

From Taniquetil to Orodruin:

The Portrayal of Mountains and Caves in
J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AGRADECIMIENTOS	i
Introduction.....	1
1. Mountains and Caves: A Historical and Cultural Perspective.....	15
1.1. Mountains and Subterranean Spaces in Western Culture	15
1.2. Mountains and Caves in Greek, Norse, and Celtic Mythologies	28
1.2.1. Greek Mythology.....	28
1.2.2. Norse Mythology.....	34
1.2.3. Celtic Mythology.....	40
1.3. Mountains in the Literary Imagination.....	45
1.3.1. Classical Period	46
1.3.2. The Middle Ages	52
1.3.3. The Renaissance	56
1.3.4. The Enlightenment	59
1.3.5. Romanticism.....	64
1.3.6. The Gothic	68
2. J.R.R. Tolkien and the Mountain.....	76
2.1. Biographical Details and Their Literary Connection	76
2.2. Mythological and Literary Inspirations of the Mountains and Caves in J.R.R. Tolkien's Works	91
2.3. Nature and Characters in Tolkien's Works.....	113

3. The Role of Mountains and Caves in <i>The Silmarillion</i>	129
3.1. The Symbology of the Mountain	129
3.2. The Silmarillion.....	133
3.2.1. Mountains	133
3.2.2. Caves and Subterranean Spaces	145
3.2.3. Aulë and the Dwarves.....	158
3.2.4. Yavanna and the Elves	161
3.3. The Long Tales: <i>The Children of Húrin</i> , <i>The Fall of Gondolin</i> and <i>Beren and Lúthien</i>	165
4. <i>The Hobbit</i> and Its Alpine World.....	179
4.1. A Long Unexpected Journey Towards The Lonely Mountain.....	179
4.1.1. The Last Homely House	186
4.1.2. The Misty Mountains.....	189
4.1.3. The Goblins of the Misty Mountains.....	191
4.1.4. Gollum and His Cave	195
4.1.5. Beorn the Skin-changer	200
4.1.6. Mirkwood's Uncanny Darkness and the Wood-Elves	203
4.1.7. The Elvenking and the Wood-Elves	206
4.2. The Lonely Mountain.....	208
4.2.1. The Desolation of the Dragon	211
4.2.2. Bard and the Oikophilia.....	214
4.2.3. Thorin's Graveyard.....	217

5. The Alpine and the Subterranean Worlds in <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	219
5.1. <i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>	219
5.1.1. Mount Caradhras	232
5.1.2. Khazad-Dûm.....	238
5.2. <i>The Two Towers</i>	253
5.2.1. The Silvertine	258
5.2.2. The White Mountains	262
5.2.3. The Glittering Caves.....	267
5.2.4. Nan Curunír	271
5.2.5. Eryn Muil.....	278
5.2.6. The Sight of the Mountains of Shadow	286
5.2.7. The Caves of Ithilien	290
5.2.8. Minas Morgul	294
5.2.9. Cirith Ungol, Shelob's Lair	298
5.3. <i>The Return of the King</i>	304
5.3.1. The Haunted Mountain.....	305
5.3.2. The White City of Minas Tirith.....	312
5.3.3. The Mountains of Shadow.....	324
5.3.4. The Return Journey	337
6. Conclusion	341
Works Cited	360

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Introduction

State of the Art

Various studies have analyzed the several meanings and connotations different natural elements have in J.R.R. Tolkien's literary work. The most prolific field of studies may be the one focused on trees and woods that the writer admired so vividly. However, Tolkien is considered a nature lover, what entails distinct natural elements that he held in high regard. Among these, any reader can appreciate the detailed descriptions he writes about the alpine world. He gives prominence not only to their actual look, but also to the characters that dwell around them, the weather conditions, the roughness of the landscape, their mystery and their location amongst others.

This thesis aims to explore the symbology and meaning of orogenies as well as of the cavernous spaces inside them, focusing on J.R.R Tolkien's literary work. In order to do so, the dissertation will examine two main areas of study. The first one analyzes the role of the mountain in literature in general and the second one studies the role of nature in Tolkien's literary work. For the first area of study, Robert Macfarlane's *Mountains of the Mind* (2003) defines what the mountain itself denotes throughout different periods, throughout the experiences of real mountaineers and the cultural changes that make people modify their opinion towards orogenies. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann's *Heights of Reflection* (2012) explains the prominence of the shape of mountains and the huge impact they have on the people near them. They also describe the crucial change in meaning the alpine world suffers throughout time and how even religious beliefs are attached to them. Schaumann and Ireton show the change of connotation mountains undergo, from complete rejection to interest and a mixture of admiration and fear. This feeling seems thoroughly common among several

mountain climbers, writers or mere admirers of the wilderness of the mountain. In fact, three centuries earlier, Edmund Burke, pushed by the new term, *the sublime*, published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), where he introduces one of the major ideas to understand the main topic of this thesis, the feelings mountains provoke on people and thus, the connotations of the alpine world. Similarly, in *Mountains, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of German and Austrian Mountaineering* (2011), Lee Wallace Holt proposes renewed concepts such as the new mountaineer, or associations of the mountain with masculinity and patriotism, what relates the alpine world with highly concrete issues and feelings. Nevertheless, in order to understand the real inflexion point the alpine world underwent, not only among mountain climbers but especially among writers, works such as “The Power of Hills: Romantic Mountaineering” (2010) by Simon Brainbridge as well as his most recent title: *Mountaineering and British Romanticism: The Literary Cultures of Climbing 1770-1836* (2020) are crucial. This author explains in this essay to what extent Romantic writers began feeling the call of the mountains and how they all started to feel inspired to set a mountain as the main background or even character in their poems. Similarly, Juan Ignacio Oliva has edited a remarkable volume where different scholars offer contrasting points of view of the mountain, the ascent, the positive and negative sides of their presence, the feelings they stimulate or even the myths around them: *Realidad y simbología de la montaña* (2012). Besides, there are other works about mountains in general, such as *Mountains* (2008) by Peter Aleshire or *High Places* (2008) edited by Denis Cosgrove and Veronica della Dora in which the mere landscape is analyzed as an outstanding natural element which will always provoke diverse reactions among citizens. All these sources are useful to understand the actual perils, looks and presence of orogenies in society throughout time.

The second group of secondary sources that have been relevant in the present dissertation is the one focused on the role of nature in J.R.R Tolkien's literary work. Among these sources, some of them have been particularly useful for this research, for example, Liam Campbell's *The Ecological Augury in the Works of J.R.R Tolkien* (2011) where the writer describes Tolkien as a real nature lover who was notoriously afraid of the damages that the Industrial Revolution caused in nature. Thus, he explains Tolkien's environmental beliefs through different examples from his literary works and shows to what extent nature plays a major role in his novels. Another well-known Tolkien academic is Marjorie Burns, who in *Perilous Realms* (2005) relates Tolkien's previous mythological influences, such as the Norse or the Celtic, on the way he depicted not only nature, but also the characters related to specific natural elements, for example, mountains and caves. The fact of having a historical background in which Burns explains Tolkien's most beloved mythological beliefs helps to understand the portrayal of such natural elements as well as the connotation he gives to them. Patrick Curry does also analyze the importance mountains have among their dwellers in *Defending Middle-earth* (2004) and refers to the cultural differences these characters suffer making a straightforward relationship between landscapes and culture, what can also be appreciated in his *Deep Roots in a Time of Frost* (2014). Similarly, Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans focus more deeply on trees and Elves, and their interrelationship, in *Ents, Elves and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R Tolkien* (2006). However, intending to depict the Elven race, they also describe the Dwarven culture, as a way of comparing Elves with their most adverse race. Hence, Dickerson and Evans offer interesting data about the underground world, its culture, the Dwarves' physical appearance, the look of the underground and Dwarven personality amongst others, what links them with the underground and the darkness of the caverns. Carl Phelpstead states in *A Companion to J.R.R Tolkien: Myth-making and Sub-creation* (2014) that the way in which Tolkien created his mythology is strongly related to the

idea of creating cultures about characters who share language, traditions and beliefs and this, in a way, makes them different from others. He also describes the Elvish culture and their harmony with nature, but he also mentions the Dwarves and their strong connection with the earth, confirming Tolkien's admiration of nature in general, as a concept entailing diversity.

There are also several insightful essays by different scholars in *Representations of Nature in Middle-earth* (2015), a volume edited by Martin Simonson. This work offers dissimilar points of view regarding nature in Tolkien's works, analyzing the Professor's approach to different natural elements such as trees, mountains and rivers amongst others to understand Tolkien's actual love and awareness of the natural world. Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005) does also offer some helpful information about the relationship between the locations and characters, and also about the etymology of some names of concrete spots. These data are often helpful for the understanding of a particular place or race. Shippey's book shows the importance of the etymology of some words, as in many occasions, before even knowing about the place Tolkien is depicting, the mere name already offers additional information to imagine Middle-earth in a particular way. Another interesting and fresh work about the locations described in Tolkien's work is *The Worlds of J.R.R Tolkien* (2020) by John Garth, where the writer shows the real-life places that inspired Tolkien to depict his worlds the way he did. For example, it is emphasized that the Swiss Alps play an important role in his way of describing the alpine world in his *Legendarium*. In addition to these more general works on the role of nature in Middle-earth, some other scholars focus more deeply on a specific work from the *Legendarium*. These are the cases of Corey Olsen, who published *Exploring J.R.R Tolkien's The Hobbit* (2012), where he offers a deep analysis not only of the portrayal of nature, but also of dissimilar aspects in the novel. Another case in which the focus is a concrete work set in Middle-earth is Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull's *The Lord of the Rings, a Reader's Companion* (2014). Although this book does not focus on nature itself, it gives many extra

details about several characters or locations that cannot be appreciated in the main text. There are, of course, other interesting works regarding the relationship between the landscape and the characters in J.R.R Tolkien's works, for example, "The Earthly Paradise in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" (1996) in which Gwennyth Hood relates the beauty of the Elven realms with the beauty of Valinor, the dwelling of the Valar in *The Silmarillion*. In order to do so, she refers to the empathy Elves feel towards nature and their taste of decorating their abodes in harmony with it. Following the concept of beauty among Elves, Marco R. S. Post shows in "Perilous Wanderings Through the Enchanted Forest: The Influence of the Fairy-tale Tradition" (2014) not only the already common positive characteristics of the Elven realms, but also their otherworldly characteristics, as in the case of the darkness of Mirkwood, for example. Thus, the writer explains how even the Elven worlds may contain mystery and negative connotation. In many occasions, the characters are the ones who shape and condition their natural surroundings, and this is what Gwyneth Hood analyzes in "Nature and Technology: Angelic and Sacrificial Strategies in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" (1993). Marjorie Burns, in "J.R.R Tolkien and the Journey North" (1989) studies the mythological influences of J.R.R Tolkien not only in the traditions of his characters but also in the aesthetical aspect, as Tolkien himself declared that many of his settings had a lot in common with real-life places. Such is the case of the realm of Edoras or Beorn's hall, which highly remind of the northern imagery or the Elven realms, which are similar to the Celtic concepts of beauty and have the fairy-like aspect common in Celtic mythology. And finally, the change in the landscape, how the pastoral imagery is broken by the attack of the machines is perceived in the chapter of The Scouring of the Shire, where the Hobbits must get used to the new kind of nature imposed in the Shire by Saruman. However, the interesting aspect of this chapter is how the main Hobbits have also changed and are now more prepared to face this new reality, as analyzed by Jonathan D.

Langford in “The Scouring of the Shire as a Hobbit Coming-of-Age” (1996), where he studies how both characters and nature are related and influence each other significantly.

Even if these two areas of study are highly interesting as they both offer considerable information about the role of nature in general and in J.R.R Tolkien’s works, so far there is not any specific research devoted to the analysis of the role of the mountain and their deep caves in the *Legendarium*. Nevertheless, there are some appealing essays and articles that have focused on the role of mines and the underground, for example, “Tolkien: The Lord of the Mines or a Comparative Study Between Mining During the Third Age of Middle-earth by Dwarves and Mining During our Age by Men” (2007) by Danièle Barberis, where the writer connects the portrayal of the mining world in Middle-earth with the closeness Tolkien had with this world when he was a child. Barberis explains the Dwarven culture, emphasizing their love towards the caves and stones, and above all, the respect they feel towards their natural habitat. Another interesting article about the underground in Tolkien’s *Legendarium* is Jessica Seymour’s “As we draw near mountains: Nature and Beauty in the Hearts of Dwarves” (2015), which examines the Dwarven race, culture, their respect towards their origins and the future of their society and, obviously, their complete admiration towards the rocky environments. Similarly to Evans and Dickerson, Seymour also compares the Dwarves with the Elves, and she even tries to eulogise Dwarves to give credit to them, as they have not been so acclaimed by scholars in comparison with Elves. David A. Funk in “Explorations into the Psyche of the Dwarves” (1996) studies more deeply the Dwarven personality, demonstrating how the so criticised Dwarven greediness might also be influenced by the huge admiration the Dwarves feel towards the jewels found in the mines where they work. However, he justifies that greediness with the hard work of the Dwarves. There is another appealing essay by Rebecca Brackmann called “Dwarves are not Heroes: Antisemitism and the Dwarves in J.R.R Tolkien’s Writing” (2010), focused on the nature of the Dwarven culture and their customs inside the

mountain and how they perceive orogenies in contrast to other characters in the story. It also examines the change Dwarves suffer in their personalities as she considers the progression of Gimli in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) compared with the Dwarves in *The Hobbit* (1937). Hamish Williams does also analyze the Dwarven race in “Caradhras: Savage Nature Warrior, Servant of Sauron, or Character Projection?” (2018). However, he deeply focuses on a specific peak, Mount Caradhras, the place where the Mines of Moria reside, and the way J.R.R Tolkien personifies the mountain giving to it several human characteristics. Williams studies the mountain as a character in the story, rather than as a mere setting, what helps to see the rest of mountains and caves as animated characters with personality. His approach is similar to what Marjorie Burns does in “Eating, Devouring, Sacrifice, and Ultimate Just Desserts” (1996). She addresses the aggressive imagery that Tolkien used to depict many mountains that appear to be huge mouths eager to devour any character who tried to climb them.

Despite these essays about the Dwarven culture, the one belonging to the underground, there is no systematic study about the alpine world and the caves inside them in the *Legendarium* by J.R.R Tolkien.

Thesis Statement

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze the representation of mountains and their symbolic meaning in J.R.R Tolkien’s *Legendarium*. Thus, it is useful to make a research of the literary influences Tolkien had when he was a student, exploring the portrayal of the mountains and the caves near them or inside them in several literary works. Tolkien’s love towards nature is nothing new, he is known as an environmentalist who suffered for the destruction of nature, especially during the Industrial Revolution and the World Wars. Environmentalism, ecology, sustainability and global warming are amongst others, utterly common terms nowadays. Hence,

I found it interesting to investigate the reason why a writer from the late 19th century could be so concerned about natural life, about taking care of it and, obviously, about the reason why he decided to spend his time offering such detailed descriptions of some natural elements in his literary works. Any of his readers can easily appreciate the prominence he gives to specific settings, giving his stories a more realistic approach and it is curious to see to what extent he even provides such places with remarked personalities. Tolkien depicts animate trees with a huge history related to them: they are part of the setting and of a specific society and they are portrayed as characters in the story, they even speak, they have a voice and they act within the story. They are the most obvious natural elements that show personality, however, are they the only natural landscapes that have such importance in the story? This was precisely one of the questions I made myself when thinking about what I wanted to analyze in Tolkien's works.

As mentioned above, several scholars have inquired into the importance of the landscape in J.R.R Tolkien's works. There are many studies, for example, the studies on woods and trees, and their connection with Elves, their culture, traditions and even myths. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, there are no studies specifically focused on the role of mountains and subterranean spaces in Tolkien's Legendarium. That is the main reason I found mountains an appealing and valid topic for this dissertation. This thesis does not deal only with the symbology mountains and caves have in J.R.R Tolkien's literary works, but it also examines the relationship they have with particular characters, races, societies when they are in contact with such natural elements. Cultures have always been actively related to specific geographical spots, thus, it is engaging to explore how Tolkien connected his made-up world with the dwellers and see the differences between races and to what extent these dissimilarities are related to the environment they live in. Different languages, ways of expression, traditions, beliefs and connotations are what separate Dwarves from Elves, Men, Hobbits or Wizards, for example, and these factors, all together have to do with the landscape they belong to. Thence,

the field this thesis works on has to do with the analysis of the portrayal of nature, mountains and caves in particular, as well as with the connection J.R.R Tolkien created between nature and characters.

Thus, this dissertation aims to offer new information about the image, connotations and symbolism of the mountain as a whole, the outside and the inside of it in Tolkien's literary works set in Middle-earth.

Methodology

The main critical approaches used in this dissertation are ecocriticism, myth criticism and cultural studies. These three ranges of study analyze different aspects within the *Legendarium* by J.R.R Tolkien, in which the power of nature, the archetypes of characters and the way different societies work within Middle-earth and its landscapes are examined.

Ecocriticism definitely plays a major role in this dissertation, as the main goal of the present research is to analyze the role of mountains and caves, not only as isolated natural elements, but especially as elements that are in contact with characters that can modify the landscape's connotation and image. Within the field of ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty's *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) and Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2011) are essential readings to understand properly the meaning of ecocriticism and the connection between nature and literature. Works such as *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment* (2011) and *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (2015) by Timothy Clark are also relevant sources as they focus on the importance and actual presence of the caring of nature and how humanity has imposed its laws on nature, causing huge damage on it. Apart from these general reference works, there are also more specific studies that have become useful for the present research. For example, it is worth mentioning a thesis by Benjamin M. Garner, called "Far Over the Misty Mountains

Cold: An Ecocritical Reading of J.R.R Tolkien's *The Hobbit*' (2015) in which Garner highlights the necessity of ecocriticism, as he focuses on *The Hobbit* and the many natural landscapes described on it, with the intention of understanding the struggles nature suffers when it is not properly treated. In fact, he adds that "turning to texts for solutions should be the core ethos of ecocriticism" (13). He considers the need for a literary text to raise the readers' awareness regarding nature. Another interesting ecocritical source is provided by Hung Ruyu, who in "Towards Ecopedagogy" (2017) introduces an interesting term known as oikophilia, which is useful to understand how different races and societies from Middle-earth feel the closeness to the natural world they live in or are surrounded by.

Tolkien's *Legendarium* was written to create a mythology for England in which the characters could be interpreted as mythological deities to look at. Thus, myth criticism is certainly relevant to understand the role of the myths within the *Legendarium*. An appealing way of analyzing the patterns some of these characters follow is to apply the Jungian interpretation of the archetypes of the characters, as depending on their personalities, they will have a deeper or narrower impact and connection with nature. Carl Gustav Jung proposed twelve different archetypal personalities that can be appreciated in Tolkien's characters. It is appealing to analyze some of the characters' individuation processes, realization of the Self, which has to do with the mixture of the conscious and the unconscious of an individual. In this way, the reader will be able to understand why some characters behave in a particular way and why others will do just the opposite. This information about the characters' way of understanding life is substantial so that the reader can assimilate the nature of each individual and of each race in connection with nature and its caring. Pia Skogeman's *Where the Shadows Lie* (2004) applies all the archetypes proposed by Jung in Tolkien's characters. Through this study, the behaviour of the characters in contact with mountains and caves is deeply analyzed, offering valuable information about their perception of the mountainous landscape. Hence,

myth criticism will become a useful tool in the present research to analyze the kind of characters that Tolkien created for his mythology, and the relationship they have with mountains and subterranean spaces. Brigitte Escobar Andersen, following Skogeman's steps, writes about the archetypes in *The Lord of the Rings* in "A Jungian Interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings*" (2012). Diego Klautau does also refer to the individuation process proposed by Jung in "From Grey to White: The Individuation Process seen in Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*" (2007), where he studies the archetype of the magician through the character of Gandalf. There are other articles more focused on the role of the hero or the heroine like "The Many Faces of Heroism in Tolkien" (1983) by Edith Crowe, where she examines the different groups of characters in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, highlighting the role of those considered heroes. These characters will receive this characteristic through some behaviours that will make them part of a concrete archetype, always in favour of the caring of nature, never on the side of the destructors.

This dissertation will also resort to Cultural Studies methodology, analyzing the behaviour of prototypical characters, within a society and within a culture to examine the relationship these characters have with nature when they are in contact with it. In that way, the reader will appreciate whether the characters shape nature and their meaning or the other way round. In the field of cultural studies, it is worth paying attention to some essays examining the behaviour of several races in Tolkien's work: "Goblins, Greed, and Goodness: The Symbolic Degradation of Goblins within *The Hobbit*" (2015) by Katelyn Stine, "Tolkien's Monsters: Concept and Function in *The Lord of the Rings*" (1990) by Joe Abbott, "Open Minds, Closed Minds in *The Lord of the Rings*" (1996) by Christina Scull, "A Warp of Horror: J.R.R Tolkien's Sub-creations of Evil" (2017) by Richard Angelo Bergen or "Let us now Praise of Famous Orcs: Simple Humanity in Tolkien's Inhuman Creatures" (2010) by Robert T. Tally, for example. These are useful articles that focus on some particular characters or character groups

to analyze their behaviour within society and create a pattern that will later be decisive in their perception of mountains and subterranean spaces.

Thus, the present dissertation resorts to ecocriticism to explain the prominence nature, mountains and subterranean spaces, have in Tolkien's literature and to show to what extent they represented an important aspect in the writer's life, even if they did not have positive connotations at the end of the nineteenth century or during the twentieth century. Mythological criticism in this dissertation focuses on the characters and their behaviour so that the connection between characters and mountains in Tolkien's work can be properly apprehended. And last but not least, cultural studies becomes a valid approach to examine the connection between specific cultures and the alpine world, exploring whether the image of the orogenies is created by the presence of their dwellers or whether it is nature who shapes characters.

Structure

The following dissertation is divided into five different chapters which will introduce the analysis of its main topics from a general perspective to a more specific one. The first chapter will present an overview of the alpine world, including the subterranean spots found inside them from the point of view of several study fields, such as history, mythology and finally literature. In order to do so, it is necessary to explore different sources dealing with the symbolism of the mountains and the caves. The analysis introduces the general meaning and feelings orogenies have provoked in citizens or even real-life mountaineers all along the years. After having examined this general perspective, it is also interesting to explore the portrayal of orogenies in several myths and legends from the Classic, Norse and Celtic mythologies. Finally, the examination of such connotations in classic literary works that have been inspiring for the portrayal of the alpine landscape in J.R.R Tolkien's Middle-earth is also provided.

The second chapter continues with the symbolism of the mountains, though it is focused on J.R.R Tolkien's personal perception of them. This chapter examines the relationship J.R.R Tolkien had with the mountains, from his childhood surrounded by the mines in Bloemfontein and his youth in the plain and tamed England to his infatuation with the Swiss Alps. Through many of his letters, one can clearly perceive the admiration the writer felt for the high hills. Orogenies were quite present in Tolkien's life and he admired them so vividly that he described two similar episodes in different novels from his *Legendarium* that actually happened to him in the mountains. This second chapter does also analyze specific literary works in which the portrayal of mountains and subterranean spaces influenced Tolkien's own way of perceiving and consequently describing them in his *Legendarium*. These are William Morris' *The Roots of the Mountains* (1889), George Macdonald's *The Princess and The Goblin* (1872) and Richard Haggard's *She* (1887). The inquiry of the relationship between the main races with their environment is also introduced, with the intention of setting each one of them in their specific setting so that the reader can better understand their point of view and their way of behaving with their surrounding lands.

The third chapter begins with the close reading of the first novel from J.R.R Tolkien's *Legendarium*, *The Silmarillion* (1977). The aim of this chapter is to analyze the novel in terms of its portrayal of the alpine world. In order to do so, the main mountains as well as caves are thoroughly explored. It is also relevant to investigate the relationship these natural elements have with their dwellers to understand the connotations, symbolism and perception they provoke on these characters in contrast with those who are strangers there. The last point of analysis in this chapter deals with the three long tales that appear in *The Silmarillion*, called: *The Children of Húrin* (2007), *The Fall of Gondolin* (2018) and *Beren and Lúthien* (2017), focusing on their main alpine settings and their different connotations.

The fourth chapter analyses the novel of *The Hobbit* (1937). This work introduces the mountain as the main goal of the main protagonists. It explores the journey from the Shire to The Lonely Mountain, paying particular attention to the cultural clash of Bilbo Baggins and the rest of the Dwarves as one of the aspects that demonstrates to what extent the landscape does shape the characters' personality and customs. However, the learning process of this journey will also add new meanings to the mountain and to its inside.

The last chapter of the dissertation is divided into three subsections, each of them analyzes the three different volumes that constitute J.R.R. Tolkien's most acknowledged work, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). Nevertheless, the aim of these subsections is the one; to delve into the symbolism mountains and caves have in this long novel, where several races are associated with different landscapes. Through their perception of such landscapes and the way in which they treat nature it will be possible to know how differently races adapt in the wilderness of the alpine landscape. The presence of mountains and subterranean spaces is remarkable all along J.R.R Tolkien's Legendarium, however, *The Lord of the Rings* provides an extent list of orogenies and subterranean realms that add dissimilar meanings to the image of the mountain itself.

1. Mountains and Caves: A Historical and Cultural Perspective

Many are the natural elements that can stand out in a landscape. However, the alpine world, together with its internal dark scenario, offers a mixture of feelings that have changed over the centuries. Mountains and the caves inside them have played a prominent role in different cultures from ancient times to the present, and they have often been related to several symbolic meanings. The perception of these natural elements has been often influenced by their connection with the sacred, the changes in the attitudes to the wilderness and also by new approaches to the concepts of beauty and danger. The aim of the present chapter is not to offer a comprehensive view of the role of mountains and caves throughout history, but to highlight some of the most common views about these elements in several periods and cultures. These approaches and interpretations will be particularly useful to explore and contextualize the role of mountains and caves in Tolkien's *Legendarium*.

1.1. Mountains and Subterranean Spaces in Western Culture

A mountain is defined as “a natural upward projection of the earth's surface, higher and steeper than a hill and often having a rocky summit” (“Mountain”). Talking about mountains is a synonym of talking about steep ways that lead to a higher location. It implies climbing, ascending and reaching a peak from where the climber gets a wider view of the surrounding lands. It also entails effort, strength, courage and even training sometimes. The roughness of a mountain depends on several conditions such as its height, its location, the weather, and the physical condition of the climbers. Not all of them demand the same effort, but they all require a harder commitment than flat meadows. Therefore, they can be considered less reachable than any other smooth landscape although these ancient natural elements have been a recurring

element in literature. However, they have not always been positively perceived or depicted. It was not until the eighteenth century that a change in society's mind made people able to make some new questions about the possible attractiveness of the wilderness. Nonetheless, there are a few remarkable cases before the eighteenth century in which the wilderness of a mountainous landscape is not only appreciated but also given prominence, what was uncommon in these times. "Three centuries ago ... the notion barely existed, indeed, that wild landscape might hold any sort of appeal" (Macfarlane 14-15). The first case is that of the Italian philosopher, Francis Petrarch, who in a letter to Dionisio da Borgo describes his memorable experience of the ascent of Mount Ventoux, in France. The journey was held in 1336 and the philosopher already found the hill attractive enough to climb it. Nevertheless, it was not an easy task, as climbing a mountain was not a common activity during the fourteenth century. The striking aspect of Petrarch's decision of climbing Mt Ventoux is that even if there were no previous examples of mountaineers that could warn future adventurers of the difficulties one might find on the heights, the Italian philosopher was already aware of some of them. In fact, he chose to go with his brother, whom he knew perfectly well, so that the slight dissimilarities that he could have with him would not be intensified during the rough times climbing the hill, making the journey even harder, as "such defects, however grave, could be borne with at home, for charity suffereth all things, and friendship accepts any burden; but it is quite otherwise on a journey, where every weakness becomes much more serious" (par. 2).

Even before the ascent, which was an unknown action for Petrarch, he already knows that it will not be effortless and that something as simple as choosing the company for the journey correctly is of great importance so that he can reach his final destination: the summit. These problems that he knows of appear as an obstacle on his way, a difficulty that makes the climbers think of the worthiness of their hard travel. On the one hand, they meet a shepherd who claims to have climbed Mount Ventoux already and he only offers negativity to Petrarch

and his brother, probably due to the tiredness of the journey. He confirms that the way upwards has brought “nothing except fatigue and regret, and clothes and body torn by the rocks and briars” (par. 3). On the other hand, the mere way is already getting more difficult and Petrarch finds himself losing time and getting lost in the labyrinthine mountain as he is trying to omit the steep ways. However, the important reflection the philosopher brings to future generations is that he was just “trying to avoid the exertion of the ascent; but no human ingenuity can alter the nature of things, or cause anything to reach a height by going down” (Par. 3). In other words, the way to the top will always require an effort, there is no reward without the previous hard work, hence omitting the obstacles and problems of the way will only bring one to lose the goal of the journey. Petrarch’s goal was reaching the peak of Mt Ventoux, but it can also be interpreted as a spiritual journey in which the mountain symbolizes the whole life of a person and the way to the top is precisely life itself, with all the obstacles that make the climbers/people learn and continue on their journey. Petrarch learnt that even if the way to the top was hard and full of different paths, from which he found it difficult to choose the correct one, one must overcome the obstacles and make a way out of all the problems so that the journey is worthy and he can finally enjoy the experience. “The life which we call blessed is to be sought for on a high eminence, and strait is the way that leads to it. Many, also are the hills that lie between, and we must ascend, ... from strength to strength. At the top is at once the end of our struggles and the goal for which we are bound” (par. 4). Petrarch’s experience is quite meaningful as he was innovative in searching for some new settings that were negatively perceived and he is supposedly one of the first writers that altered his way of thinking about mountains and gave the wilderness a chance to finally enjoy it. Having done so, he also brought the idea of changing the stigma towards mountainous landscapes and it was an inflection point in the way of understanding the beauty of nature. Another interesting approach towards the alpine landscape was held during the 16th century, when an important work by Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent*

of Mount Carmel, was published. This work is relevant as Saint John of the Cross showed in this book another important aspect of ascending a mountain. He understood the ascent of Mount Carmel as a spiritual journey where he longs to reach the summit to finally meet God. The interesting aspect of this work is that he envisions the beginning of the journey as an extremely positive deed. He believes in this journey as a rewarding duty, even if he may feel afraid of the obstacles that can be found on the way. Saint John's approach to the summit is definitely a mystic union, where he will be forced to overcome the difficulties of the purgation of the soul from any impurities. Similarly to future mountain climbers, he is moved by passion and unconditional love:

In that happy night,
 In secret, seen of none,
 seeing nought myself,
 without other light or guide,
 save that which in my heart was burning (cant. III).

Saint John's perspective was definitely another important way of understanding what the roughness of the wilderness offers to climbers. From his own point of view, the rawness of the wild mountain offered him a mystic experience through which he would learn to deny the impurities of the soul so that he could reach the summit, the clearest image of divinity and power; God, who was set at the top-most part of the mountain, providing the mountain with a divine connotation.

According to Robert Macfarlane, during the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries, nature was strictly venerated for the fecundity of the earth (14). The attractiveness of the land was precisely focused on its practicality. Nature was appreciated as long as it gave

something in exchange to human beings, like vegetables and fruits, which is part of a classical anthropocentric view. Mountains are obviously neither suitable nor comfortable spaces for farming due to their steep ways as well as due to the weather conditions, which are usually extreme for the cultivation of vegetables. Consequently, they were not given the prominence that flat meadows received and there was not a feeling of admiration towards nature just for the sake of appreciating its appearance. In order to see the beauty of it, nature had to give something in exchange that made it appealing for people. As Ireton and Schaumann claim “earlier, ‘primitive’ and agrarian societies saw mountains as barriers, hazards, and inconveniences rather than attractions” (21).

Thus, the orogenic landscapes were rather isolated from society’s interest and hence, their real look from a close distance as well as the lack of climbing related them with the feeling of fear. Society’s reaction towards the unknown has always been similar. The lack of knowledge invites people to make up stories and legends about unexplored landscapes, which are usually full of mysterious noises, shades and even monsters that abode there. Conrad Gesner, a naturalist from the 16th century, once claimed that people living near the Mount Pilatos lived afraid of a ghost-like appearance and he had to climb it to see whether that was true or not intending to calm the inhabitants of his country. He threw some stones into the water of a river to invoke any evil spirit that could be lurking there. He found nothing and “Gesner’s symbolic exorcism of the citizen’s fears is now often taken to mark the beginning of the banishment of superstition from Western imagining of the mountains” (Macfarlane 201). High heights were, hence, related to the idea of fear, of the unknown, of mystery and hence of danger. All these superstitions did only damage the possible appreciation towards wilderness, as Petrarch once suggested. Some of these mountains’ peaks could not be seen due to the mist caused by the clouds. This gave them the appearance of being touching the sky what seemed to intensify their height and inaccessibility. The mere idea of having difficulties to reach these

places did not help to increase the general interest in mountains. As a result, the most common feeling that mountains provoked was that of rejection and terror. It was the Greek Longinus, the one who introduced a concept that entails this feeling, which is nowadays known as *the sublime*. “Longinus associates the sublime with high passion and its bodily effects and expression, especially terror ... ‘sublimity’ referred to metaphors that encouraged the visceral sense of awe, terror and humility ... that we associate with vertigo-fear induced by height” (Cosgrove & Della Dora, 5).

It was not until the previously mentioned point of inflection in the 18th century that these feelings were mixed with those of admiration and awe. In that very moment, the theory of the sublime becomes an extremely important concept which will help to understand the new vision that society had for the alpine world. During the 17th century, mountains were usually avoided due to the negativity they emanated because of the murky legends about them: “go around mountains by all means, it was thought, along their flanks or between them if absolutely necessary ... but certainly not up them” (Macfarlane 15). However, during the second half of the 18th century, something changed, as people started being more concerned about those unknown spots that caused some curiosity. The interest towards wilderness began with the admiration of landscapes that had been previously perceived as dangerous. The mixture of fear and astonishment towards the huge and powerful slopes brought a new concept of beauty. With time, more people began to see the beauty of the roughness of the orogenies. The jagged rocks, the wind, the snow, the irregular and steep paths and, of course, the unexplored, which had been always considered abhorrent, became now the main allurement of the mountains. This idea of the sublime led to huge alpine tourism. Many adventurers started feeling the call of the mountains, their danger was no longer an obstacle, but a tempting feature and they were able to enjoy another kind of beauty, different from that of meadows and tamed gardens. It could be considered that the mere concept of the sublime also suffered a change in meaning. It began

being a distant interest towards the wilderness and it changed to the feeling of huge attraction towards danger.

The way in which a society perceives a concrete landscape is strongly related to culture. The impact a huge hill could provoke on a person used to tamed gardens and green meadows back in the 18th century was not the same as what people whose houses were surrounded by huge mountains could feel. The less familiar with the landscape, the more shocking it will happen to be. With the impulse of tourism and the experiences of different people up on the mountains, the interest towards them grew notoriously and thus the sublime received a more positive connotation than the one it had at the beginning. "It was in eighteenth-century England, and in direct association with experience of the Alps ... and the fascination with landscape aesthetics, that the sublime became contrasted to 'the beautiful'" (Ireton and Schaumann 5). In addition, the most shocking aspect of this new concept of beauty is that these kinds of landscapes were not only admired due to their different aspect but because of the danger they entailed. The expedition on a mountain was a synonym of exploring new situations in new places, what was potentially perilous. Many of the slopes were extremely steep making the way to the top harder. The weather in the heights was also usually hard to cope with and many were the obstacles found on the way. However, far from being a negative aspect, these perils made the ascent more interesting. De Saussure once claimed that "risk-taking brings with it its own reward: it keeps a 'continual agitation alive' in the heart. Hope, fear, hope, fear - this is the fundamental rhythm of mountaineering" (Macfarlane 71).

Together with the admiration of the landscape per se, the positivity towards mountains grew notoriously due to their straightforward relationship with divinity. Mountains usually include height as one of their main characteristics, the way to the top may offer some difficulties and the summit has many times been related to heaven due to its apparent closeness to it. It is precisely due to the adversities that can be found on a mountainous experience that

the journey can be defined as an individual's spiritual exploration, in which, similarly to Petrarch and Saint John of the Cross, one will learn to overcome the obstacles of the way and will finally reach a conclusion. Due to the summit's physical closeness to the sky and hence, to heaven: "most religions operate on a vertical axis in which heaven or their analogue of that state is up, and its opposite is down. To ascend, therefore, is in some fundamental way to approach divinity" (Macfarlane 141-142). As a consequence, there are several cases in which religious temples are set at the summit of a mountain, making a clear reference of the nearness to heaven. Such are the cases of old monasteries like the monastery of Montserrat, in Spain or the monasteries that can be found in Greece, such as Meteora or Dionysiou, for example.

There are other relevant examples of sacred temples at the top of hills in the Eastern culture that have influenced the positive perception of heights. Mount Sinai in Egypt, is an important example, where according to Jewish and Christian traditions, Moses received the ten commandments. Due to this shocking incident at the top of Mount Sinai, this mountain has been strongly related to divine issues, and hence, it has become the perfect spot for tourists interested in the legend behind it. Another important mountain that has been straightforwardly connected to sacredness and divinity is Mount Calvary, in Jerusalem, where in the Christian tradition's beliefs, Jesus was crucified. This mountain shares two kinds of connotations. The first one relates the summit of the mountain with divinity, as it is a place for Jesus. On the other hand, the mere way to the summit is a hard way in which Jesus already knew that reaching the summit meant dying. Hence the summit represents the end of life, whereas the way to it can be interpreted as life itself. As a matter of fact, the term calvary, due to the fatal ending of Jesus on the mountain, has been used to refer to a hard situation. Thus, this mountain does help with the idea of relating the summit of a mountain with the divine entities but it also entails a negative connotation due to the suffering it meant for Jesus Christ. Hence, both Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary are considered holy, what adds positiveness to the connotation of

mountains before the 18th century. The interesting aspect of building a monastery on the top of a mountain is that the actual symbology behind it is what makes people closer to Heaven. It is the effort, the training, the intention and the hard work what makes it possible for them to reach the peak. It is not the monastery per se, but the travellers' way to it what makes the journey especially spiritual, like in the case of Jesus Christ arriving at Mount Calvary. "Mountains have never stood for formal religion or for religious dogma so much as for the challenge of the individual's spiritual development. ... They have stood for the esoteric tradition of spiritual evolution brought about by following a 'way'" (Parker 2). The straightforward relationship of the mountain with divinity drove many people to embrace the new ideal of beauty as far as mountains are concerned. As a matter of fact, the interest in the alpine world was not only encouraged by their look, but also by the many features that society attached to mountain climbing and mountaineers.

In the case of the new ideas that were attached to mountains, during the Romantic Period, artists such as Caspar David Friederich, the painter of the famous Romantic painting 'Wanderer above the Sea of Fog' (1818), and poets such as Keats and Shelley discovered the rewarding experience of the heights. Following the Romantic admiration towards individualism and the exaltation of nature, they found that heights were the perfect spot. "As a concept it coincided perfectly with the Romantic glorification of the individual ... The mountain-top also provided an icon for the Romantic ideal of liberty: what could more obviously embody freedom and openness?" (Macfarlane 158). Climbing a mountain meant going towards a place from where they could observe the world from a high spot, which implies having a much wider view, not only literally speaking, but also metaphorically. The Romantics provided a new perspective concerning the admiration of the mountains. If for a common mountaineer, the main goal was that of reaching the summit, the Romantics were able to find satisfaction just on the ascent, due to the breathtaking views they enjoyed while doing so. This

can be perceived in Keats' description of his ascent to Skiddaw in England. "We had fogged and tugged nearly to the top, when ... there came a mist upon us and shut at the view; we did not however lose anything by it, we were high enough ... to see the coast of Scotland" (Brainbridge 14). As far as the features that were attached to mountaineers, mountains were not reachable for everyone and that means that the one able to climb a steep hill was seen as an especially strong person, usually male, that embodied some characteristics that were associated with masculinity, such as strength, courage and determination. Such characteristics were, at the same time strongly suitable for the representation of a nation. Mountains brought a new respectable image to those men that found some attractiveness in high steeps: "The new mountaineer of the 1920s embodied a new masculinity that drew upon several different discourses ... body, behaviour, morality and spirituality became the quintessential qualities of a mountaineer that properly represented both ... the ... nation and the promise of an imperial future" (Holt 81). These expeditions were practically experienced by men and even if during the 1920s some advertisements showed both men and women together in these alpine adventures, "the exclusion of female mountaineers as well as the feminized masses, was one way to attempt to gain control of alpine space and fashion it into a masculine space for male mountaineers" (Holt 100). Therefore, taking into account that J.R.R Tolkien experienced the noteworthy journey through the Swiss Alps in 1911 and that Jane Suffield, his aunt, was the leader of such expedition, she can be considered as a pioneer on mountain climbing, as it will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, the passion some of these men felt towards the alpine landscape went much further and they even felt the possession of the orogenies. Such is the case of George Leigh Mallory, whose major achievement in life was that of being among the first climbers of Mount Everest in 1921. If in the second half of the 18th century admiring the wild beauty of a mountain was what made the difference in contrast to the previous centuries, in the 20th

century, mountaineering acquired a more extreme meaning. Mountaineers like Mallory were obsessed with the hardest and highest peaks. The fact of being the first ones putting a step on Mt Everest is what made them feel extremely attracted to the unexplored mountain. The captivation towards it was such that even if Mallory had lost a friend while ascending, he felt the need to get what he most desired, the peak. “Despite the death of Kellas and the asperities of the terrain, Mallory feels exhilarated by the prospect of getting closer to Everest, and of going where no one has gone before” (Macfarlane 242). Nothing could be put before him and the mountain, he had been training for the great day and he was possessed by it. Mallory knew the exact shape of Mount Everest and its surroundings, however, the mystery of not having seen it before attracted him more to his goal. This admiration can be perceived in his own words when he described the feeling he got when he saw the peak from a distance. “There was no mistaking the two great peaks in the West: that to the left must be Makalu, grey, severe, and yet distinctly graceful, and the other away to the right - who could doubt its identity? It was a prodigious white fang excrescent from the jaw of the world” (Macfarlane 241-242). He described the summit of his dreams as a huge mouth, providing quite an aggressive imagery of the mountain and hence taken the danger for granted. It was a hard challenge for him as well, but still, he was in love with it. This way of depicting mountains as big mouths is a common resource in Tolkien’s depiction of orogenies, as it will be shown in the following chapters. As a matter of fact, many are the perils and situations lived by the mountaineer that were later portrayed by the writer in his works, such as the fear, the admiration, obsession and, of course, the extreme tiredness. Even Mallory, who was so concerned about his expedition, asked himself whether the whole experience was worth it. “Mallory, who has always been assured of his fitness, is slightly surprised by these signs that his body is vulnerable, that it can ever operate at anything other than optimum capacity” (Macfarlane 248-249). However, similar to Tolkien’s characters, surrender is never an option as he even preferred dying on the mountain than not

achieving his goal. “To return thwarted but alive would ... have been intolerable to him” (Macfarlane 270).

As far as caves are concerned, similar to mountains, they have been perceived in several ways throughout history, culture, art and mythology. The actual entry of the dictionary describes them as “a large hole in the side of a cliff or hill, or one that is under the ground” (‘Cave’). If mountains were unknown and unexplored locations due to their mysterious look, caves were even less explored precisely due to the darkness they embody. Caves are natural holes inside mountains or rocky hills and hence, there is no light inside them, which makes them less attractive as it is more difficult to see what is inside them, causing an understandable fear. The biggest difference with mountains is that they are indoor spaces and therefore, they have been used as a refuge or even shelter in many situations. Many animals like bears, bats or weasels live inside these rocky holes and they find them comfortable, however, they may look eerie for people who are not used to them. Their inhospitable look, the humidity and the darkness are the main reasons to feel rejection towards caves. Moreover, as it happens with mountains and any other unexplored landscapes, many are the myths and legends about caves and their horrible dwellers. In fact, there are a few mythologies and narratives that set some of their divine gods or goddesses inside caverns. Even if they do not always emanate negativity, they are more related to the unknown and the ghostly environment than the mountains themselves. However, caves represent something that mountains do not. In fact, one of the most beneficial aspects of caves is what they symbolize, as apart from being the stronghold of many monster-like creatures, they are also representative of the earth’s very core, the heart of the mountain, what offers a very positive and pure aspect of the landscape. “The cave stands for the spiritual centre, the heart or the hearth” (Cirlot 16). It is precisely due to their shape and their location that they can also be interpreted as the place where everything begins, the womb of the mountain, from where, in case of volcanoes, fire comes out. “Caves, with their darkness,

are womb-symbols” (Cirlot 40). And this aspect can be both, positively or negatively perceived as from the aesthetical point of view, the look of a volcano is breathtaking and can provoke the feeling of the sublime, however, from a mountaineer’s point of view as well as from a volcanic area’s neighbour’s perspective it is terrifying. The negativity of these indoor landscapes may reside from the time when Plato described the allegory of the cave in *Republic* in the year 375 B.C. It is from the darkness of the cave, from where, according to the philosopher, people cannot see properly the reality. There is fire and fire projects some shades that show some close images to how reality looks like, however, one does not get to know anything about the real look of reality, until one is outside it, and that means that being inside the cave only brings not progressing in life, and thus, it radiates negativity. The inability to see in the caves is due to the lack of light, and light can be interpreted as a metaphor for knowledge, hence if the cave is all about darkness, and light means knowledge, being inside the cave can only signify being away from knowledge. This might be one of the main reasons why most of the evil characters in mythologies, as well as in literary works are placed in dark, indoor places like caves, often intensifying the mystery that caves irradiate.

Both mountains and caves are strongly related and in fact, “the cave inside the mountain is an essential element in mountain symbolism, it follows that the ‘mountain-temple’ would not be complete without some form of cave” (Cirlot 16). Thus, one follows the other and this has been this way since ancient times in which they were closely depicted in different mythologies as well as in literary periods as it will be explained below.

1.2. Mountains and Caves in Greek, Norse, and Celtic Mythologies

1.2.1. Greek Mythology

Greek mythology is one of the best-known mythologies in Western culture and it holds one of the strongest basis for other mythologies. In fact, an enormous amount of Greek myths have been depicted in several classical literary works such as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*. The main reason for the creation of this mythology resides in the necessity to explain some themes such as the creation of the universe, the division of seasons or natural catastrophes like floods. "The main myths and legends were organized into a pseudo-historical pattern to provide a remarkably coherent history of the universe and divine order and of the Greek world in the heroic era" (Hard I). Greek mythology, like the rest of mythologies, introduces a large list of gods and goddesses that are related to dissimilar topics of everyday-life and they all belong to a specific location, which offers information of the dwellers. Already in Greek mythology, the strata of good and evil is portrayed as the upper world and the lower respectively. The closer to the sky, the more related to divinity and the closer to earth the further from the divine gods. Hence, it is obvious that heights will be venerated whereas the underworld will offer a more obscure world.

Everything starts with the primordial forces of the universe: Chaos, Gaia, Tartaros and Eros. The prominent ones are the two first, whose offspring were of notorious recognition for diverse causes. Chaos' children, as it may be expected, are the precursors of negative and harmful forces. They are Erebus and Night. The former is the personification of darkness "especially of the darkness of the Underworld" (Hard 23) which already offers a glimpse of the negative connotation of him and he brings Day and Aither (representative of brightness) to life. Erebus' sister, Night gives birth to many of the personifications of the "dark, destructive and

negative forces” (Hard 23). They are not straightforwardly related to the myths. However, philosophers like Hesiod would consider Night’s children as prominent due to the representation they make of real life’s situations. Such is the case of Thanatos, for example, who represents death. The only reference to light among these entities is that of Erebus’ children, who are necessary for the cycle of the day, as there is no light without darkness. However, Chaos’ children can be considered to be the prime entities in Greek mythology related to mayhem and hence to negativity. On the other hand, Gaia is the representative of the opposite. “If Chaos will become the progenitor of all manner of negative and harmful forces ... Gaia will be the progenitor of all that is positive and substantial in the world, including the features of the physical universe ... and all the great gods and goddesses” (Hard 24). Once again, the eternal war between good and evil, dark and light and above and below is strictly represented through different entities belonging to dissimilar places. The contrast with Chaos’ children is notoriously perceived through the children of Gaia. She is responsible for the creation of the world’s shape, as she alone gives birth to Ouranos (sky), Ourea (mountains) and Pontos (sea). Together with Ouranos, she gives birth to the Titans or the first-born and among them, is Kronos, the most powerful of all. After bringing the Titans to life, Gaia and Ouranos produce “two sets of monsters, the Kyklopes and the Hekatoncheires” (Hard 65-66) who their father Ouranos hates due to their aspect and decides to hide them from the rest of the inhabitants, under the earth. “He [Ouranos] hated his offspring and prevented them from coming to the light. ...He took a dislike to them because they were terrible to behold, especially the monsters who were born first of all. He hid them deep away inside the earth as each was born” (Hard 67). This is the first example through which the earth is used as a place to hide someone or something. It could also be compared to a huge cave formed on the earth which offers the intimacy of its walls to hide Ouranos’ children. As a matter of fact, according to Cirlot, “its [cave’s] meaning is probably confined to that of the general symbolism of

containment, of the enclosed or the concealed” (40). The earth is the perfect spot to hide anything and so are the caves. Due to the darkness that characterizes them, together with the lack of interest of society of exploring their inside, hiding becomes relatively easy. After some time, Kronos together with Rhea had six children, who became the Olympian Gods: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon and finally, Zeus. Kronos, who knew that one of his children would overpower him, decided to eat all of them, except Zeus, who, with Rhea’s help, was hidden in a cave in Crete, so that Kronos could not eat him too. “As each of the first five was born, Cronus swallowed them. He alone wanted to rule the world, and he didn’t want competition from his children. Rhea was greatly upset by this, so when Zeus, the sixth child, was born, she hid him in a cave” (Payment 17). This is the second time in which the darkness of the earth or a cave, in this case, is used to hide someone. The interesting aspect of this cave in Crete is that it plays the role of refuge, shelter and abode for none other than Zeus, who will become the ruler of the Mt Olympos. But first of all, Zeus wants to save his siblings from his father, who has already swallowed them and hence, makes him vomit them. It is the time for Zeus and the rest of gods and goddesses to take revenge against their father and so begins the long war called Titanomachy, in which Zeus releases the Kyklopes that Ouranos hid under the earth. They help the Olympian gods in this war sending the Titans to Tartarus, or the Underworld, which will be analyzed below. The curious aspect of this war is the concrete places in which both sides take refuge, as Kronos and the rest of Titans choose Mt Othrys, while Zeus and his companions choose Mt Olympos. Both orogenies are chosen as the stronghold of each side, providing the alpine world with the feature of protection and safety. Even if mountains have always emanated a murky environment, Greek mythology also describes them in a notoriously positive way, making them powerful. Mt Olympos is among the most famous mountains in history due to the strong connection with the gods and goddesses from Greek mythology. Robin Hard claims that “the sky was envisioned as a substantial roof

or dome ... It rose a considerable height above the earth, but not an immeasurable distance. The residence of the gods was now imagined as being the sky itself, ... the summit of Mount Olympos” (21). The dwelling of the gods is located at the very summit of the mountain, creating thus, a huge connection between heights and the sacred and divine. Nevertheless, besides having one of the most famous Mounts in history, Greek mythology does also contain a large, hidden world in the Underworld.

After having won the Titanomachy, Zeus, Poseidon and Hades will share the world. Zeus will be the leader of Mount Olympos, giving him the greatest acknowledgement among the gods and goddesses, he will become the biggest figure among the Olympian gods. Both character and location suit each other as they both complement the other. Zeus gives the mountain the importance of being the perfect abode for a god and the mountain offers him the height that will make him powerful among the rest. Poseidon will be the ruler of the sea and finally, Hades will reign in the Underworld, also known as Tartaros or Hades before it. Hades’ abode can be considered the opposite of that of Zeus’. Mount Olympos is straightforwardly related to heights and it leads upwards, whereas “far to the west ... where the sun goes down, there was a place of darkness, near which an entrance to Hades could be found ...” (Hard 109). The former is set above whereas the latter is located below, making the difference between both realms, as well as its dwellers’ dissimilarities even more colossal. Hades’ world is however not less important than Zeus’, each realm is there to fulfil its mission and Hades himself “was no enemy of the human race, nor was he radically different in nature from his more fortunate brothers” (Hard 107). Nevertheless, he is the murkiest god of all, he is dark, he rules the world of the dead and his realm is the darkest place in the universe. He even “acted in the manner of a jailer, ensuring that dead mortals who entered his dark kingdom never escaped back to the light of the sun, and his realm contained a place of punishment where some few who had gravely offended the gods, ... would be subjected to torment ...” (Hard 107).

Tartaros is thus portrayed similarly to its owner, dark, eerie and related to death. It is even compared to a prison, which depicts the underworld in a noteworthy negative way. This is another case in which the realm and the owner suit each other, as once Hades is given the Underworld, he barely goes out of it. He is more comfortable in the darkness than in the daylight, “therefore he led an isolated existence, having little to do with his fellow gods or the world of the living” (Hard 98). Even if the realm of the Dead offers the nightmarish environment most mortals would try to avoid, it is still an important location precisely due to its connection with the dead. In fact, there was a tradition in which people believed to be closer to their dead if they owned a cave or any other cavity that would let them in the underworld. “People claimed to have a cave, chasm or lake in their area which communicated with the underworld” (Hard 109). Tartaros is perfectly depicted as the land of the dead and so are its surroundings, as it is portrayed as a completely barren land, similar to that of Mordor depicted in J.R.R Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, in which the landscape that can be perceived is that of some hills, graves as well as “the famous meadow of asphodel ... [which] is a dingy and unprepossessing plant which grows on barren ground ...” (Hard 109). Another characteristic that makes the Underworld have a deadly look is that of the infernal rivers that are set in front of its entrance. These rivers are called Styx, Acheron, Kokytos and Pyriphlegethon, which mean “the Abhorrent, the Woeful, The River of Lamentation [and] the Fiery” (Hard 109-110). They are said to be infernal, which already adds negativity towards the place where they are located and their names just confirm their horrid nature. Apart from being right away related to the land of the dead, they are also known to bring death to “animals and human beings who drank from them, and to have the power to dissolve or corrupt almost everything, including glass, crystal and agate, and even pottery” (Hard 110). This may remind the land of Mordor in which the hot fire can dissolve the mere paths and create a world of volcanic rock. And last but not least, another feature that characterizes the Underworld as a dangerous place, is the

presence of the guard that keeps an eye on the entrance to Tartaros. Hesiod explains in his *Theogony* that a dog guards the dark gates of Tartaros and he is responsible for the control of those entering the underworld, who will never come out again. There is no doubt that both mountains and subterranean spaces play an important role in Greek mythology, as one of the best-known mountains belongs to it and the Underworld is of extreme power too.

There are many myths that take place in such realms. As far as mountains are concerned, one of the most famous myths is the one of Sisyphus, who tried to escape from the Underworld and he was finally punished for doing so. His punishment is paradoxically related to a mountain as he was forced to push a huge rock from the bottom of the mountain to the peak, as a symbol of making a great effort to reach heaven. However, once he finds himself at the peak, the weight of the rock pushes him back to the bottom again, making his journey never-ending. In this case, the mountain is a figure related to punishment, as it is the setting in which the punished Sisyphus will suffer on the ascent. And at the same time, the divine characteristic of orogenies is still present, as the peak is the symbol for the heaven Sisyphus longs for. On the other hand, in the case of subterranean worlds, Greek mythology explains the case of Hephaistos, son of Zeus and Hera. At first glance, one might think that being the son of such important deities, Hephaistos must belong to Mount Olympos together with his parents, however, he can be considered as an outsider, as due to his physical deformity, he was expelled from Olympus and was “sheltered in their [Thetis and Okeanid’s] cave beneath the ocean for nine years” (Hard 166). The interesting characteristic about this misfit god is that he is forced to descend from the clearest image of divinity to the inside of a dark cave. Nevertheless, far from being a negative aspect of his life, there he learns the art of smithery and becomes worshipped “in the many volcanic regions of Italy and Sicily” (Hard 164). His story is curious just because he was born an Olympian god and ended up being related to fire and darkness, which makes him closer to the general idea that western society has about caverns. Even if he

does not belong to the sacred land of Olympus but to the darkness of a cave, he is still considered a “divine blacksmith” (Hard 165).

Therefore, Greek mythology introduces both mountains and subterranean spaces equally powerful, they both are great realms with their own ruler. Still, the upper world emanates a positivity that the lower world does not. In fact, everything related to the underworld has a murky aspect in contrast with the rest of the Greek world. Nevertheless, probably, the most curious case is that of the greatest image of power, depicted by Zeus, was actually raised in a cave and Sisyphus’ torture takes place in a mountain. Thus, it can be said that the connotation given to these locations is much related to the behaviour of their dwellers and their purpose in life.

1.2.2. Norse Mythology

Norse mythology, as the mere name indicates, originates in Scandinavia and it was an important reference for the Nowegians, during the years 780-1070. This mythology is what the Norse population believed in and they spread it throughout the lands that they conquered. “The Vikings were the most exciting and influential force in Europe and beyond; wherever they went, they took their beliefs in the old gods and it was their poets who forged the myths ...” (Crossley-Holland xiv). Norse mythology is also a polytheist one in which several gods and goddesses live together with dissimilar characters belonging to different races such as Giants, Elves, Men and Dwarves amongst others. Each one of them has its own world, as the Norse Universe is the union of nine worlds.

Everything starts when the realms of Niflheim and Muspellheim meet each other and through their collision life is created. The two first living creatures are a Giant, called Ymir, and a cow. The latter licks the ice from where a man and a woman are born and they have three

sons, the gods Odin, Vili and Ve. These three are responsible for the death of Ymir, from whose body parts of the world will be created. “They took Ymir ... and made the world from him: from his blood the sea and lakes, from his flesh the earth, from his bones the mountains; rocks and pebbles they made from his teeth and jaws and those bones that were broken” (Sturluson 35). The strata in the northern universe are thoroughly differentiated. There is a clear difference between the upper and the lower worlds. As a matter of fact, the connotation that these locations have is strongly related to the kind of characters that dwell on them. Nevertheless, there are always exceptions in which a location can imply uneasiness in some situations but also calm in others as it will be demonstrated below. Exactly the same as happens with the gods, as in Norse mythology they are neither defined as hundred per cent evil nor as hundred per cent good, they are a mixture, even the most powerful god, Odin, is recognized to be somewhere in between. Thus, it is not their character what makes them belong to a specific setting, but their power or status. This universe is full of several races of people who belong to different landscapes. One of them is that of the Giants, also known as the Jötnar, who live in Jotunheim and in Utgard ‘outer enclosure’ “from where they threaten gods and men” (Sturluson xxiv), a wild world full of mountains. In addition, giants may be among the most hated characters in Norse mythology, as they are considered the main enemies of the gods. The fact of relating the enemies of the gods as the dwellers of a wild landscape like the mountains does already suggest the connotation the alpine world has in the Norse universe. Mountains are depicted as an entirely savage setting exactly like their dwellers, who do not discern from that wild appearance. They are depicted as “complex social beings with characteristics similar to those of the gods ... sometimes they are oafish, troll-like beings, but at other times giant women are of such beauty in the eyes of the gods that they wish to marry them” (Sturluson xxv). The second race is that of the Dwarves, who in contrast with the Giants, live underneath the earth. “They lived in Nidavellir (Dark Home) in caves and potholes” (Crossley-Holland xxi). The

Dwarven race is probably the one with the worst connotation due to their real origin. “They were maggots at that time, but by a decision of the gods they acquired human understanding and assumed the likeness of men, living in the earth and the rocks” (Sturluson 22). They are defined as maggots, which does not provide them with beauty or any positive characteristic. However, they took the look of human beings even if they continued belonging to the underground. The most characteristic feature of the Dwarves is that they have their own forges underneath the earth and they are the blacksmiths of the Norse universe. “The Dwarves became the major smiths or artisans of the gods. From their underground world, these craftsmen produce precious objects and forge the implements used by the gods to prevail over the natural and social worlds” (Sturluson xxv). In the case of Elves, the differentiation between upper and lower classes is clear as there are two kinds of Elves, each one of them belonging to both world parts. There are light and dark ones. The light Elves belong to “magnificent places” and are defined as being “more beautiful” (Sturluson 28), whereas the dark ones live “down below the earth” and are “blacker than pitch” (Sturluson 28). As a matter of fact, their realm is called Svartalfheim, which literally means ‘land of the dark Elves’ which provides them with negativity due to the darkness they emit. The class differentiation between above and below, once again, venerates the upper parts while the lowest ones are related to rejected species. As Kevin Crossley-Holland claims, “the Norsemen visualised the universe as a tricentric structure - like three plates set one above another ...” (xx). This world with different levels sets the divine places in the upper parts, such is the case of Asgard and of Valhalla, of course. “On the top level was Asgard, the realm of the Aesir or warrior gods. This is where the gods and goddesses had their halls ... this, too, is where Valhalla was situated, the huge hall that housed all the Einherjar, the dead warriors who fought ... awaiting Ragnarok” (Crossley-Holland xx). Taking into account the importance of warfare for the Norsemen, only those worthy warriors were allowed in such an important place like Valhalla. It is a snob place as it is not reachable

for everyone. Thus, it is considered an honourable place and hence, it is located in the upper part of the Norse universe. In these high lands, the Aesir share the category of divinity and sacredness with the Vanir, or the gods of fertility and finally the Light Elves, whose realm is called Alfheim. The level in the middle is called Midgard, and it is the world where Men live. Midgard does not have any negative connotation, however, it is not as venerated as any divine-like world, hence, it is located in the middle, together with the Dwarves and the Dark Elves. Both levels are, nonetheless, connected to each other by a huge rainbow called Bifrost, which is guarded by the god Heimdall. Bifrost is located at heaven's end, hence, Heimdall is responsible for keeping the entrance guarded against possible giants that may want to enter a world where they are not welcome. Asgard might not be as mountainous as Jotunheim, however, it is located in a higher place, giving the gods the power of heights. Nevertheless, the dwellers of the wilderness of the mountains are not welcome in the Aesirs' hall. However, as mentioned above, there are always exceptions. This is seen through the marriage of Skadi, a Giantess and Njord, a Vanir. They both belong to different worlds and they still love each other, Njord is related to the sea as he lives in Noatun, which means, enclosure for ships. On the other hand, Skadi belongs to the huge and wild mountains where her father owns a house. However, once Njord abandons this house, he confirms that he does not belong to such locations and he says: "hateful for me are the mountains. I was not long there, only nine nights. The howling of wolves sounded ugly to me after the song of swans" (Sturluson 34). He makes a clear comparison between both worlds, he relates the mountains with ancestral animals, like wolves, and the sea with not so aggressive swans. His position is clear, as he admits hating the alpine world. Such is his discomfort that both, Skadi and he, make separate ways recognizing that they cannot fit in the other's world. This clearly demonstrates that the situation of a landscape fits with its dwellers' personality and that not all worlds are suitable for everyone.

Upper and lower worlds are described in Norse mythology in opposite terms. In contrast with the divinity that Asgard and Valhalla emanate, the Norse world describes quite dark and murky worlds in its lower parts. These are, unsurprisingly inhabited by characters on the dark side, such as Loki, and especially his three monstrous children. Loki is the son of a giant and he is always making troubles for the Aesir, as he is a trickster, nevertheless he always helps them fix the disturbances. He is known as the father of lies. In contrast with the majority of evil characters, he is described as “pleasing, even beautiful to look at” (Sturluson 38-39) however, “his nature is evil and he is undependable” (Sturluson 38-39). As far as his personality is concerned, “he excelled all men in the art of cunning, and he always cheats” (Sturluson 55). Together with the giantess Angrboda, Loki had the three monsters of the Norse universe: Fenrir the strong wolf, Jörmungand the world-serpent and Hel, the half dead-half alive girl. The gods already knew that Loki’s children would only bring chaos to their world and precisely because of that, Odin, the All-father, ordered them to send the three of them to different places. “He [Odin] flung the serpent into the deep sea which surrounds the whole world ... he threw Hel into Niflheim and gave her authority over nine worlds ... the gods brought the wolf up at home and only Týr had the courage to go up to it and give it food” (Sturluson 56). These three children have a giantess mother coming from a mountainous land and they are depicted as the three monsters, which means that everything and everyone coming from the orogenies entail negativity. It is Hel, the youngest among the three of them who rules the Norse Underworld and through her appearance, one can perceive her as the perfect candidate to do so. “Hel is half black half flesh-colour, ... she looks rather grim and gloomy” (Sturluson 56). She dwells in the place where those who do not die honourably go to, in other words, the ones who do not die in battle are not worthy to rise to Valhalla and they are destined to the deep Underworld instead. Niflheim is not very different from the Greek Underworld, as they both represent the same idea, the world of the dead. It is a dark, gloomy and eerie place, and there is no way out of it.

Hence, it can be compared to a prison. “Hel made herself at home: beyond the sheer rock, Drop to destruction, she built huge walls around her estate. Her hall Eljudnir, home of the dead, lay within it, behind a massive pair of gates” (Crossley-Holland 34). Besides Niflheim, the Norse universe also introduces a hellish place called Muspellheim, which is known for its characteristic fiery environment. It is different from Niflheim, though both worlds are located at the southern part of the Norse cosmos. “There was a world in the southern region which is called Muspell. It is bright and hot. That region flames and burns and is impassable for foreigners ... Surt [black one] is the name of he who waits there at the land’s edge to defend it” (Sturluson 13). After many evil deeds, Loki is finally taken captive and chained inside a cave. The cavernous location, similarly to Hel’s Underworld, is depicted as a prison. “Loki was now captured, and with no thought of mercy he was taken to a cave” (Sturluson 70). Besides the different characters and their dwellings, the real event that takes place at the end of the world is what best shows the Norse universe’s differentiation between the upper and the lower worlds, in other words, the difference between the divine and hellish. This event is known as Ragnarok, which is the war of the end of the world, where the Aesir and the Vanir will fight against Loki, his children and the rest of demons and dead souls. It is actually Fenrir, the wolf, who escapes from the chains and starts the war. It is such a great war that “the whole earth, together with the mountains, will start to shake so that the trees will loosen from the ground, the mountains will fall, and all the fetters and bonds will severe and break ...” (Sturluson 72). After Ragnarok, the whole Norse universe is burnt and destroyed but the dichotomy of good and evil still lingers. Even if everything is destroyed, there are still more pleasant places such as Nidarfjoll or the dark mountains and Nastrandir or corpse strands where “there is a large, foul hall ... it is constructed from the spines of snakes like a house with walls woven from branches. The heads of all the snakes turn into the house, spitting venom so that a river of

poison runs through the hall, and down it must wade those ... oathbreakers and murderers” (Sturluson 76).

Thence, in most of the cases, mountains in Norse mythology are related to the Giants, who are the main enemies of the gods. Therefore, the connotation towards the alpine world is not very positive. Nevertheless, heights are still venerated and considered as sacred and divine as both Asgard and Valhalla, the two most admired places in the Norse cosmos are placed at the uppermost level. Hence, as mentioned above, it is the characters’ status that joins them with their worlds. In other words, a Giant could never live in Asgard because of the lack of divinity. In contrast to the topmost part places, there are Muspellheim and Niflheim, the hellish world, and the Underworld, which are set at the lowest parts of the cosmos, relating once again, the underground spaces with evil characters and landscapes. In Norse mythology, it cannot be said that everything is a hundred percent white or a hundred percent black. Although most of the alpine landscapes are negatively portrayed due to the presence of the Giants, there are occasions in which even dark mountains are positively portrayed, as in the case of Nidafjoll.

1.2.3. Celtic Mythology

The last of the three mythologies is that of the Celtic people. Celtic mythology is in what the Celts believed and it is considered as one of the “great founding cultures of European civilization” (Bernard 7) as it originates in the second millennium B.C. The exact area in which it was spread is not precisely known, although according to some theories, it is set in central Europe. With the arrival of the Roman Empire, two cultures collided, even if Romans at that time were polytheists, the gods they believed in were different from those of the Celts. It was with the arrival of the Romans that many Celts were forced to move to Britain, however, “by around 55 B.C the Romans made their way to Britain, [and] the only areas of Britain not to be

conquered were Ireland and the Isle of Man” (Bernard 7). With the presence of the Romans, the Celts saw themselves afraid of losing their own culture as “the dominating Romans displaced much of the Celts’ language, culture, and customs with their own” (Bernard 7-8). With time, Christianity became the dominant belief and “Celtic culture soon vanished from Britain except in the remote regions of Wales, Cornwall, and for a time, in the native British kingdoms of the north” (Freeman xii-xiii). Due to the Roman conquest, several legends about the Celts were invented and spread out through the neighbouring countries picturing them as barbarians and savage cannibals. Nevertheless, the country of the Celts “was a rich and fertile land with an ancient and sophisticated culture” (Freeman xiii). Nature was of great importance for them as they lived surrounded by it. They used to have farms with cattle and that was their main way of earning a living. It is said that Celts are still alive, the culture is still active “on the west coast of Ireland, in Welsh towns and villages, in the hills and islands of western Scotland” (Freeman xiv). Thus, these people are used to the wilderness offered by mountains and that will affect their way of venerating them. It is definitely a culture known for the great admiration they felt towards nature and its power. However, in contrast with the previous two mythologies, little is known about their myths and history, as one of their characteristics was that of giving importance to the power of the word. Hence they did not write about them, they used to sing their songs in their original languages so that they could transmit their culture orally to other generations and they were sung by some poets called bards. Nevertheless, with the arrival of Christianity, an enormous amount of information is nowadays lost. It is in fact, due to the presence of some monks who wrote about them that some of these myths are still known in the present. Nonetheless, their accuracy is not hundred per cent guaranteed as they all have been written under the influence of the Christian belief. Not many people know about Celtic culture and mythology, however, some writers and scholars have found in it something unique. “Those who have read the story of Celtic myth and legend - among them writers like J.R.R Tolkien

and C.S Lewis- have been deeply moved and influenced by these amazing tales for there is nothing in the world quite like them” (Freeman x).

Celtic mythology is quite different from the two previous mythologies that have been previously analyzed. In contrast with the Greek and Norse mythologies, the Celts did not know about the exact way in which the Celtic universe was created. There is, however, a theory which claims that the Celts believed to be descendants of, curiously, the counterpart God of the Underworld in Greek mythology, Hades, whose name is Dis. This is definitely a peculiar aspect of the Celts, as most mythologies relate the god of the Underworld with death and chaos, however, the Celts did also “mark the beginning of each day with sunset, not sunrise” (Freeman 7) which is quite peculiar, as well. Similar to this case in which the god of death is seen as a paternal figure is the case of Donn or ‘the dark one’ who “appears as a kindly, paternal figure who lives on a rocky island in the Western sea where the souls of the Irish journeyed after death” (Freeman 7). Even if there are things that Celtic mythology perceives in different ways in comparison with other mythologies, as their origin, there are others that remain similar. Such is the case of setting the god Donn completely isolated from the rest of the civilization and inside the cave of an island. In this case, the cave is related to divinity as it is related to Donn, however, the portrayal and symbology of subterranean spaces are the same as in the other two mythologies: they do not have a negative connotation, but they are isolated from the civilization. Caves are alienated spaces, and the abode of not any god, but the god of death, which provides them with some kind of obscure connotation.

Even if the idea of the creation of the world was not clear, the concept of the end of it was more evident. According to a conversation between some druids that Posidonius, a Greek traveller, during one of his journeys in Gaul heard, these druids confessed that “the human soul and the universe itself were eternal, but that at some time in the future both fire and water would destroy our world” (Freeman 13). The destruction of the world is related, once again as most

of the aspects in the Celts' life, to nature. The image of the druids was of huge importance for the Celts because they were connected to the Otherworld, a noteworthy notion in Celtic mythology. The druids "were the priestly order of the Celts. They were highly respected and feared because of their connection to the supernatural realm ... the druids emphasized that the soul did not cease to exist with death but simply passed into another body" (Brezina 8). It seems that the Celts gave much importance to what they called the Otherworld, which is different from the Underworld. The previous one is the place to which the souls of the dead bodies went, it is described as a place "beyond our immediate reality. This Otherworld is a place contiguous with our world, where deities and other powerful beings dwell and from which they can affect our world" (Monaghan xiii). The Otherworld was not extremely different from their real world, the only difference that could be found is that the Otherworld is described as "more beautiful and changeless. Trees bore blossom and fruit at the same time there; no one ever aged or grew infirm; death had no dominion in the Otherworld" (Monaghan xiii). The concept of death was, in fact, quite interesting. Due to the common belief of the idea of the Otherworld spread by the druids, the Celts did not fear death and they "were known to go into battle naked and sometimes unarmed" (Brezina 8). They were sure they would visit the Otherworld, which may not be compared to the heavenly paradises from the previous mythologies. However, it does have a divine connotation, as it was the realm of the gods. "This world had its sacred points as well ... in the Otherworld lived the great gods" (Monaghan xiii).

As far as gods are concerned, another important contrast found with the two previous mythologies is that Celtic mythology does not have a list of a genealogy of gods and goddesses even if there are plenty of them who are related to specific environments. "There is no specific pantheon of gods found among all the Celtic peoples. Rather, there were many gods, most of which were specific to a region or environment" (Monaghan xiii). Probably the most characteristic aspect of the Celtic gods is that they are strongly related to nature. This way of

admiring nature to the level of believing in it in a sacred way is known as Pantheism, which differs from other religions because people “see divinity as separate from or transcendent over nature” (Monaghan xiii). Taking into account that the Celts lived in mountainous areas of Britain, such as Scotland and Ireland, they believed in deities related to their own nature, as usually happens in other mythologies. Hence, these gods, “did not live in the sky but in mountains and the sea, in trees and in running streams” (Monaghan xiii). In addition, another fact that demonstrates the love Celts felt towards the wilderness is that “the Celts did not build many temples. Rather, they celebrated their religion in the open air, a setting appropriate to a people who envisioned divinity as resident in the natural world. Their ritual sites were on hilltops ...” (Monaghan xiv). As a matter of fact, the mere gods, and especially the goddesses were related to natural elements such as the rivers or even the mountains. “Celtic goddesses had in common with Celtic gods their special link to place, ... goddesses are particularly connected with fresh water, ... and with mountains, especially high peaks” (Monaghan 219-220). Thus, even if there is no Celtic heaven, mountains and hills are strongly related to divine entities, what makes a straightforward connection between heights and the sacred and divine. Even if death is perceived as a continuity of life, the Irish people believed in a god who dwelt separated from the civilization inside a cave.

In general terms, there is no clear differentiation between the upper spaces and the lower spaces or good and evil in Celtic mythology. However, the pattern of placing gods and divine rituals at the tops of hills and relating death with an obscure and isolated place seem to be recurrent features in this culture.

It may be argued that these three mythologies could have influenced J.R.R Tolkien on the creation of his own mythology for Britain. There can be found similar god-like characters, similar events, beliefs, and, of course, natural elements. These three mythologies make a straightforward relationship between the heights and the divinity, whereas the lower parts of

their worlds are more connected to the Underworld and darker events. It is clear, thus, that the admiration Tolkien felt for mountainous landscapes could be affected by the mythologies he knew about, as well as for his own personal experience in them, as it will be explained below. These ancestral natural elements are doubtless of great prominence as they all are introduced with the intention of providing extra information to the myths, or stories in which they are set. Nevertheless, myths are not the only stories in which the alpine world is portrayed. In fact, these landscapes are also depicted in some of the major literary works of different periods.

1.3. Mountains in the Literary Imagination

Literature has definitely made plenty of references to orogenies. Their basic appearance has not changed throughout history as they are strong natural structures difficult to break. However, due to different weather conditions, their features have been shaped throughout the years. Some may have softened their peaks, some others may have been sharpened, depending on how the climate has forced them to reshape. Nevertheless, regardless of their appearance, mountains have been always perceived as an impressive natural element that provokes different feelings to those observing them. These feelings towards them have changed throughout history; gradually, there was more information about mountains, they were not so unknown for people and fear and uncertainty are not so prominent nowadays. This changing process can be perceived throughout the description of mountains in different literary works throughout history.

