Beyond the wall of horror: a deconstructive analysis of H.P. Lovecraft’s “beyond the wall of sleep” through the Mapuche cosmovision

Más allá del muro del horror: un análisis deconstructivo de “más allá del muro de los sueños” de H.O. Lovecraft, a través de la cosmovisión Mapuche

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Abstract

H.P Lovecraft is famous because of his horror stories. In some of them he even created gods and epic battles in which good and evil forces are confronted. This dissertation addresses the question of how horror is produced. For this purpose, a short story of this American writer called “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” is going to be deconstructed based on Jacques Derrida’s literary theories and the Jungian psychoanalysis. On this foundation, this literary analysis states that the horror is an emotion created by our cultural background, specifically the Christian culture. In order to demonstrate this hypothesis, the story will be inserted in a different background: the Mapuche Culture.

Keywords

Structuralism, archetypes, christianity, deconstruction, Mapuche Culture.

1. Introduction

Beyond the Wall of Sleep is a short novel written by american author H. P. Lovecraft, published in 1919. In it, the author explores and reflects on dreams, on their importance and the dark world to which they belong. Its narrator is a doctor who works in a psychiatric institution, where in a 1900-1901 winter day, Joe Slater (or Slaader) is entered. Slater is a typical denizen of the area of the Catskill Mountains, wild and uneducated; who has murdered one of his neighbours in the middle of a fight with a being of light that haunts him in his dreams. The narrator gets involved with his patient’s delirium to such an extent that he gets into Slater’s mind. The story is driven by the motifs of insanity, death and fear of the unknown; transforming this short novel in a horror masterpiece.

It is this idea of fear and its consequences in which we will focus on. Our cultural background influences even the way in which we experience things that seem so natural such
as fear or horror. Fear is transient and responds to what seems to be a danger of the moment. Horror is fed by fear and lies at a higher level within human psychology, horror needs to be constantly fed to occur; it needs longer stimulus, that stimulus being fear. There are many ways to produce a constant fear. One of them is symbolism that is present in the setting, characters and objects of stories. These resources are used to intensify feelings, identify character traits, introduce themes and concepts (e.g. good and evil, death) and foreshadow events in the plot. These symbols manage to be so powerful that cloud the line between the 'I' as a spectator and the 'It' that I am witnessing, forming a unit that transforms the meaning of this symbol into something real and menacing, creating the Horror effect.

It has been many years since Christianity provided one of the mainstays for western culture, shaping our conception of the world in different ways but mainly changing the individual consciousness. This transformation was (and still is) possible thanks to a range of innate tendencies called, by the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, archetypes. The archetypes are archaic patterns and images which derive from the collective unconscious and conform a matrix. This conditions the consciousness of human beings providing models of behaviour in many aspects of life (religion, culture, ethics, moral and so on). By providing these standards, archetypes have the ability to produce intense and deep feelings and emotions in human consciousness. Archetypes do not have a physical form but they are present in our daily life, influencing our conscious activity through dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, etc. So, that is why it can be said that certain emotions and feelings are sculptured by Christianity whether you are a religious person or not.

Horror author H.P. Lovecraft is famous for his terrifying novels and short stories, being also very well known for his defence and love for monsters and horror literature. But, are his works intrinsically horrifying or does their effect depend on something else? Through the deconstruction of one of his works, “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”, by analyzing the symbolism present and searching for the origin of their interpretation, it is possible to say that the effect of horror generated by the symbolism in the story is the product of a culture heavily influenced by Christianity, rather than a natural response provoked by the use of such symbols. The process of deconstruction will be possible through inserting the text into another cultural context, in which the tensions present are expected to disappear, and create a whole new interpretation. The new context chosen for the symbolic analysis will be the Mapuche culture, which provides us with a rich set of cultural symbols, and their oral tradition contains many myths and stories, which they pass along in their own language.

More in detail, the objectives of this work are:

Main Objective:

To prove that the effect of horror produced by the symbolism in the story is not a natural reaction to it, but it is determined by our Christian based culture instead.

Objectives of the analysis:

- To find and interpret the symbolism present in the story from Jungian psychoanalysis
- To explain the symbolism found from western socio-literary theories.
To deconstruct the story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" to find ambiguity within the text.

- To insert the story in the context of Mapuche cosm vision.

Objective of the pedagogical implications:

- To carry out a pedagogical proposal in which the deconstruction of the story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" helps the development of critical thinking in English literature class within the framework of CLIL.

2. Analysis

In this part of our study, an analysis focused on the plurality of interpretations of the short story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" is presented. This examination of the work is divided into three main foci. It starts with an analysis from classical structuralism through finding and interpreting Jungian symbols and archetypes, and with a view from Christianity. We continue with Derrida's deconstruction of the work through the evincing of tensions in the text and reviewing the Christian Western approach, to end with the reinterpretation of the work in the eyes of the Mapuche culture.

