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Framing empire: Victorian literature, Hollywood international, and postcolonial film adaptation

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FRAMING EMPIRE: VICTORIAN LITERATURE, HOLLYWOOD
INTERNATIONAL, AND POSTCOLONIAL FILM ADAPTATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how adaptations of Victorian literature made in Hollywood by postcolonial filmmakers contend with the legacy of British imperialism and Hollywood's role as a multinational corporate entity. Highlighting the increased number of postcolonial filmmakers adapting Victorian literature in Hollywood, the project demonstrates how film adaptation has become a strategy for, in the words of Salman Rushdie, "writing back" to imperial powers. Placing such adaptations of Victorian literature within the tradition of postcolonial rewritings of classic British texts, I bridge fidelity criticism, the auteur theory, and contrapuntal readings of source texts with studies of political economy in order to position Hollywood cinema as a location of past and present imperialisms.

The first chapter examines George Stevens's *Gunga Din*, emphasizing how the film demonstrates a break in the American valorization of British culture. I then trace the global dominance of Hollywood film conventions through my discussion of Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary*. The next chapters engage with how three postcolonial adaptations address the legacies of the British Empire and Hollywood. Analyzing P. J. Hogan's *Peter Pan*, Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair*, and Shekhar Kapur's *The Four Feathers*, the chapters discuss how the filmmakers maintain fidelity to source texts to imbue the narratives with the perspectives of their nations of origin. The final chapters discuss two reworkings of *Oliver Twist*—Tim Greene's *Boy Called Twist* (2004) and Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) to demonstrate the influence of positionality on adaptation as Hollywood International embarks on a globalized business model that controls representations of postcolonial nations.

INTRODUCTION: ACCENTED SLANTS, HOLLYWOOD GENRES: AN INTERFIDELITY APPROACH TO ADAPTATION THEORY

In the wake of British decolonization, Hollywood has seen an influx of filmmakers from former colonized territories forging successful Hollywood careers after achieving notoriety in their homelands, including: Mira Nair, Shekhar Kapur, Gavin Hood, Neil Jordan, Peter Weir, Gillian Armstrong, George Miller, Baz Luhrmann, Jane Campion, John Woo, and Kar Wai Wong. Considering the political thrust of career-cementing films such as Australian Weir's meditation on urban aboriginals in *The Last Wave* (1977) and New Zealander Campion's sexualized allegories *Sweetie* (1989) and *The Piano* (1993), such postcolonial filmmakers who made the transition to Hollywood find themselves in a unique position to address not only the lingering influence of European colonialism on their nations of origin but also to negotiate the transnational corporate imperialism through their participation in and often subversive use of Hollywood filmmaking. For such filmmakers, maintaining the political sensibilities during the transition from national cinema to Hollywood allowed them to extend their postcolonial critique to an international scale.

However, while such filmmakers have retained their auteur status in Hollywood, several have opted to undertake film adaptations of British literature over the past two decades, frequently choosing the Victorian literature of Britain's imperial century as their source texts as a way to integrate the perspectives of their homelands into works that stereotype or ignore the presence of the colonized in a manner similar to a wide array of postcolonial texts such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), J.M Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), and Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) that in the words of Salman Rushdie "write back" to the imperial centre. In

addition, such postcolonial filmmakers rewrite and reappropriate Empire literature within an industry that represents the cultural arm of the transnational corporate Empire central to contemporary imperialism. As a result, these adaptations deserve scrutiny as useful texts in understanding how postcolonial nations contend with the legacy of colonialism while firmly rooted in the imperial tendencies of global capitalism.

This project discusses how postcolonial filmmakers adapting Victorian novels for Hollywood studios contend with the legacies of British colonialism while addressing Hollywood's cultural and economic influence in the globalized world. Through my work, I seek to highlight the importance of such adaptations to the fields of postcolonial, film, and Victorian studies. In addition, I hope to fill the gaps in previous critical work on the relationship between postcolonial studies and film adaptations of Victorian novels largely because, aside from brief mentions in texts such as Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) and appearances on director filmographies in works on national and diasporic cinemas, such adaptations have either been relatively ignored by the academic community or, in the case of films like Peter Jackson's Joseph Conrad-inspired 2005 remake of *King Kong*, not considered adaptations at all.

While contemporary trends in international film financing have challenged Hollywood's status as a prolific, solitary production entity, the industry has always maintained an international scope even during the peak of studio system filmmaking. Founded primarily by Eastern European Jewish immigrants and sustaining itself with the work of immigrant filmmakers from Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, and Billy Wilder to Roman Polanski, Paul Verhoeven, and Alfonso Cuarón, Hollywood is an industry built on diaspora, historically acting as a shelter for artists seeking to escape tumultuous

political situations be they World War II, the Cold War, or the various civil wars of the late 20th century. As the imperial power structure has shifted from European nations dominating native populations to multinational conglomerates subjugating the globalized world, filmmakers from former colonies have employed the film medium to respond to their old and new oppressors. Since film surpassed literature as the dominant form of mass artistic communication in the middle of the 20th century, the imperialist critiques of postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe and Rushdie have in many cases shifted to the multiplex. However, while artists from colonized nations who desire to assert their own native cultures into their work used to face only the paradox of critiquing an Empire through its own language, filmmakers desiring similar critiques in the contemporary economic climate must now also face the paradox of what film director Martin Scorsese calls “acting as a smuggler” for their own ideologies while relying on the funding of their oppressors to finance multimillion-dollar projects (Scorsese 1995). As a result of this shift toward corporate colonization, attempts to write back must now traverse the barriers of media, history, and corporate culture to reach their intended audience.

Yet, in a global economy fueled by what Ellen Meiksins Wood deems “surplus imperialism” in which the “economic imperatives of ‘the market’ do much of the imperial work” in lieu of “extra-economic powers” such as national militaries and territorial Empires, the concepts of diaspora and the imperial centre become much more complicated (153). When the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization released the results of its study on national film production in May 2009, it revealed a slippage in industrial prominence for a Hollywood already undergoing dramatic economic shifts as a result of recession and devalued currency. Though long

ago surpassed by India and its Bollywood film industry in the sheer number of films produced each year, the American film industry found itself usurped by Nigeria's burgeoning film industry, Nollywood for the first time. In the study that surveyed film production in 99 countries during 2006, UNESCO found that Bollywood produced 1,091 feature-length films to Nollywood's 872 productions. Maintaining a distant third with 485 features, the United States's numbers were much closer to those of Japan (417 productions) and China (330 productions) than the two nations who now maintain the greatest production presence in the international film industry (UNESCOPRESS 2009).

Despite demonstrating what appears to be a weakening of the American film industry's status as a center for film production, the UNESCO study also reveals the enduring privileged status of Hollywood cinema in the international culture industry. Hollywood films continued to dominate the global box office and English remained the most frequently used language in the industry in order to maximize international distribution potential, exhibiting that while postcolonial national film industries of countries like India and Nigeria may be growing, they remain controlled by the lingering, albeit less direct, influence of Hollywood (UNESCOPRESS 2009). A more indicative example of Hollywood's ubiquitous international presence than sheer statistical data is apparent in how the Bollywood and Nollywood film industries that have surpassed it in production remain defined by Western media and organizations such as the United Nations as permutations of "Hollywood," national film industries that despite relative autonomy remain rooted within the framework of a dominant cultural force. As Edward W. Said writes:

Whereas a century ago European culture was associated with a white man's presence, indeed with this directly domineering (and hence resistible) physical presence, we now have in addition an international media presence that insinuates itself, frequently at a level below conscious awareness, over a fantastically wide range. The phrase "cultural imperialism" . . . loses some of its meaning when applied to the presence of television serials like *Dynasty* or *Dallas* in, say France or Japan, but becomes pertinent again when viewed in a global perspective.

(*Culture* 291)

Said's characterization of American media certainly positions Hollywood cinema's international box-office presence as a mechanism of cultural imperialism. However, it also exposes how the definitions of Indian and Nigerian cinema as Bollywood and Nollywood respectively have affected the structure of national film industries so deeply that even their content and business models mirror that of their namesake. Seeking to challenge the global dominance of Hollywood, Bollywood cinema is produced to appeal to both domestic and international audiences, more focused on presenting musical spectacle and heteronormative romantic fantasies that re-enforce the values of traditional family structures (Desai 204-205). Likewise, though utilizing independent film practices such as digital video and alternative screening in homes, Nollywood cinema has largely borrowed its content from politically innocuous soap operas and the work of the Yoruba traveling theatre in an effort for multidemographic appeal and international popularity, only recently beginning to contend with the legacies of colonialism and military rule (Adesokan 602).

As a result of their similarities with the Hollywood film industry's goal of international dissemination, both Bollywood and Nollywood echo Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's discussion of the culture industry infrastructure that produces the conditions and terms of government for Empire—the globalized imperial force of transnational corporations that have replaced nation-based colonial endeavors. As Hardt and Negri write:

. . .there is already under way a massive centralization of control through the (de facto or de jure) unification of the major elements of the information and communication power structure: Hollywood, Microsoft, IBM, AT&T, and so forth. The new communication technologies, which hold out the promise of a new democracy and a new social equality, have in fact created new lines of inequality and exclusion, both within the dominant countries and especially outside them.

(300)

With national film industries such as Bollywood and Nollywood operating under similar mechanisms as Hollywood, the potential not only for Empire's commodification of national cultures but also for the culture industry to curtail dissent from media artists comes to fruition under the aegis of cultural fusion and globalized perspectives. Such attempts at control often manifest themselves in the international coproductions that have become increasingly prominent in the last few years: Gurinder Chadha helming the Hollywood/Bollywood coproduction *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Sylvester Stallone starring with Bollywood stars Ashkay Kumar and Kareena Kapoor in the upcoming film *Incredible Love*, Paramount Pictures and Reliance BIG Entertainment's historically unprecedented 2010 declaration for more Bollywood productions to shoot in Los

Angeles, Hollywood and the Chinese film industry co-producing summer blockbusters like Rob Cohen's *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008) and Harald Zwart's remake of *The Karate Kid* (2010), Nollywood actress Omoni Oboli turning down a role in a Hollywood production that called for multiple nude sex scenes, American filmmaker Paul Schrader signing a contract to direct a Bollywood action film, and—perhaps most famously—New Zealand-based filmmaker Jackson using his *The Lord of The Rings Trilogy*'s on-location shooting in his homeland to revitalize the nation's film industry to such an extent it developed an official Ministry of *The Lord of the Rings* to address the production's effects on tourism and the local economy.

Arguing that the narrative and stylistic conventions that Hollywood developed in the early twentieth century were an attempt to break away from British influences, I discuss how Hollywood has assumed a contradictory identity—originally functioning as a form of resistance, but transitioning into an imperial force. In articulating an “interfidelity” theory of adaptation, I bridge fidelity criticism, the auteur theory, and contrapuntal readings of source texts with studies of political economy in order to position Hollywood cinema as a location of past and present imperialisms. What results is a method of adaptation study founded on the relationships between literary texts that also demonstrates a shared foundation among the postcolonial adaptations I discuss. Establishing my theoretical approach, I structure the rest of the dissertation as an application of the interfidelity model to a series of postcolonial film adaptations of Victorian literature.

Determining an Interfidelity Approach to Postcolonial Film Adaptation

Though postcolonial cinema and adaptations of Victorian literature have become common occurrence in Hollywood and other national film industries, barring discussions of overtly political adaptations such as Jack Gold's *Man Friday* (1975), the intersections of these three aspects of film studies have largely escaped scholarly attention due in part to the ongoing discussions concerning the purpose and status of adaptation within film studies. Over the past two decades, adaptation theory has sought to extricate itself from the confines of fidelity criticism's model of pitting literary text against film, an approach that Brian McFarlane views as dependant "on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with" (8). Perceiving fidelity criticism as limited beyond evaluation purposes, critics embraced the theoretical framework of contemporary film theory with its focus on applying the structuralism of Barthes and Saussure and the Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm to uncovering the overarching ideology of cinema. Contemporary film theory's effect on adaptation studies has led to numerous and detailed breakdowns of source texts and adaptations. Yet, through its focus on the relationship between ideological formation and cinema, such a model of adaptation theory neglects critical reading of individual texts' content beyond explaining its structures, a weakness that complicates its effectiveness in analyzing adaptation as a form of resistance so vital to its study in a postcolonial context. As Noël Carroll writes: "I deny that structures of representation, at the level of abstraction discussed by contemporary film theorists, are essentially ideological. In my view, the ideological operation of films resides, roughly speaking, in their content and its rhetorical inflection

rather than in their use, *simpliciter*, of cinematography, narration, and what is called classical editing” (89). While approaching adaptation from the perspectives of structuralism and the Althusserian-Lacanian paradigm is helpful in navigating corporate imperialism’s use of the culture industry to assert power, as Carroll indicates, too broad a focus on cinematic ideology as a whole overlooks the adaptation strategies postcolonial writers and filmmakers use as forms of resistance and subversion in individual texts, strategies vital to understanding postcolonial identity and opposing imperial forces.

