Depictions of Race:
Self and Other in Tolkien's and Jackson's The Lord of the Rings

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Abstract

The war between darkness and light depicted in J. R. R. Tolkien's famous fantasy, The Lord of the Rings, is the subject of much debate and interpretation. At a first reading, Tolkien's story can be mistaken as following a traditional and predictable template of good versus evil. In this thesis, I challenge this binary reading. I use a postcolonial lens to illustrate the complexities within this work that provide characters on both sides of the conflict with opportunity for redemption and warning against corruption in a complex ideology that defies a narrow interpretation. I also argue that Peter Jackson's cinematic adaptation of The Lord of the Rings overlooks these complexities to portray a simplistic battle between light and dark that racially stereotypes white as good and black as evil.

In this reading I follow the Hobbits through the shadows of Otherness on a developmental journey and coming of age. I discuss the hybridity, ambivalence and alterity of various characters as they are drawn into the conflict. In particular, I discuss the role played by Gollum, a hybrid figure who belongs to the world of light as well as the world of darkness, and his influence upon his Hobbit companions. I point out the complex relationships that develop as the young Hobbits appropriate the military tactics of the Other to be used for their own purposes. I then suggest that in Jackson's cinematic adaptation of Tolkien's text, the focus of the narrative is shifted away from the complex Hobbit journey to highlight the war itself and that the visual adaptation promotes a racial identification of darkness to evil paralleling, in many ways, the war-on-terror.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Just as "the contents of books cannot be separated from the sense that particular readers make of them" (Curry 21), so too does every work reflect, to some extent, the paradigm and history of its author. Texts deemed to fall into the fantasy genre, despite charming realms of elves and talking trees, are not exceptions. The power of the fantastic is to "provide a conduit into social reality" (Zipes 172). As Ursula Le Guin argues, "Fantasy is true, of course. It isn't factual, but it is true...its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, all that is phony" (Le Guin 44). Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, is a seminal fantasy text written in an era replete with templates of war and race, good and evil. In Tolkien's work, these themes are presented in such a way that the dichotomies are blurred and a more nuanced reading is possible. Tolkien provides opportunity to look beyond the accepted structures of society and by so doing he confirms Le Guin's belief that "the use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow men, and your own feelings, and your destiny" (43). In this thesis, I argue that a nuanced reading of Tolkien's text which deepens understanding is possible but that Jackson's cinematic adaptation of that text negates this opportunity.

The unifying and perhaps defining feature of fantasy is the fact that its worlds are populated by imaginary beings with defined and consistent characteristics. Each fantastical species has its own very specific qualities that make it unmistakably different from another. In that way, all fantasy is intrinsically related to the issue of race: race representation within each world is what fantasies have in common:

"Because works of the fantastic are simultaneously situated both within the writers

realm (and thus subject to the codes and conventions of the time in which they are

written), and within the realm of the imaginary worlds constructed, they can both

reenact and alter racial codes and representations" (Leonard 4). The fantastic races

are often defined by, but not limited by definition to, skin colour. What emerges

from this classification of difference is a binary opposition that almost inevitably

leads to the correlation between darkness and a propensity for evil.

Tolkien's text lends itself to a structure of binary opposition because

characters belong to imaginary species with articulated characteristics. Hobbits, for

example, are light skinned. Tolkien describes them:

> Their height is variable, ranging between two and four feet of our
>
> measure…they are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and though they
>
> are inclined to be fat and do not hurry unnecessarily, they are
>
> nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements…[Hobbits] dressed
>
> in bright colors, being notably fond of yellow and green; but they
>
> seldom wore shoes, since their feet had tough leathery soles and were
>
> clad in a thick curling hair, much like the hair of their heads, which
>
> was commonly brown…their faces were as a rule good natured rather
>
> than beautiful, broad, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with mouths apt to
>
> laughter, and to eating and drinking. (1-2)

Orcs are represented as being primitive and dark-skinned. They are "large,

swart, slant-eyed…with great bows and short broad-bladed swords…long-armed,

crook-legged" (441). In another instance, Tolkien describes them as "clad in ragged

brown and armed with a bow of horn...a small breed, black-skinned, with wide and snuffling nostrils" (903). When these characters are depicted in Jackson's cinematic adaptations, the Hobbits are played by short white males while the Orcs are played by large black men. This confirms the "fetishization of the Other" the process of "substituting natural or generic categories for those that are socially or ideologically determined" (JanMohamed 67). When the fantastical creatures of Tolkien's text are created as cinematic images of discernable Other the viewer is drawn into a "fetishizing strategy" (68). The visible differences between the good characters and the bad ones support the "allegorical mechanism [which] not only permit[s] a rapid exchange of denigrating images which can be used to maintain a sense of moral difference; [but] also allow[s] the writer to transform social and historical dissimilarities into universal, metaphysical differences" (68). The images in the cinematic adaptation provide a very visual "rapid exchange of denigrating images" in spite of the fact that the characters are mythical. Discussions of race representation in Tolkien's work resurface with the images available in the recent cinematic adaptation. Anderson Rearick III defends Tolkien from accusations of racism pointing out that the original text is made overtly representational and argues that "Racism claims that one can tell the value of an individual just by looking at his or her outward appearance. But nothing could be more contrary to the assumptions of racism than a Hobbit as a hero" (872). The themes of racism are more complicated than that, but the Hobbit as a hero is worthy of more examination.

The representation of race is not without reminders of the racism and prejudice prevalent in the real world, and in the author's era and place. J. R .R.

Tolkien (1892-1973) lived and wrote in a time when the common colonial and imperial mindset in Great Britain had not been overtly challenged by postcolonial thought. Rearick explains that "The trilogy, begun in the 1930s and published in the 1950s, was written at the onset of decolonisation, when the first mass waves of immigrants from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent came to Britain. The Midlands, Tolkien's model for the Shire, was becoming a multicultural region." (865). As Rearick says, "Guilt by association is not a trustworthy tool. Living in a racist society does not predestine one to be racist" (866) and "In fact, the central message of his famous work is contrary to the central racist presumption, which is that individuals can be categorized and judged by their physical, racial appearances" (864). Patrick Curry argues that the Tolkien's stories are "profoundly pluralist," and that The Lord of the Rings is a "multicultural and multiracial book" (25). Tolkien is praised for being ahead of his time in understanding and portraying cultural relativity beyond the racism imbedded in his culture.

On the other hand, Jackson's recent film adaptation of The Lord of the Rings appears to confirm common perceptions of race and race relations. Sue Kim's analysis is that "In the films, goodness correlates to whiteness, both racially and as color scheme, and is associated with Europe, particularly England and the Scandinavian countries, the West, and the North. Evil is invariably black, savage, Southern (or "Southron"), and Eastern" (Kim 875). The answer to the question "Does Return of the King, with its martial sweep and its clearly demarcated lines of good and evil –racial lines, by the way, albeit drawn between imaginary races— stand as a mirror for our own times?" (Kim 886) is yes. Jackson's work is more

illustrative of a colonial propaganda mindset than Tolkien's original and serves as a

reflection and perhaps even an encouragement for the war-on-terror.

Seamus Deane suggests that "colonialism has been represented in literary,

historical, and political discourses as a species of adventure tale, dominated by an

ethic of personal heroism that is embedded in a specific national-religious formation"

(354). Tolkien's <u>The Lord of the Rings</u>, interpreted through this template, is less

obvious in its "national-religious formation" than Jackson's adaptation. Tolkien's

text does not appear to deal with British colonialism per se, but, as McLeod reminds

us, "just because a literary text is not set in a colonial location, nor makes

colonialism the dominant theme to be explored, it does not follow that such texts are

free from the realities of the British Empire" (145). It is, therefore, worthwhile to re-

read Tolkien's text from a postcolonial perspective, as "literary 'classics' have been

re-read to reveal, sometimes controversially, their hitherto unseen investment in

colonialism" (145).

Since Tolkien's time, there has been a shift from Colonialism to what Ann

McClintock calls imperialism-without-colonies (258). She claims that "'post-

colonial' *theory* has sought to challenge the grand march of western historicism with

its entourage of binaries (self--other, metropolis--colony, center--periphery, etc.), the

term 'post-colonialism' none the less re-orients the globe once more around a single,

binary opposition: colonial/post-colonial" (254). McClintock suggests that

> Since the 1940's, the United States' imperialism-without-colonies has
>
> taken a number of distinct forms (military political, economic and
>
> cultural), some concealed, some half-concealed. The Power of US

finance capital and huge multinationals to direct the flows of capital,

commodities, armaments, and media information around the world

can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime. (258)

In this thesis, I re-read The Lord of the Rings and identify the Hobbits' development

of an understanding of Self in relation to the Other. This reading is juxtaposed with

Peter Jackson's modern adaptation, which anticipates the current American war-on-

terror.

Situating the Thesis

Tolkien is an English citizen from a very successful colonizing nation nearing

the end of its powers in the middle of the Twentieth Century. Jackson is a

contemporary filmmaker from New Zealand, one of the countries colonized by the

English, now heavily influenced by American culture to the extent that Jackson's

adaptation of Tolkien's text mirrors the "imperialism-without-colonies" (McClintock

258) associated with American foreign policy.

Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings was not published until 1954, but its

"composition went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949" (Tolkien xv). This

timeframe situates Tolkien's epic and most famous text at the beginning of the end

of the British Empire and the era of post-colonial awakening that followed the

waning of the British Empire (McLeod 9). Anything written within this timeframe is

subject to the complex debates associated with both the overt and covert aims of

colonization and imperialism. Tolkien's third age of Middle-earth, the age in

Tolkien's fantasy world in which the The Lord of the Rings takes place, appears to

coincide with what John McLeod describes as the "third period of decolonization

[which] occurred in the decades immediately following the end of the Second World

War" (9).

Tolkien anticipated attempts to make allegorical connections between his

work and World War II:

> The real war does not resemble the legendary war in its process or its
>
> conclusion. If it had inspired or directed the development of the
>
> legend, then certainly the Ring would have been seized and used
>
> against Sauron; he would not have been annihilated but enslaved, and
>
> Barad-dur would not have been destroyed but occupied. Sauron,
>
> failing to get possession of the Ring, would in the confusion and the
>
> treacheries of the time have found in Mordor the missing links in his
>
> own researches into Ring-lore, and before long he would have made a
>
> Great Ring of his own with which to challenge the self-styled Ruler of
>
> Middle-earth...It has been supposed by some that 'The Scouring of
>
> the Shire' reflects the situation in England at the time when I was
>
> finishing my tale. It does not. It is an essential part of the plot,
>
> foreseen from the outset...without, need I say, any allegorical
>
> significant or contemporary political reference whatsoever. (Tolkien
>
> xvii)

However, applications to contemporary political situations are difficult to avoid. As

is true of most fantasy, The Lord of the Rings is an adventure tale based on the

dichotomous interpretation of what is good and what is evil, mirroring a belief that

there is an ongoing struggle between right and wrong. This was part of the

propaganda used in World War II and Jackson's cinematic adaptation, created some fifty years later, does little to deviate from the formula which relies on racially different antagonists. Good and evil are described in both texts in racial physical terms. Jackson's adaptation appears to underscore the continued and exacerbated presence of the overt aims of colonialism, or in this case, the American imperialism-without-colonies in a struggle between obvious good and complete evil. This struggle is dramatized in terms of physical difference and it culminates in a call to arms to destroy those who are racially different. I suggest that Jackson's adaptation signals an acceptance of modern propaganda which supports the continuation of the covert aims of imperialism-without-colonies, as they are being applied for the current American presence Afghanistan and Iraq.

Colonialism relies on the acceptance of differentiation of peoples by race and class. The hegemonic form of colonialism manifest in the "colonizing of the mind" (McLeod) affects both the colonizer and the colonized. As McLeod states,

> Colonization is perpetuated in part by justifying to those in the colonizing nation the idea that it is right and proper to rule over other peoples, and by getting colonized people to accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things--a process we can call 'colonizing the mind'. It operates by persuading people to internalize its logic and speak its language; to perpetrate the values and assumptions of the colonizers as regards the way they perceive and represent the world. (18)

In Tolkien's era the "colonized mind" is disseminated through a liberal humanist perspective, in which "good writing is something that transcends borders, whether local or national, whether of the mind or of the spirit...evaluated in terms derived from the conventional studies of English which stress the values of timelessness and universality" (McLeod 14), but that universality is defined by British standards.

Colonial and Postcolonial Terms

The underlying assumptions of colonialism are challenged in Edward Said's groundbreaking work Orientalism, published in 1978. Said uses the term "orientalism" to describe the binary divisions between the "orient" and the "occident," along with the "high handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonization" (2). According to him, Orientalism is based on "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). He identifies the fantasy of westernized interpretations, along with the use of science, to serve the ends of "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Said contends that "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systemic discipline by which European culture is able to manage--and even produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively, during the post-Enlightenment period" (3). The pervasive nature of a colonial mindset "is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it established canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces" (Said 19-20).

The pervasiveness of the colonial mindset of authority is recognizable in retrospect and continues in spite of the challenges articulated by Said and others. McLeod suggests that "resisting the (continuing) agency of colonial discourses to define the world requires that we expose their contradictions and shortcomings, and show how their seemingly 'factual' pictures of the world result from half hidden fears and fantasies" (64). The Self and Other interpretation of postcolonial theory challenges the race identity and racism necessary to further the overt and covert aims of colonialism associated with what Abdul JanMohamed describes as its dominant and hegemonic phases:

> The dominant phase spans the period from the earliest European conquest to the moment at which a colony is granted 'independence,' [when] European colonizers exercise direct and continuous bureaucratic control and military coercion...the hegemonic phase (or neocolonialism) [starts at] the moment of 'independence'–with the natives' obligatory, ritualized acceptance of Western forms of parliamentary government–[which] marks the formal transition to hegemonic colonialism. (62-63).

JanMohamed identifies the hegemonic phase of colonial discourse as the time in which "the covert purpose is to exploit the colony's natural resources" (62). This can only be done if the overt aim, that is, the aim to "civilize" the "savage" has been accepted. This overt aim is used to "justify imperial occupation and exploitation" (62).

