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The Uncanny and the Postcolonial in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth

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by

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Abstract

This thesis examines J.R.R. Tolkien's texts *The Hobbit*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King* from a postcolonial literary perspective. By examining how these texts, written at the decline of the British Empire, engage with the theoretical polemics of imperialism, this thesis takes a new look at these popular and widely regarded books from a stance of serious academic interest. The first chapter examines how certain characters, who are Othered temporally in the realm of Middle-earth, manage to find a place of narrative centrality from the defamiliarized view of Merry, Pippin, Samwise, and Frodo, uncannily reoccurring throughout the narrative in increasingly disturbing manifestations. From there, the thesis moves on to uncanny places, examining in detail Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow, and the Shire at the end of *The Return of the King*. Each of these locations in Middle-earth helps Tolkien to explore the relationship between colonizer, colonized, and fetishism; the colonizer(s) disavow their own fears of these places by fetishizing the pathways they colonize for their safe passage. Since their paths are unsustainable colonially, these fetishes cannot fulfill their function, as the places are marked with unavoidable reminders of wildness and uncontrollability which cannot successfully be repressed for long. Ending this chapter with a discussion of the hobbit's return to the Shire, the argument moves into the next chapter that discusses the small-scale colonization that takes place in the heart of Frodo himself, making the Shire he used to know firmly unavailable to him. The Ring, in this

case, is the colonizer, doubling, fracturing, and displacing Frodo's selfhood so that he becomes unfamiliar to himself. The uncanniness that this produces and Frodo's inability to heal from his experience with the Ring, this thesis argues, echoes the postcolonial themes of irreconcilability and the fantasy of origin. Concluding on this note, the thesis argues that reading *The Lord of the Rings* in this way renders postcolonial concepts accessible to a whole generation of readers already familiar with the series, and points to the possibility of examining other contemporary texts, or even further analysis of Tolkien's to reveal more postcolonial sensitivities engendered in the texts.

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Introduction

Ever since Oxford professor J.R.R. Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* from 1937 to1949, readers from around the globe have enjoyed the series, from its initial serializations, to its recent cinematic adaptations. Although the tale may seem merely an entertaining fantasy, fans and scholars alike have discussed its complexities and "real world" significances. Many people have noted the novels' similarities to the events of World War II, but Tolkien intended no such allegory, and refuted these claims adamantly. He said himself, in his introduction to the second edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, "I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers" (Tolkien xv).

But, even if we take Tolkien at his word and resist an allegorical reading, he nonetheless goes on to admit later in that same introduction: "an author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guessed from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous" (xv). I do not intend to make any such biographical analysis. In this thesis, I attempt to address the places where Tolkien presents an ideological position neither of anticolonial or colonial sentiments, but where he promotes the reader's uncertainty of these concepts. I argue

that these places produce an overall picture, not of an age- old battle between good and

evil, but a more complex world that functions not unlike the world we live in, with

many multi-faceted cultures, opinions, and histories that weave a complex fabric

contextualized by a time of hardship and colonialism. Although I may not be able to tell

the exact biographical content of the story, I want to prefix this discussion of his texts

with the broader historical conditions that provide the backdrop for the narrative, and

eventually discuss the aspects of postcolonial theory which reveal a far less extreme

dichotomy in the trilogy than previously hypothesized.

Scholars have used many different critical lenses to examine Tolkien's work such

as historical allegory, mythological investigation, and analysis of his created

languages/races, but I intend to use the seldom-employed postcolonial theoretical

framework to illuminate Tolkien's careful articulation of the psychological ramification

of colonialism by including functioning concepts of the Other, colonial fetishism, and

the mental processes of colonization on a micro-scale, in *The Hobbit, The Fellowship of the

Ring, The Two Towers,* and *The Return of the King*. The way Tolkien deals with these

concepts points to a position overall critical of empire; he strategically inserts themes of

ambivalence during instances when characters align with imperial ideologies, and he

focuses on characters with more flexible ideological constructions such as the hobbits,

whose lack of rigidity situates them centrally in the narrative. The historical conditions

during *The Lord of the Rings'* composition, namely, the gradual dissolution of the British

Empire, particularly justify this analysis. In fact, I intend to credit Tolkien's views partially to his late-imperial British social context, and partially his awareness of postcolonial ideologies that manifests in his fiction.

Postcolonial theory proves particularly relevant in illuminating these relationships between the late-Imperial British context for Tolkien's authorship, and the texts' manifestations of cultural and epistemological awareness of the tropes of colonialism. Tolkien expresses his own sense of loss and anomie at the foundation of his trilogy: "[the novel] has indeed some basis in experience; though slender…the country in which I lived in childhood was being shabbily destroyed before I was ten" (xv). Here, Tolkien could be referring to British imperial decline, the loss of an agrarian England through industrialization, or both, but either way, it seems that Tolkien expresses here a general sense of cultural entropy. I do not claim that Middle-Earth serves as a direct mirror that perfectly reflects any European empire; Tolkien rejected this argument as others made it. However, Tolkien shows his characters' attempts to narrate history in similar times of cultural upheaval and decline. Tolkien incites doubt in imperial ideologies at the point of their decline, and the themes of such are widespread in the texts.

Indeed, during *The Lord of the Rings*' composition, the British Empire was contending with many pressing colonial issues, and the public was often divided upon the best course of action in the late 1930's, when first dealing with Germany and Italy's

desire for expansion on the threshold of the Second World War. While Britain's

dominions avoided committing to European involvement, Britain realized that it "could

no longer defend its empire unaided" (James 472). In a sense, the imperial seat of power

that once served Britain well was now turned against them. Britain's position on the

colonies, and colonialism on the whole, was not as resolute as it had been at its height.

With war and invasion pressing in on the country, and little support from their

properties abroad, Britain's empire was dissolving despite the fact it was still, on paper,

an imperial power. During the years of *The Lord of the Rings*' composition, Britain lost a

great number of their occupations, with 198 colonies at the start of 1937 and eleven

percent fewer in 1949 (Luscombe).[1] Yet despite this dramatic loss, many citizens still

viewed "the British empire as a source of international stability" (James 480). Even so,

when the British Commonwealth finally entered World War II, it was not with

nationalist gusto, but with a "sober" and "businesslike" attitude of resolution rather

than inspiration (481). Because of this resolution, a lack of faith in not only the British

Empire, but the concept of the empire arose, the effect being a new surge of colonially

ambivalent literature such as *The Lord of the Rings*. These historical conditions provide

the background and initial justification of my argument, but the bulk of my thesis relies

on the functions of colonialism as a foundation, amplifying with theory how these

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[1] The twenty-two colonies lost were: Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1947, Australia in 1942, Baluchistan in 1947, Bengal in 1947, Bhutan in 1947, Bombay in 1947, Burma in 1948, Ceylon in 1948, Coorg in 1947, Dutch India in 1947, India in 1947, Madras in 1947, Nepal in 1947, New Zealand in 1947, North West Frontier Province in 1947, Palestine in 1948, Punjab in 1947, Sikkim in 1947, Sind in 1947, Surat in 1947, Tranquebar in 1947, and Transjordan in 1946

manifestations of colonialism in the texts arise because of this historical situation of imperial decline.

While a great deal of scholarship addresses Tolkien's works in comparison to English classics such as Beowulf, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and Shakespeare's Plays, very few scholars have considered the British involvement in World War II in their treatment *The Lord of the Rings*. Some scholarship addresses the themes of empire that persist throughout the texts. For example, in "Barbarians and Imperialism in Tacitus and *The Lord of the Ring*s," James Obertino discusses a hierarchy of the races/peoples of Middle-earth, most favorable at the top and least favorable at the bottom. He then takes this list, and contrasts it with the opinions of soldiers of the Roman Empire, in its height. By doing this, he implies a certain degree of imperial involvement on Tolkien's part, viewing the politics of Middle-earth as an equivalent empire to that of Rome. Obertino creates an interesting allegory based on the textual evidence of colonial forces in *The Lord of the Rings*. Other scholars like Jes Battis in her article "Gazing Upon Sauron: Hobbits, Elves, and the Queering of the Postcolonial Optic," have also given textual evidence careful examination. In her article she discusses the complex, and, she argues, slightly colonial relationship, between Frodo and Sauron. Other scholars utilize Tolkien's linguistic background for their use of postcolonial theory. For instance, Robert Epstien, in his essay "'Fer in the North; I kan nat telle where': Dialect, Regionalism, and Philologism," compares Chaucer's treatment in *The Canterbury Tales* of the northern

Middle-English dialect by southern speakers, to how different races of men in Middle-earth have communication challenges and language difficulties and biases. He implies a connection between Tolkien the linguist and a postcolonial Tolkien. Scholars have also argued that Tolkien's position as a fiction writer can serve as evidence of colonialist ideals. In "World Creation as Colonization: British Imperialism in 'Aldarion and Erendis,'" Elizabeth Massa Hoiem discusses a short story out of *The Book of Lost Tales* with several minor colonial themes. She explores the ways that, as she argues, the author and the colonizer are the same personality. Postcolonial analyses of Tolkien's works have been attempted before, and with success. However, there is little scholarship that specifically addresses *The Lord of the Rings'* in relation to the instances of Otherness and uncanniness that pervade the texts and how these instances culminate in a text that breaks superficial dichotomies and turns concepts like "good" and "evil" on their heads. This gap in scholarship allows for my thesis, which investigates these in-between places unanalyzed by previous scholarship through a postcolonial lens, expanding the possibilities of complex colonial positions of awareness, even among the privileged British authorship of that time.

I want to resist the desire to generalize, simplify, or map structures of allegory onto *Lord of the Rings*. Instead, I want to explore the more complex loom through which the fabric of Tolkien's fiction is woven in unison with his theory, and how this process can be unraveled by delicately attempting to identify where and when specific threads

of thought intersect. To do this, I base my argument on foundational works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Sigmund Freud's theories of fetishism and the uncanny, particularly in "The Uncanny"(1919) and "On Fetishism," (1927) but I also consider the more recent contributions of postcolonial theorists. Daniel Boyarin, in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond,* (2005) provides a discussion of boundaries in relation to the split in Judaism and Christianity and its postcolonial implications. James Ferguson, for instance, another contributor to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, who discusses the hierarchy of "the great chain of being," and its political implications in Africa; the deconstruction of this is similar to my approach of deconstructing similar textual assumptions. Also, David Scott provides an analysis of social constructionism's decline in controversy, and how postcolonial studies may follow the same path. Ultimately, all of these theorists are attempting a thorough reassessment of postcolonial studies as a discipline. My thesis contributes to this reassessment because, by returning to authors such as Tolkien on the cusp of the British Empire's dissolution, we could expand the canon of postcolonial authors and take stock of the field post-Said and post-Bhabha, returning to earlier authors previously overlooked, but equally rich in material, including even outwardly unlikely candidates such as Oxford professor J.R.R. Tolkien.

The works of Edward Said, namely *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), foundational works of postcolonial theory, prove useful, particularly in relation

to understanding the tropes of empire and the Orient that Tolkien contests with ambivalence. Said's books discuss how Western scholarship produced an inaccurate form of history concerning the East, which has been taken as fact in the past, especially in justifying colonial endeavors. Often, these ideologies are used to dehumanize certain groups of people, with European nations acting as a savior and a parent to these "unenlightened" natives. Said describes this process in *Orientalism*; and he also ties it to how scholars from the West traveled to the East, and in summarizing the complexity of Eastern cultures, reduced and over generalized a very diverse group of peoples. He discusses how the Occident defines the Orient "by dominating frameworks" (40), and argues that "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (43). These observations of Said's resonate in the texts of Tolkien; for instance, the Elves specifically, have a set of beliefs, attitudes, and stories that they share, and the beliefs of the Hobbits, Gandalf, or even the narrator often contradict some of this knowledge, especially regarding topics like Sauron and dwarves, which are rigidly addressed and confined within the frameworks of Elven bias.

Most useful to my analysis is the way in which Edward Said's draws connections in *Culture and Imperialism* between literature and culture, which I employ in analyzing Tolkien's work to show how early postcolonial thought is embedded in the subtleties of

the texts. Also, the series is set in a time of drastic political changes to Middle-earth. The characters that Tolkien focuses on are frequently forced to confront their ideas about the world through direct exposure to the real state of things. The resulting disillusionment of the characters allows for the awareness of political reality within Middle-earth, but this also provides the sliver of insight into the parallel political reality in which Tolkien wrote.