With corporate imperialism usurping colonialism as an international force as a result of media advances such as the Internet, adaptation theory has focused increased attention on the adaptation industry, a method that attempts to extend adaptation studies beyond the realm of literature and film. In advocating an “Industry-centric adaptation model,” Simone Murray writes:

Missing from the academic equation is a third stream of research that would provide the necessary production-oriented perspective on adaptation to complement existing approaches. But rather than seeing production-focused analysis as merely a corrective to existing critical imbalances and this an end in itself, the current project flags how conceptualizing the industrial subculture of adaptation provides new understanding of why texts take shape the way they do and how they influence and respond to audience evaluation. (14)

Through the industry-centric model, adaptation theory seeks an understanding of adaptation in the age of Empire; how transnational media corporations position novels such as Michael Crichton’s *Jurassic Park* or Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* in an endless

cycle of adaptation through various media, including films, television commercials, video games, Internet content, and film novelizations. Similar to contemporary film theory, the industry-centric model aids in understanding the mechanisms of corporate Empire through its focus on the commodification and dissemination of textual properties. However, it fails to account for the fissures that erupt in the adaptation process—the moments when writers and filmmakers can subvert the structure and imbue the adaptation with their own political perspectives—as a result of its attention to market forces rather than the content of not only individual texts but also the various iterations integral to the industry-centric model.

Though useful in grappling with the complexities of adaptation, previous models of adaptation theory all demonstrate deficiencies in addressing the politics inherent in adaptation, highlighting the necessity of a theory of adaptation that examines the process as a fundamental tool in interrogating past and present imperial ideologies and discusses how postcolonial writers and filmmakers “write back” to the imperial forces that subjugate them. Taking up Carroll’s call to “generate small-scale theories, watching out of the corner of our eye to see if their results can be gathered into larger theoretical constructions,” I propose an approach to adaptation that focuses on the various interactions between individual literature and film texts in a postcolonial context and accents the potential of adaptation to disrupt imperial power structures and to negotiate a voice for its subjects, which I call the interfidelity approach to postcolonial film adaptation (23).

Rather than oppose the numerous advancements that previous adaptation theories have made over the past fifty years, the interfidelity approach attempts to bridge the

field's rich history of criticism with a politically relevant analysis informed by postcolonial theory. With its focus on analyzing the relationships between specific texts, fidelity criticism serves as a strong foundation for interfidelity theory, useful in addressing, in the words of Hutcheon, “. . . many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question. . .” (7). Likewise, contemporary film theory and the industry-centric adaptation model prove helpful in engaging with the ideological structure of cinema and its relationship to forms of imperialism—as long as they are addressed in conjunction with individual texts. Similar to the “in” of the term, the influence of past adaptation theories wedges itself into interfidelity, able to move fluidly through both individual texts and an overarching discussion of the medium.

In addition to the legacies of other forms of adaptation theory, the interfidelity approach also engages with the contributions of film scholars outside the realm of adaptation. Focusing on individual texts, interfidelity criticism owes much to the auteur theory and Andrew Sarris's contention that the auteur critic view film in a holistic manner. As Sarris writes, “The auteur critic is obsessed with the wholeness of art and artist. He looks at film as a whole, a director as a whole. The parts, however entertaining individuality, must cohere meaningfully. This meaningful coherence is more likely when the director dominates the proceedings with skill and purpose” (30). Though film is clearly a collaborative art, the positionality of the director is integral to understanding the politics behind individual adaptations, especially in the case of directors from postcolonial nations hired by Hollywood after the international success of films made in their native countries. The theory is also heavily influenced by Robin Wood's advocacy

of films that expose and interrogate the fascist tendencies inherent in cinema's structure: "Many films *merely* reproduce, and thereby, reinforce, but there are also many—the interesting ones, the complex ones, the distinguished ones—that, in reproducing the social and psychic structures of our culture, also subject them to criticism" (23). As adaptation theorists concerned with the ideology of cinema demonstrate, filmmaking's structure acts as a controlling force. Yet, the adaptation process is especially adept at producing films that criticize said structure while writing back.

In dealing with the realm of postcolonial literature and cinema, interfidelity theory appropriates approaches and terms from film criticism with an international scope as well as postcolonial theory. When referring to Hollywood cinema, the theory applies Carroll's concept of "Hollywood International"—films made in Hollywood and other national film industries that are meant for international dissemination (209). Given Hollywood's international reach, the theory also operates under a modified definition of what Hamid Naficy refers to as "accented cinema," the work of diasporic filmmakers primarily from postcolonial nations who are more prone to the "tensions of marginality and difference" because they work outside the Hollywood system (9-10). While helpful in discussing postcolonial cinema, the term must be modified as many of the filmmakers Naficy deems accented such as Nair, Atom Egoyan, Caveh Zahedi, and, as I later discuss, Guy Maddin have become frequent, albeit semi-independent, presences in Hollywood.

While postcolonial theorists such as Said categorize Hollywood as an agent of cultural imperialism, Hollywood cinema occupies a contradictory position as a medium for writing back to the imperial center and a hegemonic force that absorbs filmmakers from national cinema movements into the order of global capital. However, by viewing

Hollywood adaptations made by postcolonial filmmakers within the context of Homi K. Bhabha's work on hybridity and mimicry, the disjunctions and potential for subversion become evident. Given Hollywood's dominant role in international culture, my project also employs Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussions of subaltern agency as a basis for interrogating the effectiveness of the films I discuss in both resisting imperial forces and speaking for the subjugated. The educational opportunities and class backgrounds of postcolonial filmmakers working in Hollywood also make addressing Spivak's questions essential to the overall effectiveness of my project. As a theoretical approach, interfidelity also purposefully draws on its marital connotation as a way to highlight colonialism's intertwined strategies of, according to Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, "inferiorization" of natives and women "embedded in the colonial situation" (355). In recalling the mechanisms of colonial control in the age of Empire, interfidelity extends the opposition to patriarchal imperial structures to the adaptation process, cultivating a hybrid form of resistance from film theory and postcolonial studies applicable to the contemporary politics formed from an amalgamation of colonialism and Empire.

Elaborating on Said's claims concerning the cultural imperialism of international media entities, my definition of Empire is largely informed by Hardt and Negri's work in *Empire* (2000), *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009). However, my project engages with a working definition of Empire that mediates between Hardt and Negri's corporation-centric view and theorists such as Wood and David Harvey who emphasize the continuing role of the individual nation state in global domination. Reconciling such conflicting theoretical perspectives allows me to highlight Hollywood's contradictory status as a national industry and global

cultural force. Directly applying Hollywood's dissemination power within the globalized economy to Guy Debord's discussions of celebrity and spectacle's roles in cultivating ideological totality is also useful in differentiating between Hollywood cinema and Hardt and Negri's definition, which lumps cinema, television news, print, and advertising under the moniker "media." My project also discusses how Hollywood's increased globalization and coproductions with national cinemas such as India's Bollywood and Nigeria's Nollywood relate to the political and economic ramifications of the rise of what Robert O. Keohane refers to as the "international regimes" of the globalized world, which "facilitate the smooth operation of decentralized international political systems" and "become increasingly useful for governments that wish to solve common problems and pursue complementary purposes" (63).

Despite interfidelity's attempt to apply adaptation study to the shifting economics of the globalized film industry and contemporary imperialisms, it remains an approach that relates only to a specific set of adaptations within international cinema. While such postcolonial film adaptations certainly use the film medium to write back to Empire by integrating their respective national perspectives into the literature of their colonizers and to address the current imperial powers of global corporations, their resistance to imperial power structures does not fully represent attempts by filmmakers to resist imperial and corporate colonizers. The filmmakers under consideration here hail from developed nations with strong national film industries and a history of international coproduction. In the cases of directors such as Jackson and P. J. Hogan, international media corporations have fostered filmmaking in their native countries through decisions to shoot within their nations' boundaries as a way to curtail the high costs and tax issues

associated with filming in America. Similarly, filmmakers who originated from Bollywood and other Indian national film industries benefit from an influx of foreign production revenues that supplement the income of a country that is recognized as home to the second most profitable national film industry in the world. With the exceptions of these Bollywood-associated filmmakers such as Nair and Kapur, the filmmakers I have chosen all hail from settler colonial nations that maintain financial ties with Europe. As a result, their native countries have stronger and more cohesive film industries than nations such as Iran, Brazil, Venezuela, Afghanistan, and even Nigeria where tumultuous political situations and current global military conflicts greatly hinder the ability to finance and market films for global distribution. While numerous works from these nations such as the Iranian films *Kandahar* (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 2001) and *Close-Up* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990) address postcolonial and neocolonial imperialisms and received some semblance of worldwide distribution, they still remain relatively severed from international film industry economics. As such national film industries reach economic and political stability, they will likely assert a stronger presence in international cinema culture and can possess the resources to afford the royalty fees required in adapting works such as *The Four Feathers* and *Peter Pan* to the screen with their own accented touches. Considering these caveats to the interfidelity approach, a case study of a particular film situated directly between Victorian adaptation and Hollywood spectacle may be of use to further engage with the limits and potential of interfidelity before undertaking the analytical work of which the rest of this study consists. Through the following discussion of Jackson's Conrad-inspired 2005 remake of the Hollywood classic *King Kong*, I hope not only to demonstrate how the interfidelity approach works but also

to highlight its applicability to a text that blurs the lines between adaptation, remake, and postcolonial cinema.

The Interfidelity Approach and Peter Jackson's *King Kong*

When Universal Studios released Jackson's remake of the 1933 film *King Kong* during the 2005 holiday movie season, the film achieved a melding of positive critical and commercial response not seen in the American film industry since the release of Jackson's final installment of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of Rings* trilogy two years prior. In a marketplace crowded with blockbuster family films such as *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* and prestige pictures like *Syriana* and *Munich*, Jackson's *King Kong* possessed the integral elements required for it to endure both the holiday box-office and awards seasons: a recognizable brand, a PG-13 rating, a director following up his first Oscar win, a cast featuring Oscar nominee Naomi Watts, Oscar winner Adrien Brody, and popular comedian Jack Black, and a marketing campaign that simultaneously ran Kellogg's cereal promotions and "for your consideration" ads in *Variety*. For Jackson, who honed his filmmaking skills making low-budget horror films like *Bad Taste* (1987) and *Dead-Alive* (1992) using his mother's oven to bake prosthetics, the *King Kong* remake represented an ascension to Hollywood power player usually reserved for American directors like Steven Spielberg and Tim Burton. With a Best Director Academy Award for *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (2003) and the three billion dollar international box-office revenue from Tolkien's trilogy, Jackson persuaded Universal Studios not only to undertake the \$200 million remake of his favorite childhood film with minimal studio interference but also to produce the film in his native country as he did with Tolkien's trilogy, greatly boosting

the former English colony's GDP and building on its reputation as an international filmmaking center. While one could interpret Jackson's increased power in the American movie industry as a product of his films' box-office clout, his career success represents yet another example of filmmakers from formerly colonized nations employing the monetary and cultural influence of Hollywood to foster their own nations' influence in the globalized corporate economy.

However, Jackson's *King Kong* remake illustrates the influence of filmmakers from former colonies on Hollywood in much more subtle ways than simple studio economics. Revered as one of the classic films of the Golden Age of Hollywood and made during the waning of the British Empire's global influence, the narrative of Merian C. Cooper's original *King Kong* (1933) bears strong postcolonial undercurrents that Jackson refines in his remake. The story of opportunistic filmmaker Carl Denham's journey to an uncharted island ruled by an enormous gorilla, *King Kong* serves as an example of imperial power's tendencies to conquer and subjugate foreign cultures. Not content with merely filming Kong, Denham (Robert Armstrong) captures the gorilla, transports him to New York City, brands him the "Eighth Wonder of the World," reduces the beast to a life bound by chains, and reenacts his capture for the city's socialites. Though Kong rebels against his captor by breaking free and commencing a rampage through New York, his reign as king comes to an end when military planes cause him to fall to his death from the Empire State Building, a victim of the Western World's economic and military prowess.

Jackson's remake leaves the original film's plot intact, only altering the basic narrative structure by including scenes that were either too expensive or technically

unfilmable during the original film's production. Yet Jackson clarifies Cooper's original critique of colonialism by integrating the literary work Peter Childs holds above all other works as the central text of postcolonial discourse—Joseph Conrad's 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*—into his narrative (Childs 188). The remake adds two new characters to the plot: Hayes (Evan Parke), a black officer on the ship and Jimmy the Cabin Boy (Jamie Bell), a rogue, white adolescent Hayes tries to civilize by critiquing his behavior and making him read *Heart of Darkness*. As the ship reaches Kong's Skull Island in the film, Jimmy delves further into Conrad's novella, allowing Jackson to draw parallels between Marlow's descent into the horrors of colonialism in the novella and the ship's passengers' journey into the darkness of Skull Island from which only a handful survive. Through his integration of Conrad's narrative into the film, Jackson creates an amalgam of modern and postmodern discourse on the nature of Empire in the contemporary world. While the colonizers in Conrad's novella attempt to civilize the black natives of lands they conquer, Jackson's characters reverse roles, making the black Hayes the model of civility attempting to impress his customs upon the unruly Jimmy, a relationship Jackson juxtaposes with Kong's subjugation at the hands of Denham (Jack Black). At the same time, the film's depiction of Skull Island's native tribes is one-dimensional—not out of place in a 1930s Hollywood production. As a result, Jackson's film articulates a layered, often problematic, criticism of colonialism. Using Hayes and Jimmy's relationship and *Heart of Darkness* allusions to “write back” to the Empires that colonized New Zealand and Conrad's Belgian Congo, Jackson harkens back to the colonialism of the modern era by essentially rewriting the works and power structure of the imperial project for the

postcolonial era despite maintaining the same structures of representation for his “native” characters as the British imperial project.