JanMohamed suggests that literature plays a major part in this exploitation: "If such literature can demonstrate that the barbarism of the native is irrevocable, or a least very deeply ingrained, then the European's attempt to civilize him can continue indefinitely, the exploitation of his resources can proceed without hindrance, and the European can persist in enjoying a position of moral superiority" (62). Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings is rife with basic colonialist assumptions inherent to the understandings of the time: Frodo is accepted as a hereditary heir, the power of authority is upheld by military force, and the superiority of a dominant culture is unquestioned. This is the situation in the Shire before Frodo sets out on his adventure, but it does not hold true as he proceeds on the journey. In Jackson's cinematic adaptation, the journey confirms rather than questions these structures.

Postcolonial theory provides the vocabulary necessary to "expose the contradictions and shortcomings" and "resist the agency of colonial discourse" (McLeod 64). Among the complex concepts important to postcolonial discourses are the theories of Self and Other, Manichean allegory, fetishization of the Other, hybridity, and ambivalence. Standard Colonial discourse relies on a concept of center in which the center is the civilization as known to the colonizer (Self) and the Other is anything outside of that centre. As JanMohamed describes it, "colonialist literature is an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilization,' a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification; that world is therefore perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil" (64).

In representations of the Other, colonialist literature rejects the opportunity to accept the alterity, that is, "instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it sees him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image" (65). Basic to these definitions is the "colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation" (63) which requires a binary opposition described by JanMohamed as a part of the "Manichean allegory--a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object" (63).

The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized often becomes blurred, complex and contradictory. The Self-Other dialectic is not simply the identification of people from one nation in relation to all others. As McLeod notes, "even the most seemingly Orientalist text can include within itself moments when Orientalist assumptions come up against alternative views that throw their authority into question. Texts rarely embody just one view" and "even the most seemingly Orientalist text can articulate 'counter-hegemonic' views within itself" (51). The terms "ambivalence" and "mimicry" describe contradictions that arise in interpretations of discourse. In the case of ambivalence,

> the colonized are considered the "other" of the Westerner, (or the "colonizing subject") essentially *outside* Western culture and civilization. Yet, on the other hand, the discourse of colonialism attempts to domesticate colonized subjects and abolish their radical "otherness," bringing them *inside* Western understanding through the

Orientalist project of constructing knowledge about them. The

construction of "otherness" is thus *split* by the contradictory

positioning of the colonized simultaneously inside and outside

Western knowledge. (McLeod 52-3)

The Self/Other discourse focuses on the beliefs and adaptations of both the colonizer

and the colonized. Mimicry is a form of ambivalence in which the colonized people

are taught the language and the fundamental values of the colonizers to make them

"useful" to the colonizers' ends. Mimic men are people who have accepted the

colonizers' values and way of life yet they are not accepted as equals by those who

have colonized them. As an example, McLeod refers to "Fanon's French-educated

colonials depicted in Black Skin White Masks (who) are described as 'mimic men'

who learn to act English but do not look English, nor are accepted as such" (54).

Bhabha discuses the ambivalence created through "the desire for a reformed,

recognizable other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite "*

(86 italics in the original). According to Bhabha, a mimic man belongs to "a class of

interpreters between us and the Millions that we govern–'a class of persons Indian in

blood and colour, but English in tastes and opinions, in morals and intellect'–in other

words a mimic man" (Bhabha 87). Bhabha elaborates, stating that "the discourse of

mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence" which, "in order to be

effective...must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference...[which]

is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy...Mimicry is thus the sign of a double

articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which

'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (86).

Hybridity combines the races in a "difference on equal terms" and is associated with the possibility for ambivalence, a response to difference that postcolonialists call alterity. The possible colonial responses to alterity are identified by JanMohamed in terms of either "identity or difference" (64). When "faced with an incomprehensible and multifaceted alterity, the European theoretically has the option of responding to the Other in terms of identity or difference....Instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image" (64-65). The possibility of change within the colonizer is available when the colonist moves from the centre to become exposed to the Other but this does not often happen, "alterity implies alteration, and no European theory is likely to be appropriated in different cultural circumstances without itself undergoing radical rethinking--an 'appropriation' by a different discourse" (Ashcroft 33-34). I will argue that in Tolkien's original work, his characters exposed to Other do some radical rethinking but the same characters, when portrayed in Jackson's adaptation, do not.

Homi K. Bhabha elaborates upon ambivalence, claiming that "despite the 'play' in the colonial system which is crucial to its exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (70-71). JanMohamed claims that:

> any evident "ambivalence" is in fact a product of deliberate, if at
> times subconscious, imperialist duplicity, operating very efficiently
> through the economy of its central trope, the Manichean allegory.
> This economy, in turn, is based on a transformation of racial

difference into moral and even metaphysical difference. Though the

phenomenological origins of this metonymic transformation may lie

in the "neutral" perception of the physical difference (skin color,

physical features, and such), its allegorical extensions come to

dominate every facet of imperialist mentality. (61)

As we will later see, the journey of the Hobbits moves them from occupying a

position of the Self to a position of conflicted hybridity which is "trying to do two

things at once--construing the colonized as both *similar* to and the *other* of the

colonizers--(and) ends up doing neither properly. Instead it (hybridity) is

condemned to be at war with itself, positing radical otherness between peoples by

simultaneously trying to lessen the degree of otherness. Although the aim is to fix

knowledge about other peoples once and for all, this goal is always deferred"

(McLeod 54). The character of Golllum is particularly conflicted as he struggles

between the power of the Ring and his allegiances to his past life.

The possibility of alterity and the associated ambivalence can be identified

throughout the narrative of The Lord of the Rings. Characters such as Frodo, Sam,

Merry, Pippin, and Gollum occupy a position of ambivalence, appropriating aspects

of Otherness to undergo alterity. The Hobbits are exposed to the Orcs and travel

with them as their prisoners, learning their ways and, when necessary, applying those

ways to their own people. This notion of ambivalence challenges the supposedly

homogenous ideal of the Self. Bhabha describes ambivalence as "representations of

colonized subjects which results from the simultaneous attempt to reduce and

maintain their seeming otherness in relation to the colonizers" (McLeod 62). In this

way, the colonizer affects and is affected by those that are colonized. In The Lord of the Rings almost every character is tempted, and tempered by exposure to the Other in the tradition of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness in which "Conrad shows...the transformation from the overt to the covert colonialist aims, depicted by the degeneration of Kurtz" (JanMohamed 71). Similarly, Gandalf must plunge into the inconceivable depths of Moria before he emerges as the White, Galadriel is the only unforgiven exile of Valanor, and her tempting by the One Ring is her final test and redemption. Aragorn knows the ways of the Orcs better than any other mortal and commands his own army of necromantic undead. Boromir, and his father, Denathor, are both driven mad by ambition and the proximity to the sorcery of the Enemy, and yet Farimir, Denathor's youngest son, emerges triumphant and pure after his own desent into the darkness induced by the "Black Breath" (Tolkien 846). Although all of the above characters, and their integral desent into a contrasting darkness, are worthy of more than mere mention, this thesis investigates the journey of the key Hobbits: Frodo, Sam, Merry, Pippin and especially Gollum. I trace the path of the Hobbits of the Fellowship as they encounter the forces of Otherness. The text's deviation from centricity is drawn to the surface. I then investigate how Jackson's cinematic adaptation of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings diminishes the correlations between good and evil and their ambivalent resemblance to each other. This adaptation appears to affirm "our deplorable tendency, when our interests, still more the interests of our social group, come into conflict with others, to identify our cause with Good and that of our enemies with evil (Auden 138). The cinematic adaptation

makes visual racial distinctions between characters who represent good and those who represent evil.

A Postcolonial Reading

In the discourse of colonization, "colonized subjects are spit between contrary positions. They are domesticated, harmless, noble; but also *at the same time* wild, harmful, mysterious...sliding *ambivalently* between the polarity of similarity and difference" (McLeod 53). In this thesis I discus the characters Tom Bombadil and Treebeard/Fanghorn as examples of ambivalence, existing outside of the understood world of the Hobbits, sharing characteristics with them but remaining separate and unknowable even though they do not represent either side of the conflict. I then use the journey of the Hobbits, their travels with Gollum and the Orcs to show the hybridity and alterity that Tolkien's characters are capable of. I then contrast this reading with Jackson's cinematic one.

Tolkien's Hobbits are fair-skinned like almost everyone around them. They are a race unto themselves which, at first, makes them distrustful of anybody Other. However, as they encounter more and more forms of Otherness and ambivalence, they are forced to recognize Self in relation to Other. The Hobbits, while in the Shire, are not wholly autonomous because they are under the protection and influence of the Rangers who are the direct descendants of the original colonizing powers of Middle-earth. They have replaced an aboriginal culture represented by Ghan-buri-Ghan who describes the Woses or Wildmen: "Wild Men lived here before Stone-houses; before Tall Men come up out of Water...More than one road he knows. He will lead you by road where no pits are, no *gorgun* walk, only Wild Men

and beasts. Many paths were made when Stonehouse-folk were stronger." (Tolkien

832). The Hobbits are allied with the Rangers, the descendants of the Numenoreans,

in an allegiance like nations such as those of the British Commonwealth that "still

recognized and pledged allegiance to the ultimate authority of Britain as the 'mother

country'" (McLeod 9). Like Canada, New Zealand and Australia, "the Hobbits [are]

conservative and continue to use a form of the King's Reckoning adapted to fit their

own customs" (Tolkien 1082). The colonial mindset identified by postcolonial

theorists is an ingrained and often subconscious aspect of the paradigm of the

subjects of any colonized or colonizing nation-state. Considering the overt battles

between what is depicted as dark and evil and light and good, and the numerous

mentions of races and the distinction between them, as well as the very potent

differentiation between classes, and the master/servant relationships inherent to the

workings of Middle-earth, it would seem that the text is ripe for a postcolonial

reading. "Writers have *put literary 'classics' to new uses* for which they were

scarcely originally intended" (McLeod 143). In this thesis, I provide a postcolonial

reading of Tolkien's original text of The Lord of the Rings to reveal the slippages

inherent in the assumptions of the imperialist discourses of domination. Then, I

examine Jackson's cinematic adaptation of The Lord of the Rings and suggest that

the 'new uses' to which Jackson puts Tolkien's text are neocolonial in that they seek

to return to the hegemonic values necessary for the covert aims of colonization, or

what JanMohamed describes as the use of colonialist literature to "justify imperial

occupation and exploitation" (62). Postcolonial writers have "rewritten particular

works from the English 'canon' with a view to restructuring European 'realities' in

post-colonial terms. Not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based" (Ashcroft 33). It appears that Jackson has done just the opposite, taking an existing work from the English canon and re-infusing it with a racist hierarchical order, ignoring or changing any aspects that would cast doubt on that order and affirming the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based.

Although Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings can be read as a Machiavellian style guide book which outlines the projection of a strong and fair image of the Self to provide a rationale for the conquering and holding of power by a single undisputed authority, I argue that there is an alterity within the text which can be read as covertly dismantling a straightforward binary reading. The distinction between a postcolonial and a colonial reading can be attributed to the focus placed on one or the other of the two primary narrative threads, either the coming of age of the Hobbits or the coming into power of the King of Middle-earth. Both readings require the acceptance or rejection of a formulated notion of a cultural, epistemological center, as well as a parasitic self-affirming opposition to a dark, binary Otherness. In the colonial reading, Otherness is simply a force that must be overcome in order to gain power. In the postcolonial reading, Otherness becomes opportunity for acceptance of alterity and a reassessment of the meaning of Self and Other.

In Chapter One, "Ambivalence and Hybridity in The Lord of the Rings", I discuss the hybridity, ambivalence and alterity of minor characters who inhabit the margins of Tolkien's fantastical world, notably Tom Bombadil and

Treebeard/Fanghorn. I focus on Tom Bombadil in particular because of the enigmatic status ascribed to him by Tolkien. I then investigate the integral role played by Gollum as a hybrid figure deeply changed and chained by a process associated with Bhabha's concept of mimicry. I analyze how Gollum/Sméagol belongs to the world of the light as well as the world of darkness, explaining how he is a member of both the Self and the Other, and focus on his key strength as mediator, hero, and villain; emissary between the two opposite realms.

In Chapter Two, "Blurring Identities," I trace the story of the Hobbits' coming of age including the journey in which they appropriate the military tactics of the Other to be used upon their return to fulfill their roles within the greater workings of Middle-earth. This process of appropriation specifically revolves around the journey with the Orcs, and the dissentious actions of Merry and Pippin, and the complex relationships among Gollum, Frodo and Sam. These relationships are mediated by alterity associated with the opportunity to examine their understanding of Self when exposed to Other. This is done to point out the difference between a reading which focuses on the dichotomous war between good and evil, and one in which Hobbits respond to exposure to Otherness.

Finally, in Chapter Three, "Contemporary Neocolonialism: A Cinematic Adaptation," I examine Jackson's cinematic adaptation of Tolkien's text to show how the opportunities for reading for ambivalence and alterity have been ignored. I argue that the films disseminate a rhetoric which supports contemporary imperialist interests associated with the American "war-on-terror." The cinematic representations of the characters introduces a racially identifiable stereotypical

interpretation. The focus on the war rather than on the Hobbit journey removes the opportunity for reflection on the non-confrontational meetings between representatives of the Hobbit Self and non Hobbit Other. Peter Jackson's adaptation of The Lord of the Rings serves as an example of the persistence of a colonial hegemony disseminated through literature and mass media. Although the British Empire is no longer the colonial power it once was, its American progeny has adopted the colonial mindset. The cinematic adaptation of Tolkien's work accepts the colonization of the mind and uses it to justify the current wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond.

Chapter One

Ambivalence and Hybridity in <u>The Lord of the Rings</u>

In this chapter I examine the characters of Tom Bombadil and Treebeard/Fanghorn in terms of hybridity, ambivalence and alterity. Both Tom Bombadil and Treebeard/Fanghorn in Tolkien's novel appear either to represent neither Self nor Other, or to represent both Self and Other. For instance, Tom Bombadil's ambivalent character lives on the margins of the Shire. Similarly, Treebeard/Fanghorn inhabits a forest well beyond the Shire and, for the most part, outside of the workings of Middle-earth. Neither have an initial predisposition to the Fellowship or the powers of Sauron.