2.1 Deconstructing the Structuralist and Jungian approach to Beyond the Wall of Sleep.

In order to deconstruct the story, it is necessary to explain that deconstruction needs to be based on a structuralist analysis. For this purpose, the method of analysis created by the french structuralist theorist Lévi-Strauss is going to be used to carry out a structuralist analysis. First of all, it is necessary to say that Lévi-Strauss developed his literary studies based on myth, since he considered them as a controversial type of text. In the analysis of myth, Levi Strauss found that the structure of language, as well as those of all other areas of human-thought, is formed by binary oppositions; that is, terms that are opposed and cannot be together in the same sequence of signifiers. Based on that, there are always prevailing binary oppositions inside a text. The anthropologist argues that myths are created in the attempt to solve contradictions of "all classes" establishing a relationship or trying to establish them - between an aspect of life and its opposite in a chain of binary oppositions.

Although Lévi-Strauss intended to limit his study to the myth, he clearly expressed to be interested in discovering the structure that underlies the general human thought, thus his study of myth can be extrapolated to the analysis of any literary construct. To face these binary oppositions that are predominant in the short story “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” allows us to take the first step toward deconstruction, since in deconstruction a deep reading of the text focuses on the relationship between common binary oppositions in the work, in which one term seems to be privileged or more highly valued over the other. A post-structuralist reading might try to look closely at this hierarchy in order to show how it is not sustained throughout the work, finding tensions and ambiguities, or how two terms are not oppositional but interdependent.

There can be at least two interpretations for the same story, in the case of “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” there is one related with the generation of horror while the other reading is very different. In order to demonstrate that those different readings are present in the same
story, it is necessary to use Jacques Derrida’s theory of Deconstruction. This theory was born as a response against the structuralist theories, being its main objective to demonstrate that there are no structures present in a piece of writing. Moreover, Derrida states that there are not even genres (legal texts, scientific texts, etc) but only “texts”. This idea derives from the term “vertical axis”, which is the spine of every text.

In order to explain what a vertical axis is, it is necessary to remember some key concepts from Jakobson’s theory. The first one is “the axis of selection”, in which the langue (or the language as a system) resides and the other one is the axis of combination in which parole (or the real use of the language) is located. 

In linguistic terms, the axis of selection contains the signs that could be chosen depending on a specific linguistic function while in the axis of combination remains the signs in context, this means, the words that fulfill in the best way a linguistic function. In the case of “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” the main structure or vertical axis is horror and the axis of combination is the language and words chosen in order to produce it.

In the story the author uses a great variety of adjectives and descriptions in order to produce horror, e.g. “Slater was gone, leaving behind an unrecognizable pulp-like thing that had been a living man but an hour before” (Lovecraft 12). In this fragment, the author uses those adjectives to create a feeling of repulsion at the moment of facing a homicide. This example evidence the purpose of every word working in the axis of combination in order to achieve the main function of the vertical axis which is to produce horror, giving structure to the text.

But, based on Derrida’s deconstruction, this structure can be destroyed. This can be done by finding a tension within the text that can refute this vertical axis. Since in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” the vertical axis is the generation of horror, the tension found is that the generation of horror is just a mere construction created by the influence of christianity in the western culture. This axis can be changed by making the deconstructive analysis based on the Saussure’s signifier chain in which it is possible to keep the signifiers freeze.

The elements analysed under the light of structuralism can be reinterpreted. This possibility of giving a new reading to those elements present throughout the text can be considered a tension. The tensions created particularly by the binary oppositions within the text are disassembled because, as Derrida argued, these oppositions are arbitrary and intrinsically unstable. The structures themselves begin to overlap and collide, and ultimately, dismantle themselves from inside the text. In particular, the negativization of dichotomies should be reformulated under a new sign, from the positive, to get the balance between opposites. This can only be achieved through a new interpretation. This new reading will be given, first, by evincing, criticising and questioning the reading influenced by the Christian background.

2.1.1 Binary oppositions within Beyond the Wall of Sleep and their deconstruction.

1. Civilization and Savagery: inside Lovecraft’s short story, a clear distinction between the narrator and one of the characters is done; the first one is an educated man, a Doctor, while the second one is portrayed as a savage man, with an animal-like behaviour.
It was from a youthful reverie filled with speculations of this sort that I arose one afternoon in the winter of 1900–1901, when to the state psychopathic institution in which I served as an interne was brought the man whose case has ever since haunted me so unceasingly. His name, as given on the records, was Joe Slater, or Slaader, and his appearance was that of the typical denizen of the Catskill Mountain region; one of those strange, repellent scions of a primitive colonial peasant stock whose isolation for nearly three centuries in the hilly fastnesses of a little-travelled countryside has caused them to sink to a kind of barbaric degeneracy, rather than advance with their more fortunately placed brethren of the thickly settled districts. (Lovecraft 11)

From this excerpt of the text, the opposition is more than clear. Nevertheless, we consider that it can be broken and re-interpreted, by understanding the characters’ traits from a different view. This opposition is given by the Doctor versus Joe Slater's, the latter being directly shown as a wild man with animalistic manners, without morals, and with a low intellectual level. This image contributes to the generation of horror in the story because, for Christians parameters, normative behaviour is essential and the breakdown of morality is inexcusable. For the Christian dogma, men must stay away from animalistic behaviour. As Kristeva states,

And yet, the biblical concern with separating and ordering encounters further on the supposedly previous distinction between vegetable and animal. In the postdiluvian situation such a distinction is brought out again under the guise of the flesh/ blood opposition. On the one hand there is bloodless flesh (destined for man) and on the other, blood (destined for God). Blood, indicating the impure, takes on the "animal" seme of the previous opposition and inherits the propensity for murder of which man must cleanse himself. (96)

Men should be separated from other beast to reach purity and be worthy of God's protection, that is why any action that distances man from God's protection would mean entering the realm of the unknown, of the deepest human fears; creating the effect of horror in the reader who identifies himself with the actions within the text. Since, according to Kristeva, all literary work has the power of carrying the abject, creating the proper atmosphere where the limits between the 'I' as spectator and the 'otherness' that I am witnessing are completely diluted.