However, through the relationship between Kong and Denham, Jackson also writes back to a contemporary version of Empire manifested in the global corporate powers that own companies such as his employer, Universal Studios. As Hardt and Negri write in *Empire*, “The concept of Empire is presented as a global concert under the direction of a single conductor, a unitary power that maintains the social peace and produces its ethical truths” (10). For Hardt and Negri, the role of conductor in the contemporary world belongs to the multinational corporations that control the cultural, social, and political mores of the globalized world (13). In Jackson’s view, citizens from colonized nations such as New Zealand may have won independence from their former colonizers, but even as they gain substantial strength in the contemporary world, they remain under the control of a limitless Carl Denham treating them as commodities that serve as primary attractions for an elite few.

Elaborating on these intersections between film adaptation, Victorian literature, and postcolonial cinema, the remainder of this project demonstrates how the interfidelity approach to adaptation is useful in understanding Hollywood’s evolution from national film industry to the foundations of global cinema in the contemporary world. Tracing the rise of Hollywood convention’s dominance from the studio era to the present, chapter one examines George Stevens’s 1939 adaptation of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “Gunga Din,” emphasizing how the film’s loose resemblance to its source material resists conformity to British culture while also exhibiting a contradictory representation of natives as both savages and superior soldiers—a characterization indicative of an America beginning to

assert its national culture while positioning itself as an imperial power. Building upon my analysis of *Gunga Din*, I trace how America's superpower status was marked by the global dominance of Hollywood film conventions through my discussion of Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary*. By rejecting Hollywood's iconic image of *Dracula*, Maddin calls attention to the exclusion of Dracula's own perspective from Bram Stoker's novel and makes parallels between Dracula's foreignness and Canada's relationship with the United States.

The next three chapters examine how individual postcolonial filmmakers from different nations use adaptations of their Victorian source texts to address the legacy of the British Empire and their own statuses within Hollywood through analysis of Australian filmmaker P. J. Hogan's 2003 adaptation of *Peter Pan*, Nair's 2004 adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and Kapur's 2002 adaptation of A. E. W. Mason's *The Four Feathers*. Through the adaptation process, the filmmakers maintain overarching fidelity to the source texts as a strategy to imbue the narratives with the perspectives of their nations of origin. Eliminating omniscient narrators, allegorizing narratives, and addressing Orientalist depictions, the films address the totality of British rule and the global reach of Hollywood from a variety of national perspectives.

In the final two chapters, I discuss two different reworkings of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* that are indicative of how Hollywood's international scope has altered postcolonial film adaptation—Tim Greene's *Boy Called Twist* (2004) and Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). Applying Dickens's social concerns to post-Apartheid South Africa, Greene's film exposes ties between Victorian England's domestic and imperial policies, making parallels to the contemporary dynamic occurring between industrialized countries

and developing nations. In contrast, I argue that with *Slumdog Millionaire*—an adaptation of Vikas Swarup’s postcolonial Indian novel *Q&A*—the use of adaptation as a form of resistance was usurped by the transnational media corporation. By examining these films, I demonstrate the importance of navigating the influence of positionality on adaptation as Hollywood and other national film industries embark on a globalized business model that controls representations of postcolonial nations.

1. COLONIAL DISCOURSE, GEORGE STEVENS'S *GUNGA DIN*, AND THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

Investigating Hollywood's early attempts at Victorian literature adaptations, this chapter examines George Stevens's 1939 adaptation of Kipling's poem "Gunga Din," emphasizing how the film's loose resemblance to its source material demonstrates a distinct break in the American valorization of British culture. *Gunga Din* completely dismantles Kipling's poem, recreating it as an example of a distinctly American form: the seamless studio system product that led to Hollywood's international dominance in cultural production. Yet, while the politics of the adaptation resemble textual strategies of resistance common in postcolonial texts, the film's retention of colonial literature's representation of Kipling's "natives" addresses an America beginning to assert a distinct national culture while positioning itself as a future imperial power in the tradition of its former oppressor.

As 1939 drew to a close, the golden age of Hollywood had just experienced a twelve-month period that saw the release of the "best of American cinema" staples *Gone with the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Stagecoach*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. However, despite the spate of critically and commercially successful films released during what film historians have deemed Hollywood's "Golden Year," one of the year's biggest box office draws was a genre picture that, although acclaimed for its entertainment value and sheer scope, has never quite earned the prominence in cinema history as its much-touted competitors: George Stevens's *Gunga Din* (Jaher and Kling 38).¹ Loosely adapted from Rudyard Kipling's ballad of the same name, *Gunga Din* has seen its reputation as one of the finest epics of the studio era damaged over the intervening decades as a result of allegations of

condescending and one-dimensional depictions of its Indian characters (van Woerkens 285).

Though *Gunga Din* has not achieved the same stature in the history of American cinema as its “Golden Year” counterparts, the film’s popularity at the time of its release is indicative of the cultural anxieties gripping America during the time period stemming from the death rattle of Manifest Destiny and the traumas of the Great Depression— anxieties that led to the reinvigorated popularity of the western and what Robert B. Ray calls the “disguised western” during the studio era. As Ray writes:

As a form, the western served as one of the principal displacement mechanisms in a culture obsessed with the inevitable encroachments on its gradually diminishing space. By portraying the advancing society’s abiding dependence on the frontier’s most representative figure—the individualistic, outlaw hero—the pure western reassured its audience about the permanent availability of both sets of values. . . Thus many of Classic Hollywood’s genre movies, like many of the most important American novels, were thinly camouflaged westerns. (75)

If, as Ray contends, the function of westerns both real and disguised during the Classical Hollywood era was to cope with anxiety over the disappearance of America’s diminishing space, then *Gunga Din*’s transition of western conventions into the realm of the British imperial project provides a framework for the opening of an unclaimed cultural frontier: the British colonial epic.² For Ray, the disguised western acts as an elastic category that encompasses a wide range of films featuring reluctant heroes from Michael Curtiz’s James Cagney gangster film *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) to the

Astaire-Rodgers musical *Swing Time* (1936) to nearly every Clark Gable film, including *Gone with the Wind*. However, despite the broadness of Ray's genre categorizations, a film such as *Gunga Din* refuses to conform to the conventions of either the real or disguised western. Following the adventures of maverick British army sergeants Cutter (Cary Grant), MacChesney (Victor McLaglen), and Ballantine (Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.) through India's landscape as they seek treasure, contend with MacChesney's upcoming marriage, and combat a murderous Thugee cult led by a Guru (Eduardo Ciannelli) with the aid of their Indian water bearer Gunga Din (Sam Jaffee), the film shares many of the conventions that critics such as Thomas Schatz see as hallmarks of the western: a concern with restoring "rites of order" to a frontier landscape, a juxtaposition between domesticity and the frontier, a group of reluctant, individualistic heroes, and a prosocial sidekick who shares the heroes' moral sensibilities (Schatz 64-67). Yet, the film's Indian setting (which shared the shooting location of Lone Pine, California, with many of the period's westerns) and focus on the British complicate *Gunga Din*'s associations with either genre, different enough from John Ford productions to escape the designation of western, but too thinly disguised to be anything but (Jaher and Kling 42). While critics such as Jeffrey Richards characterize *Gunga Din* and other Hollywood films set in the British colonies as a "Cinema of Empire" that serves to endow the faceless builders of the British Empire by "clothing them in the flesh and features of the great stars," they neglect to discuss the motivational impulses that led an industry responsible for cultivating its own distinct genres to imitate and engage with narratives that were the hallmark of Victorian literature (2-4). Throughout the 1930s, London Film Productions released a series of "Empire films" that were critically and commercially successful in Britain and

America, including Robert Flaherty and Zoltan Korda's Kipling adaptation *Elephant Boy* (1937), Herbert Wilcox's biopics *Victoria the Great* (1937) and *Sixty Glorious Years* (1938), and Korda's "Imperial Trilogy" of *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* (1938) and *The Four Feathers* (1939).

Considering that America had not only dominated the international film industry since World War I after lagging behind England and France for decades but also relied on a host of outsourced European talent from Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock to *Gunga Din*'s own Cary Grant, Hollywood could not afford to overlook the international popularity of the "Cinema of Empire" (Mast and Kavin 100-101). As a result, Hollywood embarked on a series of its own imperial epics during the late 1930s releasing films such as Henry Hathaway's *Lives of a Bengal Dancer* (1935), John Ford's Kipling adaptation *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937), and *Gunga Din* in addition to the screwball comedies, westerns, and melodramas that made up the majority of the releases that culminated with the industry's "Golden Year"—a business model that allowed Hollywood to hone the quality of its own genres while opening up the cultural frontier through engagement with a competing industry's own stylistic and narrative conventions.

Though one could dismiss Hollywood's intervention into the production of the imperial epic as cooption from a less powerful, albeit still formidable, competitor, an inherent political dimension exists in the creation of Hollywood's Cinema of Empire. As Said writes, "culture is never just a matter of ownership, or borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures" (*Culture* 217). Seizing upon the popularity of Empire narratives, an industry based in a nation that was once itself in

possession of the British Empire engaged with the cultural attributes of its former colonizer. At the same time, it integrated its own distinct perspectives and anxieties into a final product that was a hybrid of imperial narrative and American western. Yet, unlike other instances of “writing back” such as those of Rhys and Carey, the American imperial epics stemmed from source texts that were either minor works by major figures of Empire literature (Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* and “Gunga Din”) or works by the period’s relatively obscure authors. When Hollywood did adapt the classic texts of Empire literature, the resulting films were either prestige adaptations relatively faithful to their source texts (George Cukor’s *David Copperfield* (1935) and William Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights* (1939)), adaptations entrusted to British filmmakers (Victor Saville’s *Kim* (1950)), or loose adaptations that displaced the narrative from an American-British context (Jacques Tourneur’s *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943)—a *Jane Eyre*-influenced Val Lewton horror film about Canadians in the West Indies).³ While Hollywood could use such adaptations to demonstrate its mastery of literary adaptation and technological prowess that could recreate Victorian England on a studio lot, it could do little more than engage in the imitation those such as Frantz Fanon perceive as merely the first step in developing a distinct national culture (*Wretched* 223). Only in Hollywood’s imperial adventure epics could the industry pit its distinct modes of storytelling against the traditions of its former colonizer.

However, in melding Empire literature and the Hollywood epic, films such as *Gunga Din* faced the problem of representing their “native” characters, which *Gunga Din* failed to adequately address if its banning in India, Japan, and Malaya is any indication (Jaher and Kling 37). Through integrating American cultural attributes into their source

texts, Hollywood's imperial adventure epics were faced with a fragmentation of identity that they could not reconcile. These problems of representation extend further than general accusations of Orientalism such as Said's that Orientalists cannot think in terms of the individual but "conceive of humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities" (*Orientalism* 154). Hollywood convention dictated not only a certain audience identification with stars such as Grant and Erroll Flynn (if one overlooks their nations of origin) but also a narrowly defined savage/noble savage dichotomy for the Indian characters borrowed from the western. At the same time, American identity was equally split between the rugged individualism of the films' leading men and the colonized Indian figures who became antagonists when they rebelled against the encroaching Empire. Despite its attempts at negotiating the relationship between its own ideology and that of its former colonizer, the Hollywood imperial epic could not contain the ruptures caused by its settler colonial foundations, a failure apparent in *Gunga Din*'s ambivalent depictions of its Americanized English heroes and anticolonial Indian Thugees.

The Imperial Screwball Western

As the most financially unstable of the five major studios, RKO Radio Pictures's decision to employ the notorious perfectionist George Stevens to direct Grant, Fairbanks, and hundreds of extras on intricate interior sets for an adaptation of an 85-line poem seems a risky endeavor (Mast and Kawin 242). Yet, under Stevens's control as director and producer, the most expensive production in the studio's history was always meant as a risky endeavor, proof that a studio known primarily for screwball comedies, musicals,

and Cooper's *King Kong* could make a significant epic film and position the genres it executed so well into a prestigious package by attaching Kipling's name (Moss 60).⁴ Heralded as one of the great English writers by, according to David Gilmour, the "solid and conservative Victorian men of letters," including Thomas Hardy and J. M. Barrie, Kipling added an air of importance to *Gunga Din* that elevated its status beyond a western taking place in colonial India (90). While the studio courted Kipling's estate for the rights to the poem, Stevens relished working on a project adapted from the work of an author he said was always "right at my elbow" and "more important to me than the assistant director" when making a film—an admiration that made him bristle when those in Hollywood not involved with the project dismissed it as little more than another cowboys and Indians tale (Stevens and Cronin 6).