1.3.1. Classical Period

Among the first renowned literary works from the classical period, one of the best-known texts is Homer's *The Odyssey*, which is believed to have been published around the 8th century B.C. It can be considered the sequel of another masterpiece by Homer, *The Iliad*. This one describes the war of Troy, whereas *The Odyssey* is an epic poem which tells the story of Odysseus, who has been fighting in that war and is now returning home, in Ithaca. In *The Odyssey*, Homer describes Odysseus' ten-years-long journey on a boat. During the journey, the protagonist will be forced to overcome different obstacles in which he will be fighting against several characters, most of them belonging to the Greek mythology, such as the Cyclops or the god Neptune. In addition, Ithaca has been invaded by some usurpers who want to court Penelope and be in Odysseus' place as the King of Ithaca and it is the son, Telemachus, the one who will go in search of his father.

The very first obstacle that Odysseus finds on his way home is set, precisely, in a cave. On his way to Ithaca, after a long battle in Troy, the 'nostos' or going back home is what a warrior like Odysseus most desires. He longs for his country as well as for his wife, Penelope. Nevertheless, the nymph Calypso kidnaps him and brings Odysseus to her abode, which is a cave. "Now all the rest, as many as fled from sheer destruction, were at home, and had escaped both war and sea, but Odysseus only craving for his wife and from his homeward path, ...Calypso held, ... in her hollow caves longing to have him for her lord" (Homer 4; Preface). After a long and hard war, Odysseus just wants to arrive at Ithaca and enjoy his country surrounded by his people, thence, his discomfort inside Calypso's cave is more than understandable. Moreover, the idea that both Calypso and Odysseus have of home differs quite abruptly. Odysseus has his own house together with his family, whereas Calypso lives in the darkness of a wet cave. As Odysseus' journey home can be considered a process of learning,

all the obstacles are precisely what make him learn about the complexities of life. In that case, Calypso's kidnapping in the cave may suggest a possible temptation for the traveller as she claims to want him as her lord. Odysseus is already married and he even has a son, however, Calypso's character appears as the representation of the temptation for a warrior that has been away from his wife during a long period and she tempts him to be unfaithful to Penelope. As a matter of fact, the darkness and solitude of the cave, as it is set in "Ogygian Island" (Homer 14; bk. 1) makes the encounter between both of them easier. If Odysseus had wanted to fall into Calypso's temptation, he could have kept the encounter secretly, nobody would have known about it, precisely due to the darkness and secrecy the cave offers. It is the perfect spot to hide everything from everyone. Nonetheless, Odysseus just wants to see his place and his people again, so the stay in the cavernous abode of Calypso is nothing but uncomfortable for him. Meanwhile, some Greek gods and goddesses meet in Mount Olympus to argue about the warrior's release from the cave. Homer himself depicts the mountain the same way as Greek mythology does, as the abode of the gods where they meet to argue some serious topics and make a decision about them. "... Olympus ... is the everlasting home of the gods. Here no wind beats roughly, and neither rain nor snow can fall; but it abides in everlasting sunshine and in a great peacefulness of light, wherein the gods are illumined for ever and ever" (Homer 100; bk.6). Thus, mountains may be portrayed in relation to the sacred and the divine, as a location where there is no place for evil things or negativity, a place where the sun always shines and never rains, a place comparable to paradise. In the case of subterranean spaces, Homer clearly sees them as the complete opposite; they are depicted as a murky space from which nothing but danger and disgust can be expected. This is first shown through the example of Calypso's abode, but this is not the only case. As later in the story, when Odysseus is on his boat with his men, they see a cave in which they decide to rest. Here, Homer suggests the possibility of seeing caves as a place of shelter, in fact, at the entrance of the cave, there are some sheep and

they also find some food, which Odysseus orders to take. The situation changes abruptly when the owner of the cave appears. Odysseus and his men have arrived at the land of the Cyclopes, which are one-eyed giants. There he meets Polyphemus, Neptune's son. Polyphemus seems to be a good host at first, but things get complicated and he kills two of Odysseus' men and imprisons the king of Ithaca in his cave. Once again, a cave that seemed to play the role of refuge for the travellers, becomes the cage in which the ones who manage not to die are imprisoned. Moreover, Polyphemus asks for his father's help to make Odysseus' way home impossible. "You want to know ... about your return home, but heaven will make this hard for you. I do not think that you will escape the eye of Neptune, who still nurses his bitter grudge against you for having blinded his son" (Homer 183; bk.11). Later in the story, Odysseus finds another similar situation in which he will have to climb a huge mountain and there, inside the cave of the mountain, he will have to fight the monster Scylla. Circe warns him about the peril of climbing the mountain and about Scylla. "Of these two rocks the one reaches heaven and its peak is lost in a dark cloud. ... No man though he had twenty hands and twenty feet could get a foothold on it and climb it, for it runs sheer up, ... In the middle of it there is a large cavern" (Homer 202; bk.13). The difficulty of climbing such a mountain is clear, Circe describes it as impossible, however, on his way he will not only have to face the sheer step, but also, once at a high altitude, he will find a large cavern with another peril inside it. "...the cave is so high up that not even the stoutest archer could send an arrow into it. Inside it Scylla sits and yelps ... she is a dreadful monster and no one -not even a god- could face her" (Homer 202-203, bk.13).

Thus, Homer's depiction of both mountains and subterranean spaces is similar to the one found in Greek mythology. Mount Olympus is the clearest example of divine nature as it is the abode of the gods and goddesses. The mountain where Scylla abodes is similarly unreachable, due to its height. However, the monster lives inside it, in the usual darkness of the hole inside the mountain, providing the creature with an eerie aspect. The other two caves are

depicted as prisons where Odysseus will be taken captive. All these are obstacles on Odysseus' journey home. However, he learns from them. Thus, at the beginning, he does not doubt of telling who he is to the fouls he finds on his way. Nevertheless, this changes when he arrives at Ithaca and wants to overcome the suitors of his wife, as he appears disguised as a beggar, keeping his identity in secret to finally achieve his goal, recovering his status as the King of Ithaca next to his wife, Penelope. Without the training in the previous tests, he could have failed to achieve his final aim.

Similarly to *The Odyssey*, Virgil's well-known epic poem *The Aeneid* written between 29 and 19 B.C. tells the story of a journey. The ones in charge of this journey's fate are the Olympian gods who will tell Aeneas, the protagonist of the poem, which way to take. Aeneas is a Trojan warrior who finally gets to know about his task. He has to travel to Italy and found the new city of Rome. Nonetheless, the way to the creation of the new city will not be an easy one, as similarly to Odysseus, Aeneas will have to face several wars. The presence of mountains is practically the same as in *The Odyssey*, Mount Olympus is once again described as the abode of the gods from where they will choose Aeneas' fate and will control life on earth. Nonetheless, in the case of subterranean spaces, the meaning of the underground spots varies slightly. The first event that takes place inside a cave is no other than the moment in which the love between Dido and Aeneas is considered to be fully completed. Due to a strong storm caused by Juno, the bad weather makes both lovers want to shelter themselves in the cavity of a cave:

A pitchy cloud shall cover all the plain
 With hail, and thunder, and tempestuous rain;
 The fearful train shall take their speedy flight,
 Dispers'd, and all involv'd in gloomy night;

One cave a grateful shelter shall afford
 To the fair princess and the Trojan lord (Virgil 85; bk.4)

This cave represents the shelter, the comfort, the intimacy the darkness of the underground offers. It is the very womb of the earth, from where life is created. Virgil depicts this cave in a slightly different way, highlighting its positive characteristics as the cave is not said to be dark or gloomy in any case. It is the place in which these two characters shelter from the bad weather and it is the place where a relationship is confirmed. In addition, the goddess Juno is the one who wants Dido and Aeneas to be together, so that peace between Trojans and the Tyrians would reign. Thus, Juno is the responsible one of creating the storm that forces both characters to shelter in the cave. Hence, the presence of that cave can be interpreted as a spot from where only peace is expected, which enhances the positivity or good will of the cave. Moreover, later in the story, Virgil describes Aeneas' travel to the Underworld. There seems to be no distinction between Heaven and hell in *The Aeneid*, however, there is a difference between the good and evil souls in the same Underworld, called Dis. The innocent souls belong to a more complacent place in the Underworld than those evil ones.

The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,
 With ether vested, and a purple sky;
 The blissful seats of happy souls below.
 Stars of their own, and their own suns, they know;
 Their airy limbs in sports they exercise (Virgil 156; bk.6)

In the case of the evil souls, they are bound to the lowest parts of the Underworld, the place that is commonly used to describe the hellish world where nothing pleasant happens.

Of mortal members, subject to decay,
 Blunt not the beams of heav'n and edge of day.
 From this coarse mixture of terrestrial parts,
 Desire and fear by turns possess their hearts,
 And grief, and joy; nor can the groveling mind,
 In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd (Virgil 159; bk.6)

Another interesting depiction made by Virgil is that of the volcanoes. Later in the story, when Aeneas and his men are about to fight against Turnus, Lavinia's other suitor, Venus, decides to ask Vulcano's, her husband's help. Vulcano is the god of fire and his mere name already offers a hint about his dwelling. He resides in Etna, the volcano set in Sicily, and there, surrounded by fire and smoke, he creates indestructible weapons for Aeneas:

Sacred to Vulcan's name, an isle there lay,
 Betwixt Sicilia's coasts and Lipare,
 Rais'd high on smoking rocks; and, deep below,
 In hollow caves the fires of Aetna glow.
 The Cyclops here their heavy hammers deal;
 Loud strokes, and hissings of tormented steel,
 Are heard around; the boiling waters roar,
 And smoky flames thro' fuming tunnels soar. (Virgil 207; bk.8)

In this case, the inside of the mountain is not described as a comfortable paradisiacal place, it is a fiery mountain, with all the perils that this entails, there Vulcano dwells together

with Cyclops, who in the Greek mythology were sent underneath the earth by Ouranos. There, they play the common role of smiths and they create strong weapons in the heat of the fire of the mere mountain. The place might not be the most pleasant one, however, it is the spot where a good action with the intention of helping the hero of the poem takes place. Thus, it is the clearest case to confirm that natural elements such as mountains or the inside of them may be conditioned by those who dwell in them. In this case, Vulcano's intention was to help Aeneas and hence, Mount Etna acquires positive connotations.

1.3.2. The Middle Ages

During the Medieval period, one of the most important literary works is the Old English epic poem, *Beowulf*. This poem is anonymous and it was published between 975 and 1025. It tells the story of an epic hero that will have to keep his land safe from different menaces. All along the poem, Beowulf demonstrates being a worthy warrior for Heorot, Hrothgar's kingdom. Heorot looks like the perfect place to live. However, it is attacked several times by monstrous creatures. Beowulf plays the role of the hero every kingdom needs, any time there seems to be a problem or an attack, Hrothgar does not hesitate about his solution. Beowulf will find a way to be victorious. Taking into account that *Beowulf* is set in Scandinavia, it is no wonder that nature plays a major role in the setting of the poem. Beowulf's poet describes Heorot, as "the greatest of houses and of halls" (15). It is definitely a pleasant setting in which people live happily. Heorot is "a vale of bright loveliness that the waters encircle ... [where] men ... live in mirth and happiness ..." (15-16). However, in absolute contrast to this landscape, the poem introduces the monstrous Grendel and the swamp where he lives. Grendel is represented as a huge devil that wants to disturb the peace in Heorot and he attacks many of the men who live there, however, when he sees Beowulf, he feels completely scared. There is

where the first confrontation between good and evil or light and darkness is described. Grendel is defined as “that grim creature called, the ill-famed hunter of the marches of the land, who kept the moors ... unhappy one, inhabited ... the troll-kind’s home” (16). In addition, as a way of creating a more negative image around him, he is said to be of “the race of Cain” (16), who in the Christian tradition slew his brother, and hence, he has always been negatively perceived. The fact of comparing Grendel with Cain, already demonstrates who the hero is. Grendel is said to live in a swampy land and he is, as a matter of fact, a descendant of a betrayer.

The very moment in which both opponents fight against each other, Beowulf cuts off Grendel’s arm and the creature decides to go back to the place where he feels safe, his swamp, leaving many footsteps and bloody waters on his way. “... he had dragged his footsteps, bleeding out his life, ... there the waters boiled with blood, and the dread turmoil of the waves was all blended with hot gore, and seethed with battle’s crimson. ... there Hell received him” (37). Interestingly enough, this episode is more focused on Grendel’s point of view so that the reader gets more information about the creature’s suffering and it highlights Beowulf’s deeds making him look like a real hero. Grendel’s death makes everything look bloody and disgusting, his mere presence is described as such, hence, everything related to him entails negativity. Beowulf and the perfect kingdom which he serves in are depicted in opposite ways. Nevertheless, peace will not reign in Heorot forever as there is another eviler and vengeful character that attacks the perfect hall. She is Grendel’s mother, who has come to revenge his son’s murder. Similar to Grendel, his mother is described as an “ogress, fierce destroyer in the form of woman. Misery was in her heart, she who must abide in the dreadful waters and the cold streams ...” (49). During one night, she decides to go visit Heorot while all the knights are sleeping and she slays Aeschere, Hrothgar’s counsellor. The next day, Hrothgar decides to ask for Beowulf’s help and kill the monster who has murdered Aeschere. Many men start looking for the monster in the surrounding lands, until when they go “upon the mountain-trees”

(54), they find Aeschere's head, confirming his death. In fact, the waters that can be seen below the cliff are all bloodstained and moreover, in these waters, the presence of many evil creatures can be sighted. "The water surged with gore, with blood yet hot. ... Now they saw about the water many of the serpent-kind, strange dragons of the sea, ranging the flood, and demons of the deep lying upon the jutting slopes... serpents and beasts untamed" (54). Not only their physical appearance is negative, but the surroundings of the place where they live, or every single place they have poisoned, seem to be infested by evil creatures and disgusting landscapes full of blood. Nonetheless, Beowulf feels the necessity of fighting Grendel's mother and he decides to dive into the murky waters to defeat her. Once Beowulf achieves his goal, the darkness of the monster's abode disappears, and the waters he has been diving in, seem no longer the abode of the serpent-like creatures. "The flame flashed forth, light there blazed within, even as of heaven radiantly shines the candle of the sky" (58). It seems that the whole darkness of the swamp is brought by its monstrous dwellers. Thus, this is another case in which the connotation of a place is negatively perceived due to the presence of evil-like creatures on their surroundings.

Finally, the last and most famous combat in *Beowulf* comes at the end of the poem, when Beowulf is already an old man. Due to the theft inside a cave where a dragon hides a treasure, the creature has noticed the stealing and has attacked many villages, infuriating the many dwellers of such villages. Thence, it is, once again, Beowulf's time to attack the dragon with the help of a young but brave warrior called Wiglaf, who will help Beowulf kill the dragon. After a long fight, the dragon gets to bite Beowulf's neck introducing poison inside the warrior; however, at the same time, Beowulf himself gets to kill his most difficult opponent. At that very moment, he knows he has already achieved all his goals, he has been a good warrior and he has defended his people with honour, now his time has arrived and he proclaims Wiglaf the next King. "The fell fire-dragon, ... rushed upon that valiant man, now that a clear field was

given him, burning and fierce in battle. His neck with his sharp bony teeth he seized now all about, and Beowulf was reddened with his own life-blood ...” (91).

Beowulf portrays both mountains and caves as interrelated landscapes. There is not a single case in which a mountain is described separated from the cave next to it. In fact, subterranean spaces are the protagonist ones in this epic poem. The very first contact with the underground is depicted through Grendel and his mother’s swampy cave. It is definitely a repugnant indoor cave where only monstrous creatures feel comfortable. It makes the men of Heorot feel uneasy due to its appearance and the eerie environment. As a matter of fact, not only the darkness but also the serpent-like creatures disappear when both Grendel and his mother are defeated. Hence, the darkness may suggest a symbol for evilness, that is why they live in the swampy cave and Beowulf may, on the contrary, symbolize the opposite. He brings the light to Heorot and to the swamp once he defeats both creatures. In his last task, he has to face a huge dragon who is hiding a treasure inside a mountain. This is common in Norse sagas such as the one about Sigurd, the dragon slayer. Dragons have been always related to the idea of greediness and that may be the reason why Beowulf’s poet set the dragon hiding a treasure inside the mountain. This image is obviously common for Tolkien’s readers, as the image of Smaug comes to their minds when talking about treasure keepers inside a cave. The idea of greediness is not a positive one either. Hence the fact of killing the selfish dragon may symbolise the end of selfishness and the beginning of an era in which the wealth of the country will be shared among its dwellers, making it a more friendly area. Hence, the common idea in these cases is that subterranean spaces are inhabited by evil characters who, in some way, poison the purity of the wild natural elements. This point of view in which the obscurity of the caves represents evilness is also common in another important work from the Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*. As Oronzo Cilli states, Dante’s long poem was one of Tolkien’s influential readings (5) where Dante himself begins a journey towards Paradiso, but

in order to do so, he will firstly have to overcome the dangerous world of Inferno. There the environment is similar to the murky swamps described in *Beowulf* and the connotations of hell denote absolute negativity due to the evil characters that the poet finds on his way. Hence, it seems that the darkness of caves or subterranean worlds in Middle Ages only denotes negativity.

1.3.3. The Renaissance

During the Renaissance time, Edmund Spenser published one of the longest English epic poems, called *The Faerie Queene*, in 1590. This long poem comprises the main topics and themes common in Arthurian literature. It tells the story of a knight, who meets a princess and after facing obstacles, his final goal is that of rescuing the princess' parents, who are kidnapped inside a castle by a huge dragon. Similar to the other stories, *The Faerie Queene* is about a journey where the main protagonist will learn from the adversities found on the way and will mature from his errors and experience. The interesting aspect of this story is the way in which it depicts subterranean or indoor spaces. At the beginning of the story the knight Redcrosse, also known as The Knight of Holiness is introduced. His mere name is already a clear sign that shows the side in which the knight will fight, and even makes him look like the actual hero who will have to save the world from the evil creatures. The first scene in which he has to act near one of these natural landscapes is at the beginning of the story, when due to a storm, Redcrosse, together with Una, the princess will decide to take refuge inside the first cave they sight. "Enforst to seeke some couert nigh at hand, / A shadie groue not far away they spide, / That promist ayde the tempest to withstand:" (cant. 1 line 55-57). The fact of using a cave as a shelter during a storm is not a novelty; in this case due to the darkness of the cave and the fact that its visitors are not familiar with this place, the cave is portrayed as a labyrinth. Its visitors

seem to be unable to find his way out “They cannot finde that path, which first was showne, / But wander too and fro in wayes vnknowne,” (cant. 1 line 85-86). In fact, during the Renaissance period caves due to their darkness were often depicted quite mysteriously, as wild locations and enigmatic labyrinths. In Spenser’s poem after feeling lost inside this new landscape, it is Una the one who warns Redcrosse about the perils that they can find inside the dark cavity. “The danger hid, the place vnknowne and wilde, / Breedes dreadfull doubts: Oft fire is without smoke, / And perill without show:” (cant. 1 line 101-103). Moreover, she adds that this cave is the dwelling place of *Erroures*, a dangerous monster, who, as commonly depicted, it has the shape of a serpent-like creature. The serpent-related characters are strongly related to the devil for several reasons. First of all, they are crawling animals, which relates them to the earth, they are completely attached to it, and secondly, the link between snakes and evil is strongly influenced by their connection with the snake of Eden from the Christian tradition. In Spenser’s poem, the snake is described as: “A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:” (cant. 1 line 115). Moreover, they are usually set in dark places like caves, which are the inside part of a rocky mountain, which enhances their evil spirit. Hence, the first experience in a cave is dangerous, even if after all, he is able to kill Den, the creature and be victorious. Later in the tale, Redcrosse and Una are forced to part ways due to the magic of Archimago, a sorcerer they find on their way, who makes them confused about their real identities. Una gets to believe that Redcrosse is lost and goes find him, however, Archimago, disguised as Redcrosse tries to court her and makes Una believe that he is, indeed Redcrosse. The protagonist is led by a witch called Duessa to a palace together with a Dwarf as a companion. It is in the palace, a supposedly safe place, where the dwarf warns Redcrosse about the reality of that perilous place. In the lowest parts of the castle, there are some dungeons, where thousands of people are taken captive. It is at this moment when Redcrosse decides to leave the castle as fast as possible. Nevertheless, it will not be as easy as he thinks, as suddenly,

a monstrous giant appears and kidnaps him locking him up in the dungeons of the castle. “The monster merciless him made to fall, / Whose fall did neuer foe before behold; / And now in darkesome dungeon,” (cant. vii line 450-452). Finally, with the help of a famous King Arthur, Redcross is saved and will have to be part of the last battle from where he gets extremely weak. The interesting fact about his healing process is precisely the place where he gets healed. Una brings him to a hospital, where he will have to climb a huge hill, together with Contemplation, an old hermit, who will show him his past and future. This mountain is described as a “sacred hill” (cant. x line 478) through which with the help of Contemplation, Redcrosse will be able to see further than what his eyes let him. The mere name of the companion suggests what the purpose of Redcross in the mountain will be: he has to climb it to be able to see what is further. Thus, the mountain here is depicted as a way to open the eyes, to be able to contemplate, to learn, to assimilate new things, ideas that the protagonist had not seen before. The mountain is a journey in whose peak the vision that can be achieved is the widest possible one. Hence, the symbology of the mountain here offers the idea that having a wider view entails becoming wiser, receiving more information and learning more than those who have not climbed it yet.

The next step on Redcross’ adventure is that of saving Una’s parents from the dragon in the castle. The dragon awaits in the hill next to the castle, which confirms the close connection between dragons and hills. Once there, the protagonists of the story can appreciate the difficulty of their new obstacle. The dragon is huge and his scales give him the look of an armoured beast. “And over, all with brasen scales was armd, / Like plated coate of steele, so couched neare, / That nought mote perce, ne might his corse be harmd” (cant. xi line 73-75). The dragon is a mythological creature used with the intention of scaring the characters and obstructing them. As a matter of fact, they are usually placed at the end of the hero’s journey, symbolizing the hardest quest, and only if the hero, in this case, the knight is able to defeat the beast will be finally recognized as such. With the death of the dragon, Redcrosse becomes the

saviour of the city, and he is considered the bringer of peace. “Proclaymed ioy and peace through all his state; / For dead now was their foe,” (cant. xii line 26-27).

Thence, the episode of the sacred mountain demonstrates a huge evolution in the vision of the alpine world. They are still defined as high sheers, what does not attract the characters at first, however, at the end of them, at their peak, the climber will find a reward. The climber will be able to contemplate from the peak and this entails becoming wiser, having a wider sight, which provides the mountain with a very positive connotation. As far as subterranean spaces are concerned, similar to what has been expected from them throughout the years, they are portrayed as a shelter for those desperately looking for a refuge in an urgent situation, such as a huge storm. Nevertheless, none of these spaces has proved to be completely safe from any menacing creature. Thus, they are usually the abode of some creatures that will become obstacles in the protagonist’s way. They are dark spaces in which one can easily get lost, they look like a labyrinth, a place hard to find one’s way out and hence, become the perfect prey for the evil creature awaiting inside. In the case of the castle, it is an indoor place, supposedly safe from any menace, however, inside it, there are different strata and the lower the characters go, the more dangerous the place will be, as at its bottom there are dark dungeons in which many people are taken captive by the giant. Usually, these places are located at the bottommost part of castles, making a straightforward connection between them and the Underworld, or the Christian hell, as it is a prison-like spot, whereas the upper parts are those for the royalty.

1.3.4. The Enlightenment

During the Enlightenment, John Milton published his most famous epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, in 1667. It is a poem that differentiates the upper world from the lower ones, it makes a comparison between Heaven and hell. The eternal fight between good and evil is thoroughly

represented by the characters of God and his light angels and by Satan and the rebel ones. There are two clear sides fighting for power over the world. *Paradise Lost* tells the story of how Satan wanted to be more powerful than God and in order to do so, the myriad of rebel angels that were expelled from Heaven begin to dig deep into the ground, so that they can build a temple from where Satan will give them some orders to make Heaven of their own:

Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands
 Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth
 For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
 Opened into the hill a spacious wound,
 And digged out ribs of gold. (Milton 25)

The rebel angels build a temple in hell through which minerals like gold can be gathered. The work of these rebel angels reminds of the work of miners who are digging deep inside the earth with the intention of getting some minerals. The temple is called Pandemonium, “the high capital of Satan and his peers” (Milton 28) which suggests who the dwellers of it are, as it means ‘all the demons’ in Greek. The noteworthy aspect of Pandemonium is that it is set on a hill. Mountains have all over the years been representative of the divine, of the sacred and heights used to symbolize the difficulty or the strong effort one must overcome so that they can reach the top, which may symbolize several achievements. In this case, the hill does also represent the biggest image of power, Satan, but it is set in the lowest part of the world, which makes it different from the rest of mountains previously described. It is from Mount Niphates from where Satan takes a look at the garden of Eden and with envy, he goes down to hell “And like a devilish engine back recoils / Upon himself; horror and doubt distract / His troubled

thoughts” (Milton 93). He feels envious of the light of the angels, nonetheless, his own malice keeps him distracted:

for within him Hell

He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell

One step, no more than from himself,

can fly By change of place: (Milton 93)

Hell could be considered not only his world but also his way of life, his way of behaving everywhere he goes. When the day of the great battle arrives, the most epic moment of the great battle between good and evil takes place at the moment in which the rebel angels on Satan’s side decide to attack with some cannons, a clear reference of the new weapons of the Enlightenment period. The rest of angels are obviously at a great disadvantage, however, in that very moment the angel Michael orders them to pick up the mountains and to throw them to the rebel angels so that they get buried underneath the mountains. “They plucked the seated hills, / with all their load, Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops / Up-lifting bore them in their hands ... seized the rebel host” (Milton 183). This attack did the rebel angels not expect, “and all their confidence / Under the weight of mountains buried deep;” (Milton 183). Nevertheless, far from being defeated, the evil angels begin to dig down underneath the mountains and are able to rise the mountains that had been thrown upon them. God, tired of all the mess he has perceived, decides to put an end to the war, and in order to do so, he orders the Son, his own son, to gather all the angels in a meeting. The interesting aspect is that the angels are excluded from Heaven through a hole on the ground:

opening wide,
 Rolled inward,
 and a spacious gap disclosed
 Into the wasteful deep:
 ...
 Down from the verge of Heaven; eternal wrath
 Burnt after them to the bottomless pit. (Milton 190-191).

Now, after being banished in Heaven, Satan cannot think about any other issue than corrupting the human beings that God has created and set in Eden. Hence, taking the shape of a snake, the snake by which many other legends and stories have been inspired to represent the devil, makes human beings disobey God, and hence, they are sent to the earth, as they do not deserve being in such a pure place like the garden of Eden. Meanwhile, at the gates of hell, both Death and Sin, the guardians of the gates are waiting for their successful lord and they build a bridge that joins earth with hell. Both guardians promise Satan that they will invade the earth and will poison people's minds so that they all are corrupted like them:

endured a bridge of wondrous length,
 From Hell continued, reaching th' utmost orb
 Of this frail World; by which the Spirits perverse
 With easy intercourse pass to and fro
 To tempt or punish mortals. (Milton 65)

This bridge may be a metaphor for the sins that humankind has committed according to the Christian tradition. It is an explanation to understand why human beings sin, and the

answer is because there is a bridge that connects the earth with hell, from which some evil spirits infect human beings.

At the end of the poem, when God expels Adam and Eve from Eden, the Archangel Michael brings Adam to the top of a hill so that he can be able to see his future, his new reality. In this very moment, similarly to the hill that Redcrosse has to climb in *The Faerie Queene*, the main goal of reaching the summit is to open the eyes, have a wider vision, learn and get some knowledge about a new situation:

O sent from Heaven,
 Enlightener of my darkness, gracious things
 Thou hast revealed
 ...
 now first I find
 Mine eyes true-opening, and my heart much eased. (Milton 361)

Even Adam himself shows his gratitude to Michael for opening his eyes. *Paradise Lost* is definitely one of the literary works that best compares Heaven and hell. They both are located in the opposite place of the other as they represent contrary ideals. God and light angels belong to Heaven, whereas Satan and the rebel angels are bound to hell. Once again the heights are divine-related as they are in straightforward connection with God himself, however, the appealing aspect of the depiction of mountains is that Satan himself builds his Pandemonium on the summit of a mountain. This may suggest that no matter where orogenies will always entail power, whether saint or evil. In the episode of the battle between God and Satan's armies, the light angels use mountains as an arm, they throw them above the rebel angels, making a clear reference to the place where these dark angels actually belong. Thus, they are also

portrayed as dangerous and strong natural elements. And finally, mountains are also depicted as a way of learning. The journey to the top may symbolize a learning process and the summit is the place from where the characters have a wider view. Satan does contemplate Eden from Mount Niphates and finally, Adam contemplates his future from the highest hill in Paradise. As far as the Underworld is concerned, Milton describes hell as the place where ‘rebel’ angels serve their Evil Lord, Satan. There, they are all full of hateful thoughts and envious deeds. The subterranean world has no positive connotation in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as it is connected to the devil and his forces.

1.3.5. Romanticism

Romanticism can be considered as a period of revolution that goes from the immense changes society suffered after the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 to the Great Reform Act in Britain in 1832. However, the rough season France was going through did also contribute to the new ideals of the Romantic era. During this time “society is constantly involved in a process of transformation, and that literature is both a product and reflection of the change from one way of thinking to a new way of thinking, and an intervention in that thinking” (Peck and Coyle 152). Due to several changes in society such as the movement from the country to the city, as well as several “economic developments were taking place ... [and] changed the social relations between people, and changed how people saw, and thought about, life” (Peck and Coil 152). It is definitely a period of change, a period of innovation in which writers, most of them poets, will be brave and defiant enough to change the traditional ways of expressing their feelings. “In the Romantic period, ... we encounter a quite unprecedented profusion of new voices, and new voices that display a breathtaking ability to reject old literary conventions and find new ways of expression” (Peck and Coil 153). There are six dominant

poets in the Romantic period in Britain: William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats. They all have in common the necessity of expressing their love towards nature as their way of escaping from the city, they were the first introducing “an idea of the freedom associated with nature [which] is set against the mire of the city” (Peck and Coil 155). They all portrayed a new perspective of the individual facing the natural world. It is during this period of time in which the wilderness receives the exploration and interest that previous literary periods did reject. Mountains and the caves inside them are admired and cause a feeling of intrigue that makes the writers want to portray them in their poems. The most interesting aspect of this new approach towards the alpine world is that what once was seen as horrible, became at the end of the 18th century a spot of attraction in which the idea of beauty changed dramatically.

As a consequence of this new perspective towards the beauty of the wilderness, more and more people began to climb peaks with the intention of experiencing a unique adventure in unexplored and unknown mountains. “In the Romantic period, we see the emergence of a new activity -mountaineering- and a new identity -the mountaineer- and both are crucial to Romanticism, to the writers’ senses of their identities and to their literary outputs” (Brainbridge 8). It was Coleridge the first one using the word *mountaineering* with the intention of describing not just the ascent itself, but “the ascending of mountains for pleasure, rather than for economic or military purposes” (Brainbridge 7). This is probably the most innovative aspect of the alpine world in the Romantic period. It is the period in which mountain trips are organized due to the interest people showed towards them, they became interesting spots and most of the “male romantic poets were active mountaineers at some point in their lives” (Brainbridge 8-9). As far as the Romantic poets are concerned, many of them believed that the mere ascent to any peak was necessary for their inspiration. It was a unique event that made them feel stimulated to write. John Keats himself declared that mountains were what made him once think about

writing poetry, which highlights the power the alpine world received during the 18th century. The interesting aspect is that not even reaching the summit was considered the most important task, it was the beauty of the ascent, the effort, the views they enjoyed on their way, the unknown, what made them feel attracted to the wilderness. Romanticism offered through these poets the opportunity to perceive beauty in a dissimilar way the previous literary periods did. And they did change their perspective as long as they began to be more connected with the alpine world and its wilderness. “Mountain climbing creates a compelling visual fusion of the familiar and the strange, enabling the viewer to see new places, or to identify new places but to see them in new ways” (Bainbridge 14).

Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote about his experience when he travelled to the French Alps and there he fell in love with the Mont Blanc. According to Brainbridge, “mountains are, of course, a key feature of Percy Shelley’s poetry” (10). He defined himself as a mountaineer not only because he liked climbing hills, but also because he was raised around them: “I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests ...” (Brainbridge 10). Such was his admiration towards this newly explored landscape that among one of his most known poems, there is one completely dedicated to Mont Blanc, homonymous to the real mountain. “Mont Blanc” is a poem that Percy Shelley wrote in 1816 during his visit to the vale of Chamouni, at the foot of Mont Blanc. The beginning of the poem describes the poets’ opinion about the greatness of the mountain. The very first lines describe the mountain as “The everlasting universe of things” (line 1). This makes the mountain look ancestral and eternal, full of elements, of natural phenomena, of feelings, of dangers, of moments, of years... Shelley definitely demonstrates the absolute delight he feels just by looking at everything that entails the mountain, such as its caves and their darkness, the trees and even the river that shapes the mountain every day. “Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail / Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene” (lines 12-15). Shelley himself feels dizzy while

observing all the wilderness by which he is surrounded as if the human brain was not able to bear it. “Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee / I seem as in a trance sublime and strange / To muse on my own separate fantasy,” (lines 34-36). Still, it is a place that clearly inspires the poet, as even if the feelings there are slightly eerie, he still feels strongly attracted to it:

One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
 Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
 Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
 In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
 Seeking among the shadows that pass
 Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
 Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
 From which they fled recalls them, thou art there. (Shelley Lines 41-48)

He is having wild thoughts, probably due to the wilderness he is surrounded by, but it seems that still, he is able to appreciate the beauty of the intimidating Mont Blanc. The general image that Shelley may want to describe as far as Mont Blanc and the wild mountains are concerned is that they are there, static, they have been there for many years, and still, they are powerful natural elements. They symbolize strength, power and compromise that not everyone can understand and appreciate: “All things that move and breathe with toil and sound / Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell” (lines 96-97).

Mountains symbolize eternity as opposed to human beings’ ephemerality. Shelley perceives their ancestry and respects it in a way that has been never perceived before. “Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there, / The still and solemn power of many sights, / And many sounds, and much of life and death (lines 129-131).

The Romantic period helped with the idea of seeing mountains from a different point of view and learning to appreciate different kinds of beauty. Following these new and transgressive ideals, the Gothic continued its legacy enhancing this way of embracing diversity.

1.3.6. The Gothic

The Gothic period began as a consequence of the Romantic era and its new way of interpreting a modernized life. From the eighteenth century Gothic texts shared some of the patterns common during the Romantic period; however, the Gothic proposed even a darker perspective. In fact, “gothic writing is sometimes referred to as ‘dark Romanticism’” (Botting Intro 12). The new way of living imposed by the previously mentioned revolutions, made society change and perceive almost everything differently. All these changes, as usual, provoked fear among many people and thus, literary texts portrayed these worries in a darker way, giving the readers a reason to understand all these new ways of living. “The growth of cities delivers a new darkness of poverty and crime and the boundaries crossed by science transform the understanding of humanity’s place in the natural world” (Botting Intro 13). The Gothic became thoroughly important in England at the second half of the 18th century and it can be definitely interpreted as a transgressive literary period in which several of the beliefs and thoughts about cultural and social values are severely put into question. “Gothic signifies a writing of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality” (Botting Intro 1). Horace Walpole was the first writer who published a Gothic novel, called *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. It was taken as the model for other Gothic books. If until the Romantic period readers did not show a lot of interest in the unknown, the unexplored or the uncanny, the Gothic will definitely offer a huge change in perspective and will embrace all these dark, eerie and nightmarish environments. The presence of huge dark

castles on the top of wild mountains making them look completely unreachable, ruins, dungeons, full moons, uncommon noises, dark nights and, of course, the presence of some odd characters will definitely be the most characteristic features of this new genre. As Bayer-Berenbaum claims, “gothic scenes never seem complete without their share of crumbling architectural remains, rotting old houses, ancient relics, and even decrepit, senile people” (26). The most innovative aspect of this literary genre is that it offers a new perspective regarding many issues that in the previous times were thought to be dogmatic. The Gothic wants to break with these dogmas by introducing some topics with a characteristic dark touch. “The terrors and horrors of transgression in Gothic writing become a powerful means to reassert the values of society, ... transgression by crossing the social and aesthetic limits, serves to reinforce or underline their value and necessity, restoring or defining limits” (Botting Intro 7). In this way, Gothic novels will disturb the readers, but these new questions that the provocative genre suggests result quite appealing for them at the same time. This contradictory feeling is strongly related to the idea of the sublime in which opposite feelings are mixed. There is a mixture of admiration and terror, the same as what happens with the Gothic fiction, in which readers will be attracted by the horror described in them. “Gothic atmospheres -gloomy and mysterious- have repeatedly signalled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter” (Botting Intro 1). In contrast with the previous literary periods in which everything had to be completely tamed, well-shaped, regular and symmetrical, the Gothic demonstrates that any other way in which this symmetry is broken can also inspire beauty and intrigue. “The attraction to irregularity stems from an attraction to the incomplete; what is not whole, not self-contained or balanced, is more prone to motion and change ...” (Bayer-Berenbaum 28). The Gothic could be considered the genre of change. Even if the Romantics did begin seeing the beauty of the sublimity offered by wild landscapes, the Gothic is the

powerful literary movement that inserts uncomfortable topics through the behaviours of its characters and it shows its capacity to make them appealing for the reader.

In 1796, Matthew Lewis published an extremely controversial book called *The Monk*. Following the patterns of the Gothic novel, Lewis' publication provoked several controversies due to its criticism and the raw portrayal of the church and specifically of a monk, who has the leading role in the novel. Attacking the image of the church was not common as it was severely punished by the authorities. *The Monk* is still considered a masterpiece of the Gothic novel. Lewis' novel begins with the arrival of two women, a young lady and her aunt at a church in Madrid, where they are willing to hear the most famous monk's speech. They both live it very vividly, as a religious experience where they will almost touch the sky and see a celestial world. The church is full of people who have gathered there with the intention of meeting the one and only Ambrosio. He is hugely known by all those present in the church and his fame is impeccable. He is the best role model for those Christian followers, or that is what he wants them to believe. He plays the role of a confessor for many people who want to get rid of their sins, and he, as the major image of purity, is in charge of protecting his followers from these sins. However, with time, he will show not only to people but also to himself, that he is not such a role model. *The Monk* introduces a series of romantic relationships that due to different situations, seem almost impossible. On the one hand, there is a relationship between Raymond and Agnes, who sees herself forced to become a nun and thence it is impossible for her to be with Raymond. On the other hand, there is Ambrosio's obsession with Antonia, the lady who travels to Madrid in order to see him giving a speech in the church. Antonia feels completely obsessed with Ambrosio, she admires him and everything related to the monk makes her feel interested. The interest seems to be mutual, however, the one felt by Ambrosio entails a completely sexual connotation towards the young lady, whereas Antonia admires him for who she thinks he is. Matthew Lewis introduces an ecclesiastical character, Ambrosio, venerated

by everyone, who finally demonstrates being a complete monster. The interesting aspect of this novel is the differentiation Lewis makes between the locations and their relationship with the tone of the story. Every obscure, twisted or malevolent act takes place in the deepest parts of the monastery or in closed spaces such as private rooms. The monk lives in a monastery full of different chambers and dungeons. As far as he maintains himself pure, he is placed at the highest or open parts of it. His curse begins at the moment in which he decides to pitilessly punish Agnes for her secret love relationship with Raymond, which clearly denotes impurity. “Unworthy wretch! such lenity would make me your accomplice. Mercy would be here criminal. You have abandoned yourself to a seducer’s lust; you have defiled the sacred habit by your impurity and still dare you think yourself deserving my compassion? ... where is the Lady Prioress?” (Lewis 41). Even as it may sound impossible, Ambrosio does commit some sins, as Agnes told. One of his servants, Rosario, is always protecting him and serving him, however, one day he admits being a woman who fell in love with him when she was younger and in order to be near him, she disguised herself as a man. Ambrosio seems shocked at first, but he begins to notice new feelings which make him feel uncomfortable. However, there is something in this story he likes and he even feels lust for her. “While she spoke, a thousand opposing sentiments combated in Ambrosio’s bosom. ... still less did he perceive, that his heart throbbled with desire, while his hand was pressed gently by Matilda’s ivory fingers” (Lewis 55). Matilda, with the intention of being close to him, tricks him and makes him believe that she needs to feel loved by him once and then she will finally leave him. Thus, through an enchanting song, she makes him break his celibacy: “The attitude in which she bent over her harp was easy and graceful: ... two coral lips were visible, ripe, fresh, and melting, and a chin, ... an arm was discovered, formed in the most perfect symmetry ...” (Lewis 70). Ambrosio starts having his own dark secrets that need to be hidden from his supporters. It is from this moment onwards when Ambrosio’s real monster will rise. After different encounters with

Matilda, he gets tired of her and he is obsessed with the young lady, Antonia. However, he is not sure about the way to get closer to her. Thus, Matilda tempts him by saying that he should follow her into the catacombs of the monastery, where she affirms that if he makes Antonia drink some drops of a magic potion, she will take the look of a dead person. Thus, everyone will think she is dead, and it is in this moment when Ambrosio can take her to the crypt of the monastery and have her for him forever. "Their solitude [the crypts] and easy access render these caverns favourable to your designs. Give Antonia the soporific draught ... eight and forty hours after she has drunk it, life will revive to her bosom. She will then be absolutely in your power" (Lewis 223). The next day, already decided to sin again, Ambrosio visits Antonia in her house, and while she is sleeping, under the magic of the potion, the vices of the real monk show his real persona and he tries to abuse Antonia. "Her mouth half-opened seemed to solicit a kiss: he bent over her; he joined his lips to hers ... he resolved not to delay for one instant longer the accomplishment of his wishes, and hastily proceeded to tear off those garments which impeded the gratification of his lust" (Lewis 203). Nevertheless, his task gets more complicated than he thought because Antonia is not alone, her mother Elvira, was waiting behind the door and tries to stop Ambrosio, so he decides to kill her. This makes him not only a rapist but also a murderer.

On the other side of the story, Raymond goes to the church with the intention of saving Agnes. He decides to go to the crypts, where he finds a secret door, which leads to a dark way and a chamber at the end of it, where he finds a very ill and malnourished nun and saves her. She was left to die of hunger in the inside of the dark crypt "I found myself in silence and solitude. ... All was ... dreadful! I had been thrown upon the bed of Straw: the heavy chain which I had already eyed with terror was fastened to my waist ... melancholy rays through my dungeon, permitted my distinguishing all its horrors ..." (Lewis 275). Raymond had saved his own beloved Agnes, who had been trapped in the lowest crypt of the monastery. At the same

time, Ambrosio has brought Antonia to his chamber and has raped her, while she was trying to escape and now she is almost dead. Matilda appears in Ambrosio's chamber to warn him about the huge catastrophe outside the monastery. The only thing that worries the monk is that of being discovered by the rest of nuns and monks. Thus, Matilda offers him to join the devil by invoking some demons and live in peace in hell before the rioting priests and nuns go and kill him. The darkest moment in the monk's existence takes place when blinded by the fear of being caught and everyone knowing about his evil deeds, he decides to summon Lucifer. "A swarthy darkness spread itself over his gigantic form: ... his eyes, ... might have struck the bravest heart with terror; over his huge shoulders waved two enormous sable wings; and his hair was supplied by living snakes" (Lewis 295-296). After having accepted to serve the devil forever, he is saved from the rest of rioting nuns and monks, and he appears in a different location. "The disorder of his imagination was increased by the wildness of the surrounding scenery; by the gloomy Caverns and steep rocks, rising above each other ... the wind of night sighed mournfully; the shrill cry of mountain Eagles ..." (Lewis 296). Ambrosio cannot understand a thing, he is completely lost in a horrible desert place full of ravines and wilderness. There, he learns that the demon next to him is no other than Matilda, who admits that the woman he murdered was his mother and that the one he raped was his sister, making him become completely crazy as he cannot understand the person he really is and the pain he has caused. If that was not enough, he is pushed from ravine to ravine without the possibility of rising again as "his broken and dislocated limbs refused to perform their office ..." (Lewis 296). The monk finishes completely devastated, he has gone from complete idolatry to absolute hatred. Alone, with many broken bones, in pain and with the psychological pain that Matilda has caused him by showing his own personality. The purity of wilderness is what finally finishes with his life, as he is surrounded by peaks and after a huge storm, the mere water makes him drown.

The Monk is clearly a novel of Gothic fiction that implies all the previously mentioned aspects common in this genre. There are dark and gloomy places where people are left to die, there are odd characters who love pain and torture, like Ambrosio and the prioress, there are demons, and snake-like creatures related to sin. There are many elements that lead to the eternal fight between dark and light or more specifically, between God and the devil. The whole story is a way of proving Ambrosio's character to see whether he is such an honourable monk as he is said to be, and through different obstacles that he will find on his way, he will demonstrate that he changes from being the god-like character of the story to a real monster. As far as mountains and subterranean spaces are concerned, in this novel, there are no special hills; however, Lewis introduces the image of the church as the representative of Heaven. Because of this at the beginning of the story, Ambrosio is always set in the upper parts of the monastery, however, as long as his story gets darker, he begins to be more related to the darkness of the dungeons of the crypt and he finishes dying surrounded by rocky wild landscapes in hell. The importance of the settings in this novel resides precisely on the main character's deeds. The worst he behaves, the lower he belongs. Ambrosio's end is quite remarkable as his real pain begins when he actually realizes about his deeds. It is a psychological pain that hurts him most as "the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind ...!" (Sage 33). *The Monk* is the perfect example of a Gothic fiction in which the reader is disturbed by the character of Ambrosio, who instead of behaving like a monk is supposed to do, he demonstrates being a completely corrupted character. *The Monk* entails all the kinds of dark and gloomy spaces and eerie environments in which extremely delicate topics like murder and rape are portrayed as the consequence of the vices of an ecclesiastical character. "Gothic fictions seemed to promote vice and violence, giving free reign to selfish ambitions and sexual desires beyond the prescriptions of law or familial duty" (Botting, Intro 4).

Thus, it can be argued that mountains and subterranean spaces have often played a major role in Western culture. They have always been a natural element with a strong powerful presence that provokes something to everyone. The feelings may vary depending on who is looking at them, however, their appearance is notorious. Their presence is so prominent that they have been often portrayed in antique mythologies and literary works and are still depicted nowadays, always providing meaningful symbology. The general pattern of their depiction has related heights with divine and sacred entities such as gods and goddesses whereas the inside of the mountains has been usually related to the unknown, dark, gloomy places and even with the underworld or hell. There has always been a significant difference between both worlds, the upper and the lower ones. However, it is in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment when, for the first time, the mountain becomes the place from where the main character will be able to have a wider view, which is used as a metaphor for obtaining more knowledge. Hence, the point of view towards orogenies changes slightly during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the greatest change as far as their connotation is concerned takes place during the Romantic period, when many poets feel attracted to these unknown and unexplored spots, in fact, due to the Romantic mountaineering, many poets felt inspired by the wilderness. Finally, during the Gothic period is when all the admiration from the Romantic period is taken a step further as mountains and subterranean spaces like caves, dungeons, chambers or vaults become the central locations of the supernatural, ghostly and gloomy stories of this era. Hence, although it may be argued that early literary periods offer interesting approaches to mountains and caves, it is not until the eighteenth century that the alpine world receives a more positive connotation, often linked to the increasing interest towards the wilderness.

All these periods are previous to J.R.R. Tolkien, who published his literary work during the twentieth century. Nevertheless, he was influenced by many earlier literary portraits of the

mountains as well as by the mythologies explained above. Besides, it is worth examining to what extent mountains played an important role in the writer's life.

2. J.R.R. Tolkien and the Mountain

2.1. Biographical Details and Their Literary Connection

After Arthur Tolkien and his wife-to-be, Mabel Suffield's choice of sharing a future and forming a new family together, Arthur showed interest in traveling to South Africa, where gold and diamond discoveries became quite known among employees who wanted to earn a living: "He [Arthur] turned his eye to South Africa, where the gold and diamond discoveries were making banking into an expanding business with good prospects for employees" (Carpenter, *Biography* 22). One year after Arthur proposed Mabel to travel to Bloemfontein, he had already got a post in the Bank of Africa and by the end of 1890 he was designated as the manager of an important branch there, in that way, he was offered a comfortable lifestyle. He got a house and a good salary, things that would let him marry Mabel on 16th April 1891 and form a family in the near future.

Bloemfontein was, as Mabel described, an "Owlin' Wilderness! Horrid Waste!" (Carpenter, *Biography* 24). Even though it showed some signs of civilization, Arthur and Mabel's new place was still a wild location where they were surrounded by dangers for the upcoming children. Mabel found it more difficult to stay in South Africa, however, she loved Arthur and therefore she decided to support her husband and spend at least three more years there. On 3rd January 1892, Arthur wrote his mother to tell the news, the couple had become parents of a child, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien.

Bloemfontein offered intensely hot weather and it was too uncomfortable for Mabel and the baby as he "had to remain indoors, out of the blaze of the sun. Even in the house, the

heat could be intense and he had to be clothed entirely in white” (Carpenter, *Biography* 27). Mabel did not like that place for her child, however, she knew that Arthur was not ready to go back to England yet. Two years after John Ronald’s birth, Mabel gave birth to another baby boy, Hilary Arthur Reuel. He was a healthy child but his elder brother could not stand the hot climate in which they were living and their mother decided to bring them back to England. Once they arrived there, John Ronald aged three was quite conscious and missed his father, he even wrote a letter to him, a letter that was never sent as on 15th February 1896, Mabel received the worst news for her family, Arthur had passed away after having fought against rheumatic fever. At first, Mabel and his two sons lived at her parents’, where they were welcomed after their arrival from Bloemfontein. There, John Ronald and his young brother Hilary learnt a lot from their Suffield family. Nevertheless, Mabel knew she had to find a new place to live in. With the low salary she had, she managed to find a semi-detached cottage called Sarehole, in the English countryside. Sarehole was the place where John Ronald Reuel Tolkien together with his brother Hilary started to love the nature that surrounded them. In fact, from that time onwards, nature started playing a very important role in the future writer’s life and that had a lot to do with the education Mabel gave them. “. . . there shone his love for his mother and for the Sarehole countryside, a place for adventure and solace” (Carpenter, *Biography* 40).

His mother decided to educate her two sons by herself. She taught Ronald a lot about botany and thus, he found trees of extreme beauty and attractiveness, he was absorbed by the shape and texture of them and he used to portray that feeling through his paintings. Mabel also taught them Latin and French, and the young Tolkien fell in love with “the sounds and shapes of the words and their meanings ...” (Carpenter, *Biography* 38). He had a special ability with languages and he found it greatly interesting learning them. Mabel also used to lend them many books. Ronald liked Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), but he was more into stories where the setting was many times portrayed as a kingdom surrounded by dangerous goblins

who lived inside the mountain caves. Stories by George Macdonald, the Arthurian stories or even the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang were his favourite ones and stories such as the one of Sigurd the dragonslayer were the ones that made him feel interested in dragons and in Norse culture and mythology. “He was ... pleased by the ‘Curdie’ books of George Macdonald ... the Arthurian legends also excited him ... he found delight in the fairy books of Andrew Lang” (Carpenter, *Biography* 39).

But Ronald’s education was not only based on the study of plants, literature, and languages. He also received a Catholic indoctrination, a fact that his Suffield family, who was Anglican, rejected. Mabel and both her children were no longer insured by them for not being raised under their religious beliefs. Thus, Mabel and her two sons had to move from Sarehole to another house due to economic issues. The four years in which Mabel and her children lived in Sarehole were later described by the writer as “the longest-seeming and most formative part of my life” (Carpenter, *Biography* 42). That place meant nature, silence, peace... The new places they would have to accept as their new homes would never be as peaceful as Sarehole, these were urban locations in which Ronald would discover the power of industry with the presence of different firms with their “factory chimneys” (Carpenter, *Biography* 43). However, moving into a more urban house did not only bring negativity to Ronald’s life, actually, it was by that time when Mabel got to know a very good friend of the family. Not too far from their house, there was an oratory, where Mabel and the children met Father Francis Xavier Morgan, a priest who would help them not only with the ‘new’ Catholic education but also economically, as he would pay a part of Ronald’s education at King Edward’s School. The priest would be an important figure for both brothers as after Mabel’s death on 14th November 1904, Father Francis would become the legal guardian of Ronald and Hilary. “Mabel had left only eight hundred pounds of invested capital with which to support the boys, but Father Francis quietly augmented this ... and ensured that Ronald and Hilary did not go short of anything essential

..." (Carpenter, *Biography* 51). The two brothers moved once again to their aunt Beatrice Suffield's house in Edgbaston. Hilary adjusted himself quite well to the new environment, however, Ronald, who was very touched by his mother's death, could not adapt himself to it. The grey landscape in which he was "trapped" (Carpenter, *Biography* 52) reminded him of the opposite scenery in which he was raised, with his mother. Hence, he would always relate the peaceful and natural landscapes with the presence of his mother, and living in such an artificial place just made him hate it even more. "His mother's death had severed him from the open air ... and because it was the loss of his mother that had taken him away from all these things, he came to associate them with her" (Carpenter, *Biography* 52). The feeling of love towards nature would definitely be perceived all along his future writings as he was not only evading from city life but also remembering the four years in which he enjoyed Sarehole and its natural surroundings together with his mother Mabel. "This love for the memory of the countryside of his youth was later to become a central part of his writing, and it was intimately bound up with his love for the memory of his mother" (Carpenter, *Biography* 52).

The Tolkiens' life was not an easy one after Mabel's death; however, Father Francis tried to help as much as he could. He used to take them on holiday to Lyme Regis, a place in which John Ronald could enjoy the natural landscapes that he had been separated from. It was obvious that the future writer loved being around wilderness and natural landscapes and that he felt happier whenever he was far from the urban neighbourhoods. "Ronald loved the scenery of Lyme and enjoyed sketching it on wet days, though when it was fine he was happiest rambling along the shore or visiting the spectacular landslip that had recently occurred on the cliffs near the town" (Carpenter, *Biography* 59). Still, Father Francis noticed that aunt Beatrice's house was not the best one for the two brothers and he made them move to Mrs. Faulkner's, which was a house near the oratory so that the three could live close to one another. It was in that house where John Ronald met his wife-to-be, Edith Bratt. They got along really

well, but as soon as Father Francis got to know about the romance, he was afraid of John Ronald's possible distractions on his studies because of the presence of Edith, hence he prohibited Ronald to see his beloved one until he was twenty one, that meant, not seeing Edith for three years. Three long years in which Ronald decided to deeply focus on his work. During 1910, he concentrated on the study of languages and he found the Finnish *Kalevala*, which became an important work in his life as a writer. This epic poem was one of the main reasons of his admiration towards the Norse world and literature, he even stated that "the more I read of it, the more I felt at home and enjoyed myself" (Carpenter, *Biography* 74).

He was a Professor at the time when as far as his perception of the alpine world is concerned, an important and rewarding journey took place. It was during the summer of 1911 when John Ronald and his brother Hilary together with their mother's sister, Jane Suffield, went on an adventure with the Brookes-Smith, who were Jane's friends, to the Swiss Alps. "It was in her company [Jane's] ... that I journeyed on foot with a heavy pack through much of Switzerland, and over many high passes" (Carpenter, *Letters* 309). This journey was with no doubt an intensely important point in Ronald's life as it would inspire in many ways the way in which he perceived and portrayed the mountainous and subterranean landscapes in his upcoming writings as many of the places described in them are quite similar if not identical to the ones he saw in the Alps. Such are the cases of the valley of Rivendell, The Lonely Mountain, or even Moria as it will be discussed below.

The trip became so meaningful for Ronald that sixty-five years after the trip he still used to recall it. It was a huge adventure for the mountaineers as the road through the Alps was quite challenging. They went through many of the peaks "We must then have gone eastward over the two Scheidegge to Grindelwald, with Eiger and Mönch on our right, and eventually reached Meiringen" (Carpenter, *Letters* 392) and had to endure some difficult situations along the journey. The facilities of the trip were quite complicated, they had to walk many hours

carrying heavy bags from peak to peak making the path even harder. “We went on foot carrying great packs practically all the way from Interlaken, mainly by mountain paths, to Lauterbrunnen and so to Mürren and eventually to the head of the Lauterbrunnenthal in a wilderness of morains” (Carpenter, *Letters* 391-392). After the long walks their need of sleep was huge, but even the moment to rest was not the best one as they got to sleep in quite an uncomfortable way, due to their unconventional beds, or as they once were described “a shapeless bag under which you snuggled” (Carpenter, *Letters* 392). Moreover, apart from the everlasting walks, they had to overcome a really tough experience in one of the peaks. As Tolkien once stayed, “one day we went on a long march with guides up the Aletsch glacier - when I came near to perishing” (Carpenter, *Biography* 75). It was actually this hard moment the one that inspired him for the writing of the episode of *The Hobbit* (1937) in which Bilbo Baggins and the company of the Dwarves are going through the rough weather in the Misty Mountains. As a matter of fact, in one of the letters to his son Michael in 1968, he declared that: “The hobbit’s [Bilbo’s] journey from Rivendell to the other side of the Misty Mountains, including the glissade down the slithering stones into the pine woods, is based on my adventures in 1911 ...” (Carpenter 391). Similarly to the episode in the novel, the mountaineers suffered a snow avalanche in which their lives were in danger. “Any way at noon we were strung out in file along a narrow track with a snow-slope on the right going up to the horizon, and on the left a plunge down into a ravine. ... They [the stones] were whizzing across our path and plunging into the ravine” (Carpenter, *Letters* 392-393). The writer also confessed that the same chapter in which Bilbo and the Dwarves are fighting ‘against the mountain’, against the huge rocks and the bad weather, just before the previously mentioned avalanche, was a replica of the situation he and the group he was in had to endure. “It was approaching the Aletsch that we were nearly destroyed by boulders loosened in the sun rolling down a snow-slope. An enormous rock in fact passed between me and the next in front. That and the ‘thunder battle’

... appear in *The Hobbit*” (Carpenter, *Letters* 309). This horrible experience marked the writer so strongly that the chapter was not only described in *The Hobbit* as a similar episode in *The Lord of The Rings* (1954) can be appreciated when Gandalf and the Company of the Ring are trying to cross the Mount Caradhras. “The wind whistled and the snow became a blinding blizzard. Soon even Boromir found it hard to keep going. The hobbits, bent nearly double, toiled along behind the taller folk, but it was plain that they could not go much further, if the snow continued.” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 170).

In fact, as Fernando Frías stays in his article “Suiza en la Obra de J.R.R. Tolkien: La Experiencia de 1911” (2009), there are several passages in Tolkien’s works that recall the difficulties Tolkien’s group had to go through to cross the Swiss Alps in the episode of *The Lord of the Rings* such as the need to cross the mountain before the arrival of winter, the debate between Gandalf and Aragorn about the condition of the path or even the failure of crossing it (par. 4). There are also quite a few examples of the landscapes the writer and his group enjoyed that can be considered to be of huge inspiration for the ones that appear in the stories in Middle-earth. That is the case of the Valley of Rivendell, for instance. There are some facts that prove that the valley of Lauterbrunnen was actually a major influence for the creation of the valley of Rivendell. In fact, according to Frías, the drawing Tolkien did for *The Hobbit* is almost identical to the real valley set in Switzerland as even the framing of the mountains in the drawing corresponds with the authentic look of the valley (par. 29). But this is not the only drawing that recalls the real scenery of the valley of Lauterbrunnen. Thus, another one of his pieces of art shows the views of the westside of Rivendell. This scenery reminds of the pass of Rosenloui, between Grasse Scheidegg and Meiringen, places which, as Fernando Frías states, were part of Tolkien’s route (Frías par. 4). But the most shocking aspect that reveals the huge influence the Lauterbrunnen had on Ronald, was the mere name given to the river that crosses

the valley of Rivendell. This river is called Bruinen, which means 'loud water' similar to the meaning of Lauterbrunnen in German, which means 'loud spring' (Frías par. 2).

Nevertheless, this is not the only case in which one can see similarities between a fictitious and a real setting from the Swiss Alps. Actually, the depiction of the Misty Mountains cannot be said to be created only from Tolkien's pure imagination. In fact, many scholars have discussed the similarities between the Misty Mountains and the Jungfrau. Their looks and shape can be said to be really alike, and in addition, they both have long and deep excavated galleries inside them, giving the inside of the mountains a living aspect, as if someone living there was in contact with the very roots of the mountains. In the case of the inside of the Jungfrau, the subterranean space that Tolkien could have been inspired by to create the galleries of Moria was dug for a funicular to cross the mountain. This project was launched by Adolf Guyer-Zeller in 1893, with the intention of making the path of the mountains easier for the mountaineers (Frías par. 2).

In addition, in the case of the Lonely Mountain, there are also some discussions about its similarity with the Swiss Matterhorn. One can imagine the reason why The Lonely Mountain got that name, it looked isolated from the rest of the mountains, it was 'the only one' and it looked threatening. The writer himself did never say that he was inspired by the Matterhorn when creating the Lonely Mountain, however in one of his letters to his son Michael, in 1968, he described the Swiss peak as a remarkable and an unattainable place: "I remember the dazzling whiteness of the tumbled snow-desert between us and the black horn of the Matterhorn some miles away" (Carpenter, *Letters* 393). As Frías stays, the Matterhorn is not a lonely mountain, but its height makes it be outlined among the rest of the mountains and reminds a lot of the mountain where Smaug keeps the Dwarves' wealth safe (par. 1). Besides the shape and the looks, the way to both peaks seems to be almost inaccessible as when at the beginning of Bilbo's journey, when they arrive at a place from where the protagonist can see the

mountains, he asks the Dwarves whether they are looking at the Lonely Mountain, and Balin answers him: “Of course not! - That is only the beginning of the Misty Mountains, and we have got to get through, or over, or under those somehow, before we can come into Wilderland beyond” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43).

Another hint that indicates that Tolkien found his journey to the Alps so rich in terms of inspiration for his future writing process is perceived on the fact that the Swiss Alps offer some supporting paths for the tourists through the inside of the mountains during the winter season. This service, according to Frías, was quite known among the Swiss, however, it was something noteworthy for British people, as they were not used to such high heights and their inside. Hence, it could be said that the creation of the tunnels inside the mountains of Middle-earth, could have been inspired by these supporting paths inside the Jungfrau that were used to cross the mountains from the inside because of the impossibility to go above them during winter. Exactly the same that happens in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (par. 5). Thence, even if there is no actual proof of the similarity in the appearance of the tunnels in Middle-earth and in the Alps, the purpose of their excavation was the same one: avoiding the hard mountain paths during winter and having an easy way to the other side of them or as in the case of *The Lord of The Rings* as ‘the only’ possible way to cross them. “I advise that we should go neither over the mountains, nor round them, but under them” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 386).

Apart from these cases, there was also another interesting place in which Tolkien could have enjoyed and suffered at the same time, that is the case of Kanderstegg. The long way to Kanderstegg recalls the hard path from Minas Morgul to Cirith Ungol, where once there, the way to the top is still a tough one, similar to the case in which Frodo, Sam, and Gollum must climb quite vertical stairs that remind of the only way to Kanderstegg: the pass of Gemmi. In

Frías' words, Gemmi was not a common mountain, it was actually a rocky and almost completely upright wall (par.7).

It was definitely a hard adventure, however, even though they went through difficult moments, it was a rich and positive experience for Tolkien. He was amazed by the sights, as it can be perceived on the words he once wrote in his letters "I left the view of *Jungfrau* with deep regret: eternal snow, etched as it seemed against eternal sunshine, and the *Silberhorn* sharp against the dark blue" (Carpenter, *Letters* 392). The mountainous trip made him admire the heights and everything that admiring them really meant. He experienced the difficulty of climbing a high mountain, he underwent the danger of being caught by an avalanche, he knew about the feeling of the sublime when staring at the peaks feeling amazed by them and thus, he learnt a lot and he wanted to transmit what he once felt upon them. In that way, some years after the expedition, he used to remember some of the peaks that impressed him most and he used to compare them with the fictitious mountains he wrote about as well as with their given names, as some of them were similar. In fact, years after the expedition, when Tolkien talked about his experience in the Swiss Alps, he used to remember where the names of his mountains came from, where the inspiration to write about mountainous landscapes began. That is the case of *Celebdil* or *Silvertine*, one of the three peaks of The Misty Mountains, which was inspired by the real *Silberhorn* as he stayed "... the *Silberhorn* ... the *Silvertine* (*Celebdil*) of my dreams" (Carpenter, *Letters* 392).

Therefore, the journey to the Swiss Alps can definitely be considered an inflection point as many landscapes in Tolkien's Middle-earth can be compared to their real-life representations due to the many common factors that scholars have discovered along the years as well as the evident references that the writer himself wrote in his letters.

However, the natural landscapes were not the only factors that played an important role in Tolkien's journey, there are actually some other aspects that are important to study in order

to see to what extent that journey to the mountains was so relevant and inspiring. On many occasions, these factors happen to be characters. Their physical appearance, their behaviour towards themselves and the others or even their way of understanding the journey may have been of huge importance for Tolkien to write the way he did. Bilbo himself, for example, can be considered the writer's alter ego when the fictional character talks about mountains, showing admiration towards them and his feeling of missing them, "I want to see mountains again, Gandalf, mountains" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 42) recalls the real situation of the author and his love towards the mountains that he could not enjoy in the English landscapes. This circumstance is quite similar to Bilbo's situation as there are no such mountainous landscapes in The Shire either. Another example that shows to what extent the journey was so influential and inspiring for the creation of Middle-earth and its characters, is the enigmatic character of Gandalf. There are quite a few theories about his origins. In fact, Humphrey Carpenter makes reference to the best-known theory about it. It is said that Tolkien bought some postcards in order to remember his journey in the Alps. One of them is called *Der Berggeist*, which means 'the spirit of the mountain' and it has some common characteristics with the character he later created and gave the name of Gandalf, which Tolkien got from "the Old Norse dwarf list of the *Völuspá* and the *Snorri Edda*" (Zimmerman 22).

Tolkien bought some picture postcards. Among them was a reproduction of a painting by a German artist, J. Madlener. It is called *Der Berggeist*, the mountain spirit, and it shows an old man sitting on a rock under a pine tree. He has a white beard and wears a wide-brimmed round hat and a long cloak. He is talking to a white fawn that is nuzzling his upturned hands, and he has a humorous but compassionate expression; there is a glimpse of rocky mountains in the distance. Tolkien preserved this postcard carefully,

and long afterwards he wrote on the paper cover in which he kept it: 'Origin of Gandalf'. (Carpenter, *Biography* 76)

Nevertheless, and even though this is compiled in his official biography, there is another interesting theory about the actual origin of the Istari. Fernando Frías claims that the origin of the wizard could be Jane Suffield herself. She was John's and Hilary's aunt and it was because of her that the two brothers enjoyed the alpine adventure. Frías states that Jane's personality was perfectly comparable to that of Gandalf's. She had the initiative to climb the peaks, choose the right or more convenient paths along the journey, she was strong enough to go through all the difficulties they had to overcome and she even knew how to deal with all these obstacles that they would find on their way. In addition to that, she would be the carer of the group whenever the group was in danger or in necessity of her. She would prepare some hot teas for the inexperienced mountaineers or would provide them some food. She was definitely the leader. However, the possibility of thinking about Jane as the original influence for the creation of Gandalf was not only based on her personality, which was something that John Ronald really admired, as he once declared in his letters: "I always like shrewd sound-hearted maiden aunts. Blessed are those who have them or meet them. ... I was fortunate in having an early example: one of the first women to take a science degree ..." (Carpenter, *Letters* 308). Together with her personality, her physical aspect was also something similar to the one of the wizard's. In some pictures of this journey, one can appreciate how the clothes Jane was wearing were quite similar to those worn by Gandalf. She was wearing a huge hat and a walking stick and according to the article by Frías, she was also tall, well instructed and a bit mystic and she had a good sense of humor. She was a good organizer and her efficiency facing the difficulties of the mountains was even intimidating. (Frías par. 3). These characteristics make her closer to the character of Gandalf, who shares all these aspects with Jane. Nevertheless, Tolkien never confirmed this

theory so one cannot be a hundred percent sure about the actual origin of Gandalf. However, it is a fact that Jane Suffield played an important role in this journey and that she inspired the writer to create a similar character directly or indirectly, a character strongly connected to the mountains.

Therefore, it could be said that some characters and the landscapes they are surrounded by are strongly influenced by Tolkien's personal experience in the Swiss Alps back in 1911. In fact, the journey was so inspiring for the writer that even the inner feelings of the characters towards their surrounding nature can be compared to what Tolkien really felt when he was in contact with the wilderness of the Alps.

Apart from writing about these natural scenarios, Tolkien was also a good drawer. According to Mabel, he really enjoyed drawing landscapes when he was a child "he was good at drawing too, particularly when the subject was a landscape or a tree" (Carpenter, *Biography* 38). Therefore, after his journey to the Swiss Alps, his admiration towards the mountains was so big that he felt the necessity of portraying the colours, the shapes, the looks and even the textures of some of the mountains and subterranean or indoor spaces he wrote about all along his literary works. In order to do so, he illustrated many of the mountains of his stories giving a deep explanation of their actual look. Some of them could be said to be replicas of the real mountains he visited in Switzerland while some others could be said to be slightly inspired by them. Actually, these are the cases of the landscape of Rivendell, The Misty Mountains, Barad-Dûr and of course his "most striking of ... 'Silmarillion' pictures" (Hammond and Scull 54), the Taniquetil. In fact, the drawing of the latter is said to be "a memory of Switzerland" (Hammond and Scull 54) in *J.R.R. Tolkien Artist and Illustrator* (1995) by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull. In the case of the valley of Rivendell, he drew the valley surrounded by "mountain walls rising to great heights" (Hammond and Scull 110). Such was his own rigorousness that he had to draw with great detail so that he could perfectly represent

the feelings he got. Regarding his paintings, Hammond and Scull add that “he suggests depth, adds interest and provides a sort of visual narration” (116). Hence, the drawings he gave so much importance to were of great significance, as they added information about the landscape being described in his literary works.

As far as The Misty Mountains are concerned, there are actually two drawings that were strongly influenced by the real look of the Swiss Alps as declared by Hammond and Scull, “his memory of the Alps also influenced his hobbit drawings” (120) and these are *The Mountain Path* and *The Misty Mountains looking West*, which can be appreciated in *The Hobbit*. In general terms, the portrayal of mountains in his drawings is described as “beautiful but menacing” and “a cold place” where Tolkien still sends hope for the travellers of his mountains by “sunlight spreading ... across the landscape” (120). That means, that besides the dangerous experience he himself suffered, he was still amazed by such a wild nature. Thus, he depicted the perils he experienced upon the peaks, trying to portray them in the most realistic way. However, he wanted the reader to feel attracted to them by drawing the sunlight in his paintings, a sign of hope, a message where one can appreciate not only the difficulties of climbing a mountain, but also the beauty of them.

A very interesting picture was that in which he portrayed Dunharrow, the mountain refuge. Up until now, mountains have been described and depicted as a dangerous place, such is the case of Dunharrow, as well, yet, it is not only about perils, as it is described as a refuge in the mountains. Hammond and Scull describe Tolkien’s picture as “... a grassy plateau reached by a winding path up a mountain slope, beyond which was a natural rocky amphitheatre and caves in the walls beyond” (Hammond and Scull 171). Hence, it could be regarded as one of the first pictures in which the relationship between rocky elements and earth are not directly related to evil. However, he did not only portray the mountainous scenery, but he also gave attention to the caves, towers and all the indoor places usually related to darkness and fear.

These are the cases for example of Saruman's tower, Orthanc, or Sauron's own realm, Barad-Dûr. In the case of Orthanc, the writer's last vision of it was a tower made out of stone, "as if its builders had excavated a mountain" (Hammond and Scull 170). Even when creating a tower, which has little to do with a mountain, he made them present. In fact, according to Hammond and Scull, "its design recalls a Ziggurat of ancient Mesopotamia" (169), but he added a scary monstrous look to it, in order to make it clear that everything related to it was pure evil. "The top of the tower, ... has three 'teeth' or 'horns'" (Hammond and Scull 169) and once again, he depicted it in relation with stones and the inside of mountains "... behind it is the great ring-wall of stone, like towering cliffs that encircled Orthanc and had many chambers, halls and passages" (Hammond and Scull 169). However, this tower is also said to be similar to a "modern skyscraper, interesting in its form and forbidding" (Hammond and Scull 170), which gives Saruman's fortress a modern but also a prison-like look. Quite similar to the case of Orthanc is the depiction of the darkest place on Middle-earth, Barad-Dûr, which is full of "towers and battlements, tall as hills, founded upon a mighty mountain-throne above immeasurable pits ... dungeons, eyeless prisons ..." (Hammond and Scull 178) it was definitely depicted as a real prison within dead nature.

Tolkien did know how to portray his own ideas and images of both mountains and subterranean or indoor spaces, however, these images did not come to his mind all of a sudden. During his life besides his writing career, he was obviously a staunch reader and many of his invented scenery can be said to be influenced by his previous readings.

2.2. Mythological and Literary Inspirations of the Mountains and Caves in

J.R.R. Tolkien's Works

J.R.R. Tolkien is known to be a Catholic Christian, his faith is widely known, and this is a fact that was actually depicted in his writings. “*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision” (Carpenter, *Letters* 172). However, this does not mean that he was not attracted to other cultures and beliefs. According to Dickerson and Evans, “he works mythologically because his created myths are modeled ... on mythologies that already exist in our world: Greek, Roman, Norse, Finnish, Celtic and biblical” (3). As a matter of fact, he was especially devoted to the Northern Myths and Legends, their writing style, their stories, their settings and their culture amongst others and he was strongly influenced by them. “[the] ‘hither parts’ of Europe (and Scandinavia) gave England its Teutonic heritage, and Tolkien ... wanted their languages, their stories, and their places of origin, and he wanted it all to fit logically and believably within his Middle-earth” (Burns, *Perilous* 25). Indeed, besides the Norse writers such as Snorri Sturluson or Elias Lönnrot, he was powerfully inspired by the British writer William Morris, who had got introduced into the Northern literature by translating the Icelandic *The Völsunga Saga* and therefore Tolkien started being more interested in the literature from Northern Europe.

When he [Tolkien] was awarded the college's Skeat Prize for English in the spring of 1914, to the consternation of his tutors he spent the money not on English set texts, but on books about [...] William Morris's historical romance *The House of the Wolfings*, his epic poem *The Life and Death of Jason*, and his translation of the Icelandic *Völsunga Saga*. (Garth, *Great War* 35)

The Professor was more specifically attracted to Morris' *The House of the Wolfings* (1889) and its sequel, *The Roots of the Mountains* (1889). Through these two works he portrayed the lifestyle and culture of an early Germanic society showing quite a few Northern customs he was attracted to.

The Roots of the Mountains is set in a Germanic settlement at the foot of a huge mountain chain where several Dalesmen dwell. Among them, there are Woodlanders, shepherds, smiths, hunters... However, their peaceful and idyllic land is constantly attacked by the Dusky men and the Sons of the Wolf, who come from the mountains and are depicted as strong and savage people and outlaws. Nevertheless, through different circumstances, such as the love story between the main character and a savage girl called The Sun-beam, the Sons of the Wolf end up being part of the society: "they [Sons of the Wolf] came to us with gifts, and offered to share the Dale between them and us, for they said there was enough for both folks. So we took their offer and became their friends; and some of our Houses wedded wives of the strangers, and gave them their women to wife" (Morris 114).

In this fantasy romance, one can appreciate the many elements from the Northern societies that Tolkien felt so attracted to and portrayed in his writings, such as holy altars, similar warriors or even a similar setting. This is the case of the Altar of the Gods or The Folk Mote, for example, portrayed in Morris' romance, which was a holy place for the Dalesmen. A place where they used to meet themselves in order to talk about manslayings, blood rituals, oaths and the making of war and the ending of it:

... it was clear to all men that the Folk-mote should be holden at once, and the matters of the War, and the Fellowship, ... and the choosing of the War-leader, speedily dealt with. So the Alderman fell to hallowing in the Folk-mote: he went up to the Altar of

the Gods ... then he drew his sword and waved it toward the four airs, and spake; Herewith I hallow in this Folk-mote of the Men of the Dale ... in the name of the Warrior and the Earth-god ... Now let not the peace of the Mote be broken. Let not man rise against man, or bear blade or hand, or stick or stone against any ... (Morris 288)

Apart from being a holy place because of its relationship with the gods, the setting is also something interesting to look at, as the place where this altar is placed is not a random one, the Altar of the Gods is set up on the mountains. “The way [to the altar] went straight north through the woodland, ever mounting higher, (because the whole set of the land was toward the high fells)” (Morris 3). In this way, it can be perceived how Morris created a relationship between mountainous sides and divinity due to their close connection in placement and in meaning. These places are not for everyone, they are a special and challenging place to reach as not everyone would be prepared to climb high mountains and hence not everyone could make offers, oaths, promises or any ritual to the gods, common in the altar. Only the ones who were physically prepared could be strong and good enough to have this close relationship with the gods.