Said's work allows me to examine the postcolonial ideas embedded in *The Lord of the Rings* in this thesis, but Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1994) allows me to approach the places where the Other or uncanniness permeate from a theoretical perspective. Also central to my argument is Bhabha's postcolonial application of Freud's theory of the uncanny. Bhabha argues that the uncanny manifests in situations of cultural hybridity: the places where mimicry or devolution have blurred the boundaries between cultures and races. These instances of uncanniness are relatively common in *The Lord of the Rings*, because Middle-Earth is a site of many varying cultures that often overlap, despite attempts at isolation. Tolkien strategically places characters and places which occupy positions of otherness centrally in the text. He does this to illicit a slow process of enlightenment for the hobbits who directly experience the *unhiemlich* on their journey far from home. This ultimately foreshadows the scourge of the Shire near the conclusion of the third volume, the pinnacle of colonial devastation and uncanniness in the text. The role that this uncanniness plays is central to Tolkien's

presentation and usurpation of colonial ideologies. My intention is to examine

characters and places that are seemingly uncanny and discuss the ways in which they

illuminate these colonial ideologies on a textual level, but also how the their place of

importance in the text reflects on Tolkien's early postcolonial theory embedded in his

fiction.

Chapter Outlines

The first chapter, "The Manifestation of the Uncanny through the

Chronologically-Other Characters of Middle-earth: Tom Bombadil, Treebeard, and

Shelob," combines theories of the uncanny, with postcolonial reinterpretations of the

uncanny and Otherness. In this chapter, I analyze the position of Treebeard, Tom

Bombadil, and Shelob throughout the narrative with a narrow focus in order to show

how the implications of these character's' historical invisibility and yet narrative

centrality, a sort of "ahistoricity," or fundamental position outside of historical

narrative, positions them as Others. The possibility for characters to be ahistorical, and

yet somehow central to an innately historical narrative, through the defamiliarized gaze

of the hobbits, allows Tolkien to focus on how this Otherness functions in relation to

uncanniness. By bringing these peripheral characters to the center, they are brought into

sharp focus and are connected by their similar chronological Othering, but also

uncanniness. The three characters I have chosen have little in common as far as moral

alignment, shape, or thought, and yet they all have very specific functions textually in

relation to Tolkien's ongoing commentary on empire, specifically for these characters, a functional theory of Otherness and its relationship to the uncanny. Interestingly, all three are the only characters to be in their position of periphery yet centrality in the text; In fact, these characters are the only ones throughout the narrative to have a chapter named directly for them or their abode. There are chapters such as "The Voice of Saruman," where Saruman is directly mentioned, but he is clearly placed as an object of a preposition, and is of secondary significance. And there are chapters in which characters are indirectly named, such as "Strider" named for the introduction of Aragorn to the hobbits, and yet Strider is not his real name, or even an important nickname. Aside from this place of centrality, the characters Tom Bombadil, Treebeard, and Shelob also have in common the decided uncanniness to the characters that interact with them. For example, these characters (Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin) exhibit an emotional response as they grapple with beings so like and yet unlike themselves: sentient, emotional, living beings, and yet disinterested and detached from the rest of Middle-earth.

In the following chapter, "Uncanny Places: Tolkien's Articulation of the Postcolonial in Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow, and Saruman's Shire," I show how Tolkien characterizes certain locations in Middle-earth as neither wholly "good" or "evil," but occupying, instead, the uncanny place of ambivalence. This proves significant in relation to his implicit position on postcolonial issues, demonstrating that

no place can be unproblematically colonized. Themes of imperialism, decolonization, and change were common to many different historical periods with which Tolkien was familiar, and I argue that he focuses on this theme of the return of the repressed, to show that the same Middle-earth that Bilbo traversed still exists—but not in the same way. Just as Said discusses the boundary between "ours" and "theirs" in regard to land, Tolkien blurs these boundaries of familiar and unfamiliar. The dichotomy of Sauron and the Elves is not as clear in places like Moria, Dunharrow, Mirkwood, and the Shire that Frodo returns to after his quest. The familiar becomes alien; the un-adulterated places are shrinking, far and few between, and the fetish of the colonizer cannot remain unaltered in these places. But beneath dreams of agrarian nostalgia, lurks the potential for violation and permanent alteration, and the return of the repressed colonized that take the place of the colonizer. Tolkien pays careful attention to these interstitial spaces of Middle-earth, imbuing them with the disturbing properties that bespeak the unspoken, and that break the colonizer's fetish of colonization by rising uncontrollably into the colonizer's vision. Through these cases of Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow and the scourge of the Shire, Tolkien presents these specific instances of uncanny resurfacing.

Throughout the entirety of the texts, Tolkien unflinchingly resists generalization of racial difference, opinion, and archival accuracy; I focus on the ways that he addresses how colonization can take place on a very small scale, the psychology of the

ring-bearers. This discussion of the uncanny on the small level of characterization is the topic of the brief final coda, "Uncanny Ring," in which I explore Bhabha's postcolonial concept in greater detail. Bhabha discusses this "uncanny double" in *Location of Culture*, a "living doll" that uncannily reflects the qualities of its subject (194). In my discussion I use both Bhabha and Freud to show how this uncanny double manifests among the ring-bearers, and that their relationship with the Ring mimics and elaborates the tropes of the colonial relationship across all those who interact with it. I will show how when Tolkien is "literally splitting the difference between the binary oppositions or polarities through which we think cultural difference" (182). I also argue in this final chapter that themes of irreconcilability and homelessness are also articulated in this uncanny and colonial relationship between the Ring and its bearer. But Tolkien's use of the uncanny is not merely as a tool to produce horror in the reader, but to force his characters to perceive this sameness and selfhood in their villains and antagonists, whom they had so forcefully Othered previously; each character begins to consider his own sense of self, and as in the case of Frodo, relative position in the political narrative. For example, I discuss that situation with Frodo and Sméagol wherein Frodo grows to pity Sméagol rather than be wholly disturbed by his abjectness, and ultimately Frodo comes to believe that even a wretched creature like Gollum can have a purpose to fulfill. Specifically, as I implement Bhabha's concept of the uncanny in the case of the Ring bearers, I show how the root of this uncanniness is colonial in the nature of the

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relationship; they remain the same in body, but are changed from their peers in outwardly invisible, yet irreconcilable ways. I discuss how the Ring transforms its bearer, and how this transformation allows the bearers to feel pity for those who have been similarly altered, rather than to increase their hatred and disgust of the uncanny Other.

However, while the uncanny serves as a very significant tool in elaborating my argument, I focus on how Tolkien participates in and questions the imperial ideologies of his time, and how this critical engagement appears frequently and tangibly throughout the text. Without reducing Tolkien's position as colonialist or anti-colonialist, I show that Tolkien's text produces a much more complicated position in regard to colonialism than scholarship has yet addressed, and that his presentation of these matters is surprisingly similar to later postcolonial theory. I hope, in this thesis to apply postcolonial theory in a way that resists an overly simplified categorization of Tolkien's works, but that still conveys the nuanced approach of Tolkien to the themes, practices, and functions of colonialism in his fantasy text, *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Manifestation of the Uncanny through the Chronologically-Other Characters of Middle-earth: Tom Bombadil, Treebeard, and Shelob

In his foundational essay "Art as Technique," Viktor Shklovsky discusses the method by which artists "defamiliarize" the objects they depict in art in order to escape from "automatic" or preconceived perceptions of the object he/she represents and to render the object unfamiliar to the perceiver. As Shklovsky discusses, the "purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception" and "to transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of new perception," in order to allow new sensations of the object, and new insight into reality and life (Shklovsky n.p.).

In Tolkien's narrative, the hobbits Merry, Pippin, Sam, and Frodo constantly see the world of Middle-earth in this defamiliarized way. In relation to the Elves, Men, and Orcs of Middle-earth who have become "automatized" in the way they interact with the people, objects, and events of Middle-earth, the hobbits look at these things with a defamiliarized gaze, which shifts the perception into a new sphere. Such is the case when Samwise Gamgee, on the border of Mordor, first sees two men engaged in battle in the passage below:

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

(646)

The new realm of perception allowed by Sam's representation of this battle is that of empathy, which would be rendered inaccessible if presented from the perspective of Faramir, for instance. Through the defamiliarization of the clean distinction between the good/evil and us/them binaries, Tolkien is able to circumvent the loaded preconceptions of the familiar, and present his world in a way that allows access to sort of unfamiliarity with the familiar through the hobbits. So, when the hobbits come into contact with certain unfamiliar characters and characters who cannot be readily sorted into the camps of "us" or "them," namely Tom Bombadil, Treebeard, and Shelob, their perception of them is shifted into the realm of new perception.

We might usefully think about this process of defamiliarization in relation to Freud's notion of the uncanny. This defamiliarization process informs and supports the abundance of instances of the uncanny in the texts, even specifically the interactions with these characters. Sigmund Freud points out in his article "The Uncanny," the traditional view of one of his psychological predecessors, Jentsch, who first addressed what produces the sensation of uncanniness:

He ascribes the essential factor in the production of the feeling of uncanniness to intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about in.

> The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will
>
> he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and
>
> events in it. (Part I, n.p.)

The hobbits, then, who know little about the environment in which they traverse, are particularly vulnerable to uncanniness, at least according to this traditional definition. However, Freud's definition of the uncanny does not end at intellectual uncertainty, but rather, it encompasses the realm of frightening things that were once familiar, and through repression have become unfamiliar, and yet manage to reemerge as both familiar and unfamiliar at once. As Freud states, the uncanny is "the frightening element [that] can be shown to be something repressed which recurs" ("The Uncanny" n.p.). Whether or not the object was frightening in the beginning, its reemergence from repression is necessarily uncanny. Bhabha specifically reinterprets this uncanniness to articulate the interactions between colonizers and the colonized in imperial relationships. In other words, the colonized are uncanny because of their continued reemergence into the vision of the colonizer despite the attempted repression. This is further complicated with the process of mimicry, by which the colonized internalizes and re-presents aspects of the colonizers in their selves; thus, the colonizers then perceive the colonized as familiar (the parts of themselves that are reflected back at them), and yet alien (the parts of the colonized that they want to repress). The further the colonizers engage in the process, the more-uncanny the colonized becomes.

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With this in mind, the hobbits' interaction with Treebeard and Shelob are more uncanny encounters than the initial interaction with Tom Bombadil, the first "unfamiliar" and Other character. The passages with Treebeard and then Shelob are re-presentations of this first interaction with the Other, Tom, the hobbits defamiliarized perception of him repressed after the incident with the Barrow-wights, and then brought back to life in the more uncanny forms of Treebeard and Shelob. Each interaction, the initial perception and the two separate instances of reemergence, allow Tolkien to explore these characters' function within the world of Middle-earth without an over-emphasis on their alterity, unavoidably present in Men's, Elves', and Orcs' perceptions of them. Bhabha argues that "an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" (Bhabha 95). If this is true of colonial discourse, Tolkien presents no such vision of the Other, but instead a gradient of uncanniness that manages to articulate both differences and similarities.

From the hobbits' viewpoints, Tom, Treebeard, and Shelob are irresistibly uncanny: the animate creatures/beings who would be seemingly mortal and engaged in the chronology around them, and yet are not so. They are all extremely old creatures, each of them referred to on different occasions in the text as the oldest or eldest, and yet all three are oblivious to the historical progression around them, divorced, as it were, from both the world and individuals around them. Driven to somewhat hermetic

existences in geographic isolation from the rest of Middle-earth, they are both locally

and temporally repressed into the fringes of existence in this fantasy world. But through

the hobbits, Tolkien re-places these characters into the central position of narrative

focus for a specific effect.

Just as Freud describes the uncanny sensation of wandering through a town lost,

and inadvertently winding up, by different paths, at the same undesired location; so

too, do the hobbits keep stumbling upon these characters detached from history. The

effect is unavoidably uncanny, but out of this emerges a way of looking at the Other

that allows a defamiliarized gaze into how Otherness functions. Freud discusses in his

linguistic illumination of the German word *heimlich*, how "the word '*heimlich*' is not

unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are

yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the

other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" ("The Uncanny n.p.).