The resulting tension between RKO's desire for prestige and need to recoup such a large investment positions the film at a significant point in the history of Hollywood film adaptations. Rather than attempt to make an expensive Kipling adaptation that captured, in the words of William B. Dillingham, the "complex and magisterial achievement of his extensive body of work with its wide range of subject matter and its almost infinite variety of themes," RKO settled on a film that superficially engaged narrative and biographical aspects of the author's work while relying primarily on proven genre conventions (8). Though the film borrows its title and a character from an entry in Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1892) as well as its focus on three British soldiers from Kipling's story collection *Soldier's Three* (1888), the narrative has no resemblance to either text—solely the invention of the film's writing team.⁵ Instead, the film makes the highly unconventional choice of including the character Rudyard Kipling (Reginald

Sheffield) as a journalist who accompanies the unit during the film's climatic battle and, inspired by Gunga Din's death, writes the poem on the battlefield—a choice which angered the Kipling estate and was excised from many prints of the film after its initial theatrical run (Chowdhry 182).

With its highly unorthodox, tacked-on approach to adaptation, one could view the tensions between Hollywood style and source text fidelity as little more than another example of profit overshadowing artistic integrity. Yet, the prominence of both Hollywood and America in the aftermath of World War I also had a profound effect on *Gunga Din's* relationship to Kipling. As Fredric Cople Jaher and Blair B. Kling write:

By the late 1930s, Hollywood was ready to look more critically at British hegemony. America had become a superpower; Britain weakened in World War I was already in decline. The modification of Hollywood's British Indian epic was imminent. Participants in the production of *Gunga Din* could feel it...yet most participants seemed only intermittently aware of their ambivalence toward Britain. (33)

Though Jaher and King carefully construct the historical context of *Gunga Din's* production and highlight the ambivalence inherent in the passing of the torch between superpowers, they opt not to focus on how the film reflects the tensions of the period. However, in relying on Kipling while simultaneously pushing his influence to the margins in favor of Hollywood convention, the film—despite Stevens's open admiration for the author of his source texts—captures the anxious moment when American forms began to encroach upon the prestige of British culture while proposing a solution for the

diminishing of open space that served as a source of anxiety for Americans during the period.

Throughout *Gunga Din*, Stevens's primary strategy to address American ambivalence toward Britain occurs through narrative and stylistic juxtapositions between quintessentially American and British cultural tropes. As the film opens, Stevens fades into a close up of the base of a statue of Queen Victoria with the inscription "Victoria Regina Imperatrix" (the Queen's monogram after she became the empress of India) in the foreground of the shot. As the camera zooms out to reveal the entirety of the statue and cuts to a close up of a parade of flags, a voiceover of several lines of Kipling's ballad begins:

Now in Injia's sunny clime
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin of 'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them blackfaced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti. . . (lines 7-12)

Rather than complete line 12, the voiceover abruptly goes silent, replaced by the opening chords of the film's score as the title card "RKO Radio Pictures Presents *Gunga Din*" appears superimposed over a large gong. While the combination of the inscription, the statue's image, and Kipling's verse serve to root the film in a distinctly Victorian place and time, the cut to the RKO title card demonstrates an intense shift from the attributes of British culture to the language of Hollywood cinema. In addition, the choice to mute the voiceover narration of the poem and allow the title card to announce the identity of "our

regimental bhisti” indicates the establishment of new narrative forms in which to package Victorian tales of adventure. Taking up the mantle from the ballad, the title card indicates a break from British traditions, conveying to its audience the power of Hollywood convention to make canonical texts of Empire literature seem fresh, epic, and adventurous.

Yet, while the juxtaposition of statue and title card directly highlights the differences between Kipling and Hollywood’s modes of storytelling, the film’s selective inclusion of the poem’s opening stanza strengthens the narrative prowess of Hollywood convention by stripping away the complexities of Kipling’s work. A writer whose work has often been misread as depicting a poetic, timeless, and essential version of India, Kipling had a multifaceted relationship with the nation, both a figure complicit in Empire’s endeavors and an Anglo-Indian with a hybrid identity (Said *Culture* 133-134). As a result, Kipling’s writing is founded on ambivalent and contradictory depictions of both Britain and India. As John McBratney writes, “Kipling, more than any British imperial writer, inaugurated the pervasive image of the twentieth-century British Empire as a kind of highly self-conscious drama . . . Kipling, who devoted himself to securing that government’s permanence, may have most truly succeeded in pointing up its extravagant dumb show” (166). An example of the complexities of this “dumb show” plays out in the opening lines of “Gunga Din,” which were cut from the recitation of the film adaptation’s opening:

You may talk o’gin and beer
When you’re quartered safe out ‘ere
An’ you’re sent to penny-fights an Aldershot it;

But when it comes to slaughter

You will do your work on water,

An you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it. (lines 1-6)

Here, Kipling deftly addresses the self-consciousness innate in the military operations at the foundation of the imperial project. The British army was well trained by “penny fight” operations at Aldershot, yet wildly unprepared for service in India. The speaker of the poem claims to have had experience in India worthy of boot licking, but unspools his story to an audience from the safe quarters of a training base. The army is organized as a hierarchy of soldiers in training and those “that’s got it,” but implicitly acknowledges the danger and untamable aspects of the crown jewel of the British Empire. However, Stevens’s film neatly sacrifices the complexities of these contradictions by only including the lines of the stanza that, when taken out of context, depict India as merely a “sunny clime” with a host of brave natives eager to be a part of the Empire’s “blackfaced crew,” a choice that allows the film adaptation to revel in the atmosphere of imperial adventure while leaving ample room to assert its own ideology.

After establishing the conflict between English tradition and Hollywood spectacle in the title sequence of the film, Stevens extends the tension in his characterizations of the film’s British soldiers. Though *Gunga Din* relied heavily on British actors Jaher and Kling refer to as the “British Colony” living in Beverly Hills for at least two-thirds of its cast, including Grant and McLaglen, Stevens endows the three soldiers at the center of the film with personality traits that conform much more to the tropes of the individualism of Hollywood westerns far removed from the behavior of the film’s other British characters (36). As the film’s opening sequence begins, a member of a Thugee cult

smashes a telegraph wire while his colleagues dig a set of graves. Stevens then cuts to a small group of British soldiers led by Lt. Markham (Roland Varno) on horseback as they encounter a Thuggee posing as a local. From their introduction, the British soldiers with their rigid manners and perfectly groomed uniforms appear completely out of their element, a depiction further established when Markham asks a translator “What’s this all about?” in response to the Thuggee imposter’s questioning and pompously remarks “something’s going down” amid a string of salutes and jargon. Ignorant and arrogant, the group is quickly murdered in their sleep by the Thugees, who use the opportunity to exterminate the rest of the British population in the outpost of Tantrapur. Discovering that the telegraph wires have gone dead, Colonel Weed (Montagu Love) and Major Mitchell (Lumsden Hare) appear unable to deal with the situation, responding with little more than an “I don’t like this.” The two commanding officers immediately approach Sgt. Higginbotham (Robert Coot)—a character so buttoned-up and stiff that the film’s British military consultants deemed him an offense to the army—and order him to find Cutter (Grant), MacChesney (MacLaglen), and Ballantine (Fairbanks) to investigate (Jaher and Kling 38).

While Stevens’s depiction of the film’s British authority figures as pretentious and inept borders on satire, he furthers his critique of the British establishment by juxtaposing the personalities of his three leads with those of their colleagues. In response to the inquiry of his superior officers, Higginbotham tells Weed and Mitchell that the trio, “has gone on some mysterious mission,” which the film later reveals is a treasure hunt instigated by a map Cutter bought from a private in a Scottish regiment. Stevens then cuts to Higginbotham walking directly into an epic street brawl, scored to an upbeat overture.

In response to Higginbotham's calls, Machesney throws an opponent through a window, sticks his head out, and bellows "What do you want?" to his colleague. Ballantine follows suit, tossing his opponent out of the adjacent window and calling out, "Here." When Higginbotham inquires about Cutter, Stevens cuts first to MacChesney and Ballantine and then to an eyeline match of Cutter fending off four men by himself. Stevens then cuts back to MacChesney who deadpans, "He's busy" to Higginbotham. When Higginbotham sees Cutter dangling the private who sold him the map out the window, he orders him to "Take his hands off that man." Cutter obliges by dropping the private out the window while flashing Grant's trademark smirk. Though all of the characters the film introduces in its first ten minutes belong to the same military regiment, only the lead trio embodies the combination of anti-authority spirit and physical prowess indicative of the American action hero archetype. With their witty banter, energy, and ability to engage in a fight without the potential for harm, the "American" trio appear superior to the dense, traditional British soldiers who not only rely on the trio when danger arises but also have already been victims of the cult that will serve as the film's primary antagonists—an identification Stevens helps cultivate by filming MacChesney and Ballantine entirely with low angle shots and Higginbotham in high angle during the trio's introduction sequence.

In this juxtaposition between the traditional British officers and the three rebellious friends, *Gunga Din* echoes Ray's conception of Hollywood cinema's outlaw hero—the rogue antiheroes who "valued self-determination and freedom from entanglements"—and the official hero—the teacher, politician, or family man with a belief in "collective action, and the objective legal process that superceded private

notions of right and wrong”—who often work together to defeat an antagonist, especially in westerns and disguised westerns (58). Yet, *Gunga Din* presents a much more nuanced and conflicted official/outlaw hero dynamic rare in such an early Classical Hollywood film—largely as a result of its associations with Kipling’s colonial India. Although Cutter, MacChesney, and Ballantine act as the narrative’s outlaw characters, the scope of the British Empire is so all-encompassing that they are as tethered to military duty as Higginbotham. At the same time, Weed and Mitchell constantly rely on the trio to neutralize outside threats throughout the film, cultivating an image of the three as the only capable soldiers in the entire regiment: they investigate the remnants of Tantrapur together and fend off a Thugee attack using dynamite, they discover the temple base of the cult and capture the Guru, and they fend off Thugees during a siege of the temple. As Weed says to the three after the brawl over the map: “I ought to take away your stripes”... “but unfortunately, I need all three of you.” Even when the cavalry rescues the trio during the film’s climactic battle, Stevens presents the unit as more victim than savior by centering the suspense of the scene on the need to warn the unit that they are riding into an ambush rather than the need to rescue the outnumbered trio. With Cutter, MacChesney, and Ballantine escaping the film’s four other action scenes alone and unscathed, their ability to defeat the Thugees without support seems extremely plausible.

However, though the film both endorses Cutter, MacChesney, and Ballantine’s heroics and endows them with the same traits as Hollywood’s American western heroes, the trio also demonstrates anxiety stemming from the obvious limits of their individualism. Despite the dangers of the Thugees and other hazards of military life, the film’s central conflict stems from Ballantine’s upcoming discharge and impending

marriage to Emmy (Joan Fontaine), the daughter of a wealthy tea trader. Upon returning from Tantrapur and revealing the Thugee plot, Ballantine is dismissed by Weed because the operation will extend far past his discharge date, causing MacChesney to call Ballantine “indispensable” and Cutter to bargain with Weed: “Well, Ballantine would be a great help, sir. If I may remind you, sir, the three of us have always brought off things very well together.” When Weed expresses his powerlessness in the situation, Cutter and MacChesney spy on Ballantine and Emmy in the hall, remarking on their friend’s marriage as the film crosscuts between them and the couple:

MacChesney: Oh, that’s horrible. She’s charmed him like a snake.

Cutter: Siren!

Cutter: I wouldn’t believe it if I didn’t see it with me own eyes. You know it?

MacChesney: Me neither.

While Cutter and MacChesney’s reaction to the marriage union seemingly mirrors a standard example of homosocial behavior, one must keep in mind Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s own claim that, “‘patriarchy’ is not a monolithic mechanism for subordinating ‘the female’ to ‘the male’; it is a web of valences and significations that, while deeply tendentious, can historically through its articulations and divisions offer both material and ideological affordances to women as well as to men” (141).

Considering Sedgwick’s discussion of the complex web of significations, one must look beyond the concept of homosociality and toward the entity ultimately responsible for providing affordances to men such as the soldiers and women like Emmy: the construction and maintenance of Empire. For Cutter and MacChesney, the union does

not deserve scorn because of Ballantine's love for Emmy, but because it represents his dismissal from his friends' subversive army escapades and entrance into a traditional role in the British tea trade, a fact that MacChesney makes perfectly clear when Ballantine offers to help him rescue Cutter from the Guru: "It says here that Thomas Anthony Ballantine is restored to the rank of citizen of great Britain and his duty to her Majesty's service is over and done with...I'm saying goodbye, Pal. And I wish you luck in the tea business and your matrimony both." Though the soldiers realize the immense scope of Empire and their inability to extricate themselves, membership in the army provides them with a role that allows for enough independence for the trio's adventurous hijinks in sharp contrast to direct participation in the economy of Empire such as that of the tea trade. Similar to the American ideals they are intended to embody, the three soldiers maintain an open hostility toward Empire despite requiring aspects of its infrastructure to maintain independence amid their rebellion against the rigidity of its system.