This place can be compared with the Council of Elrond, which takes place in Rivendell. This council is described by Tolkien as a place where the members of the Fellowship meet in order to talk about the perils of the One Ring and the way in which Frodo and his fellows will have to travel around Middle-earth in order to defeat the evil creatures in Sauron’s side. It is a place where they talk about war and how to win it, a place where they all make an oath to Frodo in order to support him:

You have done well to come, said Elrond. `You will hear today all that you need in order to understand the purposes of the Enemy ... What shall we do with the Ring, the

least of rings, the trifle that Sauron fancies? That is the doom that we must deem. That is the purpose for which you are called hither. ... we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world. (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 143)

Rivendell is one of the most admired places in Middle-earth due to its natural beauty. It is a valley 'west of the mountains' (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 44) and it is said to be set at 'the very edge of the Wild' (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 44). Therefore, similarly to the Altar of the Gods in Morris' work, Tolkien depicts a safe place where the fellowship of the Ring can meet and plan how to overcome the attacks of the enemy and he places it in a valley, in the middle of the mountains, giving the mountains an important value once again. In addition to that, the way to Rivendell is not an easy one either, the journey is a long one and they will have to climb high mountains in order to get at it. "I don't know if the Road has ever been measured in miles ... Some say it is so far, and some say otherwise. It is a strange road, and folk are glad to reach their journey's end ... We have at least a fortnight's journey before us ..." (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 112).

Another similarity between Morris' *The Roots of the Mountains* and Tolkien's writings is the depiction of some of the main or strongest warriors and the places where they belong. Among the strongest and scariest Norse warriors, those from which Tolkien was hugely influenced, were those known as Berserkers and Ulfhednars who used to fight shirtless and used to wear the skin of their totem animal, a bear in the case of the Berserkers and a wolf in case of the Ulfhednars. As Wade claims in "Going Berserk: Battle Trance and Ecstatic Holy Warriors in the European War Magic Tradition" (2016) "berserk means bare of shirt ... for fighting without armor or completely bare chested; or bear-shirt for the donning of animal skins in a shamanic rite of transformation" (24). They used to be part of shamanic rituals through which these fighters believed to receive the strength of their corresponding animal. "Odin's warriors were likened to bears and to wolves (úlfheðnar, wolf-skins often translated as wolf-

warriors, who fought as a group) ... his own men went about without armour and were mad like hounds or wolves, and bit their shields and were strong as bears or bulls” (24). Morris created the Sons of the Wolf which are similar to the Norse Ulfhednars as they are related to wolves and are described as dangerous and savage fighters, strongly related to wild nature as it is said to be their natural habitat. This can be appreciated when Face-of-God, the main character in Morris’ novel, decides to go ‘toward the Great Mountains’ (Morris 33) and there he meets the Sons of the Wolf, who at first try to kill him until they see he is not a foe. “a spear came whistling forth, and smote his own spear so hard close to the steel that it flew out of his hand; then came a great shout, and a man clad in a scarlet kirtle ran forth on him ...” (Morris 36). However, the Sons of the Wolf are not common fighters “for if he [Face-of-God] was strong, yet was his foe stronger” (Morris 36).

Very similar is the depiction of one of the most dangerous warriors in the battle against Smaug in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937), Beorn. After having escaped from the goblins, Bilbo and the Dwarves need a place to spend the night safely and it is the wizard Gandalf who helps them find that place. However, Gandalf warns them about its host. He alerts them to be careful and not to irritate him as even though he is a good man, he can also be dangerous sometimes. After having explained Beorn’s personality, one can imagine what kind of temper Beorn has, nevertheless far from being a negative characteristic, due to his hard temper he has another interesting skill for battle which can actually be compared to that of the Norse Berserkers. Beorn is a skin-changer and he takes the shape of a huge bear when he does not have the shape of a tall and strong man. “He changes his skin: sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108). He is said to be descended from the ancient bears of the mountains and that he has been heard growling ‘in the tongue of bears’ (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 109).

Both kinds of warriors, The Sons of the Wolf and Beorn contain common characteristics that can be observed in the warriors of the Norse legends, they both have a strong relationship with a totem animal and are fierce. In addition to that, both are said to come from the mountains, that wild place from where only dangerous incidents can be expected. In fact, when Gandalf talks about Beorn the first time, he warns the Dwarves that ‘Very few people live in these parts’ (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 71) referring to the mountains where Beorn’s Carrock is.

As far as the journey the main characters make, in both, Morris’ as well as in Tolkien’s works, mountains play a very important role. In the case of *The Roots of the Mountains*, even the mere title of the novel contains the word *mountain*, which makes it clear that the natural phenomenon is really present throughout the novel. Both Tolkien and Morris portray mountains as an obstacle, as a difficulty in the characters’ path. “They soon had to climb a very high and steep bent going up to a mountain-neck; and the way over the neck was rough” (Morris 151). They sometimes have quite a characteristic shape that makes the way even harder due to several conditions such as weather conditions like the wind “which was mostly very great in these high wastes” (Morris 151), the snow “Winter deepens behind us ... The heights away north are whiter than they were; snow is lying far down their shoulders” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 169) or the narrow spaces through which even the ones who know the place must be careful “a narrow space clear betwixt water and cliff [was] hard to be threaded even by those who knew the passes well” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 314) and “wary must they be” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 314) for it was not the safest path to climb a mountain. They are definitely among the hardest parts of the journey, as Gandalf says “it will take us more than two marches before we reach the top of the pass” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 169).

However this feeling of danger can also be related to the fear the characters feel towards an unknown place. Usually, at the moment of facing a new circumstance, an unknown situation, the first feeling is fear, fear of the unknown, fear of not knowing what is about to come and it

is even more frightful when this stranger thing is bigger than what one thought. The mixture between fear and admiration is what it is called fear of the sublime, a very common feeling among the characters created by these two writers when facing a mountain, usually due to its height and the wilderness they are surrounded by. Edmund Burke stated that “the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature... is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of Horror” (53). In Morris’ novel, this feeling appears for the first time the moment in which after a long journey, the characters get to look at “the black wilderness of the bare mountains” (Morris 101). The word *black* makes it clearer that the mountains are dark, one cannot see properly through them, and therefore they are unexplored. Mountains mean a new place for the characters, hence, they make the situation more frightful. Nevertheless, they are not only frightful but also admirable at the same time as “beyond them, [the mountains] looking quite near now, [are] the great ice-peaks, the wall of the world” (Morris 101). The reader can appreciate the admiration towards the wilderness described by Morris.

In the case of Tolkien, he depicted this admiration, or this fear of the sublime when in *The Hobbit* Bilbo sees the very beginning of the Misty Mountains for the first time as he asks “looking at them with round eyes” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43) “Is that The Mountain? ... He had never seen a thing that looked so big before” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43).

These wild places were not usually frequented by travellers because of the difficulty that climbing them meant. For that reason, they were unexplored and unfamiliar to the travellers and that is why wilderness was usually related to danger because no one knew what one could find at the top of them. In fact, the idea of climbing not so high mountains is something that the characters in Morris’ novel appreciate, when “after a while, the way grew better, though here and there, where the cliffs lowered” (Morris 314).

In addition to that, Morris created a relationship between mountains and foes. He depicted mountainous places as a spot which could only be visited by foes because they were dangerous and these were the places which perilous people frequented. This is seen when the character called The Bride gives Face-of-God the advice of not climbing the mountain “Yet go not thither to-day: for who knoweth what thou shall be thy foe?” (Morris 55). As a result, mountains are commonly related to danger, fear, and wilderness.

Nonetheless, both novels, *The Roots of the Mountains* and *The Hobbit* break with the stigma at some point when relating characters that are considered good with alpine landscapes. Such are the cases of The Sun-Beam in Morris’ novel as well as that of Beorn in Tolkien’s work. The Sun-Beam appears for the first time when Face-of-God climbs the high mountains. He spots a shelter up there and decides to go inside it before he is attacked by the strangers living there, the Sons of the Wolf. Among them, there is a strong woman called The Sun-Beam who treats the protagonist very kindly offering him shelter and some food during the cold winter days. “... this over-lovely woman ... withal dealing with him as ... mother deal with a wayward child ...” (Morris 39). In fact, far from being afraid of her, Face-of-God falls in love with the strong lady and he even considers her a goddess “her beauty grew and grew till she seemed as awful as a Goddess” (Morris 39). The interesting feature about The Sun-Beam is that even though she is a character belonging to the wild mountains, her strength, her modesty and her deep connection with nature make her a constructive and positive character:

Desolate and dreary is the Dale, thou deemest, friend; and yet for me I love it and its dark-green water, and it is to me as if the Fathers of the kindred visit it and hold converse with us; and there I grew up when I was little, before I knew what a woman was, and strange communings had I with the wilderness. (Morris 118)

Something similar happens with the character of Beorn the skin-changer, whom Gandalf introduces as someone who “gets angry very easily” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108) but still as “a very great person” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 109). Both are characters belonging to the wild mountains, however, they both demonstrate being kind and helpful. They both offer their guests a shelter during the difficult path all along the mountains. Hence, even though generally mountains and the characters belonging to them are considered dangerous and mysterious, there are also exceptions in which mountains and their surroundings have a positive connotation.

Apart from *The Roots of the Mountains*, Tolkien also received inspiration from his “childhood favourites such as George Macdonald’s ‘Curdie’ stories” (Carpenter, *Biography* 167) from which he highlighted *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872). This was the novel from which he learnt about the presence of some horrible creatures living in a murky place which he would later be inspired by.

The Princess and the Goblin tells the story of a kingdom set in a “great country full of mountains” (Macdonald 5) where a little princess called Irene, who lives with her nanny Lottie experiences many adventures when during one day, while playing at the palace, she gets frightened and decides to go up the mountains. There she discovers another world, the world inside the mountains, where the creatures called goblins dwell. The mountains by which the kingdom is surrounded are full of ‘hollow places’ (Macdonald 5) where the protagonist cannot only find its dwellers, but also many beautiful minerals. This short novel is a good example to see to which extent Tolkien was influenced by the idea of mountains not being only the image of sublimity and divinity, but also that of mystery and darkness, as they hide a huge unknown world inside them.

Macdonald’s fantasy novel depicts mountains similarly to Morris’. They play an important role, they can almost be considered the main character of the novel, in fact, the first

thing the reader gets to know while reading the very first lines of *The Princess and the Goblin* is that the main set is a kingdom “built upon ... the mountains” (5). Morris created a relationship between mountains and divinity, as his hills were usually high and people used to set altars offered to the gods at the peaks, which were considered to be closer to the gods. In the case of Macdonald, his mountains are also related to socially high-positioned entities, like royalty. However, even though the royalty can be seen as a society difficult to get close to, similar to the gods in Morris’ novel, mountains are still the image of sublimity, fear, danger, and the unknown for them. In other words, this natural phenomenon is not a pleasant place for the royalty either. At the beginning of the story, when the princess Irene decides to run towards the mountain, once she comes back home, she tells her nanny Lootie about her adventure. When Lootie knows about the presence of the little child in that wilderness, she gets angry with her, because of the fear she feels towards the mountains, towards everything one can find up there, even if she does not know anything about the real situation of the mountains. She knows about the legends and she is afraid because the princess has crossed the security line of her home. “What you ought to have done was to call for your own Lootie to come and help you, instead of running out of the house, and up the mountain, in that wild” (Macdonald 72). Irene did not understand why Lootie was so mad at her, why the mountains were supposed to be so dangerous for her. However the protection of Irene was of such importance that her father, the King, had ordered the service to look after the little girl and not to tell her anything about the presence of the most feared creatures among the human beings; the goblins. “The servants had all strict orders never to mention the goblins to her” (Macdonald 22). Nevertheless, the next day, Irene decides to go for a walk with Lootie on the outside, and they little by little start climbing up the mountain. When Lootie sees the mountains from a near point, she gets really afraid, she feels the sublimity of them, she “started to shoo, and tremulously grasping the hand of the princess turned and began to run down the hill” (Macdonald 21). The mere feeling of

being far from their comfort zone was extremely frightful and the feeling of fear of the unknown mixed with the fear of the sublimity of wild nature made Lootie “almost cry” as they were “much too far from home” (Macdonald 21).

The outside of the mountains is clearly depicted as a place preferable not to go to, as a place where danger can be lurking, a place where especially Irene should not go because of the dangers wilderness is expected to bring. However, it is not the outside of the mountains what actually makes them so dangerous. *The Princess and the Goblin* introduces a new aspect of this landscape, it introduces the inside of them, a place which Tolkien found of special interest to later portray in his works.

As mentioned above, Macdonald depicted mountains with many hollow places underneath which are described as “huge caverns” (15). If human beings were afraid of the look of the outside of the mountains because of their ignorance of their actual look, one can imagine what a human being could think about the dark and mysterious galleries inside them. Darkness is a state that usually causes fear because one cannot see properly through it and it is ignorance, the fact of not being able to know what disgusting and dangerous creatures could be hiding in the darkness of a cave that people find so terrifying. “You could not tell night from day down there, ... for no light of the sun ever came into those gloomy regions” (Macdonald 32). Moreover, Macdonald portrayed them as a kind of a labyrinth with “nothing but passages and doors everywhere” (8) and in fact, these many passages were “all alike” (8) making it even more difficult for the mountaineers that wanted to explore the cavities of the mountains. They were definitely an unpleasant place, a maze where one could get lost easily; they were described as windy, dark, gloomy and dangerous. However, were they so unpleasant for every single living creature in the story?

They were absolutely not unpleasant for all of them. As already mentioned, caves were the dwelling of the goblins. But how were these goblins like and what made them so different from the rest so as to be able to live and appreciate these dreary places?

There were many legends about goblins and one of them told about them living outside the mountains, like any other human being, but that happened a long time ago. Nevertheless, during that period, the King decided to treat them with more severity and hence the goblins made the royalty believe that they had disappeared from their region. However, instead of going somewhere else, they hid themselves inside the mountains, in the caves, knowing that not a single human being would be brave enough to explore there. In addition, they decided to live in the “least frequented and most difficult parts of the mountains” (Macdonald 6) in order to be far from civilization. They made their lives more and more different from the rest of human beings, they alienated themselves, as they did not want to have anything to do with human beings. Therefore, their lifestyle changed drastically inside these subterranean spaces. “They lived away from the sun, in cold and wet and dark places” (Macdonald 6).

Similar to the environment in which they lived became their physical appearance, they are described as “not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous ... grotesque both in face and form”(6). In fact, Macdonald claimed that it was a “subnatural ugliness” (58) their bodies were not proportioned at all, they had long necks and legs, the sounds they produced were “mingled in one horrible dissonance” (58). They were definitely not nice to look at or to be around with. Nevertheless, apart from their disgusting appearance, their behaviour also became unpleasant, especially for the royalty. It was a kind of vengeance for the way in which they were chased out in the past from life outside the mountains. They loved “tormenting them” [the descendants of the King] (Macdonald 9). They also took the costume of living during the night, so that they could not be seen by any human being and could live in peace. “The goblins slept during the day, and went about their affairs during the night” (Macdonald 82). They were very

intelligent creatures. Despite their horrible appearance, they knew how to make the royalty suffer. “They were cunning, they grew in mischief and their great delight was ... to annoy the people who lived in the open-air ...” (Macdonald 6).

These goblins were extremely influential on Tolkien’s works. In fact, he created goblins who lived similarly in his story of the Ring. In *The Hobbit*, there is a moment in which Bilbo and the Dwarves want to take a nap and they find a cave where they think resting will be possible. However, it is the wise Gandalf who warns them about the dangers of a cave. They “don’t know how far they go back ... or where a passage behind may lead to, or what is waiting for you inside” (55). The wizard was not wrong at all, as it is in that very dark hole when Bilbo and his fellows meet the goblins for the first time. The cave was extremely dark; however, it was easy for the goblins to attack there, as they knew all the paths and secret passages. “It was deep, deep, dark, such as only goblins that have taken to living in the heart of the mountains can see through. The passages there were crossed and tangled in all directions, but the goblins knew their way ...” (Macdonald 57). Similarly to Macdonald’s goblins, Tolkien’s goblins are also used to the darkness of the caves, they make it their home, their shelter, their place.

Another similarity they share is that of intelligence. Macdonald’s goblins are said to be cunning, to know how to deal with their main enemy, the royalty. In *The Hobbit*, goblins are described as clever creatures that “can tunnel and mine as well as any but the most skilled dwarves” (Tolkien 59) and they are also great smiths as “hammers, axes, swords, daggers, pickaxes, tongs, and also instruments of torture, they make very well” (Tolkien 59). As far as their behaviour is concerned, the goblins from *The Princess and the Goblin* behave in an act of vengeance towards the royalty who once exiled them from the mountains. In the case of *The Hobbit*, goblins do not feel any special hatred towards the Dwarves, however they do hate Thorin’s kin because they killed many goblins in the goblin battles. “They had a special grudge against Thorin’s people, because of the war ...” (Tolkien 59).

These goblins use the caves as a place where they can be stronger than their enemies, as they know the paths, they can see in the darkness and they have special places to torture their enemies. “Take them away to dark holes full of snakes, and never let them see the light again” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 61).

Both writers, Macdonald and Tolkien related caves with goblins among other creatures and as already mentioned, they were not peaceful or pleasant at all. The caves they live in are not welcoming either, they are cold and murky and the fact that their dwellers are not very kind either does help to create a concrete idea of mountains and caves. Due to their cold look and the legends about them, both mountains and caves are thought to be dangerous. Not only because of the effort climbing a mountain requires, but also because of the wilderness and the unknown creatures that can be found there. However, it depends on the point of view, as even though for the royalty in *The Princess and the Goblin* or for Bilbo and his fellows in *The Hobbit* these dreary cavities are nothing but a threat, caves do play another role. They are, though not for human beings, the shelter or the refuge for goblins. They protect themselves inside them, they feel safe there, they acclimate themselves to that environment and it is their home. Therefore, in general terms, they will always have a negative connotation, they will always be the image of discomfort, for those who see in them a menace. Nevertheless, they also play the role of home for those who find it warm and welcoming. In fact, Macdonald claims that in the caves of his short novel “it was very warm underground; ... not particularly unpleasant” (31).

Yet, besides their negative connotation, they were of huge interest to some concrete human beings; the miners. The inside of these threatening mountains was full of precious minerals that human beings found of great interest. In fact, Macdonald claims that “there would have not been much known about them, had there not been mines there, great deep pits, with long galleries and passages running off from them, which had been dug to get at the ore of which the mountains were full” (5). It was actually because of the presence of the miners that

many of the caves were discovered: “In the course of digging, the miners came upon many of these natural caverns” (Macdonald 5). These miners’ role is that of digging the inside of the mountains so that they can take all the beautiful and valuable minerals from them as “the mountain was very rich with the better sorts of metal” (Macdonald 31) and “shining materials” (Macdonald 41). Curdie, the son of the lead miner, spends days and nights working in the mines. He has been many times visited by the goblins; however, he had the way to scare them. The main purpose of miners was that of earning money through the minerals they could get from the caves, especially if they worked during the night. “Some of the miners, when they wanted to earn a little more money for a particular purpose, would ... work all night” (Macdonald 31). Working during the night meant having the possibility to find some goblins and be in trouble, that is why it was better paid as a job.

Hence, it can be appreciated how goblins seem to be the main enemy for the rest of beings, not only for the royalty but also for the miners, who worked close to them. No one knew anything about them, but there were many legends and that is what people believed in. Goblins were the image of evilness and who knew what strange and horrible thing they could do to someone who was not like them. “The greater number of the miners were afraid of the goblins: for there were strange stories well known amongst them of the treatment some had received ...” (Macdonald 32).

The image of the mountains and the caves was absolutely influenced by the presence of goblins and therefore only a small number of people felt brave enough to visit the caves or climb the mountains. However, even though it may seem like that, goblins were not the only ones with negative connotation in these places. For example, when Lottie talks about the miners, it can be appreciated how these workers are not very well seen among the royalty either as she refers to them as “those horrid miners underneath” (Macdonald 117). Consequently, the main reason for being afraid or hating goblins could be influenced by the idea of them living

in a wild and untamed place like caves. Miners do not have any concrete horrible look, they simply work inside the mountains and that is enough for the royalty to have a negative perspective towards them. In fact, when Irene meets Curdie and talks to him as an equal, Lootie feels uncomfortable and orders Curdie to talk to the princess as what she is, a princess, making the difference between them both clear. Irene does not belong to that savage world in which Curdie works. However, the little princess does not see the difference between them and Lootie reminds her that “he’s only a miner-boy” (Macdonald 29).

Tolkien also portrayed the mining world in his works. The best example and the closest to Macdonald’s miners were the Dwarves, who created their homes inside the mountains. When in *The Lord of the Rings* the fellowship starts the journey to Mordor, Gandalf, Aragorn and Boromir talk about the safest path they can take so that Sauron cannot see the Ring. In the very first moment in which the Istari names the Mines of Moria, Gimli the Dwarf feels something different from his fellow friends. “Only Gimli lifted up his head; a smouldering fire was in his eyes. On all the others a dread fell at the mention of that name” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 174). Hence, caves have similar connotations in Macdonald’s short novel and in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*.

In both works, goblins are portrayed in a negative way, they are ugly and disgusting creatures going against the main characters of their corresponding story, in both cases they are a threat for someone. In Macdonald’s novel, goblins are the main enemies of the miners and of the royalty, they attack every time some human being appears near their caverns. In Tolkien’s story, goblins are of course a threat for everyone who decides to enter Moria, however, they stole that kingdom underneath the earth. They are the real outsiders there. Another similarity between both stories is that in both cases, caves were conquered by goblins at some point. Macdonald tells how his goblins decided to hide themselves in the darkness of the mountains. Tolkien created some intrusive goblins who occupied the mines of Moria after killing all the

original dwellers instead. This is seen when the fellowship enters the mines and by accident, Pippin throws a huge stone from the upper part of them to the bottom and wakes some goblins and orcs that are now living there. “It may have nothing to do with Peregrin's foolish stone; but probably something has been disturbed that would have been better left quiet” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 184). Both stories describe caves as inhospitable for most of the characters, dangerous and dark, a place that does not look attractive at all even though they share the similarity of describing cavernous spaces full of wealth. Similarly to Macdonald's caves whose walls were “of gloriously shining substances” (Macdonald 41), Tolkien's Khazad-Dûm was full of a very valued mineral; mithril. “Here alone in the world was found Moria-silver, or true-silver as some have called it: Mithril” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 186).

However, *The Roots of the Mountains* and *The Princess and the Goblin* were not the only novels that inspired Tolkien during his writing process. There was another novel by H. Rider Haggard, called *She* (1887) which actually depicted the same wild and natural landscapes. Haggard's novel contributed to the ideas the Professor had on these natural phenomena and the way in which he later portrayed them.

She is a novel about an adventure towards African lands. There, Horace Holly takes the responsibility of raising his friend Vincey's son, Leo. However, the adventure is about finding Vincey's heritage in Africa, where Horace, Leo and their servant, Job, travel and meet an ancient goddess in the insides of a huge cave, that goddess is called She and she claims that Leo is the reincarnation of her ancient lover, Kallikrates.

The main setting of this novel is the inside of the mountains, similar to the case of Macdonalds' *The Princess and the Goblin*. However, before getting to the darkness that lurks there, it is interesting to have a look at the portrayal of the mountains as it was also influential for J.R.R. Tolkien's depiction of his own mountainous landscapes. When Leo is 25 years old, he is allowed to read the letter his father left for him before dying. There he finds a bit of the

history of his ancestors and the instructions of how to arrive at the lands he depicts. In these instructions, Vincey claims that there are “great mountains” and that they are “surrounded by measureless swamps” (Haggard 14). Haggard invented huge mountains that created the same effect as the ones described above on his characters. Vincey describes them as “enormous”, in fact, their height was so unbelievable that they “seemed to kiss the sky” (Haggard 46). This description already gives the reader the actual thrilling look of the mountains due to their size. Moreover, they are said to “look hard to climb” (Haggard 46). In fact, there is a moment in which the main characters are climbing the huge mountain and they can hardly breathe. “The air began to get exceedingly thick and heavy, so much so, indeed, that I felt as though I were going to choke” (Haggard 48). However, even though they are a huge challenge for the climbers, they look admirable at the same time. It may be argued that they cause the fear of the sublime, the same way as the mountains of the previous novels cause, as Horace tells “it almost awed me by the intensity of its lonesome and most solemn greatness” (Haggard 47). It is not an easy task to go upwards. As a matter of fact, they are not only hard to climb, but also a place that mountaineers find really easy to get lost in as Haggard does also portray his mountains with a labyrinthine look. The characters of this novel get lost many times and they claim that “during the last two hours we were completely lost” (Haggard 105) and that during the ascent, it was extremely difficult to find their way. As a result, mountains in Haggard’s *She* are very similarly depicted: they look astonishing and thrilling at the same time, they are huge and the characters get lost while ascending them. However, mountains are not as present as the cavernous places in this novel.

Exactly the same way as in the previous cases, Haggard’s caves are not appealing. The characters of this novel are total strangers, they are foreigners travelling to a completely new country; in addition, the landscapes they find there are unusual for them as well. In the two novels previously mentioned, the characters are afraid of caves because of the legends they

know about them. In *She*, the characters are guided by Vincey's instructions. They describe a dark and huge cave where an ancient goddess dwells. Little more they know about that mysterious place and hence, they are frightened, because "the unknown is generally taken to be terrible" (Haggard 14). In fact, once they reach one of the many caves, their feelings do not change much. They do not feel safe surrounded by "the gloomy walls around" (Haggard 32). The description gives the feeling of being in a disgusting location and the discomfort of the characters is more than noticeable as "the look of the place gave him [Horace] the horrors" (Haggard 33).

Haggard creates extremely huge cavities inside his mountains where the uneasiness of the characters is understandable. "Beneath us were hundreds upon hundreds of feet of emptiness that gradually grew darker, till at last it was absolutely black, and at what depth it ended is more than I can guess" (Haggard 95). In addition, inside the main cave, there were many other paths to several chambers, it seems as if caves were never-ending. "From this main aisle opened passages ... to smaller chambers" (Haggard 32). Nevertheless, the views were still breathtaking. "The sight was a truly awesome one" (Haggard 95). As they go inside the little chambers, they keep finding new ones, they cannot understand "how it was possible that we should go any further" (Haggard 94). As a result, it is extremely easy to get lost there: first of all, because of the infinite cavity and also because of the darkness that reigns deep down. "Only this [one of them] passage was ... brilliantly lighted" (Haggard 50). Only one passage in the whole cave is lighted, the rest is dark and gloomy and that makes it more difficult for the main characters to follow the right path. The labyrinthine look is actually used by Ayesha, which is She's real name so that the intruders cannot learn the way to her abode. In fact, once they know each other, the goddess orders her servants to blindfold Horace and his friends so that it is even harder for them to remember the path. "we were now to be blindfolded, so that we should not learn the secret of the paths through the bowels of the mountains" (Haggard 47).

Once again, the fact of being blindfolded, the secrecy, the darkness, the mystery, the sublimity of these caves make the characters feel afraid of being there. Fear is present every time they are inside the caves because they are in a strange place where everything could happen. In fact, there is one moment in which the three main characters must follow Ayesha and it is in that very moment when Horace confesses “if ever I felt terrified in my life it was then” (Haggard 96).

Thence, Haggard depicts mountains as challenging and mysterious at the same time. However, what it is more present during this story is not the outside of them, but the inside, which is huge, a place in which “there are caves of which no man hath seen the end” (15). Their surroundings are not pleasant either as they are full of swamps. Caves are said to be “a land of swamps and evil things and dead old shadows of the dead” (Haggard 52). Nevertheless, although they may seem extremely similar to the caves described in *The Roots of the Mountains* and in *The Princess and the Goblin*, there is an important detail that makes the mountains in *She* different from the ones depicted in these novels. Thus, Morris, and Macdonald related the underground with evil creatures and the heights, and the mountains with divinity. In the case of *She*, the underground is still a place for evil beings; however, the main protagonist of the story, Ayesha is a goddess who actually dwells in the deepest caves of the mountains “in a great city ... in a hollow mountain” (Haggard 15) instead of living on the peak of it. Nevertheless, even though she is a goddess, she is considered to be evil, and that may be the main reason for her to belong to the underneath instead of belonging to the outside. Her situation is similar to that of some known goddesses and gods from different mythologies. Ayesha reminds of Hel, the goddess of the Norse underworld, and of Hades, his male counterpart from Greek mythology. Ayesha, similarly to these divine entities, seems to rule the deep caverns that are located under the great mountains. That depth is representative of death and black magic as Ayesha’s main cave “had originally served for a sepulchre for the dead”

(Haggard 33) and as she is able to heal the ones that are almost dead with her own magic, as it happens with Leo after being hurt by one of Ayesha's servants: "my medicine is of a sort to shake the life in its very citadel" (Haggard 55).

Ayesha can be said to be a character with a strong connection with earth. This is not only because of her abode, but she is also many times compared to a snake, due her nature/appearance and to her movements. "When she moved a hand or foot her entire frame seemed to undulate, and the neck did not bend, it curved" (Haggard 52), Horace says that she moves "with a certain snake-like grace" (Haggard 52). In addition, when the main characters know the goddess, they cannot believe what they are seeing and Horace adds "[she] came forth shining and splendid like some glittering snake when she has cast her slough; ay, and fixed her wonderful eyes upon me more deadly than any Basilisk's" (Haggard 68). The imagery related to Ayesha is clearly related to the earth and earthly elements contain a negative meaning as they are associated with snakes, who crawl on the ground, darkness, perils, sins and death.

Hence, in general terms, Haggard's *She* depicts both mountains and caves quite similarly to the way in which Morris and Macdonald do it in the novels previously mentioned. The most different aspect is that of relating a goddess and thus, the inside of the mountain, with the underground and death "the whole mountain is full of death" (Haggard 61). He created a powerful character, but instead of being a hero, he described the anti-heroine. She herself admits that "I dwell among the caves and the dead" (Haggard 52). However, this does not change the meaning already given to mountains or caves. In fact, it adds emphasis to the meaning of evil, death, destruction and darkness usually related to caves giving them a huge importance in the novel. As a matter of fact, one of the first impressions of the characters when they arrive there for the first time is the uneasiness inside the mountains. "These caves ... were depressing habitations for breathing mortals like ourselves" (Haggard 91). The fact of not

being suitable for breathing mortals, already gives a hint about the kind of deathly environment of the caves, as “The mountain is full of dead bodies” (Haggard 61).

The actual look of these caves, as well as their connotations, could have been inspiring for the caves J.R.R. Tolkien invented, as he also created a race strongly associated with the underground, the race of the Dwarves, who did not see caves the way the rest of the characters did. They actually loved these subterranean locations as that was the natural landscape they felt as their home. Nevertheless, they also had that death-related look as it may be noticed when the Fellowship arrives at Moria for the first time, they discover the huge cemetery of Dwarves and the main tomb, the tomb of Balin, the last King of Moria.

Yet, Dwarves are not evil characters like Ayesha. However, Tolkien’s goblins, who also belonged to the subterranean landscapes inside the mountains are considered evil. Thence, it could be said that Tolkien depicted his caves with the same negative connotation Haggard did, with evil characters inside, but he did also send hope among the readers, as he also created a strong connection between Dwarves and caverns, giving the cavernous locations a new and more positive meaning as caves are completely venerated among them. They find them of extreme beauty, even though it is a different beauty from the Elven realms to which readers and scholars are used to. Exactly the same as happened with Edmund Burke’s taste of the wild nature that was scary for most people. As Simon Schama declares in his *Landscape and Memory* (1996), Burke is “the priest of obscurity” because he found sublimity in “shadow and darkness and dread and trembling, in caves and chasms, at the edge of the precipice ...” (450). Dwarves did also find sublimity in the darkness of their caves.

Therefore, mountains as well as caves do not have a very positive connotation among most of the books discussed in this section. They are still the image of the unknown, fear and danger amongst others and the characters that are related to them -Ayesha and the African aboriginal tribes- or goblins in Tolkien’s writings do not help changing that connotation.

However, they are still depicted as beautiful and challenging among the Dwarves, what makes them attractive for the reader.

2.3. Nature and Characters in Tolkien's Works

“Tolkien's Middle-earth is built not only on stories of heroes performing brave deeds and battling evil, but also on a vast mythology that explains its cultures, landscapes, and attitudes” (Donovan, qtd.in Lee 92). In order to understand the reason why J.R.R. Tolkien created Middle-earth as well as the way he did, one must know the tradition in which he was instructed as a student. He was part of the kind of students who perceived philology and mythology almost as if they were one. He associated both language and myth together as he later demonstrated with his works. “Tolkien's intellectual development ... was nurtured by a scholarly tradition ... in which mythology and philology ... had been pursued ... as intimately related” (Lee 115). Due to that instruction, Tolkien's main intention was no other than creating a mythology for his country, England. “I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story ... which I could dedicate simply to: England; to my country” (Carpenter, *Letters* 144). In fact, and this is where his association between language and myth can be appreciated, he once stated that he wanted to write stories so that he could give a meaning to the languages he was already creating. “... the ‘stories’ were made ... to provide a world for the languages ...” (Carpenter, *Letters* 219). Due to the literary influences mentioned in section 2.2, the mythology he was most influenced by was merely Germanic as he wrote stories based on Germanic traditions and culture, such as the Rohirrim's language, their lifestyle, their folklore, their principles, and their landscapes.

As far as landscapes are concerned, it is highly noticeable that they played an important role in the writer's life in general and in his writings in particular. Because of that, it seems a

coherent choice to analyze the portrayal of natural elements, for example, mountains, in J.R.R. Tolkien's works from an ecocritical perspective, as aimed in the present dissertation. But what is ecocriticism?

Ecocriticism is a branch of studies that examines different literary texts focusing on environmental issues. "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment ... ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty xix). Its birth and expansion were closely related to the growing environmental concerns in the last decades of the 20th century. Ecocriticism is understood as a way of thinking and considering the troubles that were coming out to the world, always in relation to the environment and usually ignored by humanity. As Timothy Clark states in *Ecocriticism on the Edge* (2015), "The past few years have seen increasingly forceful studies of both climate change denial and the way the Anthropocene evades normal categories of attention and, as a result, a new variant of so-called ecocriticism has become necessary" (Preface X). But what does ecocriticism have to do with Tolkien's writings?

Since very young Tolkien was influenced by the natural views in which he was raised. Nature is constantly present throughout his works and it has a purpose in the narration of his stories. As Ralph C. Wood claims in Liam Campbell's *The Ecological Augury in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2011), "[Tolkien] was an unapologetic defender of nature before environmentalism had yet been made into a cause" (3). Hence, it can be said that the writer was deeply dedicated to nature and its caring even before ecocriticism was invented. That may be the reason why he wrote such detailed descriptions of many of his invented natural landscapes. Thus, the fact of giving such prominence to natural landscapes can be considered a way he had to portray his fears towards the industrialization that was destroying all his most cherished trees, mountains, and other natural elements. "Tolkien's fiction ... reflects ... his environmental anxieties for a world he believed was too readily embracing the machine age" (Campbell 3).

His environmental concern was so considerable that he has been described as ‘a visionary environmentalist’ (Wood qtd. in Campbell 28). Dickerson and Evans describe the writer’s way of depicting natural elements as “an answer to [...] ‘ecological depth’ in literature with environmental vision” (xvi). In addition, Tolkien demonstrates having special esteem for some natural landscapes such as mountains and trees, for example, and as he once wrote in one of his letters, “I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees and always have been; and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear as some find ill-treatment of animals” (Carpenter, *Letters* 220). Every single harm on them really hurt him. Yet, even though it is easy to think about nature as an idyllic, peaceful and tamed setting: “since the Romantic movements poetic responses to the Industrial Revolution, pastoral has decisively shaped our constructions of nature” (Garrard 33), this image of nature was not the only one Tolkien was attracted by. As a matter of fact, the writer did also find wilderness of huge interest. “Just as he afforded a luminosity of wonder to the Elven realms, so too Tolkien gives us the cold and grim rock face, and the hostile, harsh environment of wilderness” (Lee ch.5). These unknown or unexplored places are places that offer sublime and not so industrialized views as tamed landscapes do. These unexplored and therefore dangerous locations in which very few know how to ‘survive’ to the dangers that could be lurking are so present in Tolkien’s works as the pastoral landscapes are. As Stuart D. Lee claims, “Tolkien was a man for whom the wild places of the world were as vital as the tree and flower-filled woodland regions ... the diversity of nature was the heartbeat of its wonder” (ch.5).

Such is the presence and importance given to nature that it can practically be considered “an animate presence” (Lee 440), a character in Tolkien’s stories. “The landscape of Tolkien’s story ... becomes more than a setting, it becomes a presence ... actually a living entity” (Campbell 179). He introduces it by describing its spots very carefully, he explains its characteristics exactly the same way as he does with any other anthropomorphic character, and

he relates it with them, they coexist within the narration. Because of that an interesting point to analyze the portrayal of nature in Tolkien's works is exploring the way in which it interacts with the rest of the characters that it surrounds and seeing the symbiosis they have in terms of connotation.

Tolkien portrayed nature as a setting with which one can easily feel empathy, as the reader can feel its life, know about nature's feelings and about its behaviour. As a matter of fact, it is usually when nature is humanized when the reader can relate with it the most. A clear example of this is seen when the forest of Fangorn is described for the first time and the Ents there speak and behave like human beings who actually care about nature. "I used to be anxious when the shadow lay on Mirkwood, but when it removed to Mordor, I did not trouble for a while ... but Saruman now! ... I must do something, I suppose" (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 615). In that passage, nature speaks for itself, it has a voice, an opinion, a prominence in the story. Treebeard, the main Ent in *The Lord of the Rings*, makes reference to Saruman, as the main enemy of forests and nature in general, as he is the destroyer of it. As Light stays, "Treebeard and the Ents ... serve as a narrative device that allows part of nature to speak for itself" (qtd. in Campbell 154). Saruman is the clearest example among the characters who show how humanity in real life was obsessed with controlling and taming nature. He wanted to deforest Fangorn, a clear sign of controlling nature, of industrialization winning over nature. Keith Thomas claims in *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England* (1983) that during the 18th century and the early modern period "there had gradually emerged attitudes to the natural world which were essentially incompatible with the direction in which English society was moving. The growth in towns had led to a new longing for the countryside" (qtd. in Garrard 301). And this can easily be what Tolkien suffered in his life. He hated living in the city because he missed nature. In a way, nature and the rest of human-like characters that

Tolkien describes are strongly connected. In fact, the landscape and the characters' personality, as well as their physical appearance are usually related.

Hence, nature does have to do with the characters that dwell in them, in a way, it influences them. As a matter of fact, there are cases in which "specific characters are portrayed as being interconnected with their natural environment" (Lee 154). Such is the case of Tom Bombadil, who has been described as "some primal natural spirit" as he lives in a forest and demonstrates being extremely obsessed about the nature that surrounds him. He is intensely connected to the natural world, he is part of it. However, he is aware of the dangers outside his abode, as he tells about them to the hobbits once they arrive at the Old Forest: "He told them tales of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, about the evil things and good things, things friendly and things unfriendly ..." (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 79).

The relationship between anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic characters is very obvious throughout the narration, yet Tolkien went one step further with the coexistence of nature and the rest of the characters and he even related each race with different natural elements such as the rocks, the mountains or the woods amongst others. "Tolkien characterizes many of his other imagined races as being aligned with differing facets of the land: Dwarves with mountains, Hobbits with pastoral countryside, Elves with the woods ..." (Lee 436). Thence, one could not imagine the idea of orcs living in such a beautiful and natural place like Rivendell or Elves, image of light and nature lovers, in the industrialized and deforested area of Isengard.

Hence, it could be said that Tolkien describes his invented natural setting, in most of the cases, through his characters. He created "environmental models" (Campbell 22) through which the readers can learn about ecology, about being civic or non-civic with their nature, with their environment. In order to do so, he "creates ... cultures of opposition: positive and negative environmental models ... [who] reflect the struggle for Middle-earth itself" (Campbell

22). Such is the case of Gandalf and Saruman for example. Both belong to the same race, the race of the Istari, the powerful wizards of Middle-earth, however, each one of them has a different purpose. While Gandalf is the chosen one to guide the protagonists of the story through the path of light, Saruman is a fallen wizard who uses his knowledge and magic in order to gain more and more power. He is a corrupted soul who does not care about the environment or natural wellness. In fact, he destroys it with the intention of creating an army to rule Middle-earth. As Treebeard describes him: “he has a mind of metal and wheels” (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 438).

They are both examples of civic (in the case of Gandalf) and non-civic (in the case of Saruman) characters. These two, are just an example of many other couple of characters who can be introduced as environment-friendly and not environment-friendly. What is alluring is the way in which these kinds of characters are divided through Middle-earth, as each group belongs to a different environment and therefore, to a different nature. Each natural location in which these races belong, usually has its own language, customs, traditions... In other words, every location has its own culture and they all together, each one of them representing its feelings and beliefs about life in general, form Tolkien’s mythology.

First of all, Hobbits dwell in the quiet Shire where nature is tamed, it is full of fields and beautiful gardens with colourful flowers “They love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 1) and Hobbits, like Frodo, love it “he [Frodo] is still in love with the Shire, with woods and fields and little rivers” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 43). Just exactly the same as their environment is their personality. They are quiet and calm people, they like living this life and they do not like going out of their comfort zone, they do not like new adventures. This can clearly be seen in *The Hobbit*, when the Dwarves start knocking at Bilbo’s door in order to go to the Lonely Mountain and Bilbo does not understand why he can be the chosen one for such a dangerous experience.

In fact, when Gandalf tells him that he will go with the rest of the Dwarves to the wilderness of the mountains, his first reaction is no other than: “Sorry! I don’t want any adventures, thank you” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 7).

In second place, there are Elves, who belong to the woods. However, not all woods are the same. It is not the same the description of Lothlórien which is said to be “The fairest of all the dwellings” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 133) or the one of Mirkwood which is described as “the dark and dangerous wood [...], the terrible forest of Mirkwood” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 209). However, Elves are among the most nature-caring characters in Tolkien’s mythology. They belong to it, they respect and love it and suffer when it gets damaged. After all, they are the only immortal race in Middle-earth, and therefore, they want their world to be safe and cared for. “The Elves’ love of nature, their desire to tend to the natural world rather than exploit it, is also compounded by the fact that metaphysically they are bound to the fate of the Earth” (Lee 436).

As far as their personality and physical appearance is concerned, Elves are elegant, good-looking, quiet, nature-lovers, good fighters and very well-spoken. “He [Elrond] was as noble and as fair in face as an elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 94). They actually own an ancient language, one of these to which Tolkien wanted to offer a story. Yet, one of the most important characteristics of them is that they are the firstborn, the Children of Ilúvatar, the Creator of Æa. “Now the Children of Ilúvatar are Elves and Men, the Firstborn and the Followers” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 7). They have known the earth from the very first days and this might be one of the reasons why they feel so much empathy for it. They belong there, and they feel the necessity of taking care of it. However, the difference between Elves and any other character who believes to be in possession of any land in Middle-earth, like Sauron or Saruman for example, is that they do not have any other motivation than simply loving and

taking care of nature, instead of exploiting it with the intention of becoming more powerful. They feel part of it, they do not see themselves as a major race who can control the earth. “The Elves have a devoted love of the physical world ... [they] do not in any way consider themselves to have a dominion over, or be masters of the natural world. [...] The Elves practice a pure form of green politics” (Campbell 163).

The case of the race of Men is similar in a way to that of the Elves as both races are the ones that are said to be the Children of Ilúvatar. However, they are not as bound to the earth as Elves are, due to their mortality. The types of surroundings where Men live are usually surrounded by wild nature and follow the Germanic traditions and appearance which Tolkien was so influenced by. These are the cases of Denethor’s realm in Minas Tirith, for example, which is a kingdom surrounded by mountains “beautiful: white-walled, many-towered, proud and fair upon its mountain-seat” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 234) or Theoden’s, which is called Rohan and it is also surrounded by wilderness as Legolas describes the first time he spots it:

I see a white stream that comes down from the snows -he said. Where it issues from the shadow of the vale a green hill rises upon the east. Dike and mighty wall and thorny fence encircle it. Within there rise the roof of houses; and in the midst, set upon a green terrace, there stands aloft a great hall of Men. (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 661)

As far as their personality is concerned, Men are described as good fighters, loyal “true to their word” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 209), strong and even good leaders. Yet, there are differences among them. *The Lord of the Rings* introduces loyal warriors like Aragorn, who will fight until the end of his life in favour of the good side, but also infidels like the Nazgûl. They were nine strong Men who succumbed to the power of Sauron and fought by his side and “appear as faceless manifestations of the night” (Campbell 134) as many evil characters who

are strongly related to the lack of light. In contrast with Elves, there are some cases of Men who feel very attracted to the power of the One Ring. Such is the case of Boromir, for example, who even though fights on the side of the good ones, he feels attraction towards the dangerous jewel Frodo must destroy and immediately changes his behaviour when he feels the attraction to it and even demands it. “You fool! It is not yours, save by unhappy chance. It might have been mine! It should be mine! Give it to me! Give me the Ring” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 161). A similar character is Isildur, who during the Second Age, in the war against Sauron’s army, cut off the Dark Lord’s finger with the Ring on it and instead of destroying it, he submitted to the power of the Ring and decided to take it with him.

The Hobbit and *The Lord of the Rings* introduce the idea of heroism in which the hero does not only think about himself, but he is part of a community and he fights for it, the protagonists of this story are a fellowship, after all. That means that Men such as Aragorn or Boromir will in a moment stop pursuing their main ‘dream’ and will focus on the fellowship, and this is where their heroism resides. “Their commitment to one another and to community is more important than their individual strength” (Dickerson 61). This is perceived when Aragorn decides to go after the orcs who have kidnapped Merry and Pippin, instead of going to Minas Tirith, which was his main goal. In the case of Boromir, even having felt weaker than Aragorn because of the temptation of the Ring, finally, he gives his life in order to save the two hobbits at the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

However, not all Men are considered heroes, in fact, the difference between Boromir, who finally knows he was being possessed by the dark forces and comes to his senses, and Isildur, who ends up being murdered by Sauron’s supporters, resides in their way of thinking as an individual or as a community. Every time they do not behave in a selfish way, they demonstrate having the behaviour of a real hero. As far as their relationship with the Elves, the other Children of Ilúvatar, is concerned, Men have lived together with them for many years,

that is why some of them, as in the case of Aragorn, know the Elvish language and customs and they even get along well with them.

This is not the case of the Dwarves, at all. Most of them are portrayed as the main enemies of the Elves, as Elves usually make fun of them “they tease them and laugh at them” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 68). In fact, at this point is where the elegance of the Elves is reduced to a mockery towards the Dwarven race. Dwarves clearly belong to the mountains, to the inside of them, actually, and they love everything about the wilderness they offer. As even though it is not very common, wilderness does offer something that the tamed landscapes do not. According to Garrard, wilderness “is seen as a place for the reinvigoration of those tired of the moral and material pollution of the city” (59) and as far as the appreciation of it is concerned, William Cronon adds that wilderness “is a place of freedom in which we can recover our true selves we have lost to the corrupting influences of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape of authenticity” (80). Thus, Dwarves have a strong connection with wilderness, with the earth, and with stones in particular, from the natural elements from which they were created by the Valar Aulë in *The Silmarillion*. According to Jessica Seymour in her article “As we draw near Mountains: Nature and Beauty in the Hearts of Dwarves”, “Being carved from stone by their maker Aulë, the Dwarves express this connection to their natural environment through active, practical engagement with the earth” (29). They made huge dwellings inside the caves and there they created their empires. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, for example, Moria is one of the greatest Dwarven realms in which many Dwarves dwelt in other ages before the death of their last king and the invasion of the goblins. There, Dwarves became the most famous and professional smiths, they built the most powerful weapons and they owned the precious mineral called Mithril, which was also used as a better version of steel to create indestructible coats of mail. “Mithril! All folk desired it. It could be beaten like copper, and polished like glass; and the Dwarves could make of it a metal, light and yet harder than

tempered steel. Its beauty was like that of common silver, but the beauty of mithril did not tarnish or grow dim” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 412- 413).

Dwarves are profoundly in love with the earth and the rocky structures that they see all along Middle-earth, but their purpose in life is not that of destroying the earth with the intention of getting an economic profit out of it. Their mere obsession is that of creating within nature, or even improving an already existing rocky building with their bare hands in order to actually build and create useful tools or dwellings. “The relationship between Dwarves and the mines is less about profit and more about the construction of a place where Dwarves can feel safe and secure while they develop their crafts and seek their riches” (Seymour 33). Dwarves are described as hard-workers, stubborn, greedy and darkness lovers. They are used to tunneling and they belong to the darkness of the huge caves in which they live, where high temperature is always present, just the opposite of their enemies, the Elves, who are the representation of light in Middle-earth and live surrounded by shining trees and fields. Tolkien, however, introduces an exception to that rule, there is one different Elf, called Eöl, the Dark Elf, who actually had nothing in common with the rest of Elves as he will be explained in chapter 3.

It could be said that Dwarves own part of the undergrounds of Middle-earth. They know what is theirs, like the huge treasure inside The Lonely Mountain and they would always fight for their right to maintain it. Therefore, some of them are said to sin of greediness, or that is at least what it has been said about Dwarves by most scholars. Dickerson and Evans, for example, give credit to the prominence Dwarves give to the beauty of their rocky hills; nonetheless, they also highlight the common dwarven attraction towards the practicality of the earth. They demonstrate the Dwarves’ inner behaviour through the example of Gimli commenting on the value of the walls of the White City of Minas Tirith: “Certainly some of Gimli’s evaluation is based on the pure aesthetic beauty of the work. But some of the dwarf’s concern is utilitarian, particularly with respect to the streets and the gates to the city” (101). However, G. Seddon in

“Thinking like a Geologist” explains how important geology is when one wants to learn and judge the history as well as the personality and manners of the dwellers of that place. “The discipline of geology affects the case of mind, the way one thinks and perceives and behaves” (487). Yet, Dwarves are not the only race who actually show bad manners based on greediness. For example, Thorin Oakenshield, King under the Mountain in *The Hobbit*, shows that greediness makes him behave disrespectfully especially with Bilbo. In fact, the Elves, who are usually eulogised due to their elegance and good manners by most scholars, do also share that characteristic. The first thing the reader knows about the Elvenking, Thranduil in *The Hobbit* is that “if the Elf-king had a weakness it was for treasure, especially for silver and white gems; and [...] he was ever eager for more” (Tolkien 208) yet, Elves are still better seen as Dwarves are, even though at the end, they always show their kindness and even greedy Dwarves like Thorin change their mind and behave politely. This can be seen at the end of *The Hobbit* when Thorin is dying and offers these kind words to Bilbo, who in previous moments had been accused of stealing Thorin’s appreciated Arkenstone. “Farewell, good thief,” he said. “I go now to the halls of waiting to sit beside my fathers, until the world is renewed. Since I leave now all gold and silver, and go where it is of little worth, I wish to part in friendship with you [...]” (Tolkien 262).

Last, but not least, there are the evil characters. Here are the darkest lords in Tolkien’s mythology Morgoth and Sauron and all their entourage Ringwraiths or Nazgûl, orcs, uruk-hais, balrogs, spiders... The first thing that all these characters have in common is that they are the darkness in Arda, the Elvish name for the world created by Tolkien. Being the dark part of the story means that they go against the main characters, they are the opposition, the ones that do not agree with the purpose of the “good ones” “The agents of evil and the places from which they originate ... are, in many cases, portrayed as associated with the motif of darkness” (Campbell 134). This makes sense as the one who brought all the evil to Arda was no other

than Melkor or Morgoth, who during the First Age in Arda, rebelled against his fellow Ainur. Melkor's rebellion may symbolize the war between light and darkness, as through the stealing of the most powerful jewels in Arda, the Silmarils, he stole the light of the world, making it become completely dark. Thus, owning the light of Arda, he became a corrupted soul and the first dark lord who little by little and with the help of his army full of a huge spider called Ungoliant, Balrogs, Orcs and dragons, destroyed a huge percentage of nature in Aman, the continent where the Ainur and the Valar lived. "The unlight of Ungoliant rose up even to the roots of the Trees, and Melkor sprang upon the mound; and with his black spear he smote each Tree to its core, wounded them deep, and their sap poured forth as it were their blood ..."

(Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 86).

After Melkor's death, his successor, Sauron did something similar in Middle-earth, he created The One Ring, and in the mere inscription of that ring, Sauron's intention was clear, he wanted that ring to rule them all. Ruling Middle-earth, meant creating an army of Ringwraiths, orcs, and uruk-hais that would destroy the whole natural world in Middle-earth by conquering all the locations in it. As a matter of fact, Sauron is said to be "the Lord of magic and machines" (Carpenter, *Letters* 146) and as Lee claims, he "is the architect of the assault on both, the people and the landscapes of Middle-earth" (440).

Therefore, all these characters belong to the dark and industrialized parts of Aman and Middle-earth. Ungoliant lived in Avathar, a place where "beneath the sheer walls of the mountains and the cold, dark sea, the shadows were deepest and thickest in the world." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 84). Melkor created his realm in the dark land of Utumno, a huge stronghold where destruction and chaos were the main values. "In the North, Melkor built his strength, and he slept not, but watched, and laboured; and the evil things that he had perverted walked abroad, and the dark and slumbering woods were haunted by monsters and shapes of dread" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 46). The same happens with the rest of evil characters, Balrogs

lived in the deep dungeons of Utumno, orcs were created by Sauron, in order to continue with Melkor's intention of ruling the world and they dwelt in the deep caverns all around Middle-earth and dragons belonged to the inside of the mountains as it is seen in *The Silmarillion* and in *The Hobbit*. The Ringwraiths were the only ones who actually had a concrete stronghold called Minas Morgul which is described as "the Tower of Sorcery" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 144) from which Saruman and Sauron controlled the journey of the Ring.

All these places are very much alike. They are dark places, especially because their dwellers are the ones who stole the light of Arda and brought darkness all around the world when Melkor stole the Silmarils. They are in most cases indoor places such as strongholds or caverns from which only evil things can be expected. They are industrialized locations where nature is completely dead. "The consequences ... [of] the abuse of power impacts upon the landscape" (Campbell 140). They are the murderers of nature and hence of life. Thus, all these deserted places and characters do share a negative connotation throughout the story.

As mentioned above, nature or natural landscapes affect the characters that dwell in them. Depending on how nature is portrayed, the characters Tolkien introduces in his stories may distinguish from the rest or may be similar to the other characters belonging to their same race. Thus, most of the Hobbits will share some personal characteristics, but will be completely different from the race of Men, for example, as each race has its own culture. As far as language and the language register is concerned, Tolkien does create a kind of pattern in which the differences between races are clearly shown. However, inside each race, there are differences as well. As Patrick Curry defends in the chapter about nation and class in *Defending Middle-earth* (2004), in the case of the Hobbits their idioms "correspond to their social status" (30) that means that not all of them speak the same way. Hobbits live in the Shire, which is the most pastoral-like landscape in Middle-earth. They usually work the lands, they have a rural life and that is reflected in most of the cases in their way of talking. However, they do not all belong to

the rural life, that is the case of Bilbo Baggins or his nephew, Frodo Baggins, who in contrast to Hobbits like Sam or Merry and Pippin, actually like reading and writing, and in the case of Bilbo, he has been a traveller, what makes him a more open-minded and therefore instructed Hobbit. In the case of the Elves, besides the language that they own, their way of talking can also be influenced by the quiet and elegant nature they are surrounded by. In fact, they are said to speak “in a hissing whisper” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 449) or “slowly” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 446).

Another clear example of the influence of the environment on the characters’ personality and hence on their speech is that of the Dwarves, who are strong, rough and a little bit loud compared to Elves for example. Their manners also go with their way of expressing themselves, they love singing out loud as it can be appreciated at the beginning of *The Hobbit* when Dwarves intrude Bilbo’s well-ordered hobbit-hole. At that moment Bilbo feels completely stressed because of the two different cultures that are colliding and breaking the hobbit’s calm. Even the mere Dwarves are aware of the discomfort Bilbo feels when they act in this way and they make a song out of it: “Chip the glasses and crack the plates! blunt the knives and bend the forks! that’s what Bilbo Baggins hates” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 13).

The way of speaking that orcs have does also reflect the influence they receive from their surroundings. They are related to death, torture, destruction, and fear amongst others, so is their environment and so is their speech. “Their [orcs’] distinguishing characteristics are a love of machines and loud noises (especially explosions), waste, vandalism, and destruction for its own sake; ... they torture and kill for fun. Their language, ... is full of hate and anger” (Curry, *Defending* 30).

Nevertheless, even though it may seem that the landscapes and the attitude of the orcs and the rest of evil characters have a negative meaning, their language plays a major role in their connotation. Even if the language may sound aggressive, what implies negativity, it does

not mean that it must be of fewer education and thus, of lower category. In fact, “Tolkien’s major villains -Smaug, Saruman, the Lord of the Nazgûl ... and Sauron- speak in ... posh tones” (Curry, *Defending* 30). In most cases, language and behaviour are related to wisdom and knowledge. The wiser the character is the better spoken and hence, better behaved they will become. Yet, this is not always like this. Even as the use of language is more related to being well-instructed, and even though one may think about wisdom as a way of acting politely and correctly, it does not always work that way. This can be seen in the characters of Saruman and Bilbo, for example. The wizard, who is a very well-spoken character, chooses to use his magnificent wisdom in order to follow the way of destruction of Middle-earth. Bilbo Baggins, who is a humble hobbit, living his quiet life until he actually sees himself involved in serious issues like the journey to the Misty Mountains, does demonstrate that even though he is not as wise as Saruman, he acts very wisely (Dickerson, *Hobbit Journey* 64).

Thus, it is clear that mountains and subterranean spaces such as mines, for example, were of huge importance for Tolkien due to the impact they had on his life. As a child, he experienced the world of the mines due to his father’s job and as an adult, he fell in love with the sublimity of the Swiss Alps. Ever since, he felt the necessity of portraying these wild and unknown natural elements in his literary work. Through these descriptions, the depicted elements may suggest Tolkien’s own perception towards them as he described not only the admiration he felt, but also the dangers that he found throughout his alpine journeys. Altogether with the literary works he most admired, W. Morris’s *The Roots of the Mountains*, George Macdonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin* and Haggard’s *She*, for example, Tolkien showed a common pattern of depicting specific surroundings and characters to concrete landscapes. Nevertheless, he also offered the possibility of perceiving mountains as well as subterranean spaces as elements that reflect positivity and negativity interchangeably. However, even if there is a pattern of relating evil characters to the darkness of the caves, Tolkien made a huge

differentiation between the cultures and customs of such characters and others that belonged to the same dark landscape. That is the case of the Dwarves. This difference, together with the origin of the Dwarves as well as with the depiction of important mountains is explained in the next section, focused on *The Silmarillion*.

3. The Role of Mountains and Caves in *The Silmarillion*

3.1. The Symbology of the Mountain

The Alpine world has always been a mysterious spot. Their high heights, hard steps, unconquered lands and the darkness that lies inside them are the perfect mix to create an unknown world to which only a few are attracted. In Tolkien's case, he felt great interest towards orogenies and he portrayed them in his landscapes quite consciously, that means, he knew really well what these mountainous landscapes would offer to his stories. As Curtis L. Carter states "Tolkien's landscapes cover the world of Middle-earth 'from domestic interiors to mountain ranges' and provide 'intimate overviews, interior views, closed off perspectives, panoramic vistas, and dramatic approaches' to help the reader enter into his fantasy world" (9). Hence, with all these details provided by the writer himself, one does get an idea of the importance these landscapes had for him and how they actually look. In fact, when describing them, Tolkien did not write random adjectives one after the other, he created his secondary world, he draw some maps so that all these places, in this case, mountains could actually 'exist' and could not suffer from incongruity in their descriptions, as it is always easier to describe something that exists, that has a material form. This idea has been studied by many scholars like Daniel Grotta who in *J.R.R. Tolkien Architect of Middle Earth* (1992) stated: "Tolkien once advised that in an adventure story it is essential for the author to draw a map first;

otherwise he is likely to encounter ‘great discrepancy’” (89). The mountains described in Tolkien’s work are usually inspired by mountains from the real world that had to do with the writer at some point. This is what W.S. Pike added focusing on the Matterhorn, which Tolkien had the honour to visit during his journey to the Swiss Alps, and which was hugely influential for the creation of his orogenies. “... experiences in the Swiss Alps are also considered ... to have influenced Tolkien’s geography” (439) and William Sarjeant added that “all in all, in geological terms, Tolkien’s descriptions and pictures of Middle-earth are of a world that, geologically at least, is very like our own” (339).

Mountainous landscapes are usually perceived as a whole when one reaches the top of them, or when looking at the uppermost point of them. However, what gives the real symbolic value to them is far from that idea. This is stated by Kevin S. Blake when he declares that “tempting as it is to think that the summit cone symbolizes the mountain, for example, the meaning and myth of mountains actually goes far deeper and broader than the immediately visible peak” (530). A mountain as a whole represents everything that surrounds it as everything around it is part of it, the weather, the shape, the sounds, the animals, nature and the people amongst others are part of that symbology and they give a deeper meaning to them. “Each mountain massif is better conceptualized as its own region, complete with a character that comes not only from its height but also from snow, ice, wind, geological history ... topography, flora, fauna, human occupation ...” (Blake 530). But what is this symbology about? What do mountains hide inside them?

The special meaning these natural landscapes have is not only related to their look, but also to the spirituality and mysticism they offer. According to the depiction they have had all over the years, mountains are usually related to high heights, which adds extra difficulty to reach their tops, to reach the highest parts. They point at the sky or seem to be actually touching it. These difficulties and the proximity with the sky give the mountains a special spirituality

and mysticism. In fact, as Eduardo Martínez de Pison claims, in the hidden value of the ascension resides a spiritual encounter with the highest point (9). This spiritual encounter has many times been related to the idea of ascension to heaven or to any other sacred or paradise-like places. Due to that, the ascension of a mountain can also be interpreted as a metaphor of the pass of time as climbing mountains can be seen as ascension in life, as the time and experiences lived in a lifetime. The path of the mountain is a representation of life where all the difficulties and obstacles found on the way can be understood as the experiences and the learning process of life and the peak as death, as the fulfilment of life.

Hence, it could be said that mountains are strongly related to religion, as a matter of fact, many mountains are powerfully associated with religion or religious deities. The Himalayas, for example, is called 'the dwelling of the gods', the Kailas does also have a religious connotation and in general terms, many of them are a destination place for travellers or pilgrims (Martínez de Pison 9). There are in fact some mountains that are not commonly related to divine entities but which do have a spiritual meaning and that is the case of the beloved mountain peak for J.R.R. Tolkien, the Matterhorn (Martínez de Pison 14). Due to this connection with religious rituals that many orogenies have, mountains are often a symbol of sacredness. Due to this sacred condition, it is tempting to think about mountains as a positive symbol or space. In fact, Martínez de Pison states this when in "La montaña simbólica" he declares that the heights and the verticality are usually positively qualified because at these heights is where all the good things in life exist, everything related to heights has a direct relation with the celestial (9). In addition, it is curious the way in which well-known temples such as the Egyptian Pyramids, or the Mesopotamian Ziggurats, places of a religious cult, took the shape of a mountain, once again making it clear for the human eye that mountains and spirituality are strongly related. This relationship has also been noted by some scholars, like Françoise Besson who stated in *Mountains Figured and Disfigured in the English-Speaking*

World (2010) that “if all the temples of the world, like Egyptian, Maya or Celtic Pyramids, spires and minarets, have the shape of mountains, it is because men have always seen in them a link between earth and sky” (xxv-xxvi). Nevertheless, apart from the strong religious-related symbology that resides in the mountains, as it has previously been suggested in the chapter above, it is not all about positiveness, beauty, and sacredness. Mountains do also offer quite obscure imagery that can make them not so attractive or even more attractive depending on the taste of who is observing them.

Mountains are definitely not only a peak, they mean much more than that, they often entail difficulty, suffering, obstacles and, of course, fear. Among all these obstacles that one can find in the process of climbing a mountain, fear is actually a very frequent feeling. As H.P. Lovecraft once claimed, “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (1). That means that the obscurity offered by mountains, makes them more unreachable for the climbers because of the sight difficulties, and hence, closer to the idea of being an unknown or an unexplored place. Not being able to explore them makes it easier for the mountaineers to imagine them instead of actually experiencing their real look, and sometimes imagination is much worse than reality as it may cause fear. This mixture of feelings that a mountain may provoke is thoroughly depicted by Tolkien in *The Silmarillion*.

3.2. The Silmarillion

3.2.1. Mountains

In Tolkien's imaginary world, there are two continents; Aman and Middle-earth, each one of them introduces similar landscapes with several races living in them. *The Silmarillion* is set in both continents, two places where the presence of mountains and caves is very rich. Mountains are definitely depicted as a relevant character that has a lot to do within the plot and the story. They may symbolize many things like protection, shelter, resistance, home or an obstacle in the path of the characters. Some of them are quite similar and some others are not. This section will analyse whether there is a general pattern in terms of their description, the facts that take place there and the characters who live there.

Aman is not as big as Middle-earth, hence, the number of orogenies found there is smaller. Nevertheless, there reside quite remarkable mountains, as well as caves that are symbolically speaking, absolutely rich. Aman, also known as The Undying Lands, is a kind of sacred continent due to the Valars' presence who had to change their dwelling from Almaren, in Middle-earth, to Valinor, in Aman, taking advantage of Melkor's return to Middle-earth. "The dwelling of the Valar upon Almaren was utterly destroyed ... they departed from Middle-earth and went to the Land of Aman ..." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 37). The Valar are the powers in charge of shaping the world, the first creation of Eru Ilúvatar. Hence, Aman is a place where only Elves lived, as the mere name suggests, it is an imperishable continent, where only immortal people dwell. In fact, the Númenóreans, a race of Men, which are in contrast to Elves, mortal, are forbidden in these lands. Similarly to their inhabitants, the mountains that can be found in Aman are quite large and strong. Among the most important ones are The Pelóri, Taniquetil, Hyarmentir, Araman, and Ezellohar. But, what do these mountains have in

common? Are they always related to divinity? If not, how is their portrayal? These are some of the questions that will be answered all along this chapter.

The Pelóri mountains is a huge mountain range that encircles the whole continent of Aman. Apart from being extremely large, it is the highest mountain range on Earth and it is the mountain range where, as later will be explained, the Valar set their abode: “the Valar fortified their dwelling, and upon the shores of the sea, they raised the Pelóri, the Mountains of Aman, highest upon Earth” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 37). Hence, the holiness that characterizes the whole continent has a lot to do with the natural elements that actually form part of it. Therefore, the continent is imperishable partly due to its mountains, which are severely strong. It is also appealing to think about the reason for the placement where the Valar set their realm, as a consequence of the strong connection between mountains and immortality, divinity, purity, and extreme wellness. As Wei-Cheng Lin claims “sacred mountains were believed to be immune to the horrors of war, flood, and pestilence ... Daoist practitioners ... built religious structures there to pursue longevity or even immortality” (52-53).

Immediately after The Pelóri Mountains, comes Taniquetil, which is the highest mountain in the mountain range of the Pelóri. Taniquetil is amongst the most essential mountains in Aman, as it is the exact place where the Valar built their palace. Up, on the highest mountain from the highest mountain range resides Valinor, the name of Valar’s abode. Taniquetil is described as a holy mountain, precisely because of the close relationship with the Valar, who are divine entities. An interesting feature of the Taniquetil is that Manwë, the ruler of the Valar, chose the highest point in Aman to build his fortress. This choice suggests the symbolic connection between heights, heaven, and the celestial world. This link between heights and divinity is not original from Tolkien, as it may be found for example in Greek Mythology. Thus, Mount Olympus, the house of the Greek gods, is described by Robin Hard as “the residence of the gods” which “was imagined as being the sky itself” (21). In addition,

another similarity that the mountain from Greek mythology shares with Tolkien's Taniquetil is their great height. While the Taniquetil is considered the highest peak in the Pelóri mountains, the height of Mount Olympus is described as the height of three mountains together, one above the other. "If one could pile three large mountains one above another ... it would be sufficient to form a ladder to heaven" (Hard 21). It seems that the closer the mountain to the sky, the more related to divinity and usually the more sacred it becomes.

However, in *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien will also give importance to other kinds of high mountains that are not so venerated. The reason why these mountains' connotation is not as positive as the ones in which the Valar dwell has nothing to do with their height or look. In fact, the first one is the case of Hyarmentir. This summit is, similar to Taniquetil, among the highest peaks in Aman, "crawling and clinging, until at last she [Ungoliant] reached the very summit of Hyarmentir, the highest mountain in that region ... far south of great Taniquetil" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 74). Precisely because of the presence of Ungoliant, the spider, and Melkor, the Dark Lord, the perception and the symbolic value of this mountain differ quite greatly from Manwë's throne. Hyarmentir is the place where Melkor and Ungoliant decide to hide from the Valar, as it is a place where "the Valar were not vigilant; for west of the Pelóri was an empty land ..." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 74). Thus, Hyarmentir is similar to Taniquetil in the sense that both are among the highest peaks in Aman as well as in the sense of representing a shelter for their corresponding characters. However, Tolkien's work suggests a discomfort from the mountain itself as a host of the vilest characters in *The Silmarillion*. The southernmost mountain is not an easy one; it seems as if it does not want to offer an easy way for the evil characters to escape from the goodness provided by the Valar. After all, Aman is a sacred continent, a continent that embraces the goodness, purity, and loyalty of its dwellers, it is a place where wickedness is not allowed as it is built by Eru Ilúvatar, the Creator and only goodness can be expected from him. As a matter of fact, Tadeusz Andrzej Olszanski claims

that “God did not recognise darkness, as light is the only reality mentioned there [in the Bible] as good” (298). Therefore, the mere presence of these two immoral characters in this continent, made even the mountains feel uneasy. In fact, Ungoliant, who, as previously mentioned has to “crawl and cling” to climb the mountain, takes the shape of a huge spider so that she can create some strong cobwebs in order to help Melkor climb Hyarmentir. “Now upon the mountain-top dark Ungoliant lay; and she made a ladder of woven ropes and cast it down, and Melkor climbed upon it and came to that high place ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 74). It seems as if pure nature in Aman does not feel comfortable being inhabited by the darkness.

Another similar case is that of the land of Araman, which is said to be a snowy mountainous region. Once Melkor and Ungoliant decide to leave Aman, they choose the way of the Helcaraxë, a snowy land which joins Aman with Middle-earth, where the two evil characters want to hide from the Valar. The land of Araman is a tough one due to its weather condition, as it is located in the northernmost part of Aman. The weather in this land is always snowy and hence, Melkor and Ungoliant find it an easier way of escape as the Valar will not feel like going there. “Morgoth escaping from the pursuit of the Valar came to the wastes of Araman. This land lay northward between the Mountains of the Pelóri and the Great Sea ... between the shores and the mountains were barren plains, ever colder as the Ice drew nearer” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 80). Thence, similarly to the Hyarmentir, the mountains of the land of Araman are not easy either due to the difficulties they provide such as their height or the rough and raw weather. Thus nature in a way can be said to be fighting against the ‘unnatural’ behaviour of Melkor and Ungoliant, who enjoy killing nature, by presenting some obstacles. In addition, Araman is an isolated place, there is not a civilization surrounding it and for that reason, it can be perceived as a darker and more mysterious place than the rest of mountains described above. The fact of being isolated also gives the image of a difficult place to go, as if no one is or has been there, and that might be because of the rough time one must overcome

there. So, as it happened with Taniquetil, it may be argued that this mountain is far from being related to divinity.

Last, but not least, there is another type of mountain-like space that plays an important role in *The Silmarillion*. It is not a mountain, but a mound. Nevertheless, it is a sacred place in Aman, which has, obviously the form of a little mountain. Ezellohar is its name and it is especially venerated by the Valar Yavanna, the queen of Earth. Yavanna is in love with the growing nature and she is in charge of the caring of the two trees of Valinor, Laurelin and Telperion. This mound is exactly where these two trees are planted. Yavanna is the one who takes care of Ezellohar by visiting it every day and singing around it. “Before its [Valinor’s] western gate there was a green mound, Ezellohar ... and Yavanna hallowed it, and she sat there long upon the green grass and sang a song of power ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 38). The case of Ezellohar might be considered just the opposite of Hyarmentir and the mountains in Araman. Ezellohar lacks height, it is not even a mountain, nonetheless, it is among the most sacred mountain-like places in Aman, in contrast with the two other huge mountains which lack this sacredness as none of the Valar are directly related to them. In fact, only evil characters give prominence to them. Ezellohar is a synonym of light, of creation, of life. As it represents the place where the light of Valinor is set, there resides the light the Valar use to live. In addition, this light comes from trees and trees have many times been used as a symbolic representation of life. It is at this moment when a clear reference of the war between light and darkness can be perfectly perceived. The murderers of the two trees are Melkor, the Dark Lord, also known as “the Unmaker” (Crowe 57), whose main characteristic is “its implacable destructiveness” (57) and Ungoliant, who is said to have “descended from the darkness that lies about Arda” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 73). These two representatives of darkness will fight in order to impose darkness over Arda by killing the trees of Valinor. Thence, Ezellohar is not only sacred, but it is also a synonym for life as it is where the light comes from. The light is understood as a

positive aspect that brings comfort in contrast with the darkness, which provides the idea of death, unknown and destruction.

As a general pattern, the portrayal of mountains in Aman can be understood as a way of depicting some admirable heights usually related to the gods. They offer protection, knowledge and a shelter for them. It is a hallowed place for those who see in them a straightforward connection with the divine world, as well as for those who can admire their wild beauty, as it will be explained later. Nevertheless, even if they are not representative of the whole group of mountains, at all, there are two cases in which mountains are related to darkness (Hyarmentir and Araman) which are of great usefulness for evil characters and their hiding plan. They, in a way, protect Melkor and Ungoliant even if it seems that nature itself knows how to recognise evil and put some boundaries and obstacles to them with the intention of suggesting its discomfort towards evil.

After having analyzed the orogenies in Aman, this thesis will explore the portrayal of mountains in the other great continent, Middle-earth. How are the mountains in Middle-earth? are they different from those in Aman or do they symbolize the same?

Equivalent to the analysis of the mountains in Aman, this analysis starts with another large mountain range called the Blue Mountains, also known as Ered Lindon. This mountain range was created when the Valar, once having lost the trees of light, with the intention of protecting Aman from Middle-earth, or from the creatures that could actually travel to the sacred continent, widened the great sea between both continents, creating the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains were created as a consequence of the widening of the sea, with the mere intention of separating Aman from Middle-earth. Hence, the creation of the mountain range could be considered as a way of protecting the nation of Valinor, which provides them with the efficacy Lin talks about when he states that “a mountain was considered ... efficacious [when] it could respond ... to human affairs (e.g. protect the nation ...)” (52). Thence, mountains create

the boundary that separates Beleriand from Eriador and this mountain range is also known because all along its length reside the two most famous Dwarven realms in the two first ages; called Nogrod and Belegost, which will be examined below. In contrast to the other great mountain range in Aman, the Pelóri, Ered Lindon was frequented by many characters who used these mountains as a way to go from one place to another and even more by the Dwarves that actually lived in their insides. Thence, Ered Lindon was the protection, the abode of a whole race, who lived in its deepest holes. In that sense, it can be recognised as the host of two isolated civilizations who lived under their own rules.

