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Tolkien has used many different methods to express danger and evil thought his work, and Shelob is one of the most interesting presented his works. Shelob is a massive spider that hides and feasts on the passersby of her cave deep in Mordor that does not discriminate on her prey and will consume whatever comes her way. She seems to represent a primal hidden evil that exists naturally in the universe, as she wasn’t created by Sauron like the Nazgul, and does not have any sort of agenda in the narrative. She does not seek a kingdom or any sort of power, she only exists to feed. I would argue that Shelob is a metaphor for the inherent consumption that mankind always has and always will possess.

Mankind is a species driven by hunger. The hunger for power, the hunger for riches, even the hunger for some sort of purpose in life. The excesses of which can drive people to do evil. This is not inherently an evil drive, in fact it is what makes humans such a prosperous species, but Shelob exemplifies the extreme end of our natural consumption cycle. She is fat, disgusting, smells of death and exists solely in the darkness of her own tunnels. These tunnels seem to suggest a sort of, for lack of a better term, “tunnel vision” in her pursuit of food. She does not hunt, she simply exists in the tunnel system waiting on her food to be fed to her. She knows that there is a constant supply of food that will come her way without any effort on her part, so there is no reason to go anywhere but just tunnel deeper into her well of consumption. This is all she exists for, is to eat, but without a drive to press her anywhere, it is simply mindless consumption.

She is presented as a natural species, not a creation of Sauron, and in fact predates even the Dark Lord. This is because Tolkien understands that this is a natural facet of being human, and does not think it is inherently bad, but uses Shelob as a warning of what that can become if left unchecked and without an appropriate drive to correctly channel this innate hunger that we all have. Tolkien has used natural evils several times throughout the book, but Shelob really stuck out to me as a clear metaphor for this type of gluttonous evil unchecked by desire, which is in a very close proximity to the pure evil drive that Sauron has that can even bring him back from death.