Reflecting the complexities of America's own relationship with British cultural forms, Cutter and MacChesney do not resist the infringement on their autonomy that Emmy's family tea business directly represents through appeals to Ballantine's obligation to Her Majesty or overt statements concerning their fraternity. Instead, they appropriate the conventions of the Hollywood screwball comedy to both mock the rigidity of British culture and remind Ballantine of the potential for subversion inherent in military service that would be unavailable to him in the tea trade. As a genre intended, according to Schatz, to "reaffirm faith in the traditional American ideal of a classless utopian society," screwball comedies attempt to unite protagonists from different socioeconomic standing through the discovery of their love for each other (152). Equipped with Grant—already

famous for screwball comedies such as *Topper* (1936), *The Awful Truth* (1937), and *Bringing up Baby* (1938)—Stevens’s film employs screwball comedy’s central convention of mocking upper class mores to shed light on their hypocrisy (Schatz 164). However, given *Gunga Din*’s imperial adventure dynamic, the film acts as a reverse screwball comedy, utilizing Grant and Company’s antics to create division rather than marital unity—a strategy to maintain the prestige of its British associations while preserving the dynamic of a popular Hollywood genre.

When they find out that Weed has groomed Higginbotham as Ballantine’s replacement, Cutter and MacChesney hatch a plan to remove Higginbotham from service and force Ballantine to stay on. Borrowing a heavy sedative that MacChesney uses to care for the work elephant, Annie, Cutter and MacChesney spike the punch at Ballantine’s engagement party so that their new colleague will have to take sick leave during the mission. Stevens executes the gag as a prolong farce lasting nearly seven minutes: MacChesney prevents Weed and Mitchell from drinking the punch by pretending to fish a fly out of the bowl with his bare hands, Cutter initiates a long-winded toast to initiate Higginbotham into the group as he and MacChesney feign drinking, and MacChesney drops a large plant in the punch bowl that immediately droops when it comes in contact with the liquid. Yet, unlike other screwball comedies such as the Grant vehicle *His Girl Friday* (1940), the comedy is not meant to unmask an upper-class rival as an oblivious buffoon so that the male lead can unite with his romantic double. Rather, the gag allows Cutter and MacChesney to expose the ineptitude of the most stereotypically “British” character in the film while setting the plot in motion to dissolve Ballantine’s engagement. Within the imperial context of *Gunga Din*, the importance lies

not in unifying two opposite positions, but in advocating American ingenuity and independence over stolid British traditionalism.

Stevens furthers his employment of screwball comedy convention in the film as Ballantine makes his final decision to stay in the army. Though Higginbotham's sickness allows Ballantine to attend the expedition, his tenure as a soldier still reaches its expiration date. As a result, when Ballantine offers to help MacChesney rescue the captured Cutter, MacChesney only agrees to take Ballantine along if he signs reenlistment papers: "When we get Cutter, we'll tear up the papers. It'll be neat and according to regulation." Despite Ballantine's objections that MacChesney is "getting clever again," he agrees to the plan, but only if he can keep the papers. MacChesney agrees, and after a fight with his fiancée in which Ballantine tells her that he "hates the blasted army, but friendship, that's something else," the reenlistment is not remarked on. However, when Ballantine and MacChesney are captured, MacChesney tricks the Guru by telling him that the papers in Ballantine's pocket contain the regiment's location. While he is distracted with the papers, MacChesney overpowers the Guru and takes the papers, stating "Sergeant Ballantine hereby reenlists." While Ballantine feigns anger and playfully calls MacChesney a "turncoat," it is clear that he has made the decision to forego his marriage and stay with his friends, contrary to both his statements of love for his fiancée and his alleged hatred of the army.

Through the execution of this screwball scheme, the film reveals its most developed depiction of the ambivalence innate in the relationship between Britain and America. Pitting the marriage contract against the reenlistment papers, MacChesney subverts the power of British law to preserve the trio's own moral and interpersonal

codes, an ideology so important to maintain that even through his own torturous beatings and Cutter's untenable safety, MacChesney perceives it as the utmost priority. In addition, Ballantine can only become the mark of one of the trio's pranks at the point in the film when he is most British, riding with Emmy on his way to their civilian life. Such screwball conventions are meant to unite a couple and, according to Ray resolve difficult choices such as those between marriage and military service by "refusing to acknowledge that a choice is necessary" or "by blurring the difference between the two sides" (67). However, MacChesney's prank not only destroys Ballantine's marriage plans but also, in stark contrast to Hollywood convention, presents Ballantine's choice as substantial and not without consequence. With the shadow of the British Empire unshakeable, Ballantine is forced to make the right choice, maintaining his allegiance to the "blasted army" for the sake of friendship while rejecting the marriage plans that would place him directly in the economic center of Britain's imperial project.

"Very Regimental, Din": Inside/Outside the "Other"

While *Gunga Din* serves as a pivotal film that documents the dissolving of British cultural supremacy, its status, in the words of Richards, "as one of the greatest fun movies of all time" rather than a seminal Hollywood film may have resulted from the problematic representations of its Indian characters (167). In addition to being banned in India and other international markets, it became the victim of censorship by Washington's Office of War Information during its proposed re-released in 1942 for fear that it might lend credence to arguments that Britain was fighting merely to retain its colonies (Jaher and Kling 37). Much of the controversy stemmed from the film's disclaimer regarding the Thuggee religious cult during the opening credits: "Those

portions of this picture dealing with the worship of the goddess Kali are based on historic fact.” At the time of the film’s release, historians were beginning to discover that India’s roving band of Thuggee stranglers were largely mythologized and acted, as Mark Brown writes, as “a lightning rod for British anxieties about their capacity to govern in India” (87). Likewise, the film’s implication that the worship of Kali was fringe activity steeped in extremism became diluted not only because Kali is one of the most common goddesses in the Hindu religion but also because the goddess is worshipped in multiple places in multiple ways for specific regional purposes, rarely ever in a pure and abstract way, a factor that also had the effect of displacing Kali’s feminine power as a form of deviancy (McDaniel 27). Coupling the obvious inaccuracies of the film’s “historical presentation” with the fact that actors such as the Jewish Sam Jaffe (*Gunga Din*) and Italian Eduardo Ciannelli (the Guru) were Americans and Europeans in black makeup, the film’s depictions of Indians, at worst, embody the most obvious kind of Orientalism.

Yet, regardless of the criticisms leveled at the film since its release, *Gunga Din*’s depiction of its Indian characters demonstrates far more nuance than even its kindest critics have examined. Given the tension resulting from *Gunga Din*’s tense depiction of the relationship between British and American culture, the identification between the dominant power and the “other” becomes fragmented. Similar to the trio at the film’s center, America cannot entirely erase its settler colony ties to the British Empire despite its attempts to negotiate methods of resistance against it. In addition, as a result of its settler colony inception and own imperialistic pursuits, the nation cannot quite identify with the legacy of colonialism underlying British control of India. What results echoes Aijaz Ahmad’s explanation of Indian culture’s internal disunity in which poor circulation

of cultural texts causes dissemination to rest “in a significant degree to individual industry and preference with little institutionalized and systematic effort” (249). Though a former colony of the British Empire, America’s own culture industry remains ignorant of both India’s internal culture and the commonalities between how the nations engage with Britain, leaving it to fill in the gaps with its own cultural attributes. As a result, while *Gunga Din*’s appropriation of Kipling’s India falls victim to the same Orientalist tendencies of Empire literature, it problematizes these depictions by endowing its Indian characters with the same sense of moral superiority and rebellious spirit thought self-evident in America’s founding ideology. Such a choice may foster a sense of solidarity between the film’s American and Indian counterparts. Yet, it also runs the same risk of Americanizing the film’s native characters in a way not far removed from the colonial discourse of the British Empire.

Although Stevens depicts the Guru as the primary antagonist of the film, the character conforms neither to the British Empire’s brutish Thuggee stereotypes nor the “noble savage” mentality customary of America’s depiction of its own natives.⁶ Instead, the Guru displays a talent for military strategy and ethical justifications of war that conform more to a respected American general than an Indian savage of a B-western. From the beginning of the film, the Guru’s army uses the British military’s latent racism as their primary weapon, performing the roles of clueless natives begging for safety in order to fall in with units, overhear orders, and eventually exterminate the soldiers while they sleep. The plan is meant to destroy the British army piecemeal as rescue parties come to investigate until the Thuggee army can infiltrate the military’s main outpost. When MacChesney and Ballantine fall captive to the Guru during their botched rescue of

Cutter, he politely informs the soldiers of his strategy: “Two come to rescue one. The others follow.” In addition, the Guru uses the military’s own tactics against them demonstrating his use of English and service protocol as primary ways to oppose his enemies. While Ballantine ultimately fools the Guru with his American screwball shtick, the Guru is able to read Ballantine’s papers himself, realizing MacChesney’s trick moments too late. Even when captured by the trio, the Guru is able both to save his own life and to buy time for the army to walk into the ambush, calmly letting his captors know that “as long as I am alive, you live” and laughing off their threats to kill him: “You would throw away your shield, brave soldier?” Throughout these sequences, Stevens consistently shoots the Guru from low angles, conveying his power and prestige, in sharp contrast to the high angles he uses in his compositions featuring Higginbotham and the other British officers.

While Stevens’s focus on the Guru’s talents for strategy elevate the character above typical “savage” antagonists of western and imperial epics, the film complicates the Guru even further by depicting him as a mouthpiece for the arrogance and hypocrisy of the British imperial project. After defining his brutal lashing of Cutter as “a lesson in the error of false pride” and calling MacChesney an “ox” in response to the officer’s taunts that he is a “dog” and an “ape,” the Guru reveals his place in the history of India’s warriors: “You seem to think warfare an English invention. Have you never heard of Chandragupta Maurya? He slaughtered all the armies left in India by Alexander the Great. India was a mighty nation then while Englishmen still dwelt in caves and painted themselves blue.” As he completes his monologue, he shows the trio his artillery units and the layout of his ambush for the British from the roof of the temple—a plan that uses

the Guru's intricate knowledge of the landscape to defeat his enemies. Speaking in refined English not out of place on a theatrical stage, the Guru not only exposes the British's primitive history but also reveals his nation's own heritage to agents of a colonial project which functions on the false premise that colonized lands were unchartered territories free from history. While the conflict then shifts from the heroic British defeating the Thugee army to the need to save a regiment ignorant of its territory from a plan far superior to any conceived by the British army, Stevens complicates his comparison of civilizations through the Guru's speech pattern. Mocking the British for their inept battle strategies and primitive origins, the Guru espouses a clear anticolonial politics. Yet, in delivering his dialogue through a distinct English accent, Stevens depicts the Guru as an amalgamation of British influence, Orientalist thought, and American independence.

Not content with shattering the illusions of superiority of his captors, the Guru challenges their own dedication to their nation as he sacrifices himself to a pit of vipers so the battle can commence more quickly: "You have sworn as soldiers if need be to die for you faith, which is your country. For England. Well, India is my faith and my country and I can die for my faith and my country as readily as you for yours." Considering that the three soldiers spend the entire narrative mocking British authorities, seeking treasure, and lambasting the "blasted army" as was customary of Anglo-Indians who often viewed their service as, in the words of B.J. Moore-Gilbert a prison of "banishment" and "bondage," The Guru's parting words unravel the illusion of nationalism at the foundation of Empire (67). However, the Guru's love of country and intense patriotism parallel the spirit of self sacrifice that defined both America's own struggle for

independence and Indian anticolonial politics. As the only character in the film dedicated to the preservation and restoration of his nation, the Guru occupies a contradictory position, deserving of vilification for his violent assaults on seeming innocents, but respected for his steadfast belief in an autonomous nation free from Britain's control.

