The Hero-Anti-hero Dichotomy:

an Analysis of Even Matches in *Beowulf* and

the *Táin*

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In memory of Seamus Heaney (1939-2013)

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Introduction

> "It is the theory that decides what can be observed"
> Albert Einstein

In the vast, never-ending landscape of literary criticism, the number of hard-earned approaches and theories that can be applied to the treatment of heroes and antiheroes abound, oppose and complement each other. It is a common place of criticism that most approaches naturally lend themselves to particular works. It would be difficult, for instance, to analyse the previously mentioned contrasting concepts present in *Beowulf* and the *Táin* without the aid of structural approaches.

Following these theoretical trends, a structuralist critic would reckon the pair hero/antihero as units of a binary system of unique meaning, in which the heroic figure would stand as the privileged member. Quite the contrary, a post-structuralist scholar would be inclined to reverse the binary to favour the unprivileged term in order to account for the different interpretations which might arise from new relations of difference (Dobie, 2002, p.161). Such structural readings would indeed enrich our vision of contrastive characters by revealing the unifying perspective of conventional analysis, as well as novel ways of thinking countless possibilities of meaning.

Yet the root of the problem lies in the fact that structural theories of interpretation fail to consider the possibility of analysing characters of opposing behavior though bearing a similar nature, without privileging one term over the other. Another related aspect and a further gap in literary criticism is the lack of a paradigm capable of reconciling intrinsic textual features and their relationship with the outward social context of human experience. A gap previously envisioned by Northrop Frye (1951, p. 1447) and the reason why he vigorously engaged in the study of archetypal or myth criticism and its applications to literature. Following this line of thought and after considering this emphasis on structure and uneven reading of opposites, I believe that it is possible to find in archetypal criticism a critical formula capable of combining an equal examination of the hero-antihero binary. For convenience, I shall state that I will use the terms "even analysis and equal examination" (my own emphasis) to refer to a structural and symmetrical treatment of the hero/antihero binary.

Although all along the 20th century Frye, as critic, has been considered a very influential intellectual, not only in his relation to other critics but also due to his

contributions to literary pedagogy, there are other scholars that have spoken about the obsolescence of some of his premises. However, Robert Denham, Alvin Lee David, Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, Julia Kristeva and the Canadian literary critic and writer Margaret Atwood[1], to name a few, are among those who consider that Frye remains a key figure in current literary criticism worldwide. And even Harold Bloom believes that Frye's criticism will survive because his "system is serious, spiritual and comprehensive" (2000, p. xi).

While structuralist and post-sructuralist methodologies by and large have surpassed archetypal criticism as dominant modes in the academy, the latter has by no means been discarded as a valid method of criticism. On the contrary, it has adapted to changes in scholarship and methodology, and the fundamental concepts that define the language of archetypal analysis continue to circulate in a variety of mediums.

Consequently, archetypal literary criticism should still be deemed useful for the disclosure of certain implicit fields of meaning such as the enduring influence of the values, behaviours, and cultural and national awareness heroes may project along with their negative counterparts triggered by antiheroic characters. More specifically, those are the insights that belong to the realm of what Carl Jung proposed to call the "collective unconscious" (1980, p. 42, 43).

The majority of the comparative analyses done between the heroes in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*[2] and *Beowulf* tend to center on topics such as the Irish and British epic[3], the hero's battle rage[4], underwater combats[5] and supernatural powers[6]- to mention only a few. I have not found, so far, a critical work which attempts to engage in an even treatment of heroic and antiheroic roles under the light of the stages of the myth quest proposed by Northrop Frye's "new poetics" to focus on "the other cultural phenomena that form the social environment of literature" (1971, p. 25) and that has a bearing on the collective unconscious, too.

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[1] Keynote speakers who gave plenary addresses and made presentations at the banquet "The Legacy of Northrop Frye: An International Conference" held in Toronto, October 29-31, 1992.
[2] From now on I will refer to this epic as "The Táin", Ciaran Carson's translation.
[3] Ebbutt's "Hero-Myths and Legends of the British Race", Nichols' "The Spirit of Truth: Epic Modes in Medieval Literature" and Klapp's "The Folk Hero".
[4] Pohvel's "Beowulf and The Irish Battle Rage".
[5] Pohvel's "Beowulf and Celtic Under-Water Adventure".
[6] Pohvel's "Beowulf's Slaying of Daghræfn. A Connection with Irish Myth?"

In view of the previous theories, in the present study, I attempt to carry out a comparative analysis of two recent translations[7] of the Old English epic *Beowulf* and the early Irish epic the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* by Seamus Heaney and Ciaran Carson respectively, in order to equally examine, under the light of archetypal criticism, the case of even matches[8] of heroic and antiheroic characters pursuing a myth quest.

It is also my intention to show that the matchup of archetypes of the same caliber may prove fatal for both on the physical level, whereas if their transcendental influence is considered, the results could be different. They will not be conclusive, but they may yield an understanding of, and illuminate certain aspects related to Jung's collective unconscious, those universal unchanging values and modes of behavior which may ensure the survival of nations and even of mankind (Jung, 1980, p. 3, 4).

Chapter I: Structural Critical Approach: A Brief Introduction to the treatment of Heroes and Antiheroes

1.1 Structuralism and the Hero/Antihero Binary

"Structuralism is not particularly interested in meaning per se, but rather in attempting to describe and understand the conventions and modes of signification which make it possible to 'mean'"

Rice and Waugh

Since the earlier part of the 20th century, a new set of ideas, methods and practices arose in Europe, which not only prevailed over studies in linguistics, anthropology, literary theory, and semiology but also had a significant impact on people's understanding of the world. In its broadest sense, this approach known as structuralism seeks to understand how systems work, not individually, but as part of the larger structure to which they belong (Dobie, 2002, p. 151). The figure most often

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[7] Seamus Heaney's "Beowulf: A New Verse Translation" was translated in 1999, whereas Ciaran Carson's the "Táin" was done in 2007.

[8] By "even or equal match" I mean the pairing of contrasting characters, for comparison or competition, which can be perfectly matched as regards skills and power.

associated with the origin of structuralism is the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) advanced the then innovative idea that language is a system with its own internal rules and operations. He named *langue* those rules or structures of language, and he referred *parole* to the individual utterances that operate according to the rules of langue. As Ann Dobie clearly states in her book *Theory into Practice* (2002), Saussure's work also challenged certain key assumptions regarding language and its relationship to the world. For instance, he began to use a synchronic approach to study language rather than the diachronic one, long cherished by the philologists so far. In short, Saussure favoured the process of looking at a language at one particular time, as opposed to its study over a period of time, in order to search for the rules and principles that govern its functions.

Another core concept he redefined was that of *word*. At the time, the attitude towards language was referential. That is, it was assumed that words referred to things because language was supposed to mirror the structure of the world. Saussure, instead of adhering to the mimetic theory of language, proposed that words or signs, as he called them operated by linking a sound image or signifier with a mental image or signified. Meaning is achieved, in this way, because the signifier refers to a concept in the mind and not to some object in the world. Going a step further, Saussure established that the connections between signifier and signified possessed distinctive characteristics. First of all, their relationship is arbitrary and not natural as it comes about through a convention or agreement among users of the language. And finally, we know one sign from another because of the differences among them. Language is, then, differential. Bearing in mind these tenets, Saussure dared to propose a new science called semiology in order to be free to indulge in the study of how meaning is created out of signs. This, in turn, had a great influence on the emergence of semiotics, a science developed, almost concurrently in the United States by Charles Sanders Pierce. This, unlike semiology, continues to grow as a field of research specialized in the application of structuralists' principles to the study of the sign system in general, instead of merely studying a particular instance of parole. That is to say, "a single verbal utterance or particular use of a sign or a set of signs" (Abrams, 1988, p. 238).

Scholars other than Saussure who have also made particularly noteworthy contributions to the structuralist paradigm are Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Vladimir Propp and Jonathan Culler, to name a few. Many may agree, however, that the former, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, was the most influential

exponent of the movement inasmuch as the application of structuralist principles in his own work (Ryan, 2011, p. 438, 439). Levi-Strauss used Saussure's linguistic semiology to analyze a wide variety of myths he collected from all around the world. In view that there were apparently considerable similarities among myths belonging to widely separated ages and cultures, he sought to find the general structure that governed their meanings. In his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1996), Terry Eagleton issues a detailed description of this concern as well as Levis-Strauss' narrative study of the structures and language that constitute "myth":

> Beneath the immense heterogeneity of myths were certain constant universal structures, to which any particular myth could be reduced. Myths were a kind of language: they could be broken down into individual units ('mythemes') which like the basic sound units of language (phonemes) acquired meaning only when combined together in particular ways. The rules which governed such combinations could then be seen as a kind of grammar, a set of relations beneath the surface of the narrative which constituted the myth's true 'meaning'. These relations, Levi-Strauss considered, were inherent in the human mind itself, so that in studying a body of myth we are looking less at its narrative contents than at the universal mental operations which structure it. These mental operations, such as the making of binary oppositions, are in a way what myths are about: they are devices to think with, ways of classifying and organizing reality, and this, rather than the recounting of any particular tale, is their point (p. 90).

Indeed, similarly to what had been proposed by Roman Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss developed Saussure's idea regarding the significance of difference by analysing how opposites make meaning. In Lévi-Strauss' words, "if there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined" (1955, p. 431). Structuralism is well suited to identifying and explaining these links because its main interest is not what meaning is conveyed but *how* (my own emphasis) it is achieved. As Eagleton posits it, structuralists are of the belief "that the individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another" (1996, p. 82). It is in this frame of mind that Lévi-Strauss saw narratives as organizations of paired opposites (binary oppositions) whose contrastive concepts make possible a fuller understanding of

each term, an understanding that was no longer generated either by tying these concepts to a signified or by an individual author's own quirks (Bressler, 1994, p. 63). For instance, we are able to understand night because we comprehend the concept of day. So, there is no need of an outside referent, the structure of the interrelations of any literary piece (langue) imparts its own meaning and interpretations.

Having summarily described the tenets of Structuralism and Lévi-Strauss' structural reading of myths, I will now explore both the *Táin* and *Beowulf* in their light and I will also state the reason why I find it hard to apply structuralism when attempting an even-matching analysis of contrasting characters such as good-evil, hero-antihero, to name some of the binary pairs this thesis will deal with.

If a structuralist interpretation of the *Táin* is called for, the quest for crucial binary pairs and their mutual references will be essential. Based on the legendary tale from early Irish literature, *Tain bo Cuailgne,* Ciaran Carson's translation of the *Táin* centers around the figure of the seventeen-year-old Ulster champion Cú Chulainn who defends Ulster single-handedly against the armies of queen Medb and king Ailill of Connacht. Aided by the kingdoms of Meath, Leinster, Munster and the Ulster's exiles, Medb's primary intention is to steal the stud bull Donn Cuailnge to match her husband Ailill's fertile bull Finnbhennach so as to equal all his possessions. Queen Medb is at pains to find Cú Chulainn a match in order to defeat him before the Ulstermen recover from a curse that causes them to become immobilized. Once she runs out of warriors to face Cú Chulainn on single combat, she deliberately misleads Cú Chulainn's foster-brothers Fer Báeth and Fer Diad to challenge and defeat the Ulster hero. These, having renounced Cú Chulainn's friendship, fall dead in single combat at fords. As for the rest of the Irish army, after breaking the rules of fair fight, it is slain left, right and center. Even though once the curse is over, Medb's army is finally driven back by the Ulstermen, the beaten Connachtmen manage to capture the Brown Bull. Nevertheless, back to Connacht, the Brown Bull gored the White Bull to shreds but his heart bursts and finally, it dies.