Tom Bombadil

Tom Bombadil is a unique, enigmatic, and powerful character situated on the border between the Shire and the outside world. He is without a master and without subjects. Tom is positioned on the margins of both the Shire and Middle-earth with powers that no one else possesses. He cannot be categorized as either Self or Other and is beyond the power of both. Bombadil's enigmatic status is partially founded upon the fact that he does not seem to fit into the general narrative of the story. He is a stopping place on the way to the action but does not become directly involved in it. Tom Bombadil is left out of most adaptations to the book, perhaps because his character is so ambivalent that he does not fit into a clearly dichotomous interpretation. As Tolkien remarks, "even in a mythological Age there must be some enigmas, as there always are. Tom Bombadil is one" (in Hargrove 20).

Bombadil's alterity is evident in his physical characteristics. Shortly after they leave the Shire, the Hobbits, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin, are enchanted by the mysteries of the Old Forest. They are about to be absorbed by the dangers of the unknown in the form of Old Man Willow, when they are rescued by the appearance of a stranger: there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big People, though he made noise enough for one" (117). Bombadil is an amalgamation of the inhabitants of Middle-earth, sharing the attributes of the members of the Fellowship: Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, and Men. He walks in with his thick dwarf-like legs obviating a likeness to both dwarves and Men. Physically, he shares the characteristics of what the Hobbits would view as the Self but he inhabits the marginal border regions of what they would consider Other.

As McLeod suggests in reference to Bhabha's "Locations of Culture": "living at the border, at the edge, ... depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways that we represent history, identity, and community. Borders are important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence" (217). The Hobbits are in a position of flux, sneaking out of the Shire in search of a means by which to dispose of the One Ring of Power. They are beginning to learn about their own marginal status, already recognizing that there is a world outside of the centrality of their own experience. Their encounter with Tom Bombadil further demonstrates the removal of certainty as they near the boundaries. He serves as a definer and protector of those within his borders, yet he is forgotten by most and lives almost as an outcast. Living on the outskirts and in a forest

infamous for its oddity, Tom Bombadil is clearly separated from the world of Hobbits and Men. Part of the construction of the Self and most of its power is found not in the adherence to the norms of the center, but rather in the establishing of a contrast which defines the image of what this Self should look like from outside the margins of the comfort of this center. As Trinh states, "without the margin, there is no center, no heart" (215). Tom Bombadil forms a de-centered structure much like Derrida's concept of the structure of a center which calls into question all notions of fixity: "the center is not the center" (196), that is, the centre cannot be accessed and is always deferred, as each centre forms a part of a separate structure.

Tom Bombadil's distance from and lack of allegiance to either supposed center is evident in his response, or lack thereof, when he tries on the One Ring. The Hobbits are aware that it is usual for the bearer of the Ring to become invisible when it is placed upon a finger. Tom Bombadil is seemingly impervious to its influence: "Tom put the Ring round the end of his little finger and held it up to the candlelight. For a moment the hobbits noticed nothing strange about this. Then they gasped. There was no sign of Tom disappearing!" (Tolkien 130). Tom Bombadil exhibits a resistance to the power of the Ring.

Tom's alterity is reinforced by his seeming lack of interest of the affairs of Middle-earth in general. His noncommittal pacifistic intentions stand in contrast with the all-or-nothing policies of those who have interest in the control and dominion of Middle-earth. For example, the Hobbits are in danger, being pursued by a dark rider, and they have no way to find their allies, such as Gandalf. When they encounter Tom Bombadil he shows no interest in the dark rider, nor does he become

involved in their search for Gandalf. His disinterest brings a possibility of an altered

understanding since "the border is the place where conventional powers of thought

are disturbed and can be disrupted by the possibility of crossing" (McLeod 217).

The Hobbits become aware that things of importance to them are not necessarily of

importance to others.

In Tom Bombadil we find the inverse representation achieved by describing

something by what it is not. Tom is aware of the ambiguities and uncertainties

involved in attempting to describe the Self. For instance, when asked by Frodo "who

are you, master?" Tom Bombadil's response is a circular one: "Eh, What?...Don't

you know my name yet? That's the only answer. Tell me, who are you, alone,

yourself and nameless" (Tolkien 129). For Tom Bombadil, there is no need to know

more about a person than a name. The name does not need to have additional

meaning behind it. It is a function of the Self and Other dichotomy that a system of

classification needs to be in place to identify a person. This raises the notion of the

inability of the Self to ground its identity without the shadow of some Other to give

it definition. If the Self is not named, the Other cannot be treated as a dichotomous

opposite.

Tom Bombadil recognizes that the Hobbits want more information so he

enters into a list of what, by inverse definition, he is not, in an attempt to show what

he is. This list starts with a binary opposition of age: "but you are young and I am

old, Eldest, that's what I am...Tom was here already, before the seas were bent"

(Tolkien 129). He is, in Lacan's terms, of the imaginary rather than the symbolic

order. In spite of his age and his place within the landscape as the original,

Bombadil still requires the contrast to other things to establish his place, but only for

the benefit of the Hobbits. Tom Bombadil does not need to have a classification in

order to understand himself. In this way, Tom Bombadil represents for the Hobbits

the dilemma of identity identified by Trinh: "any mutation in identity, in essence, in

regularity, and even in physical place poses a problem, if not a threat, in terms of

classification and control. If you can't locate the other, how can you locate your-

self?...ones sense of self is always mediated by the image one has of the other" (73).

For the sake of the Hobbits, Tom Bombadil describes himself solely in terms that

distinguish him from Other. Tolkien uses the term "Other" when he argues that Tom

Bombadil "is then an 'allegory', or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure

(real) natural science: the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history

and nature, because they are 'other' and wholly independent of the enquiring mind"

(In Hargrove 22, emphasis in original). As Gene Hargrove notes, "Tom's

appearance in the story, although only a 'comment,' serves as a sharp and clear

contrast...Tom's role [i]s to show that there [a]re things beyond and unconcerned

with domination and control" (24). His lack of desire for control in a world so

concerned with power and domination sets him apart from the workings of either

allegiance with either side. In many adaptations and critical interpretations of

Tolkien's text, such as in Jackson's cinematic trilogy, Tom Bombadil is left out

entirely, perhaps because of the complexity of a reading in which he represents

neither Self nor Other, or the blending of both Self and Other outside of a purely

dichotomous interpretation extraneous to the conflict between good and evil.

To return to Bombadil's list of binary opposites, Tom continues with an allusion to his role as Other in relation to the struggle for Middle-earth: "He (Tom) knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless--before the Dark Lord came from Outside" (Tolkien 129). The use of the capitalized term "Outside" evokes a similarity to the language associated with Self and Other. As Trinh argues, "an objective constantly claimed by those who "seek to reveal one society to another" is "to grasp the native's point of view" and "to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (65 emphasis in the original). She describes such a person as an "outsider," someone who attempts to but cannot ever fully understand the experiences of a foreign culture. Trinh describes a "paradoxical twist of the colonial mind" in which "what the Outsider expects from the insider is, in fact, a projection of an all-knowing subject that this Outsider usually attributes to himself and to his own kind" (70). Tom Bombadil provides the Hobbits with an outsider by which to compare their concepts of Self but will not give them a set of characteristics by which to measure the Other. He gives them an empty list which provides no reference points for Self and Other.

Treebeard/Fanghorn

If Tom Bombadil is the representative of ambivalence in Book One, then Treebeard, or Fanghorn as he is sometimes called, is its representative in Book Three. Even his dual names, Treebeard/Fanghorn, point to an ambivalence since his alternate name of Fanghorn is also the name of, and for, the forest in which he resides. Treebeard, as I will refer to him, and his relatives, the Ents are inextricably linked to one another. The Ents are becoming "tree-ish" (Tolkien 457), they are in

the process of changing forms so there is no denial of the possibility for alterity. They are constantly changing their sense of Self and becoming something Other.

The Ents defy the racial classification of fantastic creatures by appearing, at first, to be completely different from each other: "As they drew near the Hobbits gazed at them. They had expected to see a number of creatures as much like Treebeard as one hobbit is like another (at any rate to a stranger's eye); ...At first Merry and Pippin were struck chiefly by the variety that they saw: the many shapes and colours, the differences in girth, and the height, and length of leg and arm; and in the number of toes and fingers (anything from three to nine)" (Tolkien 480). The differences are such that a list is kept with every creature on that list –not a listing of classifications but a listing of names. To ensure their safely in the forest of Fanghorn, the Hobbits must be added to that list. Just as Tom Bombadil is described by his name and that which he is not; Treebeard/Fanghorn can only be described by that which he is. The Self/Other dichotomy is impossible if Self is limited to an individual and Other has no common characteristics.

Treebeard, like Tom Bombadil, is resistant to the possibility of being corrupted by power. He desires nothing more than what he already possesses and does not pledge an allegiance to the constructed dichotomy of the wars for power in Middle-earth. He says to the Hobbits as they prepare to continue on their way, "I don't know about *sides*. I go my own way; but your way may go along with mine for a while" (Tolkien 455). Tolkien's italics used for the term *"sides"* is an indication of the fabricated nature of a binary opposition that moves the greater deeds of Middle-earth. Treebeard elaborates upon his non-committal position when

he claims that "I am not altogether on anybody's *side*, because nobody is altogether on my *side*, if you understand me" (Tolkien 461). In the end, Treebeard does take a *side*, the side of the Fellowship. He is instrumental in tipping the scales, but he does it out of his own interest in saving the forest. Treebeard's entry into the wars of others is reminiscent of the participation of native peoples in the wars of competing colonizing countries. Tecumseh, who fought for the British in the War of 1812 comes to mind. His participation in the wars is not associated with a belief in the overt ideals espoused by the competing forces but an attempt to save the future of his own people.

Both Tom Bombadil and Treebeard are major influences on the sojourning Hobbits, providing them with examples of ambivalence. They are positioned outside the main dichotomy of the novel and provide a place at the margins in which the Hobbits can begin their process of decentralization. As Trinh questions, "How possible is it to undertake a process of decentralization without being made aware of the margins within the center and the centers within the margin? Without encountering marginalization from both the ruling center and the established margin?" (18). Tom Bombadil and Treebeard provide an alternative to the central binary oppositions of the novel. It is in encounters such as this, with characters who have never even heard of Hobbits, that Frodo et al. begin to question their own centrality.

The Hobbits begin the process of alterity "shuttling in-between frontiers (which) is a working out of and an appeal to another sensibility, another consciousness of the condition of marginality: that in which marginality is the

condition of the center" (Trinh 18). The encounters with Tom Bombadil and

Treebeard provide opportunity for the Hobbits "to use marginality as a starting point

rather than as an ending point...to cross beyond it towards other affirmations and

negation" (19) as they begin their journey toward ambivalence and alterity.

Gollum

Gollum is a Hobbit-like creature changed by exposure to the Ring and

uncertain of his position and allegiances because of it. The character of Gollum is

central to Tolkien's text because, as Elizabeth Arthur states, "his fascinating

ambiguity can serve to locate many of the story's major explorations" (21).

Gollum's multiple personalities and multiple motivations show the complex nature

of the forces at play for dominion of Middle-earth and also the complex negotiations

between Self and Other. Like Treebeard/Fanghorn, Gollum/Sméagol, or

Slinker/Stinker, a bearer of multiple signifiers of identity, is not only an

amalgamation of names but is also an amalgamation of characters, a hybridity of the

Other, as represented by the influence of the One Ring and his hobbit Self. As Bill

Ashcroft et al. suggest, "ambivalence and hybridity have continued to be useful

amongst post-colonial critics because they provide a subtler and more nuanced view

of colonial subjectivity and colonial relationships than the usual 'us' and 'them'

distinctions" (206). Gollum is an oddity. He does not have a place on either side.

Gollum was once of Hobbit-kind and had he not died he might have been

allotted an honorable exile with Frodo and Bilbo, who are also seen as eccentric and

outlandish. As Arthur argues, "whatever sympathy we are able to feel for Bilbo, and

the Ring-desire of an ex-Ringbearer, we should be able to feel in equal measure for

Gollum" (20). Gollum has been away from the centre, or homeland, so long that he is no longer recognizable as a member of the Self. Gollum, a Hobbit-like creature who has suffered five-hundred years of subservience to the Ring, serves as a prototype for the future Frodo if he continues to follow the lure of the Ring, not unlike Marlow's relationship to Kurtz in Conrad's Heart of Darkness,

In a sympathetic reading, Gollum emerges as a Hobbit hero who makes a noble sacrifice for the Fellowship. However, Tolkien's text makes it clear that Gollum's intentions are neither wholly honorable nor completely treacherous. As Gandalf notes, "he is very old and very wretched. The Wood-elves have him in prison, but they treat him with such kindness as they can find in their wise hearts" (Tolkien 58). There is also the possibility of Gollum's redemption, of his return to his Hobbit-like Self. For instance, at the council of Elrond, when discussing the fate of Gollum, Legolas mentions that "Gandalf bade [them] hope still for his cure, and [they] had not the heart to keep him ever in dungeons under the earth, where he would fall back into his old black thoughts" (Tolkien 249). In other words, the "wise" Elves seek to "civilize" the primitive Gollum who dwells in caves and darkness and seek to make him assimilate into their world/social standards. This is akin to Rudyard Kipling's concept of the "the white man's burden" to *redeem* and *civilize* the native population (Gates 103). Gollum's captors, like Kipling's colonials, extend a similar patience to their captive. He is not free to continue with his own thoughts and actions but is controlled for *his own good*. This is reminiscent of the overt aims of colonization identified by JanMohamed as the intent to civilize the savage.

Gollum is sometimes interpreted as being simply duplicitous, or untrustworthy, but Gollum could also be seen as exercising a form of "doubleness," a "technique of indirect argument of persuasion" (Gates 54). When in the company of his newfound Hobbit companions, Gollum appears to be able to rekindle an aspect of his long-forgotten personality. It could be that, as Charles Nelson argues, Gollum "pretends to be looking out for [Sam and Frodo, but] he is in reality planning to lead them into danger and plotting their eventual demise" (51). But Nelson's argument fails to account for two factors. The first is the fact that Gollum's fate, and that of his Precious Ring, are both fundamentally linked to the fate of Frodo. Frodo has the power of the Ring, he is in control of what Gollum loves the most and Gollum must serve the owner of the Ring. The second is that, for a time at least, Gollum shows signs of change, and actually seems for once in his life to be enjoying himself. He is "indeed pitifully anxious to please" and speaks "to his companions direct" as well as "cackle[s] with laughter and caper[s] if any jest [i]s made" (Tolkien 604). The terms "cackle" and "caper" denote the uncivilized nature of Gollum, despite the mimicry which he is exhibiting in his attempts to fit in with Frodo and Sam.