Receiving almost an equal amount of screen time as the Guru though the film bears his name, Gunga Din also serves as a character that complicates Hollywood's representation of Indian figures. Speaking in broken English and dressed in a turban, Din embodies the Indian stereotypes customary of Victorian adventure tales and Empire cinema. Rather than taking the same revisionist approach to Din as he does to the Guru, Stevens uses him as a cipher to highlight the racism and strict hierarchies of the British military. Though the film's soldiers, including MacChesney, and Ballantine, scoff at Din's desire to join the army and bully him for information (culminating in MacChesney's threat to send Din to the firing squad when he returns without Cutter), Din maintains a friendly camaraderie with Cutter throughout the narrative. In one of the film's most famous sequences, Cutter discovers Din mimicking military marching patterns fully knowing that the highest Din could rise in the army is as a leader of an Indian unit. Slightly amused, Cutter assumes the role of commanding officer, instructing Din how to march and salute properly, an action which forms a bond between the two. With Ballantine consumed with marriage plans and MacChesney occupied with navigating the effect of his friend's departure on the unit, Cutter asks Din to accompany him on his search for treasure. When MacChesney throws Cutter in jail to stop him from seeking out the treasure, Din hatches his own screwball plan to spring Cutter by borrowing MacChesney's elephant to destroy the jail and ride to a treasure site that turns

out to be the Thugee temple. Through creating a bond between Din and the British character played by the film's biggest star, Stevens invokes an association between the most Americanized character in the film and its most stereotype-riddled character.⁷ Noticing that he and Din share the same talent for rebellious scheming and dedication to his friends, Cutter develops a camaraderie with him unencumbered by the military duty and impending marriages that have trapped his cohorts, allowing Stevens to depict them as two figures affected by the imperial project who can never fully conform to the military hierarchy.⁸

Despite his bond with Cutter, the Din of the film—as is true for the Din of the poem—is most important to the narrative after death. However, unlike the Din of the poem who dies while dragging the wounded speaker to safety when “a bullet came an’ drilled the beggar clean,” Din dies from multiple wounds during an act of supreme bravery in the film (line 65). With Cutter wounded and Ballantine and MacChesney overcome in battle, Din climbs one of the temple's pillars and plays his bugle to warn the approaching regiment of the ambush waiting for him. The regiment hears the bugling and changes formation in time to overtake the Thugee army, but not before Din dies a violent death, leaving his lifeless corpse dangling from the roof. After the battle, Stevens cuts to a shot of Din's corpse dressed for burial in a full uniform as Weed and Kipling hover over the body. Taking a paper from Kipling, Weed recites the last lines of the poem:

So I'll meet 'im later on
At the place where 'e is gone --
Where it's always double drill and no canteen;
'E'll be squattin' on the coals

Givin' drink to poor damned souls,
An' I'll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!
Yes, Din! Din! Din!
You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!
Though I've belted you and flayed you,
By the livin' Gawd that made you,
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din! (lines 75-85)

Given Din's relationship with Cutter, Stevens's choice to make Weed the speaker of the poem seems to violate the narrative trajectory of the film. Yet, the choice allows Stevens to both maintain the plausibility of the source text and remove his three central characters from the poem's imperial undercurrent and stereotypical representation of its subject.

Kipling's speaker honors Gunga Din's bravery, but he appears to believe that the hierarchy of the Empire will remain intact in the afterlife, leaving Din in the same role he held in the military. Likewise, the speaker assumes he will "get a swig in hell" from Din, potentially highlighting his anxiety over his actions regardless of whether he talks of a literal hell or the metaphorical "hell" that Kipling used to describe his own time on earth, especially within the context of military service (Dillingham 45-46). Worse, the speaker unapologetically admits to physically abusing the subject of his eulogy, apparently perceiving such treatment of natives as rote action. Within the context of the film, attributing such lines to Cutter, or even MacChesney or Ballantine, is contradictory to both their admiration for Din and the Americanized resistance to the Empire they demonstrate throughout the narrative. With Weed delivering the narrative, the ambivalence of Empire and its more seemingly characteristics rest solely on the character

with the highest rank in the film. Avoiding compromising the prestige that Kipling's attachment provides, Stevens interrogates the differences between American and British culture, subtly conveying Hollywood convention as distinct, absolved from the legacy of the Empire that once claimed its country of origin as a colonial holding.

Resulting from its simultaneous legitimization of and resistance to the literature of the British Empire, *Gunga Din* serves as a seminal film for understanding the political foundations of Hollywood film adaptations of Victorian literature. While attempting to trumpet its own distinct cultural forms, Hollywood cemented itself as a hegemonic force in cultural production that would have a similar scope and influence over the world as the literature of Empire did at the peak of its power. However by positioning Hollywood cinema's roots as a form of resistance to imperial control, one can see not only the lingering importance of the British Empire's cultural impact but also the complexities of contemporary Empire's mechanisms of reappropriating and repackaging methods of resistance with which contemporary postcolonial filmmakers working within and against the Hollywood system must contend.

2. HYBRID EMPIRES: HOLLYWOOD CONVENTION AND THE SETTLER COLONY IN GUY MADDIN'S *DRACULA: PAGES FROM A VIRGIN'S DIARY*

In the months leading up to the 2004 summer movie season, Universal Studios began an early marketing blitz for Stephen Sommers's *Van Helsing*, a tangential adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*, and more akin to its writer/director's *The Mummy* (1999) and *The Mummy Returns* (2001) and the previous summer's *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* than Victorian period piece. Depicting the Dutch doctor of Stoker's text as a monster-slaying mercenary for the Catholic Church, the film's Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman) faces off against Count Dracula (Richard Roxburgh). Incorporating other iconic Universal horror monsters into the film, the plot also revolved around the Frankenstein monster and the various werewolves whom Dracula and his brides use as energy sources to hatch an infant vampire army. Despite the seeming ludicrousness of its B-movie plot, the movie was not merely a halfhearted attempt for Universal to recycle its 1930s monster icons for summer tentpole cashgrab. With its \$148 million budget, it was, as Benjamin Svetkey writes, the studio's "most synergistically ambitious entertainment franchise ever" intended not only to spawn sequels, video games, and a television series but also to turn the film's Prague set into the Disneyland of horror cinema using "the long-dormant characters dug up and dusted off from the studio's ancient horror archives": Dracula, Frankenstein, the Wolf Man, and, in what amounts to a cameo, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (2004).

However, while *Van Helsing*'s disappointing \$120 million domestic gross and general critical drubbing would ultimately curtail the studio's franchise hopes, it remains a pivotal film in discussing the sheer dominance of Hollywood's cinematic style and business practices since the height of the studio era responsible for *Gunga Din*.⁹

Rather than rely on the cultural clout of a canonical work, Sommers's film exists in a context in which classic Hollywood's iterations of Stoker, Mary Shelley, and Robert Louis Stevenson's characters have completely dislocated traces of the source texts, an example of Hollywood's usurpation of the British Empire's former cultural prowess. In addition, the film's production and ultimate economic success hinge upon a global business model both through its on-location shooting in the Czech Republic and its international cast and crew, including the Australian Jackman and Roxburgh, American Sommers, and British Kate Beckinsale, who plays Anna Valerious, a Transylvanian aristocratic monster hunter and Van Helsing's sometime love interest. Perhaps most importantly, the film relied on international grosses, which would eventually total \$350 million, to become profitable, a business model that has become more prominent in recent years as studios produce tentpole films with international audiences in mind rather than merely exporting domestic successes for additional revenue.¹⁰

In both content and distribution, Sommers's film exemplifies Debord's discussion of the spectacle "understood in the limited sense of those 'mass media' that are its most stultifying superficial manifestation" (19). As Debord writes:

...the concentration of the media thus amounts to the monopolization by the administrators of the existing system of the means to pursue their particular form of administration. The social cleavage that the spectacle expresses is inseparable from the modern State, which, as the product of the social division of labor and the organ of class rule, is the general form of all social division. (19-20)

With its CGI action sequences and successful international dissemination, a film such as *Van Helsing* expresses the mass media industry's own preservation of its form of

administration via the spectacle of Hollywood magic and lays claim to distinctly British cultural forms as a way to extend the concerns of United States-based multinational corporations. Unlike Stevens's use of Kipling's poem as a way to revise Hollywood filmmaking away from British narrative traditions, Sommers's film all but erases his character's true origins, in effect, as Debord writes, burying "history in culture" with the consequence of restructuring society "without community" (137). For within the world of *Van Helsing*, there is no place for contrapuntal reading of Empire literature, nor is there a need for familiarity with the underlying social critique of "otherness" present in the original Universal Monsters films. There is only commodity—produced, packaged, and distributed with no regard for history or individualized community.

Though the epitome of synergized Hollywood commodity, one should not dismiss *Van Helsing* as merely empty spectacle. In its finer moments, the film quite effectively captures contemporary anxieties over the ethics of hierarchal institutions such as the Catholic Church and nation state. Yet the film's demonstration of Hollywood's international dominance is of central concern to the wave of postcolonial and other diasporic filmmakers working in the industry since the release of *Gunga Din* seventy years ago. Within a medium so permeated with Hollywood's influence, such filmmakers desiring to rewrite a text of colonial discourse through the adaptation process must also navigate the sheer power of spectacle so obviously on display in Sommers's film. Writing about cinema and its revolutionary potential during the studio system's transition from independent entities to arms of major multinational corporations, Theodor Adorno highlights the primary hurdles to a "liberated cinema" that were issues long before Hollywood's contemporary synergy had taken root:

As the eye is carried along, it joins the current of all those who are responding to the same appeal. The indeterminate nature of this collective ‘anything’ (*Es*), however, which is linked to the formal character of film facilitates the ideological misuse of the medium: the pseudo-revolutionary blurring in which the phrase ‘things must change’ is conveyed by the gesture of banging one’s fist on the table. The liberated film would have to wrest its *a priori* collectivity from the mechanisms of unconscious and irrational influence and enlist this collectivity in the service of emancipatory intentions. (184-185)

Adorno’s concept of liberated cinema is clearly applicable to politically charged films and national cinemas such as the Third Cinema movement so popular in Latin American during the middle of the twentieth century. However, it bears greater weight on the filmmakers discussed in this project because it so directly highlights the problems of adaptation of Victorian source texts in an industry largely governed by Hollywood. In order to firmly oppose past and present forms of hegemony, such postcolonial films must engage with and overcome the easy conformity to the diluted “fist banging” that has become the convention of Hollywood social problem cinema.

Within the relatively small sub-genre of postcolonial rewritings, two primary strategies of a “liberated cinema” emerge. The first recalls Bhabha’s discussion of “sly civility” in which the films seemingly conform to Hollywood tradition and convention, but contain strong subversive undercurrents, engaging with a projection of colonial and neocolonial discourse that, as Bhabha writes:

May compel the native to address the master, but it can never produce those effects of ‘love’ or ‘truth’ that would centre the confessional demand. If, through projection, the native is partially aligned or reformed in discourse, the fixed hate which refuses to circulate or reconjugate, produces the repeated fantasy of the native as in-between legality and illegality, endangering the boundaries of truth itself (142).

Despite calling for a modified version of native that includes the settler colonial’s relationship to multinational corporate imperialism, such films center their modes of resistance around the “in-between” status Bhabha discusses, revising colonial texts and subverting Hollywood convention, a strategy on display in Jackson’s *King Kong* remake and the films discussed in the following three chapters. Less apparent in contemporary cinema, a second strategy has emerged in recent years that aims to directly oppose Hollywood cinema by an outright rejection of Hollywood’s narrative and stylistic conventions through an embrace of pre-Hollywood modes of production that are accented with localized political concerns. Much more similar to Third Cinema than the more common subversive revision model, these films are often made outside of the Hollywood system largely through government grants and film boards. While these films sometimes receive international distribution, they are made primarily for a domestic audience and often employ experimental techniques and local allusions that make them difficult to market outside their country of origin.

While *Van Helsing* epitomizes the global onslaught of Hollywood influence in the twenty-first century, another loose-adaptation of Stoker’s *Dracula* released domestically just two weeks after the summer blockbuster is perhaps the most famous and important

example of this second category of postcolonial film adaptations. In *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (2002), Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin accents his source text's anxieties with immigration and miscegenation, examining the ideas of Britishness integral to the nation's colonial endeavors and extending their lingering presence in Canada's multiethnic culture. Through an oeuvre with a penchant for silent film aesthetics that Dennis Lim characterizes as, "willfully primitive cut-rate spectacles [that] seem like artifacts, reanimated bits of cultural detritus, but also like hauntings, the return of the cinematic repressed," Maddin has continually pitted himself against Hollywood convention through a belief in a prelapsarian cinema rooted in the ingenuity of the medium at its inception (4). Hailing from and continuing to work from Winnipeg, Maddin occupies a unique space in Canadian film culture, seemingly reveling in his outsider status unlike his contemporaries such as James Cameron and Jason Reitman, who immigrated to Hollywood, or even more marginal filmmakers such as David Cronenberg and Atom Egoyan, who, though often working in Hollywood, continue to reside and make films in their native country. Though never outwardly expressing a desire to remain independent of the Hollywood system, Maddin's engagements with Hollywood filmmaking have existed at the margins, primarily through his collaborations with cult actors such as Shelley Duvall and Isabella Rossellini or his eventual agreement to sell the distribution rights to more accessible films such as *The Saddest Music in the World* (2004) and *My Winnipeg* (2007) to MGM and IFC respectively after their initial runs in Canada.

For Maddin, the opportunity to adapt Stoker's novel arose through a "for hire" job from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to create a film adaptation of the Royal

Winnipeg Ballet's successful three-year tour of *Dracula* as a television project (Sweitzer 15). Originally declining the offer, Maddin eventually acquiesced when he realized how effective his own style would be at interrogating the text and applying it to Canada's own settler colonial legacy: "For Bram Stoker's story, so limned out in xenophobic and propagandistic terms, is a structure comprised exclusively of good and evil, black and white! Black and white and red all over!" (2). Yet, one should not mistake Maddin's either/or construction of Stoker's novel as simply Manichean. With stylistic preoccupations, according to Lim, "as gleefully assaultive in their own way as Jerry Bruckheimer spectacles," Maddin and his preoccupations with early cinema are, in fact, much more politically astute than their archaic roots (8).