Another mountain range is known as the Crissaegrim, it is the dwelling of the Eagles of Middle-earth who have helped the company of the Ring in *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the Dwarves in *The Hobbit*. What makes the Crissaegrim distinctive from the rest is the fact that it is impossible to climb it from the ground. Because of this Thorondor and his eagles are the only ones who can reach the top of it and they need to fly in order to get to the peak. Thorondor is their leader and he is in charge of keeping an eye on Morgoth and his supporters and tell their plans to Manwë in Valinor. The Crissaegrim is also part of the well-known Encircling Mountains, which are the ones protecting the hidden city of Gondolin, by, as the mere name indicates, encircling Thingol's city. As Edwin Bernbaum claims in *Sacred Mountains of the World* (1998), "floating above the clouds, materializing out of the mist, mountains appear to belong to a world utterly different from the one we know ... their summits ... are harsh and ... only those with extraordinary powers or skills can survive" (Introduction 3). Only Thorondor and his eagle-followers can get to the Crissaegrim due to their bird condition, no one else will ever be capable of climbing it precisely because they are not prepared for it. It can be appreciated as a fortress, where the messenger of Manwë informs him about the steps of Morgoth in Middle-earth. Inside the Crissaegrim lies the Vale of Tumladen, which is an inner space where only Thorondor can stay. "... Turgon of Nevrast discovered the

hidden vale of Tumladen; ... in a ring of mountains tall and sheer, and no living thing came there save the eagles of Thorondor” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 125).

The portrayal and the perception of these two mountain ranges do not differ from the mountains from Aman. They both share a sacred-like aura and play the role of the abode for some good characters. However, as mentioned when discussing the mountains of Aman, there are also other kinds of mountains that do not share that positiveness. This is what one can perceive when analysing the orogenies from the first two ages in Middle-earth.

The first case is that of Ered Gorgoroth. This is the place where Ungoliant the spider decides to reside after she chooses to follow her own path instead of Melkor’s. Once she discovers Melkor has been deceiving her, promising lands and power that she would never have, she escapes from the Dark Lord and hides in Ered Gorgoroth, also known as The Mountains of Terror. The name already anticipates the connotation the mountain has. These mountains cause fear among the ones who see it from a near distance. Usually, most wild mountains provoke scary feelings among the climbers, but this fear is accompanied by an attraction towards them because “people are drawn to it [the mountain] from near and far, as by the force of some invisible magnet” (Bernbaum, Introduction 1). However, the Ered Gorgoroth do not offer any appealing characteristic, they are simply scary. “Ered Gorgoroth, the Mountains of Terror ... none dared go thither, or pass nigh them; there life and light were strangled, and there all waters were poisoned” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 95). The mere fact of nature being intoxicated can be interpreted as an indication that evil beings are lurking around. This is actually suggested by Marcella Juhren when she claims that when nature showed unexpected situations such as an intoxicated river, a dead tree or even animals that are not supposed to be in a particular place where they are just “signalled the intervention of an otherworldly power” (5).

Another important mountain range in Middle-earth is Ered Lómin, also known as The Echoing Mountains, which lies in north Beleriand, near the icy Helcaraxë. This mountain range surrounds part of the region of Hithlum and separates it from Beleriand due to the presence of another mountain, the Ered Wethrin, which will be analysed in the next chapter. Just by looking at the name of the mountain range, it is easy to figure out that the environment there is not a comfortable one. It is said that “Morgoth sent forth a terrible cry, that echoed in the mountains ... [and] the echoes of his voice dwelt there ever after ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 80) which provides coherence with the name given to the mountain. Once Morgoth realizes that Ungoliant will never become one of his thralls, his wrath is so deep that his scream provokes the trembling of mountains. “The cry of Morgoth in that hour was the greatest and most dreadful that was ever heard in the northern world; the mountains shook, and the earth trembled ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 81). The presence of the ice that was common in the Echoing Mountains can also be the reason for the name of the mountains. In fact, the ice, with its movements and breaks, produced sounds that were echoed all around the mountains. The fact is that these mountains were not quiet and they could cause some kind of anguish among the visitors. It could also be a way nature had to communicate with its guests, a way of warning them about its perils. For example, Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe has alleged that “in China ... mountains are a medium of communication through which people communicate ... with the primaevial powers of the earth. Chinese sacred mountains are believed to be especially powerful sites of telluric power ...” (par. 5). Ered Lómin also plays the role of protection as it has the shape of a huge wall and it is actually the place from where Morgoth and his army attack during the second War of Beleriand:

The host of Fëanor went up the long firth of Drengist that pierced the Echoing Hills of Ered Lómin, and passed thus ... into the great land of Hithlum ... and upon its northern

shore made their encampment ... but the host of Morgoth ... came through the passes of Ered Wethrin, ... and assailed Fëanor ... and there on the grey fields of Mithrim was fought the second Battle in the Wars of Beleriand. (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 106)

And the last but among the most important mountains in Middle-earth is Thangorodrim. Besides its prominence in the story, Thangorodrim is formed by three huge peaks, the highest in Middle-earth and indeed, it forms a very special group of three mountains due to its volcanic origin. This fiery condition adds danger to the image of the mountain, as fire can be interpreted as a symbol of destruction or even as the Christian hell. Thangorodrim is actually one of the best examples that confirms this strong relation between fire and evil as it is the place where Morgoth builds his own realm, Angband, in Middle-earth. The fact of being the abode of the Dark Lord already proposes negativity towards these peaks. In addition, the volcanic origin adds extra disapproval from the rest of the characters, Morgoth's enemies. The environment of Thangorodrim, similar to the one in the Echoing Mountains, is not a cosy one either. "There [in Angband] ... above their gates, he reared the threefold peaks of Thangorodrim, and a great reek of dark smoke was ever wreathed about them" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 81). Angband is where all Morgoth's supporters were created; they were created from the fire of the peaks of Thangorodrim and they are the ones who bring darkness to Middle-earth. "There countless became the hosts of his beasts and his demons, and the race of the Orcs, bred long before multiplied in the bowels of the earth" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 81). These beasts worked as miners, inside the mountain creating more and more evil creatures in the darkness of the inside of the mountains with the only light that came from the fire. Apart from being the place where all these beasts were created, Thangorodrim is the image of power in Middle-earth. It is the highest mountain and that is why Morgoth decides to set his throne upon these dark peaks. Following Manwë's way in Taniquetil, the highest mountain in Aman, Morgoth proclaims

himself “King of the world” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 81) in the peaks of Thangorodrim demonstrating his power and strength over Middle-earth and indicating that he is Manwë’s evil alter ego. In fact, Morgoth uses Angband as a fortress where he does not only prepare to fight in the coming wars but also prepares his own realm to attack any possible enemy that can enter his dominions. Because of that Angband is full of secret gates giving to it the common labyrinthine look typical in mountainous landscapes and, of course, inside caverns.

Another reason to connect fire or fire-related facts with Morgoth’s kingship is related to the moment in which he forges his own crown where he puts the three stolen Silmarils as the image of total power. At that very moment, both his hands become black, and never return to their original colour due to the burning of the precious jewels. “... he set the Silmarils in his crown. His hands were burned black, and black they remained ... nor was he free from the pain of the burning, and the anger of the pain” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 81). Nevertheless, among the most interesting aspects of Thangorodrim is its destruction. During the last battle against Morgoth, The War of Wrath, Morgoth fights with all his best creatures, those forged from the deep fires of Angband. Among these creatures the most powerful one is Ancalagon the Black, the big winged dragon, who flies above the heads of his enemies, when suddenly, Eärendil throws an arrow against him causing his death with the bad luck for Morgoth, that Ancalagon falls upon his throne in Thangorodrim, destroying everything around it. “Eärendil slew Ancalagon the Black, the mightiest of the dragon-host ... and he fell upon the towers of Thangorodrim and they were broken in his ruin” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 252).

Thus, the most important mountains in both continents can be compared in terms of their symbolic relationship with power, good and evil. In several cultures, mountains have been interpreted as a sacred place where only the worthiest people can go in order to be closer to the divine entities. “People have traditionally revered mountains as places of sacred power and spiritual attainment” (Bernbaum 1). The Tolkienian mountains seem to reproduce these

concepts. The Pelóri mountain range can easily be compared to its ‘evil’ counterpart in Middle-earth, Thangorodrim. Both constitute the highest peaks in their continents and upon them are the thrones of the governors of each place. In Taniquetil Manwë, the ruler of the Valar governs the Valar and in Angband, Morgoth, the Dark Lord rules everywhere he goes. Both mountain ranges are the symbol of the greatest power in each continent, as they control everything from the heights. Hence, in these two cases, height denotes power and control. Both mountain ranges can be similar in their look; nevertheless, their connotation is extremely opposite. Taniquetil is perceived as the greatest peak from which only goodness can be expected. Even the Elves did give it many different names denoting positiveness and extreme beauty “Taniquetil the Elves name that holy mountain, and Oiolosse Everlasting Whiteness, and Elërrina crowned with Stars ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 37). In contrast with Thangorodrim, Taniquetil is described as a place of everlasting whiteness. The white colour is understood as the opposite of black, which is the colour par excellence in Thangorodrim. In addition, due to its appearance, Taniquetil seems to be the perfect candidate to be the most suitable place for a kingdom in Arda as it is ‘crowned with stars’ making the relationship between heights and the concepts of celestial, divinity, life and light narrower.

Ezellohar, Yavanna’s hallowed mound, is related to the protection of a great part of Valinor, its light, and creation. The birth of nature in Valinor depends in part on the two trees that lay in that mound. Similarly, Middle-earth introduces the Blue Mountains, which were created with the intention of protecting Valinor from the threads coming from Middle-earth. Thus, both mountains share their purpose, that of protecting Valinor. The same happens with the mountains in Araman, which are the passage from one continent to another, the important characteristic here is that due to the hard weather conditions, these mountains are seldom crossed and therefore, the perils coming from Middle-earth do not have an easy entrance to Aman, and hence to Valinor. It is another example in which mountains protect a region.

Nonetheless, Tolkien demonstrates that not all his mountains have the same purpose or connotation as he introduces mountains such as Hyarmentir, Ered Gorgoroth, the Mountains of Terror, and Thangorodrim expressing strong negativity partly because of their shocking look and partly because of the characters related to them. Hence, only wickedness is expected from these threatening orogenies. The clearest idea perceived from the depiction of the mountains during the two first ages is that mountains in Aman are in most of the cases the image of wellness. However, the mountains that appear in Middle-earth, with the exception of the Crissaegrim and the Blue Mountains, denote negativity as there even the nature surrounding them is dark and poisoned as in the case of The Mountains of Terror, where drinking from the rivers was extremely dangerous for “the hearts of those that tasted them were filled with shadows of madness and despair” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 121). Hence, Tolkien could be suggesting that the evilness coming from the mountains in Middle-earth had to do more with the kind of characters that dwell in their surroundings, as it will later be explained.

As far as the appearance of a mountain is concerned, it may be argued that mountains cannot be judged just from the outside, because these places, as seen in the novels that inspired Tolkien, hide marvellous worlds inside them. How are the caves or subterranean worlds depicted in *The Silmarillion*? Did the novels analyzed in the previous chapter actually inspire the British writer in the way he depicted caves?

3.2.2. Caves and Subterranean Spaces

Similar to the depiction of the orogenies, caves do also share some common characteristics. Darkness is definitely what defines a hole inside a huge rocky mountain and it actually implies a huge symbology for the image of the alpine landscape and its perception. Darkness and the unknown have a tight relationship and close to them is also the idea of fear.

Therefore, mountains are also related to fear, but fear is usually not associated with their outside look, which can also be terrifying, but it is more related to their inside look. The real hidden places of mountains are clearly the caves that exist inside them, these are the places where darkness, fears, hidden chambers, and diverse perils reside. As Martínez de Pisón claims, heights are the representation of nature, loneliness, and individualization in the good sense; however, the lowest part of a mountain is frequently related to the earth, the everyday life, the mechanised, the mundane. Thus, heights are venerated due to their connection with the divine world while the mountain slopes are despised because they are linked with the subterranean world or the hellish world (10).

This idea of relating the inside of a mountain, the subterranean world, with something evil was already quite common in classical mythology where the eruption of a volcano was perceived as the consequence of the fury of a titan due to their prison sentence of living locked up in the underground (Martínez de Pisón 11). These eruptions, claims Martínez de Pisón, have several times been used to evoke hell due to its close relationship with the craters and the lava that can supposedly be found there (12). In the case of J.R.R. Tolkien, the symbolic connection between some of the mountains and volcanoes can clearly be appreciated. The mere presence of some fire-related characters like dragons or Balrogs, the volcanic condition of some mountains, make the reader think of a hellish world inside these places. As a matter of fact, Peter Hodder claims that “volcanism, submergence of landscapes, the raising of mountains ... is highly suggestive of Middle-earth being a region that geologists would describe as ‘tectonically active’” (201). Taking into account that the Christian tradition has introduced hell as the dwelling of the devil, the fiery imagery offers a new and powerful significance to the perception of mountains and more specifically to their inside. The perception of these orogenies in the works by Tolkien suffers changes from being the image of sacredness to a hellish place

with monsters living inside them. Thence, the underground of a mountain has many times been perceived as hell, as a dangerous and fiery place.

Due to the connection between hell and the underground of a mountain, it is easier to relate everything that takes place there with a hellish world and perceive it negatively. That is the case of the mines. Mines are inside the mountains, it is the place from which human beings make benefit from the sources of the land, gems or valuable metals, but in order to do so, miners need to dig deep and they sometimes get quite down. On many occasions, miners use special bombs in order to break the hard rocks that hide these valuable metals. Hence, fire is also present in mines and therefore, it is possible to relate mines to hell or to evil. This relation between mines and evil is illustrated, for example, in George Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, where goblins are portrayed in a negative light, as the royalty, actually, hates miners especially because they work underground, surrounded by fire. Hence miners are perceived as devilish characters due to their workplace. Similarly, in J.R.R. Tolkien's world, mines or similar places where evil characters work and dwell are related to the two dark lords, Melkor and Sauron. "Melkor ... is associated with the first-named mine: Utumno ... Angband, the fortress of Sauron, is another parallel to Utumno, housing dungeons, caves, and quite possibly mines" (Drout 90). The perception of a mountain can be influenced not only by the sublimity of its outside, but the inner part of it can also be the main reason to fear the orogeny in its entirety.

The inner part of caves has many times been depicted as the shelter for some evil characters or even the place from where they are created. Nevertheless, far from being just the house and workplace of many evil creatures, mountains have also something interesting to offer; however, in order to get what they offer, these landscapes suffer a change, a remodelling process in which nature is changed by force, by human exploitation. That is the case of the many mines that can be found inside the mountains. Getting to the very core of the mountains

in order to get a valuable gem means that human beings are more concerned about getting something with monetary value rather than preserving nature the way it is. As Besson has stated: “Everywhere in the world, in every century, mountains were figured by artists, writers, and poets. Everywhere in the world, in our modern age, mountains are disfigured by the will of power and money” (“Introduction”).

As far as the portrayal of these innermost spots of mountains in Tolkien’s work is concerned, the writer did create a straightforward connection between caves or the underground with danger and evil, as it is demonstrated in his Legendarium, In *The Silmarillion*, the underground of the mountains is related to Melkor’s realm, *The Hobbit* introduces a group of scared Dwarves who will suffer until they get to face the fire-dragon, Smaug, and *The Lord of the Rings* tells about a long and perilous journey towards a huge volcano, where the main protagonist will have to destroy a ring of power, created, actually, by the dweller of that volcano. Nonetheless, Tolkien himself did find something interesting about the mines, not specifically about the precious jewels that can be found there, but mainly about the craftsmanship involved in mining: “Mining was essential to life in Middle-earth, but Tolkien focuses on the craftsmanship as an ultimate product from what is mined rather than on the mining itself” (Drout 90). As Danièle Barberis states “a possible explanation for the interest taken by Tolkien in the mining world may be traced to his birth ... in Bloemfontein ... at the heart of a very active mining region” (“Introduction”). In fact, according to Barberis, there are huge resemblances between Moria and some of the South African mines that existed at the time in which the young Tolkien lived there.

In Tolkien’s world mines may be related not only with devilish characters like Melkor, Sauron, and their supporters, but also with an entire race that is actually in the side of the good characters, and these are, the Naugrim, most commonly known as Dwarves. However, the main difference between them is that the previous ones use fire in order to bring chaos to Eä, whereas

the latter ones are in love with the rocky world in which they live and work. Hence they treat it very carefully and they do not exploit their own territories. Such is their admiration towards fire, that their main strongholds are protected by secret passwords or by guards at their doors. The gates of Moria were hidden so that not everyone could enter them, they were camouflaged so that “one could not distinguish them from their surroundings” (Barberis 64). And it was not until the arrival of Men that the Dwarves decided to protect their doors even more with the presence of guards. The irony here is that the Dwarven race, being the only race among the good characters who live underground is afraid of being deceived by the honourable race of Men, who live in the outside, where evil may or may not appear. “With mistrust increasing with the arrival of ... Men, magical gates and easy passwords were replaced by badges ... guards at the gates ... to let the visitor through” (Barberis 64). Thus, mines became a ‘closed world’ (Barberis 64) for everyone, making it more clear for the rest of races that mountains and more specifically, their insides, were a private and dangerous location. In addition, similar to the caves described in Haggard’s *She*, Tolkien’s mines do also have the labyrinthine look so that only their dwellers can learn the secrets hidden there, and not the outsiders: “In the Third Age of the world, Moria is described as a complex network of stairs, steep roads going up or down, abysses, with holes to be jumped over, and huge cracks into which the visitor was always in danger of falling” (Barberis 64).

However, despite all these unfavourable connotations that caves and mines receive, they are still the place where the most valuable objects, like weapons or jewels, have been built. It was during the First Age, when a Noldor, a race of Elves that is highly skilled in crafts, gives sense to the novel of *The Silmarillion*. Even though the Elves are not the best smiths in the mythology created by J.R.R. Tolkien, one of the greatest creations in terms of craftsmanship is designed by an Elf, Fëanor. He built the great Silmarils, which are three precious gems in which part of the light of the Trees of Valinor, the ones that enlighten Valinor, resides. They are,

together with the Trees, the biggest representation of light; they offer comfort, as the dwellers of Valinor may not confront darkness; they feel secure and are protected against the dark side. However, this comfort is broken by the presence of the Dark Lord, Melkor and Ungoliant, who decide to bring chaos by torturing the living nature of Laurelin and Telperion and thus, they bring darkness to Valinor. However, the light of Valinor still resides in the Silmarils and therefore the real problem appears when Melkor steals the gems, as he steals the light. It is a moment in which darkness is put ahead of light and hence a moment in which Melkor wins over the Valar.

Melkor himself is an Ainur, the most powerful among these angelic and divinity-related characters, however, he is not the ruler of Valinor, as Manwë is the one in charge of the realm up in the Pelóri Mountains. Melkor instead decides to use this power in order to rule the world and create his own kingdom of darkness. In order to do so, he goes against God's, Illúvatar's, words and denies his figure as an Ainur and becomes the main antagonist of the story. This story is similar to the story of the fall in the Judeo-Christian tradition in which Lucifer becomes a fallen angel for rejecting God. After that, Lucifer, creates his own realm in the depth of the earth and he calls it hell and tempts Adam and Eve. This is confirmed by Eric Schweicher in his article "Aspects of the Fall in The Silmarillion" (1996): "In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Fall was the occasion when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were expelled from the Garden of Eden" (167). Similarly to Lucifer, Melkor rebelled against Ilúvatar and that is why he can be considered part of the first Fall in Tolkien's Legendarium. "The original Fall in Middle-earth ... is the Fall of Melkor ... rebelling against Ilúvatar" (Schweicher 167). Fall is negatively perceived by those who see in God a good character and evil in Satan's. The Devil is related to hell, a place without any law, where only lost souls that will not follow the good one's, God's, words dwell, a fiery place where evil plans are thought. In the case of Melkor, he disobeys Ilúvatar and creates his two strongholds, Utumno, in the Mountains of the East,

where “he gathered his demons about him” and they “became like him in his corruption” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 47). They were, as a matter of fact, related to fire as “their hearts were of fire ... [and] they had whips of flame” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 47) and Angband, which was later commanded by Sauron, up in the Iron Mountains.

Nevertheless, Melkor is not the only case of Fall in *The Silmarillion*. As Aulë, the smith Valar does also fall if fall means going against God’s orders. When Ilúvatar created the world, he told the Valar that he was the only creator and that he was going to create two races, which would later be known as the Children of Ilúvatar. However, Aulë, who is said to be “a smith and master of all crafts” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27) overtakes Ilúvatar’s creation and he himself creates another race, the race of the Dwarves. As a matter of fact, he creates them in the darkness of Middle-earth, in a place where no one can see him, in “a hall under the mountains in Middle-earth” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 43). In this case, the idea of Fall is related to an underground place where someone, Melkor or Aulë, disobey Ilúvatar. Hence the connotation is clear, whatever that may have a relationship with the underground is negatively perceived. The hidden and dark spaces like the halls of the mountains share the disapproval of the rest of the good characters as they associate these spaces as somewhere where one can go against Ilúvatar’s will. Consequently, even if there is not a specific moment in which Dwarves demonstrate a fact of Fall, their own existence is considered as such, and thence, indirectly, they are part of the Fall of Aulë as they are “the sub-creative rebellion of Aulë” (Schweicher 170). In addition, Aulë instructs them in terms of smithery and that means they will be mine workers, and therefore, they will receive negativity from the rest of the characters who belong to the outside world, like the case of the Elves. The interesting point here is that both, Melkor on the bad side and Aulë on the good one, are not so dissimilar from each other. Both are ambitious and want to make a profit of their creativity. “Both, also, desired to make things of their own that should be new and unthought of by others, and delighted in the praise of their

skill ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27). Nonetheless, there is a difference between Melkor and Aulë and that is also reflected in their surroundings. Both Aulë and the Dwarves demonstrate having good intentions and loving Ilúvatar. Aulë immediately explains his situation and declares himself Ilúvatar’s supporter :“I did not desire such lordship. I desired things other than I am, to love and to teach them, so that they too might perceive the beauty of Eä, which thou hast caused to be” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 43). Melkor, on the other hand, uses his power in order to go against Ilúvatar and the Valar. As mentioned above, their attitudes also reflect or have to do with their surroundings and Melkor is so tightly related to a fiery underground that even the adjectives which Tolkien used to refer to the first Dark Lord are fire-related “ ... the light of the eye of Melkor was like a flame” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 22), his malice “burned in him” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 21) or when he is said to have “descended through fire ... into a great burning ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 31). They may look similar at some point, as they share some characteristics, nonetheless, the difference resides in their values.

This demonstrates that even though both belong to the underground, their intentions are different and that also affects not only their dwellings and the perception the others have towards them but also on their surrounding landscapes. But in what sense does the characters’ attitude affect the surroundings? How different are the caves in the lands of the good characters and in the dwellings in which only evilness is expected?

Following the pattern of analysis of the mountains, the first caves being examined will be the ones from Aman, followed by those that appear in Middle-earth. The first being analyzed is that of The Hall of Mandos. As its name indicates, it is not a cave per se, but a huge hall that could be similar to a deep hole inside the mountains. The Hall of Mandos is ruled by the Valar Mandos, the “Doomsman of the Valar” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 28). Being the doomsman means that he is in charge of assigning the fate of every single living being in Arda. His halls are the houses of the dead and no one that enters there can escape from them until Mandos himself

orders it, not even Melkor, who was sent there as a punishment “they [the Valar] took that renegade to the topmost peak of Taniquetil, and there declaring him no herald and taking the mountain and the stars to witness ... they cast him to the boulders of Arvalien ... and Mandos received him into his deepest caves” (Tolkien, *Lost Tales* 148). This characteristic gives the common feeling of suffocation that usually appears when someone is ‘trapped’ in an indoor place. The straightforward relationship between this indoor place with death gives a spooky appearance to Mando’s halls. The interesting aspect of the Halls of Mandos is that it is not located in Middle-earth where Melkor has his two strongholds. In fact, such a horrific place belongs to Aman, in the Undying Lands, on the northern shores of Valinor, close to the Taniquetil. But how is it possible that such different places are located so close to each other? Even if the Halls of Mandos is the place where the fate of the living entities is chosen, having the possibility of picking such a decision only denotes power, exactly the same as what governing Valinor means.

A different case is that of Avathar, which is neither a cave but it can also be considered as such due to the surrounding mountains that encircle it. Avathar is placed at the foot of the Pelóri mountain range, the one that encircles the whole continent of Aman. “That narrow land lay ... beneath the eastern feet of the Pelóri and its long and mournful shores stretched away into the south, lightless and unexplored. There beneath the sheer walls of the mountains and the cold dark sea, the shadows were deepest and thickest in the world” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 73). Thence, this dark and unexplored land, which is similar to an indoor place due to the mountains that surround it, does also depict quite a scary environment, in great part because of its dark appearance but besides it, its dweller does have a lot to do with the deprecation of its connotation. Avathar is the place where Ungoliant the spider makes her abode when she first enters Aman. As previously mentioned, Morgoth’s helper is said to be descended from darkness itself, which gives her a negative connotation and consequently to the places where

she goes. Avathar's darkness together with the one of Ungoliant make the place become an obnoxious one, somewhere where no one would like to go.

Even if it does not seem so, these two indoor and dark spaces share many characteristics. The Halls of Mandos have a direct connection with death as it is where the fate of people and creatures of Aman is chosen. They are also known as The Halls of Awaiting, as it is where the inhabitants of Arda await their destiny and they are, of course, an indoor space. Similarly to the case of Avathar from which only darkness is expected. Avathar plays the role of the abode of one of the darkest characters in *The Silmarillion*; Ungoliant. Taking into account that the spider is the responsible one for sucking the life of the trees of Valinor, those representative of the light and hence of life in Aman, the spider can be considered a representation of death itself, what gives Avathar a similar value to the one of the Halls of Mandos. Notwithstanding, once again, both places do not share the same connotation. Even if the Halls of Mandos is not the most pleasant place in Aman, it still denotes respect from everyone. That is not the case of Avathar, which apart from being the dwelling of such an evil character like Ungoliant, is set at the foot of the Pelóri mountains, denoting inferiority towards Taniquetil and its power.

As far as caves or subterranean worlds in Middle-earth are concerned, there are quite a few more than in Aman. The first one is called Menegroth or the Thousand Caves. Just by looking at its name one can imagine the immense size of such a place. In previous fantasy novels such as H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886) or George Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), caves suggest a discomfort from the main characters as they represent darkness, death, chaos, fear and isolation. Throughout the years caves have been used as a symbol for isolation and darkness, but also for the creation of ideas as the knowledge brought by the image of the fire is common in such dark places. In fact, the most famous cave is indeed the one described by Plato in *Republic* where through the shades and silhouettes that the people who

go around the cave create due to the presence of a fire placed in the mouth of the cave, those living inside it, can imagine how the outside looks. These images represent “the knowledge most people possess” (Ferber 52) and only some of them are brave enough to go out of the darkness and the comfort that caves offer and discover a whole new world outside. This theory can also suggest that the ones living inside the caves live according to their own rules, the rules of their civilization, isolated from the rest. This idea is not something that Tolkien created, because as Hamish Williams has stated “in Greek mythology mountains were generically connoted as places of isolation” (101).

Some of the caves in *The Silmarillion*, even if they are as big as Menegroth, do follow this idea of isolation. Menegroth is a realm created for Thingol and Melian by the best smiths in the whole Arda, the Dwarves. It was created due to the fear Thingol and his kingdom felt towards the attacks of Morgoth and his army. Thence, Thingol, a very close friend of the Dwarves asks them to build a realm for his people and Melian protects the whole city with a magical girdle, which makes the city invisible for the enemies. Menegroth is clearly a fortress against Morgoth and his evilness and it contains the same labyrinthine look as the previously mentioned caves. In addition, it is completely isolated from the world as due to Melian’s magic, it is as if it was nonexistent. Nevertheless, as far as its appearance is concerned, Menegroth does not offer the typical decoration among the Dwarven realms or the murky ones where Morgoth’s thralls dwell. The Dwarves decorated them “in the likeness of the beeches of Oromë, stock, bough and leaf and they were lit with lanterns of gold” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 93). According to the description provided by Tolkien himself, Menegroth was not the common gloomy cave. “... they built a bridge of stone over the river, ... beyond the gates wide passages ran down to high halls and chambers far below that were hewn in the living stone” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 93). The fact of giving the stone a living quality already demonstrates the biggest difference with the rest of gloomy and dark caves. It is the abode of life, of people who embrace

nature and do not kill it, in contrast with Morgoth and his followers who are the destroyers of nature.

The next two caverns may be analyzed together as they both belong to the Blue Mountains and are considered the most important Dwarven realms during the two First Ages. These are Nogrod and Belegost. As mentioned before, the Dwarven cities have their own rules as they are isolated civilizations. The Dwarves of Nogrod worked as smiths and with all the jewels that they delve from their own mines, many precious ornaments were crafted, Thingol's Nauglamir, for example "... was a carcanet of gold, and set therein were gems uncounted from Valinor; but it had a power within it so that it rested lightly on its wearer ... it sat always with grace and loveliness" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 114). Nogrod was also a place usually frequented by the dark Elf, Eöl, who had a narrow relationship with the Dwarves. It was due to Nogrod's demolition during the War of Wrath, that Dwarves started migrating to Khâzad-dum, famous in the Third Age. Immediately after Nogrod comes Belegost, the second famous Dwarven realm in Ered Luin. Belegost was like Nogrod's northern twin realm in which Dwarves also laboured as smiths. Exactly the same fate waited for Belegost as it was during the War of Wrath that this realm was demolished. Due to that, the Dwarves coming from Belegost moved to the previously mentioned Khâzad-dum. These caves offer the shelter or home condition for the Dwarven race. It is a place from which they feel secure and even admire their look, even if it does not follow the pattern of beauty for most characters. It is their workplace from where they find all the materials to work the mere stones found in the cave. However, these caves are plundered by Orcs, which relates these landscapes with evil characters and hence may be negatively perceived by the rest of the characters. There are, of course, more caverns in Middle-earth, but as they play a more relevant role in the long stories of *The Fall of Gondolin*, *The Children of Húrin* and *Beren and Lúthien*, they will be discussed in the following subchapter.

As far as the already analyzed caves are concerned, what is clear is that in the Undying Lands, there are not caves per se, there are dark spaces that due to the shape of the encircling mountains, they may have the appearance of one. The image created by the shape of these mountains is that of an enclosed and hence, dark spot, similar to a real cave inside a mountain. Hence, mountains are the ones that actually create this image of dark indoor spots. The fact of not having caves in the continent of Arda might be related to the stigma that exists towards caves. As a matter of fact, this prejudice about the subterranean worlds is worldwide known. As J.C. Cirlot “that the German *Höhle* (cave) and *Holle* (Hell) are related is not without significance” (40). As previously mentioned, fire has always been associated with the darkness of the caves, as a metaphor or similarity with the idea of the Christian hell. Thence, the stigma becomes more understandable, as hell is considered the abode of pure evil. Nonetheless, the three caves that appear in Middle-earth; Menegroth, Nogrod and Belegost do break with this stigma quite spectacularly. These three caves are actually realms that belong either to Thingol and Melian or to Dwarven civilizations. This means that the caves described in Middle-earth in *The Silmarillion*, are not so dark as could be imagined. Thingol, as well as the Dwarves, find in these caverns a refuge, an abode, a place where they can live safe from Morgoth’s threads. However, fire is still present especially in the Dwarven realms, as they need fire to work as smiths.

Therefore, it may be argued that depending on the characters related not only to caves and mountains, but to the surroundings, the perception of such places may change. A mountain from where one can see smoke, a deep mist, darkened lands, poisoned rivers, dead trees, deforested zones... may indicate the presence of a character whose goal is that of killing nature and rotting it. Notwithstanding, the Dwarven caves do not share such a terrible environment even if they are not the most loved characters either, but how is it possible to describe similar

spaces like a mountain or a cave and perceive such dissimilar connotations depending on the characters? How are these characters that change the perception of their surroundings so much?

3.2.3. Aulë and the Dwarves

Aman is the imperishable land, the land created by Eru Ilúvatar, where apart from the land, he creates some angelical entities called the Ainur, from which Morgoth was the most powerful one. They are his first creation but after them came the Valar, the Powers of Arda who shaped the world, as each one of them ruled different elements of nature. Manwë is the ruler of the winds and the clouds, Varda is in charge of the light, Ulmo is the Lord of Waters... Once all of them were created, Eru wanted to create his first children, the Children of Ilúvatar, who would be known as Elves and Men. However, one of the Valar, and among the most important ones for this dissertation, Aulë, the mightiest smith, contributed to the creation of another race, the race of the Dwarves. The aim of this subsection is to analyze the origin and the creation of the Dwarven race, which has been usually stigmatized due to the landscape they come from: the underground.

Aulë's "lordship is over all the substances of which Arda is made [and]... the fashioning of all lands was his labour" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27) therefore, he decided to go a step further with his ability to create and he designed the race of the Dwarves, which brought a reply from the Creator, Ilúvatar as he is the only one with the right to create his children. As a matter of fact, Aulë designed the Dwarven race in the darkness of the mountains, hiding his creation from Eru. That is why neither the Dwarves nor their abodes, the darkness of the caverns in the mountains, perceive a great appreciation from the rest of the races. Their own creation was already something that went against the One's commandments. The creation of the Dwarves was a kind of a rebellious act from Aulë, who did disobey his lord's order. Aulë's intention

was absolutely not that of disobeying him; however, his act did cause retaliation. The fact of having one Creator makes the rest who follow him take a stance as their subjects, for those who do not follow Eru's words, are automatically stigmatized and seen as evil or rebels just because they do not want to subdue anyone. In addition, according to Olszanski "creative passion not being evil in itself, all too often leads to evil" (299) and this is what happened with the smith Valar, he wanted to share his skills as a smith with the rest of the Valar. Aulë is the responsible one for the smithery skills that the Dwarves possess. He is the one who teaches them about the value of the stone, the gems that can be found after a long excavation in the depth of the mines and more specifically about the hidden beauty that resides in the wilderness found in a cave, usually undervalued by the rest of races. This love towards the stone is what actually distinguishes the Dwarves from the rest of beings. It is as if they felt the life of the stones out of which the caverns are made. "Their close contact with the stone makes them more aware than others of the life of the earth, of its mingled strength and fragility" (Besson xxiii). They develop the ability to feel empathy for their abodes, caves are not just where they live, but also from where they were created. Caves for the Dwarves mean everything, the greatest and most comfortable location they can think of. Similar to the explanation Cirlot gives "Caves, with their darkness, are womb-symbols" (40). Dwarves feel more than comfortable inside their caves, they know all the secret paths and gates that the characteristic darkness hides, they feel safe, as in the maternal womb. They live in the womb of the earth, and this is something not all races can brag of.

As far as Aulë is concerned, "his are the gems that lie deep in the Earth and the gold that is fair in the hand, no less than the walls of the mountains and the basins of the sea" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27). Such is his mastery in terms of smithery, that not only does he teach his children, the Dwarves, but he is also hated by Morgoth, due to his power to create a whole new race, a power related to his proficiency with craftsmanship. In fact, according to Tolkien,

there are not so many dissimilarities between the smith Valar and the Dark Lord. As a matter of fact, both demonstrate being very capable of creating, both show their ambition when constructing completely new things, but still, once again, the connotation each one of them irradiates is different. The main reason for Aulë to be positively perceived is that all in all, his intention is good. He does not create the Dwarves with the idea of going against Eru. He creates the Dwarves, with the objective of sharing his skills with the rest of the Valar, as well as so that these creatures can appreciate the beauty Eru has created. “Aulë remained faithful to Eru and submitted all that he did to his will; and he did not envy the works of others, but sought and gave counsel” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27). The main difference that can be found between Aulë and Morgoth is that the previous one repented, whereas the latter one followed his ambition and did not care about Eru. In fact, this is a question that Olszanski himself asks, “are not the other of the Valar proud? do they not experience the passion of creation, exceeding the limits set to them? do they not, in different ways, desire power?” (299). The answer to these questions is absolutely yes; however, there is a huge difference among the Valar and Morgoth, and this difference resides, basically, in repentance. “Melkor ... has not repented and humbled himself like Aulë” (Olszanski 299).

Nevertheless, even if Aulë asked for Ilúvatar’s pardon, his creation is never as well seen or perceived as the Elves or Men are. First of all, because although Aulë repents, and Eru accepts his apologies, this does not mean that Aulë did not receive a punishment. In fact, due to this punishment, Dwarves may have lessened their status as a race. As Dwarves are actually the first race in Middle-earth but as Rebecca Brackmann stays “the Dwarves ... are not the chosen people, the Children of Ilúvatar” (87). As a matter of fact, as a consequence of not being the chosen ones, Aulë promises to hide them underneath the mountains “they shall sleep now in the darkness under stone, and shall not come forth until the Firstborn have awakened upon Earth” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 44). Thus, Aulë created his Dwarves “strong to endure ... stone-

hard, stubborn, fast in friendship and in enmity ...” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 44). Still, besides their strength and ability to work under an unbearable heat in the depth of their mines, Brackman claims that “dwarves are also denied participation in the heroic ethos of Tolkien’s world” and, she adds that “dwarves are not heroes ... [and] some are tricky and treacherous” (92). It is true that some of the Dwarves created by Aulë are depicted as greedy creatures. However, all along the works by J.R.R. Tolkien, a huge progress is noticeable in terms of the personality of the Dwarves as it will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

Thus, both Aulë and Melkor created their own creatures. Aulë gave life to the Dwarven race through the stones of the mountain and set them in their darkness. His aim was to contribute to the beauty of Eä by providing dissimilar characters with different taste towards nature, creating a more multicultural world. However, Melkor, on the other side of the story, created his Orcs in the darkness of his strongholds and he also set them there. Melkor’s aim was that of becoming the most powerful character with a huge army of thralls who showed quite an aggressive attitude towards all kinds of life. Mountains and caves, hence, may be attached to dissimilar characters, but depending on their values and attitudes, their connotations are different.

3.2.4. Yavanna and the Elves

In contrast with the Dwarves, Tolkien also depicted another race, which in a way, symbolizes just the opposite of what the Naugrim do. This race is one of the creations of Eru Ilúvatar: the race of the Elves. These beings, apart from being part of the chosen ones by Ilúvatar, are also venerated by the Valar Yavanna, also known as “the giver of fruits” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27).

Yavanna, the giver of fruits or the Queen of Earth, as her mere nicknames indicate, is Valar fully connected with nature. But not with any kind of nature, she has a commitment to the *growing* nature. “She is the lover of all things that grow in the earth” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27). She is so committed to the growing nature that even she is said to have taken the shape of a tree herself “some there are who have seen her standing like a tree under heaven, crowned with the Sun; and from all its branches there spilled a golden dew upon the barren earth, and it grew green with corn” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 27-28). The fact of being under the sun suggests the idea of Yavanna’s need for the nature of the outside. She is like a real plant who needs to be fed from the sun in order to live. In contrast with Aulë, Yavanna is in love with the outside nature, and she is responsible for the planting of the two trees of Valinor. It is because of her presence that Valinor is lightened and hence life is possible. She takes care of these two trees by visiting the mound Ezellohar, where she planted them, every day. She is so in love with growing trees that when her fiancé Aulë creates the Dwarves, she is afraid of the possible injuries these creatures from the underground may cause to her beloved trees. “Yavanna continues to believe that the Dwarves will disrespect trees and plants because they were not designed to appreciate them as Elves were” (Seymour 35). This is probably one of the clearest examples through which the stigma towards the Dwarven race is perceived. Most characters are afraid of the Dwarven culture, they are completely misunderstood as they simply do not follow some patterns, such as the pattern of beauty and taste towards nature. Not even Yavanna, the wife of the mere creator of Dwarves, feels safe of their existence. She prejudices them due to their different taste. Nonetheless, Dwarves demonstrate loving nature and being completely caring, in contrast with the evil characters that also live in the darkness of caves.

Another interesting point regarding Yavanna is that when Melkor and Ungoliant kill Laurelin and Telperion, Yavanna is extremely touched by this loss and feels the necessity of bringing the light and the life back to Valinor, though she knows only with the light of the

Silmarils will she be able to do so. Fëanor, the creator of the Silmarils, nonetheless, rejects her quest and the so-known *sleep of Yavanna* begins. Her sleep starts when her trees are killed, and hence the light is gone and it lasts until with the help of Nienna and her spouse Aulë, after the planting of a leaf and a fruit of the already dead trees, they recreate the light again. Her sleep is a metaphor for the sleep of nature, a nature that during this ‘sleep’ is hurt and almost nonexistent. Once again, in contrast to her husband, Yavanna shows her devotion to the race of the Elves, who are the dwellers of forests of splendour beauty such as Rivendell or Lothlórien. Elven realms and aesthetics have been always appreciated by almost everyone in Arda as well as by the scholars who study Tolkien’s works. Jessica Seymour confirms this idea completely when she claims that “there is a clear link between how safe the characters feel, and how many trees and plants happen to be growing nearby” (32). That means, that the stigma Aulë’s Dwarves and his realms have does not exist in the Elven world, precisely because, in contrast to the Dwarves, Elves live surrounded by green nature, and that means being healthy and happy, as if living in these idyllic realms was the only possibility of wellness and beauty. In addition, Seymour has also claimed that the Dwarven worlds have only been studied as a contrast to the beauty and perfection of Elven realms and nature because most scholars “marginalise Dwarvish engagements with the natural world because they do not fit [into the canons of beauty of the Elven realms]”. She complains about this mistreatment towards the dwarves by saying that “Dwarves are only ... mentioned ... as a negative point of contrast; a way to highlight the goodness of Elves ...” (32). Similarly, Karen Sullivan has stated that “plants sustain life, and the peaceful cultivation of crops is in Tolkien’s model the complete antithesis of obtaining incredible objects by force” (93). This means that it is easy to take a stance on the Elven aesthetics, as it is closer to the traditional idea of beauty. As a matter of fact, such is the importance given to them and to their aesthetics that even if the great smiths are, without any doubt, Aulë’s Dwarves, the ones who give the title to this novel, are, once

again, the Elves, more specifically, the Noldor. They created the so powerful and valuable gems known as the Silmarils. Their power is actually so big that even Melkor feels the necessity of owning them in order to be the most powerful being of Arda.

Nevertheless, once again, Tolkien proposes quite a special character who actually belongs to these two confronted worlds. This character shows how cultures may be attached to specific places; however, this does not mean that these places are exclusive for them. This character is no other than Eöl, the Dark Elf. Eöl is an Eldar, who actually demonstrates being a very uncommon Elf. He lives in a forest, as the rest of Elves do, however, far from the splendid lights usually found in the Elven forests, Eöl lives in Nan Elmoth, to which one will arrive from one of the two roads that come from the Blue Mountains. The atypical characteristic of this forest is that it is described as a forest where the trees “were the tallest and darkest in all Beleriand, and there the sun never came” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 132) and one might think of Eöl as a sad Elf because of his living situation, but far from this idea, “there he lived in deep shadow, loving the night and the twilight under the stars” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 132). Thence, besides the uncommon abode where he lives, his personality is also different from the rest of Elves as even if most Elves do not like Dwarven culture and appearance, nor do they visit Dwarven lands and Eöl is a frequent guest in both Nogrod and Belegost, the Dwarven realms in Ered Luin. Furthermore, he does not have any prejudice against the Dwarves and their culture, he usually shares long conversations with the Naugrim and as their friendship grows, he learns about the art of craftsmanship: “he would at times go and dwell as guest in the deep mansions of Nogrod or Belegost. There he learned much of metalwork” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 133). Through these kinds of characters, Tolkien may be suggesting the possibility of a nonsegregated world, where people decide where to live and who to be surrounded by. As in the case of Eöl, who knows his Elven condition and he loves the forests as the rest of Elves do; nonetheless, he is intelligent enough to open his mind and take

advantage of the mighty smiths that live inside Nogrod and Belegost, which he definitely find beautiful, and learn from them. He is an Elf living in the deep darkness of a forest, which may have the look of a cave as well. Nevertheless, he loves and embraces this different forest with the darkness it involves and lives happily there. The forest of Nan Elmoth may be depicted as a cave due to the darkness these trees involve and it is near the Dwarven realms in the Blue Mountains. This story is straightforwardly connected to the destruction of Gondolin, as Maeglin, Eöl and Aredhel's son is the one who brought the chaos to it. Tolkien himself wrote the long tales that can be found in the story of *The Silmarillion*, *The Fall of Gondolin*, *The Children of Húrin* and *Beren and Lúthien*, separately to go deeper in details about the story of his Legendarium. Hence these long stories and the depiction of the alpine landscapes will be analyzed in the following subchapter.

3.3. The Long Tales: *The Children of Húrin*, *The Fall of Gondolin* and *Beren and Lúthien*

These long stories are part of *The Silmarillion*; however, J.R.R. Tolkien did write three separate novels in which the focus was only on the main characters of each one of the stories, apart from the rest that appear in the whole work of *The Silmarillion*. That is the reason why I find it interesting to make a separate analysis of the mountains and subterranean worlds that appear in these stories. Some of them have been already analyzed as part of *The Silmarillion*, as they belong to the same world, thus, these are just going to be named or only a little explanation with new information will be added.

The first story to be analyzed is *The Children of Húrin* (2007). This long tale tells the story of how Morgoth put a spell on Húrin's children because when the Dark Lord imprisoned him, he asked about the exact location of the hidden city of Gondolin, but Húrin did not tell him a word and thence, Melkor decided to condemn Húrin's children. Therefore, this long story

is about Húrin's children, Túrin and later his daughter Niënor. The adventure is basically focused on Túrin's life from his childhood to his death. His life is full of travels all around Middle-earth where he visits different forests, dales, mountains and, of course, caves.

From the very beginning of the story, mountains are highly visible. The first one being named is that of the Crissaegrim, which has been analysed in the previous chapter; however, what is interesting is to see how from the very first pages, the reader knows about the exact location of the city of Gondolin through the eyes of Thorondor. The walls of the Crissaegrim seem to be of extreme verticality due to the impossibility of climbing them, besides, Thorondor appears flying with his eagles towards the Vale of Tumladen, which is protected by such walls: "The eagles bore them up and brought them beyond the Encircling Mountains to the secret vale of Tumladen and the hidden city of Gondolin" (Tolkien, *Children* 23).

In general terms, *The Children of Húrin* introduces mountains with a threatening connotation. In most of the occasions, they play the role of a menacing natural place, where the wilderness perceived by the character near them actually makes them feel uneasy. This uneasiness is caused due to several reasons such as the hard times climbing such a mountain might mean or even because of the fear of the heights "the up-climbing is painful, and from high places it is easy to fall low" (Tolkien, *Children* 29).

Once Húrin leaves his home in Hithlum, Morwen, his wife, decides to leave Túrin in Doriath, in Thingol's and Melian's dwelling as there he will be protected by the previously mentioned girdle of Melian. Meanwhile, Morwen stays in Hithlum, a location near the icy Helcaraxë, which gives her a reputation among the attacking Men who assail Hithlum. They are so afraid of the surroundings of the dark and cold land, of the rumours of the strength of the people living there, that they fear attacking someone like Morwen: "they dared not yet lay hands on the Lady of Dor-Lómin, or thrust her from her house; for the word ran among them that she was perilous, and a witch ... for this reason also feared and avoided the mountains in

which many of the Eldar had taken refuge” (Tolkien, *Children* 44). The mountains, as well as the rough weather there, are associated with extreme danger. Certainly, for scholars like Bernbaum, “the fascination that [mountains] inspire leads to feelings of love and devotion so intense that we would give anything, even our lives, to remain in its presence” (Introduction 5). However, mountains often are scary to the human eye, as it is in the case of the Men who were about to attack Hithlum and its mountains. The breathtaking presence of mountains and the fear they cause may lead to some rumours that make the potential climbers, in this case, the Men who wanted to attack Hithlum be more scared. As Bernbaum has stated, “the unknown also possesses a darker, more dangerous side; ... [and] it may hold our damnation. The person who ventures into an unexplored range or tries to climb an unclimbed peak always harbours some fear that instead of what he seeks, he will find disaster and death” (7). Following with the power of rumours about mountains and the people who dwell in them, there is another case in which Túrin himself, an adventurous man, familiar to wild landscapes, warns his friend Sador about the negativity of some Men who come from the mountains “my father ... says that the Men that have lately come over the mountains are hardly better than Orcs” (Tolkien, *Children* 29). This means that characters are affected by the mountains and their connotations and thence, they create a reputation associated with the landscape they come from.

The mountain range that appears on various occasions is the Ered Wethrin, also known as the Mountains of Shadow. As the name suggests, the environment of such a mountain range is not a very illuminated one. Hence, following the idea of fear caused by darkness, it is easy to have a preconceived idea of their actual look and atmosphere. In fact, Fingon, the ruler of the Noldor Elves, who governs over Dor-lómin and Hithlum, (the lands where the Ered Wethrin is set), describes it as: “Ered Wethrin, well hid from the eyes of the Enemy” however, “he knew that it was very great” (Tolkien, *Children* 34). Thence, this mountain range could be interpreted as a huge wall against the foes, as a fortress where not only its strong appearance but also the

raw weather help protecting oneself from Morgoth's attacks. Notwithstanding, Ered Wethrin, similar to what happens with its surroundings, is not for everyone. Even Túrin, who is used to climbing mountains says that "one man alone could not hope at that time, to come through the passes of the Mountains of Shadow" (Tolkien, *Children* 66).

As far as caves are concerned even if most of the feelings towards them all along *The Silmarillion* have been usually quite negative, Túrin is not afraid of them. He does not feel any repulse towards them, in fact, the reader learns that "nine years Túrin dwelt in the halls of Menegroth" (Tolkien, *Children* 53) and every time he wanted to repair his arms, he knew that none but the Dwarves in the caves would help him best. "... desiring rest and needing smithwork for the repair of his arms he came unlooked-for to Menegroth" (Tolkien, *Children* 56). Nevertheless, the surroundings of the caves still continue adding more reasons for people to feel uncomfortable around them: "there the land was drier and barer, as it began to climb up into the moorlands. ... Túrin and his men were sheltering in a holly-thicket; and beyond it was a treeless space, in which there were many great stones" (Tolkien, *Children* 78-79). The surroundings of caves are always depicted as barren spaces where nature is almost dead giving them the opposite connotation of the growing nature venerated by the Elves.

As a grown-up man, Túrin leaves Doriath and chooses to follow the wildlife with other outlaws. During one day, they meet Mîm the Dwarf. Unfortunately, the group of outlaws kills Mîm's sons and in exchange for his life, Mîm promises to lead them to his cave, where he hides a lot of treasures, but what is appealing about this passage is the way in which the roughness of the path towards the cave is depicted. As far as the ascension starts, Túrin asks the Dwarf about the length of their way, to what the Dwarf answers: "all day until dusk, if we start now" (Tolkien, *Children* 81) making it clear that the way to the cave is a long and a really hard one. They have to climb the Amon Rûdh, a hill of stone: "then suddenly there was a rockwall before them, flat-faced and sheer, forty feet high, maybe, but dusk dimmed the sky above them and

guess was uncertain” (Tolkien, *Children* 82). The Amon Rûdh is depicted as a high mountain as “upon its north side there stood out from it a shelf ... which could not be seen from below” in addition, “far behind it stood the hill-crown like a wall, and west and east from its brink sheer cliffs fell” (Tolkien, *Children* 83). The hill was quite resounding and, as a matter of fact, not everyone could climb it as “[it] could ... be reached with ease by those who knew the way” (Tolkien, *Children* 83). Such is the prominence given to Amon Rûdh that even the climbers give human characteristics to it as if it was a living entity within the story “Amon Rûdh ... for a few it has eyes and ears” (Tolkien *Children* 94). Nonetheless, once they arrive at the cave, after having suffered significantly, the feeling they perceive is a nice one. “As for our life here, we are secure, or so it seems” (Tolkien, *Children* 85).

After some years of journeys, and many disgraces lived by Túrin, such as the death of many of his companions, Morwen and his daughter Niënor know about the absence of their relative in Doriath. Hence, Morwen decides to leave Niënor in Thingol’s kingdom and look for his son in the wilderness. However, Niënor escapes with the intention of finding her brother but Melkor and Glaurung, his dragon, found her and bewitch Niënor making her forget about her past. Thus, when both siblings meet, they do not recognize each other and they fall in love. Some years go by and some rumours reach Niënor’s ears about his husband’s death in the hands of the dragon Glaurung. Thence, she decides to look for the dragon and here comes the appealing part of the story as Tolkien demonstrates that one always knows where to find a dragon, it is not in a tamed landscape, but in the wilderness of a mountain. She knows where to go, she knows where a dragon lays and she even feels afraid of her way up the mountain. In fact, as Marjorie Hope Nicolson states in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (1997): “human response to mountains has been influenced by inherited conventions ... but even more profoundly it has been motivated by man’s conception of the world which he inhabits” (3). She goes to Amon Ethir and “slowly she

climbed the path that led up from the east. And as she claimed so the fog grew thinner, until she came at last out into the sunlight on the bare summit” (Tolkien, *Children* 135). Amon Ethir is depicted introducing some signs of the presence of a volcanic mountain. Even if it is not a volcano, there is mist around, which could simulate the smoke of the fire in a volcano as well as the presence of a fire-dragon, Glaurung. Taking into account the perception that fire has all along Tolkien’s work, to think about the negativity this hill may suggest is logic. As a matter of fact, both siblings, Niënor first and Túrin after her, end their lives due to the lies Glaurung tells them about the other’s death. Niënor threw herself from the ravine and Túrin, after killing the dragon, killed himself with his own sword. It seems that Tolkien suggests that not only the dragon but also the mountain’s atmosphere, the feelings that lurk there made both siblings go insane and commit suicide. Thus, settings influence the characters, as well as the characters, influence the setting. This is known as geographical determinism, what Meyer and Guss define as “an overriding or predominant focus on the role of environmental factors relative to the social ones in explaining a given situation of nature-society interaction” (7).

The second long tale is called *The Fall of Gondolin* and it is obviously, set in the hidden city of Gondolin, where Tuor, son of Húor wants to warn Turgon, King of Gondolin about the possible perils that may arrive at Gondolin due to Morgoth’s attacks. Gondolin, being a city hidden by the Encircling Mountains, is considered a mountainous place with diverse connotations that will be analyzed in this subchapter.

Gondolin is introduced as an extremely beautiful city, with all the astonishing imagery that a wild landscape can offer. As Lama Anagarika, a Tibetan practitioner, states about the feeling of the sublime when seeing a particular mountain, some people “overwhelmed by the mere presence of such a mountain ... [people] cannot express their feelings other than by worship” (Besson 1). Tuor’s situation is not so close to a religious experience, however, the very first moment in which he appreciates the location where the city of Gondolin is, he feels

astonished: “then they [Tuor and Voronwë] looked up and could see ... they were at the foot of steep hills ... nearer to that place where they stood, was a great hill with a level top, and upon that summit rose a city ...” (Tolkien, *Fall* 32). He is so amazed by his sights that he cannot believe what he sees and he even makes a reference to the divine: “it stands fair to see and very clear, and its towers prick the heavens above the Hill of Watch in the midmost plain” (Tolkien, *Fall* 33). The mountain where Gondolin is set is called the Hill of Watch, which makes a straightforward reference to its height and the main purpose of the city, that of watching so that its inhabitants can be prepared for the attack of Morgoth. It is basically portrayed as a fortress, where the main city is in the middle of the mountain denoting power and divinity and its walls are those of the mountains around it. “Tuor looked upon the walls of stone, and the uplifted towers, ... and he looked upon the stairs of stone and marble ... and he fared as one in some dream of the Gods, for he deemed not such things were seen by men” (Tolkien, *Fall* 33).

In contrast to the perception of mountains as a threatening set, in *The Fall of Gondolin*, as mountains are exactly what protect the gorgeous city of Gondolin, they are more venerated than in other stories of *The Silmarillion*. As a matter of fact, when Tuor speaks with Turgon about the situation with Morgoth, of how he is conquering everything, Turgon speaks worried about their cherished mountains “Nay, if thou dost not now dare greatly then will the Orcs dwell forever and possess in the end most of the mountains of the Earth” (Tolkien, *Fall* 35). Another interesting and positive characteristic related to mountains is the fact of considering them a place where someone may want to go looking for comfort and peace. “Tuor left his singing and departed to lonely places in the mountains” (Tolkien, *Fall* 73).

Therefore, in general terms, in this novel, mountains reflect positiveness; however, not all of them receive that appreciation. Such is the case of the Mountains of Iron, where Morgoth abodes. Tuor himself experiences the secret paths that can be found in Morgoth’s realm which

is full of “many secret tunnels” (Tolkien, *Fall* 31) and he gets lost so many times that “[he] climbed often to the tops of knolls and hills scanning the lands about” (Tolkien, *Fall* 31). Thence, in contrast to the rest of alpine landscapes that appear in *The Fall of Gondolin*, the one ‘belonging’ to the Dark Lord is, like his soul, completely darkened. In fact, as far as Melkor’s darkening is concerned, according to the description of many landscapes, they show that every time he is present, they darken their surroundings, their ambience changes and even the colour of the sky becomes different. This is definitely another case in which geographical determinism plays a major role. In addition, Melkor is directly connected to fire and all its negative connotations, that is why even when he lurks around, the colour of the fire follows him. Whenever the dwellers of Gondolin see these red lights near, they perceive it as the signal of the devil. “a new light suddenly began, and a glow there was, but it was beyond the northward heights” (Tolkien, *Fall* 46), which means that from the height of the mountains these lights could be seen. Melkor makes sure that everyone can see him come. He makes a kind of splendid entrance in the neighbouring lands and the negativity of his presence spreads around the landscape: “the light waxed and became yet redder, and ... men saw the snow upon the mountains dyed as it were with blood” (Tolkien, *Fall* 46).

An important fact in this story is actually the treachery of Maeglin, son of Eöl the Dark Elf, who one day while he is lurking in the Encircling Mountains, Morgoth’s servants catch him and in exchange for the location of the hidden city, Morgoth promises him many lands and power, as well as the hand of Idril, Tuor’s wife. Thus, Maeglin betrays his people and tells Morgoth about the secret ways towards Gondolin. As far as he gets near the city, all the nature around starts being killed by his pass: “then the Balrogs continued to shoot darts of fire and flaming arrows like small snakes into the sky, and these fell upon the roofs and gardens of Gondolin till all the trees were scorched, and the flowers and grass burned up, and the whiteness of those walls ... was blackened” (Tolkien, *Fall* 52). Furthermore, once Morgoth attacks

Gondolin, the references to the presence of fire are perpetual. The mountains and their surroundings receive the 'volcanic look' once again. "The fume of the burning, and the steam of the fair fountains of Gondolin withering in the flame of the dragons of the North, fell upon the vale in mournful mists" (Tolkien, *Fall* 90). This states the idea of the closeness of fire and evil. Fire is used by Tolkien as the main image of destruction as with it, Morgoth perverts and kills the nature that surrounds him.

Taking into account that Maeglin is the main guilty of the fall of the city, it is essential to know more about him and how people perceive his presence. As already mentioned, he is the son of Eöl and Aredhel. When he was a child, he used to spend time with his father in the caves of Menegroth. Similarly to his father, he learned a lot from the smith Dwarves. Being a smith Elf was something not very common; however, Eöl's lifestyle is not a usual one among Elves either. Nevertheless, his father was a good friend of the Naugrim, whereas Maeglin "less fair ... than most of his goodly folk ... of none too kindly mood, ... he won small love" (Tolkien, *Fall* 39). He is also the great betrayer of the story, thence, he is so stigmatized, that "whispers there were that he had Orc's blood in his veins" (Tolkien, *Fall* 39). This last statement can be interpreted in two different ways. The first one is about Maeglin being a smith and a common guest in the caves of Menegroth. Therefore, he could be regarded as a Dwarf friend and consequently seen from a negative perspective or the second one is about his inner malice and thence, his similarity with Melkor's Orcs. In any case, he emits a negative aura among the rest of the characters and that may be due to his dark personality, more similar to that of Melkor. Finally, after Morgoth's attack on Gondolin, Tuor, Idril and their son Eärendil get to escape from the city through a hidden tunnel that is built inside the mountains. Thus, the darkness of the tunnel inside the mountain illustrates the power of mountains as a way to escape from evil.

Overall, the depiction of mountains in *The Fall of Gondolin* differs from the dominant one in *The Children of Húrin* as in general terms the latter describes orogenies with a threatening connotation through examples like Hithlum or the Ered Wethrin and even the ascent of Amon Rûdh. Whereas *The Fall of Gondolin* usually depicts mountains with a more positive point of view, often related to divine entities or as a shelter against Morgoth. Nevertheless, there are still some exceptions in which mountains do provoke negativity. That is the case of The Mountains of Iron, which are Morgoth's abode and hence, due to the geographical determinism, the Dark Lord's presence affects directly on the surroundings and on the mountains.

The last long story of *The Silmarillion* is called *Beren and Lúthien* (2017), which does also offer different perspectives of alpine landscapes. *Beren and Lúthien* is the love story between a mortal Man and an Elf. It is actually because of the love these two characters feel to one another that the adventure starts. Lúthien is the daughter of Thingol and Melian, King and Queen of Doriath. After the Dagor Bragollach in which Morgoth had conquered many locations in Middle-earth, Beren decides to go to Doriath where he meets Lúthien and falls in love with her. However, Thingol does not like Beren and hence, he proposes to him to steal one of the Silmarils from Morgoth's crown. Beren, who knows that this will be the only way of marrying Lúthien, accepts the challenge and it is during his journey back and forth towards Melkor's realm that he is involved in all the alpine landscapes worth mentioning.

Beren is said to be among the strongest Men, but not only because of his physical power. In fact, his strength is measured by his achievement of having climbed such a mountain range like the Iron Mountains. The fact of going there alone gives him the heroism expected from a Man: "Beren ... was braver than most, as thou shalt hear ... the love of wandering maybe alone... had sped him through the terrors of the Iron Mountains until he reached the land's beyond" (Tolkien, *Beren* 41). Certainly, this feeling of love towards the wilderness and the

willingness of wandering in perilous mountains happens to be a common trait among mountaineers even nowadays. This is, for example, what Françoise Besson states about contemporary alpinism: “today, in ... modern world, mountains are regarded as embodiments of humanity’s highest ideals and aspirations. Expeditions to Mount Everest and other high peaks stand out as symbols of supreme efforts, of attempts by men and women to overcome their limitations” (2). Thus, Beren’s heroism resides in the efforts of going through really tough landscapes, like the Iron Mountains, for example. The fact of considering someone a hero because of the climbing of a peak does give to the orogenies a special power and strength. It makes them look as perilous places where not everyone can go. Besides their perilous look, these mountains are also depicted as a kind of maze where getting lost is easy. In fact, Lúthien, escaping from her father’s realm in search of Beren is followed by Dairon, one of Thingol’s servants and he gets lost in the mountains frequently: “Dairon ... following after her [Lúthien] became utterly lost” (Tolkien, *Beren* 56). Therefore, mountains in *Beren and Lúthien* are generally portrayed as a threatening place, more similar to those in *The Children of Húrin* than those in *The Fall of Gondolin*.

As far as caves are concerned, the most attractive aspect in this novel is how instead of being part of the evil characters’ world only, they also appear in the side of the good characters, such as Finrod’s. Finrod is Lady Galadriel’s brother, a common guest in Thingol’s Menegroth, which as previously mentioned, was designed by the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains. Finrod is so obsessed with these caves that Thingol tells him about the caves in Narog: “Finrod was filled with wonder at the strength and majesty of Menegroth, its treasures and armouries and its many-pillared halls of stone; and it came to his heart that he would build wide halls ... beneath the hills” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 114). Thus, Finrod with the help of the Dwarves built his own stronghold, Nargothrond. In addition, the Dwarves give him a new nickname, Felagund, which means ‘maker of caves’. Taking into account how essential caves are for the

Dwarven race, the fact of giving an Elf, which is supposed to be the opposite race such a nickname may be regarded as a proper sign of friendship: “there in Nargothrond Finrod made his home with many of his people, and he was named in the tongue of the Dwarves Felagund, Hewer of Caves; and that name he bore thereafter until his end” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 114). In his journey towards Morgoth’s throne, Beren gets the help of the people of Menegroth who end up being captured by Morgoth’s allies and are killed one by one by Thû, the Lord of the Werewolves, who ends up being the second Dark Lord, Sauron. The atmosphere that one can feel near Thû’s abode is similar to the one found near Morgoth. “That mournful land beyond the valley’s northern mouth. Thence could be glimpsed the fields of drouth, the dusty dunes, the desert wide ... now in that hill was the abode of one most evil and ... he watched with sleepless eyes of flame” (Tolkien, *Beren* 125). Once again, the surrounding lands where the evil dwells are depicted as barren, without nature, enclosed by dead environment and references to fire, like those in the eyes of the wolf, are still present.

On her way to meet Beren again, Lúthien finds Huan, the dog who helps her in her journey and saves her from many foes. He is extremely strong and he can only be defeated by someone with greater force than him. Meanwhile, Beren gets captivated in Angband and it is Lúthien, who with the help of Huan delivers Beren after having killed the wolf Draugluin. Through Lúthien’s magic, the lovers take the shape of a bat and of Draugluin so that they can enter into Morgoth’s realm. There, Beren steals one of the Silmarils from the Dark Lord’s crown. However, at the gates of the realm, Carcharoth the Werewolf awaits them and he bites Beren’s hand, swallowing the Silmaril. This moment is quite interesting as it demonstrates how characters’ actions do affect nature as when Carcharoth bites Beren’s hand “Carcharoth burned with a fire of anguish and torment, when the Silmaril touched his evil flesh, and he fled howling ... so that all the mountains shuddered” (Tolkien, *Beren* 138).

It may be argued that in this particular situation, mountains are on the side of the good characters, who when they listen to the cry of the evil character of Carcharoth, besides their steadiness and strength, still feel scared. Nevertheless, even if Tolkien may want to suggest that mountains are on the good side, the story of Beren and Lúthien still portrays some of these mountains quite negatively. However, the reason for this negativity is once again forced by the presence of Morgoth. The mere way to Angband already gives a glimpse of the kind of landscape that Beren and Lúthien will find: “the rocks were reared like bony teeth, and claws that grasped from opened sineath, on either side the mournful road that onward led to that abode far up the Mountain dark with tunnels drear and portals stark” (Tolkien, *Beren* 189). When Morgoth goes outside his own temple in the Iron Mountains, the mere palace trembles due to the malice Morgoth emanates: “Then Morgoth came. For the last time in those great wars, he dared to climb from subterranean throne profound, the rumour of his feet a sound of rumbling earthquake underground” (Tolkien, *Beren* 191). This last point is quite remarkable because Tolkien suggests that the rot of nature, the death of the surrounding landscapes and even the reputation some of these places have is connected to Morgoth’s attendance. Even the sounds he provokes influence on nature, on the earth in this case. Furthermore, and with the intention of intensifying the devilish environment in Morgoth’s world, where, of course, the surroundings of his fortress are added, Angband is also known as “the halls of hate” (Tolkien, *Beren* 213), “the caverns drear” (Tolkien, *Beren* 204) and Morgoth is described as “the host of Hell” (Tolkien, *Beren* 203-204). In addition, another important characteristic that makes reference to the negativity that Morgoth irradiates towards the mountains is shown when in the moment in which Beren steals the Silmaril, Morgoth’s reaction is compared with a misty mountain. Taking into account the negative connotation that mist over a mountain may have, once again, the atmosphere and the feeling towards the character of Morgoth, as well as towards dark mountains, becomes severely negative: “the dark and mighty head was bowed; like

mountain-top beneath a cloud” (Tolkien, *Beren* 211). As a matter of fact, the environment in Angband is so disgusting and uncomfortable that the reader can appreciate the fresh air of the freedom Beren and Lúthien feel when they finally leave the Iron Mountains: “together fled they, by the beat affrighted of their flying feet” (Tolkien, *Beren* 214).

Thus, all along *The Silmarillion*, including the long tales, Tolkien demonstrates the huge respect he felt towards the wild, alpine landscapes. It confirms what Besson said: “the essential role played by mountains in the imaginary space of the world shows that from time immemorial there has been a dialogue between men and mountains” (xxii). After this analysis, one of the main conclusions is that there is a huge difference between the continent of Aman, from which only goodness, purity and beauty are expected and thence its landscapes are designed according to these values and beliefs, and those in Middle-earth, which show a bigger variation in terms of the connotation given to each one of the orogenies. It is also remarkable the way in which Tolkien gives emphasis to the landscapes that belong to the evil side of the story as they are clearly defined as a disgusting and uncomfortable setting, whereas those which do not belong to Morgoth, are more ambiguous in terms of their perception. All this means that Tolkien chooses ambivalence in terms of his perception of the alpine world in *The Silmarillion*.

4. *The Hobbit* and Its Alpine World

4.1. A Long Unexpected Journey Towards The Lonely Mountain

The Hobbit, published in 1937, also shows the huge prominence Tolkien gave to the alpine world. In fact, this novel is especially relevant as far as mountains and caves are concerned, precisely due to its main plot, as the story revolves around these wild landforms which will influence the characters involved in the tale in several ways. What makes this novel notably interesting is the fact that its main characters are no other than the previously described Dwarves, who with the help of a hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, will have to go on a perilous adventure into the wilderness until they arrive at their destination, the Lonely Mountain.

Mountains and caves are, without any doubt, the non-anthropomorphic protagonists in this novel. They do not only change the landscapes, their actual look, but also make it more difficult for the adventurers to fulfil their main aim, which is in fact, reaching the peak of these mountains. It is also appealing to see to what extent these orogenies affect the characters, taking into account that they belong to dissimilar races and hence they perceive the sublimity of the wild nature in general and mountains in particular differently. Their prominence is huge and they entail several interpretations. As Montserrat López Mújica has stated, mountains are usually portrayed as a threatening entity, arrogant, terrifying and even devilish. However, she also adds that they can likewise be considered as both, a damned place where many undesirable events take place, and also as a spot for refuge, a shelter (34-35). In fact, depending on the setting of the mountains, including the weather, their sharpness, and their access, they affect the characters in one way or another, as it will be analyzed throughout this chapter.

These differences in the perception of the mountain are constantly present from the very beginning of the novel and throughout the whole story as it offers the cultural clash between

many races in Middle-earth. The first two races and hence, cultures that do not get along well are the race of the Dwarves and that of the Hobbits. Thorin Oakenshield and his mates knock at Bilbo Baggins' door in the quiet Shire in order to start their adventure towards their homeland together with the help of their new 'burglar', Bilbo. As mentioned in the previous chapter in which the personality of the characters was explained, these two races belong to extremely different natural environments. The Dwarves belong to the deep caves of the mountains, while the Hobbits live in the calm Shire. Both spaces reflect opposite looks, surroundings and even weather conditions, and so are their people. Thus, as Mezquita Fernández has claimed, mountains [and landscapes in general] have always provided something to the human being. They condition the climate, the cattle and even the communication among adjoining communities (69). Bilbo, similarly to his home, is calm and he enjoys the peaceful nature of his beloved shire while he drinks tea and smokes a pipe. His home is an extremely well-organized hobbit hole, which is "a very comfortable tunnel ... with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 3). As a matter of fact, the very first lines of the novel already explain that even though it is a hole, Bilbo's home is not a common hole, "it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 3). Dwarves demonstrate having different habits and behaving in a way that actually irritates Mr Baggins. They are not so well organized, first of all, because they do not all arrive at the same time, they go in little separate groups, interrupting the rigid hobbit several times. Their education does not coincide at all with that of Bilbo's as they are noisy, very active and a little bit invasive, as they enter inside Bilbo's house "just as if [they] had been expected" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 8). They are, like the landscapes they are used to, wild. Apparently, there are quite a lot of differences that distance both the Dwarven and the Hobbit worlds. Nevertheless, they all have much in common and will actually learn to live and bear with these uncomfortable situations.

Bilbo, as a good Hobbit, likes having a routinary life but this changes dramatically at the arrival of Thorin's kin, who takes for granted Bilbo's participation in the long journey to the Lonely Mountain. However, the Hobbit can not give another answer than "sorry, I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 7). Not today, not tomorrow, never. Bilbo does not like the idea of changing his everyday life full of little pleasures, like drinking tea while looking at the tamed nature that surrounds him, in order to have a hard time while climbing extremely high mountains instead. He is definitely not born for adventures, or that is actually what he thinks. This portrayal of harmony between the character and the nature that surrounds him may suggest that the character's personality is usually shaped in concordance with the nature he is surrounded by. Bilbo is calm and enjoys the peace he experiences in the tamed Shire. The Hobbit, though, does like the wilderness; in fact, his personality is said to be divided into two different parts, his Baggins part and his Took side. The Baggins side is the side of his personality that actually adjusts better to the Hobbit life, nonetheless, the Took side is the one that gives impulse to him to break with the routine and go on different adventures. This feeling is seen for the first time just after his Baggins side has been completely defeated during the dinner with the Dwarves. However, just after Thorin and the other twelve Dwarves sing *Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold*, is when his Took side acts: "then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 16). This thought makes the reader see Bilbo as if he was another character, someone completely different. Nevertheless, it is his Tookish side the one that will motivate him all along the journey. However, his Baggins side is always present, until the very end, where a change in Bilbo's behaviour can be appreciated and even if there are moments in which he demonstrates having brave thoughts, his most hobbit-like attitude appears and makes him behave cowardly. This can be perceived in moments such as the one in which

he decides to go with the Dwarves to the Lonely Mountain. “Many a time afterwards the Baggins part regretted what he did now, and he said to himself: Bilbo, you were a fool; you walked right in and put your foot in it” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 18). He loves the idea of becoming an adventurer up in the mountains. Nevertheless, something inside him, as well as Thorin’s own warnings make him feel uneasy about the many dangers that may be awaiting them in their way and at the end of it, where they will have to face the biggest challenge of all, Smaug, the dragon. Thorin tells the aim of their journey, not lying, but being too intense and giving too much importance to his role in this story. “We shall soon before the break of day start on our long journey, a journey from which some of us, or perhaps all of us ... may never return” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 17). Hence, Bilbo’s inner fight is what will characterize him from now onwards. After his first encounter with the enthusiastic Dwarves, during the night before the adventure, and due to his fear of the unknown, Bilbo will have nightmares. “Bilbo went to sleep with that [the song] in his ears, and it gave him very uncomfortable dreams” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 26).

The Dwarves’ motivation, however, is a different one. First of all, they are the ones interested in getting their home and the treasure inside it back. They are, thence, motivated by their own interest. Thorin and company are used to the hard slopes, rough weather conditions and of course, darkness, they belong there. Nonetheless, there is a big problem to which they are not so used to, Smaug. This huge serpent has stolen their home and all their jewels. They are very committed to their aim, they sing about their situation, they describe many of the places of their halls with huge passion, they absolutely love their wild natural surroundings, and they are conscious about the problem that awaits them at home. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how “they speak of the dragon and of his violation and destruction of their kingdom [but] the song never actually depicts Smaug the dragon; he himself is not a character in [their] poem” (Olsen 33). The Dwarven race is quite a stubborn race that demonstrates

having a strong personality and clear values. They love what is of their own, they love their culture and the history of their ancestors, that is why they feel the necessity of reconquering the Lonely Mountain. However, many are the obstacles they will have to face throughout their way. These obstacles are portrayed not only in the wilderness of nature, but also in the shape of different creatures or monster-like characters.

The trolls are the first obstacle in their way. They appear while the Dwarves and Bilbo decide to rest a bit and see a red light which warns them about the presence of some not friendly beings. Before they can actually see what hides behind this light, the message the reader receives is that of warning and even danger as the light comes from a torch and the presence of fire always creates a state of caution. As a matter of fact, their state of fear increases as they see their actual location. They are, once again, afraid of the unknown, “these parts are none too well known” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 32). This fear caused by the ignorance of the actual look of these beings is understandable; however, they add that moreover, “[they] are too near the mountains” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 32). It is curious that the one who says this is one of the Dwarves, who actually belongs to the wild mountains. Thus, it is obvious that even if the characters belong to these places and are used to them, they may still feel afraid of them. Mountains are therefore definitely a natural phenomenon that does not leave anyone indifferent. As a matter of fact, as Pérez Ruiz claims, mountains are much more than mere landforms as they are places full of deep meanings (112) and thence they can provide shelter as well as a hard time on their way up. The important aspect here is that even the Dwarves relate the mountains with danger. They are afraid of the unknown trolls because they are close to the wild orogenies. Thence, the only way of overcoming this obstacle is no other than sending the hobbit towards them and see whether he can fix their problem “after all, we [the Dwarves] have got a burglar with us” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 32). The ones supposed to be more prepared to fight and to have a wild life are the responsible ones of sending the least prepared one, the one who does not like adventures

as they are “nasty disturbing uncomfortable things [and] make you late for dinner” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 6), to figure out what these strange beings are. It may be hard to believe that trolls, even if they are considered to be enemies of the protagonists, are not such a difficult obstacle in their way, at least if they are compared to the rest of creatures that Bilbo, Thorin and the rest of Dwarves will meet. Tolkien depicts quite foolish, ugly and bad spoken trolls who are scary but not so dangerous. They are described as “three large persons sitting round a very large fire of beech-locks” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 33) even if their look is not very pleasant, their behaviour is not an aggressive one; they are just sitting and eating peacefully. However, their attitude, their way of expressing adds extra information about their personality. They have quite bad manners, as they speak while they eat in a dirty way, while “licking the gravy off their fingers” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 33). Bilbo, a well-mannered hobbit is very aware of these trolls’ status, he, who gives importance to one’s manners and, of course, to the language is aware of their low speaking category, “which was not drawing-room fashion at all, at all” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 33). According to Corey Olsen, they are “comical figures, clearly designed to get laughs. They have working-class names and cockney accents, and they drink beer out of jugs” (49). In addition, if their comical look and speech were not enough, they are also said to “roll around on the ground, fighting like schoolboys” (Olsen 49-50). This comparison with schoolboys gives them the characteristic of not being serious and mature enough, as an adult would be, they are silly and childish instead.