Gollum appears to be reformed, but his multiple personalities persist. There are two distinctly different characters within this one diminished creature: the Stinker and Slinker that Gollum has become and his original Hobbit signifier, Sméagol. We witness his personalities in conflict when Sam and Frodo inadvertently leave "good Sméagol to watch" (Tolkien 620). Sam awakens to find Gollum/Sméagol pawing at Frodo engaged in a heated internal debate between the various components of his personality: "Gollum was talking to himself. Sméagol was holding a debate with

some other thought that used the same voice but made it squeak and hiss" (Tolkien 618). The debate shows the original Self of Sméagol in the process of alterity.

Tolkien's text continues: "A pale light and a green light alternated in his eyes as he spoke" (618). The two colours of Gollum's eyes can be read as the dual heritage of one who has become what Bhabha (87) describes as a "mimic man," one who appears to be one thing but has adopted the attitudes of another. In the passages that follow, it is clear that the Sméagol part of Gollum wants nothing to do with the treachery of his corrupted counterpart, but the lure of the Ring, and the manipulative conviction of his Gollum side is hard to fight. Gollum "shows us the legitimacy of the dark side of the unconscious and its place within human development" (Critchett 53). Gollum has not been able to turn away from his origins and is caught between his old perceptions of Self and the changes that have made him Other.

Gollum does, indeed, as Gandalf predicts, have "some part to play…for good or ill, before the end" (Tolkien 58). If Gollum were wholly evil, he would have long ago throttled the bearer in his sleep and broken the promise which he swore. As Arthur describes it, "Gollum vacillates back and forth between the possibility of good and the lure of evil, and this lies right in the middle of the spectrum of Tolkien's exploration" (23). Gollum is happy before the Ring comes into his possession, but once it is there, he becomes a slave to it. Gollum, initially Hobbit-like, learns the attributes of Otherness. As Craig Clark notes, "good and evil in Tolkien are indeed antagonists, but they are not polarized. Indeed there exist many 'grey areas' between the two" (15). The ambivalent servant/guide, Gollum "is the psychologically conflict-detecting and problem-solving subject who faithfully

represents the Other for the Master, or comforts, more specifically, the Master's self-Other relationship in its enactment of power relations, gathering serviceable data, minding his/her own business-territory, and yet offering the deference expected" (Trinh 68). Gollum has accepted the role of subject for Frodo who is his new master. Just as Shakespeare's Caliban, upon the arrival of Prospero, can no longer go back to his previous state, Gollum cannot return to the being he was before.

Opportunity for any further transformation is cut off by Gollum's death which is pivotal to the entire plot. It is described from Sam's point of view: "Sam…saw a strange and terrible thing. Gollum on the edge of the abyss was fighting like a mad thing with an unseen foe. To and fro he swayed, now so near the brink that almost he tumbled in, now dragging back, falling to the ground, rising, and falling again. And all the while he hissed but spoke no words" (925). Sam sees Gollum as a de-humanized "thing." Gollum's struggles at the end of his life center on his role as a being forced through the influence of the Ring to balance between two cultures, his Hobbit-like Self that he once was and the Other that he has become. In Sam's description of the scene, Gollum appears as a primitive being attempting to balance on the edge of both worlds: "Suddenly Sam saw Gollum's long hands draw upwards to his mouth; his white fangs gleamed, and then snapped as they bit. Frodo gave a cry, and there he was, fallen upon his knees at the chasm's edge. But Gollum, dancing like a mad thing, held aloft the ring, a finger still thrust within its circle. It shone now as if verily it was wrought of living fire" (925). By biting off Frodo's finger, Gollum commits a barbarous act akin to the cannibalism often attributed to "primitive" culture. Gollum has "gone native", become more associated with the

Other than the Self and can no longer hope to be redeemed to his Hobbit-Self. But it no longer matters: in the act of choosing the Other over the self, he topples to his death: "'Precious, precious, precious!' Gollum cried. 'My precious! O my Precious!' And with that, even as his eyes were lifted up to gloat on his prize, he stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell. Out of the depths came his last wail *Precious*, and he was gone" (925). Gollum's struggles at the end of his life center on his role as a mimic man forced through the influences of the Ring, to balance between the two cultures. His dying words are reminiscent of those attributed to Kurtz in his ravings before he dies: "My ivory...My intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my -----" (Conrad 153). Frodo, like Conrad's Marlow, is in danger of following the path that his predecessor has taken. Gollum's character serves as a warning to Frodo and any others who might hope to bear the ring. The guide figure, rather than assimilating into a Self, was once Self and has instead assimilated into the world of the Other.

Chapter Two

Blurring Identities

The adventure tale is a fixture of colonial literature and the journey of the Hobbits is similar to others of that genre. Frodo is a Hobbit who happens to be in possession of The One Ring of Power. He is prompted by Gandalf to remove The Ring because it is the heirloom and symbol of the Dark Lord himself and the looming darkness in Mordor. This threat of darkness must be removed from the Shire in order to prevent it from being overwhelmed. Frodo agrees to remove the Ring from the Shire to protect his own kind. He does not ask for assistance, but his friends conspire to come with him, and the beginnings of the Fellowship Of The Ring are created.

The small band of Hobbits, consisting of Frodo and his servant Sam, as well as Merry and Pippin, both from noble families, leave the Shire with the Ring in their possession. Their intent is to take the Ring to Rivendale to remove it from their midst and let someone else deal with the threatened darkness. They do not intend further involvement. Their journey is not unlike those undertaken by men of noble families in Britain who traveled into the colonies as explorers, adventurers, or in search of economic betterment, and not unlike the band of travelers in H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines. The composition of the group includes a differentiation in social and economic status accepted in their homeland and provides a disposition towards an acceptance of a hierarchical ordering of society. As they travel further and further from their homeland they are exposed to other races. In a

culture predisposed to classism, the Hobbits are ripe for the initiation into another context of the Self/Other dichotomy.

The band of Hobbits becomes separated and the story unfolds in two separate but parallel narratives. In one, Frodo and his servant Sam branch off and are later joined by Gollum. In the other, Merry and Pippin are carried off by Orcs and are later separated from one another. Yet, in spite of their separation, all four Hobbits undergo a similar process; they are striped of their garments and don the colours of those who influence them en route. The stripping off of the connections to the old comfortable Hobbit Self allows for an acceptance of alterity when faced with difference in the form of the Other. As we shall see, the liveries that they gain are found both among the ranks of the Fellowship and those of their enemies. The traits admired and demonstrated by the Fellowship are primarily things that the Hobbits themselves have long exhibited. Hobbits seem to be naturally apt at such things as etiquette, stoutheartedness, and military order (Finch). When the Hobbits return to the Shire, they have acquired knowledge of things they could not have learned by staying at home. Much of the leadership knowledge that they bring back to the Shire has been acquired through their experiences at the cruel hands of the Orcs.

Merry and Pippin

Merry and Pippin play an essential role in the greater workings of Middle-earth. They grow physically, spiritually, and mentally, and, in time, come "to know and accept both the good and evil in [themselves], and to understand that [they are] only a part of a grander scheme" (Barkley 104). To fit into this grander scheme and fall into the hierarchical system that upholds it, they must first establish themselves;

that is, "in order to truly grow, they must leave the Shire and encounter experiences and individuals beyond what their aristocratic, insular, sheltered backgrounds can offer" (Langford 5). When exposed to the Other, they are in a position of ambivalence: they can chose to reject all that is Other or accept aspects of it. Throughout their journey, Merry and Pippin are exposed to many different degrees of Otherness and learn valuable lessons which enable them to use what they have learned to establish their roles in the political and martial fields.

The hybridization of Merry and Pippin requires that they cast off some of their familiar Hobbit trappings to assume those associated with the Other. Up until this point, they have always had the guidance of the Fellowship. They are captured in the forest, lose consciousness, and awaken in the middle of the plains held captive by Orcs. They must, for the first time, act as autonomous entities. They each have an experience in which they question the differences between Self and Other. Pippin experiences a dream in which his allies blur with his foes: "Pippin lay in a dark and troubled dream: it seemed that he could hear his own small voice echoing in black tunnels, calling *Frodo, Frodo!* But instead of Frodo hundreds of hideous orc-faces grinned at him out of the shadows" (Tolkien 434). Pippin's response to the dream is to let go some of the trappings tying him to the Fellowship. He discards the broach given him by the Elves of Lothlorien, symbolically giving up a signifier of his political and social allegiance. Pippin does not give up his broach as a rejection of the Elves; he does so in order to be found by the fellowship, and thus re-united with the center. His hybridization is an attempt to combine his new status with his old. Similarly, Merry assumes the mark of Otherness although he does not cast off his

signifiers. During their capture, Merry receives a nasty cut on his forehead which is mended, albeit cruelly, with Orc medicine. As a result, "he [bears] a brown scar to the end of his days" (Tolkien 438) akin to a ritualistic scarring. Merry and Pippin are both marked by their encounter with Otherness. After being bound and unable to travel of their own accord, they are forced to drink Orc liquor, which figuratively and literally is what allows them to walk on their own two feet and in their own direction. To become independent, the Hobbits must accept the alterity offered by their experiences with those who are Other. They show their strength not by destroying the Otherness, but by appropriating it.

Merry and Pippin develop an ability to deceive while in the presence of the Orcs. Before the journey, Merry and Pippin are committed to their roles and accept their positions as representatives of Self. They overhear Frodo's plan to leave on his own and conspire to accompany Frodo on his journey. Although acting out of concern and loyalty, Merry admits specifically to participating in espionage when he states, "after that I kept my eyes open. In fact, I confess that I spied" (Tolkien 102). When Frodo asks, quite rightly, if he can trust any of these conspirators, Merry replies with the following words, every one of which in time proves to be false: "you can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin--to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours--closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word" (Tolkien 103). Frodo *does* manage to "go off without a word," he *is* left to "face trouble alone," and Merry and Pippin use the secret knowledge of the Ring as a bargaining tool during their capture by the Orcs. In spite of their good intentions, Merry and Pippin break

their commitment to keeping Frodo's confidences better than he can keep them himself. The Hobbits use their conspiratorial and dangerous knowledge of the Ring, Frodo's most valuable secret, by insinuating their possession of it and offering to exchange it for their freedom by telling their guard: "its no good groping in the dark. We could save you time and trouble. But you must untie our legs first" (Tolkien 445). Their plan is successful and they manage to illicit enough greed in the Orc to entice him to run off in an attempt to keep the Ring for himself. The trick results in the Orc's demise and Merry and Pippin's escape. Before they leave the Shire, Merry and Pippin show their capacity for subterfuge. Within the ranks of the Orcs they show their capacity for deceit and even betrayal. Merry and Pippin undergo an exposure to alterity and choose to use it as an opportunity to reflect on their own identities in "an 'appropriation' by a different discourse" (Ashcroft 34).

Merry and Pippin are representatives of the Shire and carry with them not only their items and clothing but also the concepts and discourse of their homeland. In this case, the homeland is reminiscent of a colonial Britain. The Hobbits learn the tactics of Otherness and change because of it. This change can also be seen as a betrayal of the homeland and other loyalties. By breaking trust with Frodo, and in turn the Fellowship, these two Hobbits from aristocratic backgrounds begin a well orchestrated and perfectly executed acquisition of power, authority and notoriety, which leads to their eventual rule of the Shire, a country under the influence of the new King of the West. For example, Pippin's stealing of the Palantir, one of the lost seeing stones, is perhaps the most ambitious, rebellious, as well as dangerous, feat ever accomplished by a Hobbit. The theft and viewing of the Palantir marks a

turning point in the development of Pippin's character, for this is his first act of

disobedience which he commits not out of love or fear for his own life, but out of

discontent with his role in the old structure of the Shire. Pippin gets a brief taste of

freedom after his escape from the Orcs, which gives him a taste of autonomy.

However, when he is back under the authority of the Imperial Fellowship, he feels

unfulfilled and is ambitious enough to escape from his subservient role within the

Fellowship.

Once Merry and Pippin are split up, from the Fellowship and from each

other, they are both put into positions where they swear allegiance to a new lord

whom they both eventually disobey. It is in this "apparently more subservient

capacity that the two learn to act as mature individuals, taking responsibility for their

actions even when these involve disobedience or disagreement with socially

constructed authorities" (Langford 5). This disobedience marks a breaking away

from the authority of the homeland. Rather than punish the Hobbits, the King grants

them an authority which is comparable to that of a leader of a country with

commonwealth status. The Shire is rendered a colony even if it is granted a degree

of autonomy and self-rule. Its position is not unlike that of Canada, New Zealand

and Australia in relation to Britain. It is also ironic that it is through disobedience

that Pippin and Merry change their status in the Shire. Pippin is rewarded for service

and is promoted to a post as a member of the Tower Guard. However, his will

conflicts with the structure of power around him and he disobeys orders so that he

may save the life of Farimir, a prince of royal blood. Merry also has occasion to

disobey the orders of his lord, which also has favorable results when he is able to

help to destroy the leader of the Ring-wraiths. Both Pippin and Merry are rewarded for their disobedience.

When the Hobbits return to the Shire, they find that it has been taken over by ruffians, humans under the control of Sauron who have created their own laws, disregarded the existing social structure and essentially, colonized the Shire. The Hobbits, upon their return, rebel against the new construction of authority by climbing over the gate, tearing down the posted rules, and forcing the ruffians out of the Shire. In the ensuing battle, some ruffians are killed and the rest are driven out. As a result, the old aristocracy is reinstated and Merry and Pippin are able to regain a position of prominence. By destroying the enemies of the new King, they, in turn, are granted relative authority over their own lands.