The subsequent structuralist reading follows Lévi-Strauss' premise concerning thinking about the world in terms of binary opposites. For him "from the very start, visual perception rests on binary oppositions" something "structuralism recovers and brings to awareness deeper truths that have already been dimly announced" (1992, p. 119). Bearing this in mind, the previous brief description of the epic reveals at first sight three complex binary oppositions upon which the above interpretations are built, with

each binary opposition being connected to and interwoven with the others. The most obvious of the three centers on the relationship between the hero and his enemies- in this case, Cú Chulainn, the unstoppable warrior hero who performs superhuman deeds as opposed to queen Medb and her army made up of the rest of Ireland along with the Ulster outcasts. Part of the way they relate with each other rests heavily on a second binary opposition: fair fight versus dirty fight and betrayal. Since the beginning of the war, Cú Chulainn bravely holds up the army's advance by demanding single combat at fords till the Ulstermen finally snap out of their curse, defeating Medb's army and driving them out of their homeland. In other words, the young hero takes on the duty of protecting his homeland by marching out alone to meet the queen's army. Conversely, his enemies violate the truce in various ways and on different occasions. For instance, the army breaks the rules of fair fight by challenging Cú Chulainn with "a gang of five consisting of two Crúaids, two Calads and a Derethor (Carson, 2007, p. 98). Then, queen Medb, in view that Cú Chulainn has proved practically unbeatable, resorts to military and psychological tactics, stripping away the basic rules of fair play. She and her husband Aillil begin to offer their daughter Finnabair in marriage to a series of brave warriors as reward for killing Cú Chulainn. As the latter end up being all defeated, she applies the same procedure to Cú Chulainn's foster-brothers. Eventually, Finnabair is subsequently offered to Fer Báeth along with the promise of making him king of his people (p. 89). Although Fer Báeth and Cú Chulainn are "perfectly matched as regards age, skill and weight" (p. 89), Fer Báeth is slain by Cú Chulainn with great sorrow, as the former had betrayed their friendship. Right after Fer Báeth, Fer Diad, "Cú Chulainn´s own dear devoted foster brother" (p. 123), accepts the duel not only to gain Finnabair but also to avoid being put to shame by Medb's poets and satirists. Clad in impenetrable hornskins, Fer Diad is almost invulnerable, but Cú Chulainn slaughters him with his spear, Gáe Bolga, a weapon which inflicted wounds from which nobody ever recovered. After this combat, Cú Chulainn grows extremely sad and weary:

> He could have cut off my arm,
> my leg, and still I would mourn
> Fer Diad of the steeds, who was
> part of me, and breathes no more (p. 153).

The third opposition that arises in the *Táin* has to do with the tension between good and evil. As this binary will be fully discussed along with the good/evil pair in *Beowulf*, I will now delve into its analysis according to the structuralist frame of mind. It should be noted that the subsequent analysis will be devoid of a very detailed description of the epic itself. This is not the case, however, with the *Táin*, which I consider to be less widely known than the Anglo-Saxon poem par excellence.

So, a structuralist reading of Beowulf is supposed to trace those energetic clashes of powerful opposites throughout the poem. It might be assumed at first glance that since the beginning of the poem, Beowulf and Grendel stand as the major contrastive pair. Then, as it develops both Grendel's mother and the dragon become part of the group of monsters, the antiheroes the privileged character thoroughly defeats. Since the outset Beowulf epitomizes the legendary hero, the ideal king warrior whose last victory costs him his life (Heaney, 1999, p. 88). The previous pair, in turn, brings to light, as in the case of the *Táin*, the hero's true bravery as opposed to the antiheroes' betrayal. On the one hand, it could be said that Beowulf unquestionably displays undying loyalty towards the Danes and his own kinsmen, the Geats. In his youth, when Beowulf was a fettered young warrior acting under the orders of king Hygelac, he resolutely came to the aid of the Danish king Hrothgar, whose hall was first raided each night by the hideous man-eating monster Grendel and assaulted by Grendel's angry mother after Beowulf had slain her monstrous son. Then, as the elder king of the Geats, Beowulf remains brave and always honorable and loyal to his people, which he protects from the menace of a fire-breathing snakelike dragon by successfully killing in spite of finding his own death in the process. All in all, as Bloom posits in *Modern Critical Interpretations on Beowulf* (2007),

> It has been observed repeatedly, and by no one more acutely than by Klaeber, that Beowulf is a hero of finer mold and nobler spirit than other champions of Germanic story; that he lives and dies as the selfless protector of those who suffer beyond their power to resist or to bear (p. 11).

On the other hand, it seems likely that the monsters may be accused of disloyalty by structuralist critics' eyes. In view that Grendel and Grendel's mother descend from the wicked line of the accursed Cain (Heaney, 1999, p. 6), their merciless slaughters could reasonably be called acts of high treason against mankind as a whole, especially if

their cannibalistic acts are to be condemned as fratricide. As far as the dragon is concerned, even when it does not seem to share the human condition at all, Bloom is of the opinion that "there is something deeply human about the 'monsters' (included the dragon). All are given human attributes at some stage" (2007, p. 92). He concludes by stating that in the same way as Grendel`s mother, the dragon behaves humanly inasmuch they are the initially aggrieved party who suffer some sort of loss. It is only after Grendel's mother loses her son that she raids to Heorot and, following the same fashion, the dragon wreaks utter havoc after being the victim of an "unprovoked theft of treasure from the barrow by an unwelcome visitor" (Bloom, 2007, p. 92).

In sum, the conclusions arising out of the parallelism between the binary oppositions found both in the *Táin* and *Beowulf* could be rendered as follows: good/divine versus evil/demonic. It hardly needs pointing out that anti-heroes will be regarded as the embodiment of evil, either hideous, human or entirely demonic; and the heroes as representations of good and even as semi-gods. As it can be easily observed, one of the most obvious resemblances between the foes of both epics is their wicked origin as Cain's descendants, be it because they are depicted directly as Adam and Eve' sons, as it clearly occurs in the *Táin*, or because they are both "malignant by nature" (Heaney, 1999, p. 7) and physically or psychologically related to Cain's clan, as it is the case of the monsters in *Beowulf*. In turn, this resemblance gives rise to a further analogy between the antiheroes: they are depicted as traitorous outcasts unworthy of belonging to any particular community because they have betrayed their race on the person of the Danish or the Ulstermen. In this respect, not only Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon, but also the Ulster exiles are depicted as characters who have been "thrown out of the community as punishment for a crime against it" (Dobie, 2002, p. 64). Particularly related to the postmodern theme of otherness, the outcast character stands out as one of the many different archetypes considered central to mythological criticism (Dobie, 2002, p. 64). In both the *Táin* and *Beowulf*, the foes are portrayed in sharp contrast to what are deemed to be the established norms and the social groups (Wolfreys, 2001, p. 305). In this first regard, while heroes emerge as the 'standard', the antiheroes stand out as those doomed beings who are unable to meet that norm. Hence, the outcasts in *Beowulf* are seen as God-cursed evil-minded creatures condemned for having slaughtered their brothers. For instance:

Grendel was the name of this grim demon

haunting the marches, marauding round the heath

and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time

in misery among the banished monsters,

Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed

and condemned as outcasts (Heaney, 1999, p. 6).

With reference to communal and kinship ties, these outcasts are eventually judged unworthy to belong to a particular community because they are accused of betraying their race on the person of the Danish or the Ulstermen. In the case of *Beowulf*'s monsters, the Almighty made them anathema, for having committed murder, by cursing and banishing them from society (Heaney, 1999, p. 6). In the *Táin*, the Ulster exiles, led by Fergus Mac Róichare, are perceived as undesirable aliens by their own comrades, the Ulstermen. This is clearly the case of Fergus, the former king of Ulster:

He had been king of Ulster for seven years, and when the sons of Usnech had been put to death despite his guarantees, he had left the province, and had been seventeen years away from Ulster in enmity and exile (Carson, 2007, p. 24).

Quite the contrary, as for the good-natured heroes, Cú Chulainn and Beowulf appear as both divine and human. It could not be otherwise as, according to Frye, "the hero is somewhere between the divine and the all too human" (1957, p. 208). Even though Cú Chulainn's parents are human: Dechtire and Sualdam Mac Róich, an eighth-century tale called 'the Beggeting of Cú Chulainn' claims that Cú Chulainn is the son of the Celtic sun god Lug (Carson, 2007, p. 215). Conversely, Beowulf may differ from Cú Chulainn in that in spite of being depicted as a semi-god he is fully human. Nevertheless, this fact does not deprive him of the fact that "his God sent strength and his outstanding natural powers" (Heaney, 1999, p. 69). These unearthly mighty powers go hand in hand with their duty to their people. Driven by the possession of their supernatural powers, the heroes decided to risk their lives to protect their communities and comrades.

1.2. Post Structuralism and the reversal of the Hero/Antihero binary

> The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by this process of retracing, the element in the system studied which is alogical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building
>
> Hillis Miller

Known interchangeably as Post-structuralism or Deconstruction, this not fully developed critical movement, school or even philosophy emerged, on a broader scale, at the end of twentieth century as an attempt to call for a reevaluation of the world as static, absolute and unified and, in a narrow sense, as an effort to overturn the fundamental dualisms of its predecessor "structuralism". In fact, Deconstruction, not only extended and incorporated the assumptions of Structuralism in their critical method, but more importantly it undermined and challenged "structuralist ideas about the nature of the sign, the importance of difference, and the role of language in mediating experience" (Dobie, 2002, p. 157). In plain words, deconstruction's founder, Jacques Derrida, stated that a signifier is not restricted to a single mental concept. Quite the contrary, he was of the idea that this could point to a myriad of different signifieds. So, in deconstructive terms, a language is a system based on differences triggered by an ongoing play of signifieds that never come to rest and which bring about a multitude of possibilities for meaning. Derrida coined the word "différance" by combining the French words "to defer" and "to differ" to suggest that meaning can be both postponed and dissimilar at the same time. Derrida, nevertheless, went a step further by stating that the reason why meaning is unstable relies on the fact that there is no transcendental signified. Echoing his precursors Nietzsche and Heidegger, Derrida denied the existence of an ultimate reality, end or truth from which all knowledge proceeds. This, eventually, led to the assumption that if there were no centering principle, accepted meaning could be easily displaced and decentered. Borrowing the concept of binary opposition from the structuralists, Derrida pointed out that the first member of each pair has been traditionally held to be superior over the other (Dobie, 2002, p. 160). Bearing this in mind, post-structuralists developed a deconstructive strategy which consisted in overturning those conventionally accepted hierarchies:

'Deconstruction' is the name given to the critical operation by which such oppositions can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning (Eagleton, 1996, p. 115).

In fact, by reversing the oppositions found in texts (high/low, light/dark, nature/culture and so on), Deconstruction tries to expose there is no logic in their working, something structuralists posit as perfectly possible. Post-structuralists, on the other hand, are of the idea that in order to hold themselves in place, these contrastive pairs sometimes betray into inverting/reversing or collapsing themselves and thus go against their own ruling systems of logic or even ideology.