The important fact about trolls, though, is their origin, as they are said to “come down from the mountains” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 33). So, similarly to the Dwarves, they also belong to the alpine world; however, their image and connotation are completely dissimilar. Trolls are on the evil side, whereas the Dwarves are not. Mountains, hence, can be the shelter not only of good characters but also of those considered evil. They are quite similar to the Dwarves in the fact that they live inside the caves of a mountain, therefore, they are used to the darkness and

the tunnelling life. Nonetheless, the description of their caves has nothing to do with that of the Dwarven great halls. Trolls' caves are said to be full of "bones on the floor and a nasty smell was in the air, but there was a good deal of food jumbled carelessly on shelves and on the ground" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 41). The environment inside of trolls' caves does not seem to be a *locus amoenus*, at all. Just the opposite, the description is quite negative, giving the caves located inside mountains an unfavourable association. As far as the darkness inside them is concerned, such is trolls' affiliation with the darkness that they are destroyed by the sunlight, as if a sunbeam touches them, they will automatically turn into stone. They are "living stone, animated by darkness, enormously strong, and delighting in murder" (Olsen 50).

This is the first case in which the stone is straightforwardly related to living creatures such as trolls, they are both creatures belonging to the stony caves as well as creatures that turn into stone. They can be said to belong to the mountain as when the sun touches them, they turn into the mere stone of the mountain. And this will not be the only case in which Tolkien gives life to the rock, as it will be explained later. Due to their appearance and their behaviour, these mountain-related trolls inspire fear all along their region. Apart from their physical appearance, the fact of being part of the caves in the mountain does also have to do with such a bad reputation. Hence, mountains and more specifically the dark caves inside them are an image of fear, rejection and complete respect. As Olsen adds, "even the Elves avoid the region for fear of them [the trolls]" (50).

As previously mentioned, the trolls are the first obstacle that Bilbo has to overcome and he does get into some trouble while trying to steal their wallets, as some of his Dwarf friends get captured by them. It is not until Gandalf the wise arrives, that they know about the actual danger they are going through. After all, they are trolls against little Dwarves and a Hobbit. After Gandalf's trickery against them, the trolls are more watchful of attacking their foes without paying any attention to their real foe, the sun. Thus, it is not Bilbo's first victory at all,

as he does not kill them. The trolls' ending takes place because they are defeated by "their own greed and their own quarrelsomeness" (Olsen 53). This case introduces the fight between light and darkness, in which the first one wins, as it ends with the evil characters.

4.1.1. The Last Homely House

While Bilbo and the Dwarves have been struggling with the trolls, Gandalf is away "[he] went up to spy out [their] road. It will soon become dangerous and difficult" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 42). Gandalf is the only one aware of the real hard situation the adventurers are going to go through. He knows many, if not all of the corners in Middle-earth, but still, he has to spy them, as he knows that any unexpected attack from the enemy would ruin their goal. He is highly aware of the long journey they have ahead and he is also aware of the dangers that it may bring, that is why after the fight against the trolls, and before climbing the Misty Mountains, he decides to bring his companions to rest in the so-called Last Homely House, also known as the valley of Rivendell. The fact that Gandalf knows about the incoming dangers and that he decides to take Bilbo and the Dwarves to the Last Homely House already gives a hint about what is about to come. The wizard considers it necessary to have a rest before they actually start the real adventure in the mountains. Even the nickname given to Elrond's valley informs the reader about the quality of it. It is not just that it is homely, meaning that it will play the role of shelter for the protagonists of the story, but it is also the last one until they put an end to their mission, although they will find similar resting places in their journey. These two characteristics emphasize Rivendell's importance in the story. It is the place from which the protagonists will receive advice and will recover from the incident with the trolls. Moreover, the Last Homely House's role does have to do with its actual location in Middle-earth, as Gandalf states that "you are come to the very edge of the Wild" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 44).

As its name indicates, Rivendel is actually the last house where they can rest, as from Rivendell onwards, everything is about the untamed wilderness. The arrival at Rivendell sounds pretty comforting as they will have time to rest before the long journey, nonetheless, the road towards Elrond's house is neither as easy nor as safe as they think at the beginning. Even Gandalf warns them about the perils of the road "we must not miss the road, or we shall be done for ... also it is very necessary to tackle the Misty Mountains by the proper path, or else you would get lost in them, and start at the beginning again" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 44). The wizard's warning tone already scares the rest; however, it gets worse when he adds to his last sentence "if you ever get back at all" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 44). Gandalf's words about the way to the mountain, introduce it as a labyrinth, as a place where the wild nature will play tricks on any climber making them feel confused and even lost. Thence, the process of climbing a mountain is not an activity for anyone as it implies training, strength and perseverance in order to be able to face all the possible inconveniences that can be found in this challenging experience.

It is on the way to Rivendell when the first relation with mountains is appreciated. They are a kind of oasis, an illusion for Bilbo, as while already suffering to reach the Last Homely House he sees a little glimpse of the Misty Mountains, which he confuses with their last destination, the Lonely Mountain. Even if their look is completely menacing, there is a bit of hope in the shape of light in their description "dark and drear it looked, though there were patches of sunlight on its brown sides, and behind its shoulders the tips of snow peaks gleamed" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43). At the very moment in which Bilbo sees the Misty Mountains, he asks "is that *The Mountain*?". He is already amazed by the sight of it as "he had never seen a thing that looked so big before" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43) and the more amazed he is by its sublimity, the farther he feels from the Shire. This sight of the Misty Mountains is a way illustrates the Anglo-Saxon wilderness, as Juan Ignacio Oliva claims, the Anglo-Saxon wilderness is what encompasses the natural, unspoilt and desolated immensity that impresses due to its huge size

but which at the same time makes the human being feel absolutely small (“De las rocosas” 132). Therefore, Bilbo starts feeling a bit homesick again because he realizes how far he is from both, his home and his final destination. This chapter is called Over Hill and Under Hill, which actually summarizes pretty well Bilbo’s inner feelings and his real situation. It is the first time the hobbit is aware of the long journey towards the Lonely Mountain and all that he will have to overcome and suffer on his way. Because of that, he misses the Shire, his home, his comfort hobbit-hole far from dangerous adventures and where the surrounding nature is as calm and safe as its inhabitants, definitely, the underhill. Among all the wilderness and coldness found on their way to Rivendell, they finally sense they have arrived at Elrond’s dwelling precisely because of the change of landscape, weather conditions and comfort. Nevertheless, it is important to see how the mere altitude of Rivendell does also change and how they all start feeling better as “they went down and down” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 45). Bilbo feels much better at his arrival and he demonstrates it in the moment in which he can already enjoy the little pleasures like the smell of the Elves or the beauty of the light. “Hmmm! it smells like elves! ... and he looked up at the stars. They were burning bright and blue” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 45). Thus, Tolkien is suggesting that altitudes may also have a negative connotation as they make the characters feel uneasy, and they notice it when they begin descending, as they feel better. In this case, there is a close relationship between altitudes and discomfort.

After their short but nice rest in the Elven realm, their adventure begins and their first real contact with the alpine world takes place. They are about to climb the Misty Mountains, the mountains of which the Dwarves talk in the song that made Bilbo have nightmares. Thus, the predisposition or the prejudices towards the mountain are slightly negative, basically, due to the fear of the unknown deeds up there.

4.1.2. The Misty Mountains

The very first thing that the reader knows about these mountains is that they are among the biggest obstacles in the characters' way. They are treacherous as "there were many paths that led up into those mountains, and many passes over them. But most of the paths were cheats and deceptions and led nowhere or to bad ends" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 52). The way up the Misty Mountains does not seem an easy one, once again, the path to them is described as labyrinthine. In addition to this difficulty, "most of the passes were infested by evil things and dreadful dangers" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 52). Thus, besides their huge size "long days after they had climbed out of the valley ... they were still going up and up and up" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 52), they are full of creatures and perils, which already adds more negativity to the image of orogenies. As a matter of fact, during their ascent, they live one of the worst chapters in their entire journey. It is the second attack they receive but in this case, it is nature the one which disguises itself as stone-giants. They suffer a huge "thunder-battle" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 53) in which the only light they can appreciate is the one coming from lightning splinters which are categorized as "more terrible ... in the mountains at night, when storms come ... and make war" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 53). Therefore, it is interesting to see how Tolkien described this thunderstorm as an actual war. As mentioned in the chapter about his travel to the Swiss Alps, this episode is actually a replica of what he once experienced while climbing the Aletsch glacier.

With the presence of the stone-giants, Tolkien gives the mountains a strong personality, apart from their anthropomorphic shape. With this, the writer may suggest that the Misty Mountains are much more than a mere part of the landscape and setting, they have a will, they have determination, they have a voice and they are definitely angry with the climbers. It seems that it is the mountain, the one who wants to ruin Bilbo and the Dwarves' ascent by creating a war between several stone-giants. As, for example, Montserrat López Mújica has claimed that

mountains usually take the role of protagonists in the story in which they appear, due to their determination on the facts that will happen around them, and in order to do so they participate within the episode (35). It seems as if the wilderness was angry with those who dare break their unspoilt state, and their “behaviour” is an aggressive one against the intruders, in a way, enjoying the human (dwarven, in this case) suffering. In fact, Juan Ignacio Oliva states that there are cases in which mountains do also play the role of the witnesses of their victims’ suffering (“De las rocosas” 133).

These stone-giants are a clear representation of the fury and wilderness of nature. Tolkien, in addition, offers the personification of the mountain. This personification can be interpreted as a way to empathise with nature. Thence, as Juan Ignacio Oliva has stated, the personification may suggest a way so that the reader can ‘think like a mountain’ ... ‘feel like the earth’, (“La montaña” 12). It is a concept about the Dwarves and Bilbo being more in contact with nature, it is about learning its rhythm, its language and guessing what it needs for itself. This could be interpreted as an act of Ecophilia, defined by Ruyun Hung as “the love of nature where all living and non-living beings are developed in accord, interdependently and organically” (3) where the mere mountain wishes its intruders to be more empathic. As a matter of fact, the Misty Mountains are introduced as vindictive beings which “were hurling rocks at one another for a game, and catching them, and tossing them down into the darkness where they smashed among the trees far below, or splintered into little bits with a bang” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 55). However, the episode in the Misty Mountains does not only involve the war among the stone-giants, but it also contains extra difficulty on the ascent of it due to the hard weather conditions. “Then came a wind and a rain, and the wind whipped the rain and the hail about in every direction, so that an overhanging rock was no protection at all” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 55). The weather is actually an extra obstacle to the war among the stone-giants and the hard slope

of the Misty Mountains, so a mixture of fear, desperation, coldness, and uneasiness is what the travellers feel while still climbing the Misty Mountains.

There is a moment when they are already completely devastated and they decide to enter one of the caves that can be found inside the mountain with the intention of protecting themselves. Nonetheless, far from being away from any other danger, it is, once again, Gandalf, the wizard, the one who breaks with their expected peace. The same way in which in the episode of the trolls the Dwarves knew the perils that a mountain might signify, they should have known about the great peril of caves. Whether motivated by their habit of seeing caves as home or not, the fact is that they enter inside one of the caves of the Misty Mountains, where Gandalf suggests them to be cautious, as he “knew that caves up in the mountains were seldom unoccupied” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 55). To this the Dwarves answer too confidently that this cave is not a big one. Then Gandalf gives them one of his wise lessons while answering back “that, of course, is the dangerous part about caves: you don’t know how far they go back” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 55). Gandalf is the only one who is actually aware of their constant perils in the wild. Mountains are hard to climb and the caves inside them are depicted with a mysterious aura, as a place which could be safe enough but at the same time, from where this safety may also not be guaranteed. They both create this atmosphere to which the characters do not feel attracted as they actually feel uncomfortable. As a matter of fact, once the Dwarves and Bilbo find a place inside the cave where they think they can rest, it is when another race of evil creatures attacks them: the goblins.

4.1.3. The Goblins of the Misty Mountains

Similarly to what happens when Bilbo has nightmares due to the stories about the Lonely Mountain Thorin tells to the rest of Dwarves in his home, once Bilbo and the Dwarves

are sleeping in one of the caves they find, the Hobbit feels uneasy. Bilbo has a strange and negative feeling that makes him have a nightmarish experience. He actually dreams of a huge crack on the wall of the cave, a crack that gets bigger and bigger. It is due to this discomfort that the Hobbit wakes up in the perfect moment, a second before he and the rest of the Dwarves are going to be attacked by a horde of goblins. These new evil creatures are among the biggest representations of evilness, together with Smaug. Thus, it is not surprising that their actual look and manners are not appealing at all. They are described as “cruel, wicked, and bad-hearted” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 59) they belong to the inside of the caves in the Misty Mountains, so they are used to the darkness and to tunnelling. They seem to have all the common characteristics that the rest of evil characters in *The Hobbit* have, and they share many of them with the Dwarves. However, the main differences will be discussed later in this chapter.

These creatures may have been inspired by the goblins depicted by George Macdonald in *The Princess and the Goblin*. As the 25th of December 1954, Tolkien wrote a letter to Naomi Mitchison in which he admits that his goblins may be influenced by the ones depicted by Macdonald (Anderson 111). They are pretty skilled smiths and their taste for the beautiful things seems to be completely dead, as “they make no beautiful things, but they make very clever ones” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 59). Nevertheless, even if their sense of beauty is not the best one, their creations are quite useful for war, which is basically their aim in life. As a matter of fact, they enjoy killing and torturing their enemies and this can be appreciated in their language, while they sing, all the stanzas of the song are about killing and destroying everything around them. The goblins’ behaviour may be regarded as the opposite of ecophilia, they are more prone to the term ecophobia, which is the term used to describe all those who hate and thence, destroy the natural world. As Stine claims “throughout many of his works, Tolkien utilizes imagery relating to the landscape of Middle-earth to reflect the goodness, or lack thereof, present within his characters” (3). Through the dark and inhospitable image of the caves up in the mountain,

Tolkien seems to suggest that the creatures living there may not be very friendly. Once again, the concept of geographical determinism shows how depending on the geographical condition, a cave in this case, the perception of the goblins will be negative due to the darkness and discomfort the caves offer. However, are not mountains supposed to be sacred places usually related to divinity? There are cases in which the mere presence of such creatures is what actually may be interpreted as an intoxication of nature, of mountains in this case. In fact, what may be sacred for some, it may also be a place to destroy for others. Even in contemporary times we may find different examples of this dichotomy when mountains are involved. Such is the case, for instance, of Yucca Mountain, in Nevada, a volcanic mountain that is sacred for the Western Shoshone and Paiute tribes. The mountain was chosen by the U.S government in 1987 as the perfect place for the construction of a nuclear cemetery, with the intention of throwing all the radioactive wastes there (Río 140). This kind of ecophobia is the one that can be perceived in some of Tolkien's characters' in *The Hobbit*, as illustrated by the goblins' destructive personality and their lack of commitment to the natural world, to the Misty Mountains in this case. In fact, ecophilia, the love and engagement towards the natural world and ecophobia, the lack of sensitivity towards it, is another common fight introduced by Tolkien in his *Legendarium*.

The mere fact of placing the goblins inside the caves in the mountain does already offer a hint about Tolkien's intention of isolating and dehumanizing them. They are introduced as alienated characters who live far from civilization. They are disconnected from nature due to their ecophobia and "their race is degraded to being a symbol of evil rather than personified characters" (Stine 5). Moreover, similar to the trolls previously mentioned, the goblins hate the sun, they do not tolerate it, however, it is interesting to see the only kind of light they admit, that of the fire. One of the many interpretations of the symbology of fire is precisely that of destruction and "the suffocating nature of the smoke" (Stine 5) which actually, adequately

corresponds pretty well to the goblin's style. In addition, the mere fact of belonging to the "deep, deep, dark" and to "the heart of the mountains" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 57) already distances them more from the rest of races in Middle-earth as well as from the natural light. As far as the light is concerned, Stine also considers the red colour of the fire to be a sign of the feelings that this colour symbolizes, as it is usually related to "emotions such as hatred and anger" and she adds that "Tolkien again utilizes the literary symbolism of fire to depict the destructive nature of the goblin race" (Stine 6-7).

However, the presence of creatures like the goblins does not only bring evilness and bad omens. Their evil deeds are what actually stress the deeds of those considered good characters and it is precisely due to their presence, that the moment of eucatastrophe, "the sudden and unexpected change of events that prevents destruction of protagonists" (Stine 8), can be perceived. The goblins then are evil creatures who enjoy the suffering of nature and its inhabitants, but who at the same time share some characteristics with the Dwarven race, which is absolutely not related to evilness. What is the difference between both races which changes their connotation?

Both races demonstrate being noisy, belonging to the deep darkness of the caves inside the mountains, their manners may not be the best ones and more importantly, they both are amazing smiths. Nonetheless, the goblin's language is restricted to destructive adjectives while the Dwarves are more concerned with fulfilling their aim, getting their home back. As far as the caves where they both dwell, the goblins live in cold and dark caves inside the mountains, without following any rules; in the case of the Dwarves, they do not live in simple caves, throughout the history of Middle-earth, they have built huge kingdoms inside astonishing mountains, such as the Lonely Mountain. There, they follow the rules of the King Under the Mountain. And last but not least, as far as their job is concerned, in *The Silmarillion*, the reader already knows that there are not better smiths than Aulë's creation, the Dwarves. Furthermore,

the main aim of the Dwarven race in terms of smithery is that of creating beautiful things that will last in time. In fact, their songs many times speak of “the Dwarves’ ... loveliness of the works of their hands, and many of the things they describe have no obvious utility but are simply beautiful” (Olsen 77). That is obviously not the case of the goblins, “whose cleverness ... is pragmatically devoted to furthering their acts of cruelty” (Olsen 78).

There is no clear evidence whether Tolkien relates the underground with evil creatures and deeds as a way of creating a difference with the outside and the heights or in order to relate the characters with a specific landscape. Nevertheless, the general pattern is to see the floor or the underground usually related to lowness and humbleness whereas the peak is usually related to the heights and thence with superiority (Flys 151). The portrayal of the underground can be said to be quite ambivalent as depending on the characters related to it, its connotation may vary. This is demonstrated through the depictions of the goblin caves and the dwarven kingdoms.

The Hobbit is a novel about a long and turbulent journey where anytime the main characters have overcome an obstacle, right after they will have to fight another. This is what happens after the episode with the goblins. Once Bilbo wakes all of them to save their lives, he gets lost and finds himself in another quiet cave, where he will meet another creature of the darkness, Gollum.

4.1.4. Gollum and His Cave

After having escaped from the goblins’ caves inside the Misty Mountains, Bilbo loses contact with his Dwarven mates and finds himself even in a darker cave. It is so dark that he does not know whether his eyes are open or not. It is described, similarly to the cave of the goblins where the hobbit “could hear nothing, see nothing and he could feel nothing except the

stone of the floor” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 65). The fact of only being able to feel the stone of the floor already offers an idea of how cold and uncomfortable this place is, especially for Bilbo, who is not used to the darkness as his Dwarven companions are. The important fact about this cave, besides the meeting with Gollum, is that it is the place where Bilbo finds the treasure Gollum loses: the Ring. “It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 65).

According to its description, this cave seems to be much deeper than the one inhabited by the goblins as “on and on he went, and down and down; and still he heard no sound of anything” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 67) until he arrives at a point in the cave where he finds “icy cold” water. Bilbo is afraid, he is alone in the wild and does not know what to do, however, he knows that “there are strange things living in the pools and lakes in the hearts of mountains” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 67). One of these strange living things is actually Gollum. He is described as “a small slimy creature ... as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 68). Up until now, Gollum does share many of the typical characteristics of an evil character. He is extremely dark, he belongs to the deep mountains and he is completely isolated from society, moreover, his physical appearance is not attractive either as he is slimy. He lives very near the goblins, however, he is much older than them and his aura is so strange that even the goblins seldom visit his cave for “they had a feeling that something unpleasant was lurking down there, down at the very roots of the mountain” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 68). Strange as it may seem, due to the negative associations made due to his disgusting appearance, Gollum also hides himself from the goblins, a fact that makes him more similar to the good characters. In fact, “we are introduced to Gollum not as someone who is as evil and scary as the goblins, but as someone who outdoes the goblins in almost every dimension” (Olsen 87).

This is actually what makes the character of Gollum interesting, as it offers a double interpretation of his character. Furthermore, he does have a double personality due to the long

years being isolated in the darkness of the Misty Mountains, as well as due to the Ring's possession. This double personality is what makes the reader and Bilbo himself feel pity for this creature. His decadence and suffering are more than evident. Still, it is a creature difficult to see clearly on one side or in the other. Elizabeth Arthur adds that "Gollum has often been called a monster [but] he is more interesting and touching, than any other being, good or evil" (19). Nevertheless, once they meet each other, the reader can slightly appreciate many dissimilarities between Gollum and Bilbo. Gandalf himself knows about Gollum's hobbit origin and even a comparison between both of them is suggested. At the beginning of the journey, when Tolkien speaks about Bilbo's Tookish side, he describes the hobbit as an adventurer who wants to see the mountains and so is the description of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* when Gandalf explains Frodo who Gollum is. "Gollum was the most inquisitive and curious-minded of that [his] family" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 34).

When the reader realizes the similarities between the main protagonist of the story and Gollum, the dark and gloomy character who lurks deep down the mountains, he or she finds it easier to get closer to him, to empathise with him and to see him as a poor unfortunate being. "Tolkien not only makes Gollum more wicked; he also makes him more tragic and pitiable. Gollum may not have a good side, but he is not simply and repulsively evil, either" (Olsen 91). However, besides his good side, he also demonstrates being completely possessed by the golden Ring which Bilbo finds in his cavern and this part of his personality is what distances him from the good characters. As a matter of fact, Douglas Anderson states that Gollum's original name was Glip; however, Tolkien changed it to Gollum and the reason for such a change is said to be because the writer might have been influenced by the etymology of Gollum's name. In old Norwegian, *gull* means gold and it also means ring, which is actually perfect for Gollum who is obsessed with his golden ring (122). Gollum is an anxious character, though this anxiety can be understood as an aftermath of his solitude. After all, he has been

isolated and alone inside his cave for many years. Hence, when he meets Bilbo he decides to play a game with him. This riddle-game actually offers several pieces of information about this character and it is easier to know about his life. One of the most interesting things that can be appreciated from the game with Bilbo is the fact that the similarities between both of them are even clearer, as they both demonstrate having the same capacity to think of new riddles and to guess them quite rapidly and that they have quite a similar perspective of things. However, it is precisely due to the different point of view they both have towards everyday-like aspects what describes the slimy creature best. Gollum is the first one playing and his very first riddle already is about his condition, his essence, his roots: the mountains:

What has roots as nobody sees,
Is taller than trees,
Up, up it goes,
And yet never grows? (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 70)

This first riddle is of special importance for Bilbo, as “the mountains are his home ... [and] the emphasis of the riddle is on the grandeur and mystery of mountains” (Olsen 93). He definitely appreciates his home and that may be a reason for him to make up a riddle about it. In fact, this is the first thing that comes to his mind. This may suggest that even if the description of his cave is not appealing for a hobbit, it is pleasant for a creature like Gollum because he feels safe hidden there. Another riddle that may suggest Gollum’s actual condition is the fish riddle which makes it easier for everyone around Gollum to feel sorry for him. A fish is a living creature, however, through Gollum’s riddle, Bilbo gets quite an uncommon description of fishes. He says that they are “as cold as death” and that they are “never thirsty [but] ever drinking” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 72). This perception of the fishes that Gollum shares with Bilbo

reflects the way in which Gollum sees his own life. Therefore, Gollum offers his own viewpoint of the fishes' condition, which can be compared to his own: "fishes [are] living a life of continual consumption and continual dissatisfaction. Bilbo's world is a world of ... deep sighs of contentment; Gollum's is a world of gnawing desire and perpetual loathing" (Olsen 103). This view adds more drama towards the character from the deep caverns of the Misty Mountains. It makes the reader feel pity towards him, as even if he is not the most faithful or loyal character, the suffering he has undergone is more than evident and he sometimes shows his good intentions towards the rest of the characters. Thus, his hard past helps the reader feel empathy towards him. It is a way of seeing the character vulnerable.

Hence, the perception of the caves inside the Misty Mountains varies depending on their dwellers. On the one hand, the goblins, who belong to these caves, have attacked Bilbo and the Dwarves and this is considered as a deed in favour of Sauron and the darkness of Middle-earth and consequently against the main characters. On the other hand, Gollum, who also belongs to the caves, even before the existence of goblins irradiates a different perception. He is definitely an obstacle in Bilbo's journey, he makes it difficult for the Hobbit by playing some twisted riddles, however he is not as evil as goblins. That is one of the reasons why it is a character that gets closer to the reader and the characters, as he emanates pity. Once again, Tolkien depicts quite an ambivalent feeling towards the darkness of the caves due to the variety of characters that influence on their perception. In general, the relationship between the landscape and characters has often given birth to different interpretations. The Chicano writer Rudolfo Anaya, for example, has stated that the landscape is the one who changes or influences the character and hence the character becomes a shadow of the landscape where he lives. On the contrary, the African American writer James Baldwin has asserted that the landscape is not a landscape per se, but the reflection of the sensibility of the people who live there (Flys 153). It may be argued that in *The Hobbit*, characters shape and affect their surroundings as

landscapes have an impact on the characters near them. That could actually be one of the main reasons to see goblin caves completely different from Dwarven kingdoms inside the mountains.

4.1.5. Beorn the Skin-changer

Another good example of a character related to the wilderness of the mountains is Beorn. As previously seen, Thorondor's eagles are strongly related to the mountains, firstly because they belong to them and secondly because, Thorondor, the head of the eagles, is the messenger of Manwë, the ruler of Arda. Hence, the relation of mountains with divinity is still present in *The Hobbit* due to the presence of the eagles, who save the travellers' lives from the goblins and their wargs. However, they are not the only good representatives of the mountains, as Beorn does also play that role. Beorn is the next character from whom Bilbo and the Dwarves will receive help up on the mountains. He is quite a complex character at the beginning, he has a strong personality, extremely different from that of the Dwarves, and he can be interpreted as an introvert, what distances him from the rest of characters. Nonetheless, his deeds and values make him closer to the good side of the story. Once Gandalf sees that his friends are safe from the goblins, he guides them somewhere with the intention of recovering from the previous attacks as they are running out of food, they are tired and need a place to rest. This is similar to what he does at the beginning of the journey when he brings the Dwarves and Bilbo to Rivendell. In this case, he brings them to the place of "somebody that I know of" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 107). This 'somebody' is introduced in a quite mysterious way as the first thing that the wizard tells about this being is that "very few people live in these parts" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 107), distancing him from the rest of civilization. It is thus, an isolated character who has created his own 'Carrock' upon the mountains but Gandalf also warns the Dwarves that "it is no good waiting for him. In fact, would be very dangerous" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 107). Thus, the Dwarves'

new meeting takes place with quite a dangerous being who lives alone in the mountains. Nevertheless, it is impossible to think that Gandalf would bring his friends to a dangerous place. In fact, the wizard describes him as “a very great person” nonetheless, he still warns them (maybe because he knows how Dwarves act in these kinds of situations as they did in Bilbo’s house) “to be very polite when I introduce you” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108). Actually, Gandalf decides that the best way to introduce the Dwarves to him is “slowly, two by two” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108) giving the perception that this being could be annoyed by the Dwarven loud speech and outgoing personality. The Dwarves can not understand how Gandalf could bring them to the abode of someone like Beorn and this confusion gets bigger when the wizard adds that “he can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humoured” and he adds “still I warn you he gets angry easily” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108). But the most important characteristic of Beorn is that he is actually a skin-changer. He takes the shape of “a huge black bear, [and] sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108). According to Tom Shippey, Beorn could have been influenced by a similar character from the *Hrolf Kraki Saga*, ‘Bothvar Bjarki’ which means little bear (qtd. in Douglas 169). Hence, his name is not a random one, it already gives information about his condition as a bear. Such a solid character with this rough personality is said to be “a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 108). Therefore, Beorn is not that dissimilar from the landscape where he belongs to, he is strong and powerful and people may feel a bit scared before they know him. However, this feeling usually changes when he is no longer an unknown person, exactly the same that may happen with an alpine landscape.

Although Beorn seems a bit too rough with his visitors and even impolite, he may be regarded as one of the clearest examples of ecophilia. He lives in complete harmony with nature as he truly loves it. He lives with other animals such as horses and rabbits amongst others and what it is more shocking “he does not eat them; neither does he hunt or eat wild animals”

(Tolkien, *Hobbit* 109). Taking into account that he is actually half a bear, this is a strong sign of his love and empathy towards nature and living beings. He is definitely part of the wild nature in the novel, but this fact has no negative implications, as through the character of Beorn, the strength of the connection between nature and its inhabitants is evident. He is a clear example of harmony and education in the wilderness. In Corey Olsen's words, "the Wild is uncivilized in the sense that human society and social customs have made few inroads there" (132). Beorn himself may not be extremely polite, as he demonstrates quite a rude attitude most of the time, however, he is always ready to help his friends and he is an excellent host. The greatest difference introduced by Tolkien in characters like Beorn and Bilbo, for example, is the cultural clash, once again. Bilbo does not feel uncomfortable because Beorn belongs to the wild mountain, he simply does not understand the "absence of domestic comforts" (Olsen 135). However, even if their customs are different, it does not mean that those living in the wilderness do not have their own social education. As a matter of fact, Olsen affirms that the social education that someone like Beorn has might be more important than the one who Bilbo owns, as "in the Wild, politeness might save your life" (134). It is about being empathic with your surroundings, with nature and its inhabitants.

With the presence of characters like Beorn, who are real icons of what wilderness could look like when portrayed within a character, Tolkien revises the myth surrounding wilderness and its negative connotation as "the Wild may be strange and frightening compared to the quiet, comfortable, and predictable world to which Bilbo is accustomed, but Tolkien at times emphasizes its loveliness also" (Olsen 136). Beorn demonstrates that "wildness is not necessarily evil, and [that] civilization is not necessarily good" (Olsen 136). However, Beorn's hall is not the only 'queer lodging' they are going to find on their way to the Lonely Mountain as their next spot is no other than the dark forest, Mirkwood.

4.1.6. Mirkwood's Uncanny Darkness and the Wood-Elves

Mirkwood is the largest wood in Middle-earth and the Dwarves and Bilbo enter there with the intention of protecting themselves from any kind of dangers. Nonetheless, this Elven wood is far from what Rivendell looks like and this is exactly what makes it interesting to analyze. The very first information that the reader gets from Mirkwood's actual look is that "the entrance ... was like a sort of arch leading into a gloomy tunnel made by two great trees that leant together" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 130). Thus, even if it is a huge forest, it looks like a huge cave and similarly to the real holes in the mountains, "occasionally a slender beam of sun" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 130) pierces among its trees. All this darkness reminds the protagonists of the agony they have lived inside the goblin caves, and their feeling is not a nice one. In fact, "it was not long before they grew to hate the forest as heartily as they had hated the tunnels of the goblins" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 131). It seems that the protagonists are about to cross one of the darkest places they will have to face. In addition, the nights were even worse than days due to their darkness which "became pitch-dark not what you call pitch-black, but really pitch: so black that you really could see nothing" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 131). Hence, the environment is not a pleasant one; the forest is so oppressive that it turns into a suffocating place even for the Dwarves who are used to tunnelling in the depth of their own caves. The poor Hobbit "felt that he was being slowly suffocated" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 131). Once again, due to the environment they are surrounded by, the travellers know that the incoming episode will not be an easy one. The atmosphere could be interpreted as an omen, it seems that the travelers are warned about the perils that can be found in Mirkwood before actually being completely inside the forest. They feel uneasy, suffocated and they barely see their eyes in the deep darkness. Even the cutest little and harmless creatures look dreadful in Mirkwood as "the pervasive darkness of Mirkwood makes even innocent ... creatures, such as butterflies, seem ominous and vaguely

threatening” (Olsen 148) even the growth of the trees at the entrance suggests something uncanny about them. They are so strangled that it is impossible for the sun to enter there, however, “Mirkwood is not naturally dark and black; it is a forest that has been twisted and corrupted” (Olsen 148). Olsen suggests that these trees seem to be strategically strangled in order to keep the entrance to the forest dark (148). Apart from the darkness, “there were queer noises too, grunts, scufflings, and hurryings in the undergrowth” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 130) and Bilbo and his companions know that some kind of magic has enchanted this dark forest. Beorn already warns them about the perils they will have to overcome, such as the enchanted river. “There is one stream there, I know, black and strong which crosses the path. That you should neither drink, not bathe in; for I have heard that it carries enchantment and a great drowsiness and forgetfulness” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 124). The enchantment that lays above Mirkwood seems to be nothing new to the near neighbours like Beorn. It seems that the forest, as previously seen in the case of the Misty Mountains, is playing with its visitors by challenging them with its enchantment. The forest of Mirkwood is connected in some way with “the Other and the Otherworldly” (Post 69).

Such is the size of the forest, that after many days they are still walking and meet no one on their path, except for different kinds of dark animals. They suffer the drowsiness caused by the stream Beorn warned about as Bombur, one of the Dwarves, almost drowns in its depth. Everything around them is a bit disgusting: they do not see the daylight, there is a general feeling of claustrophobia and the dark magic of this forest starts to trick them as they all are more susceptible and tired. The feeling of desperation is quite general as well; nonetheless, Bilbo is especially overwhelmed and feels the need to stop, he really desires to be back at his comfortable hobbit-hole. “Go on, if you must, I’m just going to lie here and sleep and dream of food, if I can’t get it any other way. I hope I never wake up again” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 139). This general discomfort generated in Mirkwood “not only gives the reader an impression of

what the forest is like, but it also sets the tone: it creates an image of confinement in its similarity to a 'tunnel' and of a lurking threat and a gloom in the repeated emphasis on darkness and the colour black" (Post 78).

Moreover, the purest image of darkness also dwells in Mirkwood. The forest is infested with huge and black spiders. Back in the chapter of *The Silmarillion*, the real connotation of such creatures is influenced by the evil Ungoliant, the she-spider who together with Morgoth's help swallows the life of all the living nature and brings darkness to Arda. As the swallows of light, they can clearly be seen as "the very heart of the darkness, from which all light has been shut out" (Olsen 149). Similarly to the characters in *The Silmarillion*, Bilbo Baggins will have to face many of them in the darkness of Mirkwood. Nevertheless, far from being a tragic episode, it is a turning point in Bilbo's journey as a character. During one of the nights inside the enchanted forest, Bilbo has to face and fight against many spiders who are running after him; it is one of the worst moments for Bilbo. However, he demonstrates being a brave Hobbit, who, even if he would rather be resting in the Shire, is always a helpful fellow. He thinks not only about himself, but also about his travel companions, who will be defeated if he does not run and wake them all up. This episode is comparable to the one in the goblin cave when the fourteen of them are sleeping and it is due to Bilbo's nightmare that he saves the rest. In this case, the Hobbit goes one step further, as he not only saves his companions by waking them up, but he also kills the spiders. "He darted backwards and forwards, slashing at spider-threads, hacking at their legs, and stabbing at their fat bodies if they came too near" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 152). It is a clear fight between light and darkness in which, in this case, light (brought by a little Hobbit) is the winner. Therefore, Mirkwood is a place in which the characteristic that most scares its visitors, the darkness, is what actually makes it a special spot. First of all, because all the characters will have to fight against the common uneasiness provoked by the enchantment of the forest and more importantly, because Bilbo will have to abandon his

Baggins side and battle not only against the spiders but also against himself, against his fears. Thus, due to the presence of such darkness and the spiders, he himself can grow as a character. Therefore, as with most of the harsh alpine adventures he is forced to overcome, the visit to Mirwood makes Bilbo mature for future challenges of his way. Although the adventure in Mirkwood seems to have come to an end, it has just begun as “to enter in Mirkwood is to enter the realm of the Elvenking [and] to be immersed in a choking darkness that smothers life and light” (Olsen 155).

4.1.7. The Elvenking and the Wood-Elves

After all the perils lived in the long “entrance” of Mirkwood, Bilbo orders all the Dwarves to go on their way until they find a new place. They arrive at a cave inside Mirkwood, which already has the look of a huge cave made out of trees. Thus, this is a cave, inside another cave and there lives the Elvenking, also known as Thranduil. According to the description of it, Thranduil owns a spacious cave where “countless smaller ones [caves] opened out on every side, wound far underground and had many passages and wide halls” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 154). Thranduil’s cave seems to be similar to those of the goblins as it goes down and down, however, Tolkien suggests their difference by claiming that the Elvenking’s cave “was lighter and more wholesome than any goblin-dwelling, and neither so deep nor so dangerous” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 154).

The interesting fact about wood-elves is that they are actually quite different from the Elves of Rivendell, known as the High-elves. The mere name already gives a hint of the difference between these two types of Elves. The Elves of Rivendell live in a fair and peaceful valley. In fact, when the protagonists arrive at Elrond’s realm the environment is more comfortable and even the air is warmer. In addition, they are considered wiser than the Wood-

elves as Elrond knows about the journey of the Dwarves, as well as the goal of their adventure when they arrive at his valley. On the other hand, the Wood-elves belong to the enchanted Mirkwood from where all the creatures previously mentioned stalk, the environment is suffocating and the Elvenking does not have a clue about the Dwarves' visit.

As far as their personality is concerned, they are said to be more dangerous than the High-elves, and this might be due to their fault, which is "distrust of strangers" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 154) nevertheless, they are still Elves, which already makes them "good people" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 154). The main characteristic of them is actually what relates them more with the term of ecophilia. Their mere name already relates them with wood, the one found in their forest. Moreover, their own King's crown is not made out of gold or silver, he wears "a crown of leaves" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 142) instead, in addition, as Olsen affirms, he is not wearing a jewelled scepter but a carven staff of oak (167). All these nature-related details make them different from the Elves from Rivendell and make them closer to the earth and the natural world: "the High Elves went to faerie in the West, the true blessed realm across the sea, beyond the borders of the Wide World. The Wood-elves loved this world" (Olsen 167).

However, far from being an idyllic place due to their love towards nature and wilderness, the atmosphere created there is much more negative than the one in Elrond's realm. In fact, as Post claims, "the wilderness of nature is perceived as threatening by Bilbo and his dwarf companions" (72). Additionally, even if Thranduil is close to nature and does not wear a golden crown, he demonstrates having a peculiar attitude as far as jewels and gold are concerned as "if the elf-king had a weakness it was for treasure, especially for silver and white gems ... he was ever eager for more, since he had not yet as great a treasure as other elf-lords of old" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 155). This attitude demonstrates that even Elves can be jealous and greedy beings.

As previously mentioned, Thranduil does not know about the coming of the Dwarves and the Wood-elves are considered distrustful. Therefore, the very moment in which Thranduil meets the Dwarves due to this mistrust, and his enmity with the Dwarven race, he imprisons them in the dungeons that are located in his own cave. Once again, the Dwarves are prisoners in holes inside a cave, however, even if “the prospect of having to remain in the caves indefinitely seems like a terrible fate” (Olson 177) the Wood-elves differ greatly from the goblins. As a matter of fact, “they gave him [Thorin] food and drink, plenty of both ... for Wood-elves were not goblins, and were reasonably well-behaved even to their worst enemies” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 156).

Thus, Mirkwood can be described as a “literary *mélange* ... while on the one hand, it is a wild, elemental, and perilous place to be in, it simultaneously resists the characteristic dichotomy between civilization and wilderness because a royal court can be found within the very boundaries of the forest” (Post 83).

Even if the episode in Mirkwood has not been a pleasant one, Bilbo’s presence is once more, more than necessary, as thanks to the magic of his Ring, he has saved the Dwarves from the Elven cave. It has been a hard and long journey; nevertheless, their greatest challenge still awaits them, because their journey’s aim is that of reaching the Lonely Mountain. Erebor is precisely where the Dwarves have their home and where their treasure is guarded and stolen by Smaug, the dragon. It is their final destination, the one that will be more complicated to get at due to the many obstacles found on the way.

4.2. The Lonely Mountain

On their way to the final target, after having spent some days imprisoned in the darkness of the elven dungeons, as far as the mood of the travellers improves, so does the environment

and the weather. “The day grew lighter and warmer ... the lands opened wide about him, filled with waters of the river” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 174). However, this feeling of wellness and calm weather changes at the very moment they see the Lonely Mountain for the first time. “And far away, its dark head in a torn cloud, there loomed the Mountain ... the Lonely Mountain!” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 174). It seems that the mountain, through the weather, is already warning its visitors about the perils that can be found there. This moment can be considered among the most expected ones, as they finally arrive at the Dwarven realm. The expected excitement does not occur, though, as even if one might think that after having waited so long for this moment, the hobbit would feel astonished by its look, however, “he did not like the look of it in the least” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 174). Additionally, the closer they get to it, the worse the feeling Bilbo has. “[He] did not like the way the Mountain seemed to frown at him and threaten him as it drew ever nearer” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 175). In this case, it is Bilbo the one who actually gives a personal characteristic to the mountain. He really feels the mountain may want to threaten him, even if it is a static natural phenomenon. These first impressions Bilbo has about the mountain suggest that once again, the mountain is identified as a menacing space, even if the mountain is familiar for the Dwarves.

Once they arrive at Lake-town, the neighbouring city, many of the inhabitants look at the Dwarves as vivid legends. It has been a long time since they lived in the Lonely Mountain and there are many legends about them. The interesting fact about their arrival is how Thorin himself feels sad about the actual look of ‘his’ mountain, in fact, the neighbours of Lake-town are happy about Thorin’s arrival as “the return of the King under the Mountain will indeed bring prosperity and joy back to his region, and green grass will wave beneath the sun where there is now a rocky desert” (Olsen 190). Thorin’s arrival is seen as a kind of hope for nature to re-awaken as the current look of the mountain is described as the aftermath of several natural disasters and it seems that everything is damaged due to Smaug’s presence. “Great floods and

rains had swollen the waters that flowed east; and there had been an earthquake or two (which some were inclined to attribute to the dragon ...)” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 175).

Little by little, the travellers start with their quest of climbing the Lonely Mountain with the intention of killing the dragon who once stole their home with their treasure inside it. Nevertheless, it seems that during their long journey towards their home, they have been more encouraged by the recovery of their treasure instead of their home, together with their architecture and the history of their ancestors as they talk about their journey as a “treasure hunt” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 63). The only one who has been thinking about the dragon and the difficulty it could provide to their adventure is no other than Bilbo. In addition, the tiredness starts affecting the Dwarves’ mood and they start feeling more and more depressed as “they were at the end of their journey, but as far as ever, it seemed, from the end of their quest” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 189). Generally speaking, it is not easy to find a docile mountain, as it is part of the wild landscape and it will seldom be dominated by human beings. That is why mountains are usually full of different tricks (López Mújica 37). The current appearance of the mountain’s dead nature does not help either. “The land about them grew bleak and barren” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 187). There is an ounce of nostalgia in their hearts, they miss the wild and green mountain in which they used to live. Nonetheless, all the depressing feelings seem to disappear at least a bit when they finally arrive at the front gate of the mountain.

However, as suggested by López Mújica, mountains do not always behave politely and it will even offer some difficulties to enter inside them (35). Similar to the riddles in Gollum’s cave or the enchantment of Mirkwood, the Lonely Mountain introduces itself in quite a mysterious way, as the Dwarves with the help of Bilbo will have to resolve the enigma between the moon runes that they find at the front gate in order to come inside it. This extra challenge may suggest that in order to climb a mountain the effort is not only physical but also mental and therefore, not everyone would be able to do it. Bilbo may not have the longest legs to walk

such long distances; however, without him, the Dwarves could have never entered the mountain. Thus, Bilbo, already used to these kinds of tricks, resolves the riddle and the gate opens. In that very moment, fear attacks the hobbit, they all are aware of their incoming challenge, and they know it will be the biggest one in the whole journey: the dragon. In fact, a second before entering the mountain, Bilbo looks at the recently opened door “which resembles the mouth of the dragon himself gaping open to swallow him” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 205). Once again the premonition of the environment about the possible future perils is depicted, in this occasion, through the aggressive description of the entrance of the mountain, which is compared to the mouth of the dragon. This resource of making a comparison between the entrance of a mountain and an open mouth is many times used by Tolkien when he wants to describe the danger of the mountain. It may be interpreted as a warning for the travellers who may dare to enter the mountain, where considerable troubles may await them. Due to these signals Bilbo receives once he is at the gate of their final destination, he is out of control; however, once again, he is motivated by his Tookish side and faces his new challenge.

4.2.1. The Desolation of the Dragon

The mere fact of knowing that a dragon is sleeping inside the mountain already sounds scary. Taking into account the power dragons have in Tolkien’s literature, Smaug must be a huge challenge for both Bilbo and the Dwarves. As a matter of fact, as far as the hobbit enters the dragon’s lair (as the Dwarves are too afraid to do it themselves), he is more and more aware that he is getting closer to him precisely due to the signs he receives: “as he went forward it grew and grew, till there was no doubt about it. It was a red light steadily getting redder and redder. Also, it was now undoubtedly hot in the tunnel. Wisps of vapour floated up and past him” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 197). The presence of fire inside the mountain adds a volcanic feature

to it. As in any volcano, the mountain offers an extra difficulty as the ascent to the peak may or may not be dangerous, as far as the fire inside it (Smaug) is asleep, however, if a volcanic eruption happens or Smaug is awakened from his long sleep, problems will increase and many adventurers might die. The representation of the Lonely Mountain is definitely similar to that of a common dormant volcano, with all the connotations a volcano implies, such as destruction of everything that surrounds it, death and, of course, sublimity.

Even if Bilbo might have not expected it, the entrance of the mountain has nothing to do with any other cave he has visited. “This was no goblin entrance, or rough Wood-elves’ cave. It was a passage made by dwarves, at the height of their wealth and skill: straight as a ruler, smooth-floored and smooth-sided” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 196). However, besides the exquisite Dwarven taste in architecture, their realm is still a huge cave inside the mountain and hence, it is filled with “a gentle never-varying slope direct to some distant end in the blackness below” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 196). However, at the end of all this darkness, Bilbo sees a great glow, the glow of Smaug!

The presence of a treasure-keeper dragon inside a mountain reminds of ancient stories from the Germanic folklore, where these scenes are quite common. It seems that Tolkien himself was strongly attracted to them: “for Tolkien’s taste there were too few dragons in ancient literature, indeed by his count only three- The Midgarðasorm ... the dragon which Beowulf fights ... and Fafnir ...” (Shippey, *Author* 36). This admiration towards the figure of the dragon can be appreciated through Smaug’s depiction, in which some of the common features of such creatures can be perceived and we might even talk about the presence of intertextual elements in Tolkien’s portrayal of the dragon. Steele, for example, has claimed that “Tolkien uses Smaug’s dream to remind us of the sleeping dragon in *Beowulf*, who is finally defeated by Beowulf himself” (144). What most resembles Tolkien’s dragon episode with the one in *Beowulf* is the fact that Smaug dreams of the death of a dragon in a warrior’s hands due

to his sword. At first glance, it could seem that Smaug is actually dreaming about his future death. However, he does not die at the hands of a warrior with a sword, as it is Bard the one who kills him with an arrow. In fact, Bilbo does not enter the cave with the intention of harming Smaug. Hence, the dragon's dream cannot be regarded strictly as a premonition, but as a fact connected with older stories about dragons. "Smaug's dream manifests his knowledge of dragon-lore, the intersubjectivity that he shares with other dragons" (Steele 142). As a matter of fact, Steel has suggested that this episode "is suffused with a sense of history" (142) and this history is what connects Smaug with the dragons of the Germanic folklore.

As far as the look of the dragon is concerned, it can be said to let the hobbit speechless, in fact "to say that Bilbo's breath was taken away is no description at all" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 198). However, his reaction is understandable because in front of him Smaug is lying asleep. He is described as quite a menacing being "a vast red-golden dragon" who is "a dire menace even in his sleep" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 198). Before his arrival at the great hall where the dragon sleeps, Bilbo's Baggins side is complaining all the time about the craziness in which he is involved, he even emphasises his lack of interest towards any "dragon-guarded treasure" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 217). Nevertheless, even Bilbo feels astonished when he sees the amount of gold that Smaug guards, he feels "pierced with enchantment" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 198). This phenomenon is known as dragon-sickness and it is about an eager desire towards jewels and gold even when the one desiring them does not need them. It is a greedy desire, commonly related to dragons following the Germanic tradition such as the dragon in *Beowulf*, who has practically the same role Smaug has, that of guarding a treasure he has stolen.

As far as Smaug's personality is concerned, he demonstrates being a proud dragon without any fear, as he feels confident enough to kill anyone that dares to disturb him. He feels much stronger and powerful than harmless Hobbits or Dwarves and he shows it through his expressions when he talks to Bilbo, who thanks to the magic Ring has become in the "one who

walks unseen” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 204). Smaug’s arrogance is very present throughout the whole conversation with Bilbo indeed. He has a “wicked and a wily heart” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 206), and in fact, when Bilbo tells about his intention in the Lonely Mountain, “then Smaug really did laugh” and this laugh “shook Bilbo to the floor, while far up in the tunnel the dwarves huddled together and imagined that the hobbit had come to a sudden and nasty end” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 207). Hence, Smaug could be described as the most powerful creature in *The Hobbit*. With the dragon’s movement, the door at the gate has been blocked and now Bilbo, and what is worse, the Dwarves, are prisoners in their own home, with a dangerous dragon inside it. The situation is to a certain extent, precarious. Nevertheless, destroying everything that he finds on his way “the rock boomed, the walls cracked and stones fell from their roof on their heads” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 213) Smaug finally flies away towards Lake-town with the intention of making its inhabitants to “see me and remember who is the real King under the Mountain” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 213). Burning everything in Lake-town is how Smaug enters the neighbouring town.

4.2.2. Bard and the Oikophilia

Lake-town is ruled by a greedy master who does not fight for his town’s rights and is only moved by greediness and cowardry. On the contrary, there is another important character, the one brave and skilled enough to kill the dragon, who shows the opposite behaviour. He is part of the history of Lake-town and his name is Bard. Bard has spent many years waiting to shoot at the dragon and bring peace to his town. His behaviour is the one common among heroes, as the death of the dragon means the same for the inhabitants of Lake-town, as well as for the Dwarves. It means peace, it means the recovery of nature and it means empathy towards his neighbouring mountain-dwellers.

The term oikophilia is the coinage between the Greek word ‘oikos’, which means home and ‘philia’, which means love. This term has a huge importance as it is the motivation for characters like Bard and Thorin to get what they want, their home to be safe and beautiful. “Scout does not understand oikos as home in the sense of a practical dwelling, but in a larger sense of home environment, a home ecosystem, and further, the place of sacred memory, to which our longings return” (Garner 39). Lake-town’s Master lacks the sense of oikophilia, and this is what makes him escape when Smaug is threatening over his town. On the other hand, Bard is responsible for the safety of his town and even the people start calling him “King Bard!” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 230) when he kills Smaug. His love towards Lake-town as a community is so big, that “Bard’s willingness to die for his love of home is admirable” (Garner 68).

Nonetheless, Smaug has destroyed the whole town before being killed and now Bard demands his part of the treasure to Thorin, who, as expected, denies it fiercely. Bard is demonstrating once again that his demand is not a greedy action, as he is not interested in the money as an individual gain, but as the result to recover his town. Thorin, on the contrary, believes that the treasure in the Lonely Mountain is exclusively his and the rest of the Dwarves’. Hence, he does not show any intention of sharing the money. This behaviour demonstrates that the Dwarven personality is highly based on greediness. However, this negative attitude does not mean that Thorin’s oikophilia is not as valuable as Bard’s. According to Kohák, “those individuals who are consumed by greed cannot appreciate the gifts of the ‘forest peace’ ... [however] greed can be a part of oikophilia” (Garner 71). As a matter of fact, it is due to Thorin’s love towards his home that the adventure towards the Lonely Mountain begins and Garner even suggests that there are different kinds of feelings, Thorin’s oikophilia is “heavily rooted in history of conservation” (55) whereas Bard’s is more focused on the future wellbeing of his town.

Nonetheless, the different ways of understanding their love for home still bring a new dispute among not only the men of Esgaroth, and the Dwarves from the Lonely Mountain, but also among the Wood-elves from Mirkwood, who also demand part of their treasure. Thranduil does not need any of these jewels, however, “when the king hears of the death of Smaug, he immediately sets off with his army, simply as a profiter” (Olsen 251). The previously mentioned dragon-sickness is very present in the adjoining lands of the Lonely Mountain, it seems that Smaug’s soul has poisoned not only the Dwarves but also the Men and the Elves. “The spirit of division and distrust that Smaug attempted to plant in Bilbo is also a major symptom of this illness, and that spirit is clouding the judgement of more than just Thorin” (Olsen 257). Nevertheless, these misunderstandings among the three races come to an end with a final attack to the Lonely Mountain. Thanks to the goblins and his wargs that decide to assault the dwarven realm, the three races fight as a single army as “the goblins were foes of all” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 256). Hence, it could be said, that the common feeling of oikophilia of the three different communities with the help of the Eagles of the mountains and Beorn, is what makes them strong and finally the winners of the famous Battle of the Five Armies.

This is the most touching moment in the whole story as the differences among the races disappear and they all fight together for the prosperity of nature. It is also interesting to see how all these races: the Dwarves, the Wood-elves, the Men of Esgaroth, the Eagles and Beorn belong in some way or another to the mountain. This is what they all have in common, their love towards the wilderness found there, and it is at this point of union when the good side overcomes the evil one. Even Thorin, during the battle against the goblins, opens his doors and even demolishes a wall so that the rest of his war mates can be safe. His sense of greediness and possessiveness has been diminished and this demonstrates that Gandalf was right after all, as the Dwarves are good people. However, even if Thorin demonstrates that his love towards his home is the most important thing in his life, in other words, his oikophilia is as present as

the rest of characters', as Garner claims, "that oikophilia becomes misguided, and can have detrimental effects. For the Dwarves ... this is the death of Thorin" (71).

4.2.3. Thorin's Graveyard

At his deathbed, Thorin demonstrates having healed from the dragon-sickness as he affirms that "I go now to the halls of waiting to sit beside my fathers ... since I leave now all gold and silver, and go where it is of little worth" (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 262). Thorin seems to care no more for the value of these jewels and he is happy that he has regained his home, which will be used by his fellow brothers. He is finally buried with the Arkenstone, the most valuable gem on his breast, also known as the heart of the mountain. The Arkenstone is the stone that Bilbo steals and gives back to Thorin as a symbol of total friendship and respect towards the Dwarven realm of Erebor, once their adventure ends. The fact of joining or burying both, Thorin, King under the Mountain, together with the gem that is called the heart of the mountain, makes the relationship between the dwarven race and the underground stronger and narrower, as they are both now literally inside the mountain, under the ground, forever. Hence, since now, Thorin is the true King Under the Mountain. Moreover, the fact of admitting the mountain to have a heart, provides it with a living condition. Tolkien, once again personalizes the alpine scenery, as a way to feel the mountain, as a way to empathise with it and this makes it closer to the characters and even the reader.

All in all, this whole journey has not been just a physical journey, all the characters involved have changed a lot, they have lost, they have succeeded and they have matured. They all are different now from those adventurers that started the journey in The Shire. Bilbo himself is the clearest example of change and evolution throughout the story. He starts the trip being a coward Baggins but he demonstrates being the bravest among the fourteen travellers by facing

goblins, spiders, Gollum, wargs and even a dragon. He is no longer the Hobbit he was before, he has become a real hero in the story. “Bilbo comes into his own, and becomes truly adult and whole, becomes a hero” (Wytenbroek 8). And what is most important is that the whole process of becoming a hero is possible due to the difficulties found in the wilderness, as there is an interaction between characters and the landscape. The characters definitely have an impact on the actual state of the mountain by several deeds and behaviour they show towards their natural surroundings, but the mountain does also shape the characters’ personality. Mountainous landscapes are usually related to characters similar to their aspect: strong, stern and distant, and those who do not fit into this definition, perceive orogenies as menacing and scary landscapes. As far as caverns are concerned, they are usually dark, murky and inhospitable places to where no one would feel attracted to, except evil characters, whose personality may be similar to the atmosphere of the caves. There is always the exception of the dwarven caves, which as explained above, have nothing to do with the goblins’. Therefore, mountains and caves are an essential non-anthropomorphic character in Tolkien’s novel. Nonetheless, exactly as in *The Silmarillion* there are mountains and caves portrayed as divine temples as well as others related to the underworld. There is not a clear pattern to understand the meaning of these landscapes, after all, wilderness is completely unpredictable. This also illustrates the power of wild nature and its pluralistic dimension.

5. The Alpine and the Subterranean Worlds in *The Lord of the Rings*

Due to the huge success of the previously studied novel, *The Hobbit*, Tolkien was proposed to continue with a sequel regarding Hobbits, Elves and Dwarves. Even if he was not very sure of it because “... the original Hobbit was never intended to have a sequel...” (Carpenter, *Letters* 38) he wrote his most recognized novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, published within the years 1954-1955 in three different volumes: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*.

5.1. *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The story starts with the appearance of the magic Ring Bilbo finds in Gollum’s cave some years ago. Gandalf the wizard advises him to leave it behind, due to its immense dark power; however, the only way to destroy evilness in Middle-earth is by bringing the Ring back to Mordor, to the place where it was created and melt it in the fire of Mount Doom. Bilbo is already too old to go on adventures such as the ones he lived back in *The Hobbit* era. Thence he is forced to give the Ring to his beloved nephew, Frodo. The young Hobbit will have to face many obstacles during a long journey towards Amon Amarth also known as Mount Doom. The aim of the first part of this chapter is to analyze the mountainous landscapes as well as the cavernous spaces that are present in the first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Exactly the same way as in *The Silmarillion* and *The Hobbit*, the story of *The Lord of the Rings* is full of different landscapes. “What is most striking about it [Middle-earth] is the profound presence of the natural world” (Curry, *Defending* 50). The domesticated landscapes will have to face wilderness once again all along the story in which several characters will be related to one of the two conditions of nature. In that way, these landscapes will illustrate how

different the cultures, traditions, customs and values related to them are as well as the different connotations they will receive depending on the kind of characters that are attached to them. Therefore, landscapes will shape the native characters' personality as well as the newcomers' one.

The very first landscape that appears in this first volume is no other than the Shire, the quiet and tamed city of the Hobbits. As explained in the previous novel, The Shire is the clearest image of a pastoral landscape. It is the kind of landscape that was venerated during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when any kind of nature differing from the domesticated one was seen as disgusting. This kind of landscape is valuable due to its fertility, as it is perceived as a beneficial land from which to achieve both, food and money in its exchange. These landscapes are part of the economy and lifestyle in places like the Shire: "... natural scenery was appreciated largely for the extent to which it spoke of agricultural fecundity. Meadows, orchards, grazing fields... these were the ideal components of a landscape" (Macfarlane 14). This is precisely what Tolkien appreciates in his beloved Warwickshire. As a matter of fact, he admits in one of his letters that "The Shire is not far from North Oxford. It is in fact more or less a Warwickshire village..." (Carpenter, *Letters* 230). Hence, the taste and the preciseness with which Tolkien creates the Shire is quite remarkable. It denotes his love towards these calm, quiet and natural places.

Of course, the Shire, like the rest of the landscapes, shapes its characters and their behaviour towards everything and everyone else. However, Bilbo Baggins, the adventurer Hobbit is considered an exception. He does not fulfil the basic characteristics of a Hobbit. Therefore, he is regarded as a queer character. What is interesting about him is that his queerness is related to his experience, heroism, knowledge and perpetual youth, which are all aftermaths of his journeys in the wilderness and more specifically on the mountains. As previously seen, being an adventurer is not part of a Hobbit's personality, they like their

peaceful environment and lifestyle, they prefer to be in their comfort zone. Nevertheless, Bilbo is forced to break with that characteristic and even if he complains about it many times during the journey, he finally accepts being a more experienced and mature Hobbit at the end. After some years, in the Third Age of Middle-earth, when Bilbo celebrates his 111th birthday in the Shire and Gandalf attends the multitudinous party, the wizard advises him to pass the dangerous Ring to Frodo. Even Bilbo admits being too old and he declares himself in need of some good rest; however, at the same time, Bilbo knows what going off and being relieved really means. He is afraid of his nephew's new duty in the wilderness. He more than anyone else knows what Frodo will have to overcome and the dangers he will have to face. He is conscious about the perils of the life out of the peaceful Shire and he even admits Frodo's youth and lack of knowledge and experience when he states: "I want to see the wild country again before I die, and the Mountains; but he [Frodo] is still in love with The Shire, with woods and fields and little rivers" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 43). This admission gives quite a lot of information of what being in the wild actually means for a character like Bilbo. He is not only old because of his age, but he is an experienced Hobbit now. The roughness of the landscapes makes him become a real hero, as apart from his small size, he is able to overcome all the difficulties he finds on his way to the Lonely Mountain. But becoming a hero and an adventurer does not mean just fulfilling one's request, but being able to bear with all the struggles. He is not the same Hobbit at the beginning or at the end of the story. Landscapes and challenging experiences change his behaviour and personality. The consequence of going through such hard but rewarding adventures is actually a positive one as the characters grow and mature all along their journey. This can be perceived at the end of *The Hobbit*, when Gandalf himself admits that "You are not the hobbit that you were" (Tolkien, 274). And this is precisely what Bilbo is offering to Frodo when he decides to give the Ring to him. "The gift that Bilbo gives to his nephew ... [is] an unequalled opportunity for individual and even heroic maturation" (Bloom 23).

Nonetheless, it is not easy to see the positive side of such a dangerous journey when the new adventurer belongs to one's family. Precisely because the transformation takes time and a lot of suffering Bilbo does not want this ordeal for his young and inexperienced nephew.

Mountains are so strange and unknown among Hobbits, that all the stories Bilbo tells his neighbours about his past experiences and journeys abroad as well as the presents he brings to The Shire, are considered to be legendary. Nevertheless, kids are still expectant of them just because "they had come all the way from the Mountain ... and were of real Dwarf-make" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 35), giving the alpine world a mysterious and hence a more valuable characteristic. Even if "the mountains one gazes at, reads about, dreams of and desires are not the mountains one climbs" (Macfarlane 19).

All the characters have in a sense the feeling of oikophilia; however, Hobbits are among the ones who have a deeper connection with their home. The Shire is their paradise and they do not feel the necessity of travelling to get to know different kinds of nature. In fact, they only appreciate the tamed one, until they discover the marvels of the wilderness. This is what happens to Bilbo, who learns to love mountains with their dissimilar beauty, with the risks climbing one may involve. He learns to appreciate the value of getting to the peak of a mountain, the suffering, the strength and preparation a climber needs to touch the summit. He learns to love mountains the way they are and not comparing them with The Shire all the time. This does not happen with Frodo, who at the beginning of the story is just another Hobbit, even though he follows his uncle's steps and hence he can also be considered a bit queer, but not as much as Bilbo, precisely due to his inexperience in life. There is a moment before Frodo knows about his incoming adventure in which Tolkien makes sure to show Frodo's perspective towards the wild mountains where he feels uneasy in a dream due to the presence of orogenies. "He [Frodo] found himself wondering at times ... about the wild lands, and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen come into his dreams" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 56). The fact

that he has a dream in which he is able to see the mountains he has never seen before already gives a glimpse of the uneasiness he feels even before being aware of his new duty. The mere fact of thinking about them gives him a bad feeling. At the same time, it is impossible to think about something that does not exist in one's world. Every single idea that an individual may have in his mind is completely influenced by the reality in which he lives, this idea is derived from other existing ideas or items. As Macfarlane states "it is an easy thing to describe Rome or Naples to [someone who has been in a similar place] ... because you have something ... that holds at least some resemblance with them; but impossible to set a Mountain before your eyes, that is inaccessible almost to the sight" (72). However, Frodo is able to dream about the mountains without even having been near them. He has many times heard his uncle's stories and he can have imagined them, nonetheless, he is still prejudicing them and this is where the culture shock between tamed and wild nature is perceived. The Shire can be considered as a place in which ecopedagogy has been transmitted through generations. This term is proposed by Hung, who describes it as "[an] ecophilia-oriented education" (45). The Hobbits, however, are only used to their own lands and hence love only their kind of nature, as well as the Elven cities, as "the hobbits share some Elvish attitudes towards nature ... they are in their own fashion at harmony with nature, their community being close to the earth" (Hood 9) and not used to wild mountains. Bilbo is at the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* the only Hobbit able to change his home from the Shire to Rivendell, surrounded by huge mountains; however, Frodo will have to follow his moves and hence embrace the wilderness.

The moment in which Gandalf tells Frodo about his duty, both are afraid of the incoming perils; however, Frodo, who is unaware of how the outside looks like, feels more uneasy than the wizard. The Istari tells him all the news about the Ring and its power and the way to destroy it. As far as Hobbits are concerned, the story of the Ring starts in a cave inside a mountain, where Gollum loses it and it ends in the fire inside a huge mountain called Mount

Doom. That means that both Frodo's and the Ring's journey is destined to travel from mountain to mountain. Nevertheless, Frodo will have to overcome not only several mountainous ways, but also will have to survive several volcanic experiences. Mount Doom includes a double difficulty. All these news sounds horrific to the young Hobbit "he was thinking of the fabled Cracks of Doom and the terror of the Fiery Mountain" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 81), but he has no choice.

As long as Frodo's journey begins together with his other three Hobbit companions, Sam, Merry and Pippin, they notice the great difference in the surrounding nature, they feel insecure and little in the huge world outside The Shire. Once again the unknown causes fear in the four friends as they do not know what to expect from these new lands and when a place is unknown, people tend to make up legends about it, which at the same time can be dreadful for those about to visit it. This is perceived when due to their discomfort they feel in the outside, Merry says that "there are various queer things living deep in the Forest, and on the far side" and he adds "or at least I have heard so; but I have never seen any of them" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 145). Merry himself admits not having seen anything strange. Nevertheless, people still believe in these legends and hence, as a consequence, the prejudices and negativity towards the unknown wilderness become a reality in many people's minds. The wilderness is often considered dangerous and disgusting, precisely because very few people have been able to experience it; there is no place dominated by any human being and thence the adventurers do not know how this nature will answer to their steps. More specifically speaking, during the eighteenth-century mountains were usually considered "nature's roughest production" and "aesthetically repellent" (Macfarlane 14). Due to these expectations and preconceived ideas of untamed nature, Frodo and the rest of the Hobbits do see the mountains in such a way when they leave The Old Forest, where Tom Bombadil lives. "He [Frodo] turned his glance eastwards, and he saw that on that side the hills were higher and looked down upon them; and

all those hills were crowned with green mounds, and on some were standing stones, pointing upwards like jagged teeth out of green gums” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 179). By the mere look at them from a considerable distance, they feel the mountains as a huge menace, they do not see a sublime landscape, they see jagged teeth instead, giving them quite an aggressive look. In addition, these mountains are said to be looking at them, from a higher position to a lower one, as if they wanted to demonstrate the difference of status and power. This is the perspective of these four little Hobbits, who see themselves in constant danger as if the mere nature/mountain would want to devour them. This suggests the terror not only of being in the wild, but also of being outside their comfort zone and nature.

Once they arrive at the Barrow Down, they confirm this peculiar uneasiness provoked by everything similar to a mountain. The Barrow Down is not a high place; however, it is a hill where Men used to bury their dead Kings. Thence, it is a place from which peace and silence should be taken for granted. Nonetheless, once again, their feeling as they start to ascend is a bad one, the atmosphere provoked by the place can actually be interpreted as a bad omen which warns the characters about the possible perils. Tolkien even adds some emphasis on the perception of Hobbits towards mountains and hills when he says that “they felt as if a trap was closing about them” (*Fellowship* 180). The very atmosphere while climbing the hill is a negative one. So is “great a dislike for that hollow place ... that no thought of remaining there was in their minds” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 180). In addition, with the intention of distancing the main characters from these hills, the sun makes them look as if they were from a volcanic origin. This is due to the sunbeams that make them look as if fire was coming out of their peaks once the Hobbits are far from them. “They looked back and saw the top of the old mound on the hill, and from it, the sunlight on the gold went up like a yellow flame” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 191). Therefore, are these hills considered dangerous and horrific due to their non-domesticated nature and similitude with high mountains or is it because the fire adds them extra danger?

Until here, mountains have demonstrated having quite a changeable meaning. Some are sacred, some others belong to the darkness; however, it is also true that fire often has negative implications. In addition, as previously seen, the characters associated with a concrete landscape are the ones who give a particular meaning to this place. In this case, the characters related to The Barrow Down are the Barrow-wights. Before their arrival to the Barrow Down, these hills were considered sacred due to their straightforward relationship with the royalty, what makes them similar to the sacred mountains in Arda. Nevertheless, with their arrival, everything changes. These Barrow-wights are “Demons whose bodies had been destroyed [and who] looked for other bodies in which their evil spirits could dwell” (Day 28) and once they conquered The Barrow Down “[the hills] became a haunted and dread place” (Day 28). These Barrow-wights are related to darkness as all the evil monsters and creatures in Sauron’s side. “In the darkness these were powerful spirits ... they could be destroyed only by exposure to light” (Day 29). The mere fact of being destroyed by the light makes them similar to the trolls Bilbo and the Dwarves find on their way to The Lonely Mountain; they are so aligned to the darkness that they cannot stand the light. Therefore, the negative environment Frodo and the rest of the Hobbits feel is understandable. However, what makes these hills interesting is how the perception they irradiate changes from being sacred to dreadful. And this is because of the presence of such evil creatures lurking around. Hence, The Barrow-Down is an example of a place where the characters have shaped the connotation of the hills and not the other way round.

The next connection these four Hobbits, now together with Aragorn, (a strong warrior, from the race of Men, chieftain of the Dúnedain and heir of Isildur, the Man who succumbed to the power of the Ring and who was betrayed by it causing his death), have with a hill is in Amon Sûl, also known as Weathertop. There, they are supposed to find Gandalf the Grey; however, they can barely see anything due to the dense mist surrounding the hill. Amon Sûl creates the already typical mystery of mountainous places, from where the characters do not

know what to expect. There is only silence and a blurred area. The surroundings do not help either, as they are barren, they cannot find a single soul. “The lands ahead were empty of all save birds and beasts, unfriendly places deserted by all the races of the world” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 248). It is a place full of mystery “when we do get there, it is not certain what we shall find” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 240). Everything Tolkien writes about Weathertop has to do with its emptiness, barren lands, silence, mist and even the birds are depicted as “melancholy birds” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 240). All these characteristics make the place look frightening. It looks like an abandoned place from ancient times; however, it is also said that not even in those past times was Amon Sûl a crowded place as “the Men of the West did not live [t]here” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 242). Nonetheless, the most interesting aspect of such a lugubrious place is that those Men used the hill as a wall to protect themselves from the Dark Lord, Sauron. “In the latter days they [Men] defended the hills for a while against the evil that came out of Angmar” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 242). Hence, the hill was used against the dark forces, which gives them a positive connotation. Nonetheless, that connotation does not last too long, as, by the time when Frodo and the rest of his fellow companions arrive at Weathertop, the hills are already conquered by the darkness of Middle-earth.

The mist in Weathertop can, in fact, be a sign of the presence of some dark creatures from Sauron’s army. Weathertop now belongs to the Black Riders or Nazgûl. These creatures are Men who succumbed to Sauron’s power when the One Ring was created. The Dark Lord gave them nine rings which were related to the One. They are directly connected to Sauron and are, in fact, considered Sauron’s most terrible servants in Middle-earth. Their own look already illustrates their condition as evil as they are the image of the darkness. “They wore great cloaks, black and hooded, and hauberks of mail and silver helmets, yet beneath were they grey robes of the dead and their bodies were invisible” (Day 184). They have the look of an eerie spectre emanating darkness and uneasiness everywhere they go. In addition, the connection of such

creatures with the black colour is not a coincidence, as “black ... is often a terrible colour ...the primary association of black here is with night and darkness” (Curry, *Defending* 31). Such is their connection with the darkness that “in the dark they perceive many signs and forms that are hidden from us: then they are most to be feared” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 248). Due to their ghostly aspect weapons do not harm them “unless blessed by Elvish spell” (Day 184). This is another characteristic that makes them closer to the darkness and further from the light, as only Elvish spells can harm them and Elves are considered the clearest image of light in Middle-earth. As a matter of fact, they cannot see properly in the daylight as the rest of the characters can, probably because of their dark condition. “They themselves do not see the world of light as we do” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 248); however, what they see is just the projection of the bodies in the light, the shadows. After some time in Weathertop, the five travellers feel awkward and see the presence of these Black Riders going towards them. It is in this scene where three quite remarkable facts take place. First of all, at the top of this hill is the place where Frodo feels the so common homesickness for the first time “in that lonely place Frodo for the first time fully realized his homelessness and danger. He wished bitterly that his fortune had left him in the quiet and beloved Shire” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 246). This feeling is not only common among the hobbits, as it is a frequent worry in Bilbo’s journey to The Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*. However, it is a very average feeling among mountaineers in real life as well, as Robert Macfarlane states about an alpine experience “for the next twelve hours we huddled together shivering in the cave ... all that night I longed for the ... horizontal fens” (94). After this feeling, Frodo is in a moment of huge vulnerability, he feels small in a world of giants. Therefore, he feels possessed by the strength of the Ring, he feels the necessity of putting it on: “his terror was swallowed up in a sudden temptation to put the Ring on” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 255). It is in that very moment when he feels something has changed; he is closer to the darkness as “immediately, though everything else remained as before, dim and dark, the shapes became

terribly clear. He was able to see beneath their black wrappings” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 255). It is as if Frodo was one of them, he is closer to the darkness due to the power of the Ring and he can even see their faces. He is even attacked by them and the wound is so deep that he has to be brought to the House of Healing, also known as Rivendell so that he can be healed. However, it is in that very moment when a “magical” word comes out of his mouth: Elbereth. That name belongs to the queen of the Valar in Valinor and her name is called in different situations of darkness as almost a spell against those supporting Sauron. “He called on Elbereth, a name of terror to the Nazgûl. He [Frodo] was then in league with the High Elves of the Havens” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 180). This moment suggests that Frodo’s subconscious knows how to fight against the darkness and allies with the supreme image of light and power. Nevertheless, the third important fact that takes place in Amon Sûl is that Frodo makes a closer connection with the Dark Lord due to the power of the Ring as well as due to the deep wound caused by the Nazgûl, as he is now the only one who can see them properly. As a consequence of The Nazgûl’s attack, Frodo needs to be healed as soon as possible. It is Glorfindel, the Elf, the one who brings him to Rivendell, to one of the safest places in Middle-earth so that he can rest. Nevertheless, the final confrontation between the dark and the light takes place on the way to The House of the Healing. The Black Riders follow Glorfindel’s horse until the Bruinen, the river they have to cross to arrive at Rivendell. It is in that very moment when the mountains do offer their help against the Nazgûl. When the Black Riders seem to cross the river towards Glorfindel and Frodo, the river comes with a huge strength with the shape of white horses, as the opposite of the black ones of the Nazgûl and drags the riders away. That flood is not a natural one, it is provoked by Elrond, Rivendell’s host. However, what is important about this river is the place from where it proceeds, as it comes from the very Misty Mountains. “There is great vigour in the waters that come down from the snows of the Misty Mountains” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 292). This may suggest that the Misty Mountains in their way offer some resources

to fight the dark powers of Middle-earth. It is due to the presence of rough weather conditions in the wild (snow), that this snow melts and creates the river which has saved Frodo's life. This suggests the good action of the wilderness.