When the hobbits meet Tom, that is their introduction to this form of Otherness,

the unfamiliar becomes familiar. Having repressed the experience with Tom after the

disturbing incident at the Barrow-wights in which Tom fulfills both sense of the word

heimlich, familiarly returning to save them from harm, but at the same time wielding

untold power over the dead. Although Tom utilizes his power of necromancy for

"good," the hobbits leave shaken, wishing to never experience something as horrifying

again. But when the hobbits leave the boundaries of their homeland and journey out to

the lands beyond, the group of hobbits diverges and doubles. And separated, they both confront this uncanny Otherness a second time. Merry and Pippin meet Treebeard, the reoccurring familiar; Frodo and Sam meet Shelob, that which ought to have remained hidden. The splitting of the connotations of *heimlich* in the *unheimlich* produces an overall uncanny narrative where the reader along with the hobbits uncontrollably wanders back to the same instances of Otherness, now doubled and inverted reflections of each other. Tolkien's use of the uncanny, then, leads the reader to a postcolonial revelation concerning the construction of alterity. By presenting the Other's subjectivity as not reliant on the colonial construction of their Otherness, Tolkien escapes the automatized perceptions that lead to us/them dichotomies. Freed, then to focus on the possibilities of Othered characters rather than constrained by necessary perceptions of Otherness, Tolkien uses ambivalence to double the uncanny effect produced. Then, through the defamiliarized gaze of the hobbits, the readers and hobbits alike are able to reassess the truth of *this* perception of Otherness untainted by colonial constructions of alterity. Furthermore, by taking this perspective, Tolkien insights critique concerning the truth of *all* constructions of Otherness.

After the hobbits become familiar with Otherness through Tom, they then explore the two possibilities of the *unheimlich* doubles of Treebeard and then Shelob. I will illustrate this postcolonial examination of Otherness in *The Lord of the Rings* by a close examination of each of these characters in detail, beginning with Tom and then

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exploring Treebeard and Shelob, and the lasting effects of each on the narrative's presentation of the uncanny Other. This analysis is motivated by Bhabha's stance on Otherness, as he states: "otherness…is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha 96). These characters fulfill the role of objects of desire and derision, but, additionally, they also serve a theoretical purpose; they each are origins of identity by themselves. Old beyond count of days, their identities *are* origin stories; it is possible then, theoretically, for Tolkien to explore the ways that Otherness, functions along a spectrum of desire and derision outside the realm of changeability that reality necessitates. By inventing and securing fixity, Tolkien uses these characters divorced from both influence and history to examine the way that uncanniness functions with Otherness.

Tom Bombadil

In their first steps outside the Shire, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin realize that despite their attempt at controlling their direction, the trees of the Old Forest are directing their path to lead straight to the Withywindle valley. There they encounter Tom Bombadil who saves them from Old Man Willow, the malevolent tree who attempts to consume Merry and Pippin. I mention this first, because the situation almost identically mirrors Freud's uncanny experience of getting lost in the bad part of a small Italian town, which he could not seem to escape. He then explains the exact source of uncanniness in this experience: "Other situations which have in common with

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my adventure an unintended recurrence of the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of uncanniness." So, when the hobbits attempt to escape the Old Forest, and yet all paths direct them to unintended and undesired destination of the Withywindle, a certain wariness for the uncanny is already sparked in the reader, who travelling along with the hobbits on this seemingly predestined path, anticipates the uncontrollable emergence of something equally undesirable, but yet unknown.

When this expectation manifests as Tom Bombadil, the process of defamiliarization is used narratively to frame the hobbits' attempts to assess the truth about Tom. Although Tom is relatively unimportant in the plot of destroying Sauron, the amount of textual space Tolkien devotes to Tom Bombadil cannot be ignored. He holds quite a bit of importance in this particular strand of history, providing a sort of textual interlude from the horror of the black riders. Tom is refreshingly pleasant by contrast, and the hobbits, Frodo most of all, become quite fond of him. Of course, this could be attributed to more than just pleasant company; Tom aids them, providing them with sanctuary, food, transportation, and even rescues them from the horror of the Barrow-wights, who seem to be in some manner subject to Tom's linguistic power over the place.

Although the hobbits see Tom in an unfamiliar way initially, it takes little time for the hobbits to ascertain that there is something curious about him. He speaks to

them, the morning after they arrive, on the topic of himself, and captivated, they begin to situate Tom as both familiar and yet strange: "As they listened, they began to understand the lives of the forest, apart from themselves, indeed to feel themselves as the strangers where all other things were at home," (127). Tom is not frightening uncannily, however; this is because his existence is wholly new to the hobbits. As the hobbits come to know him, this state of sameness yet difference becomes an integral part of Tom's identity as they understand it.

Tom's vast age, for example, marks him as at least unusual to the hobbits, and to Elves and Men, Tom is an uncanny historical Other. Tom describes his age, and also his situation of being removed relationally from everyone in Middle-earth (*i.e.* forgotten or even repressed in his obscure corner of the Old Forest) in the following passage:

> Tom was here before the river and trees; Tom remembers the first
>
> raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the big people, and
>
> saw the little people arriving. He was here before the Kings and the graves
>
> and the Barrow-wights. When the Elves passed westward, Tom was here
>
> already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars
>
> when it was fearless—before the Dark Lord came from the outside. (129)

As he describes his own history, he reveals that he seems nominally aware of the world around him, but in a way that truncates the whole history of Middle-earth into a few

sentences, most of which refer to the natural landscape of the world: the first tree, the

first acorn, the seas, the stars, *et cetera*.

Tom does not object to his marginalization by the peoples of Middle-earth and

willingly participates in his extreme historical separation: a repression that constitutes

him as independent from *all* happenings of Middle-earth, some as small as the powers

of the Ring, some as large as the vast happenings of the entire world. He has become

hermetic, isolated, and master of himself. Living within the boundaries that he has

created, Tom further extricates from his lands all indication of the world outside the

"Queer" Old Forest. He remains master of his realm, what was once familiar but has

been forgotten, but he is a master without a following, as "the trees and the grasses and

all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves" (122). On a wider

scale, this experience reflects that of the historical Other throughout the whole of the

texts. But on a much smaller scale, Tom stands as the hobbits' first encounter with the

chronological Other, the Other divorced from the progression of Middle-earth's

political, historical, and cultural progression. This initial familiarization with Tom,

allows the interaction with Treebeard/ Shelob to be uncanny reoccurrences of the first

confrontation with the Other. Although the separate interactions with Treebeard and

then Shelob diverge from and reinterpret the experience with Tom, in unintended and

even inverted ways, all three characters are necessary to the text's cumulative

presentation of uncanniness in the Other.

So, in this interaction, the narrative function that Tom fulfills is an introduction

to the *heimlich* Tom, who is pleasant enough, but ought to, or at least does remain

hidden within the boundaries of his own land. Tom is a necessary framing for the

unheimlich to emerge in the text, since there cannot be the latter without the former. But

Tom fades back into relative isolation just as quickly as he entered his brief period of

narrative focus, specifically reaffirmed by Tom's irrelevance to the main plotline of

destroying the Ring. Namely, the Ring that has powers over other individuals holds no

sway over Tom, whether that is by corruption or invisibility (130). Seemingly, this

would be a useful advantage in destroying the Ring, but Tom cannot exert agency over

the Ring, he is simply equally divorced from its power as he is all other aspects of the

world around him. Gandalf reaffirms this at the council of Elrond when he phrases the

situation thus:

> 'Say rather that the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master.
>
> But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others. And
>
> now he is withdrawn into a little land, within the bounds that he has set,
>
> though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he
>
> will not step beyond them.' (259)

This is the last mention of Tom for a long space of the text afterward. The hobbits forget

him for a while, turning their attention to the more pressing matters of the dangerous

world, and the reader, along with the hobbits, allows Tom to slip into the narrative past.

And it is not until Merry and Pippin encounter Treebeard that sentiments expressed by Tom begin to resurface. Indeed, without Tom's interaction with them, Merry and Pippin may have never had access to understanding Treebeard. The narrator explains this interaction with Tom in the following passage:

> Tom's words laid bare the hearts of the trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers. (127)

It is not by accident that this passage seems to reoccur in the narrative concerning Treebeard, specifically in his sentiments about Orcs (462-63). Tom Bombadil does not merely foreshadow the emergence of other similar historical Others, he heralds the reemergence of himself, but a reflection of himself altered accordingly. Tom becomes *heimlich* after his interaction with the hobbits, when he enters their subconscious memory as something now familiar, but distanced from them physically in present experience. Since the "un" in *unheimlich* represents the reemergence of the familiar thing that ought to have remained hidden, when the likenesses of Tom reemerge as Treebeard, the historical Other becomes uncanny.

Treebeard

As Freud states, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar," and "as soon as something actually happens in

our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny." Treebeard, then, who is both a reemergence of the familiar Tom as experienced by the hobbits, and an affirmation of the "fireside" tale of the hobbits, expressed by Sam, (*i.e.* that trees were walking on the edge of the Shire). Sam states in an argument with Ted Sandyman: "But what about these Tree-men, these giants, as you might call them?" (43). Treebeard, even though Merry and Pippin eventually become comfortable with him, is doubly *unheimlich*, a reflection and reemergence of two separate repressions, Tom and the legends about the Old Forest that exists in the hobbits' subconscious.

In many ways, Treebeard is very similar to Tom, such as his detachment and marginalization from the rest of the Middle-earth on the basis of his historical Otherness. And like Tom, he proves very aware of the fact that he has detached from the affairs of Men and Elves, and his participation in their concerns is for the most part extremely minimal. He explains this to Merry and Pippin during their stay with him:

> "I have not troubled about the Great Wars," said Treebeard; "they mostly
> concern Elves and Men. That is the business of Wizards: Wizards are
> always troubled by the future. I do not like worrying about the future. I
> am not altogether on anybody's side, because nobody is altogether on my
> side, if you understand me: nobody cares for the woods as I care for them,
> not even the Elves nowadays." (461)

Treebeard grants this explanation after a great deal of inquiry by Merry and Pippin about which side he stands on in relation to Sauron; they are concerned that he could prove to be a danger to them, especially since he seems quite powerful, and yet odd and implacable. Also, the whole interaction between them could perhaps be amplified by the fact that Merry and Pippin seem wholly unfamiliar with the whole of Fangorn: "It seemed a very strange and remote place, outside their world and far from everything that had ever happened to them" (471). But at their insistence, he attempts to quell their curiosity with that statement above, only after the briefer "I don't know about *sides*," does not suffice to satiate their curiosity (455). This side-less-ness is a token of his isolation and marginality in relation to the others of Middle-earth. The Ents, by choice, live secluded deep in Fangorn forest, with Treebeard as their leader, distantly removed from the comings and goings of Middle-earth, from all things, including seemingly insignificant facts such as the existence of hobbits, to things as seemingly important as a raging war between the great demi-god Sauron and the remaining forces of his enemies. Treebeard does not know about even this until the information is related by the hobbits.

It seems that this isolation and detachment from Middle-earth is an elected one by the Ents, preferring to live their slow, thoughtful lives in the seclusion of Fangorn, but it becomes clear from Merry and Pippin's descriptions of Treebeard that these creatures are not as slow and sedentary as they might seem. Merry says, for instance:

"But I have an odd feeling about these Ents: somehow I don't think they

are quite as safe and, well funny as they seem. They seem slow, queer, and

patient, almost sad; and yet I believe they could be roused. If that

happened, I would rather not be on the other side." (470)

In saying this, Merry articulates the discomfort he feels, or at least the strange feeling

that Treebeard elicits. Although Treebeard's memory is skewed in a way that is strange

and incomprehensible to the hobbits, it is not just these "queer" and "funny" oddities

that produce this "odd" feeling in Merry. For instance, Treebeard cannot remember the

name for "hill," even as he is standing upon one. She states: "'*Hill.* Yes, that was it. But

it is a hasty word for a thing that has stood here ever since this part of the world was

shaped'" (455). This, to the hobbits is more comedic and curious than frightening and

odd. It is true, even, and is articulated later that "an angry Ent is terrifying," in battle

(553). But this, too, is not the source of Merry's odd feeling about Treebeard, or at least

not wholly so. Perhaps because Treebeard seems at least somewhat fond of them, fear is

suspended. At least on the part of Pippin, he overcomes being afraid of Treebeard

within just a few moments of encountering him, the narrator describes this: "Pippin,

though still amazed no longer felt afraid. Under those eyes he felt a curious suspense,

but not fear." (453) This "curious suspense" is an experience of the uncanny, but in this

case of interacting with the frightening, the fear is mitigated for two reasons. Firstly,

although the first interaction with Tom and the legends of the Ents had been repressed,

Treebeard's reemergence is not a threat to the hobbits, and secondly because Treebeard

is only one half *unheimlich*, the abject and horrifying portion of himself is repressed and

reserved for the times when the Ents become "roused" such as the siege of Isengard or

the attack on Helms Deep. The first reason, that Treebeard does not pose a threat to the

hobbits is further reinforced by his vulnerability, namely, the constant reemerging

descriptions of his eyes. The hobbits are in awe of Treebeard's deep and thoughtful

eyes, which are repeatedly described and emphasized symbolically, both as a token of

Treebeard's "endless years" but also his susceptivity to injury in that regard. Freud

discussed the fear of losing one's eyes as the fear of castration:

> We know from psycho-analytic experience, however, that the fear of
>
> damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible one in children. Many adults
>
> retain their apprehensiveness in this respect, and no physical injury is so
>
> much dreaded by them as an injury to the eye. ("The Uncanny" n.p.)