The tactic of deconstructive criticism, when it comes to the analysis of literary pieces, consists in dismantling the oppositions that govern the text as a whole and which contradict themselves. On occasions they may overlap, share the same nature or even be not contrasting at all as they were supposed to be at first glance. Although there is much to be said about Deconstruction, as a general rule, its main goal is to try to open new ways of thinking and knowing and as far as texts are concerned, it seeks to give readers a new way to read them (Dobie, 2002, p. 162).

After the previous succinct description, I will try to sketch out the tasks a deconstructive critic would carry out to analyse both the *Táin* and *Beowulf* in the light of the deconstructive interpretive approach. First of all and generally speaking, a deconstructive reading seeks to show that a text lacks the basis for presenting meaning and that what abounds is a series of conflicting significations. For the present analysis, however, I will follow Derrida's idea of "double meaning". By this deconstructive process, he meant approaching a text in the traditional structural way in order to have a basis to later deconstruct its views or hierarchies. So, if we consider the above mentioned epics, the same dichotomies discussed under structuralism would now surface, namely, the tensions between hero and antiheroes, loyalty and betrayal; good/divine and evil/demon. On a second reading, a deconstructive critic would question those binaries as neither natural nor self-evident in an effort to look for contradictory or incompatible meanings. Hence, when applying this procedure to the contrastive pairs found in the *Táin* and in *Beowulf*, a post-structuralist critic would seek to determine which the privileged member of each pair is by asking what the text deems as worthy of full acceptance. It follows, then, that a deconstructive critic would, for instance, call into question the heroism, loyalty and goodness of Cú Chulainn and

Beowulf while granting special privileges to the "unprivileged" members of the binaries. Then, the discussion might take a step further when these binary oppositions are looked at carefully in order to enter the epics deconstructively. To put it otherwise, because they are considered arbitrary and illusory, they are actually turned upside down. For instance, to deconstruct the image of the hero, who has been always reckoned as "the embodiment of the superior terms of the dualism as he adventures forth on his quest and encounters evil monsters, dragons, witches and their like" (Hourihan, 1997, p. 2), requires his substitution or "supplementation", to quote Derrida. Or, to put it otherwise, the hero, despite appearing complete in itself is actually derived from its counterpart. "We don't deny the worth of the hero by accepting Grendel and the Dragon" (Tolkien, 1984, p. 8), quite the contrary, it is the encounter and the defeating of evil creatures what grant the warrior the reputation for bravery and establishes him fully as a hero. According to Heaney "the poet may need them as figures who do the devil's work, but the poem needs them more as figures who call up and show off Beowulf's physical strength and his super gifts as a warrior" (1999, p. xviii). To make his reputation for heroism, Beowulf had no other choice but to struggle against various monstrous foes. Moreover, as Bloom claims in his *Modern Critical Interpretations on Beowulf* (2007),

> the level of difficulty experienced by Beowulf increases with each battle; Grendel causes comparatively few problems, whilst his mother, whom we are explicitly told had less terrible might very nearly succeeds in killing Beowulf, and the dragon finally proves fatal (p. 100).

This means that the monsters in Beowulf are gradually brought to focus as the poem approaches its end. In fact, it seems as if the figure of the antihero rises considerably as that of the hero decreases dramatically. In fact, Tolkien's critical essay treats the hero in Beowulf with increasing severity when stating that "Beowulf is not, then, the hero of a heroic lay, precisely" as he merely desires fame and good report (1984, p. 13). Furthermore, not even Hrothgar's discourse on the danger of power (Heaney, 1999, p. 56) could prevent Beowulf from becoming corrupted by limitless power and thirst for gold.

Turning to the *Táin*'s antiheroes, the same could be said about the enemies Queen Medb has appointed to fight against Cú Chulainn. The fact that "each night a

hero was sent for; each night the offer was made; and each hero in turned was killed" (Carson, 2007, p. 91) allows Cú Chulainn to display his magnificent guerrilla tactics in order to win victory and fame. Nevertheless, a deconstructionist might take the discussion a step further by showing that the hero's undying loyalty towards their comrades was nothing but sheer vanity and a chance to win respect and posthumous fame. The antiheroes, conversely, might be put on a pedestal. Their betrayal is likely to be treated as an apparent treason. In the case of Cú Chulainn's foster brothers and the Ulster's exiles, it may be said that they do not enter into combat against him directly (except for those that Queen Medb cunningly deceives), they do fight against the Ulstermen instead. Thus, a deconstructionist critic would less likely ponder Fergus Mec Roth, the former king of Ulster, and the three hundred Ulster Warriors dangerous foes at all, especially if the fact that they were unfairly expelled from Ulster and threatened with imprisonment or death upon return were to be considered.

As for the monsters in *Beowulf*, a post-structuralist critic may focus on a series of possible readings extremely favourable to the monsters. For instance, Grendel might be depicted as a lone outcast who suffers from deep bitterness about being excluded and who longs to be reinstated in society. Hence, it might be hard to blame him for his aggressiveness as it appears to be fueled by loneliness, jealousy and human rejection. Having attacked Heorot just once, Grendel's mother might also be treated sympathetically as she does it out of sorrow and grief to avenge the murder of her beloved son. As for the dragon, it may also be held in the high regards as there were human motives the ones which had driven him to burn the Geats' homes and lands. What is more, his outrage may be even related as a way of coping with the traumatic effects of the robbery he endured (Heaney, 1999, p. 72).

What now remains is to de-center the last binary proposed in the previous structuralist analysis, which, in my opinion, could well summarize all the possible oppositions a structuralist critic may think about. To put it differently, the good or divine over what is deemed evil or demonic. Moving towards the study of the margins of the epics, a deconstructionist critic would want to prove that there is not a single central site for meaning and that neither heroes are too holy nor antiheroes too demonic.

For instance, what brings both heroes and antiheroes' full wrath could well trigger a myriad of alternative interpretations. First of all, it is important to bear in mind that both heroes undergo a process through which they become acclaimed idols. For instance, in the case of Cú Chulainn, it is acknowledged that "at the beginning of the

Táin, Cú Chulain is a shadowy figure" (Carson, 2007, p.1). In the same vein, King Hygelac and his kinsmen were, from the scratch, openly skeptical about Beowulf's worth and power:

> He had been poorly regarded
>
> for a long time, was taken by the Geats
>
> for less than he was worth: and their lord too
>
> had never much esteemed him in the mead-hall.
>
> They firmly believed that he lacked force,
>
> that the prince was a weakling; but presently
>
> every affront to his deserving was reversed
>
> (Heaney, 1999, p. 69-70).

It follows then that these heroes had to struggle in order to establish (and restore) their tarnished reputation. Since childhood Cú Chulainn fiercely fought so as to outweigh the ill-formed opinion his comrades held of him. For instance, at the age of seven, he fought off one hundred and fifty boy warriors to gain entrance to his uncle's court (Carson 38). As in the case of Beowulf, Tolkien's critical essay treats him with increasing asperity when stating that "Beowulf is not, then, the hero of a heroic lay, precisely" as he merely desires fame and good report (Tolkien, 1984, p. 13). In other words, to win glory and to prove his worth became the chief purpose of Beowulf's existence. It was the defeat of Grendel what earned him posthumous fame: "you have made yourself / immortal by your glorious action" (Heaney, 1999, p. 30). Last but not least, Beowulf is said to be enraged with battle fury and "inspired again / by the thought of glory" (Heaney, 1999, p. 84) when striking the dragon's skull. It can therefore be assumed, from a poststructuralist perspective, that the rage which invested the heroes with exceptional warlike powers was inspired by their lust for fame and reputation and not by thoughts of comradeship. Conversely, even though it might appear quite difficult to cast a benevolent light on the antiheroes, a decontructivist critic may make the point that their acts are driven by motives a lot more human than mere greediness and unruling desire for power. The fact that the foes of both epics resort to violence, as the only way available to them to handle feelings of fear, rejection, envy and hatred adds a great deal to the favouring of the antiheroes over their heroic counterparts according to the post-structuralist point of view.

Although the treatment of the female figure, as the unfavoured reversed term of the man/woman binary, is beyond the scope of this study, it seems interesting to note the considerable influence the women warriors of these epics draw upon males in general. While Beowulf can hardly manage to slay Grendel`s mother (Heaney, 1999, p. 51), Cú Chulainn does not dare to take Medb's life when he gets the chance (Carson, 2007, p. 206) nor does he come out unharmed after facing the Morrigan (p. 94). Thus, the undeniable effect women archetypes have on heroes and villains (if Medb's tactics to deceive the Men of Ireland and the Ulster exiles are to be considered) seems to be, in my opinion, a suitable arena for further research, especially if what heretofore has been deemed marginal is made central to provide a new view of the values and beliefs that underline female archetypes (Dobie, 2002, p. 164).

The present analysis can be concluded that by overturning the centered meanings derived from structuralism, deconstruction seeks to open the Western tradition to the possibility of locating contingent meanings where they have been neglected. The post-structuralist interpretations provided so far are by no means definite or even widely accepted. They are just a few out of many possible readings which can always be displaced by a subsequent one.

1.3   Archetypal Criticism and the Archeypal Hero and Antihero

"I suppose all art, all literature, must respond in some way, however obliquely, to whatever is happening in the larger world (…) The old myths and the old stories are still relevant, and there is little new under the sun"

Ciaran Carson

Based on the previous structuralist and post-structuralist descriptions and analysis, I will focus now on Archetypal or Mythological Criticism to show the considerable potential it may provide to an even examination of heroic and antiheroic archetypes. As the title of this thesis well indicates, my aim is to study this dichotomy in the *Táin* and *Beowulf* neither favouring the traditionally privileged member nor reversing the opposition so that the marginal component achieves centrality. Quite the contrary, taking into account Northrop Frye's "new poetics" or Archetypal Literary Criticism, it is my intention to analyse the structure of the poems following a parallel

analysis of the myth quests of heroes and villains alike, in which they are treated equally in every respect, and to provide insights regarding the social environment these pieces of literature depict. That is to say, pointing those values and beliefs which are granted universal validity by the collective unconscious at different epochs. And to show, also, the behavioral patterns that usually go unnoticed unless they are the focus of some sort of psychological or mythological paradigm.

Originally employed in the discipline of anthropology by Sir James George Frazer during the turn of the nineteenth century, archetypal criticism has long been associated with the analysis of literature, art, and popular culture. Nearly two decades later, the psychiatrist C. G. Jung advanced the study of archetypes. Like his teacher, Sigmund Freud, he believed that our unconscious mind powerfully directs much of our behaviour on a personal and collective scale. Then, archetypal criticism moved away from psychology and into the sphere of literary analysis thanks to Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934) and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Frye was primarily concerned with the recurrence of universally familiar characters, landscapes, and narrative structures within genre and text. Many years later, Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and *The Masks of God* (1968), opened archetypal analysis and comparative mythology to larger audiences inside and outside the academia and maintained that almost all mythical heroes (not antiheroes), regardless of the time and culture in which they live, follow at least one of the many stages Campbell describes in the latter book.

The theoretical framework I will basically make use of to develop this piece of research is the one proposed by Northrop Frye. According to Frye "criticism will always have two aspects, one turned toward the structure of literature and one turned toward the other cultural phenomena that form the social environment of literature" (1971, p. 25). He also claims that "a purely structural approach has the same limitation in criticism that it has in biology" as it does not develop "any explanation of how the structure came to be what it was and what its nearest relatives are. Structural analysis brings rhetoric back to criticism, but we need a new poetics as well" (1951, p. 503, 504). This "new poetics" he proposes came to be known as Archetypal Criticism.