After some days of rest in Rivendell, Frodo feels much better; nevertheless, he is still tired of the dangers of the wilderness, he feels he has had enough. "I hope I shan't go any further. It is very pleasant just to rest. I have had a month of exile and adventure, and I find that has been as much as I want" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 288). Rivendell is quite different from a place like Weathertop where the orogenies are not very high, which could be a reason to be more comfortable as it seems that the higher the mountain the rougher the experience. However, in the valley of Rivendell, despite the surrounding mountains being huge and menacing, the feeling of comfort is insuperable. It is described as a fortress against the darkness as "evil things do not come into this valley ... [and] outside is getting dark" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 294). The Hobbits and especially Sam, who is in love with the Elves, feels that "it is impossible, somehow to feel gloomy or depressed in this place" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 294). Tom Shippey states that "Elves were neutral angels ... and these were confined to earth or the Earthly Paradise until Judgement day" (*Road* 178). In other words, Elven tamed nature is often related to extreme beauty precisely because of the harmony and respect they feel towards the earth. The importance of Rivendell, however, does not reside only in its feeling of wellness, but in the event that takes place in the middle of savage nature. It is in this Elven realm where the most important meeting takes place. The council of Elrond meets people from different races. This multicultural reunion does not only bear with the cultural shock among all the participants, but it also ends with the creation of a brotherhood, a fellowship that is created with the intention of demolishing Sauron and his servants. All these characters have different cultures, beliefs, perceptions of life, and lifestyles, and they are seen along the story, as they will behave differently in the dissimilar landscapes they will visit. They all are still quite

motivated about the journey because they do not know what is actually waiting for them on the outside. Nevertheless, even if their interests and tastes are dissimilar, they all have something in common, they all are against Sauron and want to defeat him. It is during this meeting when Gandalf warns the rest about another enemy, his former colleague, the powerful wizard, Saruman the White. The white Wizard asked Gandalf to join the dark forces with him; however, the latter demonstrates being completely against his maleficent plans. Therefore he is taken captive on the top of Orthanc. Gandalf suggests Saruman's change when explaining the barrenness of Isengard. It seems that Saruman, being now on Sauron's side, has changed his aims and values as the surrounding nature has died, suggesting that Saruman does not venerate nature and wants to torture and kill it. "They took me and they set me alone on the pinnacle of Orthanc ... I looked on it and saw that, whereas it had once been green and fair, it was now filled with pits and forges" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 339).

After having spoken about the possible perils and changes in their way, the travellers decide to fight against the enemy and help Frodo with his journey towards Mount Doom. Hence, they create the Fellowship of the Ring, which consists of four Hobbits, two Men, an Elf, a Dwarf and a Wizard. In addition, besides their meeting and the creation of the fellowship, the stop in Rivendell is the perfect excuse to rest well and get stronger. This situation is similar to the one lived by real mountain climbers who rest in their base camps along the ascent due to the impossibility of reaching the summit in one day. In his ascent to Mount Everest, for example, John Hunt tells how he had to make use of these camp bases in order to rest and to train for the final ascent, which was obviously the most challenging one. "Here we set up a base camp for the next three weeks, while we trained among the surrounding peaks" (3). In the case of the Fellowship, Frodo and the Hobbits rest in order to be able to face what will probably be the most difficult part at the beginning of the journey, the ascent to Mount Caradhras.

5.1.1. Mount Caradhras

The fellowship starts going towards the mountains and the mere way to it can be interpreted as a prelude of what is about to come on the mountain. The weather is extremely cold and the wind makes everything more complicated. This is a common problem found up on the high altitudes and it is defined by the climber John Hunt and Edmund Hillary as “an invisible enemy ... which ... made our task all but impossible” (7). As a matter of fact, these difficulties caused by the rough weather are said to come due to the presence of the near mountains. “The first part of their journey was hard and dreary, and Frodo remembered little of it, save the wind. For many sunless days, an icy blast came from the Mountains” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367). They make some stops before arriving at the mountain, following the ways of real mountaineers. However, not even the moment to rest seems peaceful enough. The coldness is a great obstacle to get to sleep as “they seldom felt warm, either moving or at rest [and] they slept uneasily ...” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367). Nevertheless, it is not only the weather what makes their way difficult, but also the monotonous surrounding landscape of the Misty Mountains. In fact, this recurrent landscape makes the fellowship feel as if they were on a never-ending path towards their destination, causing a feeling of tiredness even before arriving at the Misty Mountains “Each day the land looked much the same as it had the day before” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367). As a matter of fact, the different paths bring them “to the edge of some sheer fall, or down into treacherous swamps” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367). It seems as if the surrounding lands were the first obstacle before the huge slope as they are depicted as a trap for the travellers to get lost or to arrive at dangerous places like sheer falls or swamps. Slowly, the company gets closer to the Misty Mountains, which are depicted as the real obstacle that hinders the fellowship’s journey “away in the south Frodo could see the dim shapes of lofty mountains that seemed now to stand across the path that the company was taking”

(Tolkien, *Fellowship* 368). The Misty Mountains are a mountain range formed of three different peaks, from which the tallest one “stood up like a tooth tipped with snow” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367) giving to it an aggressive look due to its comparison with a tooth. However, in order to make sure about its height, it is said that “its great, bare, northern precipice was still largely in the shadow” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 367). Apart from its height, the most remarkable aspect of that peak is that “where the sunlight slanted upon it, it glowed red” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 368). Usually, the red colour has been used as a signal of the presence of fire or to make a reference to a hellish-like world. In this case, the Caradhras does not introduce any volcanic characteristic at first glance. In fact, the mountain is full of snow and ice; however, the red colour does always suggest alarm or warning, it is used as a signal of danger and the mere mountain is a clear reflection of peril. In fact, Tolkien himself describes it as “a mighty peak, tipped with snow like silver, but with sheer naked sides, dull red as if stained with blood” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 373). Hence, the straightforward interpretation of these signs the travellers make when seeing the Caradhras is no other than suffering and death, and the red colour could be regarded as a symbol for the blood of the daring climbers who have not survived their journey. Therefore, the Caradhras can be interpreted as both a messenger who is warning the climbers about its roughness and also as a menacing mountain with the shape of a tooth covered with the blood of its devoured mountaineers. In any case, these mountains have alarming connotations.

The fact of climbing a mountain has never been an easy task, not only physically speaking but also psychologically. Besides the constant physical training, one needs to be mentally ready to suffer a constant fight against one’s own thoughts of surrender, of giving up and of course, one must be prepared to see the memorials of the victims of the mountain, what actually plays an important role on the meltdown of the ones seeing them. “I have seen the climbing dead all over the World. They congregate in graveyards in mountain towns, or in ad

hoc cemeteries in base camps” (Macfarlane 98). Nevertheless, the perception towards the alpine world may vary depending on the characters and the nature they are used to. In Tolkien’s novel “The various races of peoples in Middle-earth are rooted to ... their natural contexts” (Curry, *Defending* 51). As already mentioned, the company is formed by different races and they all perceive mountains and wilderness in a different way. Once again, the Dwarven race is the one more used to it as they live in huge cavern holes inside them. Gimli is the representative of the Dwarven race in the company and he is in love with wilderness; however, he is the one who knows best about the condition of the Caradhras and its surroundings and precisely due to that knowledge he is afraid even of his mere closeness to it. “Dark is the water of Kheled-zâram ... and cold are the springs of Kibil-nâla. My heart trembles at the thought that I may see them soon” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 369). In addition, together with Gimli’s worry comes Aragorn’s observation of another added danger. This one is also related to nature, and connected to the term Ecophilia. Aragorn, as a good traveller and warrior, knows everything about the kind of nature to be expected in every single land, for example, the kind of animals that are usually present in different places. As they progress on their adventure, he realizes that a flock of crow-like birds is flying upon them. Such is his knowledge, that he is aware of the breed of these birds as well as their origin. These are crebains, a race of crows coming probably from near Isengard. “They are not natives here; they are crebain out of Fangorn and Dunland. ... I think they are spying out the land. ... I think we ought to move again this evening. Hollin is no longer wholesome for us, it is being watched” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 371).

Many are the little obstacles found just on their way to the Caradhras and the whole company seems to be tired of the difficulties; however, they do not all feel the same way. Frodo is starting to feel especially devastated at the very beginning of his long journey to Mount Doom. He really needs to arrive and end with this nightmare. His situation is so desperate that the first time he glances at the peak of the Caradhras far away, due to its red colour he thinks

he is already arriving at the final volcano, at Mount Doom. “I’m beginning to think it’s time we got a sight of that fiery Mountain, and saw the end of the road, so to speak. I thought at first that this here Redhorn, or whatever its name is, might be it, till Gimli spoke his piece” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 372). As long as they start ascending it, Gandalf is already aware of the additional difficulty they will have to bear with, the extra snow. It seems that usually, the amount of snow up there is not that dense. “Winter deepens behind us, he [Gandalf] said quietly to Aragorn. The heights away north are whiter than they were; snow is lying far down their shoulders” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 373). Hence, they will have to face not only the cold, but also the difficulty of walking among a huge amount of snow. As a matter of fact, the rough weather is actually said to be “a more deadly enemy than any” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 373). It is indeed the weather the one who warns the fellowship about the hardest situation they will have to face in a short period of time:

The twisting and climbing road had in many places almost disappeared, and was blocked with many fallen stones. The night grew deadly dark under great clouds. A bitter wind swirled among the rocks ... the narrow path now wound under a sheer wall of cliffs to the left, above which the grim flanks of Caradhras towered up invisible in the gloom; on the right was a gulf of darkness where the land fell suddenly into a deep ravine. (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 374-375)

They are almost unable to climb the mountain. The weather becomes harder and harder and it complicates the company’s journey, not only because of the cold, but also because of the snowstorm which is so dense that they can barely see the way: “the dark bent shapes of Gandalf and Aragorn only a pace or two ahead could hardly be seen” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 375). Caradhras is the most difficult barrier in their first part of the trip as it seems to be completely

against the group's decision of climbing it; all the obstacles that it presents are natural ones, coming from the mere mountain and its surroundings. It seems that this mountain is fighting against the characters and even winning the battle. However, the real problem is yet to come. The fellowship hears a strange sound, similar to a voice which "may have been only a trick of the wind in the cracks and gullies of the rocky wall, but the sounds were those of shrill cries, and wild howls of laughter" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 376). There is a clear suggestion of Saruman invoking the mountain to make the company's way impossible. In that very moment is when the mountain behaves as a character in the enemy's side, as "stones began to fall from the mountain-side, whistling over their heads, or crashing on the path beside them. Every now and again they heard a dull rumble, as a great boulder rolled down from hidden heights above" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 376). This scene is very similar to the one Thorin, together with Bilbo and the rest of Dwarves, lived in *The Hobbit* in which stone-giants seemed to be throwing rocks to them so that they could not progress on their quest and very similar to the real experience Tolkien had in the Swiss Alps back in 1911. "They [the stones] were whizzing across our path and plunging into the ravine. ... They started slowly, and then usually held a straight line of descent, but the path was rough and one had also to keep an eye on one's feet" (Carpenter, *Letters* 393). Through the description of such a vivid mountain, it seems as if the mere orogeny is behaving as a living entity. In fact, as Marjorie Burns claims "Tolkien gives life to his landscapes through active, watchful verbs and through the use of human form" (*Perilous* 85).

Understandable as it is, not all members of the fellowship are equally prepared to cope with such an extreme experience. As Boromir, the other Man in the fellowship, claims "this will be the death of the Halflings" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 377). The Hobbits, due to their short size as well as due to their inexperience in the wild are the most affected ones. "A great sleepiness came over Frodo; he felt himself sinking fast into a warm and hazy dream" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 377). Similar to what usually happens to the extremities of real mountaineers when

they face the weather problems up on a mountain: “one friend ... lost sixteen fingers and toes to frostbite” (Macfarlane 141), Frodo almost gets frozen and without the help of the rest of the company, he may die. The moment to consider the incoming difficulties has arrived and Gimli warns the rest, telling that “Caradhras was called The Cruel, and had an ill name” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 376) and then he adds “the heights above were hidden in great clouds still heavy with the threat of snow” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 379). Gimli is aware of the roughness of the wild mountain and the weather conditions up there. At the moment in which the storm seems to calm down, the Dwarf still reminds the rest “Caradhras has not forgiven us ... he has more snow yet to fling upon us, if we go on. The sooner we go back and down the better” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 379). He personalizes the mountain, probably due to the love towards these landscapes the Dwarves demonstrate, however, by doing so, he empowers the orogeny giving to it the condition of a character like the rest who form the fellowship. Such is the emergency of doing something soon, that the snow is said to be “breast-high, and often Boromir seemed to be swimming or burrowing with his great arms rather than walking” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, 380) and “it was no ordinary storm. It is the ill will of Caradhras” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 381). This sentence also personalizes the mountain by suggesting it is the mere mountain’s choice to swallow the climbers and the one who does not want them to continue on their way. Now that they are closer to the peak, its presence is even more intimidating and it is described as a “sudden wall, and its crest, sharp as if shaped with knives, reared up more than twice the height of Boromir” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 382). The aggressiveness of its look is always present on every single description of it due to the red colour, the shape of a sharp tooth or because of its great height. Tolkien himself considers that the mountain “had defeated them” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 383) and Gandalf contemplates the incident as an “attack on the Redhorn Gate” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 384).

On the moment of considering what to do after this attack, Frodo himself considers that going back on their way would be shameful. As a true warrior, the little Hobbit does not want to surrender and suggests to continue with their hard and dangerous adventure. “A mixture of pride in achievement and fascination with oblivion is one hallmark of the evolution of mountain symbolism since the early 1700s” (Blake 529). It is then when Gandalf proposes another way. “I advise that we should go neither over the mountains nor round them, but under them. That is a road at any rate that the enemy will least expect us to take” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 386). That sentence suggests two interesting things: first of all, that Gandalf sees in the underground the safest way to continue their journey, and secondly, that the underground is a place from which the enemy will not expect characters on the good side to be, implying that the underground is usually related to evilness.

5.1.2. Khazad-Dûm

After the adversities found in Caradhras and after Gandalf’s advice of crossing the mountain from the inside, a new type of cave is introduced. The huge gap inside the mountain does not resemble the inhospitable little caves found all along the mountains which are usually full of orcs or trolls. This huge cave is actually the biggest and most famous Dwarven realm. It is known as Khazad-dûm or the Mines of Moria and it is hugely venerated by the Dwarves. However, this feeling differs quite abruptly from the rest of the characters’ opinion. Aragorn, the brave Man, declares that he once had to cross and he adds: “I do not wish to enter Moria a second time” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 175). After him, Pippin claims: “and I don’t wish to enter it once” so does Sam when saying: “nor me” (175). Boromir rejects going inside the mines: “I will not go” (175), Legolas shows his discomfort as well: “I do not wish to go to Moria” (175) and so does Frodo: “I do not wish to go” (175). In contrast with the predisposition Sam shows

about visiting the Elven realms at the beginning of the journey: “Elves, sir, I would dearly love to see them” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 40), the wish to visit the realm of Moria is nonexistent. The mere image of a hole inside a mountain clearly scares them. Hobbits are not used to the wilderness of mountains, but Aragorn, Boromir and Legolas are, and still, it is not a pleasant place for them either. Even Gandalf, the wise wizard, knows about the dangers of a place like Moria and after hearing the fellowships’ complaints, he adds: “of course not! who would?” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 175).

The Hobbits are facing a completely new kind of dwelling and art, quite the opposite to the one they are familiar with in the Shire. As a matter of fact, their perception of the wild caves inside mountains may be influenced by the common tendency “to glorify and idealize the Elvish and Hobbit relationship with nature”, which is done “by limiting the definition of nature to growing things [...]” (Seymour 31). Hence, it is easy to understand Sam’s definition of Khazad-dûm the first time he sees it, as he refers to the Mines of Moria as “darksome holes” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 411) and Gimli feels irritated by the comment and even answers back: “these are not holes ... this is the great Realm and city of the Dwarrowdelf. And of old it was not darksome, but full of light and splendour” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 411). Through Gimli’s statement, two things are clear: the first one is that Dwarves enjoy a “hidden beauty” (Funk 332) and the second one is that even if caves have lately been related to darkness and hence to evilness and hideous characters, this has not always been this way. Caves were a place for good people with good values some time ago. Such is the case of Khazad-dûm.

Dwarves have a strong feeling of oikophilia, as explained through the case of Thorin and his company in *The Hobbit*. They are intensely attached to their caverns. This is a feeling that Sam probably does not know when he refers to them in such a discredited way. He is unaware of what these caves actually mean for the Dwarven race, what demonstrates the huge cultural clash between Hobbits and Dwarves. In addition, for a Hobbit like Sam, who has been

born and raised in an idyllic place where everything is under the Hobbits' control, appreciating such a different and extreme landscape is just hard. A very important fact about the alpine world is that, as Maria Müller claims, "mountains have been used in popular narratives to inspire respect for the powers of nature" (2). Thence, another extra characteristic attached to them is the presence of beasts, dragons or even gods with the intention of maintaining the people away from them (Müller 2). This is the kind of rumour that people not belonging to the mountains believe in and due to them, their rejection towards orogenies is huge. Depending on the race, the characters will be more connected to certain landscapes and environments. As a matter of fact, "the meaning of a place comes from the evaluation based on personal, individual and private experience of this place ..." (Hung 44). In other words, each place has a different meaning for the different characters that form the fellowship and everything depends on their personal experiences in such places. If Sam has never seen a cave, he will not be attached to it the same way as Gimli is, who has been raised in one. In addition, sometimes "the place is the anchor of a collective memory of a group of people ... sometimes the place is the historical heritage of a people or culture ..." (Hung 53). This is the clear example of what Dwarves feel towards their realms. The Dwarven race loves their ancestors' work inside the mountains, their craftsmanship and their culture. They venerate their history and the presence of their ancestors is always cherished. They are professional smiths and diggers who have transmitted this job and love towards the earth from generation to generation. Everything that they love and need in everyday life can actually be found in one of these realms. Hence the human-place relationship that "includes historical, cultural, societal, economic ... dimensions" (Hung 53) is perfectly reflected on the Dwarves. Nonetheless, these human-place relationships can also derive into a more economic issue. When the connection to the place is done just due to the economic profit that can be taken from it, the feeling of belonging there is not the same as in the previous example. However, the Dwarves break with the differences and make from their

realms not only their dwelling to which they feel strongly connected, but also their working place. In fact, Khazad-dûm is a huge mine from which the Dwarves make a living. This episode also shows the great impact or presence mines had in Tolkien when he was just a child. Men's and Dwarves' way of digging is quite similar; however, "Men look toward this issue from a purely practical standpoint (roughly ...) while Dwarves had a higher ideal (beauty) in mind" (Barberis par.7). The Mines of Moria are of great interest not only for the Dwarves, but also for all the usurpers that one day decided to plunder them. The richness of Moria resides in its beauty, its history, culture and minerals. However, that is not what the Orcs think. They find the richness of the realm in the presence of a mineral called Mithril. Therefore, unlike the Dwarves, Orcs' only connection to the Dwarven Realm is stimulated by the "price of the place" (Hung 44). This is seen when "[one's] surroundings ... are just materials prepared for [one's] access and use. Their value depends on how useful, how convenient, how efficient they are to serve [one's] purpose" (Hung 44).

Nevertheless, besides its economic and sentimental value, none of the fellowship feels as comfortable as Gimli when talking about Khazad-dûm. As a matter of fact, they all feel uneasy in its surroundings. This common and shared feeling may be due to the cultural memory of the characters. "The myths, images and imagining of mountains are inseparable in the same way that our responses to landscapes are predetermined by what we think of them" (Blake 528). In other words, the prejudices that some characters have towards alpine landscapes are related to previous stories, myths and even legends that they have heard of them. Even if they have not experienced a journey on the mountains, their first impression when observing a mountain from a close distance will be hugely influenced by these thoughts. Prejudices towards a mountain vary depending on the place where particular characters belong to. This is called cultural memory and in Tolkien's novel prejudices are different depending on the race they come from. However, there is a shared discomfort among the members of the company. "I thought from

the beginning, when first I considered this journey, that we should try it. But it is not a pleasant way ... Aragorn was against it, until the pass over the mountains” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 385). As expected, due to his great knowledge, Gandalf had already thought of the possibility of crossing the Mines of Moria; nevertheless, he also adds the idea that the way will not be easy. The first reactions of the travellers are, obviously the consequence of fear, ignorance and prejudices about what the path through Khazad-dûm can be like. Merry is the first one complaining about it. For a Hobbit, crossing a huge and dark mine which could actually be full of perils does not sound attractive enough. “If it is a worse road than the Redhorn Gate, then it must be evil indeed” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 385). The Hobbit describes the entrance of Caradhras as among the worst situations he has been through. Nevertheless, this fear is not only felt by Hobbits, but also by Boromir, who adds to Merry’s comment that “[Moria] is a name of ill omen ... nor do I see the need to go there” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 385). Khazad-dûm is known as The Black Pit, which actually adds extra negativity towards the place as it suggests its darkness. Therefore, Moria is a clear example of a place which emanates negativity through people from different races, they all feel uneasy and disagree with the idea of crossing it. All, except Gimli, the Dwarf, whose relationship with the mines is so deep that even Tolkien adds the element of fire to his reaction so that this connection can be clear “only Gimli lifted up his head; a smouldering fire was in his eyes” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 385). He feels amazed by the idea of entering the realm of his ancestors. Even if the general feeling is not a positive one, Gandalf makes sure to distinguish the Dwarven Realms from the gloomy caves of or Mordor. “I only of you have ever been in the dungeons of the Dark Lord, and only in his older and lesser dwelling in Dol Guldur. Those who pass the gates of Barad-dûr do not return” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 386). Gandalf’s words are useful to see that even the darkest mines or subterranean places are far from the real darkness of Middle-earth, the dungeons of Sauron’s lands. The very words that may calm the company down, are not very helpful for Frodo, who will have to face

the gates of Barad-dûr. However, even if Moria is not as dangerous as Mordor, the general feeling when the fellowship is around the great cave is unfavourable. “Behind him [Gimli] they walked in file, threading their way with care, for under the weedy pools were sliding and greasy stones, and footing was treacherous” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 394). They are not even inside the mines, but the atmosphere is already disturbing on the outside. Humidity, difficult paths, sloppy lakes... and strange sounds define the entrance of Khazad-dûm. Once they are in front of where the gates of Moria should be, they can barely see a thing; however, Gandalf knows about the secrecy behind them as “where the wizard’s hands had passed, faint lines appeared, like slender veins of silver running in the stone” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 397). The ignorance towards Moria and the fear caused by the ideas one gets from previous legends about it makes the place look gloomy. However, the fact of having huge gates from which apparently nothing can be perceived unless the passenger knows its trick adds an extra mystery to the unknown place. “Dwarf-doors are not made to be seen when shut ... they are invisible, and their own makers cannot find them or open them, if their secret is forgotten” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 396). Nevertheless, the interesting fact about the doors of such an unfamiliar location is that in order to be able to cross them, a password is needed, and the password is what actually brings the positivity to this scene. “I had only to speak the Elvish word for friend and the doors opened. Quite simple ... those were happier times” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 401). The word friend or *Mellon* is the clearest example of Moria being a place from which goodness was expected. A place in which the mere password reflects the good disposition of both adversary races, the Elven and the Dwarven. The password is a signal of the union of them and the echo of a time in which the environment was much happier and more positive than in the Third Age. As a matter of fact, Christopher Tolkien clarifies this good relationship when he explains how Celebrimbor and Narvi, Elf and Dwarf respectively, became close friends when they lived in the neighbourhood of Moria and Eregion. It was in those times when “Both Elves and Dwarves

had great profit from this association: so that Eregion became far stronger, and Khazad-dûm far more beautiful than either would have done alone” (*Unfinished* 235-6). Still, things have changed a lot from these past times in which Khazad-dûm was a safe place. But why has the connotation of this huge subterranean space changed? Many are the menaces that lie in wait for the newcomers and even if it is not easy to see them at first glance, the uncomfortable environment already offers an impression of the incoming perils. In fact, the next impediment the fellowship finds appears just after having opened the gates and before being able to cross them. In such a short period of time, the nine travellers are forced to fight a new enemy. “There came a soft sound: a swish, followed by a plop, as if a fish had disturbed the still surface of the water ... there was a bubbling noise and then silence” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 394). Something that the fellowship is not expecting just appears with the intention of making the entrance to Khazad-dûm even harder. A long tentacle attacks Frodo by grabbing his ankle and scaring him. They are expecting Orcs inside the cave, but they had never imagined seeing a huge Kraken-like creature lurking in the depth of the lake in front of the gates of Moria.

Once inside the dark place, the fellowship sights many stairs leading on into the dark of the Dwarrowdelf. Such is the mistrust that Gandalf warns the rest to be careful and suspicious about everything; they should not touch anything they find on their way. “Go carefully with the water, too! there are many streams and wells in the Mines, but they should not be touched” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 404). Most members of the fellowship have difficulties seeing inside Moria. The only light they have comes from Gandalf’s glimmering staff and through it, Frodo can see a bit of the look of the indoor parts of Moria, full of different passages, chambers and tunnels, everything surrounded by deep darkness. The presence of so many dark and closed passages also creates a feeling of suffocation. The beginning of the journey through Moria is not a pleasant one. In addition, as long as they descend, there is a notorious change in the temperature, “the air grew hot and stifling, but it was not foul” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 404).

While the whole fellowship advances on its way, Gandalf is the one leading, however, he asks for Gimli's help when the way is hard to choose due to the darkness the Dwarf is so used to. They are descending into the depth of the mines, and due to the impossibility to see and the slow rhythm with which they advance, the way seems never-ending and "they seemed to have been tramping on, on endlessly to the mountains' roots" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 406). All this creates a shared feeling of tiredness. In such a hard situation, Pippin is the one responsible for bringing chaos to Khazad-dûm by throwing a stone into a huge hole that leads downwards in the complete darkness. The whole company is afraid of what has just happened inside the dark cave. However, Gandalf, who actually knows the possible perils inside this place cannot believe it and then Gimli adds "that was the sound of a hammer, or I have never heard one" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 408). Gimli, as a good Dwarf, is a smith, he has been raised and educated in smithery and knows how a hammer sounds. That means that the sound they have just heard comes from the deep underground and that someone is actually lurking down there. An immense feeling of uncertainty invades the members of the company as they know that "probably something has been disturbed that would have been better left quiet" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 408). Pippin does not obviously know what kind of problem that small gesture of him can actually bring and they all have to walk for many hours with the fear that someone could attack them at any moment. Suddenly "Frodo's spirits rose a little" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 410) as they were ascending on their way. The Hobbit's improvement suggests that the higher places are better for those who do not belong to the dark side and that the lower parts, those in the underground, are more connected to evil characters. Even Frodo and the rest of the company feel better when ascending and suffocated when descending.

Similarly to the moment in *The Hobbit* in which Thorin and his companions choose a cave inside the chambers of The Lonely Mountain to rest on their journey, the fellowship does the same. They rest inside a chamber they find. A closed space inside another closed space that

they find safe. Nevertheless, they still “were oppressed by the loneliness and vastness of the dolven halls and endlessly branching stairs and passages” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 411). In other words, even if they find a secure place inside the Mines of Moria, it is still oppressing and devastating. There is no place of safety and calm inside or around a subterranean space.

Such is the danger which Khazad-dûm hides in its depth, that even when back in time the Orcs plundered the upper parts of it, they were not brave enough to dig so deep due to the fear they felt. “Since the Dwarves fled, no one dares to seek the shafts and treasuries down in the deep places: they are drowned in water - or in a shadow of fear” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 413). Once again the power of the legends told from generation to generation about the perils of the underground do play an important role even among Orcs. Macfarlane, for example, has noted the traditional connection between mountains and dangerous elements: “mountains were dangerous places to be ... you might fall between the blue jaws of a crevasse, or you might encounter a god, demigod or monster ... for mountains were conventionally the habitat of the supernatural and the hostile” (15).

As mentioned above, Moria’s wealth resides on Mithril, which is worth “ten times that of gold, and now it is beyond price” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 413). Its worth is now much higher precisely because all the Mithril that can be found in the upper parts of Khazad-dûm has gone due to the Orc’s pillaging. However, there is still an amount of Mithril in the depth of the Dwarven Realm, but no one dares to dig so deep precisely because of the presence of a disturbing and dangerous creature in the very roots of the mountain. Once again, after this information about the worth of the precious mineral, Frodo, knowing that with Mithril he could actually buy the whole Shire, feels homesick and overwhelmed by the situation they are living. Instead of feeling a lucky Hobbit due to the richness he can achieve, he feels sad: “he wished with all his heart that he was back there [in the Shire], ... moving the loam, or pottering among the flowers, and he had never heard of Moria, or Mithril, or the Ring” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*

414). This demonstrates the Hobbits' personality. They are not greedy beings, they have enough with what The Shire offers them; they actually love everything about their home and do not need anything else. However, it is interesting to see how Frodo always feels homesick when he is climbing a mountain or inside one. This actually suggests that he feels devastated by their presence, which also gives extra information about the actual meaning of the alpine world in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. His feeling is understandable as his condition as a Hobbit makes him miss the tamed nature in which he feels safe and comfortable. As a matter of fact, "the mountain environment has represented a challenge for thought and imagination. The grandeur, majesty, verticality, in some cases even the inaccessibility of the peaks ... has nourished for centuries the conviction that the mountains represented ... the extreme boundary, the frontier of civilization" (Costa 1). The civilization is what Frodo misses so much as the only kind of relationship he has now is with eight other people, from which he only knows four, the Hobbits and Gandalf. Nonetheless, back in time, Khazad-dûm played the role of a civilization, it was the realm of the Dwarves, but it is clear how its connotation has changed severely from being a sacred place for the Dwarven race to a huge cemetery. Frodo and the rest of the fellowship enter another little chamber when they find many of the dead bodies and skeletons of some of the Dwarves that used to live there until the attack of the Orcs. "By both the doors they could now see that many bones were lying, and among them were broken swords and axe-heads, and cloven shields and helms" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 418). The fact of being a place of the dead still maintains its sacredness, but it adds a gloomy aspect to it as this place is not a proper cemetery where the bodies are correctly resting in their tombs. Hence, it can be said that after the plunder of the Orcs the connotation and environment of the Mines of Moria changed. They brought chaos, destruction and death to them. As already mentioned, each race in Middle-earth is used to the land they belong to and they shape it according to their history, culture, traditions and taste. Hence, there are several patterns of nature in Middle-earth.

Gwyneth Hood asserts that the characters' relationship with their environment is related to the way in which they fight the enemy. Characters on the benevolent side shape their nature with the intention of bringing peace to their corresponding inhabitants and in the opposite way in which the enemy would shape it. On the contrary, the special aspect of the evil beings is that they do not follow a specific pattern, but what really matters is "the spirit with which they do so" (6). Following this explanation, Orcs do shape or feel more attracted to the wild places where there is no order, no-followed pattern and no harmony and in fact, they add an extra feeling of chaos and destruction. As a matter of fact, the chamber in which they find Balin's tomb together with all the dead bodies of the Dwarves is a huge reflection of that chaos and destruction.

Among all these dead bodies, next to Balin's tomb, Gandalf finds a huge book full of dust. In it, the Dwarves wrote a long time ago about the moment in which the Orcs attacked the Mines of Moria, the fear they felt and what kind of sounds they heard. "We cannot get out. The end comes, and then drums, drums in the deep ... they are coming" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 421). The moment in which Gandalf reads these lines, "there came a great noise: a rolling Boom that seemed to come from depths far below, and to tremble in the stone at their feet. They sprang towards the door in alarm. Doom, doom it rolled again" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 421). The wizard can not believe what is happening, they are experiencing just what the story he has just read tells, the exact sounds, the same feelings. The book, called *The Book of Mazarbul* is an archive of the history of the inside of the mountain and they find it quite valuable. It has a similar value to the one that Geology got after the 1820s when it "was perceived by many as a form of necromancy, which made possible a magical voyage into [the] past" (Macfarlane 49). In fact, many believed that "mountains provided a venue where it was possible to browse the archives of the earth . 'the great stone book', as it became called" (Macfarlane 49). Until this moment, Khazad-dûm seems to be similar to other mournful caves,

with the difference of being extremely huge and an old belonging of the Dwarves. However, there is still something else that makes it especially dangerous when compared with other little caverns. Just when the company hears the sound inside the chamber, Khazad-dûm becomes a mountain with a volcanic resemblance. The noise the company hears sounds “as if huge hands were turning the very caverns of Moria into a vast drum” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 421). As long as the company prepares to be attacked by Orcs and similar cave-related creatures, there is something else that makes the inside of Moria resemble a volcanic eruption, and it is precisely its fire-related creature that wakes from the very depths of the mountain, what provokes these drum-like sounds and makes the walls tremble. “The walls seemed to be trembling. Every now and again the drum-beats throbbed and rolled: doom, doom” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 425). As a matter of fact, besides the sounds and the tremor of the walls, as long as the company descends the stairs of Khazad-dûm, they feel how the temperature grows notoriously. “It is getting hot! ... we ought to be down at least to the level of the Gates now” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 425). Hence, the underground is hugely related to heat and to fire. This, unconsciously makes the reader think of the Christian hell, which adds the negative connotation every single character has towards it. In addition to the sounds, the tremor and the heat, the creature lurking in the deep underground also seems to block the little light that the company gets from Gandalf’s glimmering stick, it swallows the light until it appears in front of them and then “they could see their way ... [as] through it the growing light came. The air became very hot” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 427).

The travellers do not know what is about to happen, what they will have to face, however, all the references are similar to the ones described in *The Hobbit* at the moment in which Bilbo meets Smaug. Heat, no light, drums-like sounds that make the walls tremble, it seems as if a volcano was about to erupt, however, it is not fire per se what they are about to find, even though it is not very different. The company is facing an apocalyptic moment, “the

pillars seemed to tremble and the flames to quiver” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 428). The great beast they will have to face is a Balrog, a fire-demon, the mightiest of Morgoth’s creatures back in times of *The Silmarillion*. They all are supposed to be gone, however, according to a letter Tolkien himself wrote “that one had escaped and taken refuge under the mountains of Hithaeglor (The Misty Mountains). It is observable that only the Elf knows what the thing is - and doubtless Gandalf” (Carpenter, *Letters* 180). They end up overcoming the perils of the great mines, however, they will not overcome all these perils without any incident. As a good and realistic adventure in the mountains, they suffer a huge loss on their way. Gandalf the wizard confronts the Balrog, each of them being on opposite sides of the bridge, however, the Balrog attacks him and brings the wizard with him into the abyss. They all feel devastated by the loss, especially Frodo, who now feels extremely vulnerable. He has lost a good friend, a perfect guide and a huge help in their journey. However, like real mountaineers, they have to move on and continue their way without Gandalf. Many of them, except the hobbits, perhaps, knew the perils and the risks they were about to suffer; however, the final result is that, having overcome all these dangers, they are now at the other side of The Misty Mountains, which was actually their plan at the beginning of the ascent of Mount Caradhras. Therefore, climbing the mountain, choosing its internal part to cross it and risking themselves has been worth it, as they have reached their goal, even if that meant leaving one of the members behind. As a matter of fact, the mere act of dying on the mountains, as a fighter, does also add heroism to the character himself. As Macfarlane states, back in the nineteenth century “the public ... was more fascinated than horrified by the deaths. ... To many, moreover, the act of dying in the mountain had conferred a majesty upon the men” (96).

Once they are outside and away from the Mines of Moria, Tolkien uses extremely beautiful imagery through which the reader can appreciate the power the alpine world has for him. There is a moment in which Gimli, who really loves his ancestors’ abandoned realm, looks

back at the mountain with a certain nostalgia and tells Frodo to look once more at them so that he can admire the real beauty of the wilderness from a safe place, without the fear he has felt all along the journey through them. “Then slowly they saw the forms of the encircling mountains mirrored in a profound blue, and the peaks were like plumes of white flame above them; ... there like jewels sunk in the deep shone glinting stars, though sunlight was in the sky above” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 435). After the Balrog’s death, the flame that ‘comes out’ from The Misty Mountains has changed from red to white, suggesting wellness has invaded the inside of Caradhras and in addition, Tolkien compares the summits of The Misty Mountains with one of the most valued treasures for the Dwarves; jewels. “There lies the crown of Durin” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, 435) adds Gimli, however, it is not clear whether he refers to the Kingdom of Durin or to the whole mountainous landscape, with its three peaks, which could remind of the shape of a crown. Both interpretations propose the orogenies as the symbol of a huge and important kingdom, the kingdom of the Dwarves.

Once they move away from The Misty Mountains, they enter the second but probably most important Elven location, the land of Lothlórien. After spending some days resting, and learning about the future perils they can find on the outside, they take some boats that they receive from the Elves of Lothlórien as they will have to cross the river Anduin. On their way through it, they perceive the huge change in the environment as the surrounding lands are barren and there is no nature near “on the eastern bank to their left they saw long formless slopes stretching up and away towards the sky; brown and withered they looked, as if fire had passed over them, leaving no living blade of green” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 495). They are in the neighbouring lands of the Eryn Muil, their next contact with a mountainous landscape. Such is the deterioration seen in the mountain that “what pestilence or war or evil deed of the Enemy had blasted all that region even Aragorn could not tell” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 496). The look of this mountain is completely deplorable and even worse after having experienced the absolute

beauty of Lothlórien. The contrast in the look of these two places is not just a coincidence. While Lothlórien is among the prettiest and most cared places in Middle-earth, the arrival at the barren Eryn Muil suggests the presence of some evil creatures usually related to these dreadful lands. In fact, Eryn Muil is said to be “a hilly rocky land, and on both shores there were steep slopes buried in deep brakes of thorn and sloe, tangled with brambles and creepers” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 501) which is full of possible spies flying on the sky: “there were many birds about the cliffs and the rock-chimneys, and all day high in the air flocks of birds had been circling, black against the pale sky ... Aragorn watched the flights doubtfully ...” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 501). Therefore, the Eryn Muil does not seem to be as dangerous as the pass of Caradhras or the Mines of Moria, however, the mere environment already warns the travellers about its possible perils just while the company is arriving at its surroundings.

Therefore, *The Fellowship of the Ring* demonstrates that the huge prominence mountains have in the previous works by J.R.R. Tolkien is still present. It is interesting to see to what extent these wild landscapes were so beloved by the writer as “in most nineteenth-century ... mountains were written about as places who have no intrinsic value” (Müller 3). They are, similarly to the ones introduced in *The Hobbit*, a remarkable part of the journey; they are part of the most important incidents during the long travel, the greatest obstacle, the natural element that most scares the characters and hence the element through which above all Frodo grows and matures. As Dhar claims “there are many purposes of mountain travel ... but one stands out the quest for an encounter with the self” (3). In this first volume, the core of the story actually takes place outside and inside The Misty Mountains. Caradhras or the Redhorn is the first impediment the fellowship finds on its way and it is the most dangerous way they face. It is so dangerous, that even its surroundings can be interpreted as little warnings of the incoming and real obstacle of the Caradhras. In addition, as mentioned above, this episode is very similar to the one Tolkien describes in *The Hobbit* when the travellers are climbing The Lonely

Mountain and a storm attacks them. The real episode which Tolkien lived back in 1911 in the Swiss Alps did undoubtedly shock the writer immensely so that he felt the necessity of portraying the risk of climbing a ferocious mountain in a similar way to the one he experienced and twice in two different novels. As far as the inside of the mountain is concerned, Khazad-dûm plays the most important role in the whole story. Similarly to the pass of the Caradhras, the mere surroundings of the Mines of Moria already offer a glimpse of the calamities they will live inside the mountain. In addition, “everything has already conspired to force the company to this location” (Stanton 41). This can be interpreted in two ways: as if someone from the dark side wants them to suffer and die, or as a must or rite of passage their journey so that they can learn about the adversities of the wilderness. The important aspect here is that in both cases, in the ascent to Caradhras as well as in the crossing of Khazad-dûm, the mere mountain sends little omens with the intention of warning the fellowship.

Mountains are one of the main obstacles in Frodo’s way. What makes him suffer but also learn and become braver than what he thinks he is. This kind of landscape makes him feel completely vulnerable and small; however, thanks to its presence, Frodo, exactly the same way as Bilbo, will no longer be the same Hobbit who left The Shire some days ago and this is what he will admire most about mountains in the near future. But first, he has to be involved in several adventures that will be analyzed in the following chapter about the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*.

5.2. *The Two Towers*

After the long and perilous adventure crossing the mines of Khazad-dûm, most of the fellowship is still alive, although a great loss is still present in their hearts, Gandalf the Grey has fallen fighting against a Balrog of Morgoth. The defeat of the Wizard demonstrates how

even the most powerful characters can become the mountain's casualties. There are no exceptions, no distinction of races or social classes, all of them are possible victims of the mountain. Nevertheless, the pass of the Caradhras can be considered a successful victory over the mountain and the wilderness. It may be regarded as a rite of passage, as it has been a learning process and the experience of climbing another hill will never be the same, as they all have already experienced and learned from it. However, the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings* begins with the sadness of the rest of the characters and with the breaking of the fellowship. Boromir, the man of Gondor, completely attracted by Frodo's Ring, tries to convince the Hobbit to give the Ring to him, his hunger for power betrays him and finally falls fighting against a huge army of Uruk-hai who are trying to kill the Hobbits. Frodo together with Sam escapes and takes the way towards the dark Eryn Mui, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli decide to follow Saruman's servants and try to rescue Merry and Pippin, who had been kidnapped. All of them, in separate ways, will have to face new environments and fight as well as get along with characters from different cultures, where the alpine world plays, once again, an important role.

After trying to be safe from the appetite of Orcs and Uruk-hai, and with the help of the attack of Éomer of Rohan, Merry and Pippin escape from the claws of Saruman's servants and enter in a different environment, one which they would have never chosen as a place of safety, one which even the Elves of Lothlórien warned them not to enter in, the Forest of Fangorn: "they [the fellowship] should not go too far up that stream, nor risk becoming entangled in the Forest of Fangorn. That is a strange land, and is now little known" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 487). Similarly to the situation of the unknown mountains, many legends are told about the darkness of Fangorn; however, the Hobbits feel attracted to its darkness, as not many places will terrorise them as much as hungry Orcs and Uruk-hai. Nonetheless, as Marjorie Burns states "we are drawn into ... a more primitive world, as we are drawn ... over the hills and ... forests and

mountains of Tolkien's Middle-earth. To move in such direction is to move deeper and deeper into risk" ("Journey" 7). In the wild forest of Fangorn, Merry and Pippin meet Treebeard, an Ent and main enemy of Saruman, who will not see a menace in the halflings or the "hole-dwellers" (Tolkien, *Towers* 605), as he calls them as they go against the white wizard as well. Together with Treebeard's help, they will advance in their journey, which is not simply physical but also personal. They are getting close to the feet of the Misty Mountains, where the little Hobbits can appreciate the magnanimity of the Methedras, one of the peaks of The Misty Mountains. "Beyond there [Fangorn] glimmered far away, as if floating on a grey cloud, the white head of tall Methedras, the last peak of The Misty Mountains" (Tolkien, *Towers* 558). The Misty Mountains, as always, are depicted with the common cold and rough weather, covered with snow and mist. The look of them does not leave the Hobbits indifferent at all "at last the hobbits saw, rising dimly before them, a steep dark land: they had come to the feet of the mountains, and to the green roots of tall Methedras" (Tolkien, *Towers* 611). Even if Fangorn is portrayed as a dark forest, it seems that its darkness cannot compete with that of the huge hill, which adds an extra feeling of fear towards it. However, the way Treebeard chooses is the way towards the peak of the Methedras, as from it, he will be able to show the Hobbits, the evil that dwells in the other side of the Misty Mountains, Saruman the white. "At last they stood upon the summit, and looked down into a dark pit: the great cleft at the end of the mountains: Nan Curunír, the valley of Saruman" (Tolkien, *Towers* 635).

In this case, both, the way and the peak mean much more than just climbing. It is actually during the ascend of the Methedras when Merry and Pippin discover the real face of Saruman, his evil intentions, how he has not always been evil. They learn how power corrupts people, how it can make someone become completely indifferent and inconsiderate with the rest of living beings as well as with the environment. It is part of their maturation, a way of opening their eyes and seeing how the world actually is out of their comfortable Shire. The

ascend represents learning from life and reaching the top of it symbolizes the actual realization of the situation. They can confirm every single word Treebeard has told them about Saruman and his land, Isengard. The ascent of the Methedras is a rite of passage for both innocent hobbits, as they lose their ingenuity and learn about the evilness of Middle-earth.

Saruman's valley can be considered the industrial counterpart of Rivendell, which is another natural valley. However, the main difference found is that whereas the Elven realm is full of life, savage nature and the House of the Healing, Saruman's Realm "is a sort of ring of rocks or hills ... with a flat space inside and an island or pillar of rock in the middle, called Orthanc" (Tolkien, *Towers* 627) full of destruction and death. In addition, "there is always a smoke rising from Isengard these days" (Tolkien, *Towers* 617), which includes a gloomy look to the land of the white wizard. Once again, Tolkien uses the image of fire, or even worse, the result of its presence: smoke, giving the valley quite aggressive and destructive qualities. Smoke can also be considered a warning symbol of what the main characters of the story will find in these lands, a clear menace, exactly the same as what happens to the fellowship before arriving at Mount Caradhras. Perceiving a warning signal only denotes uneasiness and requires special attention from the climbers, as it means something fiery resides inside the mountain. What is clear is that the presence of smoke adds negativity to the place, discomfort and a volcanic scenery used many times by Tolkien in all the previous analyzed novels. Every time that fire can be spotted next or inside a mountain, it means that the mountain will be dangerous due to the peril fire itself denotes, or due to the presence of evil and fiery creatures such as Smaug or the Balrog. Fire is definitely the symbol of destruction. After the appreciation of the barren valley of Isengard, Treebeard tells the Hobbits about the meetings he once had with Saruman and how he has changed, how he is not the superior of Gandalf anymore. He has been corrupted by power and he does not care about the environment. He is a creator of war and death. Treebeard defines his new personality as having "a mind of metal and wheels [who]

does not care for growing things, as far as they serve him” (Tolkien, *Towers* 616). The fact of having a mind of metal and wheels offers a glimpse of how industrial not only his mind but also his surroundings have become. He has quite a selfish and materialistic attitude. Saruman only cares about the usefulness of what surrounds him, he is looking for what he most desires, power and in order to get it, he uses his Orcs who are horribly corrupted souls that “Melkor subsequently manipulated ... to mock the Children of Ilúvatar” (Bergen 115). Consequently, Saruman and his deeds can be considered as a mockery against life and peace in Middle-earth. He would love to have Ilúvatar’s power of being able to create, but he destroys and manipulates instead. He is not able to create any living, he corrupts the Orcs as well as Uruk-hai’s personalities so that they fight on his side and kill nature. Merry and Pippin can not believe what they have seen and heard about Saruman and they attribute their unconsciousness to the presence of the Misty Mountains. These become a huge wall from which any information about what happens in this land will hardly spread into the other side of the mountains “well, I am afraid the songs have not come west over the Mountains to the Shire” (Tolkien, *Towers* 619).

Following these Hobbits, who have already escaped from the claws of the Orcs, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli enter the dark Forest of Fangorn. There the differences of the appreciations of nature can be seen in these characters’ reaction when in contact with the old trees. Even if the Elves of Lothlórien do not like the idea of entering into Fangorn, Legolas feels safe enough inside it. Due to his condition of wooden-Elf, his sensitivity towards the trees is much deeper than Aragorn or Gimli’s. “He stood under the eaves of the forest, stooping forward, as if he were listening, and peering with wide eyes into the shadows. ‘No, it is not evil; or what is evil in it is far away ... there is no malice near us” (Tolkien, *Towers* 641). Legolas is from the other dark forest, Mirkwood and similar legends are told about his abode; however, he finds beauty and comfort in both of them and does not want anyone to harm the trees. That is appreciated when Gimli claims that he will travel with his hands on his axe, but

finally adds to the Elf's calm "not for use on trees" (Tolkien, *Towers* 640). This can be due to what Patrick Curry defines as *bio regionalism*: the mere feeling of respect for the nature that surrounds the characters' dwellings. "Given that most of the races are closely tied to a particular geography and ecology, and manage to live there without exploiting it to the point of destruction" ("Less Noise" 128). This feeling is shared by most of the characters that are hugely attached to their own environments. It happens with the Hobbits and the Shire, with Boromir and Minas Tirith, Éomer with Rohan and with Legolas and the dark forests. Nevertheless, Legolas' comfort with the trees will not be the best of their feelings, as at the core of Fangorn at the feet of the Misty Mountains, they will be hugely surprised by the presence of the resurrection of their main guide, Gandalf, who now has been transformed into Gandalf the White.

5.2.1. The Silvertine

Through the description of the battle against the Balrog, the three warriors and specifically Gimli, get to know about the actual look of the deepest parts of Khazad-dûm. Gandalf adds extra danger to the story by saying that "we fought far under the living earth, where time is not counted ... till at last he fled into dark tunnels. They were not made by Durin's folk, Gimli ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 654). The land is not dead, and the time is not counted, it seems as if the lowest part of the Mines of Moria was part of another dimension. As a matter of fact, the Istari continues saying that "far, far below the deepest delvings of the Dwarves, the world is gnawed by nameless things. Even Sauron knows them not. They are older than him" (Tolkien, *Towers* 654). The Balrog is Morgoth's most powerful creature during the First Age and he dwells in the deepest parts of the mountains. It seems that together with Balrogs, there are other extremely ancient creatures that not even Sauron knows. Gandalf's

story just adds more mystery to the roots of the mountains, where there are not only unknown creatures but also unknown places that not even the real dwellers of the underground, the Dwarves, know. Once again, legends about hidden places are told. Thus, Gandalf tells them about an endless stair in the depth of the Mines of Moria. Even Gimli believes in this legend “long has that been lost ... many have said that it was never made save in legend but others say that it was destroyed” (Tolkien, *Towers* 654). Thence, the mines of Khazad-dûm are definitely much deeper than Gimli thinks, and they hide many unknown corners stairs, entrances... this technique of depicting so many stairs, secret doors and dungeons is usually common in Celtic and Teutonic tradition in which these elements symbolize a metaphorical journey through which the character will undergo a transformation. “The very presence of such forms gives substance to otherwise intangible moments ... readying us for the metaphorical solidity of journeys (spiritual or physical)” (Burns, *Perilous* 50). In order this transformation can happen, Gandalf must overcome some stages which will actually make him stronger and wiser. It is the learning process he will have to suffer while climbing the stairs inside the mountain so that he becomes the white wizard. He tells his friends that he went “from the lowest dungeon to the highest peak ... ascending in unbroken spiral in many thousand steps, until it [the stair] issued at last in Durin’s Tower carved in the living rock of Zirakzigil, the pinnacle of the Silvertine” (Tolkien, *Towers* 654). The interesting point here is that the journey goes, as in the case of Merry and Pippin in the Methedras, from the roots to the highest peak of the Misty Mountains. Gandalf’s ascension to the uppermost part of the mountain while fighting against the Balrog is another clear case of a rite of passage. Through the ascent, Gandalf gets the highest level of knowledge and thus, the way upwards can be interpreted as the wizard’s own transformation as the main leader of the group and the act of ascending as the learning process. This provides the ascension with a highly positive connotation. Looking at the stratum in the mountain, the wizard’s journey begins at the lowest strata and culminates on the highest one. The one which

actually belonged to Durin, the King of the Mountain. In that divine or at least royal place is where Gandalf acquires his mastery. He overcomes the obstacles of the darkness and reaches the lightest point in the mountain to become the fairest among the Wizards. He transforms into Gandalf the White. It seems that the mere mountain is portrayed here as the place where the real heroes are trained, or as Marjorie Burns states “over the Edge of the Wild ... [is] where... heroic qualities are tested in hobbits, dwarves and men” (“Journey” 6) and of course, in Wizards. The summit becomes the battle camp in which the character does not only fight against the Balrog but against oneself. Hence, the presence of such a mountain introduces several obstacles and hard times for the travellers; however, it also denotes a positive aspect; that of helping Frodo (through Gandalf’s guidance) into Mordor. It seems that the mountain itself is the one who wants the Wizard to become the wisest among the Istari and guide his friends, especially Frodo, who will be the one bringing peace and the regeneration of nature in Middle-earth. Similarly to what happens to Frodo on Weathertop when the leader of the Nazgûl stabs him and hence a little part of him belongs to the darkness the Black Riders spread, Gandalf’s fight against the Balrog makes him learn from the darkness and even incorporate it in himself. He becomes the most powerful character as a whole, as he knows about light and darkness. This mixture between good and evil can be interpreted as the mixture of the conscious and unconscious side of a character’s psyche, which Jung called the individuation process. “The conflict between the two dimensions of consciousness is simply an expression of the polaristic structure of the psyche, which ... is dependent on the tension of opposites” (Jung 149). In other words, in order to have complete control of the self, in order to become aware of the whole of a character’s personality, both sides, the conscious and the unconscious, this last one usually related to evil and primitive instincts, known in Jungian terms as “the shadow”, are necessary. It is precisely this shadow which has made Gandalf become aware of everything and hence, wise enough to transform himself into Gandalf the White. In order Gandalf can

evolve and obtain the maximum knowledge, it is necessary to confront his shadow counterpart, the Balrog, who can only be found in the depth of the Mines of Moria: “by accepting the Balrog’s help, Gandalf could find the Endless Stair, the only path to individuation” (Kloutau 6). Hence, it is through the acceptance and learning of the darkness found in the depth of Khazad-dûm that Gandalf is worthy enough to evolve into white. Among the Istari, each one of them has his own colour, representing the title of the wizard. Gandalf is the Grey, Saruman is the White and Radagast is the Brown. White is seen as “the one that gathered all colours in harmony and peace” (Kloutau 3) and hence, Saruman was the leader of the Istari. However, after Saruman’s corruption and Gandalf’s fight against the dark, things change “Saruman is deposed, loses his colour, and Gandalf becomes the White” (Kloutau 3). Hence, the Silvertine is the clear representation of the maturation and evolution as a character for Gandalf. The depth of Khazad-dûm can be perceived as his learning process, his training battle camp. Khazad-dûm is definitely Gandalf’s mentor for the incoming and complicated adventures all along Middle-earth. He is the chosen one to guide his friends to try to save Middle-earth from Sauron’s evil intentions. The magnificent change in Gandalf’s character is hence provoked by the inside of the mountain. It is due to this episode that Gandalf can learn about the darkness in Middle-earth and hence, guide his friends towards victory. As a matter of fact, in order to do so, Gandalf, once again, clarifies the prominence of orogenies, as he goes towards the foot of the Misty Mountains, to the dark Forest of Fangorn to meet his friends and begin the war against the destruction of nature in Middle-earth.

After having reunited with Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, advised by Éomer, decide to go towards the south, where they will ask for the help of King Théoden of Rohan. In order to do so, they have to travel towards The Mountains of the South, also known as The White Mountains.

5.2.2. The White Mountains

The White Mountains are probably among the most striking landscapes in the novel. They are depicted as the huge wall that protects the land of the Rohirrim. Their appearance is similar to the previously analyzed mountain ranges, defiant, extremely tall, tipped with snow and surrounded by darkness “before them stood the mountains of the South: white-tipped and streaked with black” (Tolkien, *Towers* 660). Their darkness is so deep that “the hills that clustered at their feet, [are] untouched by the light of dawn, winding their way into the heart of the great mountains” (Tolkien, *Towers* 660). The four characters can see in Rohan a savage and even a breathtaking view due to the sublimity offered by the high heights surrounding the city, Edoras. “Immediately before the travellers the widest of these glens opened like a long gulf among the hills. Far inward they glimpsed a tumbled mountain-mass with one tall peak; at the mouth of the vale there stood like a sentinel a lonely height” (Tolkien, *Towers* 661). And there, inside the encircling mountain range lies Théoden’s Realm, Meduseld. As previously mentioned, the Rohirrim do also have the feeling of oikophilia so common in most of the races in Middle-earth. They have a specific culture, language and history they take care of and their personalities are also shaped by the climate and landscapes they are used to. In fact, Legolas makes reference to the presence of mountains to describe the language of the Rohirrim. “It is like this land itself; rich and rolling in part, and else hard and stern as the mountains” (Tolkien, *Towers* 662). And so is their personality, they are warriors, and as their very emblem, the horse, depicts they are known as the Riders of Rohan or the Horse-lords, in fact, “Rohan itself is Sindarin for ‘horse-country’” (Shippey, *Road* 140). The fact of the horse being their representation in Middle-earth, symbolizes the strength, loyalty, wilderness and above all their free spirit as warriors. Theirs are the strongest and fastest horses in Middle-earth and they adore

the most powerful breed, the so-called Mearas. Thus the Rohirrim are depicted as strong, stern and committed, exactly like their horses.

Hence, it can be said that due to the kind of rough landscape and weather conditions, the Rohirrim are shaped in a similar way to their environment: “these distinctions in imagery and mood make geographical and cultural sense” (Burns, *Perilous* 52). However, not everything shines in Théoden’s hall. The previously mentioned darkness lurking around the summits of the White Mountains may be a signal of the real darkness living in Meduseld. King Théoden has his own evil at home, even if he is not aware of it. The evil intentions of Saruman to control the King’s mind are revealed through the character of Gríma Wormtongue, Théoden’s counsellor, who through his poisoned words has possessed the King and does not behave as he used to anymore. Not until Gandalf with the help of his staff fights against Saruman after telling Gríma to stay away from the King. “A witless worm you have become. Therefore be silent, and keep your forked tongue behind your teeth” (Tolkien, *Towers* 671). The mere name Wormtongue already offers a glimpse of how Gríma is: he is called a worm, his tongue is said to be forked and he is the one possessing Théoden. He is definitely the human representation of a snake. He poisons and almost kills the King, as he is in a sleepy mood. In fact, Gandalf himself orders him to maintain away by saying “down, snake!” (Tolkien, *Towers* 679), when after having fought against the spirit of Saruman “in his [Wormtongue’s] eyes was the hunted look of a beast seeking some gap in the ring of his enemies. He licked his lips with a long pale tongue” (Tolkien, *Towers* 678). Thus, Tolkien makes use of several references in order to depict Gríma as the traitor he is, like a poisonous snake who will arouse and bite everyone he finds on his way; he is cold, dark and his intentions are evil. According to Hammond and Scull “*Worm* implies that Gríma is low, beneath contempt ... also compare Old English *wyrm* ‘serpent’, recalling the serpent in Eden who spoke falsely and tempted Eve. *Forked tongue*, ... connoting ‘deceitful’” (*Companion* 405). But Gandalf is the light that fights

against Saruman's darkness inside Meduseld "he raised his staff ... the whole hall became suddenly dark as night. The fire faded to sullen embers. Only Gandalf could be seen, standing white and tall before the blackened heath. In the gloom they heard the hiss of Wormtongue's voice" (Tolkien, *Towers* 671). Nobody can understand what it was happening until Gandalf admitted to Théoden that "Wormtongue's whispering was in your ears, poisoning your thought, chilling your heart, weakening your limbs, while others watched and could do nothing, for your will was in his keeping" (Tolkien, *Towers* 680). Similarly to other fiery mountain scenes, inside the circle that the White Mountains form, in what could actually be considered the core of the mountainous landscape, inside Meduseld, fire appears once again. In this case, it is Gandalf the one who makes use of it, as a purification, as a way of cleaning or killing all the evilness introduced through Gríma Wormtongue. Fire this time is not used as a way to destroy nature, but as the way to wash the sickness from which it suffers. Such is the connection and the love the Rohirrim feel towards their land, that Théoden's illness could be considered the land's sickness as well. Since Wormtongue has possessed him, the King is extremely weak, he cannot fight in defence of Rohan "Wormtongue played dangerously, always seeking to delay you, to prevent your full strength being gathered" (Tolkien, *Towers* 680-681) and he has even sent his nephew Éomer into exile. All these bad deeds are the aftermath of having the evil inside his Realm, inside the core of the mountains. It is through the power of light that Gandalf brings the real Théoden back to life and he gets rid of the evil creature of the inside of the mountains. This is precisely Gandalf's second fight against the darkness of the mountain. Firstly, he confronts the Balrog and now, as Gandalf the white, he fights Saruman by expelling Gríma Wormtongue from Rohan and more specifically, from Théoden's mind. All in all, Gríma may be interpreted as a way of destroying a strong city like Rohan. His words are, after all, Saruman's, and as previously seen, his current intention is that of creating an army of servants who will help him govern Middle-earth, even if that means destroying the whole natural world of it. Thus, the

warning mist that Legolas, Aragorn, Gimli and Gandalf see when they are getting near Rohan may be a representation of the darkness awaiting them inside Meduseld. Once again, darkness, visibility troubles, mist or smoke are a warning symbol of something inside the mountain that needs to be fixed.

Once Gandalf saves the Rohirrim from Saruman's control, and tells the King about Saruman's evil plans, together with Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, Théoden decides to fight against Saruman's army in one of the strongest fortifications the men of Rohan owe, a place where the race of Men has always been victorious: the fortification of Helm's Deep. Even if the idea of going towards Helm's Deep is clear, the way to it is not so. Legolas, who has Elf's eyes and hence a greater vision, is not able to see properly due to the deep darkness lurking around the mountains. "There was a growing darkness, as of a great storm moving out of the East" (Tolkien, *Towers* 686-687). The weather and the impossibility to see what could be hiding behind all this darkness, (the fear of the unknown), is what makes the image of the mountain become fiercer and more menacing. "Mountains rise ... intimating ... [and] alpine scenes become dominant background motifs" (Ireton and Schaumann 7). However, the darkness is not coming only from the White Mountains, because from the other side of the Misty Mountains as well as from Isengard, a dense mist can be appreciated as well, and it is regarded as a warning of the evil intentions of Saruman. It is common to perceive the presence of rough weather or deep darkness around the places where evil awaits. In this case, these signs of evilness come from the orogenies, warning the main characters about the perils of their way. "And away in the North-West there seemed to be another darkness brooding about the feet of the Misty Mountains, a shadow that crept down slowly from the Wizard's Vale" (Tolkien, *Towers* 687). Nonetheless, the mist or the clouds are not the main reason for Legolas' difficulty to see "there is a veiling shadow that some power lays upon the land, and it marches slowly down stream" (Tolkien, *Towers* 687). It is a different shadow the one that does not let him see

properly, the shadow of the evil, who consciously is making the way of the main characters more complicated.

On their way to Helm's Deep, they sight the presence of the hills; however, they can not see the whole mountain as "the tall peaks of the Thrihyrne were already dim against the darkening sky" (Tolkien, *Towers* 689). The land of Rohan is a mountainous one, hence, the alpine landscape is common for them. Nonetheless, the sights of such land are so impressive and wild that they are depicted as sharp horns, with the devilish connotation that horns imply. "Now very near they stood on the northernmost arm of the White Mountains, three jagged horns staring at the sunset" (Tolkien, *Towers* 687). The presence of such menacing peaks surrounding the fortress of Helm's Deep suggests the shade and hence the darkness they offer to those inside the fortification. Precisely due to its closeness to the orogenies, the fortress is made out of stone, which makes it immensely strong and able to defend its people. "At Helm's Gate, before the mouth of the Deep, there was a heel of rock thrust outward by the northern cliff. There upon its spur stood high walls of ancient stone, and within them was a lofty tower" (Tolkien, *Towers* 689). This savage scenery is not only familiar for the Rohirrim, as the mixture of high heights with all the surrounding rocks looks considerably appealing to Gimli, the Dwarf, whose dwelling does not differ too much from these views. "'This is more to my liking' said the dwarf, stamping on the stones" (Tolkien, *Towers* 693). The closer they get to the fortress, the more comfortable Gimli feels. In fact, due to his perception of the beauty of nature and his extra sensitivity with the rocky landscapes, he himself is the one responsible for humanizing the mere orogenies by saying that "this country has tough bones. I felt them in my feet as we came up from the dike" (Tolkien, *Towers* 693-694). Gimli feels at home whenever he is near the mountains, he truly admires them as well as their stones and he admits it when he says that "ever my heart rises as we draw near the mountains" (Tolkien, *Towers* 693-694). He studies the structure of nature around Helm's Deep, something that none of the rest of

warriors has probably done. In addition, he even scrutinizes it with the intention of improving both, its look and its practicality. “Dwarves approach the natural world with a desire to improve and make use of it” (Seymour 39). He actually tells Legolas his desire of doing it. “Give me a year and a hundred of my kin and I would make this a place that armies would break upon like water” (Tolkien, *Towers* 693-694). Such is his admiration for the stony fortress, that during the battle of Helm’s Deep against Saruman’s troops, Gimli is missing and both his companions worry about him. However, Aragorn knows Gimli’s personality and he is aware of the possible corner where his friend can be, the Glittering Caves inside Helm’s Deep. “He is stout and strong ... let us hope that he will escape back to the caves. There he would be safe for a while. Safer than we. Such a refuge would be to the liking of a dwarf” (Tolkien, *Towers* 702).

Thus, the White Mountains can be said to shape their dwellers’ personality and temperament, as the Rohirrim demonstrate being strong, determinate and defiant. Nevertheless, before the arrival of Gandalf, the city of Rohan is ill, by Saruman’s treachery over Théoden and Gríma is the one emanating dense darkness around the mountains, which catches Legolas’ attention when they are arriving at the alpine city. In this case, fire is also present inside the core of the mountain, which can be interpreted to be Meduseld, Théoden’s hall. However, this fire is used in order to clean rather than to destroy. It is used as a way of killing evil, not nature. And this is what most distinguishes the fire inside Meduseld from the rest of fiery mountains.

5.2.3. The Glittering Caves

These are among the most admired caverns by Gimli. He discovers them during the battle at Helm’s Deep and he immediately falls in love with them. He is so excited about what his eyes have seen, that he is not able to keep all this excitement for himself and decides to share it with Legolas. His feelings are so intense, that Tolkien creates a monologue to actually

represent such happiness. Gimli describes these caves to his Elf-friend, who obviously will not appreciate them the way the Dwarf does just because he belongs to the woods, not to the underground. The Dwarf cannot understand how Men are not able to admire such a marvel the same way he or any other Dwarf would do:

Strange are the ways of Men, Legolas! Here they have one of the marvels of the Northern World, and what do they say of it? caves, they say! caves! Holes to fly to in time of war, to store fodder in! My good Legolas, do you know that the caverns of Helm's Deep are vast and beautiful? There would be an endless pilgrimage of Dwarves, merely to gaze at them, if such things were known to be. Aye indeed, they would pay pure gold for a brief glance. (Tolkien, *Towers* 713)

Gimli's sense of oikophilia is perfectly reflected in this scene. He needs his companions to feel exactly what he feels when his eyes see the precious caves. As a Dwarf, he is concerned about the practicality of them; nevertheless, he is astonished by its beauty as well. The mere name already indicates that something about precious minerals has to do with the look of these caves, it is actually the presence of these jewels that makes them glitter. An interesting point of the alpine landscape of the White Mountains is that it is a place in which the friendship of a Dwarf and of an Elf is clearly exposed, even if the relationship between these two races is not the best one. Due to the astonishment of Gimli towards the caves, he feels the need to share his rich experience with his Elf-friend, Legolas. He is offering him all the feelings he has inside him so that Legolas can enjoy the view of the Glittering Caves the way he does, with the functionality of them, with all that this actually means for a Dwarf. Such is his need for Legolas' understanding of the actual look of these caves, that Gimli uses a practical example for Thranduil's son. Legolas is familiar with the look of the caves inside Mirkwood where his

father reigns; however, Gimli makes a comparison with these caves so that Legolas can imagine the magnanimity of the Glittering Caves. “Do you think those halls are fair, where your king dwells under the hill in Mirkwood ... they are but hovels compared with the caverns I have seen here: immeasurable halls, with an everlasting music of water that tinkles into pools, as fair as Kheled-Záram in the starlight” (Tolkien, *Towers* 714). Everything inside these caves is worth being admired, even the noise of the water, which Gimli defines as music that tinkles and he even compares it with the lake situated at the feet of his beloved Khazad-dûm, the Mirrormere. The precise description Gimli offers together with his way of speaking only denotes his commotion towards the underground palace. “And Legolas, when the torches are kindled and men walk on the sandy floors under the echoing domes, ah! then, Legolas, gems and crystals and veins of precious ore glint in the polished walls” (Tolkien, *Towers* 714). His joy can be appreciated in his words, he even compares the brightness of these gems with “the living hands of Queen Galadriel” (Tolkien, *Towers* 714). Gimli’s encounter with The Glittering Caves is probably his best memory of the whole journey as he finally admits that “happy was the chance that drove me there! it makes me weep to leave them” (Tolkien, *Towers* 714). It is interesting to see how Gimli does not fulfil the requisites to be the hero of the story. However, he does have many values that actually make him look like a possible candidate. He loves the stony world sincerely and due to the real passion he feels towards his environment, he is able to fight on its defence. He definitely belongs to the underground and that is why he admires it on such a great scale. In addition to that, Ireton and Schaumann claim that “heroes do not so much climb peaks as explore their cavernous interiors” (7). Thus, Gimli could be close to becoming a hero in the story. Gimli’s and Dwarves’ love towards the underground is related to their straightforward connection with it. After such a thorough and long description of Gimli’s astonishment, even Legolas, who at first does not put any kind of attention on the surroundings is willing to see the caves. “You move me, Gimli ... I have never heard you speak like this

before. Almost you make me regret that I have not seen these caves” (Tolkien, *Towers* 715). And just after such a promising expression, both comrades’ friendship seems to get better and better as Gimli promises to “endure Fangorn if I have your promise to come back to the caves and share their wonder with me” (Tolkien, *Towers* 715). The most fascinating aspect of the presence of the rocky caverns is precisely that no matter for how long the Elven and Dwarven races have been angry with each other, the mere existence of this kind of wild nature makes them forget about past irritations and this at the same time lets them enjoy the beauty of multiculturalism. In fact, the good atmosphere that the caves of Helm’s Deep provoke in Gimli can be interpreted as an aftermath of the happiness stimulated by the presence of the mountain. It may be argued that the Glittering Caves make Gimli forget, for a moment, about the negativity of such a place, (it is a fortress after all) and enjoy his surroundings just by their beauty. This effect may be interpreted as the healing power of nature, as it is the landscape that makes the Dwarf enjoy the moment besides the real negative situation he is about to live.

Thus, the whole alpine scenery of Rohan is completely meaningful. At first, The White Mountains are depicted as a huge wall protecting the land of Rohan. Having a natural wall that protects a whole land may have some positive qualities such as the difficulty to be attacked by anyone not used to such wild landscapes or the survival of the culture of the Rohirrim. Nonetheless, it also has its negative side as that of being completely isolated and hence not being able to learn from other neighbouring cultures or to have difficulties to receive any news from the other side of the mountains. However, the Rohirrim know their land perfectly and due to it, they are able to arrive at their fortress in Helm’s Deep in time, before the arrival of the enemy. As far as The Glittering Caves are concerned, they do also play an important role. First of all, because they are inspired by some real caves that Tolkien himself visited, as he admits it in one of his letters. “[the description of the caverns] was based on the caves in Cheddar Gorge and was written just after I had revisited these in 1940 but was still coloured by my

memory of them much earlier ...” (Carpenter, *Letters* 407). These caves are, at the very core of the White Mountains, next to the menacing Thrihyrne, which adds a scary appearance to them; however, they glitter, they are shiny and most important of all, they are used as a refuge, not as the abode of evil creatures, like other caves. In addition, they are a place belonging to the race of Men, adored by Gimli the Dwarf and they become a future visit location for an Elf, who is now thanks to his Dwarf friend more interested in them. They definitely emanate positiveness and richness to the story in contrast with most of the non-dwarven cavernous places in Middle-earth. All in all, the Glittering caves present multiple and even contradictory symbolic meanings as they play the role of refuge for the good characters, they reinforce the union between Dwarves and Elves and due to their power on Gimli, the Dwarf feels strong enough to fight for them. Nevertheless, the fact of being a fortress also involves being surrounded by war, which adds negativity to their existence.

5.2.4. Nan Curunír

The next alpine landscape that the characters find is not so far from Helm’s Deep. It is located at the southern arms of the immense Misty Mountains, and it is called Nan Curunír, also known as Saruman’s Vale. As the mere name indicates, there, in the middle of such high heights is situated Saruman’s Realm, which due to his master’s new identity, has a dreadful look. “There is ever a fume above that valley in these days ... but I [Éomer] have never seen aught like this before” (Tolkien, *Towers* 720). Éomer, King Théoden’s nephew, has been raised in Rohan, not far from Isengard, but he admits the huge change this land has suffered. He is even aware of some disgusting transformation of the water as it looks as if some smokes were evaporating from it. He attributes their state to some evil plan of the Wizard. “These are streams rather than smokes. Saruman is brewing some devilry to greet us” (Tolkien, *Towers*

720). Moreover, the atmosphere there is disgusting and significantly stifling due to the dense darkness. “Over the ground there crept a darkness blacker than the night ... a mist gathered about them ... on either side there arose walls of impenetrable gloom; they were in a narrow lane between moving towers of shadow ...” (Tolkien, *Towers* 721). The most shocking aspect of the look of Isengard is that even if it is surrounded by wild nature like the mountains of Nan Curunír, the appearance of the valley is completely different since Saruman has changed his mind and is now selfish and evil. He obviously does not care about nature as he just wants to destroy it with the intention of creating a factory of horror. “That was a sheltered valley ... once it had been fair and green, and through it the Isen flowed ... all about it there had lain a pleasant, fertile land. It was not so now” (Tolkien, *Towers* 722). What once had been a natural wild valley has now turned into “a wilderness of weeds and thorns” (Tolkien, *Towers* 722) where in agreement with the new look, the caves naturally created are the dwellings of many beasts. “Brambles trailed upon the ground or clambering over bush and bank, made shaggy caves where small beasts housed” (Tolkien, *Towers* 722). In addition, together with the new grey look, Tolkien defines this land as “a sad country, silent now but for the stony noise of quick waters” (Tolkien, *Towers* 722). Silence in nature could be interpreted as the death of it as if there were no living beings left. Because of that Tolkien himself finds it sad, as the only noticeable noise is that of water against stone, which implies the lack of grass and consequently, life. The whole vale is now completely stony as if Saruman had started a war against nature and had built his own land into the most unnatural place in Middle-earth. “After they had ridden for some miles, the highway became a wide street, paved with great flat stones, squared and laid with skill; no blade of grass was seen in any joint” (Tolkien, *Towers* 722). And there, in the very core of the mountain range, stands the high tower of Saruman, Orthanc. Saruman’s valley is definitely shocking, not only due to the presence of Orthanc, but also because of its new appearance, due to its wide and empty grey terrace. It seems that Tolkien wants to show

his disapproval and sadness, both feelings are related to Saruman's destruction of nature as he constantly defines the land of Isengard as a completely barren place, where nature is killed. "Once it had been green and filled with avenues, and groves of fruitful trees, watered by streams that flowed from the mountains ... but no green thing grew there in the latter days of Saruman" (Tolkien, *Towers* 723). As a matter of fact, the presence of rocky pillars of several different kinds of metals in the exact place where in the past many trees laid makes it look more as a constructed industry in the middle of the mountains; nature is destroyed due to Saruman's blind will for power. "Instead of trees there marched long lines of pillars, some of marble, some of copper and of iron, joined by heavy chains" (Tolkien, *Towers* 723). This imagery may remind of the Dwarven industries inside their own mountains; however, there is something that differs completely Saruman's and the Dwarves' intentions towards nature. Even if "some Dwarvish practices are not ideal in a world which privileges the love of growing things over all others, Dwarves are never depicted as engaging in the destructive, 'progressive' practices of Saruman and his followers" (Seymour 42). The look of it could resemble that of the Dwarven dwellings because of their underground location and because of the description of the many chambers and passages that can be found there. Nonetheless, Dwarves live freely inside their caves, whereas according to what is said of the chambers of Isengard, their structure suggests the idea of being small spaces for many workers. They are similar to a prison for Saruman's followers. "Many houses there were, chambers, halls, and passages, cut and tunnelled back into the walls upon the inner side ... thousands could dwell there, workers, servants, slaves, and warriors with great store of arms ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). In addition, the most shocking aspect of the new look of Isengard is that due to the presence of some mounds and domes of stone "in the moonlight the Ring of Isengard looked like a graveyard of unquiet dead" (Tolkien, *Towers* 723). Another similarity with the Dwarven realms and traditions is the one of having big treasures hidden in the lowest part of its dwelling, inside the caverns. "Many slopes and spiral

stairs [ran down] to caverns ... there Saruman had treasuries, storehouses, armouries, smithies, and great furnaces” (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). In addition, another common feature found in the conquered Khazad-dûm is also perceived in the depth of Isengard: the sound of the drums coming from the caves, which makes the characters remember the scene in the depth of Moria and still feel uneasy about it. However, the Vale of Isengard goes one step further in terms of creating a disgusting atmosphere around it due to the presence of fire, which due to its heat becomes blue and they are accompanied by green vapours defined as “venomous green” (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). Thus, the land of Isengard has become the sickness of the mountains of Nan Curunír, where nature is dead and only smokes and green vapours come from the deep and dark caverns that Saruman created.