But in a deeper analysis, our main concern is what happens when we take away the Christian background from the reading. Being in contact with a more primitive side of human behaviour should not necessarily be seen as something bad, nor as an action that deprives us from being closer to God. Without this Christian consciousness and sense of morality, this opposition between the civilized and the savage man would not generate the abject and, as a consequence, the horror effect will not be part of the story's interpretation.

Nevertheless, if we consider the binary opposition of civilized man and the savage man represented respectively by the Doctor and Joe Slater, the separating line becomes blurry. Can we regard as civilized a man that in order to continue living an apparent mystical epiphany let another man die? This question leads us to affirm that one of the main
oppositions in which the story is built collapses by itself, based on the actions of its characters. We believe that through the story “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” there is no consistency in the behaviour of the characters, making it impossible to keep this dichotomy standing, largely dismantling the initial storyline.

3. Reason and Insanity

The issue of Joe Slater's insanity is yet to be solved. If there is no doubt that the man behaves irrationally, we must also remember that one of the doctors who takes care of him, and that is precisely the narrator of the story, claims to have connected with the world described by Slater and the being who possessed him. This binary opposition between reason and insanity can hold one of the keys to a possible interpretation of this tale at a mythical level, as it involves the assertion of the existence of other universes and beings with a level of cosmic consciousness superior to our own. This tension will allow us to partly deconstruct the short story; tracing the path to find the main tension of the work, the existence of horror.

The text dismantles this opposition by bringing closer the positions of Slater, who seems to be possessed and behaves irrationally with the one of the doctor, a scientist without any sign of mental perturbation who begins to believe the stories of his patient, to a level such that he tries to enter Joe’s mind to find the world that this man talks about.

And yet I could extract nothing definite from the man. The sum of all my investigation was, that in a kind of semi-corporeal dream-life Slater wandered or floated through resplendent and prodigious valleys, meadows, gardens, cities, and palaces of light; in a region unbounded and unknown to man; that there he was no peasant or degenerate, but a creature of importance and vivid life, moving proudly and dominantly, and checked only by a certain deadly enemy, who seemed to be a being of visible yet ethereal structure, and who did not appear to be of human shape, since Slater never referred to it as a man, or as aught save a thing. (Lovecraft 14)

Another way of questioning this dichotomy is by question the affirmation of Slater's insanity. The narrator of the story finally manages to enter into Slater's mind and visualizes exactly what the man had previously described. The Doctor -and narrator- even communicates with this shining being who is in possession of Slater's actions. Having this in mind, can we assert that Slater's visions were the product of madness, and that they are not reflecting a real world, and a real battle? Certainly this question gives us the opportunity to deny the dichotomy between reason and insanity within the story. We can find endless semantic possibilities within this range, and they will depend on the reading that is given to the story. We must not forget that from the classic reading we are building a vision of madness from the rules of reason; understanding reason as the clinging to the standards set by Western culture, and the morals of Christianity.

Studying the impact of Christian culture in the interpretation of the story, and its influence to create the Horror effect, we find that insanity, or madness, is at a great extent a producer of abjection since it takes us away from the limits that we know, those that make us feel safe. The separation of men and the breakup of his relationship with God through sin is undoubtedly one of the greatest fears of the Christian world. For Christianity, madness may
be sin, as a madman is one who does not follow the straight path of virtue, one who is tipped to irrationality and is carried by wild impulses. St. Thomas Aquinas raised the consideration of moral insanity as sin.

Kristeva, when analyzing modern literature, takes some authors motifs as examples to show how the abject is presented on their works, she talks about Dostoyevsky and the object of 'The Possessed' a novel in which revolutionists possessed the soul of Russia, as a plague, attacking men by way of their sanity, and that, unless exorcised by a renewed faith in Orthodox Christianity and a pure nationalism, they would drive his country over the precipice. This relates to our analysis because it accounts for acts that cross the border of established norms, they lose the moral limits, as does the man driven by insanity.

The lack of education, the apparent wilderness and his murderous act, coupled with the visions aligned with this apparent possession of his body and consciousness by a supernatural being, make of Joe Slater an instance of the abject to himself – unable to distinguish between himself and the original object (the shining thing seeking revenge). These in turn cause his descent into insanity, where the boundaries disintegrate between himself and his delusion, between sanity and insanity, and he is brought to a frightening state of indistinction. The abjection of the character works within ‘Beyond the Wall of Sleep’ to demonstrate the abjection of people afraid of losing their minds, and the process by which their intellectual selves can become separated from their physical selves in a horrifying creation of alterity within their own minds. However, this analysis leads us once again to ask how this would be seen from a non-Christian background.