However, what could be seen as vulnerability in some respects does not prove to be;

Treebeard can prove quite horrifying in certain situations, or at least he has the capacity

to do so in relation to those he does not trust or to whom he is adamantly opposed.

Consider this passage from the description of the Saruman's Army fleeing into the

clutches of the Ents from the battle at Helm's Deep: "Wailing they passed under the

waiting shadow of the trees; and from that shadow none ever came again" (529). While

the supernatural might not be necessarily uncanny in the realm of fantasy, these hints at

death and the powers of the supernatural are wrapped up in this uncanny description, one of the only views of Ents as described from a perspective other than the hobbits. Interestingly, from this view point, even though the Ents are helping Théoden and the Rohirrim, they are extremely disturbing. Like when Freud discusses how things that affirm long abandoned primitive or childish beliefs are uncanny—the thing that was repressed but has come to light. The Ents, then, long faded into legend and disbelief, are uncanny just in their existence, affirming the long set aside belief in animated tree-beings. Théoden describes this feeling to Gandalf, after seeing the Ents for the first time:

> "Out of the shadows of legend I begin to understand the marvel of the
>
> trees, I think. I have lived to see strange days…Songs we have that tell of
>
> these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to children,
>
> as a careless custom. And now the songs have some down among us out
>
> of strange places, and walk visible under the Sun." (536-37)

Even the hobbits have these same songs and stories, though they live much farther from the Ents of Fangorn. But as they never see the devastation of the Ents (except, of course, on the walls of Isengard), the Ents along with Treebeard are uncanny, but not threatening. Treebeard specifically, though, is in many ways reminiscent of Tom Bombadil, and though the hobbits may see only the familiar of the *heimlich,* the reader begins to anticipate the *heimlich* that ought to remain hidden to surface, especially after Théoden's description of his feelings about the Ents. Just like, on Freud's journey

through the small town, and ended up at the same place multiple times, each time the effect is multiplied when he ends up at the same spot unintentionally. With this uncanny reemergence of Treebeard in mind, the reader is left with the unsettling uncertainty that an even more frightening reflection of this type of reoccurring historical Other might exist in the realm of Middle-earth.

Shelob

As it turns out, Frodo and Samwise encounter just this amplified uncanny Other in the pass of Cirith Ungol. The manifestation of this, Shelob, is perhaps one of the most abject and horrifying characters in the texts. On a basic level Shelob is uncanny because the familiar thing, the spider, has become engorged, vile, and "unnatural," with untold strength and hidden super-natural powers. But even more than this, Shelob is, like Treebeard, a reflection of Tom. So in some very minor ways, she resembles the way he acts and behaves. For example, she is similarly external to influences of Sauron and the elves. She remains equally disinterested in the affairs of her neighbor, Sauron, whom she also does not serve, as the narrator describes in the following passage:

> And sometimes as a man may cast a dainty to his cat (*his* cat he calls her, but she owns him not) Sauron would send her prisoners that he had no better uses for: he would have them driven to her hole, and report back to him the play she made. (708)

Here, though Sauron considers her a pet at least for his own purposes, she serves only

her own hunger, and could certainly not be considered his ally. Similarly side-less,

Shelob also exists on the periphery of Middle-earth. Like Tom Bombadil and Treebeard,

she has dwelt long in the confines of her own isolation. But the difference of timeless

night and vile darkness, with which Shelob has cocooned herself, proves to be a

disturbing contrast when considered alongside the songs of Tom or the endless

ponderings of Treebeard.

It is worthwhile to note that Shelob's isolation is unlike Treebeard's and Tom's

reclusion, not enacted by choice or coincidence; instead, colonizers displaced her from

her homeland, and she dwells at Cirith Ungol as a refugee (707). The description of her

exodus is summed up in the following passage:

How Shelob came there, flying from ruin, no tale tells, for out of the Dark

Years few tales have come. But still she was there, who was there before

Sauron, and before the first stone of Barad-dur; and she served none but

herself, drinking the blood of Elves and Men, bloated and grown fat with

endless brooding on her feasts, weaving webs of shadow; for all living

things were her food, and her vomit darkness. (707)

In addition to revealing how she fled her homeland, thoroughly colonized and

marginalized, this description also reveals the extent of Shelob's abjection. But even this

abjection seems reactionary to the initial upset that displaced her from her home;

although she is "an evil thing in spider form," the sea has swallowed up her home, and because of this, she desires to swallow up all who trespass through her domain (707). Indeed, the horror of Shelob's hunger is known to all the wise, and all those near to her lair. Shelob is characterized by her extended violent reaction in response to colonization in the past and her consequential abjection. Bhabha argues that the Other is both an "object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (96). So, Shelob is displaced from her homeland because she was an object of colonial pursuit, and now has become an object of derision, and thus her banal representation. But as Freud states on the uncanny: "The '*unheimlich*' is the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light," and, for Frodo at least, Shelob should have remained in the shadowy recesses of her lair. Shelob fulfills a textual purpose, reemerging as the final and most uncanny representation of the historical Other thus far displayed.

This abjection and horror is intensified by the situation. Unlike Merry and Pippin during their interaction with the uncanny Treebeard, quite a bit more is at stake in the case of Frodo. Charged with the quest of protecting and destroying the Ring, Frodo greatly fears being deprived of it. Shelob bears the power to "castrate" Frodo of the Ring, the phallic stinger with which she can penetrate and immobilize him at once. She is the mother medusa, the castrating woman. Many times Frodo has evaded the constant forces that would deprive him of the Ring, and each time the situation recurs,

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the horror of losing it resurfaces with renewed vigor. In the case of Shelob's attack, she

reveals what is really at stake for Frodo if he loses the Ring, and in this attempted

despoilment of the Ring, he is most vulnerable, abandoned momentarily by Sam,

betrayed by Gollum, and almost hopelessly under the persuasive power of the Ring.

Driven by hunger for Frodo, Shelob only retreats from her attack when Sam returns and

penetrates Shelob's "age-old hide" (711). The situation is further sexualized in this

description of the moment Sam's blade pierces her flesh:

> Deep, deep it pricked, as Sam was crushed slowly to the ground... A
>
> shudder went through her. Heaving up again, wrenching away from the
>
> pain, she bent her writhing limbs beneath her and sprang backwards in a
>
> convulsive leap. (712)

The sexualization of this incident is by no means accidental; it is a theoretical necessity

in representing the both carnal grossness and Otherness of Shelob. In representations of

the Other in the discourse of colonialism, Said argues that "an almost uniform

association between the Orient and sex…. seems still to suggest not only fecundity but

sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, [and] unlimited desire" (*Orientalism*

185). In the case of Shelob, the sexual threat of castration and her hunger is only

mitigated by the final penetrative act of Sam, who steps in on Frodo's behalf, although

at that point it was too late. Frodo had already been penetrated by her poisonous

stinger.

Before this final defeat of Shelob, Frodo, when besieged by Shelob could call for anyone's assistance: Gandalf, Sam, or even Aragorn; and yet he wishes Tom was there. He calls out, "I wish old Tom was near us now!" (703). This exclamation is very intriguing because it indicates far more than just a relational power that Tom might wield over Shelob. Frodo wishes to return to the familiar, the wholesome version of the *heimlich,* Tom. Such a return, of course, is not possible. Just like decolonization is never truly possible. The nostalgic and often nationalist desire to return to the pre-colonial can never be satisfied, just as Frodo can never return to his encounter with the historical Other, Tom in his present interaction with his uncanny double of the Other, Shelob. This irreconcilability expressed in the moment of uncanny sensation represents the same postcolonial entanglement that Bhabha discusses: "there was no return, no going back to 'the good old days'" (40).

The vision of the uncanny historical Other, Shelob, that Tolkien leaves the reader with offers no redeeming characterization, no appeal to her wildness, no forced justification, only these haunting words as she exits the limelight of narrative focus:

> Shelob was gone; and whether she lay long in her lair, nursing her malice
> and her misery, and in slow years of darkness healed herself from within,
> rebuilding her clustered eyes, until with hunger like death she spun once
> more dreadful snares in the glens of the Mountains of Shadow, this tale
> does not tell. (713)

Nothing within the representation of Shelob allows her to maintain any lasting impression other than an acute horror. As she slides from narrative focus back into marginality, she fades into the background narratively as well. But even this is congruent with the loss of the Other's ability to communicate, as described in postcolonial theory. Bhabha argues:

> The Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never an active agent of articulation. The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in the shot/reverse-shot strategy of serial enlightenment. Narrative and the cultural politics of difference becomes the closed circle of interpretation. The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. (46)

Shelob thus slides back into the realm of non-representation. The "tale does not tell" what becomes of her fate, nor does she, even when in the narrative limelight ever articulate her own perspective. She is spoken for, framed, and illuminated as abject. After this brief representation, she, like Tom and Treebeard before her, shifts back into the unconscious.

Tolkien's presentation of the chronological Other, through the defamiliarized gaze of the hobbits allows for the examination of these three marginal characters. The way the hobbits experience, repress, and the re-experience the Others' uncanniness

elucidates to the overall presentation of how Otherness functions through these texts. I have shown one small way that an awareness of Otherness and the uncanny manifests itself in the text. In the case of Tom, he is *heimlich,* the familiar that must exist before the *unheimlich* can be manifest through reoccurring. Treebeard is the first of these reoccurrences, but because he does not pose a threat to Merry and Pippin, the terror of his uncanniness is mitigated. While the hobbits Merry and Pippin learn to trust these socially peripheral characters, Théoden and the Rohirrim have no such experience, and Treebeard's uncanniness is much more striking. But with the case of Shelob, her abject presence cannot be subverted in the same way because of the threat of figural castration that she poses to Frodo: the possibility of proving their quest futile by devouring him, or even usurping the Ring. Only through Sam's reassertion of the phallus does the uncanniness of Shelob become successfully re-repressed. The role that these manifestations of uncanniness serve in the reader's experience of the text is to present a vision of alterity that is inevitable, and yet not fixed in the same way that the colonial fetish supposes. Ranging from helpful to vile, from *heimlich* to *unheimlich* as it were, the historically detached Others, Tom, Treebeard, and Shelob allow Tolkien to explore the varied and diverse ways that the marginalized and peripheral characters can exist outside of the traditional dichotomy of "good" and "evil." By placing these characters in narrative focus, Tolkien demonstrates how the Other is both familiar and unfamiliar, and uncontainable with that dichotomy. By showing the hobbits confronting uncanny

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Others and attempting to reconcile this construction, Tolkien points to the irreconcilability of the production of Otherness, pointing to a reality of alterity not along the lines of the binary, or on a gradient between the two points, but external to the entire construction. In this realm of the "beyond," Tolkien refuses to classify Otherness within the borders of categorization, and gestures to an understanding of difference that might, indeed, be uncontainable.

Uncanny Places: Tolkien's Articulation of the Postcolonial in Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow, and Saruman's Shire

The Lord of the Rings, at first glance, seems to present the dichotomy of "good" places and "evil" places in Middle-earth as unproblematic. The contrast between the scourged and exploited lands of Mordor and the agrarian paradise of the Shire and Lorien appears definite and uncomplicated. Imbued with varying degrees of sentience, certain landscapes even seem to desire the influence of different tenants or masters, like the deserted lands of Hollin that whisper in longing for their Elven masters of old (*Fellowship of the Ring* 277). However, this seemingly solidified contrast between good and evil places in Middle-earth consists of a far less rigid polarization than it might seem superficially.

