

# Fantasy Literature: The Teratological Imaginary between Utopia and Dystopia\*

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MARIUS CONKAN

**I**N FANTASY literature, the monster is the creature that, made by distorting the moral and physical character of the human, tries to upset the balance of the fantastic world. Monstrosity can thus be perceived as the indispensable element for alternative worlds to exist. Neither character imbued with exceptional moral attributes, nor wizards wielding white magic to fight the evil, not even the alternative world itself, often perceived as a paradise, are elements that fascinate and confer dynamism to fantasy fictions, but precisely the skillfully directed monstrosity placed in the service of formation journeys. Since it inherited from the fairy-tale “some fundamental conflict and patterns, such as the quest or combat between good and evil,”<sup>1</sup> fantasy literature skillfully directs archetypal structures of mythical narrations, emphasising monstrosity’s diversity and uplifting it to a cosmic level. This is also due to the fact that, on the one hand, fantasy fiction has as matrix “the relationship between the individual and the infinite,”<sup>2</sup> between man and transcendence and on the other, the essence of this type of fiction lies in “the confrontation of the ordinary and the fabulous.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, we cannot progress so abruptly so as to say that, without the monstrous, fantasy literature would cease to exist, or so as to speculate that, without fantasy literature, the monstrous would not have grown to such proportions. The truth lies somewhere in the middle, but from the perspective of a pertinent interpretation of fantasy literature, we must offer a nuanced understanding of the fact that the monstrous (no matter how it is envisaged) is the red line binding among themselves fictions of other worlds, imagined in relation to the barometer-type “reality,” as some spatiotemporal enclaves.

As I tried to show in the study “Avatars of Fantastic Space,”<sup>4</sup> the chronotope of fantasy worlds portrays the heterotopic principles described by Michel Foucault in the essay “Of Other Spaces” (1967), marking a double rupture from the reality thought of as the structure of reference. On the one hand, we find a spatial rupture, the alternative world being the parallel reality reconfiguring the imaginary of the referential reali-

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ty, and on the other hand we find a temporal rupture that makes the time of the alternative world a sacred one, with a mythical origin. That is why fantasy worlds are spatiotemporal enclaves or heterotopias situated at the interpenetration of the real and the imagined, since they take elements of the referential reality, empower their subversive character in comparison to the norm and change them according to the profile of the imagined reality (that is to say, the secondary world constructed consistently with flawed or reversed laws of the referential reality).

To return to the central theme of this essay—the monstrous—I will mention from the beginning that in fantasy literature, characters undergoing initiation are interchangeable (they can, at any given time, be replaced by other characters from the same category of the neophyte that reaches, through facing evil, a profound knowledge of good). Ancillary creatures and white mages are, in turn, interchangeable (particularly since the latter category is the prototype of the old, wise man who leads the neophytes towards the essence of the world). Then, the space endowed with positivity is, to different extents, a replica of the classical paradise (the place where the essence and the good are revealed in their pure state). Furthermore, the complex morphology of the alternative world is founded on the morphology of the fairy tale, even though the complexity of the narrative scheme, which created the skeleton of fantasy fiction, allows for an array of fantastic nuances. The monstrous is highly individualised in all the novels pertaining to this genre and acquires such a complex psychology that, from a narrative perspective, it departs from the psychology of good which is structurally unchanged at all points in time. To avoid confusion and as a preamble to this essay, I shall point out the following aspects: 1) the monstrous is not merely a manifestation of the original evil (regarded through the eyes of the Christian moral); furthermore, it is the expression of that which does not cohere with human nature (from the physical, to behaviour and world vision); 2) as a deviation from the human, the monstrous contributes precisely to the re-creation of what is human, placing man in the cosmic centre; more accurately, through the meeting with the monstrous and the knowledge of it, man rethinks his/her identity and place in the world, remodelling all that contrasts with the archetype of the beautiful that governs nature; 3) viewed outside Christian moral, the monstrous (like the barbarian of Antiquity) is nothing more than the ex-centric element, that cannot be encompassed by an alternative world, conceived as it is according to the model of the classical paradise. Self-sufficient ever since genesis, this world excludes the monstrous (and the evil equivalent or evil attached to monstrosity) from the beginning, refusing any reconciliation with its nature, which is why fantasy literature can be considered an avatar of the ultimate good, not frequenting any society, a utopian policy even, where negotiating with evil is not done (i.e. Christian immorality); rather its violent destruction is consensual to the survival of the one holding strong Christic values. Fantasy literature offers, as the avatar of the ultimate good and through the exaggeration of the monstrous evil, an exponential image of good, unattainable in society, and that finds itself in a perpetual conflict with evil. That is why fantasy fictions often portray, as a given of nature, the utopian policy of the best world there exists, while envisaging evil as the negative extremity, indeed the merciless disease endangering the utopia.