Among Frye's concepts, and in order to achieve an even analysis of heroes and antiheroes, I will consider what he deems the missing organizing principle of criticism: the quest myth, which according to Jung, is both a psychological and physical journey pursued by the hero (Dobie, 2002, p. 66), which, to serve the purpose of this thesis will

be also applied to the villain. Then, I will make use of Frye's four mythoi of romance, comedy, tragedy and irony along with their corresponding seasons and natural cycles as the four main phases of the myth quests of heroes and antiheroes (1957, p. 192).

I will also take into consideration one of Jung's most important contributions to archetypal criticism, that is the idea that human culture, history, and consciousness share an inherited body of universal myths, beliefs and symbols. Jung took this theory a step further by positing "the existence of a collective unconscious, a domain of symbols an archetypes that can be accessed only indirectly by means of the personal unconscious and that can exert a sublime and potentially dangerous influence on social groups" (2011, p. 42). Hence, if the evolution of a particular archetype within a changing literary or social context is followed, significant insights into the changing values and ideologies of a given community could be brought to light through the collective unconscious that crafted them.

Apart from the use I will make of Frye and Jung's ideas, I will also consider the work of Peter O'Connor, a psychologist who, in his book *Beyond The Mist: What Irish Mythology Can Teach Us About Ourselves* (2002), explores the possibility of revisiting ancient mythological sources to discover "the nourishment" that lies in their archetypes for handling universal themes and conflicts, an issue that is, in my opinion, closely related to Frye's outward perspective of literature.

Chapter II: The case of Even Matches of Heroic and Antiheroic Archetypes pursuing a Quest Myth in *Beowulf* and the *Táin*: Inward perspective of Archetypal Criticism

As stated in the previous chapter, the following analysis of the case of even matches in *Beowulf* and the *Táin* will focus on the four distinguishable aspects of the Quest-Myth, which, according to Frye, is the central unifying myth. Far from being conflictive, the literary genres, seasonal cycles and human rituals harmonically intermingle with each other composing the entire body of literature called Monomyth (Dobie, 2002, p. 67). Thus, the four mythoi of romance, comedy, tragedy and irony go along with their corresponding seasons –summer, autumn, winter and spring- and natural cycles –birth-struggle-disappearance and recognition (Frye, 1957, p. 192). Even though it is not the intention of this thesis to carry out an in-depth analysis of each of the six phases that make up each mythos, their central theme, which sometimes overlaps with some of the phases, will be regarded as the backbone of each of the four

abovementioned aspects. Hence, it follows that the archetypal theme of romance/summer is conflict, of tragedy/autumn is death-struggle, of irony/winter is disappearance and of comedy/spring is recognition. The latter aspect will be fully developed in Chapter III.

Given that "equal matching" stands as the key issue of this study, this chapter will be developed by carrying out a comparative analysis between opposed archetypes, first in the *Táin* and then in *Beowulf*. The choice is simply grounded on chronological basis. It is thought that the events narrated in the *Táin* took place in Ireland approximately around 500 B.C., though the manuscript dates from the beginning of the twelfth century (Squire, 1909, p. 55). Whereas the action of the Anglo-Saxon poem seems to have occurred around 500 A. D. and it may have been written during the first half of the eighth century (Bloom, 2008, p. 7). By the same token, the fact that this analysis deals first with heroic archetypes' myth quests, and then with those of the antiheroes, is by no means intentionally based on structuralism. These things considered, I will now delve into Archetypal analysis with passion.

Chapter II: The case of Even Matches of Heroic and Antiheroic Archetypes pursuing a Quest Myth in Beowulf and the Táin: Inward perspective of Archetypal Criticism

2.2. *Cú Chulainn versus the Connaccht Army: The Men of Ireland and Ulster Exiles*

2.1.1 The Táin: The mythos of conflict and the issue of matchups

Being conflict the archetypal theme of romance and summer, the following analysis will center on the major bloody encounters in the myth quests of the heroic and antiheroic matchups of the *Táin*. Conflict, apart from consisting of a sequence of marvelous adventures, also focuses on mysterious births and upbringing. As it can be seen both in the *Táin* and *Beowulf* there seems to be a correlation between even-matches

of opposing characters and common origin. Cú Chulainn and most of the Ulster exiles of the Connaccht Army are "perfectly matched as regards age, skill, weight" (Carson, 2007, p. 89) as well as "well met" (p. 128) due to the fact that both Fer Báeth and Fer Diad are Cú Chulainn's foster-brothers: "Cú Chualinn is my foster-brother. Our lives are sworn to each other" (p. 89), "Two hearts that beat as one, we were comrades in the woods" (p. 141). These things considered, it seems important to bear in mind that the main conflicting driving force that triggers the full-scale war described in the *Táin* springs from the pillow-talk between the Connacht queen Medb and her husband Ailill, concerning who was wealthier and superior. After comparing their respective possessions, they find out that the only thing that distinguishes them is Ailill's fertile bull Finnbhennach. To match her husband´s prized White-horned bull, Medb decides to get the equally potent Brown Bull of Cúailnge, the Donn Cúailnge from Ulster. Unable to negotiate with the bull's owner, she raises an army to take the bull by force. Apart from including Connachtmen, Medb cunningly manipulated the Ulster exiles, as well as the kingdoms of Meath, Munster and Leinster, into joining her army to capture the Brown Bull. The invasion is opposed only by the teenage Ulster hero Cú Chulainn, who holds up the army's advance by demanding single combat at fords. Queen Medb is at pains to find Cú Chulainn's match so as to defeat the champion before the Ulstermen recover from a curse that causes them to become immobilized. "Each night a hero was sent for; each night the offer was made; and each hero in turn was killed" (p. 91). Before running out of men to take Cú Chulainn on, Medb bribed two Ulster exiles, paralleled with Cú Chulainn in strength and schooling, by offering them her daughter and by making them kings of their people. This is the moment when Fer Báeth and Fer Diad, two equally magnificent and compelling characters, become Cu Chulainn's deadly enemies. Despite the fact that "Cú Chulainn appears to Fer Báeth as a foster-brother, brought up by the same foster-mother Scáthach" (Carson, 2007, p. 89), the latter renounces his friendship with Cú Chulainn and fights against him till falling dead in single combat. Then, so as to force Fer Diad fight the champion, Medb applies a different tactic. Apart from the proposals above mentioned, she ridicules Fer Diad and he accepts to fight his comrade. Once again although Cú Chulainn tries to persuade Fer Diad to step back, Fer Diad gravely tells him to "forget [their] brotherhood" (p. 142). Thus, on the fourth day of fierce struggle, and after having used different weapons and

guerrilla tactics, such as martial arts, spears, broad swords and ford combat, Fer Diad is brutally killed by Cú Chulainn's gae bolga[8].

2.1.2 The Táin: The mythos of death-struggle

Now, I will turn to the realm of Frye's catastrophe or fall. This second quest theme stands as a dominant trait shared by the majority of the epic heroes, which prevails over their destiny and fate. And Cú Chulainn does not seem to be the exception to the rule. Indeed, the Ulster hero's excess of pride and lust for renown seem to have brought about his progressive downfall. Since his childhood, Cú Chulainn ambitioned to "achieve great fame" at the expense of having a quite short life: "so long as I'm famous I'm happy to live just one day on earth" (Carson, 2007, p. 43). Then, during his youth and after contorting and turning himself into an unrecognizably horrible and grotesque thing to avenge young dead warriors, he "displayed his elegant figure to matrons and maidens and young girls and poets and practitioners of verse (...) to let them see his true beauty" (p. 111) while "he held nine human heads in one hand, ten in the other" (p. 112). As the fall of the tragic hero stresses humanity's moral weaknesses and its capacity for evil, "it is usually easier to make him a villainous hero" (Frye, 1957, p. 222). Conversely, if "the villain is part of the hero himself" (Frye, 1957, p. 208) it may not seem surprising that both Fer Báeth and Fer Diad faced Cú Chulainn out of thirst for reward and fear of being labelled cowards (Carson, 2007, p. 89, 123, 131). Moreover, it could be said that, apart from acting out of sheer vanity, the fact that they betrayed Cú Chulainn by renouncing his friendship adds a great deal to the understanding of their deadly downfall. With respect to Medb's army, the breaking of the rules of fair war seems to have triggered its misfortune: "He killed the lot, for they'd broken the rules of fair fight" (Carson, 2007, p. 56).

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[8] The *gae bolga* was a "special weapon unique to Cú Chulainn, given to him by the female warrior Scáthach, his tutor in the martial arts" (Carson, 2007, p. 212) which "made a single wound when it entered a man's body, it opened up into thirty barbs, and couldn't be taken from the body without the flesh being cut away from it" (p. 151).

2.1.3 The Táin: The mythos of disappearance

The third aspect of the quest myth, in Frye's words, deals with disappearance, "the sense that heroism is absent and disorganized, foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world" (1957, p.192). The turning wheel of fate in the form of flaw has triggered the hero's isolation and imminent death, which is the center of tragedy and betrayal (Frye, 1957, p. 208). Since his bloody battle against Fer Diad, Cú Chulainn became not only extremely weary: "My everlasting sorrow / that I live while you are dead" (p. 154), but also badly wounded with "wounds that almost finished him off" (p. 177). The latter proved him unfit to face the men of Ireland once the Ulstermen had recovered from the curse. Moreover, and according to a later story, after offending Morrigan, the goddess of death and battles, Cú Chulainn was summoned to fight in spite of being still fatally ill. On the way to battle, he saw a vision of a woman washing the body and weapons of a dead warrior. Recognizing the warrior as himself, he fought bravely and when feeling too weak to stand, he tied himself to a pillar so that he could die fighting on his feet. As for the Ulster exiles and the Irish warriors, there also seems to have been some sort of prelude concerning their impending doom. Indeed, Cú Chulainn once prophesized their forthcoming defeat on account of previous battles: "as for all those who came here to fight me, they got no gain or profit from it" neither on earth nor in the other world "for they all died at my hands" (Carson, 2007, p. 140).

2.1.4 The Táin: The mythos of recognition

Frye's last theme deals with the topic of rebirth or recognition. Although Cú Chulainn does not meet death in Carson's the *Táin*, he is once "made to rise, as Christ at Easter, after a sleep of three days" by her god-father Lug when falling nearly mortally wounded after the Irishmen broke the rules of fair fight (Carson, 2007, p. xviii). Nonetheless, if other isolated sagas external to the *Táin* are to be considered, it follows that after Cú Chulainn has been killed, and his head and sword-hand cut off by the enemy, Ulster wept bitterly for the loss of its true champion. Cú Chulainn's great deeds

in defense of his people and the province of Ulster (p. 86) granted him widespread recognition. His good heart and his loyalty to his kinsmen also earned him enduring respect. Furthermore, and equally importantly, are his enemies' open acknowledgement of both his worth and magnificence: "give praise where praise is due / He strikes the battle-road / like water of a cliff - / or a thunderbolt" (p. 136). Even Fergus, the exiled former king of Ulster and Cú Chulainn's foster-father, frankly admitted that there's no one of his generation to match him for built, for gear, for fearsome looks or sweetness of expression; none to match his splendid form and voice, his strength, his striking-power and battle-bravery (p. 36).

In the case of the non-heroic archetypes of the *Táin*, as it has been observed in the previous quest phase, they seem to have disappeared not only physically speaking but also in the memories of their peoples: owing to their lack of legendary reputation or because their deeds were deemed unworthy of praise.