A close examination of the text reveals a far more intricate dynamic than the initially supposed dichotomy between "good" and "evil" places. The in-between spaces of Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow, and the Shire under Saruman provide insight into how colonization works in the text; these places are resistant to colonization and are uncanny because of it. Confronted with the abject horror of these places, characters repress the banal realities of the place outside their field of vision, fetishizing the path by which they travel in order to ignore the realities they repress, and to successfully enact their partial colonization. The characters fetishize the "safe" bits that have been scourged of the vile native inhabitants, but only as a method by which to ignore the

horrors they do not wish to see. The reality of the places, though, remains just as undomesticated, and I argue that the reemergence of this suppressed wildness on the fetishized pathways is the true source of the places' uncanniness. Thus, I examine these violations of the imperial fantasy, the breaching of the fetishized pathways in Middle-earth, where the reader gains insight into the colonial psyche and the process of imperial fetishization. By ascertaining this from Tolkien's narrative, contributions can be made to the wider goal of postcolonial reassessment in late-imperial British texts.

Bhabha views colonialism as a complex discourse of fetishism. He makes the connection thus:

> Fetishism, as the disavowal of difference, is that repetitious scene around
>
> the problem of castration. The recognition of sexual difference—as the
>
> precondition for the circulation of the chain of absence and presence in the
>
> realm of the Symbolic—is disavowed by the fixation on an object that
>
> masks that difference and restores an original presence. The functional
>
> link between the fixation of the fetish and the stereotype (or the stereotype
>
> as fetish) is even more relevant. For fetishism is always a "play" or
>
> vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity. (106-
>
> 07)

Bhabha's *Location of Culture* reinterprets Freud's arguments on fetishism and the uncanny to articulate parallel processes of the colonial fetish and how they function in

the inbetween spaces of colonial interactions. My analysis of the uncanny places of Middle-earth employs Bhabha's reinterpretation to provide a useful theoretical structure with which to analyze this aspect of Tolkien's texts. Bhabha shows how the colonizer uses fetishization to master the colonized and ignore the threat they pose, but creates uncanny subjects through this process whenever the colonizers are forced to confront anything about the colonized that reminds them of either themselves or the potential threat to themselves. At the beginning of *Location of Culture*, Bhabha discusses the works of Toni Morrison and Nadine Gordimers, bringing clearly into focus three vital postcolonial theories: firstly the blurring of boundaries and borders at the fringes of cultures, identities, or even social realms; secondly, the primary importance of the realm between this overlap of borders; and thirdly, the return of that which becomes repressed in the process of creating this hybrid identity of overlap. When discussing the confusion of the borders between domestic and public spaces, he states: "In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (13). In this example, when the two entities become fused, an inbetween space that melds the two together emerges: the terms and meanings of the domestic sphere and the public sphere are apparent only at their intersection. The interstitial space bears the burden of giving meaning to both. He argues that the net result proves to be a "transition of elements that are neither the one…nor the other…but

something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" (41). Through

this discussion, Bhabha introduces for the first time the concept of inbetween-ness. This

consolidation and resulting hybridity serves as the second theoretical concept vital to

my argument. The inbetween spaces halfway between the colonizing parties of Middle-

earth, which I examine, coincide with Bhabha's concept. Just as Bhabha examines

hybrid and interstitial spaces in his discussion of Morrison, specifically the idea of

uncanny manifestation and reemergence of that which the imperialist and the imperial

subject represses (*i.e.* the ghost child), so, too, do I examine the hybrid and interstitial

spaces of Middle-earth. The colonizers are able to produce a geographically isolated

illusion of tameness by focusing on the places they control, at least nominally, and

ignoring the threatening places that elude complete colonization. By maintaining a

docile pathway by which travelers can imagine themselves safe, the colonial fetish takes

on geographical manifestation, but is similarly ineffective at rendering invisible the

horrors that ought to remain hidden. And, the reemergence of these horrors, despite

the fetish of the pathway, nullifies any fantasy of mastery that the colonizers had

envisioned.

The places Mirkwood, Dunharrow, and the Shire under Saruman exhibit this

type of resistance to colonial attempts, and the resulting problematic relationship with

those who inhabit (or attempt to inhabit) them is worthy of investigation. Bhabha

describes the inbetween relationship created in the moment of colonization: "A

contingent, borderline experience opens up in-between colonizer and colonized. This space of cultural and interpretive undecidability [is] produced in the 'present' of the colonial moment" (295). The interpretive undecidability, in my case, is the lack of straightforward classification: places that resist occupation/inhabitation by both Sauron and the Elves, locations of inbetween-ness in the text. As Bhabha states: "[it is] the inbetween space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (56). The inbetween spaces that I examine in *The Lord of the Rings* indicate awareness of colonial processes embedded in the text. Furthermore, these uncanny places construct a system of "connective tissue" that designates the "symbolic interaction" between colonizer and place (5).

This symbolic interaction Bhabha discusses in his introductory chapter: the return of what was repressed and omitted in the creation of a consolidated, colonial vision of reality. This is articulated in the example of the ghost in *Beloved*, and the unwanted return of the child who was murdered by its mother reveals the shared sins of slavery. In Bhabha's reading of Morrison, the ghost of the child is uncanny not because of its murder, but because its reemergence disables the connected motive of silencing its potential to remind both the mother and the slave owner of their shared atrocity. The interstitial space between the mother and the slave owner, is what makes the child's ghost so uncanny, not just the familiarity, but the child's unlooked for resurfacing, the very antithesis of the mother's and the slave owner's intent. Just as, in

Middle-earth, what makes Mirkwood, Moria, Dunharrow, and the colonized Shire uncanny is not just that they are familiar and creepy to those who colonize them; their uncanniness stems from the violation of the colonial fetish of the pathways and the undesired reemergence and encroachment of the "uncolonized" wild landscape onto these paths. This intermingling dissolves the illusion of colonization—these imagined docile places are irrevocably nullified. And the uncanniness is the result of this overlap between safe/familiar (the path) and unsafe/unfamiliar (the wilderness). Thus, these intermediary moments of the colonial fetish being entangled with these resistances to imperial pursuits, allows Tolkien to expose, in Bhabha's words "the tropes of fetishism" in a colonial and geographical context (110).

In this way, the characters attempting to stave off their anxieties concerning the wild lands of Middle-earth through fetishizing the "safe" pathways are met only with the return of what they repress; the land uncannily reacts by violating the colonizer's fantasy of the place, rendering it impossible for the anxieties to be effectively mitigated by the fetish of tameness. I argue, following Bhabha, that only through the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized "does it become possible to understand the productive ambivalence of the object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (96). So then, in traveling through these lands, the hobbits experience both the inbetween-ness of the land's identity, and

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the uncanniness of its resistance to colonization. Both of these aspects manifest through the stubborn return of that which the imperial fetish represses.

<center>Mirkwood</center>

The very first hobbit to endure such an encounter with an uncanny place is Bilbo Baggins on his journey through Mirkwood forest. From his first impression of the woods, Bilbo is aware of the forest's presencing, to borrow Bhabha's term, or the process by which the forest establishes the boundaries of its identity. The narrator describes Bilbo's impression of this oppressive presence thus: "it was everlastingly still and dark and stuffy" (126). As the company penetrates the forest, the land makes its awareness of their intrusion clear, and in reaction the forest maintains control of the experience, blocking out light, fresh air, and otherwise peering at the intruders. Interestingly, Bilbo has encountered unpleasant places throughout his journey before, but he describes Mirkwood as the most unbearable so far on his journey. That Mirkwood should be such an unpleasant place, especially since the company endures no offensive attack throughout most of their travel through it, at first may seem peculiar to the reader. By this point in the text, both Trolls and Goblins have captured Bilbo and the dwarves, and although the text presents both of these occasions as appropriately frightening, the narrator describes Bilbo's impression of Mirkwood forest as more disturbing than any place thus far in the narrative. Bilbo claims that "the enormous uncanny darkness," is broken only by disembodied, un-human/un-animal eyes that

<center>46</center>

peer at them from the gloom, creating a sort of unbearable anticipation of attack (*The Hobbit* 129). This anticipation *makes* the place so very unpleasant.

However, it is not only the eyes that peer out from off the beaten path that make the unending labyrinth of Mirkwood uncanny. The company had traveled through forests before, and had not had the same experience. Mirkwood itself is a disturbing landscape, mainly because it is a disputed land. Mirkwood remains unclaimed by "good" or "evil" forces. And yet, of its own accord, it is a dark place, and a disturbing place. Although a thin and winding path has been carved through it, it is the only path by which travelers can traverse. The rest of the vast forest remains mostly unoccupied by humans, and virtually impenetrable.

Except for the evil stronghold of Dol Guldur and the Elven king's caverns, both peripherally located in relation to the forest, no other peoples have successfully occupied Mirkwood. Only specters, poisons, and beasts inhabit the place, and even so, these beings do not aim for conquest or ownership, but instead they desire to eat, subsist, and consume. Whether by "good" or "evil" forces, Mirkwood is essentially un-colonize-able. It is an inbetween space in Middle-earth, an abstraction between "good" colonization and "evil" colonization, but also a physical and geographical inbetween-ness through which one must traverse on the journey from West to East or *vice versa*. This treatment of Mirkwood and its path by colonizers allows for an expression of how fetishism functions in relation to colonization.

The creation of this pathway stands as a sort of incomplete colonization attempt, or at least, the illusion of such. There remains, of course, no other way to pass through the forest (a theme that repeats in the other uncanny places of Middle-earth). This carved out passage, though not free from danger, seems at first to be a successful domestication, as illustrated by the partially uneventful sojourn through it. But when the dwarves violate this pathway, the illusory nature of their perception is exposed as a fantasy of colonization, the fetish of the tamed forest. The illusion becomes broken when the dwarves transgress the border of the path; as a result, the hungry forest attempts to swallow up its colonizers in its vast and gloomy thickets. Indeed, Bilbo describes the forest as being hungry (*The Hobbit* 141). If someone stays on the path while traveling through Mirkwood, he/she should remain unhindered, but the penetration of the forest through a divergence from the path, breaks the surface of "safe" colonization and opens up the channel through which the repressed can return.

The more intense the effort of the colonizer is, the more intense the colonized resurfacing is reciprocated. Indeed, we might say that the dwarves' hunger is so intense that it is reflected back at them, not only by the forest wishing to swallow them up, but by the spiders who stalk them from the beginning of their trek through it. The dwarves' experience of hunger is uncanny in and of itself, repeatedly being reflected back at them throughout the text, firstly with the trolls, then Gollum, then the spiders. In their interaction with the spiders, it becomes impossible for the dwarves to repress the guilt

of their hunger any longer—that creatures as abject and vile as such could harbor the same feelings, but directed at the dwarves illustrates the fear inherent in the position of colonial mastery. The reversal of roles from hunter to prey forces them to confront their own hunger—and the unthinkable comparison between them and the monstrous Other becomes unavoidable. The forest, though wild, harbors many of the same experiences; and therein dwells the uncanniness of Mirkwood: it is familiar yet abject, and any attempt of colonization provides only a momentary illusion of success. Mirkwood thwarts domestication on all fronts, and refuses to allow the dwarves to pass through it with their fetishes of colonial mastery intact.

Moria

Moria, like Mirkwood, has a single navigable path that previous colonizers have attempted to carve through the vast, wild chasm. Although the original tunnel-makers remain a mystery, the dwarves widened the passages as a result of their mining, but they were not the only, or even the original colonizers of Moria. And the dwarves have clearly failed to keep hold of Moria, adding to the succession of failed conquests. Moria, named for the valuable *mithril* running through its veins, has more allure to potential colonizers than the barren Mirkwood, but as Gandalf explains, "'no one dares to seek the shafts and treasures down in the deep places: they are drowned in water—or in a shadow of fear'" (Tolkien 309). However, this has not entirely staved off Dwarvish fantasy concerning its potential; Gimli constantly reminds the company along their

travels of its splendor and glory, the pinnacle of dwarves' industrial and colonial capability. This fantasy does not function too disparately from the fantasy of colonization in Mirkwood; except the fetish, in this case, is further enabled with the possibility of capital gain in addition to a position of mastery.