. Life and Death

One of the most common and natural oppositions within the universal narrative is that of life and death. In “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” the confrontation between life and death comes by the hand of Joe Slater. Even though this character has little - or none- development inside the short story, his actions and argument were driven by the death impulse. The foundation of the story is Slater’s murderous act, and the story reaches its climax at the moment of his death.

There is a kind of repulsion related to this act because of human survival instinct. This instinct is intrinsic to every living creature and helps them avoid risky situations in which danger (wounds or injuries) or even death can be involved. This repulsion is portrayed through the reaction of Joe’s neighbours when facing the homicide, any of them could be the next victim. But, knowing that humans are not purely instinctive creatures, we raise the question of whether the influence of Christianity and its image about death may influence against this natural repulsion. While on the one hand, the fear of death is real, it is also true that for Christian culture there is life after death. Consequently, based on the western culture, it is possible to say that this opposition is somehow neutralized by Christian religion. Christianity set its basis on the belief that there is life after death. This religion claims that it is in Heaven where human’s souls will reside for the eternity in company of the creator of everything, and where humans will achieve eternal life. Based on this idea, death is not something to be afraid of, instead, death is a kind of reward for the life an individual lives on earth. As it is written in the Bible: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (King James Bible, 1 Corinthians 2.9).

2.1.2 Archetypes in the story and their deconstruction.

Jung, based on his studies of the human psyche, establishes in Arquetipos e Inconsciente Coletivo that there are two centers of the personality. The first one is the center of the consciousness and it is called ego, while the second one is called The Self and involves the consciousness, the unconscious and the ego. From the moment of the birth, there is a sense of integrity intrinsic to every human being which is separated into two parts as the natural process of ego-differentiation is carried out in order to form one’s personality. This sense of integrity is called by Jung “The Self”. The self is the center and totality of the psyche, it includes and directs every element in our minds, it accepts and reconciliates all the psyche components. It even balances our opposite feelings. There is also a dark side of an individual’s personality and it is called The Shadow. The shadow is the confrontation of our obscure depreciated emotions and impulses with our chosen conscious attitude that are accepted by society, religion, and ourselves. The articulation of The Self and The Shadow constitutes the Jungian archetype.

Even though Jung defines very clearly what an archetype is and the types that could be present in a story, he does not establish fixed classifications or categories. In order to solve this problem, the American author Carol S. Pearson, based on Jung’s works, together with CASA (Center for Archetypal Studies and Applications) developed a study called The twelve archetypes. Throughout this work, Pearson established twelve Archetypes and described them in depth.

Following the line of Deconstruction, it is also possible to find tensions in the analysis of archetypes. Archetypes, as most part of the structuralist approach, are constructed based on binary oppositions and they provide a description of personality that is quite limited and lacks of subtleties. That is why, in the analysis of the characters we can find actions, emotions and thoughts that escape this archetypal description; allowing us to dismantle them. While most of the actions of the Doctor allow his identifications with the Seeker Archetype, some other battle them, and betray the spirit of this archetype. In the same way, during the narration the behaviour of the Shining Being is not stable, expressing thoughts and concerns that do not match with the Villain Archetype. In the following process of deconstruction we will expose these characters’ traits that are in conflict and will somehow amend them by showing that this characters are not static but versatile.

In the story “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”, based on Pearson’s analysis of Jungian studies, it is possible to find two main archetypes. The first one is The seeker. This archetype is present in the character of the doctor. According to Pearson, this archetype is characterized by its inquisitive mind, it leaves the known to explore unknown dimensions as the doctor does it throughout the development of the story. This archetype, as the doctor in the story, is always learning and looking for something that would improve its life: In the case of the doctor, he was working (some time ago) in a machine that would allow him to hear human thought. So, he takes advantage of Joe’s case and he returns to work on it. Usually throughout this path of discovery, the character that represents the archetype of The Seeker works by itself avoiding support from others. In the case of the doctor, he worked by himself
mainly because he was afraid of skepticism from his colleagues. The main feature of this archetype is that they keep on moving until they fulfill their goal, like the doctor, who against all odds kept on working on his theory. Moreover, based on Pearson’s studies, the addictive quality of this archetype is the self-centeredness, characteristic which is very well portrayed by the doctor who experimented with his patient until Joe’s death, without helping him in order to achieve his goal.

Nevertheless in our story it is possible to find at least three tensions that do not match all in all the description of this archetype. First of all, the doctor narrates his uncertainty on whether or not his experience with The Shining Being was real, and accepts Dr. Fenton’s deduction that it was all part of the narrator’s imagination. “As I look back across the years I realise how unreal it seems; and sometimes half wonder if old Dr. Fenton was not right when he charged it all to my excited imagination” (Lovecraft 14). This hesitation is not expected from the seeker, who is supposed to stay true to himself and his identity. Secondly, the doctor shows nonconformity with the lack of interest of the nurse that was in the room when this peculiar event occurred “In the cell with us was one nurse, a mediocre fellow who did not understand the purpose of the apparatus, or think to inquire into my course” (15). There is no reason for the seeker to be somehow annoyed and criticize the nurse’s indifference, since this personality type does not allow external help, he wants to do it all by himself, the nurse’s attitude would be ideal for The Seeker. Finally, the doctor goes on vacation, leaving all his new findings behind, he just anxiously goes to sleep that night, watches the new star the next day and ceased investigating