2.2. Beowulf versus the Monsters: Grendel, Grendel's Mother and the Dragon

2.2.1 Beowulf: The mythos of conflict and the issue of matchups

Turning now to the case of equal match of opposing archetypes in *Beowulf*, I will begin with the issue of parallel origin as I reckon it the thread that runs through both epics, and which, in turn, may add a great deal to the understanding of conflict as the result of the encounter of contrasting matchups of shared origin.

Since the beginning of the poem, it is made explicit that "the King of Glory had posted a lookout who was a *match* (my own emphasis) for Grendel, a guard against monsters, special protection to the Danish king" (Heaney, 1999, p. 22). Moreover, Beowulf's own words to the Danes emphasize the fact that he is fully aware of the mission he is about to undertake: "Now I mean to be a *match* (my own emphasis) for Grendel, / settle the outcome in single combat" (p. 15). Thus, what makes Beowulf and his antagonists suitable matchups may lie in the fact that, in spite of bearing contrasting

features, they share the same nature and possibly a common origin. Not only Beowulf is undoubtedly depicted as "a man, with the Lord's assistance" (Heaney, 1999, p. 30), but also "the monster Grendel is described as one of Cain's descendants":

> Grendel was the name of this grim demon
>
> haunting the marches, marauding round the heath
>
> and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time
>
> in misery among banished monsters,
>
> Cain's clan, whom the creator had outlawed
>
> and condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel
>
> the Eternal Lord had exacted a price:
>
> Cain got no good for committing that murder (p. 6).

Furthermore, to dispel any doubt, the *Beowulf* poet made Grendel's humanity clear by describing him as "the bane of the human grace roamed forth, / Hunting for pray in the high hall" (p. 24). Being Grendel his monstrous mother's legitimate son, the fact that she also descends from Cain, and thus from the human race, is beyond doubt:

> The threat to this superb people [the Danes, the Ingwins and the Bright-Danes] comes from within their borders, from the ashes beyond the pale, from the bottom of the haunted mere where 'Cain's clan' in the shape of Grendel and his troll-dam, trawl and scavenge and bide their time (p. xvi).

By the same criterion, it could be pointed out that history repeats itself. Like Cain in the biblical account, Grendel and his mother are also slaughtering their Almighty father's sons by murdering the Danes. What now remains to be shown is the dragon's origin. As it can be deduced from the following lines, the dragon seems also to be part and parcel of Cain's clan, one of the cast out monsters of ancient times:

> He had dwelt for a time
>
> in misery among banished monsters,
>
> Cain's clan, whom the creator had outlawed
>
> and condemned as outcasts (p. 6).

After having briefly examined these characters' true origin of birth, it would be possible to attain a more balanced picture of conflict, as a coin with two contrasting sides, so as to deal with it by considering Frye's theoretical accounts. Conflict, as the archetypal theme of romance and summer, revolves around the crucial struggle or major quest in which either the hero, his foe, or both, may perish in battle.

As it has been done with Cú Chulainn, I will begin by sketching Beowulf's outstanding exploits and combats which occurred previously to what I deem the hero`s major adventure: Beowulf's ultimate encounter with the fire-breathing dragon. As the second story opens, readers get to know about Beowulf and Grendel's long combat. Beowulf mortally wounds Grendel by ripping his arm off. He flees in despair and dies in his cave under the swamp. Seeking vengeance for her son's death, Grendel's mother descends on Heorot and in a frenzy of grief and rage she kills Aeschere, Hrothgar's trusted adviser. Beowulf is tasked with destroying her, and ventures into her lake-based home. Grendel's mother grabs and pulls him into the cave. The two wrestle, and Grendel's mother almost kills Beowulf because Hrunting, the sword, does not hurt her. However, his armor does save him. Providentially, he sees a giant sword hanging on the wall of the cave. Once he grabs it, he cuts off the monster's head with one mighty swing. After having defeated Grendel and his mother, Beowulf and the Geats go home to Sweden where Beowulf eventually becomes king. After wisely ruling for fifty years, a rampaging dragon begins raiding throughout his kingdom after a fugitive steals a single gold-plated cup from his treasure hoard. Though Beowulf is now an old warrior, he decides to fight the dragon even if he might perish in the attempt. After finding the dragon's cave, Beowulf insists on fighting it alone. Early in the battle, Beowulf discovers that his iron shield will not protect him against the dragon's fiery breath. Just as Beowulf is about to be killed, Wiglaf, one of his youngest kinsman, rushes to his aid. Nevertheless, in spite of being deadly wounded himself, it was Beowulf who summoned the last of his strength to deliver the fatal blow to the dragon. In his death-speech, Beowulf chooses Wiglaf as his successor, leaving to him the dragon's treasure hoard, the kingship and the instructions as to the building of his funeral mound.

2.2.2 Beowulf: The mythos of death-struggle

Grounded on Aristotle's concept of fatal flaw, Frye's catastrophe deals with "crossing the boundary line between innocence to experience which is also the direction in which the hero [and antihero] falls" (1957, p. 221). Although there exist a myriad of causes that could be attributed to have triggered Beowulf's downfall, particular attention will be given to the issues of God's assistance, boastfulness, Hrothgar's pieces of advice and loyalty to one's kinsmen. Let us, then, begin by looking at Beowulf as the heroic archetype of the poem.

At the beginning of the story, Beowulf repeatedly acknowledges God as his protector and as the source of his outstanding natural powers: "Beowulf was mindful of his mighty strength, / the wondrous gifts God had showed on him: / he relied for help on the Lord of All, / on his care and favour" (p. 42). In his struggle with Grendel, for instance, he sought God's assistance by praying hard enough: "the Divine Lord in His wisdom grant the glory of victory to whichever side He sees fit" (p. 23). Hence, right after Grendel's defeat, the *Beowulf* poet makes it clear that "Beowulf was granted the glory of winning" by God (p. 27). Hrothgar, too, paid his full regards to the Almighty by publicly declaring that "by not a man with Lord's assistance, has accomplished something none of us could manage before now for all our efforts" (p. 30). Although Beowulf did seek God's assistance in his struggle with Grendel, once the fight was over and he had managed to emerge victorious, he not only easily forgot divine aid, but also claimed that God had not been of much help. In fact, for Beowulf, God has proved to be a hindrance to stop Grendel "slipping" his "hold" as He, the Almighty, had allowed the monster to escape (p. 31). These things considered, it could be said that instead of merely wanting to "avenge dear ones", Beowulf seems to have beaten these monsters with the sole purpose of winning "glory before death" (p. 46). In Hrothgar's words, to make himself "immortal" by his "glorious action" (p. 31). So, by the time Beowulf is about to face Grendel's mother, he is already convinced that he will be able to accomplish the feat without God's assistance just by trusting blindly in his strength and weapon: "with Hrunting I shall win glory or die" (p. 49). Only when Beowulf managed to cut off Grendel's head in order to lift it up as a winning trophy at Heorot, he was forced to admit that "although Hrunting is hard-edged (…) the Lord of Men allowed me to behold an ancient sword on the wall" (p. 54). As the story proceeds, Beowulf's conception of God as a close and helpful presence vanishes. When wrestling Grendel's mother, Beowulf not only acknowledges the feat was done "to win glory and prove [his] renown" but more importantly he makes it clear that he managed to survive with the aid

of a mighty sword because his "time has not yet come" (p. 68). It is as if Beowulf were attributing the outcome of his battles to his strength and weapon plus the judgment of God. At this point Beowulf appears to reckon God as some sort of impersonal fate who randomly controls the destinies of men, and not as some spiritual being on whom he could put his trust in. This is, in my opinion, when Beowulf's hubris brings about his tragic downfall, something Hrothgar had foreshadowed in his speech at the Hall of Heorot. Hrothgar had earnestly warned Beowulf about the dangers of power and pride, the fragility of life and the course of action he ought to undertake so as to become a wise ruler:

> O flower of warriors, beware of that trap.
> Choose, dear Beowulf, the better part,
> eternal rewards. Do not give way to pride.
> For a brief while your strength is in bloom
> but it fades quickly; and soon there will follow
> illness or the sword to lay you low,
> or a sudden fire or surge of water
> or jabbing blade or javelin from the air
> or repellent age. Your piercing eye
> will dim and darken; and death will arrive,
> dear warrior, to sweep you away (p. 57).

Although Beowulf does not become king of the Geats immediately but many years after his return from Heorot, his exemplary career as a warrior served, in part to prepare him for his ascension to the throne. Whether or not Beowulf blindly followed Hrothgar's pieces of advice is a matter of further debate. It seems, at the very least, it has proved insufficient to prevent Beowulf from becoming corrupted by limitless power and thirst for gold. What is certain is the fact that he managed to rule his people peacefully for fifty years until a theft awakened and angered a dragon by stealing a jewelled cup from its stoned-roof barrow. Hence, when the Geat nation was brutally assaulted by the fire-eating dragon, Beowulf took advantage of the situation to prove much more than his courage, such as when he proudly hauled Grendel's head at Heorot (p. 53). He sensed that this was his last chance not only to "win glory before death" (p. 46) but above all to make himself immortal by a glorious action (p. 31): "fight for the

glory of winning" (p. 79). This time he trusted neither the divine power nor earthly assistance or weapons (p. 79). Quite the contrary, "the prince of the rings was too proud / to line up with a large army / against the sky-plague" (p. 74). Instead, he explicitly ordered his kinsmen to keep away from joining him in the battle:

> Men at arms, remain here on the barrow,
>
> safe in your armour, to see which one of us
>
> is better in the end at bearing wounds
>
> in a deadly fray. This fight is not yours,
>
> nor is it up to any man except me
>
> to measure his strength against the monster
>
> or to prove his worth. I shall win the gold
>
> by my courage, or else mortal combat,
>
> doom of battle, will bear your lord away (p. 80).

As it can be seen Beowulf "trusted in his own strength entirely" (p. 80). As soon as Beowulf was about to be killed, one of his loyal thanes, Wiglaf, rushed to his aid. Nevertheless, Beowulf is the one who delivers the fatal wound after the dragon had bitten him in the neck: "Inspired again / by the thought of glory" (p. 84), Beowulf plucked up enough courage "and drew a stabbing knife (...) stuck it deep into the dragon's flank" leaving it deadly wounded (p. 85). The following evidence points to Beowulf's self-centeredness: "the man who had lately landed among them, / proud and sure, had purged the hall / kept it from harm" (p. 27). Before dying of poisoning, and after gazing at the treasure, Beowulf orders the building of a burial mound both to serve as his memorial and to provide a landmark for seafarers (p. 88) "since of all men / to have lived and thrived and lorded it on earth / his worth and due as a warrior were the greatest" (p. 97).

Turning our attention towards the antiheroes' flaw, it could be said on a general basis, and according to Bloom, that the monsters' downfall lies, as it was also the case in the *Táin*, in the very fact that they are the living embodiment of their evil progenitor Cain:

> Thus in Grendel and the dragon the medieval audience of the poem would be
>
> able to recognize the survival of Cain's monstrous progeny and the symbol of

his sin in those who formed the bestial clan dedicated to the destruction of social harmony and brotherhood and determined to eradicate the Abels of the earth (2007, p.70).

These things considered, their fratricide tendency, perhaps, is the breeding ground of these monsters' hybrids. It is as if their inherent flaw were leading each of them, one at a time, to their imminent catastrophes.