Prior to justifying such an approach to the monstrous, in a space of literature hastily coined as children's writing, several questions come to mind: to begin with, where does the lineage of the monstrous commence in literature? What are the functions and the finality of the monstrous imagery? Can the monstrous be regarded from the perspective of a new axiology? When, exactly, is the monstrous no longer monstrous?

## Imagination and the Monstrous

**T**HE ISSUE of the monstrous in culture (with its ramifications in literature) can be assessed from a double perspective: teratogenic and teratological. From a teratogenic perspective, I shall try to draw a genealogy of the monstrous which, in the European space, originates from antiquity, in the writings of Aristotle and Empedocles. Pursuing an archaeological approach, I shall create a clinical chart of the monstrous and, according to recurrent aspects of monstrosity, I shall emphasise the manner in which authors of fantasy literature relate to this cultural genealogy of deformities. From a teratological perspective, I shall try to structure the various forms of monstrous found in fantasy literature according to criteria relating, in general terms, to either the manner in which the human characters perceive the fantastic world, or the manner in which fantastic characters perceive the human, or even the manner in which both the human and the supernatural contribute to the construction of dystopian dimensions.

A starting point for this investigation is Marie-Hélène Huet's study, *Monstrous Imagination*,<sup>5</sup> which sheds light on the mutations undergone by the idea of monstrous, placing its roots in the antiquity vision on procreation. In the following, I shall present a synthesis of these mutations, as structured in Huet's work, only to then nuance the part played by the authors of fantasy literature in this cultural scenario.

If Aristotle, in *Generation of Animals*, views the woman as destined by nature to create monsters, as herself a deformed man, in a lost text attributed to Empedocles (Marie-Hélène Huet maintains a certain degree of ambiguity towards the origin and the perpetuation of the text) we learn that maternal imagination<sup>6</sup> is the one that can endow the fetus with monstrous characteristics. Also, "during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the mother's imagination was only one of several elements believed to cause monstrous births: others included sex with the devil or animal, as well as defective sperm or a deformed womb."<sup>7</sup> In other words, as refined by Huet, art and not nature is blameable for the proliferation of monstrosity, while the imagination (seen as a negative psychic process) intervenes and mediates the alienation from the natural model.

"The idea that imagination could give life and form to passive matter became a central theme of Romantic aesthetics,"<sup>8</sup> though it is worth mentioning that the maternal role is substituted by the genius creator who, through imagination, gives birth to monstrous art. "If the theory that credited the maternal imagination with the birth of unnatural progeny implied a theory of art as imitation, Romanticism, in turn, interpreted art as teratology"<sup>9</sup>—herein lies the key to an evolution of the monstrous imaginary, stressing imagination and its creative or, as the case may be, subversive nature.

In antiquity, art is an anomaly of nature and the monstrous is the one created through the distortion of the natural pattern and the intercession of maternal imagination. But then, the romantic paradigm shatters all these prejudices and puts on a pedestal both art and imagination, the monstrous being the metaphor mediating between the two. If we were to problematise further the relation between the monstrous and the imagination as culturally inherited, we can state that, if by the emergence of Romanticism, the monstrous was a deviation from the norm (one caused by imagination which is but the negative element of human nature), Romanticism rehabilitates the monstrous, due to the positive revision of the imagination to which the productive function and high creative meaning are revealed.

If up to Romanticism, monster and monstrous are strictly literal terms, implying deformities of a physical and natural prototype, with Romanticism, the idea of the monstrous acquires metaphorical overtones. Imagination is the one which rebuilds the visible nature in a monstrous manner, one that may confer it fantastic forms. Taking into account the evolution of the concepts of the monstrous and imagination, that have worn throughout time cloaks varying from the positive to the negative, both of which in the extreme, it becomes imperative to question these concepts with reference to the vast domain of fantasy literature.