In contrast to the dark chambers laying in the depth of Isengard, Saruman, as the representation of complete power over his land, dwells in his tall Orthanc, which seems to be “riven from the bones of the earth in the ancient torment of the hills” (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). The mere description of its creation makes reference to the death of nature, the torment of the hills. Thus, Orthanc is depicted as being built as the aftermath of the life of the earth. With the earth’s bones, Orthanc was built. It was created by death with the intention of being responsible for future deaths. Moreover, and adding another physical characteristic to the already threatening look of the place, Orthanc makes his relationship with evilness really clear through the presence of its summit. “Near the summit they opened into gaping horns, their pinnacles sharp as the points of spears, keen-edged as knives” (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). The aggressiveness of its look makes it less appealing to strangers and it can also be interpreted as a way of showing Saruman’s intentions and warning those who may be willing to attack him. Orthanc is the best reflection of what Saruman is, a copy of the greatest image of darkness in Middle-earth, Sauron, whose Tower Barad-dûr is taken as a model to build Orthanc. That is why Tolkien himself admits that “he [Saruman] made ... nought, only a little copy of a child’s model or a slave’s

flattery of that vast fortress, armoury, prison, furnace of great power, Barad-dûr, the Dark Tower, which suffered no rival, and laughed at flattery ...” (Tolkien, *Towers* 724). The same way Saruman corrupts his land and the nature that surrounds him, he also poisons his followers’ minds and makes them fight and destroy everything around them. Among his troops can be found the great Uruk-hai, which are described as “horrible, man-high, but with goblin faces, sallow, leering, [and] squint-eyed” (Tolkien, *Towers* 738) as well as Orcs, which in many times can be seen riding wild wolves. The two species have an awful look, they are both wild and disgusting and they both have the same idea of destroying and killing everything and everyone. They are deceitful, and they cannot even trust each other as “the wolves of the mountains do not devour them [Men]. It is with their friends, the Orcs, that they hold their feast: such indeed is the friendship of their kind” (Tolkien, *Towers* 719). However, even if the three of them are dishonest, the wolves, which are wild creatures coming from the mountains, are not evil until they are persuaded by the orcs, which means that it is the influence that Orcs have on them what makes them behave shamefully. As previously mentioned, Jung proposes the term of “The Shadow” to refer to the unconscious part of a person’s psyche. This shadow represents the aspects that one does not want to show to the rest of the society due to the fear of not being accepted. As Andersen claims in her Jungian interpretation of some aspects of *The Lord of The Rings*, “shadow is a central and universal archetype which has been personified in literature through countless destructive and malevolent characters. However, the archetypal shadow figure is not necessarily of a destructive nature” (7). It is easier to characterize the darkest side of oneself as an ugly creature or character who, in addition, acts cruelly because, in that way, its bad manners will not be questioned; it is a way of justifying evilness. Evil creatures are evil and they behave abominably. Following this idea, the Uruk-hai, due to their closeness with Men, can be interpreted as their shadow. They behave instinctively and their manners are socially unacceptable due not only to their deeds, but also due to their language, which is full

of aggressiveness and is used just as a material thing, without care. Orcs and Uruk-Hai find in the language just a way of communicating, demanding things and arguing. As Cody Jarman states: “in Tolkien, heroes speak plainly with a mythic language of literal and figurative truth, while evil limits language to the material and uses this to play games with meaning” (158).

As far as Saruman is concerned, he does not look very different from Gandalf. “His face was long, with a high forehead, he had deep darkling eyes ... though the look ... was grave and benevolent, and a little weary” (Tolkien, *Towers* 754). However, an interesting detail on his description is that when talking about its colour, Tolkien admits that he is “an old man, swathed in a great cloak, the colour of which was not easy to tell” (Tolkien, *Towers* 754). This might seem a simple description; however, it means much more than what it seems. As mentioned above, in the chapter in which the transformation of Gandalf is analyzed, the colours of the Istari are their title and Saruman used to owe the mixture of all colours, the white, becoming the leader of the group. Now that he is corrupted, and that Gandalf himself has turned into Gandalf the White, he is losing his power and hence, his colour. He, like Gandalf, has suffered a transformation in which his will for power is the main reason for his existence. He only wants to destroy all the natural world in Middle-earth and create an industry full of his slaves to control everything and everyone. He visualizes Middle-earth as a huge factory from which he can make a big profit. He can be interpreted as the opposite of the characters who live in harmony with nature, Saruman may be a clear example of Ecophobia. His only interest is that of power and only values the practicality of things. He does not care about the caring of nature, as he is one of its main destroyers. Together with his ecophobia, his language, more specifically, the way he uses it, is similar to his mind, twisted, with the only intention of harming the rest of the characters. As a matter of fact, Tolkien himself admitted that: “those who listened to him were not in danger of falling into a trance, but of agreeing with his arguments, while fully awake” (Carpenter, *Letters* 276-277). Thus, in Jungian terms, Saruman

is definitely Gandalf's shadow side. He is the reflection of how Gandalf would be if he could not control his unconscious side, the temptation towards the Ring, the will for power, and the dictatorial behaviour amongst others. In other words, Gandalf is what Saruman was supposed to be before his own corruption. As far as the reason for Saruman's change is concerned, it may be argued that it may have to do with his dwelling. The fact of being completely isolated in his tower, Orthanc, which is protected by the mountains of Nan Curunír, making the tower the core of the mountains, can be regarded as a possible reason for the wizard to focus just on himself and become extremely selfish and power-hungry. Saruman has isolated himself from the rest of Middle-earth and has created his own army in the lowest parts of the mountains. Even if he has still maintained strata between him and his servants, (he lives in the highest part of Orthanc, and the Orcs are created in the inside of the mountains), Orthanc is set in the middle of the Nan Curunír, which suggests being metaphorically inside the mountain range. However, through several examples, it has been demonstrated that the will for power usually brings failure and death. Such are the cases of Feänor in *The Silmarillion*, Thorin and Gollum in *The Hobbit* and Saruman and Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*. "Tolkien is clearly demonstrating to us how excessive power inevitably leads to evil doing and can dissolve the personality of even the most well-intentioned" (Andersen 15). In addition, Saruman's transformation due to his evilness is also compared with the movements and behaviour of a snake. He is a person that uses his hissing voice to manipulate and finally bite his enemies in order to get what he desires. In fact, the first time the company sees him, they can appreciate that "his hair and beard were white, but strands of black still showed about his lips and ears" (Tolkien, *Towers* 754) and Gandalf himself confirms that he is "an old liar with honey on his forked tongue" (Tolkien, *Towers* 756). These characteristics make Saruman be very similar to a poisonous snake who may look vulnerable at first but who can attack whenever it wants. The black colour of his lips can be interpreted as the poison he has on his mouth. Moreover, smoke is very present in Nan Curunír,

which together with the snake-like presence of Saruman and his evil intentions, makes the atmosphere of such mountains quite devilish.

Hence, the mountain range of Nan Curunír plays the role of a huge wall of protection and isolation, exactly the same way as The White Mountains with Edoras. The wilderness these orogenies emit is immense, but far from being what scares the characters the most, what really alarms them is the lack of empathy towards nature, the will of power and how blind someone like Saruman can become. The huge transformation that this valley has suffered since Saruman's occupation is much worse than the fear the orogenies of the Nan Curunír can cause. Isengard is now the representation of industry and death of nature. Through Saruman's example, William Pitt's idea of the aftermath of power is perfectly reflected "unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it" (qtd. in Shippey 155) and once the mind of the leader is corrupted, he is able to corrupt not only his followers but also his surrounding lands. However, the will for power usually leads to downfall and this is what happens with Saruman, who ends up "locked in his Tower" (Tolkien, *Towers* 747).

5.2.5. Emyn Muil

On another different way to Mordor are the main protagonists of the story, Frodo and Sam, who have been climbing another different mountain, known as Emyn Muil. What makes this mountain similar to the previously analyzed ones is that it is depicted as a huge obstacle in these two characters' way. The dissimilarity is more related to its barrenness. Mountains are usually related to wild nature, however the closer the characters get to Mordor, the more infertile the lands are. This situation suggests that a huge part of nature in Middle-earth has been whether destroyed by evil or manipulated by it. That may be the clearest reason to understand why the nearest parts of Mordor are so different from the rest of the natural elements in Middle-earth. As a matter of fact, mountains and caves, specifically in these touching areas

with Mordor seem to be intoxicated by Sauron and Saruman, as fire is often present in them and with it, both evil-minded characters can actually kill nature, creating the so common barren landscape. Such is the case of Eryn Muil, which due to its monochromatic and monotonous look makes it difficult for the travellers to actually advance on their journey. “They [Frodo and Sam] had almost lost count of the hours during which they had climbed and laboured among the barren slopes and stones of the Eryn Muil, sometimes retracing their steps because they could find no way forward ...” (Tolkien, *Towers* 787). Besides its infertility, which actually makes it closer to the idea of death due to the lack of nature, and hence less appealing, it also has a labyrinthine look, as Frodo and Sam discover that “they have wandered in a circle back to where they had been hours before” (Tolkien, *Towers* 787). The labyrinthine look adds extra difficulty in the already hard journey to Mordor, which makes the hobbits feel desperate and willing to “find a way to the outer edge of this strange twisted knot of hills” (Tolkien, *Towers* 787). The negativity caused by the adversity of the tangled mountain is even bigger when the uneasiness of the sight of the Mountains of Shadow is felt in the environment. “South and East they stared to where, at the edge of the oncoming night, a dark line hung like distant mountains of motionless smoke” (Tolkien, *Towers* 787-788). They are not in a comfortable place and the sight they get is the worst sight they can have, that of the Mountains of Shadow, where they are actually leading to. This contradictory feeling is depicted by Sam, who states “that’s the one place in all the lands we’ve ever heard of that we don’t want to see any closer; and that’s the one place we’re trying to get to!” (Tolkien, *Towers* 788). The desperation on the summit of the Eryn Muil is noticeable not only in Sam’s words but also in Frodo’s. He feels the necessity of escaping the mountain. “I wish we could get away from these hills! I hate them. I feel all naked on the east side, stuck up here with nothing but the dead flats between me and that Shadow yonder” (Tolkien, *Towers* 789). Once again, Frodo is feeling homesick on the summit of a mountain. This frequent feeling may take place in the heights, precisely because they are

the opposite of what The Shire is. Frodo feels more homesick when he feels further from home. “Danger ... clearly lies to the North and East” (Burns, “Journey” 6). The hobbit is completely alienated, he admits his discomfort in the heights, he feels naked, which means that he feels out of place, he does not belong there, to these infertile and dead lands. The Eryn Muil is definitely portrayed as a huge dead maze from which the hobbits can not escape. “They were still scrambling along the ridge and had found no way of escape” (Tolkien, *Towers* 789). If they actually have to escape from it, it means they are the prey of the mountain, they have been trapped by it and that is why the feeling on its summit seems to be especially unpleasant. The Eryn Muil can be considered as the first summit in which the hobbits are captured. Their tiredness can already be felt when they are trying to find a way of escape from the dead mountain and it is reflected on their attitude. Frodo finds a way, and even if he does not know where this path leads to, he has some hope that it will be the way out of the mountain. However, Sam’s attitude denotes his desperation as he is complaining all the time. Frodo tries to encourage his friend by saying “let’s see what it leads to!” (Tolkien, *Towers* 790) to which Sam answers “a nasty drop, I’ll bet” (Tolkien, *Towers* 790). Nevertheless, Sam follows Frodo as there is no other way and the mere fact of descending already makes them feel much better, as if there was more fresh air to breathe, they feel an inner peace as they get further from the heights. Sam himself admits that he hates the looking down from heights, “but looking’s better than climbing” (Tolkien, *Towers* 791). The fact that they hate being on the summit of Eryn Muil offers a glimpse of the negative connotation mountains, and more specifically, mountains, where nature is dead, have among hobbits. They are not used to such wild landscapes; however, there in Eryn Muil, from where Sauron’s land can be sighted, the weight of the journey seems much heavier. This feeling is quite common among real-life mountain climbers as well. For example, in one of the desperate moments George Mallory suffered when climbing the Everest, he himself admitted the crisis he suffered when he got closer to the peak and found himself lost

in the wild due to something strange in the environment. “No course seemed to lead anywhere. When would our troubles be at an end? ... I seemed to notice some enervating influence which had not affected me elsewhere. ... It was ... not the hard work alone but some malignant quality in the atmosphere...” (Messner, ch.2). This feeling is something that Frodo himself suffers in the Eryn Muil as “the dark thought of Sauron brooded [there] for a while” (Tolkien, *Towers* 795). Both hobbits feel much freer once they get to find the way “We’ve escaped from the Eryn Muil!” (Tolkien, *Towers* 797). They perceive the mountain as a real prison from which they have to face the difficulty of seeing the threatening land of Mordor, as well as the hard way out of it. The situation is so exhausting that Sam prefers to find a cave, with the perils they may find inside them, in order to rest. “We might find some rock there, or even a cave or something” (Tolkien, *Towers* 799). In this desperate situation in which Sam and Frodo seem to be completely overwhelmed by the circumstance they are living, caves seem to provoke a feeling of rest in contrast with mountains. Eryn Muil has been so difficult due to the sights of the Mountains of Shadow, its barrenness as well as its labyrinthine aspect, that the possibility of finding other menaces inside caves seems insignificant to Sam. They feel they already have lost almost everything, protecting themselves inside a hole in the mountain sounds like the only hope they have not to be overexposed to possible perils on the mountain. In fact, in such a hard and desperate situation in which there is no hope left, sheltering themselves inside a hole may remind them of their home, in the Shire. Thus, even if most times caves have been more related to suffocating, dark, gloomy prisons especially in contrast to mountains, in this case, desperation has made the characters change their opinion and see them more as a shelter rather than a menace.

Once at the feet of the Eryn Muil, Frodo and Sam will find another stone on their way, another obstacle that will make their way to Mordor easier and more difficult at the same time. They meet an old well-known creature; Gollum. Due to his physical features and his many

unpleasant manners, the relationship with him is not an easy one. As a matter of fact, Sam feels irritated whenever he hears the creature complain about almost every decision the hobbits make. “What a pity Bilbo did not stab the vile creature, when he had a chance! I do not feel any pity for Gollum. He deserves death” (Tolkien, *Towers* 803). Sam’s words are very rough, however, exactly like in Bilbo, Gollum has awakened some kind of pity in Frodo that will save not only the creatures’ life but also the hobbits’. “Even if deformed in mind and body: [Gollum is] an object of disgust but also of pity- to the deep sighted, such as Frodo had become” (Hammond & Scull, *Companion* 447). Gollum is not an easy character, he is quite complex due to his double personality of Gollum/Sméagol and his behaviour is a bit annoying on many occasions. Nevertheless, the pity both Bilbo and Frodo feel towards him is what actually helped the latter on the acquisition of his quest, arriving at Mount Doom. As David Callaway claims, “Neither historically significant Middle-earth event [Bilbo’s or Frodo’s] could have occurred without Gollum” (14). It is precisely due to his experience in most of the corners of Middle-earth that he can be helpful for the Hobbits. Nevertheless, due to the huge possession the Ring has on the creature, it may be argued that Gollum’s ‘new’ condition as an unpleasant being may be an aftermath of his life in the darkness of caves. He has dwelt in complete darkness where not even Orcs dared to enter, as a way of protecting himself. He admits seeing better in the dark spots rather than in the light. Hence, he has embraced this absolute darkness as his way of life, which makes him closer to the evil in Middle-earth, usually related to the darkness of caves. The interesting aspect of such a dark creature is that he also helps the hobbits even if that means trying to trick them from time to time. In fact, when Frodo tells him about his destination, Gollum tries to warn the hobbits not to go there, due to the pain he has suffered inside the Mountains of Shadow. “‘Ach! sss!’ said Gollum, covering his ears with his hands, as if such frankness, and the open speaking of the names, hurt him ... ashes, ashes, and dust, and thirst there is; and pits, pits, pits, and Orcs, thousands of Orcses. Nice hobbits mustn’t go

to - sss- those places” (Tolkien, *Towers* 804). Nevertheless, as Gollum has been a prisoner of Mordor, he knows the way to it, and the hobbits decide to use him as a guide and travel together to the enemy’s land. His Sméagol side really helps the hobbits, the Gollum one, however, fights against them. Nonetheless, there are some features that the creature as a whole has adapted into his new self, that is the case, for example, of his rejection of the sunlight. Gollum has spent most of his life hiding from evil perils inside the caves of the mountains and he is now used to this darkness. He is actually so aware of the perils he sees during the day that he cannot understand how the hobbits prefer to advance during the light hours. “You are not wise to be glad of the Yellow Face ... it shows you up ... Orcs and nasty things are about. They can see a long way. Stay and hide with me” (Tolkien, *Towers* 812). His better relationship with darkness actually reflects his evil condition. He has been strongly possessed by the Ring and that is why his Gollum side is the strongest one. Moreover, another hint that makes him closer to the darkness is his total rejection towards the Elven Lembas. “Frodo broke off a wafer and handed it to him ... Gollum sniffed at the leaf-wrapping. Gollum sniffed at the leaf and his face changed: a spasm of disgust came over it ... ‘Leaves out of the Elf-country, gah! they stinks’” (Tolkien, *Towers* 813). The Elven realms are the healing houses where the adventurers take some rest and eat. They are the light in all the darkness that lives in Middle-earth and the intolerance Gollum feels towards their food places him closer to the evil side. All their misunderstandings come from the different perspectives they have. They understand life in different ways, due to their different experiences and they learn to accept each other step by step. In Christina Scull’s words, “We should not immediately reject the unknown or alien, but equally we should not assume that all that outwardly seems fair is so” (“Open Minds” 151). However, it is harder for Sam to handle Gollum’s behaviour. He does not trust him and this leads to constant arguments between Sam and Gollum, which are hard to handle for Frodo, the one who actually is suffering the heaviest of all weights, the pressure of the Ring. The

consequence of most of the controversies is seen in Frodo's change of attitude. The negativity his both companions radiate affects severely on his mood. "If the One goes into the Fire, and we are at hand? I ask you, Sam, are we ever likely to need bread again? I think not. If we can nurse our limbs to bring us to Mount Doom, that is all we can do. More than I can, I begin to feel" (Tolkien, *Towers* 815-816). Frodo's mood may also be so negative as an aftermath of the long hours they have spent trying to find a way out from the Eryn Muil, which actually tires both Hobbits. "I don't know how long we shall take to finish ... we were miserably delayed in the hills" (Tolkien, *Towers* 815).

After they have descended the Eryn Muil, Gollum brings them through quite a disgusting place. Nevertheless, as they do not know the way to Mordor, there is no other chance. At least they are not lost in the hills, they are on a flat floor now. However, the environment makes the hobbits feel uncomfortable, and the lack of life seems to be a common characteristic at the foot of the Eryn Muil. Nonetheless, Gollum himself makes clear that there is life in this place. "No birds here. There are snakeses, wormses, things in the pools. Lots of things, lots of nasty things ... they had come to the very midst of the Dead Marshes, and it was dark" (Tolkien, *Towers* 819). The fact that Gollum himself describes the things lurking around the Dead Marshes as nasty just means that they must be absolutely disgusting for Frodo and Sam, who have not dwelt in the conditions Gollum has. The wetness and the small pools on the floor make it more and more difficult to walk without sinking their feet in the mud. The name of the place already denotes a close relationship with death, however, the hobbits do not know to what extent they are literally walking around death. As far as they get deeper in the Dead Marshes, the environment gets darker. "Presently it grew altogether dark: the air itself seemed black and heavy to breathe" (Tolkien, *Towers* 819). The same as when the characters are about to climb a mountain the weather or the environment already warns them about the possible perils of the mountains, the atmosphere has now warned them again. However, the

worst is yet to come, what Frodo and Sam do not know is what these pools actually hide. Gollum orders them not to look inside the pool, until Frodo, already quite weak, gets to see the truth behind the muddy floor they are crossing. “There are dead things, dead faces in the water, Dead faces! ... but all foul, all rotting, all dead” (Tolkien *Towers* 820). They are walking around a disgusting place where the atmosphere is severely uncomfortable due to the presence of death itself. Therefore, the disgusting smell, the dark and unpleasant atmosphere it emanates is coming from the presence of the dead bodies sunk in the pools.

Thus, Eryn Muil is the mountainous representation of death. It is all surrounded and built by it. Its barren spaces, dark environments, lack of living beings, unpleasant smells and the presence of the dead bodies in the pools of the Dead Marshes confirm it. The important fact about this disgusting place is that it is the place where Frodo feels pity for Gollum and decides to trust him in spite of Sam’s disagreement. This fact can be interpreted as Frodo accepting his shadow side. “It is Gollum in particular who has the deepest effect on Frodo as he is the living embodiment of what Frodo is most afraid of becoming” (Andersen 10). Moreover, Eryn Muil is the summit from which Frodo sights the Mountains of Terror, which is a way of reminding him of his quest, and it is there where he accepts following Gollum, and hence his shadow side, the one who does not resist the temptation of the Ring. It is in that moment in which he is more aware than ever about his mission, he is aware of himself as a whole character, he is aware of his self, the totality of the conscious and the unconscious of his psyche. And precisely if Gollum is Frodo’s shadow, the main reason why he gets upset every time Gollum and Sam argue may be due to Sam’s lack of empathy or lack of understanding towards the inner struggle Frodo is going through. Hence, the Eryn Muil can be said to be the point in which Frodo decides to go forward in his quest learning something new of his innermost self, which is the strength that he will need in order to go to Mount Doom.

5.2.6. The Sight of the Mountains of Shadow

The Hobbits' situation does not get any better after having crossed the Dead Marshes at all. The closer they get to the enemy's land, the arider the lands will become and greater will Frodo's pressure be. Being close to the sight of the Mountains of Shadow does not help either, as he feels weaker with time. "With every step towards the gates of Mordor Frodo felt the Ring on its chain about his neck grow more burdensome. He was now beginning to feel it as an actual weight dragging him earthwards" (Tolkien, *Towers* 824). The first relatively close vision Frodo has of these abominable mountains leaves him speechless. Both Hobbits have experienced difficult situations in rough landscapes; however, the vision of Mordor is, by far, the worst vision among the rest. "Frodo looked round in horror. Dreadful as the Dead Marshes had been, and the arid moors of Noman-lands, more loathsome far was the country that the crawling day now slowly unveiled to his shrinking eyes" (Tolkien, *Towers* 825). In addition, and following the pattern of the Eryn Muil and the Dead Marshes, the land seems to be the most barren they have ever seen. The present aridness in most of the neighbouring lands of Mordor seems a clear signal of the values of these lands. They do not care about life, they just destroy every single corner of life and nature, as they are only interested in the power of governing Middle-earth. "Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness" (Tolkien, *Towers* 825). The only natural elements present in Mordor are The Mountains of Shadow, also known as Ephel Dúath and even these are depicted as sick. "The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and grey, as if the mountains had vomited the filth of their entrails upon the lands about" (Tolkien, *Towers* 825). The metaphor of the vomiting mountain already offers the idea that the land of Mordor is a volcanic one, and the rests of lava are what its slopes are made of. Besides its disgusting look, the Ephel Dúath is terrifying due to the aggressiveness of its appearance. "High mounds of

crushed and powdered rock, great cones of earth fire-blasted and poison-stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows, slowly revealed in the reluctant light” (Tolkien, *Towers* 825). We may find similar connections between toxicity and mountain landscapes in other geographic areas portrayed by several writers in different periods. For example, as stated earlier in this dissertation, Yucca Mountain in Nevada was chosen in 1987 by the US government as a repository storage facility for nuclear waste. Several contemporary American writers, and in particular, John D’ Agata (*About a Mountain*, 2010), have blamed politicians, business owners and local celebrities for the connection of Nevada with nuclear energy. D’ Agata even feels skeptical about those who apparently reject the Yucca Mountain project, such as senator Harry Reid, who, in fact, has received great donations from miner companies and has opposed supporting the Shoshone indigenous people, the ones spiritually connected to the mountain (Río 145). Similar to the situation in Mordor in which the image of absolute dominion over this volcano, Sauron, is interested in destroying nature due to his power hunger. The atmosphere there is so hard to stand, that not only the volcano is sick, but Sam himself also admits feeling quite ill as well. “I feel sick ... for a while they stood there, like men on the edge of a sleep where nightmare lurks...” (Tolkien, *Towers* 825). It seems impossible to feel slightly pleased in these lands. The many obstacles they find on their way make the path much harder and hence they tire easier. However, it is not simple to find a safe enough place to rest before arriving at Mordor. The fogs in the environment are so suffocating that the need of finding any hole to protect themselves is urgent. “Frodo and Sam crawled after him [Gollum] until they came to a wide pit ... It was cold and dead, and a foul sump of oily many-coloured ooze lay at its bottom. In this evil hole they cowered, hoping in its shadow to escape the attention of the Eye” (Tolkien, *Towers* 826). As far as the adventure advances, a clear sight of the Ephel Duáth is appreciated by both hobbits and Gollum. The mere name already warns about its appearance. “From Sindarin *ephel* ‘encircling ring or fence’ + *Dúath* ‘dark shadow’” (Hammond & Scull,

Companion 457). It is the darkest, most dangerous and barrenest place in Middle-earth. Both qualities characterize the perilous places in Middle-earth: darkness makes it difficult to see what lies in the shadows, barrenness is connected to the death of nature and they both lead to perilous locations. In fact, they are located in front of the Cirith Gorgor, the Haunted-Pass, the access to Mordor, surrounded by mountains that lead passage to the centre where two hills can be sighted. They, exactly like their surroundings, are described as “black-boned and bare [and] upon them stood The Teeth of Mordor, two towers strong and tall” (Tolkien, *Towers* 831). This name is, once again severely suggestive of the aggressiveness that can be found in Mordor. Mountains have the shape of sharp teeth, which actually can be interpreted as a menace of the mountains. They leave its visitors breathless due to the fould and vapours, there is also fire, and if this is not enough, the mere mountain will devour them. As Marjorie Burns states “the greatest pleasures in Middle-earth are the pleasures of food and drink, just as the greatest risks are the risks of being devoured” (“Eating” 108). In addition, Tolkien depicts the mountains as the teeth and the entrance as the mouth, which makes his intention of creating a threatening landscape clear. The surface of these mountains is not very attractive, and so is the lowest part of them. “Beneath the hills on either side the rock was bored into a hundred caves and maggot-holes; there a host of Orcs lurked, ready at a signal to issue forth like black ants going to war” (Tolkien, *Towers* 831). These caves are far from being slightly similar to the Dwarven caverns, they seem to be horrific, full of evil and manipulated creatures, whose only goal is killing and destroying nature. In fact, the hostility of the Cirith Gorgor is so forceful that “none could pass the Teeth of Mordor and not feel the bite” (Tolkien, *Towers* 831-832). Once Frodo, Sam and Gollum are in front of The Haunted Pass, Frodo has no doubt of what his task is. He has to go through Cirith Gorgor and get into the land of Sauron, although the mere idea scares him. Nevertheless, Gollum, who has already been there, knows the atrocities the servants of the Dark Lord can do to anyone entering there, therefore, he begs Frodo to listen to him and not to enter

there all alone, as he would finally be killed very fast and he could not fulfil his quest. “No, no, master! ... no use that way! no use! don’t take the Precious to Him! He’ll eat us all, if He gets it, eat all the world” (Tolkien, *Towers* 833). Once again, the risk the protagonists have to face in the moment of trying to confront a perilous mountain is that of being devoured by its dwellers and consequently by the mountain itself. Even the name of Mordor may suggest the idea of biting and eating the visitors of the land. As Marjorie Burns claims “the word Mordor ... is also highly suggestive (through Latin roots) of both devouring and death. (Mordant and mortuary are perhaps our closest English words)” (“Eating” 110). Gollum himself thinks of Sauron defeating them as an act of being devoured. At the last moment, Gollum tells them of another way to reach Mordor, which is defined as “darker, more difficult to find, more secret” (Tolkien, *Towers* 834). The next morning, where the light is at least a little bit brighter, both Hobbits can perfectly contemplate how the land of terror looks like and how “the deep shadows ... mantled all the western sides of Ephel Dúath” (Tolkien, *Towers* 835). The depth of the darkness present in The Mountains of Shadow is so intense that it is described in the form of a huge dark blanket as if the sun was not allowed in these lands. Gollum’s new proposal is not much better than the one they have already experienced at the Morannon, or the Black Gate of Mordor. He even describes it as “a very terrible place ... [in which] travellers shiver when they see it, they creep out of sight [and] they avoid its shadow” (Tolkien, *Towers* 839). It is definitely scary to lurk around these places, however, the comfort Gollum sees in that passage is that “the mountains are lower there, and the old road goes up and up, until it reaches a dark pass at the top, and then it goes down, down, again - to Gorgoroth” (Tolkien, *Towers* 839). Even if the place is still dangerous and unpleasant, the small detail of having to climb lower mountains already is considered as the best way to arrive at their destiny in an easier way. In this case, discerning from other divinity-related mountains, height is regarded as a negative feature, as something that will only hinder the protagonists’ way to Mount Doom. The huge effort Frodo

has to make in order to be strong enough to continue on his quest becomes bigger with time, he feels devastated and it is in these moments when he remembers the figure of Gandalf, who he still thinks passed away in the Mines of Moria. The pressure of the Ring together with the long and difficult journey through the mountains have made him stronger and weaker at the same time. He is mentally stronger than the hobbit of the beginning of the adventure; however, he is completely exhausted due to the lack of rest and that is why he wishes Gandalf's support in these hard times. "Gandalf's guidance had been taken from them too soon, while the Dark Land was still very far away. How they should enter it at the last Gandalf had not said ... here he [Frodo] was a little halfling from the Shire, a simple hobbit ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 842). As a matter of fact, besides the dangers provided by the wild nature and the darkness above them, there are also some winged creatures watching over the land. They are the Nazgûl or the Black Riders, who now are mounted in huge winged beasts, which are said to have great sight and are described as "great carrion birds" (Tolkien *Towers* 843). The fact of calling them carrion birds makes them even closer to death, as they only eat dead bodies. Therefore, everything in the land surrounded by the mountain range of the Ered Lithui or the Ash Mountains is about darkness, death, and also destruction represented by the fire coming out of the volcano. In fact, as an incentive of the aggressiveness found in Mordor, "a single red light burned high up in the Towers of the Teeth" (Tolkien, *Towers* 847).

5.2.7. The Caves of Ithilien

The closer to the goal, the harder the path becomes. In fact, on their way, they hear some sounds, as if an army was getting closer to them. At that very moment, they see a huge army of Westerlings, or Men coming from the West, with the intention of joining Sauron's command. Scared as they are, they meet some rangers that actually attack the Westerlings and

one of their warriors lands near Sam, who feels completely intimidated by such a raw scene. The Hobbits are interrogated by these Rangers, whose leader is no other than Faramir of Gondor, Boromir's brother, who once aware of the identity of the Hobbits and of the friendship with his fallen brother, wants them to be hidden from the Eye. They are now at Ithilien, also known as the garden of Gondor. The most shocking characteristic of Ithilien is that surrounded by death as it is, it seems to be the only place that can actually be called a garden, which in fact is said to keep "a dishevelled dryad loveliness" (Tolkien, *Towers* 850). The dryads are strongly related to trees, which are extremely difficult to see in the surrounding lands of Mordor. Thus, their presence is a way to depict Ithilien as the hope for nature, as it is the only place that keeps it alive, the only corner in which life is appreciated. The garden of Gondor can be interpreted as an oasis or refuge for Frodo and his fellow companions before actually entering into Mordor. As a matter of fact, on 30 April 1944, in one of the letters to his son Christopher, Tolkien admitted that Ithilien was "proving a lovely land" (Carpenter, *Letters* 76). Moreover, only positive qualities define this land. They are "shielded from the east by the Ephel Dúath and yet not under the mountain shadow, [and] protected from the north by the Eryn Mui" (Tolkien, *Towers* 850). Therefore, they are quite protected by the wilderness, which far from being a menace, provides the Hobbits with a pleasant stay. This means an important change from the rough paths and disgusting lands they have visited. In addition, and in contrast with the last lands they have frequented, in Ithilien "brushing their way through bush and herb, sweet odours rose about them" (Tolkien, *Towers* 850). It seems like a little rest for the Hobbits who, in a long time, can actually breathe properly and feel slightly safe. It is not the same feeling for Gollum, who similarly to what he feels towards the Elven realms, their customs and, above all, their Lembas, he does not like the pleasant smell coming from Faramir's land. "Gollum coughed and retched; but the hobbits breathed deep ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 850). This kinds of reactions make him closer to the evil side, which at the same time is related to barrenness and

hence to death. Gollum's evil side is strong enough to feel uncomfortable in such a pleasant place, which symbolizes life, probably because it has been too long since he has been consumed by the possession of the Ring.

Most of the previously described landscapes have something in common. Depending on who governs or dwells in them, their environment is different. If these characters behave ethically with their surroundings, if they care about the natural world they live in, the landscape will offer beautiful places and it will be gentle to the characters. Nevertheless, when these lands are governed by evil characters whose only interest is that of power, the land will be hostile. The leader of Ithilien, Faramir confirms this idea, as he is able to maintain the last piece of land alive while surrounded by death and chaos. His own personality differs quite from his brother and father's, the actual Steward of Gondor, Denethor. Faramir, in contrast to Boromir, does not feel tempted by the Ring; his task is that of controlling the area of Ithilien from possible attacks of invaders. He is not power-hungry and does not have the will to reign in Minas Tirith. "Faramir has always yielded place to his elder brother and has no great personal ambitions" (Scull, "Open Minds" 154). The difference between both brothers is that both love their land; however, Boromir "admires her [Minas Tirith] mainly for her role in the forefront of the battle against the Enemy. Unlike Faramir, he seems to enjoy fighting for its own sake and the glory he earns by it" (Scull, "Open Minds" 154). As a matter of fact, Faramir may represent a new idea of a warrior because he does not reject being one, but he does not perceive this role like Boromir. "During World War I, the classical idea of war breaks down and is replaced with ... a heroic model that, like Faramir, is grounded more in humility and peace than in glory and combat" (Carter 91). In addition, one of the first things Frodo and Sam know about him is that he is ordered to kill everyone entering the surroundings of Ithilien; however, the same pity that Frodo felt for Gollum is the one Faramir feels for the two Hobbits. After all, he has a good heart and he goes against his father, the Steward's orders when doing so. This rebellion against

the main image of power in his land is what makes him different from most warriors, he is emphatic and so behaves with the natural elements in his land. "I do not slay man or beast needlessly, and not gladly even when it is needed" (Tolkien, *Towers* 869). He admits his open-mindedness, he acts with coherence and follows his instincts. Tolkien himself in one of his letters defines him as "personally courageous and decisive, but also modest, fair-minded and scrupulously just, and very merciful" (Carpenter, *Letters* 323). He actually believes that these two hobbits will neither harm nor betray him, and that is why he decides to help them in their rough journey to Mordor. He brings them to the secret caves of Ithilien; however, as the mere name indicates, they are unknown to most of the creatures in Middle-earth and hence, he brings them completely blindfolded so that they cannot tell about the way to such a sacred place. George Macdonald's influence on this episode is clear, as in *She*, the travellers are blindfolded at the moment in which Ayesha brings them to the inside of her sacred cave. Once they are inside the caves of Ithilien the view of them leaves the Hobbits wordless, as far from being comparable with the wild caves found on their way, these are beautifully treated and preserved. In fact, "it was as if they stood at the window of some elven-tower, curtained with threaded jewels of silver and gold, and ruby, sapphire and amethyst, all kindled with an unconsuming fire" (Tolkien, *Towers* 881). The fact that a cave is compared to an Elven realm suggests the breathtaking beauty of the caverns. Nevertheless, it is still a cavernous place, not a valley. Faramir himself admits that it is "not a place of great ease" (Tolkien, *Towers* 881); however, he defines it as "our refuge" (Tolkien, *Towers* 881) and a place where the two hobbits can take some rest before continuing with their adventure. Nevertheless, it can also be interpreted as a small fortress from which the Rangers are prepared to fight or leave it in case of attack as it has only two entrances, the one from which they, blindfolded, have entered, and another more aggressive one which is "filled with knives of stone" (Tolkien, *Towers* 881) offering an obstacle to those who do not know the cave the way these Rangers do. The Hobbits' stay is

pleasant enough; however, Frodo is still worried about his future destiny. Faramir cannot travel with him; nevertheless, he helps him by providing both hobbits with provisions as well as the needy rest in a dry and peaceful chamber. “The hobbits’ packs were brought to them (a little heavier than they had been), and also two stout staves of polished wood, shod with iron, and with carven heads through which ran plaited leathern thongs” (Tolkien, *Towers* 908). The Caves of Ithilien are, without doubt, the oasis in the desert in the Hobbits’ path. Before arriving there, they are exhausted, they have passed through difficult places like the Eryn Muil, the Dead Marshes and The Haunted Pass, and in order to be able to continue on their last part of the journey, the stay in Ithilien is highly comforting as they eat, sleep and get some provisions from Faramir. The stay in Ithilien can absolutely be compared to the stays in the previous Elven Realms of Rivendell and Lothlórien, as they all have been a place of healing for Frodo.

5.2.8. Minas Morgul

The next place that the Hobbits together with Gollum visit is a place from which Faramir warned them about. Minas Morgul is not its original name, it was called Minas Ithil some time ago, and it was the twin sister of Minas Tirith, but it was finally occupied by corrupted Men of Númenor, the Men to whom Sauron gave nine rings controlled by the One. “Living ghosts they were become, terrible and evil ... they took Minas Ithil and dwelt there, and they filled it and all the valley about, with decay: it seemed empty and was not so, for a shapeless fear lived within the ruined walls” (Tolkien, *Towers* 905-906). The history of the place is already dark; nonetheless, the way to it also warns the travellers about the darkness they are about to face. The landscape changes again, completely in contrast with the alive Ithilien, going towards Minas Morgul “the ground became more broken and walking was more difficult” (Tolkien, *Towers* 913). It is in these places where an important difference between

the hobbits and Gollum is perceived, as in the places in which the hobbits find difficulty to walk, Gollum feels comfortable and the other way round. "Gollum seemed in no way troubled" (Tolkien, *Towers* 913). As far as they begin climbing the mountain, the environment gets tougher and nature withered or able to cause some harm. It is definitely not a smooth spot. "For the most part it was covered with a thick growth of gorse and whortleberry, and low tough thorns, though here and there clearings opened, the scars of recent fires" (Tolkien, *Towers* 914). As a matter of fact, the closer they get to the summit, the worse it gets as "the gorse bushes became more frequent as they got nearer the top; very old and tall they were ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 914). The fact of these bushes being tall means precisely that it has been a long time since someone last went through these passages, what makes them wilder and hence, eerier. They are now closer than ever to Mordor, and this is perceived not only through the dead surroundings, but also in the environment, the days are getting darker with time, the closer to Mordor, the darker the days become. This is something the hobbits are obviously not used to, and hence they feel the necessity of hiding in a hole, which can be interpreted as a feeling of homesickness, once again present in the Mountains. "The day is getting darker instead of lighter: darker and darker ... we shall wish we were down a deep hole, not just stuck under a hedge" (Tolkien, *Towers* 916). At that moment, something already common when danger is near happens, they hear a deep sound, as if the earth trembled and the sound of huge drums was heard in the distance. They are now in front of Minas Morgul from which deep darkness is most of what can be perceived. "All was dark about it, earth and sky, but it was lit with light ... Paler indeed than the moon ... wavering and blowing like a noisome exhalation of decay, a corpse-light, a light that illuminated nothing" (Tolkien, *Towers* 921). Besides its darkness, the fact that the only light that can be seen from Minas Morgul is defined as corpse-light already offers a glimpse of how gloomy that place is. In fact, it resembles a murky cemetery. It is actually the place where the Numenorean Men lost their conscious side and were extremely

devoted to their shadow, as they succumbed to the temptation of the Ring. Following Jung's theory of the archetypes of the psyche, when someone wants to fulfil their individuation process, they must accept both conscious and unconscious sides. As Andersen asserts, "those characters who represent a higher level of consciousness and have successfully undertaken their personal individuation process ... are able to resist the temptation of the One Ring, where others who have not yet fulfilled their quest for individuation can not" (8). Therefore, Minas Morgul can be the physical representation of the place where the Nazgûl lost part of their selves and they finally became a faceless shadow living in the absolute darkness.

Following the pattern of aggressiveness and deadly look of the previous places Frodo and Sam have visited, the entrance to the palace of the Nazgûl is, once again, depicted as "a black mouth opening in the outer circle of the northward walls" (Tolkien, *Towers* 921). It seems that in any of the neighbouring lands of Mordor will the entrance be appealing enough, they all are menacing and ferocious mouths willing to devour all the outsiders. One of the main differences between Mordor and Minas Morgul is that the previous shows no signal of life, whereas the latter does so, even if it is in a special way. The environment is so dark and deadly that even the flowers are said to be "beautiful and yet horrible of shape ... and they gave forth a faint sickening charnel-smell; an odour of rotteness filled the air" (Tolkien, *Towers* 921). The feeling of seeing this kind of nature beautiful and horrible at the same time can be compared with the idea of the sublimity of the mountain, which defines the wilderness of the orogenies as extremely beautiful but emanating a ghoulish atmosphere at the same time. This unpleasant environment is what makes the climbers feel afraid of them. The deadly nature in Minas Morgul reflects this idea of menacing beauty. Once again, nature is the reflection of those who govern it. Minas Morgul has actually been a nice place before it was corrupted by corrupted Men, and so was its nature. However, now it is a horrible place in which all leads to succumbing the power of the One Ring. That is why Frodo is weaker than he has been in

previous lands near Mordor, but now he feels hugely tempted to put the Ring on. It could be said that Minas Morgul is a place in which people can easily fall into temptation and lose not only their conscious side, but also part of their identity as it happened with the Lords of Minas Morgul. "... he felt the Ring resisting him, dragging at the chain about his neck" (Tolkien, *Towers* 922). In addition, once the Ring-bearer puts the Ring on, he also loses his identity as he becomes invisible for everyone except for those who live in the shadows. Once climbing the mountain in Minas Morgul, the hobbits feel the trembling of the earth, it is the great volcano of Mordor which is in eruption as if it feels the closeness of its beloved Ring. "At that moment the rock quivered and trembled beneath them. The great rumbling noise, louder than ever before, rolled in the ground and echoed in the mountains. Then ... came a great red flash" (Tolkien, *Towers* 923). Fire is definitely the main protagonist in Sauron's land, as a representation of destruction and devouring everything; however, it is also what enlightens the sight of this land. It is due to the eruption that the hobbits can actually get an idea of the look of their destination place. The mountainous imagery they get does not comfort them, they have suffered many different bad experiences in the mountains all along their journey and the Mountains of Shadow do not look any simpler. "Peaks of stone and ridges like notched knives sprang out in staring black against the uprushing flame in Gorgoroth" (Tolkien, *Towers* 923). Frodo is finally devastated by what he has seen, he does not feel strong enough to fight against the dangerous wilderness awaiting him inside the Ephel Dúath and he is completely hopeless. "I am too late. All is lost. I tarried on the way. All is lost. Even if my errand is performed, no one will ever know. There will be no one I can tell. It will be in vain. Overcome with weakness he wept" (Tolkien, *Towers* 926). Once he is face to face with Mordor, Frodo feels weaker than ever, it seems that the power of Mordor has made him feel the most fragile person in Middle-earth and that makes him think that everyone will or is actually dead. However, with the help of Sam, he will be able to continue and demonstrate his power.

Thus, the closer to Mordor, the more unpleasant the lands will be. Not only because of the aridity, but also because of the smell, the scary sights, and the ghostly atmospheres. Nonetheless, the reason for these lands to look so menacing is because someone made them become hostile. Minas Ithil became Minas Morgul after the corruption of Men and so became its nature. However, surrounded by death, Ithilien is still alive due to Faramir's good ethic and will towards life.

5.2.9. Cirith Ungol, Shelob's Lair

They are finally at their last chance to enter Sauron's land. Gollum has brought them to the place from which he promises mountains will be lower and hence the pass will be easier, though the first obstacle on their way is a huge, long stair built on the same stone of the mountain itself. This stair goes upwards to the mountain peak, where the next challenge awaits. Faramir is the one who warns the hobbits about "some dark terror that dwells in the passes above Minas Morgul" (Tolkien, *Towers* 905). Therefore they know the way through the pass over the land of the Nazgûl will not be an easy one either. Moreover, the stair is extremely long, which from the bottom already overwhelms the hobbits. They are coming from the Shire, a completely different land in which such heights do not exist, and even if they can be considered almost experts in mountain experiences, the length seen from the lowest part of the stairs does not help on their already accumulated tiredness. In addition, an extra adversity, the condition of the stairs is quite improvable. "The steps were narrow, spaced unevenly, and often treacherous ... some cracked as foot was set upon them. The hobbits struggled on, until at last they were clinging with desperate fingers to the steps ahead, and forcing their aching knees ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 927). The huge effort the two Hobbits have to make in order to be able to climb such a hard wall is perfectly represented in the novel. Besides, they have the common

feeling of being near enough and extremely far from their goal, the summit, at the same time, which makes them feel more and more tired with time. They are about to give up when Gollum alerts them of the actual length of the stair, which seems to be never-ending. “There’s another stair still ... much longer stair. Rest when we get to the top of next stair. Not yet” (Tolkien, *Towers* 928). The need to stop is urgent; nevertheless, Gollum promises the second part of the climbing to be much milder. The everlasting stair can be interpreted as the metaphor of their journey towards Mordor, long, difficult and exhausting. It represents Frodo’s need to arrive at his final destiny and finish with his quest. However, it seems that the closer he gets to it, the bigger the obstacle he will find will be. Furthermore, the landscape being milder, still means being surrounded by the aridity of the land, the thirst, hunger, fear and perilous mountainous surroundings, but at least, the hills do not seem so steep. “... the hobbits could discern tall piers and jagged pinnacles of stone on either side” (Tolkien, *Towers* 929) from where “great crevices and fissures [were] blacker than the night” (Tolkien, *Towers* 929). The pass of Minas Morgul is definitely a difficult one, in which one can not look back if he does not want to feel dizzy due to the heights. Furthermore, everything in Minas Morgul is disgusting and eerie. They may be afraid of the heights of the stair of Cirith Ungol; however, the sights from it are also terrifying. It does not matter from which point the hobbits look at their surroundings, they will all be awful. During the ascent, they can appreciate the horrors awaiting them in the summit. “Still far ahead, and still high above, Frodo, looking up, saw ... the very crown of this bitter road. Against the sullen redness of the eastern sky a cleft was outlined in the topmost ridge, narrow, deep-cloven between two black shoulders; and on either side was a horn of stone” (Tolkien, *Towers* 929-930). The hostility of the appearance of the stairs, which has the shape of a horn mixed with the presence of fire and the barrenness of the place “I wonder when we’ll find water again?” (Tolkien, *Towers* 931), creates a devilish and uncomfortable atmosphere that only gets to tire the hobbits out and be more and more afraid due to the lack of strength.

There is actually nothing positive that the hobbits can find in the stairs of Cirith Ungol; it has been a way in which tiredness and desperation have increased thoroughly. Additionally, the stay starts being unbearable when both Hobbits are aware of an extremely disgusting smell which even makes them feel hopeless. “There’s a wicked feeling about this place ... and a smell, I fancy ... a queer kind of a smell, stuffy. I don’t like it, I don’t like anything here at all ... step or stone, breath or bone. Earth, air and water all seemed accursed” (Tolkien, *Towers* 931). Such is their weakness, that everything makes them, especially Sam, doubt about their surroundings, including Gollum. Sam can clearly see how Frodo is almost strengthless and how easy it is to manipulate him, therefore he does not trust Gollum, who he thinks will betray them once at the top. “Mark my words: if ever we get to the pass, he won’t let us really take the precious thing over the border without making some kind of trouble” (Tolkien, *Towers* 934).

Sam is actually not wrong, as the moment in which Frodo and Sam reach the summit, everything they can perceive is extreme deep darkness before them, while there is a huge fall behind them. Thence, it seems that darkness is their only way. There the smell keeps growing on such a great scale, it feels suffocating “ugh! that smell! ...it’s getting stronger and stronger” (Tolkien, *Towers* 938). The smell is obviously another signal that the land offers to its intruders as a warning of the incoming danger, already seen in most of the occasions in which the characters had to face a challenge. In this case, the new challenge is another cave, which due to the signals Frodo and Sam have received, does not look like an amicable one. In fact, something catches the hobbits’ attention as far as the smell is concerned, as it is not the same smell of death felt back in Minas Morgul but “a foul reek, as if filth unnamable were piled and hoarded in the dark within” (Tolkien, *Towers* 938). The new stimulus does not comfort Frodo, he is afraid of what the reason for that disgusting odour can be. However, it is not only the smell which seems different, but the mere darkness itself is also dissimilar to the one they have been experiencing all along the journey. “Not since the lightless passages of Moria had Frodo

or Sam known such darkness, and if possible here it was deeper and denser” (Tolkien, *Towers* 939). The stay in this cave is obviously as he thought. The smell, the filth and the deep darkness make Sam compare this cave with that of the Orcs’. “It’s like ... some hole of the Orcs, I’ll warrant, with a hundred years of their filth in it” (Tolkien, *Towers* 939). As a matter of fact, they can barely breathe properly, as due to the heights “the breathlessness of the air was growing” (Tolkien, *Towers* 940). In this case, the cave can be the representation of both extreme darkness, fear and danger, as well as their only possible entrance to Mordor. It is a perilous disgusting spot, however, the only one that offers the safest entrance to Sauron’s land. Thus, Frodo and Sam deposit the little hope they have in the complete darkness and disgusting odour coming from the cave. This would have probably been inconceivable at any other previous stage of the journey. Nevertheless, through this episode, Tolkien may be suggesting that at a desperate moment, every single deed or place can be interpreted as the best option, as it is actually, the only one.

The interesting point of the passage of the tunnel in Shelob’s Lair is the fact that Gollum, the one responsible for the Hobbits’ presence up there, actually abandons them, leaving them alone in the complete darkness in which Frodo feels like a halfling out of the safe Shire. Similar to what happens in Weathertop, where Frodo is supposed to meet Gandalf, but he has to face the Nazgûl for the first time without the Wizard’s help. The fact of being left alone in the danger can be interpreted as a way to see the mountains (outside and inside parts) as the real challenge of the story. These are the places where Frodo himself suffers most: he is attacked by Nazgûl in Weathertop, almost killed by a strong snowstorm in Caradhras, followed by Orcs and menaced by a huge Balrog in Khazad-dûm, lost in Eryn Muil, hopeless in the passage over Minas Morgul and abandoned in Shelob’s Lair where he will still have to face another horrible creature: Shelob. Frodo himself can actually feel her presence. “There’s something worse than Gollum about. I can feel something looking at us” (Tolkien, *Towers*

943). Shelob is probably the oldest creature in Middle-earth. She is Ungoliant's offspring and hence, she is the closest character to the darkness. Similar to her mother, who during the First Ages of Middle-earth brought complete darkness to Arda together with Morgoth, she is defined as "she that walked in the darkness" (Tolkien, *Towers* 943). As mentioned above, the darkness in her cave is the deepest Frodo and Sam have seen. As far as her appearance is concerned, she is described as "the most loathly shape that he [Frodo] had ever beheld, horrible beyond the horror of an evil dream" (Tolkien, *Towers* 949). She is always waiting for some fresh flesh to eat. Moreover, the Orcs that serve her actually admit that "she doesn't eat meat, nor suck cold blood" (Tolkien, *Towers* 968). This means that what she actually likes is not eating but killing, sucking the life out of her victim's body, exactly like Ungoliant did with the life of the nature in Valinor. They are murderers who enjoy killing. As a matter of fact, Marjorie Burns adds that "Shelob's and Sauron's appetites, [depict] the insatiability [they feel]" ("Eating" 111). Being insatiable means that they always want more, they are greedy and power-hungry. The interesting aspect of Shelob's and Sauron's relationship is that even if the previous one is much older and was in Middle-earth before Sauron and his own Barad-Dûr, the Dark Lord approves having Shelob in her own Lair as he considers her an obstacle for possible intruders of Mordor; she is like a watcher for him. "He [Sauron] knew where she lurked. It pleased him that she should dwell there hungry but unabated in malice, a more sure watch upon the ancient path into his land ..." (Tolkien, *Towers* 948). At the same time, whenever Sauron feels like compensating her, he sends her some Orcs and she decides what to do with them. Nevertheless, she owns her own Queendom, which makes her a strong and powerful character. Leslie A. Donovan asserts that there are some characters in *The Lord of the Rings* who have many of the characteristics of the Norse Valkyries, who were strong women in the Norse world. However, in terms of Shelob, she claims that she "incorporates many of these same characteristics in a negative chroma, [which] is typified by baleful, vengeful, destructive female figures" (229). In

addition, she has also been contrasted with the Lady of Lothlórien, Galadriel, the clearest representation of light. In Jungian terms, Shelob is said to be Galadriel's shadow, who represents darkness. This can be confirmed, as it is with the phial that Galadriel gives to Frodo in Lothlórien that he can actually attack the spider or at least defend from her. It is Galadriel's light what Shelob, as the representative of darkness, cannot stand "... a thought came to him, as if some remote voice had spoken, and he fumbled in his breast ... and found what he sought: cold and hard and solid it seemed to his touch in a phantom world of horror, the phial of Galadriel" (Tolkien, *Towers* 954). It is the light, similar to what happens with other evil creatures, that she cannot stand and even less can she handle when this light comes from an Elven Realm. Elven realms comfort the hobbits and annoy and harm Shelob, and Gollum and all the creatures on the evil side. This is a war between light and darkness.

Thus, the presence of mountains can be interpreted as the real obstacle where Frodo will often have to face many challenges alone, without any guidance, such as Gandalf's. Gollum's help actually forces him to trust the creature, but he is many times betrayed by him, though as it will be analyzed in the next chapter, Gollum's presence is part of Frodo's learning process and success. There is not a single mountain without a meaning in the whole story, which makes them of extreme importance. Even if they are all part of the wilderness of Middle-earth, there is not any tamed mountain, though there are some which are manipulated, as Sauron's Barad-dûr or some others in which an entire society dwells, like in the case of the inside of the Caradhras. As far as caves are concerned, they are usually depicted as horrible places where Orcs or giant spiders may dwell, but there are also stunning caves which are not related to such evil creatures at all. Such are the cases of The Glittering Caves in Helm's Deep and Faramir's caves in Ithilien. This demonstrates that depending on the dwellers or governors, the nature of these places will vary. Those who live in harmony with nature and take care of it will live in a pleasant and not so menacing place, whereas those who are just interested in

killing and becoming more powerful, will live surrounded by stones, toxicity and perils. The eternal war between nature and industrialization is clearly represented in the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings* through characters like Saruman or Sauron in contrast to the rest of Elves, Dwarves and even Men (Rohirrim and Gondorians), who actually live surrounded by orogenies but they adore and take care of them.

5.3. The Return of the King

The third volume of *The Lord of the Rings* tells the last part of the fellowship's journey. The whole company is getting closer to their respective destinations. Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli together with Merry, Pippin and Gandalf will have to face the obstacles found in several wild landscapes as well as wars against the forces of the Dark Lord, Sauron. Besides, as they get even closer to the perilous land of Mordor, Frodo and Sam will be confronting the riskiest of all the quests, destroying the One Ring in the deep fires of Mount Doom. Now the landscapes are not as mild as the ones found in the first part of the journey, with time, there are fewer tamed and more wild landscapes, fewer fields and more sharp mountains. In addition, the main mountain that the protagonists of the story will have to face adds extra peril to their quest with the presence of an already well-known threat: fire.

One of the main ideas of the story might be the alliance of two of the most important houses of Men, the Rohirrim and the Gondorians with the intention of fighting together against the common enemy, Sauron. In order to do so, the fellowship, except Frodo and Sam, is divided into two groups in which Gandalf will lead Pippin to the White City of Minas Tirith in Gondor, while Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, together with Merry will go to Rohan and will join King Théoden's army. Aragorn, who has used one of the Palantír, a stone usually used to see the situation in different locations of Middle-earth, has seen that the enemy is getting closer every

day and that the number of evil creatures doubles the number of their warriors. The adversities are becoming bigger with the passing of time. Thus, Aragorn, leader of his group, decides to take a considerable risk at the mountains in order to get the help of some mysterious characters, the Dead Men of the mountains. Very few seem to know about their existence, however, many are the legends told about the Dwimorberg or the Haunted Mountain.

5.3.1. The Haunted Mountain

Aragorn knows the perils going inside the Dwimorberg may bring, that is why he decides to take the road alone. Nevertheless, Legolas and Gimli feel that they must walk with him in any of his adventures regardless of the possible dangers of the road. Still, Aragorn advises his companions about the future disgusting landscape they will have to confront. “But I do not go gladly; only need drives me. Therefore, only of your free will would I have you come, for you will find both toil and great fear, and maybe worse” (Tolkien, *Return* 1023). Through Aragorn’s description, it is clear that the Haunted Mountain is not a pleasant place, he just feels the necessity of going there due to the desperation of the moment, because their armies need more warriors to fight Sauron. The interesting feature of this mountain is its mere name, the Haunted Mountain, as the fact of being defined as haunted already offers an eerie environment that makes it harder for the travellers to go inside its caves. As a matter of fact, the character of the ‘haunted mountain’ is quite frequent in several literary works and even cultures, providing the mountain with a mysterious and ghostly aspect. In addition, there is a legend that tells how during the war against Sauron, Isildur brought a huge black stone that was set upon a hill. In that stone, the King of the Mountain and his supporters swore allegiance and promised to help Isildur against the Dark Lord. However, when Sauron came, they were too afraid and did not help Isildur, which caused his death. These Men decided to hide in the caves

of the mountains instead. Hence, it is said that there is a curse upon the Men of the Mountains and even as they died with the passing of time, their souls were taken captive in the depth of the orogeny, without the peace death would offer them. “And the terror of the Sleepless Dead lies about the Hill of Erech and all places where that people lingered” (Tolkien, *Return* 1024). John Garth claims that so shocked as the writer was with the Swiss Alps, “it is very possible that Tolkien knew a famous account of supposed ghost encounters on the Matterhorn itself ...” (*Worlds* 89).

The paradox of the Dwimorberg is that it was once used as a refuge for the escaping Men. However, it became a prison once they did not fulfil their oath. There are two interesting characteristics of this mountain. First of all, the oath is taken on the heights and not on the flat trail, a fact that enhances the altitudes as a place for important promises or oaths, as a serious spot with an almost sacred hint in which loyalty towards the orogeny is taken for granted. Secondly, the mountain suffers a change of environment and hence of connotation, as it was not haunted before the presence of the souls of these Men. These souls are clearly attached to the ghostly environment and hence, the dangerous aspect to the mountain. This may be interpreted as the vengeance of the mountain towards the escaping Men. The mountain had once offered its shelter to these Men and protected them from the war against Sauron. However, they broke the promise they had made and due to this betrayal to the mountain they became its prisoners. Thus, due to the ghostly presence of the souls, this mountain has become a dangerous and eerie wild mountain. However, that uncanny atmosphere also gives voice to the mountain. In a certain way, the presence of the imprisoned souls makes the mountain have a real voice, as “there seemed an endless whisper of voices all about him [Gimli], a murmur of words in no tongue that he had ever heard before” (Tolkien, *Return* 1030) even if the message may sound scary to the travellers. As Patrick Curry claims, “the living personality and agency of this character [nature/mountain] are none the less for being non-human” (*Defending* 50). Once

again, the mountain is perceived as a living character which has something to offer to the story, not only its beauty or its obstacles but also a personality- quite intimidating in this case- that the characters will have to face in a way or another depending on the difficulty the hill offers. As the previously analyzed mountainous wild landscapes, the way to the entrance of the Haunted Mountain is not the simplest one. It may not be difficult to climb due to its ascent, nevertheless, the deep darkness found on the forest in front of it does not make it easy for the travellers to advance. Such is the darkness provided by the black forest, that not even Legolas with his Elven sight can distinguish a thing. “There under the gloom of black trees that not even Legolas could long endure they found a hollow place opening at the mountain’s root” (Tolkien, *Return* 1029). In addition to the darkness, it is in the atmosphere where the travellers find their main difficulty to advance on their journey and not even the horses want to go through that road. “Arod, the horse of Rohan, refused the way, and he stood sweating and trembling in a fear that was grievous to see” (Tolkien, *Return* 1030).

Following the pattern of the previous entrances of mountains, the gate of the Haunted Mountain is also compared to a mouth, which not only includes an aggressive look to the orogeny but also offers the idea of being devoured by it, a metaphor for the death of those brave enough to cross it. The warning signs found on the way to a mountain is a frequent tool used by Tolkien, so that the reader, as well as the characters, may notice the uneasiness and dangers of the mountain itself. It is such a hard way due to the environment, that not even Gimli, a Dwarf used to mountainous and more specifically, cavernous landscapes and to their darkness, feels brave enough to do it until he sees his other companions, especially Legolas, the Elf, cross the gate. “His [Gimli’s] knees shook, ... ‘here is a thing unheard of!’ he said. ‘An Elf will go underground and a Dwarf dare not!’ with that he plunged in. ... at once a blindness came upon him, even upon Gimli ... who had walked unafraid in many deep places of the world” (Tolkien, *Return* 1030). The fact of giving this mountain the power of scaring a Dwarf belonging to the

very roots of the mountains makes it mighty. The mountain makes a Dwarf feel uncomfortable and uneasy, which means that it must be highly frightening.

Similar to the situation in Khazad-dûm, the deep darkness does not let the travellers see more than what Aragorn's torch enlightens. Once inside the mountain, the light of the fire lets the travellers see the image of a dead man, fully ornamented by golden jewels and a broken sword. "His belt was of gold and garnets, and rich with gold was the helm upon his bony head face downward on the floor ... a notched and broken sword lay by him, as if he had hewn at the rock in his last despair" (Tolkien, *Return* 1030-1031). The image of the corpse together with the one of the broken sword may epitomize the desperate situation the man had to suffer in this place. As if something brought him there and could never come back again. As a matter of fact, Hammond and Scull add that "the skeleton of Baldor [that] was found was [there] probably due to the fact that the door was the entrance to an evil temple to which Baldor had come ..." (*Companion* 534). Therefore, the inside of the mountain is portrayed as a trap or an evil mountain that catches the travellers who dare to enter inside it. This mountain has many of the factors for a landscape to be scary. It is a mountain which due to its shape and look can be intimidating, it contains golden jewels, which reminds of the hidden treasure of the Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*, and this makes it alluring. However, despite all the gold that can be found there, Gimli, who loves jewels and precious stones, prefers to keep himself away from them. His only interest resides in liberating himself from the nightmarish mountain: "in any other cave Gimli Gloin's son would have been the first to run to the gleam of gold. But not here! Let it lie!" (Tolkien, *Return* 1030). Moreover, there is also an otherworldly presence of dead men that provides the travellers with uneasiness. Legolas actually can feel the presence of them: "the Dead are following ... I see shapes of Men and horses, and pale banners like shreds of cloud, and spears like winter-thickets on a misty night. The Dead are following" (Tolkien, *Return* 1032).

At that moment, one of the travellers gives Aragorn a horn through which he will gather these Dead Men to make a treat. Aragorn, as the heir of Isildur, is the only one able to bring all these spectres together and free them from their curse. In exchange, these Dead Men will have to fulfil the oath that they made years ago, which implies their presence at the fight on the Pelennor Fields, at the foot of Minas Tirith. When Aragorn blows the horn, “a chill wind like the breath of ghosts came down from the mountains” (Tolkien, *Return* 1033). The first impression towards this mountain is not a positive one, there are legends telling that the visit there will only bring problems and death. It is surrounded by a deep darkness that does not let an Elf see properly and it emanates an otherworldly atmosphere that makes the travellers feel completely uncomfortable. However, there is a huge society hidden there, and even if they are the prisoners of the mountain and are actually undead, they will help Aragorn and his army fight against the Dark Lord, which gives them a positive connotation. Thence, it seems that the fact of portraying the mountain as a living character makes it become a sacred place which will demand the loyalty that is required through the fulfilment of the oath. Once an oath is made, it must be accomplished, if not, the mountain itself will perceive the oath-breakers as traitors and consequently will not release them and they will not be free until someone can make them conclude their promise. The interesting characteristic is that through the pass of time, these Men die and hence, have a severe disgusting look, which makes the environment of the mountain become less attractive to someone who could save them from their curse. Thus, the mountain is portrayed as a huge obstacle not only for its visitors but also for its prisoners, who will still be imprisoned until someone brave enough will face them and, by doing so, free them.

On their own way to Gondor, the Rohirrim take the road that leads them to Dunharrow, a refuge made by them to cross the White Mountains that encircle Rohan. The sights that can be appreciated on the way are breathtaking, especially for Merry, who is experiencing several new stimuli such as riding a horse in a valley surrounded by wilderness. As far as mountains

are concerned, the first one appearing on their way is the Starkhorn, which already has a menacing look due to “its jagged peak, clothed in everlasting snow” (Tolkien, *Return* 1035). The presence of snow is indicative of cold weather, and thus hard conditions to climb it, which is common in the land of Rohan and at the top of high hills. However, the most appealing characteristic is its name once again, as it makes reference to its sharp summit. According to Hammond and Scull, “its name is said to derive from Rohan, meaning ‘a horn (peak) ‘standing up stiff like a spike’” (*Companion* 538). Moreover, the sunbeams touch its western side as it is defined as “red-stained” (Tolkien, *Return* 1035) and provide it with a reddish colour, which, even if it is not straightforwardly related with fire, reminds of the volcanic or fire-related mountains that they have found all along the journey to Mordor. This obviously makes it look more menacing. Still, even if it is menacing, Merry’s admiration towards this new scenery is described as a highly rich event: he is enjoying the landscapes he once heard about in the tales and legends that arrive from far away. “It was a skyless world, in which his eye, through dim gulfs of shadowy air, saw only ever-mounting slopes, great walls of stone behind great walls, and frowning precipices wreathed with mist” (Tolkien, *Return* 1036). It is like a dream for a Hobbit who has never seen anything similar to the sublimity of wild mountains. He absolutely enjoys these feelings and views: “he sat for a moment half-dreaming, listening to the noise of water, the whisper of dark trees, the crack of stone, and the vast waiting of silence that brooded behind all sound” (Tolkien, *Return* 1036). There is no doubt about his amusement, however, the old feeling of homesickness attacks the Hobbit once he is overwhelmed by the grandness of the alpine landscape by which he is surrounded. This makes him sometimes feel caged between the slopes of the mountains: “he loved mountains, or he had loved the thought of them marching on the edge of stories brought from far away; but now he was borne down by the insupportable weight of Middle-earth. He longed to shut out the immensity in a quiet room by a fire” (Tolkien, *Return* 1036). The fact that not only Frodo feels homesick during his adventure

makes clear the idea that even if the experience is being positive, the strong admiration towards their lives in The Shire and their beauty ideals regarding nature are stronger than everything else. Hence, usually, when the landscape is introduced as the opposite of the one found in their beloved Shire, they long for their past at home. The curious aspect of the effect mountains have on some characters is that they make them feel away from home and miss their old habits. Mountains are equated to the call of the wild and the unknown, but the rewards of knowledge and experience cannot compensate for the risks and suffering involved in this process. This is what makes the hobbits feel attracted to the beauty of mountains and also homesick, due to the difference found in these two completely different landscapes.

Not everything under these huge mountains is so idyllic; foes are everywhere and so is Sauron's eye. However, encircling orogenies, such as the White Mountains, offer slight protection against the evil forces, as they are huge walls hard to climb and only the Winged-beasts can keep an eye on their target. That is actually Gandalf's advice when the Rohirrim leave Meduseld and are leading to Dunharrow, near the Pass of the Dead where Aragorn and the rest of travellers are. "There came a cry that stopped our hearts [a Nazgûl]. Then it was that Gandalf counselled us not to assemble in the fields, but to meet you here in the valley under the mountains" (Tolkien, *Return* 1038). Once in the refuge of Dunharrow, Merry cannot take his eyes off the look of the line of stones of the mountains "some were leaning, some were fallen, some cracked or broken; they looked like rows of old and hungry teeth" (Tolkien, *Return* 1040). There is not a single mountain that looked from any angle will not remind the travellers of a huge mouth with its menacing teeth, which sends a message to the future climbers: to be careful of the perils of the mountains. The fact of perceiving most of the mountains with such characteristics only denotes the fear that travellers feel towards these new and unexplored landscapes, where danger awaits in every single corner of it. The sights Merry is observing are splendid, however, they reflect the perfect definition of the sublime, as they are the mixture

of beauty and terror. Moreover, Théoden's own idea of leading to the mountains, even if he is the King of Rohan, a mountainous city, adds negativity to the alpine world, which is depicted as the source of death. He considers that getting closer to mountainous landscapes is a synonym for doom. "They have all left me now. They have all gone to some doom: Gandalf and Pippin to war in the East [Minas Tirith]; and Sam and Frodo to Mordor; and Strider and Legolas and Gimli to the Pass of the Dead" (Tolkien, *Return* 1042). As a matter of fact, Théoden, who has led his troops to Dunharrow, looking at the Pass of the Dead through which Aragorn has crossed claims that "what lies beyond no man knows" (Tolkien, *Return* 1043) adding extra mystery to the inside of the mountain. If we take into account that Dunharrow is a refuge for the Rohirrim, and still, Théoden does not know the truth behind the legends about it, this means that the look of the Haunted Mountain must be extremely threatening.

5.3.2. The White City of Minas Tirith

Meanwhile, Pippin rides together with Gandalf to the great city of Minas Tirith, the citadel of Gondor from which the immensity of Mount Mindolluin catches Pippin's attention: "and there where the White Mountains of Ered Nimrais come to their end he saw, as Gandalf had promised, the dark mass of Mount Mindolluin, the deep purple shadows of its high glens, and its tall face whitening in the rising day" (Tolkien, *Return* 982). From this place the white city and its strong structure can be seen. "And upon its out-thrust knee was the Guarded City, with its seven walls of stone so strong and old that it seemed to have been not builded but carven by giants out of the bones of the earth" (Tolkien, *Return* 982). The fascinating feature of the description of Minas Tirith is that it seems to have been carved out of the bones of the earth, becoming a place of special beauty and wilderness. The capital city of Gondor is made

out of the stone of the very mountain, which situates the civilization in the middle of a wild and impressive landscape.

Similar to Merry's feelings when he is riding towards Dunharrow, Pippin lives an identical experience when he is getting closer to the city. He is absolutely captivated by the beauty of his views, so much that "he cried aloud, for the Tower of Ecthelion, standing high within the topmost wall, shone out against the sky glimmering like a spike of pearl and silver, tall and fair ... and its pinnacle glittered as if it were wrought of crystals ..." (Tolkien, *Return* 982). Minas Tirith is among the most impressive cities in Middle-earth, precisely because of its irrefutable beauty inside the astonishing wilderness that surrounds it. The citadel is built at the heights of the mountain. It contains several levels, each one of them full of distinct walls and the topmost part of it is the place where Denethor, the Steward, controls the city. "... those in the Citadel might, like mariners in a mountainous ship, look from its peak sheer down upon the Gate seven hundred feet below" (Tolkien, *Return* 983). Therefore, the importance given to heights is once again remarked by placing the palace of the ruler at the same altitude of the summit of the mountain. It implements a level of importance to the alpine world as it is related to the idea of demonstrating power. The power of the mountain enhances the power of Denethor and the other way round. Furthermore, the White City of Minas Tirith is a stronghold that is hard to reach it due to its shape and high altitude: "a strong Citadel was indeed, and not to be taken by a host of enemies, ... unless some foe could come behind and scale the lower skirts of Mindolluin ..." (Tolkien, *Return* 984). Minas Tirith can be defined as a Citadel as well as a stronghold for the Men of Gondor. As a matter of fact, it was once a fortress of Osgiliath, the chief city of Gondor, which was destroyed by Orcs long ago. Nevertheless, after being recovered by the Gondorians, they use it as the fortress against Sauron. The most shocking aspect of both, Minas Tirith and Osgiliath are their views, which, due to the uncommon environment they offer for a Hobbit, catch Pippin's attention. Both fortresses are placed in

front of the Ephel Dúath in the land of Mordor, they can be considered neighbouring cities and therefore, the gloomy atmosphere from the dark land is usually perceived in Gondor. Pippin actually, feels burdened by the deep darkness: “perhaps it was mountains looming in the verge of sight, their jagged edges softened by wellnigh twenty leagues of misty air; perhaps it was but a cloud-wall, and beyond that again a yet deeper gloom” (Tolkien, *Return* 1000). The look of the neighbouring land is far from pleasant and it makes Pippin feel insecure, even if he is protected by the walls of Minas Tirith. The presence of sharp mountains together with the deep darkness that makes everything look more dangerous, makes the little Hobbit feel even smaller.

It is intriguing to see how the White City can be completely darkened by the presence of the mists coming from the mountains in Mordor. Once again, Tolkien portrays the eternal fight between light and darkness, good and evil: “but even as he [Pippin] looked it seemed to his eyes that the gloom was even growing and gathering, very slowly, slowly rising to smother the regions of the sun” (Tolkien, *Return* 1000). The mists coming from the dark land do not only darken Minas Tirith, but they also create an unbearable atmosphere where it is impossible to breathe. This feeling of breathlessness is quite similar to the situations in which due to the darkness or the oppressiveness of a place the characters feel suffocated, like in the dark forest of Mirkwood in *The Hobbit* or in the Emyn Muil in which the smells are so disgusting that both Frodo and Sam need to escape from the mountain. As a matter of fact, it is so evident the contrast between the light and the darkness in these lands that Minas Tirith had once a twin city called Minas Ithil, which suffered a huge change after being corrupted by its dwellers, as it became Minas Morgul, the stronghold of the Witch-King and his Nazgûl, the black Riders. The comparison between the descriptions of both fortresses resides, fundamentally, on the environment. Minas Tirith represents the Kingdom of Gondor, white, surrounded by snowy mountains, whereas Minas Morgul, as previously explained, emits a mixture of darkness, coldness and deadly atmosphere. Minas Tirith amazes Pippin, while Minas Morgul is one of

the most dangerous places Frodo and Sam have to experience. Minas Morgul could be interpreted as the second most opposite landscape to the one introduced in The Shire. The Hobbits' natural habitat is the clear image of the pastoral, while Minas Morgul is defined as "a parody of the pastoral" (Croft 10). This reflects the importance of the influence of the characters on the landscapes as "character and landscape are always closely related in Tolkien's literature" (Burns, *Perilous* 26). Minas Ithil becomes a corrupted land, that was fair once. Nevertheless, when the dark forces perverted it, its connotation changed, exactly the same as what happens with the Haunted Mountain of Dwimorberg.