It seems that the possible gain of colonizing Moria provides a tool to make the truth about the place easier to repress, and necessary aspect of the dwarves' fetish. The carnal and feral inhabitants of Moria consist of more than just a few rogue talking spiders, and this far more extreme anti-colonial reaction makes sense in reaction to the numerous attempted conquests of the place. These guardians take several forms, but it remains ambiguous whom they serve, if indeed they serve anyone; they work neither for Sauron nor for the elves, but for themselves and their land. The first of these is the mysterious wolf attack outside the walls of Moria (290-91). But like the child in *Beloved*, these wolves are phantoms: reflections of a repressed wildness, who bite and scratch under cover of darkness, but whose flesh vanishes by the dawn. Although Legolas shoots the wolves down, when the sun rises, he finds his arrows unbroken, yet bloody, strewn upon the hillside.

Similarly, the watcher in the water, which the company also confronts before entering the mines, strategically attempts to block the fellowship's passage through Moria. The young hobbits skip stones across the morbid lake's surface, and thus wake the monster that lurks beneath. But, other members of the company wish to resist

coming into contact with the abject water. Frodo describes after the encounter: "'I felt that something terrible was near from the moment that my foot first touched the water'" (301). Frodo's senses and awareness are heightened because of the Ring and the attack at Weathertop, and this allows him to experience far more acutely the "shadow of fear," or the presencing produced by those watchers who resist colonization at these points of inbetween-ness.

Once in the mines, the fellowship attempts to maintain the fetishized boundary of the pathway. By following their wary guide, and ignoring contrary evidence of habitation, the fellowship successfully subverts the creatures of Moria beyond their gaze for the majority of their passage. The calm is breached only when Peregrin penetrates the borders, both actual and metaphysical, of the designated pathway. Gandalf speculates: "It may have nothing to do with Peregrin's foolish stone: but probably something has been disturbed that would have been better left quiet" (305). Pippin drops the stone because of curiosity — a need to know what lurks past the field of his vision. By looking too closely at the illusion of colonization the fellowship partakes of during their passage through Moria, Pippin breaks the spell. Forced to confront the previously repressed entities that lurk in the dark of Moria, the fellowship can no longer maintain the fetish. The company can no longer speculate on the vacancy of the mines; they are brought face-to-face with the monstrous inhabitants from below the surface.

Although at this point, they are first attacked by Orcs and a Troll, the Balrog is the real horror the company has awoken. The uncanniness of Moria emanates from the Balrog. Certainly, this fire-elemental demi-god maintains the stubborn un-conquest of the mines. The Balrog's return to the surface is a harbinger of the end of any Moria colony. Gimli, who had once fetishized the mines as a paradise of Dwarvish industry, realizes the uncanny reality of the unconquerable Moria after this encounter with the Balrog: "I have looked on Moria, and it is very great, but it has become dark and dreadful" (310). Gimli's disillusionment reaches crescendo in this undesired return of the Balrog to the surface, forcing any idea of a "safe" colonized path through the mines into the realm of the unrealistic and naïve.

Although the reader can be sure that the Balrog is by no means "good," it also does not work for Sauron, even though they are brothers. The Balrog remains fiercely on its own side, resisting even Gandalf's attempts to contain him on the bridge of Khazad-dûm. Indeed, the Balrog's literal rise and fall serves as a harbinger for the figural events in the Scourge of the Shire, specifically, the rise and fall of Saruman, namely the repressed thing that recurs but only to be repressed again. But, ultimately, the mines of Moria themselves play a vital role as an inbetween space in Middle-earth, not belonging wholly to "good" or "evil" colonizers, but something else besides—stubbornly un-colonize-able, and distinctly uncanny for it.

Dunharrow

However, Middle-earth's colonial situation is such that places where the colonization process is complicated also exhibit qualities of uncanniness. Dunharrow, for instance, is one such place. Dunharrow is a land at the periphery of Rohan, which lies very near the way to the paths of the dead. Once inhabited by the Wild Men who lurk in the wildernesses of Druadan, Dunharrow is a mountainous landscape peppered by primordial statues of men that line the singular pathway through the hills. Merry's impression of the place, as voiced by the narrator is thus:

> Such was the dark Dunharrow, the work of long-forgotten men. Their
>
> name was lost and no song or legend remembered it. For what purpose
>
> they made this place, as a town or secret temple or a tomb of kings, none
>
> in Rohan could say…and only the Pukel-men were left, still sitting at the
>
> turnings of the road. (778)

In this passage, the narrator describes the remnants of the previous inhabitants of this land. However, that is not what is truly harrowing about Dunharrow. The narrator relates more than just a description of the landscape revealing that, while the repression of the Wild Men may have been possible, there remain traces, unconquerable remnants of them. And although the mere statues do not give any evidence of being dangerous,

there is something unsettling in the experience of the place, some allusion to unsettled

ghosts of the past that linger beyond comprehension or human memory.

Furthermore, through free indirect discourse, the narrator then voices Merry's

observation that the Pukel-men "looked like rows of old and hungry teeth" (778).

Although clearly a personification of the landscape, this statement contains more than

just figurative language. Keeping with the qualities of inbetween spaces, it makes sense

that the vestiges of these long-forgotten, displaced conquerors should appear hungry.

This hunger, though figurative, symbolizes the disembodied sense of loss and

emptiness resulting from the previous problematic occupation of Dunharrow. This

figurative hunger of the repressed, as in the case of Mirkwood, supersedes the

parameters of the symbolic and manifests as a carnivorous and insatiable hunger for

flesh.

However, the reaction that Merry has to these statues exhibits a more

sympathetic impression. Perhaps this is because they have only the power to watch, not

to act. For this reason, they are still uncanny, but their uncanniness is less threatening,

and more pitiable. In this instance, the statues watch unheeded; their gaze is not

reciprocated by any, save Merry. It is not only that the Wild Men are driven from the

land and forgotten; it is also that the remnants of their un-lasting and unsuccessful

colonization have also lost their power to communicate the past and negotiate the

present. The statues they left behind, the Pukel men, are symbols more of loss than of

aggression; more of submission than of resistance. And yet these statues are still reminders of complicated colonization. Although their sculptors are forgotten, here the Pukel men remain. The colonizers can look away, but they cannot wipe them away. This passage describes Merry's perception and interpretation of these statues:

> Some in the wearing of the years has lost all features save the dark holes
>
> of their eyes that still stared sadly at the passersby. The Riders hardly
>
> glanced at them. The Pukel-men they called them, and heeded them little:
>
> no power or terror was left in them; but Merry gazed at them with
>
> wonder and a feeling almost of pity, as they loomed up mournfully in the
>
> dusk. (777)

Unlike the Riders of Rohan, for whom the statues have become familiar and, thus, invisible, Merry reciprocates the gaze of these inanimate statues, but it remains clear that even with Merry's gaze, they remain unable to negotiate their own situation and upkeep or reinstate their referents, the Wild Men, to their original state of mastery. The hobbit feels pity rather than horror at the sight of these beaten remnants of the past. The Pukel men are successful at disturbing the fetish of colonial mastery when looked at, which is why the Rohirrim look away. But since they have no agency, they can only be superficial reminders of repressed colonial guilt and never real fear.

Furthermore, the scariest aspect of the Pukel-men, is their geographical proximity to the paths of the dead, an alcove for the dead traitors of Gondor, and

completely deserted by the living. Although the oath-breakers have died in their mountainous out-post, their souls linger in the caverns. Their opportunistic ambivalence between sides in the first war of the Elves/Gondor and Sauron has marginalized them geographically, displacing them to the subterranean, interstitial land beyond both Dunharrow and Gondor. In this case, the return of these hybrid individuals, even beyond death, serves to further illustrate their unending lawless occupation of the paths of the dead and surrounding land.

The ghosts of the paths of the dead are most disturbing when they have oaths left unfulfilled, lurking in their mountain caverns, wild and unaffiliated. What is uncanny and disturbing about this, however, is their interstitial position; being neither wholly resigned to support good or evil is unsettling to potential colonizers, such as Aragorn who would have them fulfill their oaths. In essence, having them choose a side bereaves these ghosts of their hybridity, truncating or wholly eliminating any traces of colonial ambivalence, and focusing their violent energy in a way that appropriates their horror as an asset. Aragorn, in this case, is participating in the same sort of colonial fantasy that I have been discussing.

By redirecting and rendering "safe" these ghosts, Aragorn manufactures for himself a channel through which these ghosts can be controlled. The Paths of the Dead may have once had an equivalent "safe" pathway like Mirkwood and Moria, but the ghosts have dismantled it—Aragorn's action in passing through and taming it is a

reassertion of colonial order: a reestablishment of the fetish of a "safe" path through the wild land. Aragorn is prepared for a confrontation of the uncanny, and by diminishing the "unexpected" component of the uncanny's reemergence, and by forcing the ghosts on his side, he effectively diminishes the power of the ghosts to enact any sort of resistance. Seemingly at odds with the rest of the text's presentations of colonialism, this instance posits Aragorn himself as a sort of fetishized perfect colonizer that can never really exist. Although Aragorn is successful at redirecting the forces of the ghosts at his enemies, this action is just another reestablishment of the colonial fetish of mastery. Aragorn cannot erase the Paths of the Dead, nor can he create an actually safe colony. If nothing else, the Pukel-men always remain: a final irrepressible remnant of the colonial present.

Tolkien utilizes this example of Dunharrow to present complete colonization as impossible, and he also uses the Pukel men, unlike the spiders of Mirkwood or the Balrog Moria, as a passive reminder of colonial guilt. Furthermore, the ghosts of Dunharrow cannot reconcile or disentangle from political obligation and domination by Gondor, but by complying with the demands of the "good" colonizer, they escape the circle of marginalization and abjection previously afforded to them, but only in death. The Pukel men and the land, however, have no hope of return to the pre-colonial state, lingering as testaments to the guilt of the colonizers and the illusory nature of the colonial fetish.

The Shire under Saruman

All of these instances of geographical inbetween-ness and colonization throughout the texts foreshadow Tolkien's most explicit and affecting commentary on colonization during the scourge of the Shire. I say most affecting, because this time the interstitial land subject to undesired colonization is that land which throughout the trilogy's entirety had been fetishized by the hobbit protagonists. When the hobbits leave their homeland, the Shire is occupied by neither "good" nor "bad" colonizers (neither Sauron's servants nor the Elves hold ownership over the land). Seemingly, the hobbits who inhabit the land are the original occupants.

In order to maintain this autonomy, the hobbits leave the Shire, with the primary purpose of diverting attention from their beloved homeland, and hopefully allowing it to remain un-colonized. Of course, in this, they are unsuccessful; while they are away saving Middle-earth, the hobbits' precious Shire falls to the imperial conquest of Saruman. In for quite the shock, the hobbits return to the border of their land, and are immediately struck by how "un-Shirelike" it has become. Sam articulates the disappointment all the hobbits feel returning to their changed and suddenly un-homely homeland: "No welcome, no beer, no smoke, and a lot of rules and orc-talk instead" (977). The loss expressed here by Sam is not one of beer and smoke; the real loss is the colonial fetish of the Shire that Sam shared, which has dissipated as the Shire has been almost irreparably claimed by "evil" colonizers.

The example of the Shire under Saruman most clearly exemplifies the tropes of colonial fetishization present throughout the narrative, and is the culmination of all previous confrontations with imperial fantasies of safety and reinstatement of origins. In colonizing the Shire, Saruman and his emissaries have created in the land a vision of themselves. The Shire has subsequently become a reflection of the blasted landscape from which Frodo and Sam have just narrowly escaped. Recognizing this, the two communicate the following:

> 'This is worse than Mordor!' said Sam. 'Much worse in a way. It comes
>
> home to you, as they say; because it is home, and you remember it before
>
> it was all ruined.'
>
> 'Yes, this is Mordor,' said Frodo. 'Just one of its works. Saruman was
>
> doing its work all the time, even when he thought he was working for
>
> himself.' (994)

The Shire has become *worse* than Mordor, because it cannot be externalized in the same way; though it has been irreparably altered, it is more than just a vile landscape of the filth of industry. As previously stated, Freud argues about uncanniness: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud n.p.). The Shire, in this case, the long known and loved home of the hobbits has become horrifying in its stark unfamiliarity. While slowly recognizing the

depth of the violation their homeland has been subject to, the hobbits travel through the countryside, interacting with the damaged hobbits therein.