It is self-evident and understandable that imagination constitutes the driving force of this type of literature, since we have already established that it confers dynamism and originality to the alternative worlds. Through the monstrous, neophyte characters fulfil their formative journeys and acquire a knowledge of good; through the monstrous, fantasy worlds reveal their infallible nature and are deeply particularised in relation to other fictional worlds. Even though the history of the monstrous depends on the cultural revalorisation of imagination, on its positioning in the creative centre of the human being, the imaginary of fantasy fictions hybridises the two grand visions on the monstrous, in a context in which imagination is no longer viewed as a negation of the visible world, but as an opportunity and a possibility to extend this world. As it revisits both the myths of antiquity and the medieval imaginary,<sup>10</sup> fantasy literature projects on the one hand, the monstrous as a distortion of nature and the human, in virtue of defying a pre-established moral; on the other, when it does not envisage the lack of moral values, the monstrous is, *par excellence*, the privileged in the fantastic world, alongside man.

Thus, despite the fact that imagination is the one to deliver the negative monster, it is no longer blameable for its perception, since moral is that which disqualifies or overqualifies the monstrous. In other words, the imagination-monstrous binomial, radicalised from Antiquity and revised by Romanticism, is eliminated from the equation and replaced with the tense relation between the moral and the monstrous, imagination being merely the neutral process that generates the fantastic and, implicitly, the alternative worlds. The imprinting of fantasy literature authors' own ideologies of good and evil onto the imagined universe is unavoidable for any work of creation. Yet, it is more important to note how a certain obscenity of the monstrous makes this type of writing attract as many readers as possible.

In the above, I argued that fantasy literature combines, in a novel manner, the two grand visions of the monstrous. It illustrates, to be precise, the monstrous as a deformed

replica of the human being or as a deviation from nature viewed as a universal design. At the same time, the monstrous can be positive, a metaphor of good embodied in a deformed being. But then, the romantic monstrous, equivalent to the art of genius (so catalogued through the revalorisation of imagination), is taken from its abstract sphere, the obscenity of the fantasy literature monstrous being not a metaphor of art itself, rather one of the profound evil of society. That is why the apotheosis of the monstrous must necessarily be seen in fantasy literature that, through its cohort of non-human and non-natural creatures depicts the greatest of fears—death (this idea will be explored in depth this essay).

## Monstrous Races in Fantasy Literature

**I**T IS necessary to make several more remarks regarding the origin of the term “monstrous” and the circulation of its cultural avatars in order to illustrate further the encounter between the human and the supernatural in fantasy literature. This encounter allows for the birth of the magical imaginary and contains the fantastic nucleus that, in contact with a different world than that in which the reader and characters initially live, causes them a feeling of hesitation. Kevin Alexander Boon, in his study, “Ontological Anxiety Made Flesh,” clears aspects of the idea of monstrous, establishing that the human and the natural are the standards through which monstrosity is portrayed. Everything that does not live up to this particular standard is a “malformation of some universal design,”<sup>11</sup> especially since “human beings are, by divine mandate, supreme in the universe and anything that threatens human form and status is monstrous.”<sup>12</sup>

In fantasy literature, especially in C. S. Lewis’s and J. R. R. Tolkien’s novels, man and nature are, indeed, privileged elements, but the monstrous, as a deviation from these models, is not negated from the very beginning and looked upon as being deformed in comparison with nature and the human, but must, first of all, pass the test of Christian moral. Boon’s following statement upon which, in the context of fantasy literature, new light can be shed seems to me much more relevant: “the divide between human and the monstrous is inextricably bound to mortality: life and death, being and non-being, presence and absence; in the subjective, self and other.”<sup>13</sup> If we view man as representative of life, of the active presence in the cosmos, then, the negative monstrous, the deformity and the non-natural of fantasy literature (portrayed as trespasses of Christian moral) are depictions of death trying to destroy the human being and the natural order. The secondary worlds are contaminated by apocalyptic images through the monstrous evil or the negative monstrous which are able to produce a catastrophe, eventually triggering the violent return of good. John S. Morris’s observations are very relevant here. In the essay “Fantasy in a Mythless Age,” Morris interprets the imaginary of evil in fantasy literature from an entirely new perspective: “the power of Evil, he argues, is not the power of a counter world, but the power of non-order in this world”<sup>14</sup>; and “it is characteristic of fantasy literature that the powers of creation always defeat the power of evil.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, if man and nature are protagonists of creation, of maintaining the exist-

tent order in the world, the negative monstrous is the one that, as a herald of evil and by virtue of its status of unfinished creation, willingly attempts to dismantle the natural order and construct an edifice of death where, as a cosmic given, paradise is located—that is to say, the space of privileged creatures, created in balance with nature.