The new positions that Merry and Pippin assume in the homeland fit McLeod's description of a Neocolonialist regime in which "the newly-independent nation can find itself administered by an indigenous middle class that uses its privileged education and position cheerfully to replicate the colonial administration of the nation for its own financial profit" (89). For the new Barons, Merry and Pippin, the return to the Shire "is the culmination of a maturation process that has from the beginning been geared, though not always obviously so, toward their eventual importance as leaders within the hobbit society" (Langford 4). This maturation process consists of different stages of rebellion and emulation resulting in a slow transition from their position as ignorant but free citizens, to seemingly independent but paradoxically subservient squires. In this way, they might be like African royalty who go to England for their Education or Joseph Brant rewarded for

his service to England. Once in control of the Shire, they are expected to provide a royal honor guard for the new King of Middle-earth: "King Elessar announced that the Hobbitry-in-arms was to be an honorary part of the Royal Guard of the Northern Kingdom and that when the King or his heirs were in the north it was to supply a troop as Honour Guard to travel with him" (Finch 23). This is much like the treatment of a commonwealth nation which is granted relative control over its own affairs while still being expected to pay allegiance and tribute to the Crown. Upon their return, Merry and Pippin become part of the class which "continues to exploit the people in a way not dissimilar to the colonialists...They serve as 'the national bourgeoisie (which) steps into the shoes of the former European settlement'" (89). The acceptance of alterity, in this case, provides Merry and Pippin with the means to re-create imperialist processes in a hegemony similar to neocolonialism.

The Other Three

Meanwhile, their former traveling companions respond to exposure to the Other in a different way. The journey of the other Hobbits is much longer and more involved and does not lead back to glory in the homeland. Almost half of Book Two, *The Two Towers,* and Book Three, *The Return of the King,* revolve around the journey of the two walkers, Frodo and Sam, who are later joined by Gollum. Throughout this journey, Frodo's slow transformation and eventual adoption of Otherness is demonstrated and contrasted with Gollum's recoveries and relapses from and into Otherness. All three members of this new Fellowship are or have been bearers of the Ring of power, and all three, in one way or another, adopt Otherness. These Hobbits travel, garbed in the uniform of Self and Other, and emerge the

stronger as a result of their abilities to pass in both communities. It is in Mordor, the supposed center of Otherness, where Frodo and Sam come to terms with the tactics and attributes of the Other through explicit mimicry.

After Sam and Frodo leave the Fellowship, they quickly become lost on barren rocks. Although the place is a part of a fantastical land, it is no more inviting than the road taken by Marlow in Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Marlow, recounting his journey, describes his experiences to his captive audience aboard the Neville as follows: "Paths, paths, everywhere; a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land, through long grass, through burnt grass, through thickets, down and up chilly ravines, and up and down stony hills ablaze with the heat; and a solitude, a solitude, nobody, not a hut" (121). Similarly, in the wilderness experienced by Tolkien's travelers, "they had climbed and laboured among the barren slopes and stones of the Emyn Muil, sometimes retracing their steps because they could find no way forward, sometimes discovering that they had wandered in a circle back to where they had been hours before" (Tolkien 589). Both Marlow and the Hobbits must rely on their guides. The Hobbits' guide is Gollum. Gollum is forced to lead them out of starvation and endless wanderings because of an oath of subservience: "We will swear to do what he wants, yes, yess" (Tolkien 603). The symbolic taming of the native/guide in Tolkien's text mimics adventure literature. The opportunity for learning from the Other dismantles the overt master/guide dichotomy. The masters are in the power of the servant and the servant has the superior knowledge, since he has already traveled this road. Sam and Frodo both follow, footprint for footprint, where Gollum leads the way.

Sam makes note of the blending of identities among the bearers of the Ring

when he mutters: "three precious little Gollums in a row we shall be, if this goes on

much longer" (Tolkien 614). Sam despises Gollum, but subconsciously realizes that

Gollum's state is a circumstantial one and that he, Sam, could easily find himself

walking in Gollum's place. By walking in the tracks of Gollum, Sam does not gain

an understanding of him but rather the experience elicits a denigration and contempt

towards this captive/guide

Sam's own desire for the Ring is wrapped up in a very complicated structure

of class, race, and social hierarchy. The Hobbits define their Selves in terms of

Others, others who are separated by markers such as gender, class, social

connections, place of habitation. Hobbits have no reason to question their notions of

order as transmitted from one generation to another while they remain in the Shire.

The Self cannot be known without the dichotomous opposite, so the Hobbits are less

aware of their subjective positions until they are confronted with Others beyond the

familiar distinctions of class and gender. Now that there is an outside Other, the

distinction of the class difference between Sam and Frodo has been blurred.

With the event of the quest, Gollum becomes an alter-ego for both Sam and

Frodo, although in different ways. Frodo uses Gollum as a prototype upon which to

fix his sense of his own future as the bearer of the Ring. Gollum's role is dictated by

the Ring that now controls his character and his role in society. The possession of

the Ring is transferable, and the power associated with it is also fluid. The Nine

Rings for mortal Men can create nine wraiths, beings who have accepted hegemonic

situations with designs to further their own power. The Ring is an extension of the

workings of the systems of powers, not a power wholly of its own. In Jackson's cinematic text, when it is worn by someone who is good, the Ring corrupts that person irrevocably. In Tolkien's text, the Ring serves as the symbol for an integrated relationship between Self and Other that can be re-established by the Ring's wearing and removal.

In Tolkien's text, the Ring serves as an opportunity for Sam and Frodo to understand themselves, their relationship to each other, and their individual relationships to Gollum. Sam is forced to reassess his relationship to Frodo and Frodo must examine the meaning of his ownership of the Ring. Mediated by the influence of the Ring, Sam and Frodo are experiencing the blurring of the distinctions between the established dichotomy of Self and Otherness. The social hierarchy established in the Shire does not apply when they are on this journey. It has been undermined by the necessity of imitation. Gollum is a mimic man who has forgotten and learned again the ways and the language of the Hobbits. Although Frodo and Sam are in a position of power, since Gollum must serve Frodo who is the bearer of the Ring, both Frodo and Sam become reflections of their guide/captive and often find themselves oblivious to and wholly trusting of his control. In this case, regardless of social and economic status, they all nearly starve to death, and their experience creates a potent actualization of the arbitrary and fabricated nature of the distinctions between them.

Frodo

Frodo, who is now the bearer of the Ring for this portion of the journey, is not exempt from the confusions of identity and purpose. He is yet to be overcome by

fits of momentary possession, occasions in which he is "tottering forward, his groping hands held out, his head lolling from side to side" (Tolkien 689). This zombie-like thralldom, this inability to further control his own responses, is the danger of the Ring. As David Critchett states "the proper way to behave is given a priori, from the top, and all that is necessary is to make a character like Frodo understand his duty" (49). Frodo understands his duty to his fellow Hobbits before he leaves the Shire. The thralldom associated with the Ring represents an attention to duty. The individual is ruled by position in the relationship dictated by the societal structure.

Frodo, when removed from his homeland has difficulty maintaining the trappings of his former Self and is dressed in the clothing of the Other. After he is poisoned, captured, and all of his clothing removed, he loses touch with his old motivations and sense of Self. The removal of Frodo's signifiers of identity is necessary for him to be able to assume the new identity that will allow him to understand and benefit from the knowledge of the Other. With the physical stripping of his clothes he awakens, surrounded by Orcs, and then is forced to don their clothing and thereby to embrace their Otherness in order to escape it. The items that Frodo loses are symbols that separate the Self from the Other and the separation of mimicry comes into play. In this transaction he loses the grey cloak of Lothlorien, one of the key significations of his allies and the Fellowship. He unwillingly sheds all of his clothing, the signifiers which represent his firmly implanted identity as a Hobbit, not just any Hobbit, but a Hobbit of upper social standing. He gives up his Mithril mail and his sword Sting, both heirlooms from Bilbo, his father-figure.

Then, he takes up a "black cloak," some heavy chain mail, "hairy breeches of some unclean beast-fell," and a "black cap…upon which the Evil Eyes was painted in red above the beaklike nose guard" (Tolkien 892). Frodo has literally been stripped of the signifiers of his identity, and has donned the symbolism and gear of the enemy. The loss of Frodo's Hobbit identity is exacerbated by the weight of the Ring and the wounds of the Wraith-blade and spider-poison. All of these catalyze his descent into a Gollum-like state. Unlike Merry and Pippin, who gain power from taking on the signifiers of Otherness, Frodo loses his self control and becomes more like the Gollum prototype. He is no longer in control of his destiny. Just as Conrad's Marlow is unable to explain why he is not buried with Kurtz, Frodo is saved from Gollum's fate by means outside of his own control. Both Marlow and Frodo know the dangers, but neither has made a conscious decision to change his fate. Marlow's options are lost when he falls sick and is sent home, and Frodo's option goes over the edge with Gollum.

Sam

Sam is the least hybrid of all the Hobbits at the end of the trilogy, perhaps because of his initial status as the lowest class member of the circle. The concept of the master/servant relationship between Frodo and Sam is transformed when Sam, the servant, becomes a free agent as well as the bearer of the Ring. Sam's position in the socio-economic hierarchy is changed. The benefits and evils associated with the Ring can be experienced both by those in power and by those who are considered to be subservient. Sam comes into possession of the Ring by chance when, after Gollum betrays his companions and leads them into the lair of Shelob, Frodo is

poisoned and lies, as if dead, in the mountain pass. Sam believes that Frodo is dead,
and Sam is forced to become a bearer of the Ring rather than just a bystander.
Tolkien describes Sam's inner debate this way:

> If we're found here, or Mr. Frodo's found, and that Thing's on him,
> well, the enemy will get it. And that's the end of all of us, of Lorien,
> and Rivendell, and the Shire and all. And there's no time to lose, or
> it'll be the end anyway. The war's begun, and more than likely things
> are all going the Enemy's way already. No chance to go back with It
> and get advice or permission. No, it's sit here till they come and kill
> me over master's body and gets It; or take It and go'. He drew a deep
> breath. 'Then take It, it is!' (Tolkien 715)

Sam is forced in this moment to make a decision without the aid or permission of a
master.

Sam is about to carry the Ring across the border into Mordor, but it is with a
changed status. His position as both representative of the colonizer and one who has
occupied a subservient position within the colonizing structure has not prepared him
for a border crossing on his own, and this border has a new significance: "As he
gazed at it suddenly Sam understood, almost with a shock, that this stronghold had
been built not to keep enemies out of Mordor, but to keep them in" (Tolkien 880).
Sam is crossing both figurative and physical borders and, as Bhabha explains, the
border is a "place where conventional patterns of thought are disturbed and can be
disrupted by the possibility of crossing. At the border, past and present, inside and

outside no longer remain separated as binary opposites but instead commingle and conflict" (in McLeod 217). Sam is at such a border.

This border is the location of Sam's first true encounter with the powers of the Ring, and, moreover, his first time operating as his own master. His independence, however, is always mediated by the power and allure of the Ring, and thus his autonomy is mediated even during this brief autonomous stint. But Sam chooses not to act on this opportunity for a change in his status. As soon as he puts on the Ring, he realizes the hallucinogenic effects of the Ring. He sees an avatar image of himself "striding with a flaming sword across the darkened land" (Tolkien 880). The image is only an illusion, a temptation of power and domination. Sam, perhaps because he is a servant bound to the limitations of having a master, is the only one to see the Ring as an illusion. He tells himself: "anyway all these notions are only a trick" (Tolkien 881). Although he is tempted by the Ring and by the possibility of attaining power within his structural hierarchy, he rejects it almost immediately and remains one of the only characters to be little affected by the wearing of it. Sam continues the journey and returns to the Shire as Sam. He returns a stronger character, but without the titles conferred upon the others or the physical changes. Merry and Pippin both come back taller, Frodo is missing a finger, only Sam remains unchanged. His previous status as servant is removed because Frodo goes off into exile without him but he remains himself.

Sam's experience is one of the only encounters with the Ring, with the exception of Tom Bombadil, that does not have drastic repercussions to the character involved. In fact, Sam's use of the Ring is not without its merits, for without the

corrupted and excessively powerful image of himself as contrast, Sam's true desires could not be revealed. He rejects the colonial ideal of power, and understands through this experience that his needs are simple ones: "one small garden of a free gardener [is] all his need and due" (Tolkien 881). A free gardener is a change in status that would bring him to a different level in the hierarchy but would not place him in a leadership position. This conception of the allotment granted a "free gardener" as "all his need and due" is part of the contradiction inherent in the colonial system. When Sam reaches the border he has opportunity to look at how things are in a centre different from his own. McLeod alludes to such imaginative crossings when he says, "imaginative crossings at the 'beyond' offer ways of thinking about communal identity that depart from older ideas such as the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' of the nation which can fall foul of the binary logic of same/different, inside/outside, citizen/stranger" (218). This is part of the alterity that is occurring throughout the Hobbit journey. Sundered from their homeland, the Hobbit sense of Self must be drawn not from a patriotic notion of home and country but from a difference mediated by encounters with the Other.

While Sam's brief possession of the Ring may not have great effects on his character, it does have a drastic effect on his relationship with Frodo, not because Sam's commitment to Frodo changes, but because the Ring influences Frodo's perceptions of their relationship. Frodo has come increasing under the power of the Ring. When Sam tells Frodo that he is in possession of the Ring, Frodo is immediately and unreasonably jealous because he has already been changed by its influence. Frodo now sees Sam in a different way. Tolkien describes it this way:

"Sam had changed before [Frodo's] very eyes into an Orc again, leering pawing at his treasure, a foul little creature with greedy eyes and slobbering mouth" (Tolkien 891). The passage shows the Orc as a dehumanized being. The Orc is a racial Other while Sam is an economic Other who steps out of his accustomed place. In the time it takes Sam to debate and renounce the Ring, Frodo steps nearer to a Gollum-like state.