2.2.3 Beowulf: The mythos of disappearance

Now, it is time to focus on the third archetypal theme of the quest myth, that is to say, the disappearance of the hero and –for the purpose of this study- that of the antiheroes of the poem. In order to track down instances where "heroism is absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world" (Frye, 1957, p. 192), I will start with Beowulf who "after many trials, he was destined to face the end of his days" (Heaney, 1999, p. 74) when slaughtering the fire-eating dragon. Beowulf's funeral was meticulously fulfilled following Wiglaf's commands, which were in fact Beowulf's last spoken words. The Geats, bitterly grieved, gathered wood for the fire, and piled it on the cliff-head. In accordance with Norse burial customs, after having brought the treasures, they threw the dragon' s body over the cliff into the sea and a wain, hung with shields, was also brought to bear the corpse of Beowulf to Hronesness. In this place, Beowulf was solemnly laid on the funeral pile and consumed to ashes. After that, the Geats mourned the disappearance of their noble king with songs of grief and were gripped by the worst fears: "the nation invaded, / enemies on the rampage, bodies in piles, / slavery and abasement" (Heaney, 1999, p. 98). Great was the lament for Beowulf's loss but even greater were the worries that haunted their thoughts.

Turning on the outcome of the antiheroic archetypes in Beowulf, it seems by no doubt clear that Beowulf's courage, skill and anger merged together to help him vanquish Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon, even though the latter victory costs him his life.

Despite the fact that this quest–myth phase particularly deals with the topic of disappearance, the two first monsters could be thought of as the embodiment of evil reappearing in the last one. Cohen has forcefully argued in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996) that "the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes to reappear" (p. 4).

While this may be true in the case of Grendel and Grendel's mother, it does not seem to apply to the fire-breathing dragon. Once the dragon is slaughtered, danger and threat are considerably reduced to a great extent. The reason simply lies in the very fact that as there is no one else worth fighting against, evil itself seems to have vanished from society. The nightmarish destroyer has been defeated as the following lines show

> Never again would he glitter and glide
> And show himself off in midnight air,
> Exulting his riches: he fell to earth
> Through the battle-strength in Beowulf's arm (p. 89).

Besides, as Heaney states that

> the poet may need them as figures who do the devil's work, but the poem needs them more as figures who call up and show off Beowulf's physical strength and his super gifts as a warrior (Heaney, 1999, p. xviii).

By looking critically at the figure of the monster, Heaney focuses not only on its malevolent component, but also on its significance to highlight the heroic figure: "They are the right enemies for a young glory-hunter" (Heaney, 1999, p. xviii). Hence, provided that heroism appears to have ceased to exist in the person of Beowulf at first sight, no devilish creature seems to have a bearing neither on the epic poem nor on the exaltation of the heroic archetype.

2.2.4 Beowulf: The mythos of recognition

Considering both the hero's disappearance and the importance of the antihero, it could be inferred that despite Beowulf's death, it is the last defeat of evil what granted

the warrior posthumous reputation for bravery, and established him fully as a hero of worldwide renown: "for the king, / this would be the last of his many labours / an triumphs in the world" (p. 85). Thus, for Beowulf to meet death when slaying the dragon primarily meant achieving the best kind of death, "the supreme product of [his] occupation" (Raffel, 1963, p. xiv).

All in all, Beowulf's disappearance, and consequently, the absence of heroism, appears to be partial. On the one hand, after being burnt on a huge funeral pyre, the remains of Beowulf's body are buried in a large barrow on a cliff overlooking the sea to accomplish a specific purpose. According to Beowulf's wishes, this will serve as his memorial. In other words, the barrow is meant to ensure that both his extraordinary exploits and visionary leadership will forever be deeply rooted in the Gatish cultural heritage and among pagan nations from time immemorial. On the other hand, there is an heir to the throne. Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, is the only one left of the Waegmundings who is destined to survive Beowulf's lifetime and carry on the great hero's legacy:

> You are the last of us, the only one left
> of the Waegmundings. Fate swept us away,
> sent my whole brave high-born clan
> to their final doom. Now I must follow them (p. 88).

Once an archetypical heroic leader has ceased to exist on earth, somebody, whose worth has been proven, has to occupy his place. Wiglaf will live up to the legacy that Beowulf has left behind by becoming his visible successor.

Chapter III: From an inward to an outward perspective of Archetypal Criticism: towards the Social Realm of Heroic and Antiheroic Archetypes

Having examined the *Táin* and *Beowulf*'s inward structure under the light of the archetypal heroic and antiheroic characters' quest myth, I will now attempt to apply the outward layer of Frye's "new poetics" so as to attempt a feasible social reading of the previous findings. In other words, I will make use of Archetypal Criticism to account

for "the social environment of literature" which springs from inward analysis (Frye, 1971, p. 25). The structural reading provided so far has made me question why heroic archetypes are able to achieve worldwide recognition while their antiheroic matchups seem to suffer neglect and hardly stand the test of time. A question that, in my view, has a bearing on the social aspect Frye hoped to bring to light by means of Mythological Criticism. In order to provide a clear answer, concepts such as Aristotle's flaw, pagan's heroic code and Jung's collective unconscious will be considered in relation to one another from now onwards. The first two issues will be dealt as two within-the-text social aspects while the latter will be analysed taking into account its external influence.

3.1 Aristotle's flaw

The fact that Cú Chulainn, the Ulster exiles and the Irish army have gone through all the stages of the quest myth, does not imply that they have managed to attain equal degrees of recognition. In my opinion, the key point lies on whether or not these mythological archetypes were able to overcome Aristotle's hamartia. This is to say, the concept of tragic flaw that Frye places in the third step of the archetypal quest "which is also the direction in which the hero [and antiheroes] falls" (1957, p. 221). Cú Chulainn is a hero of burning ambitions of glory, who since his early childhood aspires to power out of selfishness, complacency and vanity, especially after he heard "a druid say that if a warrior took arms that day his name would endure in Ireland as a byword of heroic deeds, and that stories would be told forever" (Carson, 2007, p. 43). On another occasion the same druid proclaimed "whoever takes command of a chariot today his name will live forever in Ireland" (p. 43). Having heard these announcements, Cú Chulainn headed straight towards Conchobhar and asked for arms and for a chariot, despite the fact that "he'd achieve great fame but his life'd be short" (p. 43). As for the Ulster exiles, they also appear to have been serving no higher goal than their own desire for power when they blindly accepted to fight Cú Chulainn. Both Fer Báeth and his comrade Fer Diad seem to have given little thought to the impact of their actions on the bond that linked them to Cú Chulainn. Quite on the contrary, "Fer Báeth did not shirk the issue [of fighting Cú Chulainn], but went that night with Fiacha Mac Fir Febe to renounce his friendship" (p. 89). In like manner, Fer Diad told Cú Chulainn sternly to

"forget [their] brotherhood" (p. 142). The flaw of the Irish army may also be triggered by betrayal, though this would be in close relation to the rules of fair fight and honest competition. In fact, on several occasions, they failed to observe the rules of single-combat they had agreed on: "On the same day the rules of fair fight were broken against him when he was attacked by a gang" (p. 98).

As for the flaw in *Beowulf*, there exist, according to Frye, two reductive theories concerning the causes that may trigger the archetype's downfall. Namely, omnipotence of external fate or punishment driven by the violation of a moral law whether human or divine (i. e. flaw). It should be noted, however, that it is not the intention of this paper to conduct a thorough analysis concerning whether or not the collapse of the archetypes in *Beowulf* were motivated by arbitrary fate or by the mere break of a law. Nevertheless, the fact that throughout the three struggles, the Beowulf poet and Beowulf himself put the blame on both fate and the Almighty's will should not be dismissed. As Bloom posits it, "there is much tribute to Fate, hardly a Christian category, and rarely is Fate set in apposition with the will of God" (2007, p. 4). This suggests that both theories coexist in perfect harmony and might be used interchangeably so as to explain the source of different tragic episodes. Thus, it is not really surprising to find in *Beowulf* that sometimes it seems to be God and other times fate the one that brings about the characters' inevitable fall. In this regard, since the beginning, Beowulf is fully aware of "the hard fate they [the Danes]'d been forced to undergo" (p. 27). However, alongside that, Beowulf makes it clear that God denied him the opportunity of slaughtering Grendel at once. Instead, the Almighty barely allowed him to tear off the demon's arm (p. 31). What is more, Beowulf's last words grant fate the characteristics bestowed to God: "I won't shift a foot / when I meet the cave-guard: what occurs on the wall / between the two of us will turn out as fate, / overseer of men, decides" (p. 80). The personification of fate running parallel to God adds a great deal to our understanding of fate and God as two symbolic representations of the Pagan and Christian forces overlapping and harmoniously interacting within the poem. Following the same fashion, the *Beowulf* poet puts the blame on both inevitable fate and divine intervention in an attempt to offer a possible explanation for Beowulf's death. Thus, at first he claims that "that final day was the first time / when Beowulf fought and fate denied him /glory in battle" (p. 81). And later on he suggests that:

Much as he [Wiglaf] wanted to, there was no way

he could preserve his lord's life on earth

or alter in the least the will

what God judged right would rule what happened

to everyman, as it does to this day (p. 90).

On the same issue, there is yet another character that, once again, succeeds in concluding that both unfortunate twist of fate and divine will definitely have a bearing on both sides of the battle line. For Winglaf, on the one hand, "it was too cruel a fate / that forced the king to that encounter" (p. 96) while on the other:

The king had little cause to brag

about his armed guard; yet God who ordains

who wins or loses allowed him to strike

with his bravery was needed (p. 90).

These things considered, it appears unreasonable, at first sight, that some characters, included the poet himself, fail to propose a single source for adverse events. Still, in light of the above-mentioned evidence, it can be deduced that in spite of the fact that they do not seem to take sides, they eventually manage to reach a balanced and natural judgment, at least from their frame of mind. Hence, as it was suggested, the existence of fate and God as two unavoidable forces seems to be nothing less than projections of a mixture of Pagan and Christian rites and beliefs of the time. As it has been suggested by Susanne Weil in *Bloom's Guides: Beowulf* (2008):

As the story of Beowulf was told and retold through the centuries, it seems to have picked up the verbal vestiges of cultural change like a snowball rolling through time: so many pagan and Christian ideas exist side by side in the poem that critics have long argued whether it is essentially a pagan or a Christian work (2008, p. 80).

It must be noticed that the latter paradox might be a likely issue for further research due to its being both relevant and controversial at the same time.