The negative monstrous is the unfinished creation, not integrated in a pre-established universal order, which, through the dismantling of this order, assumes the right to re-create the entire creation according to laws of evil, annulling all that was built consistent with divine nature. On the other hand, the positive monstrous, represented by deformed creatures (centaurs, fauns, nymphs etc.) helping to fulfill the good, symbolise the prevailing over the mortifying status, being accepted by nature if they do not endanger its equilibrium. These monstrous creatures are unfinished creations, too, but, through knowing and practicing the good, and by not attempting at the cosmic balance, they acquire (beyond the physical aspect), human functions and protect the creation from the constant danger of the negative monstrous.

At the edge of the Ptolemaic world, the monstrous races of the Middle Ages, so catalogued not only because of their difference in physical aspect, but also due to their social practices,<sup>16</sup> unlike those of the inhabitants of Europe, of the known space, are re-valued in a positive manner in modern fantasy literature, then they make proof of irrefutable Christian values. Were they not to embody these values, the monstrous breeds would be exiled to the negative hemisphere of the world, to the edge of the space claimed by an authentically Christian moral (see also C. S. Lewis and Tolkien).

In his work, *From Archetype to Anarchetype*,<sup>17</sup> Corin Braga establishes several causes of monstrosity which motivated and generated the teratological imaginary of the Middle Ages. “The incomplete creation,” as he calls it, is one such cause, tied to the manner in which the medieval man envisioned the Earth according to four sacred cardinal points. The above were designated either by the localisation of the terrestrial Paradise or by the four extremities of the body of Christ (the head, the arms, the legs), that encircled the Earth’s disc, whose *omphalos* was Jerusalem. All that did not belong to these sacred extremities and was placed at the circular edges of the terrestrial disc was considered to be monstrous, an incomplete creation, in full process of becoming the creation of God.

In fantasy literature we often find that such a location of monstrous races, at the end of the secondary world—bearing in mind that the difference herein is that some of them populate precisely the centre of this world—is envisioned as a paradise (see C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*). The criterion according to which some monstrous races are assimilated to the centre reflects the extent to which they protect the natural order and the human being. The Christian vision, of course, is the one to intervene in situations such as this, only from a less moralising perspective than the one that persisted during the Middle Ages.

The monstrous is thus drastically banished to the outskirts of the secondary world only if it cannot be converted according to the principles of good, its deformed physical aspect remaining merely as its magical and fantastic form. When the monstrous perpetuates the “original sin” (another cause of the teratological imaginary, as described by Corin Braga), it is transformed into a mega-monster, a hyperbole of the degeneration of the human, like the orcs and goblins in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Sauron

is the Luciferian entity, an emissary of the original sin, a spirit that knows the value of good to such an extent that, by manipulating the monstrous races, tries to impose a deconstructed replica of nature. On the same level of the imaginary, we have the description of the witch Jadis, from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, who commits and multiplies the archetypal sin. She does this by summoning in the Walpurgis night of the sacrificing of Aslan (the Christic patron of Narnia and the crucial metaphor of Richard Lionheart) a cohort of monstrous races of subterranean origin.

Fantasy literature, through its indisputable masters, Lewis and Tolkien in particular, constructs two types of the monstrous: one that, from its status of incomplete creation, attempts at the cosmic balance, aiming at its own revalorisation through the degeneration of the paradisiacal world, and another that is, in turn, an incomplete creation, but which, through the practicing of good, overcomes the biological and integrates itself into the human condition.