As I have already admitted, my superior, old Dr. Fenton, denies the reality of everything I have related. He vows that I was broken down with nervous strain, and badly in need of the long vacation on full pay which he so generously gave me. He assures me on his professional honour that Joe Slater was but a low-grade paranoiac, whose fantastic notions must have come from the crude hereditary folk-tales which circulate in even the most decadent of communities. All this he tells me—yet I cannot forget what I saw in the sky on the night after Slater died. (17)

The seeker’s most prominent aspect is the ambition, the constant search for improvement. Why would the doctor just take those months off and abandon his new discovery to the point that he is not sure if it was actually real? The doctor’s vacations can be interpreted as a surrender, it would mean that The seeker stopped seeking. In any case, as much as the seeker has defined features, it is possible to find characteristics that differ from it in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”’s doctor’s character, that create tensions and permit the deconstruction.

Analyzing from Jung's theories, no matter what archetype stands out in a character, the shadow is always present. The shadow represents the unconscious aspect of personality, characterized by traits and attitudes that the conscious ego does not recognize as its own, or that remain repressed. As Jung declared “(…) Beneath this is the Shadow, a demonic image of evil that represents the side of the Self that we reject” (543). In the same vein, analyzing the story’s archetypes with Pearson classification, we find that The Shining Being represents the shadow side of the warrior. The warrior is tough and courageous, and he would only fight for what really matters with fairness and integrity, seeking win/win outcomes. Nevertheless,
its shadow side is, as named by Pearson, the Villain, this archetype has an obsessive need to win, compulsively and without ethical principles; this archetypal character tends to dominate or suppress others in order to achieve its mission.

In "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," The Shining Being who possessed Joe Slater seeks to achieve his revenge at all costs, regardless of the damage caused to whom we could consider as its vessel. This shining entity with a higher consciousness that seems to live inside Joe Slater - and that can only be accessed through a state of unconsciousness - struggles to find revenge against a being of similar characteristics to its own, who appears to be its opposite. In the development of the story, Slater is affected by the actions taken by this being of light as it is in possession of his body. From the moments when he just seemed to lose consciousness and started to speak of places that could only be known by the Shining Being and that Slater could not even imagine, going through the murder of his neighbour, whom he killed to avoid being retained, until his death caused by the inability of his organism to bear the communication established between the Shining Being and the doctor. All of these actions lead to the assertion that this Shining Being represents the archetype of the Villain as portrayed by Pearson.

However, there are two main tensions in the text that differ from this categorization. To begin with, the Shining being is seeking for revenge, to achieve this is his main goal, nothing will stop him from carrying out his objective, he would burn anything that stood in his way, but is it really a lack of morality and goodness? Later in the story we learn that the shining being is made of what it seems to be fire, it would be impossible for him not to burn what he touches, besides, despite the fact that he wants vengeance, his fight is against an evil being, which makes it a fair and morally accepted battle.

Of the oppressor I cannot speak. You on earth have unwittingly felt its distant presence—you who without knowing idly gave to its blinking beacon the name of Algol, the Daemon-Star. It is to meet and conquer the oppressor that I have vainly striven for aeons, held back by bodily encumbrances. Tonight I go as a Nemesis bearing just and blazingly cataclysmic vengeance. (Lovecraft 16)

In the same way, the shadow side of the warrior would not care or have any mercy and thoughtfulness for anyone as long as he can get his personal gain, yet the Luminous being seems to have a certain consideration for Joe Slater’s death, even when the man’s body was his prison for decades during daytime.

He is better dead, for he was unfit to bear the active intellect of cosmic entity. His gross body could not undergo the needed adjustments between ethereal life and planet life. He was too much of an animal, too little a man; yet it is through his deficiency that you have come to discover me, for the cosmic and planet souls rightly should never meet. He has been my torment and diurnal prison for forty-two of your terrestrial years. (16)

On the whole, even when the Luminous being suits the villain archetype in most of his aspects, we can find some tensions within the text that show contrast with the shadow side of the warrior.
In a totally different circumstance, we find the character of Joe Slater. From the analysis of archetypes, it is intended to find a pattern or image that seems to have a universal meaning; a clearly identifiable and meaningful prototypical behaviour is sought. For this character, his actions are limited and he is not in aware of his conduct. However, we could not define him as the prototype of the alienated character, or one that is out of his mind, since he is neither sufficiently developed in the story, nor seems to have a particular personality. That is why, in the traditional reading, we will consider Slater as a means in the process of individuation of the other characters. Joe is the way to achieve the objectives for the Shining Being and the Doctor. Nevertheless, to affirm that this character has no importance within the story would be misguided since he is the propeller and the starting point of the story.

2.2 Symbolic analysis of the work from the Mapuche cosmovision

The resignification of the text from a different view implies a new analysis considering both the constituent elements of the work, and the work itself, full and as a unit of meaning. The insertion of Lovecraft's short story in the context of the Mapuche culture for symbolic analysis should be carried out taking into account the Mapuche’s religiosity and its fundamental concepts. It is important to remember that the Mapuche’s religious beliefs are based on the worship of the spirits of the ancestors (either mythical or real).