Conversely, what, in my opinion, seems to have set off the antiheroes' unfavorable turn of events is hamartia in the form of three conflicting, interrelated and

overlapping dimensions of outrage, namely hatred, revenge and greed. Advancing one step further, this threefold vice could be identified with the three monsters' deceitful actions. Thus, Grendel hated men as God-cursed Cain hated his father's son Abel. Since the very first lines, we are told that this fiend begins his feud with Hrothgar's men out of fraternal hatred: "As Grendel roams the marshes and swamps, he hears the joyful sounds of song and laughter from Heorot. They fill him with envy and hatred for Hrothgar and his warriors" (Encyclopedia of World Mythology, 2009, p. 178). Hence, envious of the righteous thanes and offended by the sounds of happiness within the mead-hall, merciless and remorseless Grendel murders anyone he finds in Heorot (p. 7). Grendel's mother's rage, on the other hand, seems to be fueled by the slaughtering of her devilish son at the hands of Beowulf (p. 27). When she wreaks utter havoc at Hearot, she brutally kills Aschere, Hrothgar's right-hand man (p. 43), and leaves his bloody head on a stick at the entrance to her lair as a sign of her revenge. Whereas Grendel and Grendel's mother appear to act out of resentment and vengeance, the dragon's fury seems to be fueled by covetousness. As long as Norse mythology is concerned, dragons are depicted as greedy evil creatures driven by the obsession of increasing their treasure hoards (U X L Encyclopedia of World Mythology, 2009, p. 319). Beowulf's daunting fiery dragon enrages with greed and threatens "the sky with streamers of fire" when an intruder steals a cup from "the underground treasury" it had been stoutly protecting for three centuries (Heaney, 1999, p. 72). While in Beowulf it is the mere thought of glory what acts as spur, in the dragon it is the theft and its fallouts, the feelings of greed and selfishness, the reasons that ignite his hatred (p. 80) and lead him to kill Beowulf at the expense of dying in the process.

3.2 The Pagan's heroic code

Once the archetypes' flaws have been brought to the core, what remains is to examine a further within-the-text process by which the heroic's flaws seem to be forgiven and those of his antiheroes fully condemned. To carry out this analysis, the warrior-culture enshrined both in the *Táin* and in *Beowulf* will be explicitly addressed as misinterpretations could arise if deeds and flaws are judged according to modern western standards.

The epic of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, from which the *Táin* springs, belongs to a pagan Celtic society governed by a heroic code of honour, one where the attainment of a name for warrior-prowess among the living appears to overwhelm any concern about its hero's faults. The pride of defending one's lord and kinsmen seems to overlook "the prospects of gaining a glorious name" (Heaney, 1999, p. xv). This suggests that for those civilizations pride may not be considered a fault, provided that other behavioral traits counteracted its harmful effects. So, as far as heroes are concerned, it is significant to bear in mind that the heart of the lone warrior Cú Chulainn was continuously "set on defending his homeland" (Carson, 2007, p. 87) and the rules of fair fight were always observed on his behalf (p. 88). On the other hand, the code of loyalty and bravery instilled in the pagan culture did not admit acts of high treason against comrades. This may be the reason why the Ulster exiles in the *Táin* are deemed traitors for having betrayed their foster-brother Cú Chulainn as well as their comrades, the Ulstermen, just to fulfill their desire for praise and glory. Moreover, Medb's army may have also committed a treasonable act by breaking the rules of single-combat and fair fight. Following the heroic line of thought, thirst for glory seems to have served a good cause. Judging by the precepts that ruled the heroic code, loyalty towards comrades and pursuit of fame could be thought as the two sides of the coin of true heroism.

In the same way as the Irish hero Cú Chulainn and according to Burton Raffel in the introduction to his translation of *Beowulf*, Beowulf stands as the ideal of his civilization in that he embodies the values and morals on which the behaviour of the Anglo-Saxon society was based and judged (1963, p. xiv). This society had a strong sense of community and treasured fame and success as a passageway to immortality.

By fighting with Grendel and assuring the survival of the Danes, Beowulf was also beginning to confirm his immortality. Keen to win renown, after hearing of the troubles at Heorot, Beowulf crosses the sea to the land of the Danes to help king Hrothgar get rid of the man-eating monster Grendel:

> I am meant to perform the uttermost
> what your people wanted of perish in the attempt
> in the fiend's clutches. And I shall fulfil that purpose,
> prove myself with a proud deed
> or meet my death here in the mead-hall (Heaney, 1999, p. 21).

In such a passage we can sense that what seems to have made Beowulf heroic was having defeated Grendel: "Beowulf doings were praised over and over again" (p. 28) because "his courage was proven, his glory was secured" (p. 53). Moreover his great victory against Grendel's mother validated his reputation for bravery and established him fully as a hero. Thus, Hrothgar's subsequent speech emphasises that "this man was born to distinction" and that Beowulf's "fame has gone far and wide" due to the fact he was "known everywhere" (p. 55).

While Beowulf's triumphs over Grendel and Grendel's mother have both won him glory and proven his worth (p. 68), I reckon the fight with the dragon is the crucial struggle or the quest itself in *Beowulf* as well as the only way out he had to achieve posthumous renown according to the Anglo-Saxon way of life. Judging from that frame of mind, "battle is a way of life (…) and death the supreme product of their [Anglo-Saxons] occupation" (Raffel, 1963, p. xiv). Taken as a whole, the driving force that leads Beowulf to "gather his powers for the final climatic ordeal" (Heaney, 1999, p. xvii) seems to be the burning desire of achieving beyond-the-grave recognition:

> Inspired again
> by the thought of glory, the war-king threw
> his whole strength behind a sword-stroke
> and connected with the skull (p. 84).

Notwithstanding that the Germanic heroic code exalted strength, courage, pride and good reputation in a king warrior, it also honoured generosity and commitment to the community. Since the beginning of the poem Beowulf shows his generosity of spirit by offering King Hrothgar his protection:

> I come to proffer
> my wholehearted help and counsel
> I can show the wise Hrothgar a way
> to defeat his enemy and find respite –
> if any respite is to reach him, ever.
> I can calm the turmoil and terror of his mind (p. 11).

An offering, as Beowulf puts it, that apart from being a privilege (p. 15) had been cherished and encouraged by the Geats: "so every elder and experienced councilman / among my people supported my resolve to come here to you" (p. 15). Instead of boasting about Beowulf's achievements, King Hrothgar makes insightful comments about the true value of the Geat warrior, a peacemaker:

> What you have done is to draw two peoples,
>
> the Geat nation and us neighbouring Danes,
>
> into shared peace and a pact of friendship
>
> in spite of hatreds we have harboured in the past (p. 60).

Over the course of the poem, Beowulf matures into a wise leader who "ruled over the Geats. He was a good king" (p. 76). And as an old king, Beowulf did not spare any effort to achieve durable peace for his people and spent his last moments on earth fulfilling his filial duties. In fact, "Beowulf's gaze at the gold treasure / when he first saw it had not been selfish" (p. 96) as his thoughts were with all those he left unprotected. On the one hand, he thanked the Almighty for the generous bequest his people would receive

> To the everlasting Lord of all,
>
> to the King of Glory, I give thanks
>
> that I behold this treasure here in front of me,
>
> that I have thus been allowed to leave my people
>
> so well endowed on the day I die (p. 88).

And on the other, thinking about the future of his nation, Beowulf named Wiglaf as his legitimate heir: "now that I have bartered my last breath / to own this fortune, it is up to you / to look after their needs. I can hold out no longer" (p. 88).

All in all, it could be said that, like Cú Chulainn and following the heroic code of his time, Beowulf's protection and devotion towards his people harmonically intermingles with his thirst for victories over the powers of evil. Once again, these contrasting features could be thought as the two sides of the same coin; an idea the poet of *Beowulf* did not hesitate to use as a perfect finale for his poem: "kindest to the people and keenest to win fame" (Heaney, 1999, p. 99).

So, if we were to consider that both an Ulster and a Geat hero devoted their whole lives to the single-minded quest for glory to prove their worth and gain victories for the sake of others, to whom they fiercely defended at the cost of their own lives, I would venture to maintain that our western mentality would not differ much from that of ancient times.

3.3 Jung's Collective Unconscious

The mythological/archetypal approach is closely related to psychological methods, since Freud has formulated many theories around the idea of the social archetype, and his pupil, Carl Jung, expanded and refined his mentor's theories into a more cross-cultural philosophy (Richardson, 2007, p. 17). Jung stated that an archetype is "a figure...that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested" (in Dobie, 2002, p. 62). He was of the idea that human beings were born innately knowing certain archetypes. Jung's belief was based on the fact that some myths are repeated throughout history in different cultures and epochs which could not possibly have had any contact with one another. Provided that many stories in Greek and Roman mythology have counterparts in Chinese and Celtic mythology (Richardson 17) it would not be far-fetched to think that the same could be the case between Celtic and Norse mythologies. Advancing one step further, Jung asserted that these archetypes, often expressed outwardly in myths, are unconsciously shared and inherited. He then coined the term "collective unconscious" to describe this form of an ancestral memory.

All these things considered and once the heroes have been redeemed from the sin of pride by the heroic code, the focus will now be placed on the *Táin* and *Beowulf's* outward impact, that is to say their social recognition in the form of collective unconscious.

From the fact that Cú Chulainn has been able to achieve greater recognition, it follows that the Celts may have unconsciously managed to portray in this character those individual and collective values, feelings and aptitudes desirable for the survival of their nation and for people of all walks of life and time:

Cú Chulainn does not seem to come back to life in any other cycle or version. This does not mean he has been erased from the collective consciousness, quite the contrary, he has become a symbol of Irishmen (Cotterrel, 2006, p. 129).

Following the same line of thought, if we turn our focus to *Beowulf*, we will discover that the heroic character, although physically dead, continues to exert posthumous influence both on his people's memory and on the person of his last surviving heir. In other words, his perpetual intervention in Geatland is ensured by the building of a barrow to live on the memories of those who hear the story of his deeds and to guide his people by his exemplary life. And his material assistance, on the other hand, seems to be portrayed by the visible presence of a legitimate heir to the throne. Apart from being Beowulf's distant cousin and only living relative, Wiglaf had proven a worthy successor in the battlefield as he was the only man of Beowulf's band who went to his king's aid, crying words of encouragement:

Go on, dear Beowulf, do everything

you said you would when you were still young

and vowed you would never let you name and fame

be dimmed while you lived. Your deeds are famous,

so stay resolute, my lord, defend your life now

with the whole of your strength. I shall stand by you (p. 84).

Even if both Cú Chulainn and Beowulf's physical rebirths did not actually take place in the poems, their figures have managed to survive in the memory of their people by transcending time and place and by remaining alive as part of the collective unconscious of humanity. On this basis, it can be inferred that Cú Chulainn's archetypal quest truly ends in recognition/spring because the universal unchanging values and modes of behavior he embodies are thought to ensure the survival not only of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland but also that of any nation and mankind as a whole. As for Beowulf, quoting Heaney, it could be said that Beowulf also achieves recognition in that there seems to be a beyond-the-grave aspect in him, a relevant quality about his resoluteness (1999, p. xx). Indeed for Heaney, Beowulf's soul may not have fled "to its destined place among the steadfast ones" (p. xvii) as he has become imprinted in the

collective unconscious of human kind, apart from that of the Geats (or Englishmen), of course. Beowulf has endured over the centuries as a prime example of the Western European hero and his story has been translated, adapted and revisited by many writers and screenwriters as well.

To be more specific, Cú Chulainn represents the ideal protector and is associated with the Celtic culture in that he personifies legendary strength and rage that can, at times, hardly be controlled as well as the fact that great fame and glory are often paid for with an early death (UXL Encyclopedia of World Mythology, 2009, p. 272). Following the same fashion, Beowulf emphasizes the values that were important to Norse warriors, such as courage, loyalty to one's king and comrades. In fact, Beowulf stands as the selfless ruler who faces danger bravely trusting that the story of his deeds will cause him to live on in the memories of those who hear it (UXL Encyclopedia of World Mythology, 2009, p. 182). Like any person, both Cú Chulainn and Beowulf must find meaning in their worlds while accepting the simple fact that they will eventually die, emphasizing, in their own ways, how fragile life and fame can be.