Another poignant idea of Kevin Alexander Boon, relevant to an approach grounded in fantasy literature, is that “in the dialectic of self and other, both are defined, and in the dialectic of the self and the monstrous, the human self is glorified.”<sup>18</sup> Being concerned either with the negative or with the positive monstrous (seeing both aspects as deviations from nature), we find that, in the relation with these two types of the monstrous, only the human identity is privileged from a double perspective.

Through the positive monstrous, represented by ancillary creatures, human characters reach self-knowledge, mediated by a completed formative journey and, through confronting the negative monstrous, the same characters are forced to protect the cosmic balance and nature (and, implicitly, their own existence) from the imminence of death. That is why I argue that the negative monstrous portrays in fantasy literature an acute fear of death. The perfected creation of nature and man himself is interrogated, negated even through its manifestation.

Most exciting in fantasy literature is the confrontation between the positive monstrous and the negative one, often unfolded violently and with an acutely ontological stake: do we defend the human being and the nature that generated it or do we tear them apart? With nature and the human as objectives, this confrontation confers to the alternative dimension a magical substance and mythicizes man, to whom sacred and heroic nuances are attached, as they were to the protagonists of the classical epopee (the Pevensie brothers, ordinary English school pupils, are glorified and made royalty in the land of Aslan).

To remain in the vicinity of the positive monstrous versus the negative monstrous, with a slight changing of emphasis, in the following, I will consider Farah Mendlesohn's book, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*.<sup>19</sup> Here, four categories of fantasy fictions are analysed; one of them is a portal-quest type—or, to be precise, a narrative in which characters of the “real” world enter alternative worlds through various places of passage (see Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*).

In portal-quest fiction,<sup>20</sup> the monstrous can be interpreted from a double point of view. From the perspective of the primary world, i.e. of characters arriving in the fantastic land, the monstrous is seen either as a physical deformity or as a moral one, one held by the human beings trying to install dystopia where the alternative world's para-

dise is situated (for instance, King Miraz from C. S. Lewis's *Prince Caspian*). When depicted as a physical deformity, the monstrous is attributed positive or negative values, according to its appropriation of Christian moral (the fauns and centaurs are benevolent monsters in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, whilst the infernal creatures from the cohort of Jadis, the witch, are negatively connoted). From the perspective of the secondary world, that of fantastic creatures inhabiting the land on the other side, man is initially considered a monstrous creature in relation to monstrosity itself (for instance, the corporeal metamorphoses of Alice in Wonderland and the encounter of Lucy Pevensie and Tumnus, the faun, who suspects her identity, viewing man as a mythological creature). On the same level as the monstrous races of the Middle Ages, man is placed at the edge of the secondary world and s/he is the one in need of proving his/her virtues in order to be deemed a rightful inhabitant of the paradisiacal land (test to which the Pevensie brothers, entering Aslan's magical land, are subjected).

## In Lieu of Conclusion

IT IS challenging to analyse the monstrous even when starting from definitions contributed by renowned scholars of fantasy literature, particularly starting with the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (C. N. Manlove's *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* and Brian Ardebey's *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature*). In the *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy* dictionary, Gary K. Wolfe makes an inventory of these definitions,<sup>21</sup> from which I shall select only the ones I deem edifying for this essay, emphasising the terms that are connected in one manner or the other to the concept of monstrous. Thus, fantasy fiction "implies the *supernatural*, but need not express it" (E. M. Foster); it is an "imaginative fiction in which no logical attempt is made, or needed, to justify the 'impossible' content of the story" (Reginald Bretnor); it is "*imaginary and not possible*" (Robert A. Heinlein); "A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of *supernatural* or *impossible* worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (C. N. Manlove); it is "that corpus in which the *impossible* is primary in its quality or centrality" (Roger C. Schlobin); "Any narrative which includes as a significant part of its makeup some *violation* of what the authors clearly believes to be *natural law*" (Brian Ardebey); "The essential ingredient of all fantasy is '*the marvellous*,' which will be regarded as anything *outside the normal space-time* continuum of the everyday world" (Ann Swinfen); it is "the deliberate *departure from* the limits of what is usually accepted as *real and normal*" (Kathryn Hume).