Some of these hobbits, left scarred and painfully passive, are easily roused against their "evil" oppressors. Others, however, have complied with the colonization in a way both malicious and opportunistic. Frodo soon realizes that this sort of psychological hybridization in sway of the "evil" master has proven to be a far more horrific and unalterable consequence of the Shire's colonization. He states, after encountering one such hobbit, Sandyman: "I hope there are not many more hobbits that have become like this. It would be a worse trouble than all the damage the Men have done" (994). And although throughout his journey in the wide world of Middle-earth, Frodo had adopted a sort of pacifism, he soon realizes that the hobbits, too, must react with violence against their colonizers.

Interestingly, though, this violence does not restore the unadulterated "Shire-ness" to their beloved homeland. Both psychological and geographical damages remain partially unhealed. Although Samwise eventually replaces the party tree with a *mallorn* of Lorien, the *mallorn* is not the same as the original tree, nor is it the equivalent of no tree at all, but it is something else entirely, becoming itself a symbol of loss and irreconcilability (993). Helpless to restore the usurped agrarian culture of the Shire, but unable to accept the post-colonial lack, Sam turns to the next-best alternative to replace the party-tree, which can never be fully restored to the pre-colonized state. Like the

symbolic pathways that cannot be maintained in Mirkwood, Moria, and Dunharrow, the party-tree of the Shire fulfills a symbolic function of postcolonial resistance and negotiation. Although, unlike the previous places in the texts, the party-tree is replaced through the introduction of the "good" colonizer's assistance, the seed given to Sam from Lorien, the psychic-symbolic damages in the case of Frodo cannot be similarly repaired. The same sort of symbolic negotiation is only possible for Frodo when he deserts the insatiable desire to return to a Shire that no longer exists, and travels through the Grey Havens with these same "good" colonizers:

> 'I thought you were going to enjoy the shire, too, for years and years, after
>
> all you have done.'
>
> 'So I thought too, once. But I have been deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save
>
> the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me.' (1006)

The postcolonial situation in the Shire, and the loss associated with the inability to return to the fantasy of origin, is felt deeply by Frodo as an overwhelming sense of homelessness. Inside of Frodo is the heart of the uncanny; and when each year he acutely feels the stab of the Morgul blade on Weathertop, or the deep and fathomless loss associated with his destruction of the Ring, that which he has repressed uncontrollably resurfaces.

Frodo is changed; he is no longer the same hobbit that left the Shire or the hobbit that bestially fought Gollum for the Ring over the fiery pit of Mount Doom, but

someone else besides. Though he tries to return to his original identity, he remains

uncannily tainted by the darkness which he sought to destroy. Through the sacrifice of

himself, and the abandonment of the hope to return Shire that no longer exists, Frodo

attempts to escape the uncanniness that has now realizes has taken residence inside

himself. Only by insisting his companions remain whole for the greater good, can Frodo

attempt to escape the fractured doubling of identity that colonization forces upon the

self. But the result is only a further repression.

And ultimately, the vision that Tolkien exhibits by this closing chapter of *The

Lord of the Rings* stands as the most clearly manifested synthesis of the postcolonial

process. Neither advocating colonial pursuit, nor anti-colonial violence, Tolkien

presents a reality that remains unflinchingly honest concerning the complexities of

colonialism. Tolkien allows for the tropes of colonialism to manifest in these inbetween

places: the fantasy of uncomplicated colonial pursuit, and conversely, the impossibility

of complete decolonization. This reoccurring message in the text causes the constant

and unavoidable reemergence of the uncanny, which lives beyond the vision of the

colonial projects in Middle-earth. He simultaneously highlights the ambiguities present

in these situations, and allows them to elicit for empathy, particularly in non-violent

decolonization, like that which Frodo initially attempts to facilitate in the Shire.

Through this recognition, a sort of postcolonial literacy is embedded in the texts, ripe

with cultural and political awareness. By examining this complex presentation of the

colonial fantasy/fetish in *The Lord of the Rings*, specifically as I have done in this chapter, an avenue of investigation emerges. Looking through Tolkien's texts for instances of uncanniness yields, not only perspectives on the colonial process of fetishization, but insight into how characters interacting with the uncanny can articulate criticism and awareness concerning the devices of colonialism. By looking even closer, specifically at Frodo, and the relationships of the ring-bearers with the Ring, an even deeper understanding of how the fetish of the colonizer manifests in Middle-earth can be actualized.

Uncanny Ring

After carrying the Ring of power for sixty years, Bilbo begins to show signs of its effects on him. When planning his birthday party at the beginning of the *Fellowship of the Ring*, he explains to Gandalf: "Why, I feel all thin, sort of stretched, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread" (32). At 111 years old, quite elderly even for hobbits, as the forward explains, Bilbo shows no signs of aging outwardly. Yet, inwardly, Bilbo feels stretched, over-extended. This instance, though small, is the reader's first introduction to the pernicious and corrosive power of this ring that up to this point has been the trinket of a trickster; curious, mischievous even, but also seemingly harmless and even helpful. Before the truth of the Ring is revealed to Frodo by Gandalf, it would seem to the reader that Bilbo's response might simply be the natural psychological reaction to the burden of the Ring, rather than something inherently powerful and disturbing from the Ring itself. As Freud argues:

> Whoever possesses something that is at once valuable and fragile is afraid
>
> of other people's envy, in so far as he projects on to them the envy he
>
> would have felt in their place. ("The Uncanny")

This, as a functioning theory of behavior in relation to objects that are precious to their owners, could explain the way that ring-bearers tend to exhibit an excess concern over the Ring's safety and wellbeing. It is precious to them, and so they anticipate protecting it with the same reciprocal force that they themselves would employ in attempting to

despoil it from others. If this is the case with the ring-bearers, this constant vigilance

concerning the Ring is surely exhausting, but this initial quote from Bilbo or the

disturbing intensity of this need to protect the Ring begs the question, could this

behavior be something more? What, exactly, makes this ring so precious to its bearer, or

compels them to see it thus? There is something, even at this point narratively before

the reader knows the Ring to belong to Sauron, unusual and mystical about the Ring,

and something disturbing about it as well. This effect is intensified in Bilbo's

conversation with Gandalf about abandoning the Ring. Bilbo becomes angry and yells:

"'And what business is it of yours, anyway, to know what I do with my own things? It

is my own. I found it. It came to me… It's mine, I tell you. My own. My precious. Yes,

my precious'" (33). In this, the undeniable echoes of the verbal tics of the Gollum are

present, and Gandalf points out as much. With the only commonality between Bilbo

and Gollum being the ownership of the Ring, the Ring is suddenly suspect, an avenue

through which this curious behavior manifests in both Gollum, the monster living in

the depths of the goblin caves, and now Bilbo, the quaint and elderly hobbit. Again,

Freud's article "The Uncanny" allows us to examine why this repetition in relation to

the Ring is so disturbing:

> These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the 'double',
>
> which appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus
>
> we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look

alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of

these characters to another — by what we should call telepathy —, so that

the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the

other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with

someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes

the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling,

dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant

recurrence of the same thing — the repetition of the same features or

character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same

names through several consecutive generations. ("The Uncanny" n.p.)

This doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self as discussed by Freud is exactly

what the Ring enacts on its bearer—a misrecognition of the bearer's own self as a result

of its uncanny ability to slowly alter the bearer over time. Gandalf explains to Frodo: "It

is far more powerful than I ever dared to think at first, so powerful that in the end it

would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it. It would possess him"

(*Fellowship of the Ring* 45). The Ring does this, I argue, by dividing the selfhood of the

bearer, and interchanging the strange and uncanny murmurings of those Ring bearers

before him, until nothing remains of the original self. The bearer, thus, comes to be

unfamiliar with his own self, and no reconciliation is possible for him to return to his

original identity. Always, at least a part of himself will have been colonized by the Ring of Sauron.

The uncanny effect of this is doubled by the symbolic interaction of the Ring and Sauron, as the Ring itself, on the micro scale of the individual, colonizes the selfhoods of those who possess it, mimicking the imperial practices that its master Sauron employs. As Freud states: "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced …when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes" (Freud). So then, when the Ring becomes the imperial force in the text, an uncanny effect is the result, and a small, focused instance of colonization takes place within the relationship of the Ring and its bearer.

Bhabha's postcolonial reinterpretation of Freud's work provides the stepping stone for me to make this theoretical connection. Bhabha uses Freud's arguments to examine the way that colonization affects and alters the self. In this passage on mimicry he argues:

> Its "identity-effects" are always crucially split. Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. (130)

As I will show, the Ring similarly splits the identity of its bearer and renders their past inaccessible. And Bhabha states later: "the past is a foreign country" (283). By this he means that no attempt to revive the past identity can be actualized; no such nostalgic past can be accessed, because it no longer exists. Such is the case for the ring-bearers, who in their colonization/decolonization cannot return to the fantasy of origin.

In order to explore the way that this micro-colonization functions, and using these theories by Freud and Bhabha as a starting point, I want to examine instances in the texts that discuss Gollum and Frodo's states of mind, both while in possession of the Ring and after having been deprived of it (*i.e.* under the colonization, and then after decolonization). By examining how this uncanny effect of the Ring to colonize its bearer functions textually, I hope to reveal how parallel themes about the self of irreconcilability, loss, and homelessness characterize Tolkien's presentation of colonization on the micro scale of the individual.

Gollum

Gollum, the very first Ring-bearer presented in the narrative, clearly has a disturbing split in his personality. Arguing with himself, talking always in the plural, hungering after Bilbo's flesh and coughing a "gurgling sound horrible to listen to" characterize Gollum's behavior in Riddles in the Dark (78). Bilbo, in beholding him, is overcome with "pity mixed with horror" (80). Gollum is occupied by two selves, a doubling of the self that is both sad and disturbing. Gandalf explains later his

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relationship to the Ring: "he hated it and loved it, as he hated and loved himself" (54). Having borne the Ring for hundreds of years, Gollum has sunken into a deplorable state, not even able to carry the Ring that he loved so when Bilbo finds him. Deprived, then, of the Ring, Gollum follows Bilbo, though he slips out of the gaze of narrative focus until the *Fellowship of the Ring*. He does not know what to do, and overcome by both love for the Ring, and a hate of it, he is compelled to search after it because so much of himself had been then devoured by the Ring, that his actions were hardly his own, but also because having been so long in the company of his colonizer, he had forgotten how to govern himself, and though he hated his subjugation, he did not know how to proceed except to seek out what was once familiar, even if not preferable. Eventually, finding Frodo on his quest, Gollum becomes their guide, driven and subjugated by a desire for the Ring.

Several passages describe the continued inner debate of Gollum, in one he looks at his reflection on the surface of a pool and argues aloud what he should do concerning the Ring and the hobbits. Tolkien presents him as fundamentally in conflict with himself, or at least the original Gollum; the vestiges of Sméagol that remain are at war with the Gollum, or the altered and twisted bits altered by the Ring. There are moments where one is in control, and moments when the other prevails. One particular moment, where the narrator describes Gollum looking at the hobbits on the stairs of

Cirith Ungol describes a moment that Sméagol seems to prevail, but is tired and pitiable:

> Gollum looked at them. A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm of pain seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo's knee-- but almost the touch was a caress. For a moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing. (*Two Towers* 699)

The time for recovery or reconciliation, for Sméagol, has almost disappeared. The Ring, which had once rendered Sméagol into Gollum, has long relinquished its hold and interest in him, and yet he remains Gollum—though attempts to heal are made—no such victories are won. Sméagol no longer exists, and the vestiges that remain serve only to elicit pity, fractured, broken and let down as he is. That is, Sméagol remains only to contrast with Gollum, to render Gollum all the more horrid by comparison; likewise, the two must remain in the frame of vision to the reader, a constant reminder of the Ring's potential to divide and alter the self. This uncanny effect of the Ring can

only appear uncanny when both Sméagol and Gollum remain in focus, though one might prevail, the conflation of the two and the indivisibility of the two serves to foreshadow the relationship between Frodo and the Ring, and to force comparison between Sméagol and Frodo, thus anticipating the eventual loss of Frodo's innocence.