The Coming of Age

In contrast to Gollum's solitude, Frodo has always had the support and love of friends and the loyalty of Sam to hold fast the notion of identity that he has come to accept. Frodo has had the Ring in his possession for some eighteen years and has already turned into something of a wraith. The simple joys have been lost. Even Gollum savors the taste of fish, whereas Frodo hardly eats at all and has lost all memory and desire of all things pleasant and wholesome to Hobbits. Frodo laments that "no taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to [him]. [He is] naked in the dark…and there is no veil between [him] and the wheel of fire. [He] begin[s] to see it even in [his] waking eyes, and all else fades" (Tolkien 916). Nakedness in colonialist literature traditionally is reserved for the "savage," whereas clothing is used to denote "civilization." Frodo is in transition. He remains an Elf-friend, but is also kindred to the Wraiths. As Wayne Hammond suggests, "in mind and body, Frodo is now truly 'rootless' and will remain so" (32). Those who accept Otherness to the exclusion of Self cannot return to the homeland because there is no longer a place for

them. Frodo, like Conrad's Kurtz, can not go home. Although he returns, physically, he no longer feels at home in the Shire.

Frodo is now forced to adopt the garb of the Orcs in order to escape. The disguise is a key appropriation of Otherness, but once it has served its purpose he renounces it as well: "picking up his orc-shield he flung it away and threw his leather helmet after it" (Tolkien 916). As important as the adoption of the traits of both sides is, the renouncement of both is also necessary. Frodo has now worn the garb of both the Self and the Other and is left with only a thin remnant of his Orcish gear and none of his own. Tolkien describes it: "then pulling off the gray cloak he undid the heavy belt and let it fall to the ground, and the sheathed sword with it. The shreds of the black cloak he tore off and scattered. 'There, I'll be an orc no more,' he cried 'and I'll bear no weapon fair or foul'" (Tolkien 916). Frodo may be attempting to regain an essential Self or perhaps he is attempting to take a neutral stance between the identity as he knew it and the new one being forced upon him by his changed circumstances. Neutrality is a difficult place in the oppositional discourse of Self and Other. Frodo has no centre; rather than a hybrid with characteristics of the former Self and the acquired Other, Frodo becomes a homeless exile.

Sam is under the power of the Ring to a lesser extent but he must also find his identity. Like Frodo, he must first renounce the signifiers of his personality to do this. Although Sam is still wearing the clothes he was wearing when he left the Shire, he must discard something much nearer to the heart of his identity. Sam must throw away his cooking gear, a sign of domesticity and civilization, and with it any hope of returning to his homeland. As Tolkien describes it, "the clatter of his

precious pans as they fell down into the dark was like a death-knell to his heart" (917). Interestingly, Gollum uses the same word "precious" to describe the Ring and its hold over him. Gollum is the prototype of Hobbits who have worn the Ring and become exiles because of it. The abandonment of Self when faced with the Other means changes in day to day activities. As in many cultures, the Hobbit identity centres around food and food preparation. Sam is especially linked to that identity because of his responsibilities during his former life. His decision to throw away his cooking gear is made with the intent of keeping Gollum's hands from it. Although he has shed these items by his own choice, it is a great blow to his conception of the Hobbit Self.

Gollum is an exile who tries to reclaim his identity but is unable to relinquish the changes wrought by the Ring. His is a state of hybridity, "composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations–demolishing forever the idea of subjectivity as stable, simple, or 'pure'" (McLeod 219). When he has a chance, he claims articles of clothing cast off by Hobbits. When Frodo and Sam are nearly apprehended by the tracker and the warrior Orc, they overhear an account of appropriation perpetrated by Gollum. The Orcs are speaking of Gollum who "messed up the scent back there, pinching that cast-off mail-shirt" (Tolkien 904). Gollum's interest in the shirt is based on the fact that a Hobbit has recently worn it. This adoption of the mail shirt represents Gollum's desire to re-identify with the Hobbits and mimic them. Gollum is not concerned with the protection that the mail shirt might grant him, even if this is a very lucky side effect of the armor. Instead, he is attempting to re-establish his kinship with his distant relatives by wearing the

discarded shirt. Meanwhile, the Hobbits themselves are taking on the characteristics

of the Other. Thus, the Self becomes mixed with the Other. The boundary between

the two is blurred either through necessity or longing, but the distinction is becoming

ever more murky creating a hybrid Self and Other.

Gollum remains the prototype of loss of identity and in the end he saves

Frodo from a similar fate. During the journey Frodo is increasingly less able to fight

the urge to accept the Ring, but the effects of the Ring have become apparent to him.

For instance, after Sam and Frodo overhear the discussion about Gollum from the

two Orcs, Sam tells Frodo "all that he could find words for of Gollum's treacherous

attack" (Tolkien 905). After the story is done, the disheartened Frodo, as a sign of

his failing Self, ponders "how long it will be before [the] slinking will be over"

(905). Frodo's own association with the slinking Gollum is a sign that Frodo realizes

that they make this journey not to renounce Otherness, but to embrace it. They come

to shed the skin of their comfortable identities in the land that is unknown, and they

must adopt the shade of their surroundings, exactly as Gollum does. If Otherness is

to be scorned, it cannot be embraced in order to increase the understanding of the

sense of Self. In Tolkien's text, if Frodo would have scorned all that is associated

with the Other, he would not have survived even to this point or learned enough from

Gollum to slink near enough to allow for the eventual destruction the Ring.

Frodo begins his journey with the intention to destroy the Otherness that

resides within the Ring, but in the end embraces it. The journey into Mordor ends

not as a struggle against Otherness but as a rushing towards it. When Frodo arrives

"there on the brink of the chasm, at the very Crack of Doom," he changes his mind:

"'I have come,' he said. 'But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!' And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight" (Tolkien 924). The Frodo that Sam knew is "vanished from Sam's sight." The Frodo Self, the one that existed before the introduction of the Other, would not have made this decision. Had Frodo been able to keep the Ring, it would have lead to his death or, at best, to his everlasting torment. Frodo is like Kurtz, who "after coming three hundred miles, had suddenly decided to go back" (Conrad 134). Similarly, as Kurtz is relieved of his position, so too is Frodo relieved of the Ring. Frodo is saved from his changed intentions by Gollum, the slinking manifestation of Otherness that has for so long guided and aided the Hobbits in their seemingly impossible quest. Frodo has stepped back from the edge with the intention of remaining in his corrupted, and no less colonial, station. Were it not for the inadvertent intervention of Gollum, Frodo would have been consumed by the Ring and completely corrupted by its power.

Rather than being tempted and overcoming Otherness, as Sam does, Frodo embraces it entirely and never, of his own free will, breaks the hold of its power. It takes an act of ambitious rebellion by the colonial guide/servant, Gollum, to subvert, not dismantle, the role of master. By embracing the power of the Ring, Frodo is doomed to a lesser form of freedom, and Gollum escapes his thralldom through death. The other Hobbits, Merry and Pippin, are able to realize their newfound power. Sam returns as a free gardener but eventually becomes the Mayor of the Shire, but it is Frodo's fate to endure the everlasting solitude that is his exile. Frodo becomes a diasporic subject, who is displaced from his homeland and is unable to

return. Paul Gilroy claims that the diasporic subject "does not have secure *roots* which fix him in place, in a nation or an ethnic group; rather, he must continually plot for himself itinerant cultural *roots* which take him, imaginatively, as well as physically to many places and into contact with many different peoples" (in McLeod 215). In Frodo's case, his journeys take him across the seas to the undying west. Frodo, after the elaborate games of appropriating traits and characteristics from all sides, is finally able to regain his composure, but only after the Ring is forcefully taken from him, along with his finger. His missing finger remains a mark of Otherness but when the Ring is gone he is more like his old Self: "there was Frodo, pale and worn, and yet himself again" (Tolkien 926). Although Frodo is recognized by the leaders of the West and is now able to rest, he will never fully heal, nor ever truly find his roots again. For his first appearance in public, after his rescue from the tumults of the destruction of the Ring at Mount Doom, Frodo must wear again the old Orcish rags that he was forced to don after his capture. Although these are meant to honor him, they are the symbols and reminders of Otherness. Gandalf says, "'The clothes that you wore on your way to Mordor...even the orc-rags that you bore in the black land, Frodo, shall be preserved. No Silks and linens, nor any armor or heraldry could be more honorable" (Tolkien 931). Gandalf recognizes the changes that came to Frodo as a result of the sojourn with the Orcs but may also be recognizing that the clothes that Frodo used to wear do not fit him any more. Although much praise is intended, the stark similarities between the recently defeated Sauron and "Frodo of the nine fingers" (Tolkien 933) shows the link between the two and their ultimate kinship. Frodo is displayed as an Other, essentially what he is, wearing the garb of

the enemy, and yet all present at the ceremony, even the new King of Middle-earth, bow before him. Sam, as well, is garbed in his travel gear but this still consists mainly of the significations of his allegiances rather than of his enemies. The change in Frodo's character is much more extreme than is the change in Sam. Sam has temporarily assumed some of the knowledge offered by the association with the Other but has used it differently. As a result, he is little altered and more able to return to his homeland, yet he too is admired and exalted. Frodo's garb reflects how much he has changed and foreshadows his fate as an exile.

Frodo's character has changed as a result of the journey; the Frodo that left the Shire no longer exists. The explicit mixing of Self and Other results in a new identity. Frodo's identity is interminably linked to that of his doppelganger, Gollum, as his experiences parallel those of Gollum. With Gollum's destruction, Frodo's chance for self-realization is gone, as O'Neil says, "in time, Frodo will feel loss, the emptiness that is the cessation of growth" (in Critchett 47). This, in effect, perpetuates the Otherness that appears to be destroyed. While all of his companions go on to great glory and renown, Frodo is forgotten and can no longer function within the societies that he rescued. Frodo fades back into the position of the eccentric hermit. As Critchett says, when we look closely at what Frodo is "forced to give up we can see that his sacrifice, instead of leaving him whole and sound, that is, in a greater state of awareness, has had the opposite effect. Frodo gives up an essential part of himself, something without which psychic wholeness is impossible" (46). His end is not death but exile and eternal banishment from Middle-earth. Both Kurtz and Frodo experience an inverted Diaspora, since both come to acknowledge

the Other, associating with the dark land rather than with the homeland. Critchett suggests that, without the doppelganger, Gollum, "to exhibit the necessary model for Frodo's subconscious identity, the completion of his development is marred because it is without the always compromising, equalizing, effects of an integrated Otherness" (46). However, both of Frodo's Others, Gollum and Sauron, are utterly terminated. Frodo is unable to defeat for himself the powers that control him, and because of this he is unable to place himself in a position that will allow him to appropriate the useful aspects to be learned from Otherness. As part of his exposure to Otherness, Frodo appears to have learned the unusual characteristic of compassion for the enemy. When he has opportunity for revenge, he dismisses Sauron to go freely despite his treachery. Sauron attempts to stab Frodo with a hidden knife, but even then Frodo spares him saying: "do not kill him even now. For he has not hurt me. And in any case I do not wish him to be slain in this evil mood" (Tolkien 996). Frodo demonstrates his alterity in his ability to recognize the Other as human. Although he is ever scarred and marked as the Other by the Ring wraith wound, the memory of the One Ring and the finger on which he wore it, this does not help to fulfill the lacking components of his Hobbit Self. When Frodo does return to the Shire, it is not in glory nor with much spirit. He is now able to see himself as part of this Otherness. All that he can do is hold out a hand of compassion and forgiveness towards the Otherness upon his doorstep.

Frodo, Sam, and Gollum are interrelated characters that function in roles similar to mimic men as leaders of the coming of age of Hobbits once all four are reunited and return from their journey. In order to restore order to the Shire they

implement strict discipline and heavy-handed military action, in which they force the "hungry and very footsore" Hobbits to march beyond their endurance (Tolkien 980). This is similar to the treatment they themselves remember, Merry and Pippin while in the captivity of the Uruk-Hai and Frodo and Sam on a forced march with the Orcs of Mordor whose whips are so "cunningly handled" (Tolkien 440). Although Frodo has only thoughts of humane action in regard to the Ruffians, he still participates in a forced march, driving the Hobbits that "could not stand the pace" before them while they ride casually on their horses (Tolkien 980). Frodo, who nearly dies of exhaustion in a similar procession in Mordor, does not object to this parallel of regimented military behavior. Now back in the garb and the security of the Fellowship, which by this point has claimed dominion over Middle-earth, the Hobbits consider it necessary to force other Hobbits, obviously controlled by the devices of the enemy, into the same treatment that they themselves were subjected to at the hands of the Orcs. This time it is in the name of "good." The means remain the same, only the ideology that uses the means has a different discourse. Frodo is not alone in his application of Orc battle tactics. Merry and Pippin were also forced into a cruel march beyond their stamina, and yet back in the Shire, it is "Merry [that] made them march in front, while Frodo and his friends rode behind" (Tolkien 980). The tactics of Otherness have been appropriated, and like mimic men the Hobbits exhibit characteristics from both Self and Other. The Self and Other are, like the doppelganger, two parts of the same construct.

So it is that a postcolonial reading of Tolkien's adventure tale traces the journey of the Hobbits to new understandings of Self and Other. As a group,

Hobbits exist in a world untouched by Other so the sense of Self is hitherto undefined. However, when they journey out of the Shire, they encounter characters unlike themselves and are forced to recognize the Self-Other relationship. In the beginning, the journey brings them to experience ambivalence through characters like Tom Bombadil and Treebeard/Fanghorn. These characters inhabit the margins of the Shire and in postcolonial terms, provide the possibility for an understanding of the Self-Other dichotomy. The encounter with Gollum shows the Hobbits a prototype of a Hobbit who has embraced Otherness to the extent that Self has been lost. Upon his indenture to Frodo, he becomes a mimic man, learning the language necessary to please the master and appropriate the powers of colonialism for himself, but he is destroyed in his quest to recapture the powers he has lost. Meanwhile, the individual Hobbits have opportunity to enter into the Self-Other dialectic. Merry and Pippin use the opportunity for alterity to appropriate characteristics of Otherness to be used to their advantage. Sam chooses not to accept alterity and returns to the Shire little altered by the experience. Frodo, on the other hand, comes so close to losing his Self to the influences of the Other that he can no longer exist in either society. In the next chapter I describe how this opportunity for a postcolonial reading is ignored in Jackson's cinematic adaptation which appears as a neocolonial nod to the colonizing mindset necessary for maintaining the covert aims of exploitation currently being cast as an overt war-on-terrorism.