Considering the definitions above, we clearly notice that terms like the "impossible", the "supernatural," the "imaginary," the "unreal," the "abnormal," the "violation of natural law" are unanimously used to analyse fantasy fiction, seen through the narrow lenses of the opposition between perceptible reality and the imagined world. Rather than clearly circumscribing the structure of fiction fantasy, these definitions build on principles of the known reality to which they return. This is particularly so, since the impossible, the



supernatural and the unreal are inexact terms, and give as a result a touch of ambiguity to these theoretical visions, for they do not succeed in capturing the essence of the fantastic imaginary, built according to laws different from those of reality and insufficiently investigated. It follows we cannot but agree with Maria Nikolajeva, who criticises unproductive approaches to fantasy literature, claiming from the outset that “the concepts and terms used in the discussion of many types of ‘non-realistic’ narratives are often imprecise and ambiguous.”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the monstrous of the fantastic imaginary is impossible, abnormal and supernatural—it violates the laws of nature and, once more looked upon through the lens of the perceivable reality, is the miraculous content of the secondary world. Thus, the previously inventoried definitions have as a guiding principle the monstrous in diverse renditions and hypostases, as a more accurate term that can be used productively in theorising fantasy literature, one that must not necessarily be related to that which is possible, normal and natural in the referential reality. In lieu of a conclusion, we offer what we deem to be a more adequate definition of the narratives of other worlds, a definition that can be formulated as follows: Fantasy narration is that type of fiction which uses avatars of monstrosity to undertake ample formative journeys, to build the miraculous imaginary and to create, from the findings of more worlds (primary or secondary), a single magical dimension.

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## Notes

1. Maria Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern,” *Marvels & Tales* 17, 1 (2003): 140-141.
2. Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.
3. Nikolajeva, “Fairy Tale and Fantasy,” 154.
4. Marius Conkan, “Avatarii spațiului fantastic,” *Steaua*, 9-10 (2012): 62-66.
5. Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
6. For the relationship between monstrous and the maternal imagination see also Marie-Hélène Huet, “Living Images: Monstrosity and Representation,” *Representations*, 4 (Autumn 1983): 73-87; Marilyn Francus, “The Monstrous Mother: Reproductive Anxiety in Swift and Pope,” *ELH* 61, 4 (Winter 1994): 829-851; and Rosemary Betterton, “Promising Monsters: Pregnant Bodies, Artistic Subjectivity; and Maternal Imagination,” *Hypatia* 21, 1 (Winter 2006): 80-100.
7. Huet, *Monstrous Imagination*, 6.
8. *Ibid.*, 7.
9. *Ibid.*
10. For a better understanding of this topic see also Andras Sandor, “Myths and the Fantastic,” *New Literary History* 22, 2 (Spring 1991): 339-358; C. W. Sullivan III, “Folklore and Fantastic Literature,” *Western Folklore* 60, 4 (Autumn 2001): 279-296.
11. Kevin Alexander Boon, “Ontological Anxiety Made Flesh,” in *Monster and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. Niall Scott (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2007), 34.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*

14. John S. Morris, "Fantasy in a Mythless Age," *Children's Literature* 2 (1973): 82.
15. *Ibid.*, 83.
16. John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
17. Corin Braga, *De la arhetip la anarhetip* (Iași: Polirom, 2006).
18. Boon, "Ontological Anxiety," 34.
19. Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).
20. In relation with this type of fantasy fiction see Sarah Gilead, "Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction," *PMLA* 106, 2 (Mar. 1991): 277-293.
21. Gary K. Wolfe, *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 38-40.
22. Nikolajeva, "Fairy Tale and Fantasy," 138.

### **Abstract**

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The issue of the monstrous in culture (with its ramifications in literature) can be assessed from a double perspective: teratogenic and teratological. From a teratogenic perspective, I shall try to draw a genealogy of the monstrous which, in the European space, originates in antiquity. Pursuing an archaeological approach, I shall create a clinical chart of the monstrous and, in keeping with recurrent aspects of monstrosity, I shall emphasise the manner in which authors of fantasy literature relate to this cultural genealogy of deformities. From a teratological perspective, I shall try to structure the various forms of monstrous found in fantasy literature according to criteria relating, in general terms, to either the manner in which the human characters perceive the fantastic world, or the manner in which fantastic characters perceive the human, or even the manner in which both the human and the supernatural contribute to the construction of dystopian dimensions.

### **Keywords**

Fantasy literature, Monstrous, Imagination, Dystopia.