<div align="center">Frodo</div>

After seeing this transformation manifest in Gollum, the reader anticipates Frodo's slow metamorphosis into the same odd and pitiable individual that Gollum had become and that Bilbo was becoming. The Ring causes this transformation over the course of the whole narrative, beginning by trying to control his will. For instance, when in Bree, Frodo is uncontrollably compelled to put on the Ring and disappear. The narrator describes the nature of this desire in hindsight: "It seemed to him, somehow, as if the suggestion came to him from outside, from someone or something in the room" (154). This exertion of control by the Ring is by no means the first or last time that Frodo cannot help but put it on. After the attack on Weathertop, for example, "[he] reproached himself for weakness of will; for he now perceived that in putting on the Ring he obeyed not his own desire but the commanding wish of his enemies" (194). This transgression, as opposed to the one in Bree, has serious consequences for Frodo, who is stabbed because of his inability to resist conceding to the Ring's "commanding wish."

The stab wound Frodo receives as a result of his indiscretion severely compounds this process of transformation. Just days after the attack, Frodo seems

almost certain to become a wraith himself, and his senses are altered from the experience. Mimicking Gollum's keen awareness in the dark, Frodo begins to have a heightened and even abnormal ability to see in the darkness. The narrator remarks that Frodo begins to wish for darkness, as the hobbits and strider travel towards Rivendell: "during the day things about him faded to shadows of ghostly grey. He almost welcomed the coming of night, for then the world seemed less pale and empty" (207). Frodo's externalization, being more aware of the world around him, but less aware of himself, is the direct effect of the stab wound, but worsened, prolonged, and intensified by his continued possession of the related object, the Ring. For instance, in the Mines of Moria, Frodo's wound has long healed from Weathertop, and yet his awareness for shapes in the dark continues; although "that grim wound had not been without effect," increasing his ability to see in the darkness, "he was in any case the bearer of the Ring" and it is this that continues to tug on the chain around his neck (303-04). This externalization or heightened awareness of the unseen things in the external world is the hallmark of the Ring's colonization of Frodo. The main effect of which is a disorientation of selfhood. By shifting the Ring-bearer's focus from himself to the world around him, the Ring manages to dislocate the sense of the bearer's identity from internal to external. By opening up this space, the Ring then has room and power to affect the bearer to an even greater extent. Like the colonizers who force the colonized

into diaspora, the Ring shifts the self out of its home, the body, leaving the body for the Ring to possess and exploit.

As time progresses and the Ring reaches closer in proximity to its symbolic referent, Sauron, this effect is multiplied. Once in Mordor, Sam recognizes this heightened intensity after briefly carrying the Ring: "among all their pains [Frodo] bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind" (914). The control of the Ring, and the dislocation of the self culminates in several horrifying moments, when for however brief, Frodo is rendered completely blind by the power of the Ring (593, 689). He begins from this point on to forget the things he once so enjoyed, like food, friendship, and the Shire. The uncanny effect of the Ring reaches a crescendo when Sam asks Frodo to carry the Ring for a while to lighten his burden Frodo exclaims: "Stand away! Don't touch me!... It is mine, I say! Be off!" (916). Echoing the same exclamations of Gollum and Bilbo, Frodo has inherited the psychic burden of these reoccurring motifs. Frodo, himself, has become uncanny. The self of Frodo is lost, adopting the shared experience of complete colonization by the Ring, and at this point the main free-indirect discourse shifts to the perspective of Samwise. Yet, in the decolonizing act of destroying the Ring, no victory is gained for Frodo. Anticipating his death from the border of Mordor onward, Frodo does not expect to recover from the psychological damage of the Ring's colonization of his selfhood.

Hope is kindled for Frodo in his success in destroying the Ring, and his survival

and journey home are characterized by an upbeat optimism of finally going home. But

it is upon the return to this homeland that Frodo is first painfully reminded of his

ordeal along the return journey, but as I argued in the chapter on uncanny places, there

is no home for Frodo to return to. Upon arriving at Bree, one local boy calls for the

hobbits to sing a song. The memory of Frodo's disappearance months earlier had not

yet left the minds of the inhabitants as this passage indicates: "But then a hush fell, and

he was frowned down, and the call was not repeated. Evidently there was no wish for

any uncanny events in the Common Room again" (973). Frodo begins to fear, upon his

experience at Bree, that the Shire he longs for has been forever lost to him. Barliman

points out to Frodo: "You've come back changed from your travels," and hints then that

all is not well in the Shire (973). Through the scourge of the Shire, the hobbits reclaim

their homeland, and for them this seems a great success, but for Frodo, the home he

wishes to return to is himself; the self, changed and tainted irreconcilably by the Ring.

He begins to doubt whether there is any recovery possible for him, and asks Gandalf if

there is anything he can do to heal and reclaim the home inside himself that the Ring

had bereft of him. Gandalf's answer is far from optimistic:

> "Alas! There are some wounds that cannot be wholly cured," said
>
> Gandalf. "I fear it may be so with mine," said Frodo. "There is no real
>
> going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for

I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a

long burden. Where shall I find rest?" Gandalf did not answer. (967)

The silence of Gandalf foreshadows the grim truth that is confirmed later: there is no

rest for Frodo. Slowly Frodo begins to discover this, and he explains the situation to

Sam in these haunting words: "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not

for me" (1006). He also implores Sam that he cannot be "torn in two" as Frodo is, but

must yet be "whole" for a long time, to rule the Shire and protect the home that Frodo

at once desires but can never attain, both inside and outside himself.

The ultimate implication of this discussion is that Frodo has chosen to leave the

Shire, and sail away from Grey Havens. Thus, to fully destroy the Ring, Frodo has

decided that he must also die, for he has become the Ring, there is no division that can

take place to separate this uncanny double, no original identity to return to, no home to

be reconciled and returned too. Frodo believes that he is damaged beyond repair, and

that try as he might, "it will never really heal" (1002). He cannot repress the uncanny

experience of the Ring, because he has become the Ring in many respects. To repress the

experience, he must also repress himself.

Despite his attempts to reclaim himself, the self that existed before he owned the

Ring is inseparable from who he is at the end of the text, and Frodo no longer

recognizes the pleasures of his past life, nor even his own selfhood. He feels the acute

pain and loss actively of the empty space left by decolonization:

Farmer Cotton found Frodo lying on his bed; he was clutching a white

gem that hung on a chain about his neck and he seemed half in a dream.

"It is gone for ever," he said, "and now all is dark and empty." (1001)

Changed forever by the effects of the Ring, Frodo is left with a cleaved selfhood, the

wound of which he cannot mend or efface. On this microscopic scale, Tolkien

illustrates the harmful effects of imperialism. The micro-level colonization that has

taken place in the subject of Frodo can be decolonized, but can never return to the

original state. Gollum and Bilbo likewise could not successfully return to the origin of

identity, leaving the only alternative as death. The Ring, the colonizer lives on in its

subjects — the colonized ring bearers, who cannot disentangle themselves from what

they have become — hybrids of their original self and the Ring.

Conclusion

The *Lord of the Rings* uses the realm of fantasy to illustrate the methods and effects of colonialism and imperialism on several levels. Tolkien explores Otherness by situating Tom Bombadil, Treebeard, and Shelob as Other in relation to history, and then through the defamiliarized gaze of the hobbits, shows how interactions with this Other can evolve into uncanniness, horror, and abjection. But also the interaction with the Other need not necessarily be abject or horrible. The continued reemergence of these Others in the text implies the unavoidable interaction, and the way that the uncanny functions in relation to Otherness on a large scale. I have focused on this specific image of the Other in Tolkien's texts, but there are countless examples of the way that Tolkien treats the Other that further illustrate his sensitive and astute treatment of Otherness. For example, further exploration into this could be made in the texts, specifically in the way that Tolkien treats characters like Orcs in a way that is neither demonizing nor totalizing. Consider, for example, the following passage:

> No, they eat and drink, Sam. The Shadow that bred them can only mock,
> it cannot make: not real new things of its own. I don't think it gave life to
> the orcs, it only ruins them and twisted them; and if they are to live at all,
> they have to live like other living creatures. Foul waters and foul meats
> they'll take, if they can get no better, but not poison. They've fed me, and

so I'm better off than you. There must be food and water somewhere in

this place. (893)

The Orcs are enemies of Frodo and Sam, and yet Frodo manages to articulate a position

that is aware of the complexities of the Orcs' existence and relationship to Sauron as one

equally colonizing. Exploring the plethora of passages that treat this issue would

further support my argument that Tolkien presents Otherness in his text as more

complex than the "us/them" dynamic supposed by imperial powers.

In the chapter "Uncanny Places" I moved from presentations of Otherness to the

more psychological treatments of colonized/colonizer relations in the texts, specifically

through landscapes. I explore the way that Tolkien presents certain places, (Mirkwood,

Moria, Dunharrow, and the return to the Shire) as Uncanny because of the way they

resist colonization attempts, and return to the attention of the characters who try to

repress and disavow the knowledge of these places' wildness. I argued in that chapter

the way that the colonizing parties purposefully focus on the fetish of colonized

pathways to ignore and repress their knowledge of the really uncolonizable places they

travel through or inhabit. By doing this and examining these places in detail, I further

illustrated how Tolkien has created a text that is aware of the vexed psychological

relationship between the colonizers and colonized. However, Tolkien treats the

psychology of the colonizer in many different instances. I specifically chose to look at

the instances that this confrontation of the colonizer with the colonized renders the

experience uncanny, but there are many other instances between characters and not just landscapes. For example, by examining the relationship of Sauron with the others of Middle-earth, my argument would be further supported. Gandalf, at one point explains a certain belief of Sauron that takes on the properties of the colonizer:

> He supposes that we are all going to Minas Tirith; for that is what he would himself have done in our place. And according to his wisdom it would have been a heavy stroke against his power. Indeed he is in great fear, not knowing what mighty one may suddenly appear, wielding the Ring, and assailing him with war, seeking to cast him down and take his place. That we should wish to cast him down and have *no* one in his place is not a thought that occurs to his mind. (485)

In this passage, Sauron can only understand his own desires and reflection of his own desires on his adversaries, which almost perfectly reflects Bhabha's explanation, via a passage from Jacqueline Rose, of how the colonizer imprints on the colonized the desires they would hold in their place forming a complicated relationship of fear and subjugation:

> "When their glances meet he [the settler] ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, 'They want to take our place' It is true for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the

settler's place." It is always in relation to the place of the Other that

colonial desire is articulated. (63)

Analyzing the many places in the text that address these colonial relationships reveals

that the way the texts treat the aftermath of colonization further supports the argument

that I have put forward.

In my final chapter I explored the micro-level colonization that the Ring of

Sauron enacts upon the ring-bearers creating an uncanny relation between the bearers

by dividing and occupying their selfhoods. The ring-bearers, because of this

relationship with the Ring become uncanny doubles of themselves, and they are

rendered irreconcilable hybrids of their original identity and the colonizing Ring. By

doing this to the sympathetic Frodo, the text encourages a more nuanced response to

the abject characters like Gollum who otherwise share Frodo's plight.

Although Tolkien may not have engaged in the contemporary political struggles

of his time in *The Lord of the Rings* in any blatant terminology or allegory, through

aspects of Middle-earth, he does offer an extended examination of the tropes of empire.

These late-imperial British texts take a keen approach to the complexities that

colonialism entails including Otherness, the uncanny, colonial fetishism, and

irreconcilability.

This reading of *The Lord of the Rings* serves a few functions. Firstly, it opens the

door to other texts of this time that might have been equally engaged in postcolonial

thinking and critique of imperialism and yet have not received attention from postcolonial scholars, as such. Secondly, reading *The Lord of the Rings* in this way allows a common ground between popular culture and cultural activism. In terms both subtle enough to not seem garish, but pervasive enough in the texts to be comprehensible, Tolkien offers a view of colonialism that is not totalizing, generalizing, or one dimensional. Additionally, the series is accessible to a whole generation of readership already familiar with them. Their popularization seems to have been a double-edged sword in many respects. The Hollywood blockbuster adaptations of the last decade or so eliminate many of the elements that make the texts so resonant postcolonially. It is for this reason that I specifically did not focus on the films in this thesis. The films are inclined to dichotomize the good/evil setup of the Elves/Sauron, and by eliminating aspects of the texts like Tom Bombadil and the scourge of the Shire, the films undercut the postcolonial articulations of the books, which emphasize ambivalence and sensitivity to the complexities of colonial interaction. But, if the increased popularity of the films should incite increased readership of the texts, then it is all the more necessary to sustain similar scholarly attention popularizing Tolkien's approach to the colonial, emphasizing ambivalence and critique, and striving toward the postcolonial.

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