Chapter Three

Contemporary Neocolonialism: A Cinematic Adaptation

Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings has been adapted into multiple genres and media ranging from comic books to stage plays and animated films, and more recently to an Academy Award winning Trilogy. The visual adaptation of Tolkien's text forces directors, such as Peter Jackson, to make choices in casting the various roles and in the selection of scenes, which shift the focus of the depiction of the vague Other to a very specific representation of the Other. The Other in Jackson's adaptation is dark skinned, visibly non-Caucasian. Jackson began work on The Lord of the Rings trilogy in the late 1990s before 9/11 but his anticipation of Otherness in the film coincides with the diametrically opposed rhetoric of the war-on-terror.

Ken Gelder argues that the "modern epic fantasy is a literary form of fundamentalism that troubles secular ideals but also troubles the kind of political fundamentalism that relies on Manichean binaries of good and evil" (25). In Tolkien's text, the binaries found in discourse that distance the Self from the Other are constituted by an ambivalent perspective to reveal the interdependence of each component of the binary pairs. Tolkien's characters must continuously mediate between the two components. This is not the case in the cinematic adaptation. My reading of Jackson's adaptation of The Lord of the Rings focuses on the loss of the ambivalence present in Tolkien's text and the omission of the progression in the characters of the Hobbits as they deal with the opportunity for appropriation of Other in relation to the awakening of the concept of Self. My investigation focuses on the ways in which, in Jackson's treatment, the ambivalent characters lose their place in

the overall story, and the Hobbits, rather than straddling the balance between Self

and Other, overtly embrace the straight-forward roles of heroism associated with

"colonialism...represented in literary, historical, and political discourses as a species

of adventure tale, dominated by an ethic of personal heroism that is imbedded in a

specific national-religious formation" (Dean 354). Specifically, I will outline

Jackson's representation of Tolkien's ambivalent characters, Tom Bombadil,

Treebeard/Fanghorn and Gollum/Sméagol and of the Hobbit travelers Frodo, Sam,

Merry, and Pippin, to identify the changes he makes to these characters. I will also

examine cases of deviation from Tolkien's plot. As part of the analysis, I explore

how the current "war-on-Terror" declared by American President George W. Bush

relates to "the war of the Ring." I analyze the ways in which Jackson's changes to

Tolkien's novel can be related to a contemporary political and martial paradigm.

In Jackson's cinematic adaptation of The Lord of the Rings, the use of an

overt and opposite enemy fulfills the Manichean allegory by constructing an Other

from which to distinguish the Self. Tolkien is relieved of the necessity for re-

presentation since the characters are all fanciful and exist in a fantastical world

without concern for representational truth-value. But this does not negate the

possibility for racial representation in his work. In Jackson's adaptation the mythical

characters are played by human actors. By casting the roles of the characters on the

side of evil as racially distinct from the characters on the side of good, the binary

opposition is made specific, exemplifying the foundational assumption of colonial

discourse, the constructed nature of Self and Other. Tolkien's text lends itself

readily to the structure of binary opposition by clearly dichotomizing the characters into imaginary species with articulated characteristic.

Hobbits are closely related to humans in Tolkien's descriptions of them and, as we have seen, Tolkien's Orcs are big and ugly and not as closely related. The physical characteristics in Tolkien's description allows for the interpretation of them in racial terms. These characters are depicted in Jackson's cinematic adaptations as racially distinct actors. Hobbits are played by white males while the Orcs are played by large black men. The racialization conforms to what JanMohamed describes as the "fetishization of the Other" the process of "substituting natural or generic categories for those that are socially or ideologically determined" (JanMohamed 67). When the fantastical creatures of Tolkien's text are created as cinematic images of discernable Other the viewer is drawn into a "fetishizing strategy" (68). The visible differences between the good characters and the bad supports the "allegorical mechanism [which] not only permit[s] a rapid exchange of denigrating images which can be used to maintain a sense of moral difference; [but] also allow[s] the writer to transform social and historical dissimilarities into universal, metaphysical differences" (68). The images in the cinematic adaptation provide a very visual "rapid exchange of denigrating images" in spite of the fact that the characters are mythical. In Tolkien's novel, the ambivalent characters can be read as simultaneously fulfilling roles as both "the domesticated, harmless, noble; but also *at the same time* [being] wild, harmful, mysterious" (McLeod 53). In his adaptation, Jackson erases the ambivalence of the Other, thereby making the enemy overt and beyond redemption.

Jackson makes this enemy explicit in two ways: he rewrites characters and creates a new one of his own. He changes the conception of Otherness, shifting it from a reading of Middle-earth as an ambivalent realm of possible corruption and possible redemption, to a strict good/evil binary. Jackson, in an interview with Eric Bauer, explains why he makes some of the changes that he and his co-authors undertook while writing the screenplay: "for the movies, we will have to make motivations a little tighter and more urgent. We have to focus on The Ring, Sauron, and the threat to Middle Earth" (6). In this way, the Hobbit journeys are shifted from Tolkien's centre.

Jackson's "tighter [and] more urgent" interpretation sounds ominously like the recent American campaign against weapons of mass destruction identified by the Bush administration as an overt reason to invade Iraq. In the contemporary war-on-terror, it is necessary to put forward an interpretation of events to make people believe that there is a threat and urgency to the situation in order to build public support for a campaign against an invisible adversary. For that campaign to be successful, it is equally necessary to give a face to a villain which is antithetical to what Tolkien facetiously describes as the "self styled forces of Good" (xvii). The self-styled forces of good in the war-on-terror are a coalition of American and British forces joined by other European nations and former colonies such as Canada.

The climax at the end of Jackson's first film, The Fellowship of the Ring, requires a specific villain in order for that villain to be defeated. As Jackson explains, he creates "a character called Lurtz, who's not in the books. It's the only time in the movies that we've created a character that Tolkien didn't actually write

about. Because we thought that we needed to personalize the leader of this band of Orcs" (12). Without Lurtz, the Orcs are masses of Other, depicted as dark primitives fulfilling the role of stereotypical Other. With Lurtz, the Orcs are synechdochically represented by an amalgamation of the traits of the Other. The Other becomes a personified being to represent the enemy.

When Jackson created his villain, Lurtz, it was his intention to "write the villain in one draft, get that working, then go back over the scenes and humanize him in the next draft" (6). Perhaps the humanizing draft did not occur. I argue that Jackson's interpretation of The Lord of the Rings reflects the template through which the modern war on terrorism is reinforced. In the context of the demonization of foreign leaders who were once allies of the United States, Tolkien's characters can be distorted to serve as examples of an ambivalent ally, and new ones created to be the overt and remote avatar of Otherness.

The personalized leader of the band of Orcs is used in fight scenes that are not depicted in Tolkien's text. There is an extended fight scene in which the fabricated Lurtz battles Aragorn, a hero of Tolkien's novel who remains in the cinematic adaptation. The additional battles are perhaps another effect of what Courtney Booker describes as the "emphasis in...Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films upon graphics at the expense of plot" (171). Although Tolkien describes some battles, he uses them sparingly. In most instances, the details of the battles themselves are sketchy, or left out entirely as in the scene in which the members of the Fellowship stumble across a battle already ended between the Ents and the Orcs. Jackson focuses on the battles and the scenes around them, in order to use special

effects. The creation of Lurtz is more than an opportunity to use special effects. Lurtz's presence fundamentally alters the conception of Otherness to give it a contemporary face.

The modern cinematic adaptation, filmed simultaneously for release at intervals, includes several changes which appear to support my contention that Jackson was applying a neo-colonial reading to Tolkien's text. There is the creation of a new character to "crank the climax up into something that's pretty powerful" (Jackson 12). The fabrication of a climax is not restricted to the first installment of the trilogy but permeates the endings of each film. The ending of Jackson's The Fellowship of the Ring is a professional wrestling match between Aragon, portrayed by a white man, and Lurtz, portrayed by a dark skinned man, an opportunity for the fetishization of the Other. The second film, The Two Towers, also culminates in a battle, whereas Tolkien's second book ends in open-ended darkness with Sam unconscious upon the margins of Mordor and Frodo "alive but taken by the enemy" (725). In contrast, the battle scene in Jackson's adaptation removes all sense of ambivalence. The fight between good and evil is carried out in the dichotomous tradition of colonial understanding, with light defeating darkness. At the end of the third film, other complex resolutions are omitted. In Tolkien's The Return of the King, the death of Sauron occurs by the hand of his own servant. This separates his death from the larger battle between good and evil and reduces it to an almost anticlimactic moment when power has already shifted. The cinematic adaptation stops with the destruction of the Ring, and does not include the scouring of the Shire, the death of Sauron, and Frodo's eventual exile. Jackson's endings emphasize the

defeat of an obvious manifestation of Otherness in the formulaic violence of the movie screen.

The Self and Other dichotomy is confirmed throughout all three films, yet any opportunity for ambivalence of this binary relationship is overwhelmed by the fetishization of the Other. The removal of the blurred lines between Self and Other in Jackson's films has the effect of representing the Other as inherently evil. This dichotomy is furthered by the omission of characters in the book who provide ambivalence as a counter balance. For example, the exclusion of Tom Bombadil from Jackson's films is an instance where the film leaves out an integral link to the understanding of the struggle between Self and Other. Tom Bombadil occupies a crucial role in Tolkien's text because of his political ambivalence and pacifism. The removal of a character who is for the most part outside the structure of power, domination and fear, removes the challenge to the us-versus-them dichotomy propagated in the media and the West-versus-East political agenda. The meeting with Tom Bombadil is an opportunity for the Hobbits to know someone who is outside of the Shire and someone who is outside of the influence of the forces of power. In Jackson's adaptation, the complexity of a character that does not pertain to the central conflict is inconvenient. His interpretation focuses predominantly on the adventure tale without providing character development. Tom Bombadil does not fit into a binary dichotomy and so he is removed.

Other ambivalent characters in roles similar to Tom Bombadil's are included in Jackson's adaptation but have lost much of their ambivalence. For instance, although Treebeard is represented, his character is used for comic relief and he and

his Ents are used as an opportunity to display digital special effects. Turning Treebeard and the Ents into moving and talking trees is a cinematic marvel, but their roles are decidedly more superficial; they are allies rather than ambivalent inhabitants of the region. In Tolkien's novel, Treebeard specifically states that he is "not altogether on anybody's side" (461). Treebeard joins the battle for his own reasons; he is defending his own people since the Orcs have started chopping down the Ent relatives who have become trees. In Jackson's film Treebeard also becomes involved when his own kind comes under attack, but this is brought about by the comic relief trickery of Merry and Pippin, responding directly to the quest of the Hobbits.

Gollum is another character made specifically Other in the cinematic adaptation. Tolkien's Gollum can be seen as what Deane describes as a "modernist experience of the dissolution of the individual self into a nullity, a condition of ghostliness" (355). Deane's description of Kurtz in Conrad's Heart of Darkness as playing a dual role in which he "creates and subverts one of the canonical oppositions of postcolonial and postmodernist discourse--that between Self and Other, between a cultural formation that is finally and intricately articulated and one that is inchoate and amorphous" (356) can be applied to Gollum. He is both guide and servant, who plays the role as a "psychologically conflict-detecting and problem-solving subject who faithfully represents the Other for the Master" (Trinh 68). In contrast, Jackson portrays Gollum as a divisive force, coming between Frodo and Sam. In the film, Gollum throws their food over the precipice and sprinkles crumbs over Sam so it appears that Sam has eaten the last of their food. On the basis of this

deception, Frodo dismisses Sam and continues on his way with Gollum alone. Gollum is portrayed as a primarily evil being, and the conflicted aspects of Gollum's complex character are lost. The simplicity of the character that is portrayed on the screen ignores the opportunity to envision "the spectacle of a person 'eaten up inside' by devotion to some abstraction (which) has been so familiar throughout the twentieth century as to make the idea of the Wraith, and the wraithing-process, horribly recognizable, in a non-fantastic way" (Tom Shipley in Gelder 24). In the cinematic adaptation, Gollum's role is that of a slinking creature to be despised for his duplicity but his role as a prototype for the dissolution of character that comes to the bearer of the Ring in diminished.

The film adaptation ignores the fact that Frodo, too, is in danger of becoming a Wraith-like creature. If Frodo is compared to Conrad's Marlow who returns from the "Heart of Darkness" a changed creature, his relationship to Gollum is parallel to Marlow's relationship to Kurtz. He is the prototype of what Frodo will become if he continues to wear the ring. This relationship is not developed in Jackson's film, mainly because of a series of omissions of pivotal text. For example, excluded are the conspiracy of the other Hobbits concerning Frodo's secret exodus from the Shire, and the scouring of the Shire when the Hobbits turn their knowledge of warfare on the members of their own community. The characteristics displayed by the other Hobbits, Merry, Pippin and Sam, as they conspire to accompany and protect Frodo on his journey are fundamental to their opportunity for later change, and the scouring of the Shire shows the potential for change, whether it is in a positive or a negative light. If the other Hobbits around Frodo are read as mimic men, there must be seen

in the transition signs of "a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform,

regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power"

(Bhabha 86). In the cinematic adaptation, the Hobbits who surround Frodo are

reduced to humorous and lovable characters who change only in superficial ways.

These characters remain associated with the prevailing stereotype of a Hobbit Self

unaltered by the opportunity for change through exposure to Other. It is as if they

reach the margins and are never forced to consider the crossing of borders to

challenge the existence of the centre.

Jackson's adaptation reinforces the predominant hegemony of military

conquest, which falls very cohesively into the template of the current American war-

on-terror. The justification of any war requires that the combatants adhere to the

Manichean allegory, in which the demarcation of the "oppositions between white

and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery,

intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and

object" (JanMohamed 63) is clearly outlined and sustained. The Other must be

completely different from the Self in order to justify the use of force to destroy and

subjugate it. In Jackson's adaptation, the ambivalence of Tolkien's text is removed

and, with it, Tolkien's sensitivity to the futility of war. In the novel, there is a scene

in which Sam pauses in introspection on the battlefield as he sees a fallen enemy

warrior. In this scene, Tolkien shows war stripped of its glory as is evident in the

following passage:

> It was Sam's first view of battle of Men against Men, and he did not
>
> like it much. He was glad that he could not see the dead face. He

wonders what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he

was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long

march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed

there in peace. (Tolkien 646)

Sam's contemplation of the faceless enemy is represented quite differently in the

cinematic adaptation. In the movie, Sam's reflections on the possibility of sameness

for those serving on both sides of the conflict is removed. The ambivalent lessening

of the fabricated notion of Otherness is overlooked entirely. Although Sam, in the

novel cannot see the identity of the fallen warrior, it being "face downwards"

(Tolkien 646), in the cinematic adaptation, the audience sees through the camera lens

a specific face of contemporary Otherness. This scene is fleeting, and there is no

representational dialogue whatsoever. Sam's important and profound moment of

contemplation is reinterpreted through this camera angle as a means by which the

threat and hostility of the faces associated with a contemporary war are confirmed

for the audience. This face allows the audience to relate the events portrayed on

screen to the contemporary war-on-terror.