Through its silent-era experimentation, Maddin's work relies largely on the highly-political style of the Soviet Montage, which, in the words of Soviet filmmaking pioneer Sergei Eisenstein, "arises from the collision of independent shots-shots even opposite to one another: the 'dramatic principle'" (49). Heavily influenced by Hegelian dialectics, Eisenstein's montage theory revels in contradictions, using editing to call attention to the spatial, sonic, and temporal conflicts of the moving image as a way to politicize the medium (Eisenstein 52). In addition, Maddin's work is heavily influenced by the fantastical mise-en-scene and Freudian imagery of German Expressionism, a movement which sought, in the words of Thomas Elsaesser, to work through "uneven development and the time lag that separated Germany from its European neighbors," reconciling the class and gender conflicts of the Weimer Republic through fantasy and romance" (45). Applying the diluted and abandoned movements of the early cinema to a contemporary Canadian film culture existing largely in the shadows of Hollywood,

Maddin's films engage with the early political motivations of the pre-Hollywood silent era, cultivating a disjointed cinema of juxtaposition far removed from the seamless, invisible filmmaking style of a Hollywood production like *Van Helsing*.

In the case of *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary*, Maddin's filmmaking sensibility serves as an effective strategy for applying the novel's host of conflicts and contradictions to a postcolonial Canadian context. Stoker's Gothic portrayal of Dracula as an invading "other" holds a distinct place in the colonial discourse of the Victorian Era because Dracula's Transylvanian origins are, as William Hughes writes, "Quite simply, outside the political sphere of British national or imperial presence, a component not of formal or informal Empire but of geographical generalization...the imposition of which marks areas of sporadic interest outside of formal national control or interest best denoted as areas of policy rather than politics" (91). In addition to its vague depiction of late-Victorian imperial politics, the novel also sets up its central figure as a monster without a voice, an other, who, despite that his mastery of knowledge makes him the ultimate Englishman, is completely defined by the depictions of the novel's English and Western European characters (Hughes 95).

As a result of Stoker's vague constitution of imperial politics, the novel and its lingering effect on popular culture allow Maddin to situate the various contexts of Dracula as a centralized point for examining Canada's settler colony tradition as well as Hollywood's cultural imperialism over the nation. Paring down the novel to the narrative strand involving "New Woman" Lucy Westenra and her three suitors Dr. Seward, Quincey Morris, and Arthur Holmwood, Maddin centralizes the text's associations between gender and otherness, positioning Dracula—played by Asian-Canadian dancer

Wei-Qiang Zhang—as a conquering foreign presence on which Lucy’s suitors can, “vent so much mystical spleen” (Maddin 2). Through his disproportionate focus on a narrative strain of the novel that highlights Dracula’s otherness, Maddin engages with Frederic Jameson’s concept of the Third-World novel as national allegory. Writing about the allegorical potential of postcolonial literature, “particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel,” Jameson’s argument, though largely dated and focused on only one type of postcolonial literature directly relates to Maddin’s articulation of settler colonial Canada in his text (69). For in mining one of the most adapted and influential texts stemming from the Victorian Era’s “western machineries of representation,” Maddin acknowledges his nation’s complicity with the West while cultivating a space through adaptation for an immigrant group often denied agency within Canadian culture. Within this context, an allegory emerges in which the European male characters embody colonizing presences and Lucy acts as a settler colonial who benefits from her participation in Empire but ultimately becomes a victim. Working with a Dracula who belongs to Canada’s largest minority group, Maddin complicates his allegory by constructing the film’s “other” as a presence who investigates the Asian-Canadian “model minority” and its status as a site of, as Marie Lo writes, “negotiations of a racial formation that is shaped by US racial paradigms and reconfigured by Canadian racial politics” (97). By highlighting Stoker’s contradictions and injecting his own nation’s racial politics into the narrative via allegory, Maddin cultivates a frenetic montage of imperial control that exposes the conflicts and anxieties of Canada’s postcolonial status.

Building upon my analysis of *Gunga Din* in the previous chapter, I trace how America's rise to superpower and increased imperial presence led to Hollywood conventions becoming indicative of cultural dominance. In his adaptation, Maddin alludes to Stoker's own conflicted Irish-Victorian heritage by examining not only the Britishness integral to Canada's treatment of its multiethnic culture but also Hollywood's influence over and close geographical proximity to Canada. Rejecting Hollywood's iconic image of *Dracula* popularized by films such as Tod Browning's 1931 adaptation and Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 update, Maddin executes his own adaptation as a silent, montage-heavy film in the tradition of German Expressionism, a choice that calls attention to the exclusion of Dracula's own perspective from Stoker's novel and makes parallels between Dracula's foreignness and Canada's own marginalization resulting from its British heritage and American media influence. In addition, Maddin's casting of Zhang as Dracula allows the film to comment on the settler colony's treatment of the foreign presences central to the thematics of the source text. Through the film's silent film aesthetic, Maddin denies not only Dracula but also the entire Canadian cast a voice, accenting the marginal status of colonized groups within imperial culture's structure.

Ballet Resistance

While *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* was a job Maddin took largely because he, "needed the money," the film is not merely a rote concert film preserving American choreographer Mark Godden's ballet as originally performed (Sweitzer 15).¹¹ Rather, Maddin positions the project primarily as a silent film complete with title cards bearing a striking resemblance to F.W. Murnau's German-Expressionist pseudo-Stoker adaptation *Nosferatu* (1922). As a result, Maddin relegates Godden's dance sequences

only to the scenes that involve Lucy's courtship with her suitors and Dracula's dalliances with Lucy and Mina.¹² Though drastically paring down the film's ballet elements may appear a cop out for a director who admittedly was not comfortable working with the medium, the choice allows Maddin to use dance as a strategy to disrupt the colonial discourse of Stoker's text and integrate its gender and racial representations into the context of a postcolonial Canada in a globalized economy. Writing about "the rhetoric of embodiment" inherent to all performance, Helen Gilbert discusses the importance of dance as a subversive element of resistance:

The ever-shifting relational axis of space breaks down binary structures that seek to situate dance as either image or identity, and the spectator as observer rather than co-producer of meaning. Furthermore, situated within a dramatic text, dance often de-naturalizes theatre's signifying practices by disrupting narrative sequence and/or genre. What dance 'does' then, is draw attention to the constructedness of dramatic representation, which suggests that it can function as an alienating device in the Brechtian sense. This calls for analysis of its ideological encoding, an especially important project in criticism of postcolonial texts. . . (302).

In the case of a text as important to genre and late-Victorian culture as Stoker's novel, Maddin's use of dance engages with the ideological encoding of the source text, decentering its politics from the narrative and allowing for postcolonial revision. However, Maddin's focus on ballet instead of other genres of dance is also indicative of the nuance of his adaptation's resistant elements. Originally conforming to perceived natural hierarchies of the king's connection to the body politic, ballet underwent a radical

transformation during the French Revolution in which, as Jennifer Homans writes, “The aristocratic principles that organized the body had to be fully examined, or, more radically, overthrown” (97). What resulted was a ballet more concerned with narrative and political undercurrents, which, eventually would act as a springboard for the revolutionary festivals that marked the final days of Louis XVI (Homans 111).

Harnessing the narrative and revolutionary potential of post-revolution ballet, Maddin creates a narrative space that combines the resistant strains of Gilbert’s ideological critique with one of the most political subversive dance genres of the past few centuries.

With its intense focus on the body as a site of colonization and sexual repression, *Dracula* lends itself remarkably well to Maddin’s ballet-driven resistance strategy. In his seminal article “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,” Stephen Arata positions Dracula’s invasion of England as both a political and biological colonization of the body politic:

...the Count can threaten the integrity of the nation precisely because of the nature of his threat to personal integrity. His attacks involve more than an assault on the isolated self, the subversion and loss of one’s individual identity...Dracula imperils not simply his victims’ personal identities, but also their cultural, political, and racial selves. In *Dracula* vampirism designates a kind of colonization of the body. (630)

While Arata’s views of *Dracula* clearly highlight the novel’s distinct associations between imperialism and the body, they also bring the vague nature of Stoker’s imperial undertones to attention. Through neither endowing Dracula with Eastern origins as was customary of “other” figures in late-Victorian fiction nor locating his origins within a

colonized territory, Stoker cultivates an imperial allegory ripe for the inclusion of various colonial subtexts, including that of his own Irish-Victorian heritage. As Alison Milbank writes, Dracula hails “from a culture on the frontier between Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, and between Christianity and Islam, characterized by fervent and superstitious piety. The anthropological studies used by Stoker take Ireland as analogous to Transylvania because of these cultural determinants and because Ireland too had an imperial order thrust upon it” (20). Given the complex imperial milieu in which Stoker wrote the novel, Maddin’s adaptation serves both to inscribe Canada’s own settler colonial history onto the narrative and to appropriate Stoker’s use of the body as a site of colonization in order to interrogate his own nation’s colonial relationship with Britain and neocolonial American influence. As a result, the film realizes the novel’s allegorical potential positioning Lucy in the role of settler colonial, evading the subjugation of her British and American suitors while forming a contentious alliance with Dracula’s Asian-Canadian “otherness.”

Throughout his film adaptation, Maddin’s identification with his female characters clearly exhibits a sharp deviation from his source text, a novel which Phyllis A. Roth argues is obsessed with “the desire to destroy the threatening mother, she who threatens by being desirable” (420). In contrast to Roth’s criticism, Maddin’s film almost solely identifies with a female perspective, a factor apparent even in the *Pages from a Virgin’s Diary* addendum absent from the novel and the ballet. The novel is primarily a collection of texts authored by men from Jonathan Harker’s journal that introduces the Count through the ship’s logs and newspaper articles that indirectly detail Dracula’s invasion of England while excluding the vampire’s own perspective. Even when the

female characters make vital contributions to the narrative, such as Mina's metafictional transcription of the articles that make the text a cohesive whole, they are motivated by a desire to compete for the attention of the male characters. Only after reading Jonathan's account of his seduction by Dracula's harem in his diary and dismissing his writing of "all those terrible things" as caused by "brain fever" does Mina decide to collect the various accounts of Dracula's migration to London: "I shall be prepared. I shall get my typewriter this very hour and begin transcribing. Then we shall be ready for other eyes if required" (161). Motivated by the accounts of the harem's unbridled sexuality, Mina's transcription serves as a way to prove herself against the overt appeal of the vampire women, adding an additional sense of legitimacy to the disparateness of the largely masculine discourse.

Yet, as Maddin's film title implies, his *Dracula* adaptation is not based on a random collection of primarily male-authored documents, but the general impressions of one source: the virgin Lucy's diary. Deviating sharply from the novel, Harker and his journal no longer retain their authority, the character not only serving the minor role as Mina's jealous suitor but also entering the narrative in only the last third of the film. Instead, Maddin focuses his narrative thrust on Lucy's interaction with her suitors. Paradoxically, the physical object of the virgin's diary is confiscated by her male suitors early in the film, replaced with ballet sequences. The resulting contradiction serves as a primary strategy of revision to the novel's sources of authority. As Milan Pribisic writes concerning the adaptation: "To tell the story of Dracula cinematically shown previously as dance on a stage implies finding a filmic code that shows and tells without spoken dialogue" (165). Though focusing largely on Maddin's adaptation from stage to screen,

Pribisic's comments also directly relate to Maddin's translation of the novel's gender politics into the language of cinema. Unable to convey characters' authority and subjectivity through their authorship of letters and journal entries in the film medium, Maddin endows authority through his use of montage, combining Lucy's subjectivity with the camera's seemingly objective point-of-view as it captures the film's men behaving badly—a unified, diary-like confession of one woman's fatal sexual awakening. What results is not a loose palimpsest of accounts that, in the words of Leah Richards, make each character “dependent on the accuracy of his or her own observations and one another's accounts,” but a resounding endorsement of a female subjectivity resisting the domination of her English and American suitors (444).

Through his identification with Lucy's subjectivity, Maddin drastically alters her role in Stoker's novel, positioning her as a settler colonial figure torn between her cultural allegiance to the British social conventions embodied by Holmwood and Seward and the neocolonial economic power of Morris and ultimately forming an alliance with Dracula's Eastern otherness. As Dracula's first English victim, Lucy with her blonde hair and sexual purity embodies, according to Bacil F. Kirtley, “a typical upper-middle class Victorian woman who has known no evil” and whose last name of Westenra implies that she is, “The Light of the West” (20-21).¹³ Within the context of the novel, Dracula's eventual siring of Lucy serves as an example of his ability to permeate even the most hallowed figures of Victorian England. However, as perhaps the novel's most cited passage reveals, Lucy's conflicts between her Victorian duty and repressed sexual desire acknowledge a weakness that leads to her demise. Writing to Mina after receiving

marriage proposals from Holmwood, Seward, and Morris, the twenty-year-old Lucy grapples with her transition into womanhood:

My dear Mina, why are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them? Here was I almost making fun of this great hearted, true gentleman. I burst into tears, I am afraid, my dear, you will think this a very sloppy letter in more ways than one, and I really felt very badly. Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it. (60)

Though Lucy dismisses her polyamorous feelings as “heresy” while decrying the prohibitions the “they” of Victorian England place over her sexuality, her comment reveals a repressed desire to break out of the social norms inherent to the colonial discourse of the “light of the West.” As critics such as Sally Ledger have noted, Lucy’s acknowledged sexual desire places her in the same context as the “sexually decadent New Woman” of late-Victorian Britain, associating her more with the three vampires of Dracula’s harem than Mina and legitimizing her death as a form of punishment for alleged sexual impurities (101).