However, the transcendental power of the within-the-text social perspective of these heroes, analyzed before under the headings of flaw and heroic code, appears to have gone beyond written words, making far-reaching impacts on culturally and chronologically diverse societies. In other words, a displacement of the mythological past into the contemporary present can be thought of as a kind of continuity between past and present, a continuity that seems strongly related to the concept of collective unconscious. Apart from capturing and expressing the spirit of their particular nations, these national heroes, often seen as a cultural heroes, are adapted and recreated to suit the taste and needs of other cultures and generations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope this analysis of matchups may yield some understanding of the transcendental capacity of the heroic archetype who, after engaging in fierce combat against his enemies, manages to survive, if not physically, at least in the memory of the people, by transcending time and place, and becoming part of the 'collective unconscious'. On the other hand, even though the antiheroic archetypes also pursue

their own myth quests, they do so without achieving immortality: they neither come back to life nor do they have a relevant bearing on the collective unconscious of the human race. This archetypal inward reading bears potential social relevance as far as the collective unconscious is concerned. So, apart from providing a sense of belonging, the *Táin* and *Beowulf* have a lot to offer to a broader audience. As we have seen so far, their influence is not restricted to the scope of the Irish and English territories and societies, quite the contrary, these pre-literary epics continue to be translated to be accessible to a world audience.

Although what Celtic and Norse mythology, and particularly the cases of Cú Chulainn and Beowulf as heroic archetypes, may be able to transmit to the present generations still remains to be determined, there is evidence which proves that many authors have drawn their inspiration from Beowulf and Cu Chulainn's heroic achievements and great feats. Many are the writers who have been influenced by Beowulf but probably, one of the most significant ones is J. R. R. Tolkien, whose lecture *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics* (1936) had a lasting influence on *Beowulf*'s research and deepened the degrees of its understanding. As Heaney posits "Tolkien's brilliant literary treatment changed the way the poem was valued and initiated a new era – and new terms – of appreciation" (1999, p. xi). Among others who paid a tribute or made a reference to Beowulf, I can mention the American author John Gardner and his novel "Grendel" (1971), a retelling epic poem from Grendel's perspective. In the field of the cinema there have been several *Beowulf* adaptations from "Grendel, Grendel, Grendel" (1982) till "Outlander" (2008). Beyond its literary, cinematic and theatrical adaptations, *Beowulf* is also leaving a trace in popular culture in the form of numerous comics, graphic novels, board and computer games.

Cú Chulainn has also influenced generations of writers and has appeared in several elements of pop-culture too. On the one hand, the Celtic hero has been adapted for artistic, patriotic, nationalist, unionist and cultural purposes. For instance, W. B. Yeats wrote a series of plays based on the stories of Cú Chulainn; Lady Gregory, his patroness, also re-wrote several Irish myths to put over her nationalist message, to put forward an idealized vision of struggle and to 'free Ireland' in order to make it 'a nation once again' (qtd. in Williams, 1983, p. 312). Indeed, so widespread was Cú Chulainn's fame that his exploits have also influenced the development of the Arthurian myths in Britain and France (Cotterell, 2006, p. 119).

Like Beowulf in England, Cú Chulaiin, besides having risen to national epic status in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, has also become an emblem of popular culture. Eventually, he appeared in short animated films and TV series (The King's Wake, Gargoyles), in several Marvel Comics (Guardians of the Galaxy, Thor), in graphic novels (Cúchulainn: Champion of Ulster, Celtic Warrior: The Legend of Cú Chulainn) as well as in music (symphonies, opening themes for films and theatrical shows, hip hop, rock, Celtic metal, German metal, symphonic metal and epic doom metal bands). Moreover, Cú Chulainn's exploits can also be found in novels (The Tapestry, Meredith Gentry), video games and even in a number of Gaelic Athletic Association clubs, an Irish broadcasting company, an Irish online sports college and even as an award in scouting.

All in all, regardless of whom and why they have been adopted, these heroic archetypal representations seem to remain in the collective unconscious of humanity. Regarding the moral potential of Cú Chulainn and Beowulf, I think that their reading promises pleasure along with edification as the values and attitudes they portray may serve as moral example to a varied readership. Clearly, men with such a heritage are more able to incarnate themselves the old virtues depicted in mythological heroes.

Moreover, Cú Chulainn and Beowulf may also enhance our conscious understanding of different realities because heroic archetypes can "provide a model, in story form, for mastering critical periods such as birth and death" (O'Connor, 2002, p. 126). According to Peter O' Connor, this seems highly relevant in a world that is always wanting spring and summer without autumn and winter (2002, p.126). That is to say, the desire to have a promising beginning so as to earn high esteem without having to struggle and/or meet some sort of death in the process.

In the same vein, but following a rather opposite logic, the antiheroic archetypes of the *Táin* and *Beowulf* go through the stages of conflict/summer, fall/autumn, disappearance/winter without achieving rebirth or recognition/spring. This may be because the values and behaviors they portray are not deemed of transcendental importance, either for the civilizations that generated them or for the present-day societies. While many critics have endeavored to delineate the cultural uses the monsters serve (Cohen, 1996: 9), it seems obvious that they may have become landmarks, in the negative sense, for their readership's conscious or unconscious understanding of the behaviors and attitudes that should be avoided. Cohen advances a

step further to deal with the cultural use monsters serve, i.e. the antiheroes, to serve the purpose of this thesis. So,

> the monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot -must not- be crossed (Cohen, 1996, p. 9).

To put it in a different way, monsters in these epics do not come back to life, quite the contrary, they seem to have been portrayed to represent eternal vices, in the hope that humanity would learn to reject vices by avoid modeling their self-destructive and criminal behavior. Conversely, the aim, whether unconscious or not, seems to have been the creation of heroic characters, who after undergoing a cyclical process managed to achieve redemption through self-sacrifice and heroism and in the form of collective memory. It is as if the previous generations would have portrayed characters that embodied eternal values in order to create and foster fundamental virtues. And what is more, it could also be said that many have managed to unveil to some degree how the grandeur of ancient legends might be applied as a way of coping with present-day struggles.

Appendix A: *Beowulf*

The epic of *Beowulf* is considered the most important relic of Old English, and, indeed of all early Germanic literature. In fact, it is the earliest Anglo-Saxon poem which has come down to us in a single manuscript written about 1000 A.D. It tells the story of Beowulf, a Norse hero and warrior who fought and conquered several monsters that terrorized Denmark and Sweden.

Beowulf is divided into two parts. The action in the first part takes place in Denmark, where King Hrothgar is troubled by the rampages of a cruel and brutal monster called Grendel. Every night, Grendel attacks King Hrothgar's wealthy mead-hall, Heorot, killing Danish warriors and sometimes even eating them. When stories of Grendel's raids spread reaching the land of the Geats in southern Sweden, a mighty Geatish warrior named Beowulf decides to sail to Denmark and help Hrothgar rid his kingdom of the monster. The first night the Geats stay at Heorot, Grendel appears and kills one of Beowulf's men. And when Grendel grabs Beowulf, the mighty warrior seizes the monster's arm with his powerful grip and until he finally tears it's arm. Grendel staggers back to his cave and dies while the severed arm is hung in Heorot as a trophy. Hrothgar showers Beowulf with gifts and honors him with a feast. The Danes believe they will finally be able to sleep in peace at Heorot again. Nevertheless, after seeing her dying son, Grendel's mother vows revenge, goes to Heorot at night and kills Aeschere, Hrothgar's most trusted adviser. Beowulf and several warriors track Grendel's mother to her lair in the swamps. When they arrive, she grabs Beowulf and pulls him into her cave where the two start to wrestle. Grendel's mother almost kills Beowulf as Hrunting, his sword, does not hurt her. However, after seizing a nearby sword from Grendel's mother's treasure, Beowulf manages to cut off her head with a single swing despite the fact that her poisonous blood melts the blade. At the back of the cave, he sees Grendel's corpse and by the aid of the same sword, he also decapitates him and returns to the surface with Grendel's head. Beowulf and his men return to Heorot in triumph, and after Hrothgar rewards them once more, the Geats go home to Sweden where Beowulf eventually becomes king.

As the second part of the epic begins, Beowulf has reigned for fifty years, protecting the Geats from other tribes. However, one day, a runaway slave who had been punished by his master, steals a golden cup from an ancient treasure in a cave so as to earn his master's forgiveness. This wakens and angers the winged dragon that

protected the treasure buried hundreds of years earlier. To punish the Geats for stealing from him, the dragon flies over the countryside breathing fire on the villages and slaughtering people. This is when the old Beowulf decides to kill the monster personally though his thanes accompany him climb to the dragon's lair. When they see the dragon, all but Wiglaf flee in terror. With his young kinsman's help and encouragement, Beowulf is able to defeat the dragon, but he is mortally wounded in the process as his iron shield does not protects him against the dragon's fiery breath. Before he dies, Beowulf sends Wiglaf to inspect the dragon's treasure, tells him to look after the Geats and to order his troop to build him a barrow.

In accordance with Norse burial customs, Beowulf's body is burned in a great fire on a cliff overlooking the sea. The treasure is placed in the fire with Beowulf as a sacrifice while a large burial mound is built over the remains of the fire to serve as a reminder of the great king, and to provide a landmark for seafarers.

See UXL Encyclopedia of World Mythology, USA, Gale Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 178-180

Appendix B: The *Táin*

Táin Bo Chuailgne (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) stands as the oldest Irish epic and the core of the Ulster Cycle. Even though the exact time in history when this epic was created remains unclear, the events of the *Táin* are estimated to have roughly occurred around the 600's CE. In fact, its chief figure, Cú Chulainn is said to have lived in the first century BC while the tales about him began to be written down in the 700s CE.

Ciaran Carson's translation of the *Táin* tells that King Ailill and Queen Medb of Connacht, after comparing their respective wealth, find out that the only thing that distinguishes them is Ailill's fertile bull Finnbhennach. Medb determines to get the equally potent Donn Cuailnge from Cooley in Ulster to equal her husband's White-horned one. Unable to negotiate with the bull's owner, she raises an army to take the bull by force. Apart from including the Connachtmen, Medb cunningly manipulated the Ulster exiles and the kingdoms of Meath, Munster and Leinster into joining her army to capture the Brown Bull. The invasion is opposed only by the teenage Ulster hero Cú Chulainn, who holds up the army's advance by demanding single combat at fords. Queen Medb is at pains to find Cú Chulainn a match so as to defeat him before the Ulstermen recover from a curse that causes them to become immobilized. Cú Chulainn's foster-brothers Fer Báeth and Fer Diad, after renouncing their friendship with the Ulster hero, fight against him till they fall dead in single combat. The rest of the Irish army breaks the rules of fair fight and, as a result, are slayed left, right and center. Even though Medb's army is finally driven back by the Ulstermen once the curse is over, the beaten Connacht men manage to capture the Brown Bull. Back to Connacht, the Brown Bull gored the White Bull to shreds but his heart bursts and it dies.

According to a later story that is not narrated in the *Táin*, after offending the Morrigan, the goddess of death and battles, Cú Chulainn is summoned to fight in spite of being fatally wounded after having battled Fer Diad. Sensing his own death, he fought bravely and when feeling too weak to stand, he tied himself to a pillar so that he could die fighting on his feet.

See Cotterell, Arthur. The Encyclopedia of Mythology. London, Hermes House, 2006; Nutt, Alfred. "Irish Mythology According to a Recent Writer". The Folk-Lore Journal, Vol. 2, No. 6 (Jun., 1884), pp.

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