For the Mapuche, the cosmos is divided into platforms and areas inhabited by beings related to the good and the evil. However, in their view, evil and good are not so radically opposed as they are in the Christian culture, so it is possible that the wekufe (evil spirits) act for good and pillán (good spirits) for evil, without any confusion between the two kinds of spirits. This does not mean the Mapuche religiosity does not distinguish between good and evil but that it considers that one cannot exist without the other. In this context, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" takes on a radically opposed meaning to the Christian Western interpretation.

This new analysis of the short story has been done from the deconstructive process. We take and analyse the same elements previously studied with a structuralist point of view and which conceptions have been dismantled based on context, and re-analyse them under the light of this culture’s beliefs. We show how every character can be seen from another perspective, changing their mission inside the text and even their importance within the story. This reinterpretation demonstrates how the story as a whole can be re-read from this new approach.

2.2.1 Symbolic analysis of the characters

Doctor

In the archetypal analysis of characters, we identified the Doctor as ‘The Seeker’ archetype, since he leaves the comfort of the known searching for the unknown and has an eagerness for discovery and learning. However, in the typical reading of the story he also contributes to the creation of horror, through his actions and his interest in the visions of this crazy man, since he blurs the line that separates him from the madness of his patient. By resignifying the story from the Mapuche vision, we could characterize the doctor as a Shaman. The name given to the Shaman in the Mapuche society is Machi, they are the intermediary between the Mapuche people and the Wenu mapu or land of the above. Through their mediation, the deities give health, welfare, peace and abundance to the indigenous people. The Machi,
during the shamanistic rite (called Nguillatun) sends his/her soul into the spirit world and talks to Nechechen, the Supreme Being. Using this power of communication with supernatural beings, the Machi expels evil spirits that harm people and gives medicines during the Machitún, using his/her knowledge and healing powers.

In this case, he is not only a Doctor (hence, he has the ability to treat diseases), but he is also able to establish contact with another dimension and communicate with a supernatural being. This communication is accomplished in a process that could be compared with a shamanistic rite, it has a process in which the Doctor enters in a trance, and manages to establish a interaction with this other world. In the Mapuche culture this barrier that limits what a Doctor should do and think about his patient’s apparent hallucinations that is broken for the Christian World, is not really broken since it is non-existent. Contrary to the analysis previously done within Christian culture, this behavior is regarded as completely normal, common, and well known by Mapuche people. From this view, we are far from a tale of horror.

Shinning being

Due to his eagerness for revenge, in the structuralist-Jungian analysis, the shining being fits into the description of 'The Villain', which is the shadow part of 'The Warrior'. Nevertheless, this analysis is done by ascribing human features to the Shining Being. We must not forget that the archetypes are evidently based on human psyche, since in the western Christian culture it is difficult to find a parallel for this creature. However, the Mapuche are a culture with a rich variety of myths, legends and tales, and in whose worldview the supernatural beings are widely described and characterized. Therefore, we can find in its pantheon of deities a parallel to this "Shining Being".

Among the Mapuche, this being would be identifiable as a Pillán, which is described as a being made of light, passion, intuition, dreams and infinite understanding; an endless and ageless being who is not governed by the rules of time as we know it. This description fits perfectly with that given in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep", as we are encountered with an entity that physically is not human and that shines brightly. Besides, this being is moved by passion and dreams, trying to get his revenge at all costs:

Then the resplendent aura of my brother of light drew near and held colloquy with me, soul to soul, with silent and perfect interchange of thought. The hour was one of approaching triumph, for was not my fellow-being escaping at last from a degrading periodic bondage; escaping forever, and preparing to follow the accursed oppressor even unto the uttermost fields of ether, that upon it might be wrought a flaming cosmic vengeance which would shake the spheres? (15)

Furthermore, this entity seems to have infinite knowledge and understanding. As described by the narrator, in his dialogue with this cosmic entity it was explained to him the very existence of this being and its relationship with the ethereal and earthly worlds; as well as the inexistence of space and time limits for cosmic consciousness.
“I am your brother of light, and have floated with you in the effulgent valleys. It is not permitted me to tell your waking earth-self of your real self, but we are all roamers of vast spaces and travellers in many ages. Next year I may be dwelling in the dark Egypt which you call ancient, or in the cruel empire of Tsan-Chan which is to come three thousand years hence. You and I have drifted to the worlds that reel about the red Arcturus, and dwelt in the bodies of the insect-philosophers that crawl proudly over the fourth moon of Jupiter. How little does the earth-self know of life and its extent! How little, indeed, ought it to know for its own tranquillity! Of the oppressor I cannot speak. (16)

In this new reading, the existence of this being becomes naturalized and, although the fact of possession can generate fear in the Mapuche as it would mean loss of health, the naturalization of the phenomenon allows to demolish the possible existence of horror. Moreover, for the Mapuche, these supernatural beings are not inherently good or bad, so they do not generate fear by means of their mere existence. Additionally, within this culture dichotomies are not present as opposites but as complements; that is, the good could not exist without evil. Specifically, whether in the reading we consider that the actions of this Shining being fall into the domain of 'the bad' or not, they may generate criticism, but not a sense of fear among the receptors of the short story.