Throughout the several experiences all the characters, and more specifically Merry and Pippin, are facing, they are compelled to mature by leaving all their lives behind and by confronting new duties. Pippin is introduced to Denethor, and he accepts his service converting the Hobbit into the Prince of the Halflings. In order to fulfil all his new assignments, he receives new clothes with the badge of Gondor, a signal that can be interpreted as a way of leaving his old identity behind. He is supposed to be a responsible Hobbit now and serve Denethor. That would not be of extreme difficulty for Pippin if the environment could help more than what it actually does. The Hobbit feels devastated by the weight of the land of Mordor, he does not feel happy about his position in a house like Gondor and does not feel strong enough either. Most of the negativity is caused by the closeness to the Enemy's Land. There, the situation is similar to the one in Orthanc where Saruman's subversive language, can be "removed from its meaning, and rendered into a manipulative tool" (Jarman 161). In Sauron's land, the common state is also chaotic, suffocating and ready for war. Thus, Pippin finds it hard to handle the heaviness of Mordor's way of life, which discerns from that in the Shire:

He felt uncomfortable. And the gloom began to weigh on his spirits. It was dark and dim all day ... the heavy shadow had deepened, and all hearts in the City were

oppressed. Far above a great cloud ... from the Black Land, devouring light, borne upon a wind of war; but below the air was still and breathless, as if all the Vale of Anduin waited for the onset of a ruinous storm. (Tolkien, *Return* 1056)

Pippin himself feels his own change, his growth, his maturation, and it all has been forced by the experiences in the wilderness, in which he has to confront more difficult situations than the ones which he was used to. During his life in the Shire, he would have loved to know that he would become Gondor's steward, as having such an honourable position gives some prestige to anyone. However, that is not his situation in the present. Once in Gondor, he is able to perceive the roughness of the circumstances. He has changed from a completely tamed and pastoral place to the middle of the wilderness, having to look at the huge perils he and his companions will have to face in Mordor, every day: "now he was one small soldier in a city preparing for a great assault ... in some other time and place Pippin might have been pleased with his new array, but he knew that ... he was ... the servant of a grim master in the greatest peril" (Tolkien, *Return* 1056-57). It is important to notice and understand how an idea or a dream may sound attractive when the dreamer is in their comfort zone; nevertheless, having to face such an idea or dream does not look the same when they are in such a place. This feeling was, for example, quite common among the soldiers before World War I, in which Tolkien fought. Many of the soldiers dreamed about becoming heroes defending their country in the trenches, however, the reality there was far from that dream. "The truth about war was forgotten, and in 1914 young officers went into battle with the *Illiad* in their backpacks and the names of Achilles and Hector engraved upon their hearts" (Garth, *Great War* 42). That is what happens with the four Hobbits of the story, who at the beginning of their journey fantasized about the mountains, but once there feel small and insecure, and hence homesick. Moreover, Pippin does not sympathize with Denethor and instead of feeling proud of his position as his

steward, he feels more like a servant due to the lack of support he receives from him. There is a huge culture clash between Denethor and the Hobbit, which could be resolved through communication, however, the steward seems to be quite difficult to communicate with. This is evident at the moment in which Pippin has to wait until Denethor finishes his lunch, while he is hungry. He does not understand why he should wait for his master to finish eating. As a Hobbit, he loves eating and drinking, as such are big pleasures in the Shire, however, such is the pressure he feels in Gondor that he does not even enjoy the meal anymore. “What is the good even of food and drink under this creeping shadow? what does it mean? the very air seems thick and brown!” (Tolkien, *Return* 1057). Master Beregon, a true and loyal member of Gondor’s army is forced to explain how this creeping shadow that disturbs the Hobbit is nothing else than “some device of his [Sauron’s] malice; some broil of fume from the Mountain of Fire that he sends to darken hearts and counsel” (Tolkien, *Return* 1057). Hence, it is clear that the heavy environment perceived in Minas Tirith is provoked by the Dark Lord. Therefore, Pippin’s uneasiness, as well as Denethor’s negativity and indifference towards all the evilness surrounding his city, can be understood as an aftermath of the grisly ambience coming from Mordor.

Nonetheless, justifying Denethor’s attitude as a consequence of the evilness of Mordor would not be fair, as his deeds demonstrate much more than that. He is aware of the attacks on his city, however, far from being worried about it, he just thinks about his son Boromir’s death. The only son he takes into consideration, the one he considered fit enough to be his heir, and now he is completely devastated because even if he still has another son, Faramir, he does not respect him the way he respected and admired his elder son. His bitter personality, once he is informed about Boromir’s death, affects all his people, as he does not treat them as allies, but as servants. As a matter of fact, he compares his way of leading to that of Sauron’s “He [Sauron] uses others as his weapons. So do all great lords, if they are wise, Master Halfling. Or why

should I sit here in my tower and think, and watch, and wait, spending even my sons?" (Tolkien, *Return* 1071). Thus, it might be argued that the environment may affect the steward's mood because the roughness of the mountain in which his dwelling is set as well as the sight he receives from its windows (the land of Mordor) seem to influence him negatively. Nevertheless, comparing this attitude to that of King Théoden's, who also lives in a savage land surrounded by the menacing alpine landscape, just confirms that his acerbity is not at all related to the roughness of the mountains he is surrounded by. Denethor's childish attitude of winning the war or not belonging to Middle-earth anymore makes him send Faramir to fight in Osgiliath only with his men, knowing that this fact is almost suicidal and will bring his only son's death. Faramir is finally wounded but not dead, however, Denethor is completely out of control and he decides to think only of his own grief. He abandons the defence of the city and even suggests his warriors to abandon it too. He has no power of sacrifice and in fact, he wants his still-alive son to be burnt in his same pyre. He was born selfish and he wants to die in a selfish way as well. As Christina Scull states, "he seeks death, and not a death useful to Minas Tirith, defending it on the battlefield, but a wasted death also killing his son" ("Open Minds" 155).

Due to Denethor's deplorable attitude towards his son, Pippin, who knows that Faramir is just wounded, will come across his most heroic deed: saving Faramir's life by escaping from the Steward's hall and looking for Gandalf's help. At that very moment, in which the little Hobbit is forced to run away from his leader, he demonstrates his great change, his maturation. It is, once again, at the height of a mountain where the evolution of a character can be perceived. Pippin is definitely experiencing a completely unknown situation in an uncommon place for a hobbit. Nevertheless, he demonstrates being more mature than a Man and steward like Denethor. This episode seems to recall Tolkien's own experience in the Battle of the Somme when "[he] forces himself forward 'against a gust of fear and horror' when the city gate is

broken with ‘a great shock, and a deep echoing boom’” (Garth, *Worlds* 165). Pippin, who finds Beregond on his way, asks him to stop Denethor, however, Beregond knows he is not allowed to go against his master’s orders. To this Pippin has a clear answer: “well, you must choose between orders and the life of Faramir ... and as far as orders, I think you have a madman to deal with, not a lord” (Tolkien, *Return* 1083). A little Hobbit has understood better the idea that sometimes one just has to follow their own heart and not fulfil others’ orders. This idea can be attributed to Faramir himself when even if he was obliged by his father to kill any stranger in Ithilien, he followed his intuition and saved Frodo and Sam’s lives. The fact that Pippin and Gandalf, who is already fighting against the evil forces at the Pelennor Fields, (at the foot of Minas Tirith), are fast enough to save Faramir’s life from his father’s craziness, may be understood as an act of fate in exchange of the pity Faramir once felt for Frodo and Sam. According to Hammond and Scull, “this is perhaps Tolkien’s clearest expression of the view that obedience to orders should not be absolute, that in some circumstances it is right to disobey and yet fulfil a greater duty” (*Companion* 551).

The importance of the war that takes place at the Pelennor Fields in Minas Tirith, also illustrates that remarkable events occur at the foot of the watchful mountains. First of all, two of the most important houses of Men join forces with the intention of protecting their lands from the Enemy. This can also be interpreted as an act of oikophilia in which Men, with the help of Hobbits, an Elf, a Dwarf and a Wizard decide to fight hand in hand in order to protect their beloved landscapes, which in this case are fields surrounded by colossal orogenies. Such is their love towards these lands that they even risk their lives to defend them. Something similar is represented through Faramir’s obedience when he decides to ride just with his Men to fight in Osgiliath, even if he knows that the foes outnumber him and that he has little opportunity to win. However, he just wants to please his father and demonstrate that he is brave like Boromir. Nevertheless, far from being a martyr, Faramir represents much more than what

his father appreciates. Tolkien once declared that Faramir was quite a similar character to his persona “as far as any character is ‘like me’ it is Faramir” (Carpenter, *Letters* 232). Hence, he depicts his way of understanding the war through the character of Faramir and he is then considered “as a means to establish a new definition of the heroic model for the twentieth century” (Carter 90). In fact, he is quite different both from his father and brother. Even if Denethor and Boromir love Minas Tirith and want to protect it, their reason to defend it does not consist of protecting their land from evil, but more of gaining some fame and being remembered in the stories and songs of their city as great Kings, with all the powerful connotation that this involves. Faramir, however, represents a more modern way of understanding war. He does not reject the necessity of it, sometimes, but unlike his brother, he longs for a peaceful time in Minas Tirith with its righteous King sat upon his throne, even if his father has to be away from it. “Faramir too enjoys the idea of the reestablishment of a peaceful government after the war. However, Faramir does recognize the necessity of war” (Carter 99). This can as well be compared to Tolkien’s own ideals towards war, as Carter stays, when in a letter sent to his son Christopher, he wrote: “The utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, is so staggering for those who have to endure it. And always was ... and always will be ... -not of course that it has not is and will be necessary to face it in an evil world” (Carpenter, *Letters* 75). The idea that this new heroic image is more successful is depicted by both Boromir and Denethor’s ends, compared with that of Faramir’s. While the two first ones die, Faramir is saved. In addition, “it is when Faramir abandons his own combat strategy in favour of the classical model endorsed by his father Denethor that he loses a battle” (Carter 95).

Another important character that is revealed in the battle in favour of Rohan, is Éowyn, the shieldmaiden among the Rohirrim. From the very beginning, Éowyn demonstrates her bravery and her desire to be like her brother Éomer and fight for her land, even if she is expected

to be with other women and children. She can be considered as the clear representation of a character shaped after the landscape where she comes from. Éowyn manifests her strong personality, her rough attitude and determination as the proper child of the White Mountains that she is. As a matter of fact, she decides to dress with the armour of Rohan and together with Merry, who has also been excluded from war, rides with the rest of Men to battle. Both characters' presence in this war is significant as they both are involved in one of the most heroic deeds of the battle; the death of Sauron's most powerful creature, the Witch-King of Minas Morgul. In this scene, the eternal fight between light and darkness is represented through these characters. Éowyn and Merry fight for the White City against The Witch-King, who as the leader of the Nazgûl, represents the corruption of Men. In fact, the Witch-King comes from the perverted Minas Morgul, a stronghold that belonged to Men. The Witch-King's intention is that of killing King Théoden of Rohan, and he fulfills his aim. However, Éowyn, probably the most loyal character to her King with the intention to defend her uncle defies the Witch-King, showing her courage "you stand between me and my lord and kin. Begone, if you be deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite you, if you touch him" (Tolkien, *Return* 1101). Nevertheless, the shieldmaiden is mortally wounded when Merry stabs the Witch-King from behind killing him. At this point, both characters demonstrate being worthy enough in the battle, as they both collaborate together to kill Sauron's most powerful creature. Nevertheless, Éowyn's character far from being proud of her deed is said to possibly suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Because of that, she is sent to the Houses of Healing, where she meets Faramir, who has also been recovering from his fall in Osgiliath. Both characters share several characteristics: they both belong to important families set on the mountains, they love their lands surrounded by wilderness, they respect their kings, and they both have the feeling of not being worthy enough. Faramir learns to deal with his father's disapproval; however, Éowyn feels she has not been worthy enough as her King has been murdered in front of her and she

could do nothing. She has lost many family members, as well as Rohirrim warriors. During the battle she does not know about her brother Éomer, who is also fighting and that is why she is considered to be “a literary mirror for all those family members, war widows, and the stunned ‘lost generation’ who struggled to recover from their tremendous losses in World War I” (Johnson 123).

And last but not least, the Battle of the Pelennor is important as it is the place where the two great rulers die, Denethor, Steward of Gondor and Théoden King of Rohan. Both Houses have lost their representatives, still, it is important to see how different both deaths have been, especially because at first glance, both rulers seem to have a similar profile. They both are powerful characters within the story, as they rule a whole city. Both characters’ thrones are set on a mountain and their cities are completely alpine. Still, their attitude and endings are different. Denethor cannot accept the idea of having lost Boromir, then, selfishly decides to commit suicide and leave his land without protection or history. However, Théoden representative of an honourable house and values, rides together with his people and dies in battle in the Witch-King’s hand, but his last words are to proclaim his nephew Éomer as the future King of Rohan as well as to protect his “dearer than [a] daughter” (Tolkien, *Return* 1103) Éowyn. The former does not care about the future of Gondor, whereas the latter is willing to pass his duties to his heir and protect his beloved land. Even his last words recall that of heroes, who similarly to Thórin in *The Hobbit*, rest while admiring all they have achieved in life. “My body is broken. I go to my fathers. And even in their mighty company I shall not be ashamed” (Tolkien, *Return* 1103).

The mountains of Minas Tirith have played the role of a protection wall against a straightforward connection with the land of Mordor. However, their menacing presence also makes them look watchful and accomplice of the horror that takes place at the Pelennor Fields. Nevertheless, when the battle is over and Aragorn decides to visit Éowyn in the Houses of

Healing, there is a special healing wind said to be coming from the mountains. “It [the wind] bore no scent, but was an air wholly fresh and clean and young, as if it had not before been breathed ... and came new-made from snowy mountains high beneath a dome of stars ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1136). The fact that this air is said to be newly made and to be coming from a severely high altitude to be beneath the stars suggests that this air is coming from the great and sacred Taniquetil in Arda, where Manwë, Valar of the air is sending Éowyn healing air so that she can recover faster. As a matter of fact, that is what Hammond and Scull propose when they say: “the wind that at this moment blows into the Houses of Healing again suggests the agency of Manwë” (*Companion* 582). It is clear that the mountainous landscapes do not shape the totality of their dwellers’ personalities, as both Denethor and Théoden belong to similar landscapes and demonstrate having dissimilar attitudes towards their lands. Nevertheless, even if both cities, Rohan and Gondor are near Mordor, the fortress of Minas Tirith is nearer and the same way as Pippin gets apathetic due to the sight he gets when he looks out of his window, the same evil spirits can also affect Denethor and condemn him to his fall. Thus, even if the importance of each leader’s attitudes resides on their values, it could be considered that Denethor’s position is slightly conditioned by the presence of the dark mists of Ephel Dúath in Mordor which depress and darken him every day. Moreover, these wild orogenies are the kind of sharp landscapes that force the characters to change their perspectives and behave in a more mature way. That is Merry and Pippin’s case. It is due to the roughness of the situation in such wild landscapes that they are obliged to mature and behave as real heroes as they do. Merry helps Éowyn killing the Witch-King and Pippin disobeys Denethor and faces the first rows of the battle to save Faramir’s life. These heroic deeds make them grow as characters and become the heroes they are, even if that means not being the same person from the beginning of the journey. Similar to what real-life mountaineers feel once they have achieved their goal: “those who have struggled hard against nature, who have forced nature’s will to their own unbowed

will, they will not bow before any adversity in their everyday lives” (Holt 90). Thus, it can be said that experiencing dissimilar dangerous situations out of the comfort zone of the characters, such as the mountainous scenery, does affect them in a positive way, as they suffer a deep growth as characters.

Even if the war may be an epic event for warriors such as Aragorn, Éomer or Legolas, characters like Merry and Pippin who achieve important duties do not feel it the same way, as they are not used to war. This feeling of being completely useless was absolutely common among the soldiers in World War I. “We also see the battle from the point of view of Pippin ... and Merry ... Like the experience of the common soldier in the trenches of World War I, their part is far from glorious; there is tedious waiting, a sense of uselessness and futility, terror and pain and ugliness” (Croft 18).

Once the war is over, the environment gets clearer, probably due to the absence of so many foes coming from Mordor, still, the final battle awaits, the one in which Frodo and Sam have to arrive at Mount Doom and destroy the One Ring, and this feeling is perceived at the Pelennor Fields: “the darkness had been dispelled, and far away westward sunset was on the Vale of Anduin, and the white peaks of the mountains blushed in the blue air; but a shadow and a gloom brooded upon the Ephel Dúath” (Tolkien, *Return* 1158).

5.3.3. The Mountains of Shadow

Aragorn and his army move towards the Black Gate of Mordor, which can be identified as the entrance to a hellish world full of fire, destruction and darkness, what does not make it especially appealing. Moreover, the way to the entrance will not be easy either, due to the deep mists that could be seen from afar and are forced to face now: “the weather of the world remained fair, ... but nothing could waft away the glooms and the sad mists that clung about

the Mountains of Shadow, and behind them at whiles great smokes would arise and hover ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1159). In addition to the perils and uneasy feelings found on their way, they all perceive the presence of a variety of watchful eyes following them. “They passed the hours of night in wakefulness and they were aware of many things half-seen that walked and prowled all about them, and they heard the howling of wolves” (Tolkien, *Return* 1161). The bloodcurdling environment in the Dark Land is more than evident. In fact, the terror of being watched adds an extra adversity to Aragorn and his people’s quest, and that is a common tool used by Tolkien in his whole Legendarium. As Edward Lense claims “the sense of being constantly watched by terrible eyes is an important part of the texture of life in Middle-earth” (3). The land of Mordor has always been described quite negatively with unfavourable characteristics. Nevertheless, the description is even worse as far as the characters are getting closer to it. “Their noisome pits lay the first of the great heaps and hills of slag and broken rock and blasted earth, the vomit of the maggot-folk of Mordor” (Tolkien, *Return* 1161). The fire in such a gloomy land is defined as vomit, as the toxicity of the mountain coming out to cause more death and chaos. In addition, apart from the fire coming from the mountains, the two towers are described as “the teeth” (Tolkien, *Return* 1161) of the land, once again making reference to an aggressive landscape willing to devour its intruders. The travellers do not have an easy entrance to Sauron’s dominion; however, they know they have to avoid the mountains due to the peril that getting closer to them in such a dangerous land means: “they knew that all the hills and rocks about the Morannon were filled with hidden foes, and the shadowy defile beyond was bored and tunnelled by teeming broods of evil things” (Tolkien, *Return* 1162). Everything and everyone is corrupted in Mordor; however, mountains are particularly protagonists in such a place, as they all have a purpose. The surrounding ones, the so-called Ephel Dúath are a huge mountain range that encircles not only Mount Doom, but the whole land of Mordor. They are a huge protecting wall as they do not only defend Sauron’s land from

possible intruders, but they are also an enormous ominous barrier that just by the look at them frightens anyone, they emanate uneasiness. In addition, Mordor is a spot in which most of the Dark Lord's creatures lurk. Such is the case of the Nazgûl, who are depicted in a severely intimidating way as they are located "above the Towers of the Teeth like vultures" (Tolkien, *Return* 1162). Besides their frightening location, they are compared with vultures, which makes them closer to the idea of death, as if they were carrion birds, waiting for their prey. Furthermore, the living creatures are not the only threats the travellers will find on their way to The Black Gate, as some familiar sounds will make them tremble and be scared. Everything seems silent, however, when Aragorn shouts in front of the entrance to Mordor expressing that they want to see the Dark Lord, a drumming sound is heard. This drumming sound recalls the sound of the entrails of the earth when it is about to explode. However, this time the noise sounds more terrifying due to the presence of the Ephel Dúath, the echo of it makes it sound much deeper: "there came a long rolling of great drums like thunder in the mountains, and then a braying of horns that shook the very stones and stunned men's ears" (Tolkien, *Return* 1163). The atmosphere, as previously seen in other episodes involving mountains, warns the travellers about the rough situations they will have to face once on the ascent. This fact could not be fitter in Mordor. The harsh environment anticipates the incoming experience in this land. In fact, immediately after the sound of drums, a new creature responds in Sauron's defence. The Mouth of Sauron is his name, and he is a disgusting servant of The Dark Lord: "its face was a frightful mask, more like a skull than a living head, and in the sockets of its eyes and its nostrils there burned a flame. The rider was robed in all black, and black was his lofty helm ...this was but a living man ..." (Tolkien, *Return* 1163). Exactly the same way in which corrupted lands reshape, receive and emanate a gloomy aspect, characters who have been corrupted by Sauron do also change their look and they all become disfigured, ugly creatures that are related to death like the Nazgûl, the Mouth of Sauron and even Gollum. Nevertheless, the most shocking aspect of

the Mouth of Sauron is that he actually behaves as Sauron's voice. He was a man in the past, however, when he succumbed to the Dark Lord, he lost his name, and hence, his identity to just become Sauron's mouth. "He ends by being transformed into a replica of his teacher. ... Considering the high value placed in Tolkien's Middle-earth upon real names as indices of identity ... such namelessness is the acme of total surrender" (Kocher 67). Therefore, it could be said that Sauron's evilness is of such a magnificence that it is able to corrupt both living characters as well as nature and make them both behave cruelly.

On the other side of the story, Sam and Frodo are struggling in this scary land in which the former is looking for his best friend who was kidnapped by some Orcs in Shelob's Lair. If advancing in such a land is hard for wanderers like Aragorn or warriors like Éomer, it is doubly hard for a Hobbit like Sam. He has been advancing all alone with the intention of fulfilling Frodo's quest. Now that he knows he is taken captive, he just wants to save him and end with their shared nightmare. However, the days seem longer in Mordor, the deep negativity perceived by Pippin in Minas Tirith is much worse once inside The Dark Land. "He wondered what the time was. Somewhere between one day and the next, he supposed; but even of the days he had quite lost count. He was in a land of darkness where the days of the world seemed forgotten, and where all who entered were forgotten too" (Tolkien, *Return* 1173). An already familiar feeling of uselessness attacks Sam. He cannot even know what day it is, a sign that the journey is being never-ending and exhausting and he even fears to be forgotten by his companions and family members in the Shire. This may be a glimpse of the common homesickness among the Hobbits once they feel vulnerable outside of their land. Moreover, the fact of describing the days as the days of 'the world' sets Mordor in another parallel world, as if time there was different, as if Sam was living another reality out of real life. This is what depicts The Dark Land as an alienated land, apart from the rest of Middle-earth, Mordor is a nightmarish place where only horror dwells.

This sense of horror increases when Sam looks at the Ephel Dúath from a near distance: “hard and cruel and bitter was the land that met his gaze. Before his feet the highest ridge of the Ephel Dúath fell steeply ... its edge notched and jagged with crags like fangs that stood out black against the red light behind them ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1176). Once again, the repeated imagery of a huge mouth with its sharp teeth, more specifically, the sharpest ones, the fangs, is used by Tolkien to describe the ferocity of The Mountains of Shadow. The immensity of such orogenies together with their violent look make Sam struggle severely. The common colours in Mordor are black, coming from the deep darkness, and red, which is perceived due to the presence of fire. Thus, fire and darkness can be considered the most characteristic elements that define Sauron’s land and probably among the worst obstacles that the travellers will find. Unlike other fiery mountains in Middle-earth, such as The Lonely Mountain or the inside of the Caradhras where the Balrog is hidden, in Mordor there is not just one single way from which the mountain can expel the fire. Fire is present almost everywhere: “far beyond it, but almost straight ahead, across a wide lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires, there was a great burning glow; and from it rose ... a swirling smoke, dusty red at the roots, black above where it merged ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1176). Thence, the danger there is much bigger than in the previous mountainous landscapes where the travellers do not have to keep an eye on the peril of being burnt. Fire can be considered a hallmark in Mordor. In fact, fire is what has shaped the whole dark land, like in other volcanic areas, the lava usually deposits on its way and shapes the territory with a stony appearance, all barren. In addition, apart from the previously mentioned reasons to perceive such land in a negative way, Seymour also has suggested that “the darker, more dangerous places in Middle-earth are described as desolate, gloomy, and devoid of growing things” (32). Notwithstanding, due to the negativity attached to Sauron’s land, the forms that the lava create are defined as “twisted dragon-shapes vomited from the tormented earth” (Tolkien, *Return* 1176). Tolkien himself defines these hills firstly as

tormented as if they suffered from Sauron's malice and he also adds that the shape the land takes is that of a dragon, which makes it look even more perverted due to the negative connotations dragons and snake-like creatures have. The metaphor of fire for the sickness of the mountain sounds legit, as it is the will for power what darkens the whole Middle-earth and its dwellers. It is the corruption what perverts these mountains and it is through the fire, with all the hellish connotations it implies, that mountains expel this evilness. In fact, all the fiery mountains present in Middle-earth share this negative connotation, precisely because Smaug, the Balrog, as well as Sauron himself belong to the perverted side of the story. Thus, fire can be interpreted as a signal of perversion and evilness. As far as the tormented earth is concerned, it may be a suggestion of the rage of the very roots of the mountains, of the earth itself which fits with the harsh environment of Mordor. In general, the strong connection mountains have with fire can be appreciated in ancient stories and legends through which people explained the presence of fire and volcano eruptions. Fire has always been a strong element that often brings chaos due to its power of destruction. Hence, it is common to relate fire with negative concepts. As Tamra Andrews has stated: "the ancient attributed frightening displays of nature to frightening gods and demons, for instance, to horrendous giants struggling against binding chains or tempestuous fire goddesses who exploded in anger by hurling liquid rocks and flaming spears" (218). Thus, it is understandable to portray the fiery mountains as the most perilous ones, as if they require an extra effort from the climbers. In fact, fire has a strong negative connotation in Tolkien's Legendarium as it is what most of the times causes chaos, as it has been seen in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* when their protagonists tried to reach their final goals at the top of two fiery mountains (the Lonely Mountain and Mount Doom, respectively). Nevertheless, Sam behaves strongly and even if he feels it almost impossible, he does not lose his faith. As Tom Shippey explains "courage undiluted by confidence but at the same time untainted by rage and despair" (*Road* 119) is what defines most of the heroic

characters in Middle-earth. As far as Sam advances on his journey towards Frodo's location, he learns about this land's perils. The aspect that shocks him most is that "this stronghold had been built not to keep enemies out of Mordor, but to keep them in" (Tolkien, *Return* 1178). Sauron's land is horrifying and that makes it unappealing for possible intruders. However, he makes sure that once anyone enters his land, they can not escape from it. Once again it shows that the normality in Mordor is just the opposite of what normality is in the rest of Middle-earth. Whereas both Minas Tirith or Osgiliath are defined as strongholds, that do not let the enemy enter their dominions, Sauron's fortress is described as a hellish prison for the possible Ring-bearer who might want to destroy the Ring in the fires of Mount Doom. Sauron's main interest is that of recovering his Ring and thus, he will present all the possible perils and obstacles for any outsider. Such is Sauron's power of corruption, that once inside his dominions, even Sam, who has never felt the necessity of possessing the Ring, feels something has changed inside him. "No sooner had he come in sight of Mount Doom, burning far away, than he was aware of a change in his burden" (Tolkien, *Return* 1178). He has always suffered the journey from a distance different from that of Frodo's. Now that he is wearing the Ring, he feels weaker than ever. And this weakness is intensified due to the proximity of the Ring to the place where it was forged. "As it grew near the great furnaces where, in the deeps of time, it had been shaped and forged, the Ring's power grew, and it became more fell, untamable save by some mighty will" (Tolkien, *Return* 1178). Moreover, it seems that Sauron knows how to play with his adversaries' minds as even Sam starts thinking about the possible positive aspects of keeping the Ring for him. "Wild fantasies arose in his mind; and he saw Samwise the Strong, Hero of the Age, striding with a flaming sword ... and armies flocking to his call as he marched to the overthrow of Barad-dûr" (Tolkien, *Return* 1178). The effect Mount Doom has on Sam is more than evident, probably similar to the one it had on Isildur when he showed he could not simply throw the Ring into the fire.

Another interesting feature that appears repeatedly in the whole novel of *The Lord of the Rings* is the presence of never-ending stairs, which are always attached to a mountain. Gandalf tells his story about these eternal stairs hidden in the depth of Khazad-dûm, Gollum leads both Frodo and Sam to the stairs of Cirith Ungol and now Sam is forced to climb a long stair to arrive at Frodo's location. "Up, up he went. It was dark save for an occasional torch flaring at a turn ... Sam tried to count the steps, but after two hundred he lost his reckoning" (Tolkien, *Return* 1183). What all these stairs have in common is that they all reside in a dark spot, they all are extremely long and they all must be climbed in order to get something positive in exchange. The stairs of Khazad-dûm are the ones climbed by Gandalf who becomes wiser and more powerful in his fight against the Balrog; the stairs of Cirith Ungol are the ones Frodo and Sam climb before meeting Shelob, and they climb it so that they can get into Mordor, and finally, the ones that Sam has to climb are the ones that will make him save Frodo from the Orcs that kidnapped him. All these long and almost eternal stairs may suggest the immense effort achieving a huge goal requires. Gandalf, Frodo, and Sam have to demonstrate that if they really want to be useful in the story, they must climb such stairs. These three characters almost end up dead. However, it is at this desperate moment in which they manifest the real power they have to fight until the end. They all run the risk of being murdered, nevertheless, they all end up being wiser and mentally stronger, even if both hobbits do not feel it so. Thus, the ascent of these stairs could symbolize the growth of these characters, their maturation, a way of learning how to continue in the story bravely, even if the mere ascent may cost their lives. The ascent may also suggest a glimpse of divinity, as they all go upwards and at the end, they all end up like real heroes. Gandalf becomes white, Frodo saves Middle-earth and needs to go to Valinor, the Undying lands, with the immortal Elves, and Sam is the one responsible for bringing Frodo to the pits of Mount Doom. Thus, through the ascent of these stairs, these three characters climb towards final salvation and they evolve notoriously towards heroism.

Similar to the rest of the spaces in Mordor, the atmosphere in the tower where Frodo is kidnapped is absolutely repulsive. The image of death and chaos is present everywhere the Hobbits go: “all the court was choked with dead orcs, or their severed and scattered heads and limbs. The place stank of death” (Tolkien, *Return* 1184). This imagery may be related to the disgusting as well as hard situations Tolkien had to experience when he was sent to the trenches during World War I: “binoculars might pick out a multitude of dark dots on the rising ground beyond the River Ancre -unburied bodies from 20,000 British soldiers killed two days earlier on the first day of the battle” (Garth, *Worlds* 161). When both Hobbits meet again, the pressure of the nearness to Mount Doom invades the weak Frodo, who after knowing that Sam has the Ring, attacks his best friend by yelling at him and demanding the Ring. Sam can not believe what he is seeing, the closest to their final destination, the harder the journey is becoming. Frodo already behaves as an amateur Gollum, demanding for his precious. The weight of the Ring is obvious, as Frodo’s manners are suffering a huge change and he is becoming Gollum’s replica. Although immediately after he asks for Sam’s forgiveness and with his most Sméagol-like attitude, recognizes Sam’s hard task and great help. “O Sam ... what have I said? what have I done? Forgive me! After all you have done. It is the horrible power of the Ring. I wish it had never, never been found” (Tolkien, *Return* 1193). By the time they both are together again Frodo is extremely exhausted, the pressure of the Ring, its possession and the hard way to Mordor avoiding all the perils found on their way have left him weak. “He sank to the ground. ‘I can’t go on, Sam’ ... ‘I am going to faint. I don’t know what’s come over me!’” (Tolkien, *Return* 1197).

Similar to the sharp, jagged mountains, the rest of growing nature is twisted and sharp like a knife. Every single definition of Mordor’s nature makes reference to its barrenness and to its ugly look. “Here things still grew, harsh, twisted, bitter, struggling for life. ... scrubby trees lurked and clung, coarse grey mosses fought with the stones... some had stabbing thorns,

some hooked barbs that rent like knives” (Tolkien, *Return* 1205). Everything in Mordor is perilous and it has a menacing look, making the way to Mount Doom even harder. The mere look at it adds extra weight on the two Hobbits who are strongly struggling to get at it. They are still looking from afar when Mount Doom looks apparently calm, still, it is defined “as threatening and dangerous as a sleeping beast” (Tolkien, *Return* 1207), which gives a living characteristic to the mountain. The hobbits are horrified by the look of the lands between them and their final destination. It is all “ruinous and dead, a desert burned and choked” (Tolkien, *Return* 1207). As a matter of fact, together with the many experiences they have undergone, they are at the furthest location from the Shire, which makes them long for the kinds of landscapes they are used to there. Altogether with their mixed feelings once in the land of Mordor, the common association of the rocky or barren lands with negativity is already more than evident. In fact “the flora of Middle-earth is associated with goodness and rock and stone with evil [...]” (Seymour 34). However, the only obstacles they will find are not those related to the disgusting smells and looks of the barren land. The greatest difficulty Frodo and Sam will have to overcome is straightforwardly related to the ascent of the mountains in Mordor. Similar to what happens in Eryn Muil, both hobbits find it especially hard to find the right way to the mountain and spend a long time on it. The labyrinthine look of the mountain is present in Mordor as well. “It was impossible to make their way along the crest ... or anywhere along its higher levels ... they were forced to go back the ravine that they had climbed ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1209). After so much effort, Frodo can literally not take any step further, he is run out of all the strength he had, and “there he lay like a dead thing” (Tolkien, *Return* 1219). Due to his horrible appearance, he has already become a thing, a dead thing indeed. Nevertheless, Sam’s most heroic deed is yet to come, and it is that of taking Frodo in his hands and bringing him to Mount Doom. It is at this moment when Sam feels Frodo’s emotional weight, which together with the presence of the Mountains of Shadow and Mount Doom, and

the feelings of homesickness and hopelessness the Hobbit finds it really hard to continue on their way. “I would clearly like to see Bywater again, and Rosie Cotton and her brothers ... I can’t think somehow that Gandalf would have sent Mr Frodo on this errand, if there hadn’t a’ been any hope ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1221). Both Hobbits try to stay as positive as possible, however, it is not easy when after having experienced so many harsh situations, the closer they get to Mount Doom, the harder they find it to advance. Hammond and Scull quote Graham Teyar’s, Tolkien’s companion in King Edward’s School: “the physical setting [in Mordor] derived directly from the trenches of World War One, the wasteland of shell-cratered battlefields where he had fought in 1916” (*Companion* 613). Taking both Hobbits’ mood into consideration, Teyar’s statement can be considered acutely correct, as even if Frodo wakes up in a good mood, at the mere instant in which he sees the look of Mount Doom, his attitude undergoes a severe change. “When his eyes beheld the Mountain and the desert he quailed again. ‘I can’t manage it, Sam ... it is such a weight to carry’ ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1225). In his extreme tiredness, Frodo shows signals of giving up. It is precisely then when Sam must offer his best support by making him think about the little pleasures awaiting them in their beloved Shire. Nevertheless, it is at this moment when both realize that the long journey has been especially hard for Frodo, something inside him has changed quite severely, as he does not even remember these things anymore. “Do you remember that bit of rabbit, Mr Frodo? ... ‘No, I am afraid not, Sam’ said Frodo. ‘At least I know that such things happened, but I cannot see them. No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or glass or flower ...are left to me. I am naked in the dark, Sam ...’” (Tolkien, *Return* 1226). With such bad omens of Frodo’s present and future moods, Sam himself starts losing his faith. Nevertheless, he knows Frodo needs him to fulfil the hard quest. Many are the adversities that Sam is facing with the extra difficulty of having to help his almost dead friend. The behaviour of the land itself suggests that Sauron knows about the ring’s presence and that is why Sam can

feel some scary movements of the earth: “Sam felt a tremor in the ground beneath him, and he heard or sensed a deep remote rumble as of thunder imprisoned under the earth ... the mountain too slept uneasily” (Tolkien, *Return* 1229). Tolkien depicts a living mountain which can actually be said to be feeling the incoming perilous events due to the closeness of the Ring and Mount Doom. Together with the strong sensitivity of the mountain, the weather, as usual, also offers some information about the future dangers in Mount Doom: “there seemed to be a storm coming up, and away to the South-east there was a shimmer of lightnings under the black skies. Worst of all, the air was full of fumes; breathing was painful and difficult, and a dizziness came on them” (Tolkien, *Return* 1229). The huge change in nature perceived by the characters is said to be described in such opposite ways so that the reader can actually feel “the depth of Frodo’s torment and what he has lost carrying the Ring” (Croft 10). Moreover, Garth adds that due to the huge impact the trenches of the war had on the soldiers “[the trenches] may be a prime reason why he [Tolkien] housed his hobbits in safe and comfortable holes and yet created so many settings of claustrophobic danger and terror” (*Worlds* 163) creating similar holes with a completely dissimilar connotation.

As the clearest image of terror, Tolkien depicted Mount Doom which “filled all their sight, looming vast before them: a huge mass of ash and slag and burned stone ... they had crawled to its very feet” (Tolkien, *Return* 1229). Once there, the level of tiredness is such that after having overcome all the past situations, the only way to start climbing the mountain is by “crawling like a snail with a heavy burden on its back” (Tolkien *Return* 1231). Tolkien created a breathtaking volcano from the image of a real-life volcano in Iceland. The Hekla filled many pages of the newspapers when it erupted and this fact greatly impressed Tolkien. Mount Doom “brings us back to the photograph of ‘the latest eruption of volcano Hekla’, shown by Tolkien ...” (Garth, *Worlds* 95). As impressive as the landscapes are the situations lived by the characters, thus, the mere description of the former is the exact reflection of the travellers’

internal situation. Exactly the same as nature in Mordor, they are almost dead, twisted, exhausted, struggling to survive such an abhorrent situation: “their [landscapes’] impressions are so vivid that the blasted desolations, cramped and twisting tunnels and scenes of renewed natural wonder sometimes seem to reflect what is going on inside head and breast. So landscape becomes a way to chart interior as well as exterior journeys” (Garth, *Worlds* 160).

Notwithstanding, Frodo and Sam’s next adversary is not the mountain itself, but Sauron’s eye at the tower of Barad-dûr. The Eye that has been watching them all the way to Mordor, the one who is desperately looking for his Ring. As Lense claims, “all of Sauron’s malice is concentrated in the image of the Lidless Eye. ...The Eye is an instrument of torture” (4). Effectively, the vision of the Eye is probably what most harms Frodo. “High there stabbed northward a flame of red, the flicker of a piercing Eye; and again and the terrible vision was removed ... but Frodo at that dreadful glimpse fell as one stricken mortally” (Tolkien, *Return* 1233). Tolkien defines the Eye’s movements as ‘stabbing’ and as ‘piercing’. It is indeed described as a harming arm as Lense suggests. Moreover, to culminate Frodo’s suffering, Gollum appears attacking him from behind at the very core of Mount Doom, at the moment in which Frodo is about to throw the Ring away. Once again, Sam can not believe what he is seeing, already there, almost feeling the victory and that horrible creature has to add an extra burden to their quest. The first idea that comes to his mind is killing him with his bare hands; he would have liked him to be dead a long time ago, actually. However, it is at this moment and at this specific place, when Sam, after having experienced the weight of the Ring for a short period of time, understands all the hard situations the creature must have undergone. In the inside of Mount Doom, their final destination, is where Sam feels the pity Frodo and Gandalf talked about long ago: “deep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust ... now dimly he guessed the agony of Gollum’s shrivelled mind and body, enslaved to that Ring, unable to find peace or relief ever in life

again” (Tolkien, *Return* 1235). Sam knows it well, there is already no hope for Gollum. He has been following them all the way to Mordor, and still, inside the volcano, he is demanding the Ring, he cannot forget it and his fate is the same of that of the Ring’s, being killed in the fire, in the possession of his precious jewel, after having pulled up Frodo’s forefinger with it.

The Ring is finally destroyed, the quest is fulfilled, and the essence of Mordor has endured until the very end. Frodo’s struggle of deciding whether he could destroy the Ring or not has been solved by the aggressiveness and the corruption in the form of Gollum that characterizes the land of Mordor. As a final image of the abominable dark land, the mere landscape reacts to the catastrophe. “Towers fell and mountains slid; walls crumbled and melted crashing down; vast spires of smoke and spouting steams went billowing up, up, until they toppled like an overwhelming wave ...” (Tolkien, *Return* 1239). The image of the smoke, on the contrary, is said to be “not the ash plume of Mount Doom but the spirit of defeated Sauron” (Garth, *Worlds* 95). Besides, Mount Doom appears as a perilous mountain not only because of its difficult ascent but also because of its challenging descent, as illustrated by the problems that Frodo and Sam will have to face when descending this mountain. Surrounded by lava as they are, “a huge fiery vomit rolled in slow thunderous cascade down the eastern mountain-side” (Tolkien, *Return* 1244) when the eagles together with Gandalf rescue both hobbits.

5.3.4. The Return Journey

On their way back home, after the destruction of the Ring in Orodruin, Middle-earth recovers the good look it had before the presence of Sauron and nature seems to be growing again, the sickness of Sauron has faded away and with it, Middle-earth is being healed. Nevertheless, there are still some places that create a slight uneasiness in Frodo. Such is the

case of Weathertop, for example, where he was wounded by the Nazgûl. That wound made him closer to the dark side, and it is still an evil memory of the long journey. “He [Frodo] would not look towards the hill, but rode through its shadow with head bowed and cloak drawn close about him” (Tolkien, *Return* 1296). That wound left a mark on Frodo. And together with many other evil situations in which the hobbit was about to give up, the character of Frodo has changed tremendously. “You’ve come back changed from your travels, and you look like folk as can deal with troubles out of hand” (Tolkien, *Return* 1303). None of the problems of the Shire can be compared to those they have been forced to face on their way to Mordor. They all have changed, and that is something that Gandalf warned Bilbo about, just before leaving the Shire with Thórin and the rest of the Dwarves. The journey is not just a physical journey, but a spiritual one, in which through all the adversities experienced by the characters, their personalities will be shaped. On their coming home, they perceive that Saruman has manipulated the Shire and they try to protect it from its power. Merry and Pippin are both glorified by the rest of the Hobbits because they both have now honourable jobs related to royalty and they walk around the Shire wearing the royal garments. Sam is now the official gardener of the Shire, he is in charge of making their home look beautiful and pastoral again, far from the industrial look that Saruman imposed. However, as far as Frodo is concerned, nobody asks about his duties, nobody cares about his hard task in Mount Doom and he himself does not feel the same anymore. As Joseph Campbell has noted, one of the most important aspects of a hero’s quest is to be recognized for what he has achieved. “The adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy ... back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may rebound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet or the ten thousand worlds” (167). Even when he sees his home destroyed by Saruman, he is not able to do anything else, he is sick and needs to be healed. “Frodo has sacrificed the most and has returned maimed and broken, but Sam, Merry and Pippin, who are whole assume public position” (Wodzak 111).

Because of that, the same way as Thórin and Théoden, Frodo leaves Middle-earth and goes to the Grey Havens, in the Undying Lands together with Bilbo, so that all these wounds can be healed and so that they both can rest.

This section has demonstrated the important role played by mountains, mountain ranges and not so high hills in the whole novel of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is obvious to say that Tolkien loved the alpine landscapes, as John Garth states, “Tolkien’s artistic response [to the drawing of landscapes] was aesthetic and emotional rather than scientific” (*Great War* 12) and that may be a reason why he decided to give such prominence to them in his *Legendarium*. Precisely in *The Lord of the Rings* is where the main goal of the characters is that of arriving at a mountain. It is the closing scene of the whole novel, the final destiny. It is also evident how these mountains are not placed randomly, as they all have a purpose in the travellers’ journey. In fact, a similar situation may be found in another short story by J.R.R. Tolkien, *A Leaf by Niggle*, published in 1945, where the main protagonist’s own journey, which symbolizes his life, ends on the mountains. “He was going [...] towards the Mountains, always uphill. Beyond that I cannot say what became of him” (115). Their meaning may seem different from the final mountains found in the *Legendarium*; however, the aim is similar. In the *Legendarium*, both Bilbo in *The Hobbit* and Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* need to go towards a final mountain from where they will get eternal peace. In the case of *Niggle*, mountains are his final step on his long journey, symbolizing death, also known as the eternal rest. This provides mountains with a highly positive and even divine connotation, as they are representing a place to rest, which entails the comfort of the landscape and they even can be interpreted as Heaven itself, within a Christian context.

Nevertheless, most of the times, mountains in *The Lord of the Rings* are depicted as huge and menacing obstacles that will make the travellers’ way extremely hard. Their obstruction role is usually supported by rough weather conditions or evil creatures lurking

around them. Thus, on many occasions in which the protagonists, especially the Hobbits, are forced to confront a mountainous experience, the most common feeling invading their hearts is that of homesickness. Nonetheless, there are some exceptions, in which mountains do offer shelter, or are a wall of protection against the Enemy, as in the case of the valley of Rivendell. As far as caves are concerned, they are dark and gloomy spaces with a severe negative connotation due to the frequent presence of evil creatures such as orcs. There are, of course, other cases in which caves can be extraordinarily organized Dwarven palaces, in which peace reigns. However, the most important mountain, as well as the most important cave, which happens to be the same, Mount Doom, is especially evil, as it is the dwelling of the Dark Lord, Sauron. Orodruin is the clearest example of a land corrupted by his masters' perverted mind. Nevertheless, is there anything positive about it? If there is something beneficial as far as Mount Doom is concerned, is the challenge it entails. It is due to the fact that Bilbo finds a mysterious Ring, that four Hobbits from the Shire are forced to leave their comfort zone and confront new adversities that will make them put their lives in risk. However, it is due to these challenges that they all change, and hence, grow. Because as Hammond claims, "Without change there is no growth, without growth no life" ("Comforts" 31).

6. Conclusion

Mountains and the caves inside them have always been powerful natural elements that have provoked different feelings when staring at them. Because of that, their presence has been notorious since immemorial times influencing several artists. In the literary world, the perception and connotation of mountains and caves suffered a huge change, especially during the Romantic Period. After a few previous examples of mountain climbers that decided to live the alpine experience and later portray it in their writings, Petrarch, for example, the Romantic writers were the ones that began feeling attracted to this new and unexplored landscape, giving the alpine world prominence that would later develop into increasing literary attention towards mountains.

As far as J.R.R. Tolkien is concerned, he was profoundly interested in nature and its caring as well as in its portrayal in his writings. He was definitely worried about environmental issues and he depicted it throughout his *Legendarium*, giving nature or most of the natural elements huge importance. The prominence given to nature is such that Tolkien has described it with a futuristic vision, as a way of predicting the future of the environment of the world, usually pushed by the fear he felt of the damages caused by industrialization. In fact, Dickerson claims that “Art-works -in every medium- can symbolize for us our deepest concerns” (“Introduction”) but they can also “help us to see our world and our place in it -in a new way” (“Introduction”).

As far as the alpine world is concerned, the prominence that mountains and subterranean spaces have in J.R.R Tolkien’s *Legendarium* is really remarkable. Once Tolkien discovered the alpine landscapes, he felt a huge admiration towards the new and different kind of nature he found outside his hometown. He can even be compared to Bilbo Baggins at the beginning of *The Hobbit*, who lives comfortably and in love with the calm and tamed Shire.

However, once he has overcome several experiences in the wilderness of the mountains, he admires them vividly and it is a memory that he will never forget. This can be said about Tolkien himself, who once visited the Swiss Alps and the Caves of Cheddar Gorge, amongst others and he was deeply touched by them. In fact, some of these orogenies and caves that he created for Middle-earth are strongly influenced by the real mountains and caves he knew during his life.

As it has been explained in the first chapter of this dissertation, mountains and caves have always had a strong meaning and symbology in several fields like culture, history, mythology and literature amongst others. Orogenies have always required some degree of effort, as they are a slope that needs to be climbed in order to reach its summit. Some hills are easier to climb, whereas others are more difficult, depending on the height and many other factors that play a major role in the ascent of a mountain, for example, the weather. The more unreachable the goal of a mountain, the wider its meaning may be. However, the symbolic value of mountains goes further than just reaching the summit, as the mere fact of climbing it is part of the journey, and this often has a symbolic meaning, too. Moreover, mountains throughout history have usually been related to the divine world, especially due to their high altitudes and hence, to their closeness with heaven. Therefore, climbing a mountain has many times been connected to the idea of a spiritual journey in which the climbers travel into their own inner world and find God as well as themselves. Thus, scaling a mountain can be interpreted as making a spiritual and mystic journey towards the summit, which is the moment and place in which the activity ends successfully. Due to this strong connection with divinity, mountains have also received a sacred connotation and, in fact, they are not available for everyone. Only the good trained, strong and persistent enough will be able to succeed on the climbing and reach the peak, which in this spiritual interpretation can be compared to reaching God. Hence, the fact of being unreachable for many people adds exclusivity to it, as if knowing

God was not meant for everyone. Therefore, following this belief, many religious temples have been built at the top of mountains, making a clear reference to the effort one has to make in order to be worthy enough to feel the presence of God. Consequently, mountains and sacredness have been always related, what provides the alpine world with a divine connotation, making it look more unreachable. In Tolkien's *Legendarium*, this divine aspect is perceptible in *The Silmarillion*, where the whole continent of Aman is sacred due to the presence of the Valar and their biggest image of power, the realm of Manwë on the Peak of the great Taniquetil. Both, the character and the mountain offer power and sacredness to each other and in fact, the whole continent, in contrast with Middle-earth, is exclusive for the Valar and the immortal Elves. In fact, it is a place forbidden for Men, which shows the exclusivity of the continent. Nevertheless, there are other several factors that are part of the symbology of mountainous landscapes such as the unknown, fear, darkness, dizziness, extreme weather conditions and even legends and myths about them. Thus, orogenies have not always been interpreted as perfectly divine and sacred natural elements due to the many factors that interplay in the process of climbing, as well as the many possible hard times the stay on the mountain may offer.

Hence, besides their sacred aspect, mountains, and more specifically, caves, can also represent dense darkness. This makes the way even harder for the climbers as they can barely see what is on their way or who is hidden waiting to attack them. Due to this darkness, the most common feeling is that of the fear of the unknown, fear of what nobody can see, of the unconquered, and as a consequence, several legends about the possible perils found on a mountain are made. This often enhances the fear towards the alpine landscape. The cavities inside the rocky mountains in several myths, legends and literary works have been related to evilness and even to the Christian hell due to the common presence of darkness and fire in them. Tolkien himself depicts many times in his *Legendarium* the danger of the mountains

through the image of fire and it usually has a negative connotation. The presence of Smaug, the Balrog or even Sauron actually affects straightforwardly in the perception of these mountainous landscapes. However, there are other examples in Tolkien's works in which the presence of fire inside the mountains is positively perceived. Such is the case of the Dwarven mines, where Dwarves work the rock and the jewels they find inside their rocky caves thoroughly or even as a process of healing, as a way of expelling the toxicity from the core of the mountains to the outside. This is seen when Gandalf uses fire in order to expel Gríma from Meduseld, for example. In terms of the connotation of fire, there is definitely a huge difference between the evil characters and the Dwarves. Tolkien hated the way in which World War I had affected the landscapes and nature surrounding him; however, he loved the craftsmanship and he depicts mines quite positively, as a place where miners or smiths work hard without trying to exploit nature.

Thus, in general terms, heights are usually depicted as the representation of holiness and the divine and hence, they are many times venerated, whereas the lowest or inner parts of them are connected to the mundane, the earth, the everyday life and the mechanised. These perceptions are hugely influential for Tolkien as an important number of his descriptions of the mountainous landscape actually follow this pattern; however, his particular way of portraying mountains includes a variety of different approaches. This fact is perfectly appreciated through the description of some of these mountains and other natural elements when they are in contact with the characters. Thus, depending on the race, culture and side in which the characters fight, the landscape will be differently perceived.

One of the most evident examples of this powerful impact of the characters' behaviour on natural elements may be found in Tolkien's description of the rulers of evil in Middle-earth, and their way of treating everything surrounding them. Beginning with their dwellings, it is not a hard task to know about the possible changes that the future will bring to the near landscapes.

Such is the case of Sauron and his entourage who demonstrate being the representation of complete destruction of many lands in Middle-earth. Mordor is depicted as a place both “‘bare’ -devoid of vegetation- and ‘barren’ -its fertility destroyed, no longer able to produce life” (Dickerson and Evans 189). Very similar is the depiction of Isengard where Saruman’s tower is the depiction of power and industrialization. In fact, in its dungeons, the white wizard creates an army of orcs with the intention of destroying nature and trees more specifically. In fact, the image of the Shire after being attacked by Saruman shows a glimpse of how other natural landscapes would look like if they were ruled by such evil minds. As a matter of fact, Dickerson stated that this depiction of the Shire was an applicable idea of how a well-treated natural land would look like after industrialization, (77). Hence, Tolkien’s way of writing could be considered a way of showing the readers the future of our own environment ruled by those who do not care about nature.

The previous chapters of the present dissertation have shown that even if an important number of mountains do follow a common pattern (in particular in terms of the connection between the heights and the sacred), Tolkien also offers ambivalence on their descriptions and more specifically on their meanings. Mountains are portrayed in different ways, some of them represent shelter, some others danger, a huge challenge, fear or even death, some are related to divinity or on the contrary, to the underworld. However, mountains play a major role in the scenes in which they are depicted and one does not simply look at them and continue with their life. In fact, their image often can be considered so shocking that they remind of the extreme wilderness that can be found in wild locations from the real world, such as Iceland, for example. “Tolkien’s Middle-earth ... contains elements ... typical of Iceland’s climate and its mountain scenes” (Burns, *Perilous* 80). Mountains are there in order to provoke many different feelings throughout the stories by J.R.R. Tolkien. He portrayed them majestically giving them personalities through which not only the characters, but also the readers can feel empathy

towards the wilderness and get to comprehend their 'behaviour' towards the anthropomorphic characters.

Tolkien does definitely consider mountains and caves as other characters who actually interact with the anthropomorphic ones. This special attention given to nature is firstly seen in the story that is considered the mythology of his other writings, *The Silmarillion*, which introduces the Valar, some divine characters who, each of them, represent different natural elements. They all have a meaning in his mythology. The description of the Valar shows a clear personification of nature, which makes it easier for the readers to feel the environmental issues as something that actually affects their everyday life. In fact, the author seems to give voice to nature to raise awareness among the readers about environmental issues.

In general, the many different kinds of landscapes that Tolkien depicts in his novels are not perceived the same way by all the characters, as nature, in general, is not treated and appreciated the same way by them. Each race shows its own way of understanding the role of nature. Hobbits love tamed landscapes, Elves dwell in idyllic settings, Men are surrounded by wild landscapes like rivers and mountains and Dwarves belong to the caves inside them. Evil characters are often related to indoor, dark and murky places, like caves, dungeons or towers. Yet, even though most of them are bound to a concrete landscape, except the evil characters and the Dwarves, this does not mean that they can not appreciate different landscapes in Middle-earth. As a matter of fact, the whole fellowship demonstrates admiration towards Elven realms like Lothlórien or Rivendell. For example, Sam has many times shown his will of seeing Elves and therefore their lands. "Elves, sir! I would dearly love to see them" (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 40). It is clearly demonstrated that Elves and their landscapes are hugely admired all over Middle-earth, even if Sam has never been around them. The general admiration towards these lands is due to the inhabitants' strong connection with the nature that grows, instead of the barren lands. Elven locations are described as "otherworldly realms sourced in natural

landscapes” and as an example of “how society and nature may live in harmony” (Campbell 185). However, little is said about the beauty and the harmony of the realms of the Dwarves, the huge and breathtaking mountains and their inside, and this may be due to the different standards of beauty associated with them, which is also known as the ‘hidden beauty’ of the Dwarves. They appreciate different aspects of nature, not common among the rest of the characters, like the darkness of a cave, an excavated rock or the rawness of wilderness amongst others.

The clearest example of a character in *The Lord of the Rings* who demonstrates a huge admiration towards the stony mountains is no other than Gimli, the Dwarf. He loves the inside of them, more specifically. His devotion to mountainous landscapes is not strange as, as a Dwarf, he feels attracted to the rocky landscapes. It is in his nature, as he belongs there. Dwarves demonstrate having a prominent feeling of love towards their history and heritage, they care about the future generations and that is why mountains are not just the place where they work or where they live. They are the image of comfort, shelter, and culture, which can always be improved in terms of building or even of appearance: “the preservation of the beauty of a mine for future generations is a key part of the dwarvish identity” (Seymour 33). Because of this, Dwarves know the inside of the mountains perfectly well, they spend many hours a day inside them, they make them their refuge, their comfort zone. As far as beauty is concerned, as already mentioned the beauty they admire is not the most common one. However, Dwarves are said to have a very good taste “Dwarves have always had an eye for those things splendid and magnificent” (Tolkien, *Lords of Middle-earth* 36). Nevertheless, even though they give huge importance to beauty, they are very pragmatic, practicality is where they actually find perfection. “Dwarven items are often stunningly beautiful, but practicality underlines all their artifice” (Tolkien, *Lords of Middle-earth* 46). Yet, even if they find the wild inside of the mountains stunning, they also know about the dangers they offer. Gimli knows about the perils

climbing some of the mountains may bring, as when the fellowship decides to climb mount Caradhras, the Dwarf warns the rest about the 'angry mountain' and consequently, the fellowship manifests a shared uneasiness about the idea of entering in such a dark and perilous place. In fact, the only one willing to see the new parade is Gimli. One of the key elements in Tolkien's approach to the mountains in his works is the difference between *knowing* and *speculating* about the possible dangers a mountain or the inside of it could offer. The fellowship -except Gimli- may not know about them, but Gandalf, of course, does. Yet, he also knows it is the safest way among the rest of the places, which provides the subterranean setting with a positive connotation.

As it happens in Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, the feeling of fear of the darkness, where no one can see properly, and hence, where no one knows what to expect from it, is very common in these kinds of landscapes. In addition, darkness has usually been related to evil in many fields. Taking into account that both the Shire and the Elven realms are light and tamed places where nature is related to growing things especially due to that light, the darkness depicted in Middle-earth is suggested to be representative of the most barren, infertile and evil places. Hence, there is a clear tendency to marginalise places like Khazad-dûm or Erebor in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, or Belegost and Nogrod in *The Silmarillion* in terms of nature and beauty and this may be the reason why all the members of the fellowship, except Gimli, do not wish to go inside a cave. They have a preconceived idea about their actual look and the perils of exploring them. In addition, Moria is known to be the tomb of Balin and the place where many Dwarves were slaughtered by goblins, thence, it has become a huge Dwarven cemetery which already brings the gloomy and disgusting look and feeling to the place.

Hence, due to the inclination to consider valuable and beautiful only the nature that grows, the stony world of caves is often regarded from a negative perspective in Tolkien's

Legendarium by most of the characters. Even Tolkien himself used words related to the earthly world, to the stones, the mines, the gems with the intention of describing the negative characteristics of a character. Expressions like “their horrible *stony* voices” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 81) or “he has a mind of *metal* and wheels” (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 616) actually demonstrate the negativity thrown to these landscapes, which is not only related to Dwarves but also to Goblins and to Saruman’s plan of destroying the environment with his army of Orcs. This may be the strongest reason why these arid lands have such a strong negative connotation for the rest of the characters. Moreover, caves and mountains are often related to the wilderness of nature, which as Garrard claims, “is associated with Satan” (61). In addition, they are seen as high heights which can be found all along the journey by Tolkien’s characters and they are definitely among the biggest obstacles they will find on their way. However, even if being an obstacle is negatively perceived, these natural elements are, precisely, the ones that give credit to the main characters of the story. In that way, mountains can also be interpreted as the real monsters in J.R.R. Tolkien’s stories about the Ring and, as Joe Abbott confirms, “the monsters ... are to provide for the various characters that possess heroic potential the vehicle through which that potential may be realized” (59). Therefore, the symbology given to mountains and caves can be both, negative, as they are often related to evil, the devil, and the bad characters, or positive, because their recurrent role as the monsters of the stories enable the main protagonists to show their growth and courage when defeating or overcoming these natural obstacles. The cases of the ascent of the Misty Mountains, the peril of going inside Erebor, the ascent of Mount Caradhras, the stay in Khazad-dûm, and, obviously the ascent to Mount Doom, are definitely cases in which the main characters of the story have to overcome several hard situations, many times alone, without any guidance and fight without being warriors, at all. Such are the cases of Bilbo and Frodo, who are complete outsiders in mountainous landscapes, and hence, they see orogenies as a real menace. Due to the fact of being surrounded by a

completely different natural environment, a common shared feeling appears; in most of the cases among Hobbits, it is a feeling of homesickness. Longing for their home, in this case, implies not only that they miss their tranquility, but also, that they are not used to the roughness of the wilderness. They belong to the tamed Shire, where none of the obstacles and perils they find on the mountainous sceneries can be found. They can actually be compared to children, as they show the most innocent behaviour once out of the Shire. Nevertheless, it is due to these adversities that these children grow and mature notoriously.

In addition, the portrayal of mountains and caves suffers a severe change in aspect and even in connotation as they are set closer to the land of Mordor, what makes the journey harder with time. The alpine landscape, including their subterranean caves, that is described in Aman, discerns completely from the one depicted in Middle-earth. *The Silmarillion* does offer the description of some dark mountains that actually play the role of the abode of evil characters such as Ungoliant and Morgoth. However, these mountains always include elements that prevent potential climbers from arriving there, keeping evil apart from the rest of the landscape in this sacred place. Nevertheless, the rest of orogenies present there are strongly connected to divinity, especially the great Taniquetil, the place where Manwë's throne is set. In the case of Middle-earth, the ambivalence of the meaning of such landscapes is more present. The first mountains described in Middle-earth are, of course, dangerous and they transmit fear to the protagonists; however, they offer what is expected from them, as they are part of the wilderness. Nevertheless, the closer these natural elements are from the dark land of Mordor, the more dangerous they seem. The environment present near a mountain is seldom positively perceived, nonetheless, once in Minas Tirith, characters like Pippin or Denethor himself, who should be used to the sights of the citadel, are hugely affected by the presence of the Mountains of Shadow. Frodo and Sam suffer something similar in Emyn Muil, from where they see Ephel Dúath from a near distance and obviously, once inside Mordor. Hence, the presence of evilness

does not only affect the characters, but it also affects its surrounding landscapes and that is why the closer to Mordor, the arider the landscape becomes. Everything looks stonier, without life and the image of mountains is so powerful that it affects the characters emotionally. In addition to the grandiosity these mountainous lands emanate, the main characters have to face some mountains whose ascent becomes particularly fearful because of their volcanic imagery. In fact, fire becomes a recurrent symbol of destruction.

Therefore, fear towards the mountains and caves is really common in Tolkien's Legendarium, even if there are cases in which these natural elements play the role of abode for the race of the Dwarves, for example. However, the two main Dwarven dwellings, the Lonely Mountain and Moria, are no longer a refuge for Thorin's company in *The Hobbit* or for Gimli in *The Lord of the Rings*, due to the presence of intruders like Smaug and the Balrog, respectively. Thus, it is due to the fact that these negatively portrayed characters are part of these caves, that such special places for the Dwarves also imply negativity for them. Besides, these two abodes also inspire fear among the rest of the members partly due to the hard time climbing them implies, and also because of the invasions both places have undergone. These invasions have had a great impact on the look these places actually have. The physical appearance of these two mountains, (in fact, the two of them are among the most iconic mountains in *The Hobbit* and in *The Lord of the Rings*), resembles the previously mentioned Icelandic landscape due to their volcanic condition.

Many of the mountains portrayed in Tolkien's works contain a cave inside them, and most of these caves are huge mines or they are related to fire. In terms of symbology, the hole inside a mountain, the main core of it can be considered the womb of the earth, as the place from where life begins, but it can also be a symbol of death, a prison, a suffocating place where there is no space for life. It is both the cradle and the grave of nature. As far as their volcanic look is concerned, some of the mountains created by Tolkien are related to fire. Life and fire

are very much connected as the latter can be interpreted in relation with light, with the creation, with the heart, or with blood, which actually is a sign of life. “Fire is frequently associated with the sun, light, lightning, the colour red, blood and the heart” (Becker 112). Still, they have a negative connotation due to other meanings that fire has, like its relation with the Christian hell, or the consumption and thence destruction or death, for example.

In terms of their relationship with fire and evil, the negativity shown towards these landscapes is more than understandable when the reader knows about the very first named mine, which is no other than Melkor's. Melkor is known as the first Dark Lord, which does not help on the perception towards the dark and mysterious inside of mountains. In addition, after him, Sauron also built his own fortress, Angband, where similarly to his mentor, he housed many evil creatures, and it contained caves, dungeons and mines. Sauron did continue creating his own strongholds in Middle-earth, and that is how we get into the land of Mordor and in Mount Doom, more specifically.

Through the description of the land of Mordor, its environment and of course the main mountain there, Mount Doom, the reader appreciates how this shady land is all about fire, smoke, terror, and darkness. It is the fortress of the Dark Lord in Middle-earth and it has the look of a volcano, which, once again, can be considered a metaphor of the Christian hell, a place with no rules, with a strong negative connotation due to the Dark Lord who rules it and where destruction, chaos and death are the main ingredients. It is a mountain whose volcanic origin is explicitly stated in *The Lord of the Rings*. The land of Mordor was actually the only active volcano in Middle-earth during the Third Age. In Swithin's words, “though no doubt there was much volcanic activity during the earlier orogenies, the only recently active region was associated with the crumbling of the Mordor plate after collision [...]” (336). In terms of the connotation of these landscapes, Dickerson and Evans say that “Tolkien gives us one of the

vilest literary images imaginable: the vomit of entrails.” (187). Relating fire with the vomit of the earth brings the idea of the earth being sick and in need of getting rid of all the toxicity.

Within Tolkien’s Legendarium, there are two specific mountains, Erebor and Khazad-Dûm, whose hellish connotations are related to the fire originated by the creatures living inside them. The straightforward connection between Erebor and Khazad-dûm with a hellish world instead of being perceived from the fire itself, it is appreciated from the creatures that have plundered both mountains. Erebor, also known as The Lonely Mountain, the place where Thorin’s Dwarves want to go in order to get their home and treasure back, is not described as a volcano. Nonetheless, there is an indication that actually gives the Lonely Mountain such a look, and that is the presence of a huge creature, the golden dragon, Smaug. Even though the Lonely Mountain is a property of the Dwarves, they are afraid of going inside it due to the presence of the dragon, and they know he is still alive, due to the smoke they witness coming out of the mountain. Smaug’s presence makes them feel scared and even nostalgic. In fact, Smaug’s invasion of the Lonely Mountain has transformed the nature surrounding the Dwarves. It is due to the fact that he had invaded the Lonely Mountain, that the nature surrounding them has changed notoriously. Therefore, Smaug, or more specifically, his fire, is the main cause of murdered nature in the neighbouring town of Dale.

Very similar is the case of Moria or Khazad-dûm, in *The Lord of the Rings*. Khazad-dûm is one of the biggest Dwarven realms, and it is the chosen path among the fellowship to go onwards on their journey to Mordor. However, once the fellowship decides to explore it, after showing their little interest in going inside it, they discover that they are not alone. In fact, besides the horde of Orcs there is an even more dangerous creature lurking in the depth of Moria, the Balrog, the fire-demon. The Balrog is fire-related due to its physical appearance and it has always fought in favour of evil. Because of this, the negative meaning and the volcanic appearance that a Balrog brings to the mountain, to Moria, in this case, is flagrant.

Thus, taking into account the love Tolkien felt towards the environment, and how affected he was due to the presence of new factories as a result of the industrialization, the mere fact of depicting the inside of some of his most iconic mountains in relation with fire and smoke, actually gives the reader a clue of the negativity he projected on these landscapes. In fact, as Dickerson and Evans state, “the smoke pouring into the air from Mount Doom and from the ground itself suggests modern industry of the kind Tolkien must have observed as a child in or near Birmingham” (190).

Nevertheless, besides the wild look and negativity with which Tolkien depicted his caverns, he offered two main positive aspects of the subterranean spots. The first one is about the relationship between caves and the mineral world and craftsmanship, which he really admired. “Tolkien himself ... had a high regard for craftsmanship and esteemed the role of artisan” (Funk 331). The second positive aspect is the fact that even though caves do represent the not so positively perceived nature in Middle-earth, they are of huge importance in the story as relevant locations for the rites of passage that several major characters have to undergo. It is the place where many different characters achieve a superior level of heroism due to their success in overcoming particularly difficult challenges. Bilbo gets the sword Sting in the Trolls’ cave, Gandalf fights the Balrog in Khazad-dûm, and Frodo has his own inner fight to throw the Ring into the pits of Orodruin amongst other actions that take place in the insides of mountains. These are among the most important scenes in Tolkien’s story. However, caverns and hills still have a negative image, due to the challenge they actually involve, they are introduced as an obstacle in the characters’ journey and being an obstacle has never been perceived as something positive.

Yet, in Tolkien’s *Legendarium* we may observe a huge difference between the dwellers of caves and subterranean or indoor spaces, which are Dwarves, Saruman and his Orcs. While both touch and change nature, they do it in a different way and with a different purpose.

Dwarves love nature, they are actually in love with the stony lands they see, such as the Glittering Caves, for example. At the moment in which Legolas makes a joke about Dwarves exploiting such a beautiful place, Gimli answers fast and angrily by saying that his race would never dare to destroy such a marvellous place with the intention of making a profit out of it. In addition, and in contrast with Saruman, who does not remodel, but actually kills nature so that he can rule Middle-earth, Dwarves work with their bare hands, without using any big machinery as Saruman does (Seymour 41). Their goal is that of creating or improving their realms where they want to feel comfortable and want to secure a place for the future generations. Their commitment to craftsmanship is so strong that they are not just obsessed with creating random things, but imperishable ones. "Dwarves are long-lived; not interested in transitory beauty. They made things to last" (Funk 333). Dwarves love and respect their surrounding lands and especially the wild nature of the caves inside mountains and they express this love and connection with their maker, Aulë, through craftsmanship. However, Saruman is a power-hungry character, whose only intention is that of winning power over Middle-earth by destroying nature and making all the surrounding lands of his own. Hence, there is not a clear pattern in terms of the depiction of mountains and caves. Tolkien did not portray mountains as a sacred place and caves as the abode of evilness. He created a wild landscape, where both mountains and caves have been described as positive or negative natural elements, interchangeably. This can be interpreted as the unpredictable power of wild nature. It can be perceived as a way of understanding that wilderness cannot be defined as completely good or completely evil, but as a state where both goodness and evil can be found.

Although some of Tolkien's most iconic mountains and, in particular, their inside are related to evil and darkness, he still sends a message of hope about these places and some of the characters related to them. This can be appreciated, first of all through the character of the Valar, more specifically of Manwë, the one ruling Valinor at the top of Taniquetil. Manwë

probably represents the clearest image of light and power, he is the ruler of the Valar, and his deeds always lead towards positiveness. His divinity is part of the image and symbology of the mountain and as he represents goodwill, so does the great Taniquetil. The other significant case in *The Silmarillion* is that of Aulë, the smith Valar and creator of the Dwarven race, who teaches his skills of smithery to the Dwarves he creates, and he is at the same time forced to hide them until the Children of Ilúvatar are born. The interesting fact about him is that he hides them under the mountain, in the pure darkness to which these Dwarves will belong. And last but not least, the case of Eöl the Dark Elf is striking as well. He is probably the first character embracing the multiculturalism of Middle-earth, as he does not follow 'the rule' of belonging to a specific environment just because of his Elven condition. On the contrary, he prefers to dwell in the darkness of a forest and he is a friend of the Dwarves, from whom he learns about smithery, without having prejudices against them. He is probably the most open-minded character; however, as a consequence of his admiration towards the Dwarven dark realms, he himself is called the dark Elf, which always adds negativity. Nevertheless, he demonstrates being an interesting character breaking the rules of society and he still chooses to live in the dark, which provides the darkness and mountains a positive connotation. In *The Hobbit*, the forgiveness Tolkien offers through Thorin's change of attitude when he is dying is also another glimpse of hope. He gives the Dwarves a chance to show that after all, even though they belong to the unexplored and dark caves, they are good people. In fact, Tolkien once explained that his Dwarves were not like those that appear in Germanic folklore, he made a distinction and he stated that his dwarves "are not naturally evil, not necessarily hostile, and not a kind of maggot-folk bred in stone, but a variety of incarnate rational creature" (Carpenter, *Letters* 207). In *The Lord of the Rings*, even if Tolkien depicted selfish people like Denethor and Boromir, that belonged to the wilderness of mountains, he also created humble and big-hearted characters like the Rohirrim, who show great respect towards their alpine land or Faramir, who even if he

is a relative of Denethor, follows his ideals and behaves more ethically. Yet, he did not only send hope through the portrayal of some of his characters, but also through the landscapes themselves. Hope is something that anyone can feel towards almost all the places in Middle-earth. Tolkien even depicted what almost everyone would describe as impossible: he offered hope through nature in Mordor. He sent a message of life winning over death, of nature winning over destruction. This is appreciated when Sam and Frodo arrive at Mordor “the hobbits find it surprising that there is any life at all, [...] but there is some. Tolkien seems to suggest that even in the midst of such horror ... nature exhibits a tenacious will to survive” (Dickerson and Evans 189). In addition, it is due to the malice of Sauron that the land of Mordor is so dangerous, and it is precisely due to this danger that the four Hobbits will develop and will no longer be the children that once were when they left the Shire for the first time. It is due to the perils the Ring forces them to overcome, that they are now the heroes of the story. Hence, even Mordor can be positively perceived. But what is more important, besides hope, there is still love towards the mountainous landscapes by several characters who have undergone hard situations in these places. This is the case, for example, of Bilbo Baggins, who at the beginning of *The Hobbit* wants to deny the offer of going with the rest of the Dwarves to the Misty Mountains; however, once he arrives just at the beginning of them, he is tired but also astonished due to their size. “He had never seen a thing that looked so big before” (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 43) but he misses them once he is back in the Shire. “I want to see mountains again, Gandalf” (Tolkien, *Fellowship* 42).

In general, the alpine landscapes in Tolkien’s works share some characteristics that actually give them a perilous look. However, as already seen, not all of them receive the same connotation as not all the races in Arda do perceive them in the same way. Orogenies are depicted as the final destination of the characters and it is the place from where they will receive not only suffering, but also peace and healing. Bilbo leaves the Shire and goes to Rivendell in

order to recover from his adventure with Thorin's company and will finally accompany Frodo to the Undying Lands in Aman, in order to heal and rest. Tolkien's way of depicting the same natural elements with such differing connotations may be related to one of the messages that he wanted to spread through his work. The real monster of his stories is not the wilderness, but the will for power. The real problem is that the most power-hungry characters are actually the ones that corrupt and destroy the nature of Tolkien's secondary world. Hence, the deterioration and perils of wild nature are definitely a consequence of its governors' evil and destructive intentions. In fact, in cases such as the death of Smaug in Erebor, the one of the Balrog in Khazad-dûm and the one of Sauron once the Ring is destroyed, nature suffers a change. Smaug's death leads to the recovery of the Lonely Mountain and the city of Dale. Similarly, after the death of the Balrog, the smoke coming out of the mountain becomes white, as a symbol for the cleaning or the expelling of evil from the Mines of Moria. Finally, after the destruction of the Ring in Mount Doom, the mere volcano explodes and even the mountains slide destroying everything around this land, as a symbol of the end of the toxicity and, obviously, evil.

Another interesting aspect in Tolkien's depiction of mountains is that far from following the common pattern of relating the heights only with divinity and sacredness and the darkness and inhospitality with subterranean worlds, the writer did create a new possible way of perceiving and understanding mixed concepts such as admiring the different, the other, the unknown as well as being able to break the already set association of terms such as beauty and comfort. He managed to break traditional polarities and the standard ideas of setting each race in a particular and concrete landscape. He described the common pattern society expected from nature in terms of beauty, as illustrated by the location of places such as the Shire or any Elven realm within the nature of Middle-earth. However, he also demonstrated the importance of multiculturalism and open-mindedness through the creation of characters and landscapes who

break with the traditional archetypes. In addition, there is a clear evolution as far as the connotation of Dwarves is concerned throughout his Legendarium. The Dwarves that appear in *The Silmarillion*, Mîm and his son, are described as much more dangerous and stubborn than the Dwarves from *The Hobbit* and still, there is a slight difference between Thorin's company and Gimli in *The Lord of the Rings*. There is also a variation in terms of their dwellings, as Mîm's cave is not described as carefully as Khazad-dûm or Erebor are. This suggests that Tolkien himself also wanted to portray the development of the perception other characters had towards the Dwarven society and their culture. This new attitude towards them is illustrated, for example, by Legolas' promise to visit the Glittering Caves once the war is over. Tolkien finally shows how all the species in Middle-earth, except those who fight in Sauron's side, are big-hearted and simply have different customs, which does not mean that they are less valuable.

Tolkien created in his Legendarium a majestic work in which the alpine world is a recurrent element, a fact that shows his admiration and huge interest in mountains and in their symbolic meaning. Thus, the main scenes take place near mountains, at their summits, on the way to them or inside them, providing the alpine world with a remarkable role in J.R.R Tolkien's literary work. Tolkien's portrayal of the interaction between his main characters and mountains is often aimed at emphasizing the importance of behaving as a society in harmony with nature and seeing how everything works better when we all take care of our surroundings and respect each other. Tolkien's Legendarium teaches how making prejudices towards any land or race based on preconceived ideas only affects us negatively and makes us behave as the different races present in Middle-earth. Thus, J.R.R Tolkien's Legendarium is much more than an old long story, it is a story which can perfectly be related to nowadays' real-life relevant environmental, economic and cultural issues, which adds grandiosity to the writer's work.

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