The contemporary war-on-terror reflects an Orientalist world view as

identified by Said. Said defines Orientalism as follows: "Orientalism (is) a style of

thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between

'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2). Said makes explicit

reference to the Middle East as "a place crisscrossed by Western, especially

American, interests" (26). Nearly thirty years ago, Said said:

one aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds...this is nowhere more true than in the ways by which the Near East is grasped...making even the simplest perceptions of the Arabs and Islam into a highly politicized, and almost raucous matter...because the Middle East is now so identified with Great Power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small...the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed. (26-27)

In Jackson's interpretation of The Lord of the Rings, the "electronic, postmodern world" is using film to reinforce the stereotypes about an area of the world that, as Said predicted, has become the new locus of Western aggression, a focus for the "American Orientalism after the Second World War" (Said 18), especially after 9/11.

Jackson's film was well into production when the events of 9/11 precipitated the war-on-terror announced by the White House in the wake of the fall of the Trade Towers in New York. However, its release following the events of 9/11, fits with the 9/11 media coverage that overtly emphasizes the Arab face of the Other. As Smyth

suggests: "The second installment of the film, *The Two Towers* (2002), re-edited after September 11, makes the allusion to terrorism and genocide, to veiled aggressors from the East, even more explicit" (Smyth 20). The timing of the release of the film The Two Towers caused confusion among those unfamiliar with Tolkien's original books about the identity of the towers being portrayed in the film. The words two towers had, since 9/11, taken on an entirely new meaning. This alteration has been seen by some, like Gelder, as a political connection to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. According to him,

> it was difficult not to notice the synchronicity between New York's
>
> destroyed twin towers and the second book of Tolkien's epic fantasy,
>
> *The Two Towers*--signposted as an already completed film-yet-to-
>
> come shortly after the 11 September attacks. Tolkien's dark
>
> towers...are evil and remote; New York's towers became proximate;
>
> both functioned as 'marvelous' symbols, installed at the center of
>
> some sort of epic struggle. (21)

Gelder suggests that the twin towers of both the World Trade Center and the cinematic representation of The Lord of the Rings have assumed a place on "the vulnerable border between fantasy and reality" (21).

Although the name of the second book, The Two Towers, is the same as the name of the second film, the symbolic use of the towers themselves has been altered from the book to the cinematic version. In Tolkien's novel, the Two Towers are both originally good, but over time, one of them is corrupted. Tolkien's single corrupted tower functions as an ambivalent symbol because of its association, first with one

side, and then with the Other. Sam recognizes that "this strong hold had been built not to keep enemies out of Mordor, but to keep them in" (Tolkien 880). In Jackson's adaptation, the two towers both represent an alliance of the dichotomized Other in which two evils have combined forces.

The happenings associated with the towers, real and fantastic, are linked by coincidental dates: Tolkien dates the changed allegiance of the tower in 2002 of the third age. Jackson could have noted that date and fixed the date for release of The Two Towers for the year 2002 of our calendar. The factual events of the twin towers in New York occurred on September 11, 2001. By the time of the release of the film, the twin towers, which stood for American trade and Western economy, and were read by some as symbols of American Imperialism, had been destroyed, and had, overnight, became symbolic instead for the fear of a terrorist Arab Other, reminiscent of the stereotype depicted in Said's Orientalism a quarter of a century earlier.

Tolkien is on record as being skeptical regarding attempts to connect his work with actual events. For example, he denies any connection between the events of the Second World War, which interrupted his writing of the original novel and any "allegorical significant or contemporary political reference whatsoever" (Tolkien xvii). However, Tolkien, fifty years in advance, pinpointed what has now lead to Carlo Stagnaro's reading of the United States Foreign Policy. Stagnaro suggests that the current policy is a dangerous allegorical misuse of Tolkien's work: "The conservative and liberal elites have been portraying Bush's war on terrorism as a sort of crusade of good against evil. They have even tried to enlist John Ronald Reuel

Tolkien...for this endeavor. In their view, the coalition led by the United States is like the 'league of the free' who fight against Sauron of Mordor--that is, bin Laden of Afghanistan" (in Gelder 23). Gelder suggests that there are those who take this inverse notion of allegory even further by naming current political figures: "it might be worth thinking of Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard as real-life counterparts to Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli. These leaders' counter-terrorist discourse has absolutely relied upon a Manichean conception of evil from which liberal democracy in the West is then earnestly distinguished" (Gelder 26).

The political distinction drawn between those willing and those opposing the discourse of anti-terrorism fits cleanly into the representations of Self and Other as they have been understood in colonial binary opposition supported and portrayed in Jackson's films. The coincidence which links the events of the fantasy with those of reality is made even more startling by Jackson's changes to Tolkien's text. The political narrative of actual events following the 9/11 tragedy are portrayed in the media in such a way that these events become allegorical to the fantasy. As Gelder notes, this leads some "not to read the fantasy of The Lord of the Rings as an allegory for reality, but the inverse, that is, to read reality as an allegory for fantasy" (23). The changes, filmed before the modern day events of the trade towers took place, appear to be sculpted to look like modern life.

The similarities between actual events and the cinematic portrayal of the fictional events of Tolkien's novel is evident in a scene in which Aragorn encourages the troops before the final battle. This speech does not exist in Tolkien's text but is invented for the purposes of Jackson's screen version. Although this genre of pre-

battle rally speech is a common one in literature, film, and reality, Aragorn's speech

in the film has chilling similarities to the propaganda used to provide meaning for the

troops of Bush's Coalition-of-the-willing as they bring the war for freedom overseas.

For example, George Bush's address to the nation on September 20, 2001, when

juxtaposed against Aragorn's speech reveals layers of similar text, starting with the

identification of fear among the people, admonition of the strength of purpose

afforded by the group, a sense of the importance of the event to future generations

and the righteousness of the cause for which the people must be willing to die.

George Bush starts with a comment on the fear that people may be experiencing:

"After all that has just passed -- all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes

that died with them -- it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some

speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face"

(Bush, September 20, 2001). Aragorn also starts by addressing the fear in his troops:

"Hold your ground, hold your ground. Sons of Gondor, of Rohan, my brothers. I

see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me." (Aragorn). Bush

then assures his people of the courage of the Country: "But this country will define

our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is

determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty,

here and across the world. (Applause.)" (Bush). Aragorn's speech takes the same

tone: "A day may come when the courage of men fails, when we forsake our

friends, and break all bonds of fellowship, but it is not this day" (Aragorn). Bush

speaks of the importance of the mission: "And in our grief and anger we have found

our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human

freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us." Aragorn's people are similarly challenged: "An hour of wolves and shattered shields when the age of men comes crashing down, but it is not this day, this day we fight." Bush calls to the nation to protect themselves and future generations: "Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." (Applause). Aragorn makes a similar call: "By all that you hold dear on this good earth, I bid you stand, Men of the West" (Aragorn, in Jackson's Return of the King, George Bush in Address to the Nation, September 20, 2001). The call to arms focuses on the aspects of the coalition that hold them together, calling them brothers and sons, friends and fellowship. In Tolkien's fantasy, the group entering the battle on the same side as the Hobbits is a mixed crew that has already provided evidence that there is some mistrust among the various groups. There are hierarchies and differences that are overlooked in order for these disparate groups to join together against a common enemy. The forces of the Fellowship join together to counter the threat of the Other, just as coalition members are able to put down their territorial and national differences when faced with the perception of a common foe.

Tolkien provides the differentiation between East and West as part of the landscape of Middle-earth. The use of the designation as the "West" appears to be in keeping with Said's Occident and its fetishization of all that is Other directed at the Orient (or "East"). Jackson takes this differentiation to a new level. In Tolkien's novel, the enemy is the aggressor, "the enemy come[s] charging to the assault" (873-

4), whereas, in Jackson's cinematic representation, it is Aragorn's army that mounts the assault. The concept of a preemptive strike is ominously similar to the preference of the current Bush administration when framing the war-on-terror as a response to 9/11.

All this is to say that Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings is an adventure tale in which both sides, good and evil, are ambivalent concepts which promote reflection. In the contemporary adaptation, Jackson's trilogy, the story has been altered in order to establish a binary conception of the Other and to fetishize it. The film builds an ideal heroic notion of good to the extent that, as Gelder says, it is "difficult to extricate counter-terrorism policy from the realms of fantasy and fantasy discourse" (21). If the world of reality is linked to the allegorical representation of a fantastical world, then Gelder suggests that there exists "no better guide to the mood and morals of the United States than Jackson's contemporary adaptations of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings" (23).

Jackson's films, through the further polarization of opposing forces and the subsequent loss of ambivalence, appear to coincide with the political expectations associated with a dichotomized war-on-terror. The film, in order to uphold its central discourse, leaves out the opportunity for the conceptualization of the Self as Other, or as appropriating Otherness. Without this "recognition of the self as the other" (Pretorius 34), an integral part of this particular investigation into the relationship between these opposed forces is omitted. As Anne C. Petty puts it, "both opposing elements are necessary for wholeness, making them paradoxically

complementary as well" (in Pretorius 33). Without this wholeness, the story is a simple, and very problematic, representation of light/goodness versus dark/evil.

Given the connections that I have been drawing between Jackson's reading/interpretation of Tolkien's Middle-earth and the workings of a political and martial propaganda campaign, I return to Tolkien's thoughts on allegory. Tolkien refutes the allegation that there is an allegorical connection between his work and World War II. Tolkien took pains to outline the allegorical connection that he has *not* made in his work. Tolkien's differentiation, in which he cautions that "many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory', but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and other in the purposed domination of the author" (Tolkien xvii), is important for understanding modern adaptations of his work. I suggest that Jackson dominates Tolkien's discourse with allegory suited to the contemporary depiction of Otherness that parallels the current war-on-terror. The "applicability" of Tolkien's work has been reduced to a cookie-cutter dichotomy that reinforces the binary system of Self and Other. Changes in contemporary adaptations of Tolkien's original work reflect the society and time in which the changes are made. Tolkien's ambivalent representation of characters is obscured in Jackson's recent adaptation. In the process of Jackson's "domination" of narration, those with power have taken up the unwavering dominion of the quill. The Red Book containing the history of the Hobbits is in flames, the tales and legends are being forgotten, purposefully altered and trivialized by a stronger, corrupted hand, not Sauron's, but that of the "self-styled Ruler[s]" of Earth (Tolkien xvii). Jackson's use of Tolkien's outline of an archetypal discourse of war fits as an allegorical link to our modern war-on-terror.

Tolkien's <u>The Lord of the Rings</u> is adapted into one of this age's greatest works of

fictionalized propaganda.

Afterword

Postcolonial theory, despite all of its insight into contestable issues, is itself

contested. As Bart Moore-Gilbert states: "Every new movement or school sooner or

later breaks down...in the case of postcolonialism, this process of dissolution has

marked it from its inception. Most essays that begin by asking what postcolonialism

is soon turn into diagnoses of what is wrong with it" (Moore-Gilbert 1). The

formulation of an understanding of what is wrong with something may be a large

part of understanding what it is. The same warning is repeated by Alfred J. Lopez:

> It has become habitual in literary and cultural studies to hurl all that is
>
> troublesome or encumbering into the world of the 'post':
>
> postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, and so on. It is a
>
> practice that [has] come to be fantastically laden with meanings, but
>
> that also provides the soothing illusion that whatever it held to be
>
> really significant has either already happened or is yet to come. (1)

In 1989, when Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin published The

Empire Writes Back. they suggest that

> in critical theory, the growth of important indigenous theories, and the
>
> adaptation of aspects of European theory to the analysis of post-
>
> colonial English writing have been important developments leading to
>
> the questioning of basic critical assumptions in all societies (and)
>
> post-colonial readings of traditional English literary texts and more
>
> importantly, perhaps, the effects on the practices of reading by which

such texts are canonized, are inevitable products of a changed world

in which it is no longer possible to preserve repositories of a fixed and

immutable system of values. (194)

A postcolonial reading of colonial texts can help in the process of "displacing the

hegemonic centrality of the idea of 'norm' itself" (Ashcroft 37). By 2003, Ashcroft

et al. recognize that

despite its usefulness for the task of decolonization, post-colonial

theory has often produced an ambivalent reaction from intellectuals in

post-colonial societies. It has certainly had a wide distribution in

these societies and has drawn a good deal of attention, often regarded

as useful by many local critics. But fears about its homogenizing

effects, and of its dominance by metropolitan-based critics have lead

to a suspicion sometimes erupting into open hostility...the continued

assertion of older and more limited models based on nationalist

cultural categories has not always yielded to the arguments of post-

colonial critics, for all their power and cogency. (205)

Unarticulated racism imbedded in Colonial thought is challenged by postcolonial

theory. The associated concepts of Self and Other provide a starting point for a

debate around the effects of postcolonial thought on an oppressed people.

Jackson's cinematic adaptation of The Lord of the Rings, adaptation serves as

an example of the fact that it is still possible to "preserve repositories of a fixed and

immutable system of values." Jackson's adaptation represents a return to a paradigm

which embraces the hegemony of binary opposition and does so in a political climate

in which that hegemony is a necessity for the continued support for American imperialism-without-colonies.

With any cinematic adaptation there is a danger of misrepresentation or loss of the original themes. Most stories are based on conflict and battles between good and evil. When these dialectics are adapted, they are turned into contemporary renditions that reflect modern political conflicts. Although postcolonial re-reading allows opportunity to address class and racial inequities, for the most part, these fundamental issues are overwhelmed by the cinematic marvels and the opportunity for the display of voyeuristic violence.

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