Homicide

The story unfolds from the actions of Joe, who wakes up one morning giving terrible howls, making noises that seem to come from the underworld, shouting his determination to find and kill certain "thing that shines and shakes and laughs" (Lovecraft 12). He beats a neighbour who tried to restrain him to a lifeless pulp, then fled into the mountains. Later, Joe is on trial for murder, absolved by reason of insanity and imprisoned in the psychiatric hospital where the narrator works. Within the Christian analysis, and according to what was proposed by Kristeva, Joe's actions cause fear because they are part of the abject, they have to do with what affects the lack of order, limits and rules; with what makes the fragility of the law evident. Below, the motif of murder will be analysed.

For the Mapuche, death is brought by the wekufe, and it is decided by the higher spirits. Men should not have any influence on it. In general, the Mapuche culture does not resort to human sacrifice, they avoid it. For them to feel the need to do so they would have to be suffering from something big and terrible, something that escapes all rationality; They would have to be motivated by influences or forces that are superior to their own will to commit an act of barbarism. A human sacrifice could only be explained if they are looking for an act of cosmic repair, as it is in the case of the killing in battle, in this case it is a fair death because they are looking to restore the order of peace.

In spite of their respect for the fate of every man's life, human sacrifice is rooted in the Mapuche culture, as part of its myths; a clear example is the Mapuche myth about the universal flood, many versions of this myth make explicit the need for sacrifice (with a human victim) for life, the new cosmic life, to be created. The conflict between Kai-Kai and Tren-Tren, who kills men, ends only with the ritual killing of a victim. The return to the origin, or the restore to order, is marked by a sacrifice offered by men to the deities. On the basis of the myth of Kai-Kai and Tren-Tren we find meaning to the death of the man killed.
by Joe Slater and Slater himself. Joe is thrust into a battle between supernatural beings who disrupts the natural order of the universe and peace. To achieve the restoration of the lost order it is necessary a human sacrifice, even if this is not done consciously and willingly. It is not a sacrifice offered directly to supernatural beings, but a necessary one to channel both the story and the path of the shining being.

The meeting with this being is in the context of a cosmic struggle, as it is in the Mapuche battles, achieving the revenge sought by this entity would be a fair death, and what it seeks is to restore the peace order. That is why the homicide in this context does not qualify to be classified as an abject, despite breaking some rules of life in terms of the Mapuche people, this is justified for reasons that seem natural to their worldview. Unlike the Christian context, in the Mapuche cosmovision, murder can be explained and even be accepted as it has substantiation with historical and mythical roots.

Joe Slater’s Insanity

Based on Slater’s actions and visions, the narrator of the story and its reader can undoubtedly assert that he has lost his mind. The above analysed from the point of view of a culture shaped by Christianity. But seen from the Mapuche culture, Joe is not necessarily a character mentally disturbed, nor a man who hallucinates - in fact, in a certain way, this is the assertion of the narrator, who considers that these vivid dreams could be part of a parallel world that really exists and therein lies his fascination with his patient - for the Mapuche, having a connection with the world above, with supernatural beings, is a necessity, so they often resort to rituals to achieve it. The rituals enable the connection or encounter between the sacred and the profane. The opposition between the sacred and the profane has a complementary nature and is the main principle of the whole cosmic order. Therefore, the apparent communication of Slater with the supernatural does not represent an act of madness, but a possible situation that is even wanted by the Mapuche.

2.2.2 General analysis of the story from Mapuche Culture

This new reading done from another extra linguistic context, i.e. considering a completely different audience or set of potential receptors, has allowed us a new vision of the work. Starting from cultural differences, it is clear that what for the Christian Western culture evokes fear that feed the horror, for others, like the Mapuche culture could not do it. From the consideration and analysis of the characters and their actions previously done, we have interpreted the general work in the light of the Mapuche worldview. First, we have established that no character has a smaller share in the work, and that they are susceptible of being analysed. Secondly, that their actions and particular descriptions do not have the qualities of the abject, so they do not generate deep fear in the reader. And, thirdly, that all of their actions and interactions can be seen as natural and common to the Mapuche people, transforming this Lovecraftian short story into just one more tale in the typical narrative of this culture. In this way, a general analysis made in light of the beliefs of this culture will allow us to overthrow the concept of horror that seems to be the focus of the story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep"

To begin with, we have proved that the actions of the characters are not a reflection of lack of reason, they are not evoking evil, and are not part of the sphere of the terrifying. First, the actions of the narrator of the story - the Doctor - are not arbitrary, representing obsession
or lack of sanity; they are only the expression of a shamanistic work typical of the Mapuche culture. Second, the Shining Being in a traditional Christian West reading would instill fear because of its unknown origin, extra-human characteristics, and violent behavior; whereas in the Mapuche culture is nothing more than a Pillán, supernatural being that tends to be part of human life, taking behaviors that may be favorable or adverse to the Mapuche community. However, these behaviors are understood as the nature of the supernatural Being. And, thirdly, the situation experienced by Joe Slater will be nothing but a disease brought by the Pillanes; or, in a less natural vision, but more positive, it will be an instance of communication between man and the Wenu Mapu. Thus, we find in these characters, their actions and experiences, behavior that is not unknown or feared by the Mapuche people.

Continuing this analysis, we must remember that the Mapuche narrative has a strong connection with their daily activities. Consequently, the Mapuche discourse has an intracultural character, which means that it is based on the ideas, values, references, codes and genres of their own cultural tradition. However, we also believe that the reading of narratives from other cultures will be equally understood from their own cosmovision; assimilating the contents and comparing, contrasting and mixing them with those of their own culture that help them generate meaning. That's why, in a general reading of the story, the Mapuches will relate each character with one of their surroundings, each action with a typical one from their daily lives, and each event - natural or supernatural - with one of which they have prior knowledge. Within this people, as we have previously noted, the supernatural does not represent something unknown, it is something with which they live and that they know thanks to the stories of their oral tradition. Additionally, death, despite being feared, is understood and accepted, and it does not represent a bad thing by itself, even though the circumstances surrounding it can. Even if we find unnatural factors in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" that are representative of "the bad", the story does not meet the conditions for the generation of abjection, because for the Mapuche "the bad" is only a part of the universe. the Mapuche culture from its bases destroys the binary opposition of good and evil, when considering them as complementary and not as opposites. In other words, in this reading, the overall story does not qualify as a horror story.

3. Pedagogical Implications

According to the Chilean ministerial Plans and Programs, one of the main objectives of the Chilean Education, apart from delivering knowledge, is to develop the students’ competences and attitudes that enable them to better deploy their competences and foster their integral development, so that they can cope better with the world. For this purpose, the Transversal Fundamental Objectives (OFT) were created across all sectors that make up the curriculum in order to contribute significantly to the process of personal growth and self-assertion. However, a review of the English plans for Chilean secondary education, particularly for the higher levels, third and fourth year of secondary education in the humanist-science area, common and differentiated plans, allows to find a lack of proposals that demonstrate a genuine interest in developing, particularly, critical thinking.

The importance of developing critical thinking lies in giving the students the tools to become an integral person and, at the same time, be a change agent. But that is not the reality for most of Chilean students, since they tend to accept and to take as almost universal truths
what is imposed to them in the classroom context. The prevailing Chilean education is not changing this fact.

Nevertheless, we believe that teachers have the opportunity to change this situation. Under this context, we came through with the idea of using literary deconstruction to achieve the development of critical thinking along with acquisition of a foreign language, in this case, English. We have designed a classroom proposal to be included in the curriculum for Language and Communication, Foreign Language "Inglés Cultural-Literario", specifically for third and fourth year of Chilean secondary school, in differentiated Humanistic-Scientific area. This proposal aims to reinforce the development of critical and creative thinking through the use of deconstruction, using the preceding analysis of the short story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" as a reference base.

Within this context, a unit composed of four lessons has been developed to be included into the regular lessons. Each one of these lessons has an extension of two pedagogical hours, of forty-five minutes each. It is aimed to students of sixteen years old or older, and it could be applied in a class group of any size. Every lesson will focus on a different part of the deconstructive analysis process, starting from the comprehensive reading of the texts provided. Based on Bloom’s taxonomy, the students are expected to use skills from the higher levels of cognition, giving them the starting point and the tools to develop critical thinking while acquiring the English language.

As this is an activity which develops students’ critical thinking, it is a matter of the utmost importance for the teacher to encourage students to break the established interpretations. In addition, it is very important to explain that tolerance and respect are crucial as there will be a lot of different interpretations depending on the cultural background of every learner. Finally, the students will expose their results. The idea is to explain the tension found within the text that gave them the chance to deconstruct the story. The idea of using the same text is to contrast the different interpretations developed by students. This process will show students the possibility of interpreting the same story in a wide variety of manners.

4. Conclusions

Based on what has been previously discussed in our study, we can conclude that: first, all text is susceptible to be analyzed from different perspectives and cultural contexts, and its meaning is not conditioned by the categorization that can be given to it. Deconstruction allows us to expand the vision and interpretation of any text by finding its internal contradictions and to understand it as a human creation born within a context and with a defined purpose. Second, the work of the author H. P. Lovecraft, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" is not intrinsically a work of horror, rather, the effect of horror while reading it is generated thanks to the interpretation given to it within the Christian Western context. Third, the inclusion of the work in a context different from that of the Christian Western culture can destroy the idea of its horrifying nature. Within the Mapuche culture; this story, its events and characters can be considered part of the everyday narrative of this people, part of the universal nature. Therefore, through this redefinition of the work in a new context, we tested the point of deconstruction in literature, which states that the texts do not have fixed and determined interpretations and meanings. Finally, we propose to consider using
deconstruction in literature to foster the acquisition of English as a foreign language and the development of critical thinking along with language skills. Deconstruction helps students to learn how to think in a transferable way according to the context, promoting argumentative ability, critical and logical reasoning, together with respect for the view of others. This idea is particularly important if we think of extrapolating this analysis to other literary works and even to other areas of human thought; because it allows us to approach the world with the awareness of that the way we understand it may be limited by our cultural background, and that there are other worldviews.

Works Cited


Works Consulted