Though critical analyses of Lucy as the archetypal New Woman have been central to discussions of Stoker’s text for decades, the manner in which Lucy characterizes her three suitors in the passage deserves equal attention. Lucy’s expressed wish to “marry three men, or as many as want her” stems not from a desire to engage in promiscuity or because her suitors are simply inadequate; her desire stems from the implication that the suitor most firmly rooted in British tradition and class structure is her ideal mate. Lucy may express feelings for all three suitors in the text, yet, her eventual acquiescence to the

aristocratic Holmwood is such an obvious choice that, as she writes to Mina, “I needn’t tell you of number three, need I?” (61). While a potential suitor, Seward is also the “lunatic-asylum man” with a “good forehead” (58). Likewise, Lucy’s descriptions of Morris are wrought with her attempts to justify him as on equal footing with Holmwood:

Mr. Morris doesn't always speak slang, that is to say, he never does so to strangers or before them, for he is really well educated and has exquisite manners, but he found out that it amused me to hear him talk American slang, and whenever I was present, and there was no one to be shocked, he said such funny things. I am afraid, my dear, he has to invent it all, for it fits exactly into whatever else he has to say. But this is a way slang has. I do not know myself if I shall ever speak slang. I do not know if Arthur likes it, as I have never heard him use any as yet. (59)

Despite the passage’s own latent anxieties concerning America’s infringement upon British culture, it demonstrates Lucy’s need to rely on the traditions of the British class system to differentiate among three extremely marriageable suitors. As a result, the novel positions her dalliances with Dracula as an invasion in which Lucy is desecrated and taken from a stable role in Victorian culture, a depiction Stoker underscores by constructing Mina’s discovery of the attack within the terms of the aftermath of a wedding night: “it might have been serious, for the skin of her throat was pierced. I must have pinched up a piece of loose skin and have transfixed it, for there are two little red points like pinpricks, and on the band of her nightdress was a drop of blood” (89).

Through this symbolic loss of Lucy’s virginity, Dracula becomes a threat to the

legitimacy of Victorian social mores, challenging a host of virile and noble men who will eventually put an end to his invasion.

Though Maddin's film preserves Lucy's relationships with her three suitors, it depicts Lucy Westernra (Tara Birtwhistle) as a resistant object who seeks out liaisons with Dracula as a way to maintain some semblance of the autonomy implied by the additional "R" Maddin adds to her last name. As the film begins, Lucy sits alone in her room writing in her diary as a title card displays her words: "Why can't they let a woman marry three men?" Maddin then cuts to a subjective shot of Lucy looking at Holmwood (Stephane Leonard), Seward (Matthew Johnson), and Morris (Keir Knight) as she sits on a swing decorated with flowers. As Lucy rocks toward the suitors, Maddin zooms in on their exaggerated smiles and fake demeanors before cutting back to Lucy in her room finishing her thoughts on marriage: "Or as many as want her." While rocking back and forth awkwardly, Lucy points to her suitors as a flurry of title cards reading "I choose" interrupt the scene. While Lucy eventually settles on Holmwood, the sound of a steamship whistle immediately draws her attention away from the suitors and toward the coast as she unknowingly watches Dracula's boat arrive. Despite that Maddin's adaptation of the scene dilutes Lucy's full control over her story of the proposals, it allows him to engage with the undercurrent of Western anxiety so prevalent in the novel. Unlike Stoker's Lucy who finds settling on just one suitor difficult because of British men's innate nobleness, the Lucy of Maddin's film is largely unfulfilled by her choices, still searching the horizon for additional options. Through his exaggerated satirical portrait of Lucy's suitors, Maddin mirrors Arata's contention of Dracula as the novel's most potent male figure: "No one is more rational, more intelligent, more organized, or

even more punctual than the Count. No one plans more carefully or researches more thoroughly. No one is more learned within his own spheres of expertise or more receptive to new knowledge” (637). Forced to acknowledge their inferiority to the Count, the men spend the rest of the narrative as a collective colonial force, both in their attempts to kill Dracula and their attempts to control the sexuality of the narrative’s female characters.¹⁴

Maddin’s primary juxtaposition of the suitors’ dominion over Lucy with Dracula’s solidarity occurs directly after the proposal sequence. Crosscutting between Lucy in her room, Renfield (Brent Neale) at the asylum, and Dracula on the ship, Maddin splices together a succession of seemingly unrelated images: Lucy looking out the window, Renfield bellowing “He’s coming, Master’s coming, coming,” Dracula’s eyes bursting open before he erupts from a coffin, and Lucy pricking her finger as blood—which Maddin hand-colored red—drips down a white wall. Through unifying the disparate images in the montage, Maddin creates a frenzy of double-entendres and visual puns that both highlight the impotence of Lucy’s suitors and attest to the power of Dracula and Lucy’s politicized sexual union. When Dracula actually bites Lucy in the next sequence, Maddin cuts to a close up of Lucy’s face in an orgasmic state while birds chirp on the soundtrack as Lucy happily dances with her maids, initiating the first ballet sequence of the film.

In a similar manner as Stoker’s novel, Lucy’s initial encounter with Dracula leaves her “better this morning than she has done for weeks”—complete with “birds chirping outside the window” (89-90). However, Maddin presents the aftermath of Dracula’s attack on Lucy as a potential strategy of liberation for his settler colonial character, an act that forces her to come to terms with her subjugation at the hands of the

male suitors who infringe upon her sexuality. After a brief title-card intro, the three suitors interrupt Lucy's "morning after" dance and promptly block her escape from the room as they push her toward each other—a ballet rendition of Sedgwick's triangular traffic in women. Bouncing from man to man, Lucy enacts a domestic routine to distract her oppressors and escape to meet Dracula. But, Lucy is eventually trapped when Dr. Van Helsing (David Moroni) bursts into the frame and glares at her with a demonic glee as the film stock shifts to a bright pink and the film's Mahler score falls into a hopeless abyss. While Van Helsing temporarily halts Lucy's union with Dracula, her domestic ballet applies Marvin Carlson's idea of "resistant performance" to her settler colonial status:

When the very structure of the performative situation is recognized as already involved in the operations of the dominant social systems, directly oppositional performance becomes highly suspect, since there is no "outside" from which it can operate. Unable to move outside the operations of performance (or representation), and this inevitably involved in its codes and reception assumptions, the contemporary performer seeking to resist, challenge, or even subvert these codes and assumptions must find some way of doing this "from within." (308)

Working from within the social codes of a young, marriageable woman, Lucy's use of dance to carry out rote domestic duties subverts her gender role from within, calling attention to its artificiality ala Gilbert's views and dance while still undertaking the duties expected of her. Yet, in her subsequent encounters with Dracula, her use of ballet as resistance becomes more complicated. Freed from a domestic duty and sexually fulfilled

by a vampiric “other,” Lucy’s passionate dances with the Count appear a partial unity of two colonized individuals—except for the fact that they still to some extent operate under a similar form of male domination as her relationships with her suitors.

As Van Helsing and Lucy’s suitors slowly realize the foreign threat that seeks to free her from traditional Victorian womanhood, Maddin positions their attempts to revive her as a method of sexual domination rather than actions motivated by love, elaborating on views such as those of Eric Kwan-Wai Yu that Stoker’s Lucy is a sacrifice “to consolidate the male bonding” inherent to the success of the imperial project (153). Such a characterization of the men as a colonial unit (not dissimilar to the trio at the heart of *Gunga Din*) is most prevalent in Maddin’s sharp deviation from the source text in the film’s transfusion sequence. Recalling the scene in the novel via his journal, Dr. Seward details Van Helsing’s remedy for Lucy’s growing weakness, “There must be a transfusion of blood at once” before the elder doctor asks Seward “Is it you or me?” (113). Offering the justification that “I am younger and stronger,” Seward prepares to give his blood when Holmwood enters and offers his own aid:

“What can I do?” asked Arthur hoarsely. “Tell me, and I shall do it. My life is hers' and I would give the last drop of blood in my body for her.”

The Professor has a strongly humorous side, and I could from old knowledge detect a trace of its origin in his answer.

“My young sir, I do not ask so much as that, not the last!”

“What shall I do?” There was fire in his eyes, and his open nostrils quivered with intent. Van Helsing slapped him on the shoulder.

“Come!” he said. "You are a man, and it is a man we want. You are better than me, better than my friend John." Arthur looked bewildered, and the Professor went on by explaining in a kindly way. (113)

Similar to the narrative gaining coherence after Mina's transcription of the various accounts, the suitors only possess the attributes needed to even begin a defense against Dracula's invasion when they unite ideologically, and, in the case of the transfusion, biologically. While Lucy's four transfusions, fail to save her life, they have the effect of forming a bond between the novel's men that will evolve when they unite to decapitate the undead Lucy, when they invade Dracula's Transylvania castle to destroy him, and when they combine their documents and take complete control of Dracula's representation. Yet, according to Peter K. Garrett, the characters' unity also serves to undercut their ideological agency: "The thrust of this narrative collaboration marshals the solidarity of the group against the solitary predator, but in demanding the surrender of privacy it also mirrors (reflects and reverses) the obscene intimacies of vampirism" (130). For in their donations of blood to Lucy, the suitors and Van Helsing must grapple not only with the homoerotic undercurrent of their mingling fluid but also the fact that, contrary to Van Helsing's statement to Morris, even a combination of "brave men's blood" is not sufficient to stave off Dracula's invasion (136).

Applying the contradictions of the mingling male blood to Lucy's settler-colonial status, Maddin positions the transfusion as an aggressive attempt to sexually reconquer Lucy after her alliance with the Count. While the catatonic Lucy lies on her bed, Van Helsing suggests that he and the three suitors must give their own blood because Lucy "filled herself with polluted blood." Rather than show the mechanics of the transfusion

process, Maddin relies on a montage of close ups, alternating between subjective shots of the men's faces from Lucy's point-of-view and close ups of Lucy's stoic face. As a result, Maddin executes the scene as a type of gang rape, focusing on the men's faces contorted in pleasure until they have filled Lucy with enough fluid to erase Dracula's alliance with her—a change that causes Lucy's cheeks to literally bloom into a rosy hue via Maddin's hand-coloring. In the wake of Van Helsing's transfusions failing and Lucy's transformation into the undead "Bloofer Woman," Maddin furthers his use associations between vampire slaying and gang rape. As Lucy continues her midnight dances with Dracula after her funeral, Maddin includes numerous shots of Van Helsing looking at the couple through a long pair of binoculars in voyeuristic glee, echoing Laura Mulvey's description of the male gaze in which, "Pleasure in looking has been split between the active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly" (39-40). Unable to come to terms with Lucy's active life removed from the context of Victorian mores, he recruits her suitors to destroy her in a final act of violent male bonding.

While Lucy's death at the hands of Van Helsing's posse is a central sequence in the novel, Stoker constructs it largely through allusions to religious imagery, including "The Host" Van Helsing brings from Amsterdam to purify Lucy's coffin and the hammer and large stake, which, though Arthur drives it through Lucy, positions its victim as more sacrificial lamb in a moral crucifixion than murder weapon (187). As Stoker writes:

Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dint in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might.

The thing in the coffin writhed, and a hideous, bloodcurdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions. The sharp white champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercybearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it. (192)

Rather than fulfill the roles of invader and murderer, Arthur enacts a “high duty” through Stoker’s crucifixion imagery, liberating her soul from the damned state with which Dracula saddled it. However, Maddin’s film completely removes the religious elements from the murder sequence, positioning the murder solely as an extermination of an unassimilated presence who opposes the male characters. As the suitors and Van Helsing invade Lucy’s tomb with their gigantic, phallic stakes and knives, Lucy enacts her final dance sequence of the film, now taunting and actively fighting the men in stark contrast to the earlier domestic dance the scene parallels. Amid Lucy’s expressions of resistance, Maddin again resorts to close-ups of the men thrusting stakes at her, aligning the sequence with the rape connotations of the earlier blood transfusion. Employing slow motion for the first time in the film, Maddin frames Morris in a medium close-up as he thrusts his stake from waist level into Lucy. She falls to the ground and Van Helsing promptly decapitates her accompanied by the sounds of a grotesque, sound effect of splattering flesh. Through her relationship with Dracula, Lucy forms an alliance with a figure that provides her an appealing exit strategy from the confines of Victorian

womanhood and a future with one of three men, who fall far short of the British Empire's overarching ideals. Yet, her ballet of liberation with Dracula comes to an abrupt end when Van Helsing and the suitors view the alliance as a threat to their dominion over Lucy, leading to their conquering of her and desecration of the newly defined space of resistance that was her crypt.

Though the film spends a disproportionate amount of time on Lucy's interaction with and ultimate murder by her suitors, Maddin does offer an example of the resistant potential of vampirism for the narrative's female characters through his brief depiction of Dracula's brides (Sarah Murphy-Dyson, Gail Stefanek, and Kerrie Souster). With Harker (Johnny Wright) and his narrative thrust relegated to the last twenty minutes of the film, his encounter with Dracula's brides amounts to little more than a frenetic dance sequence followed by his quick escape through a window into the safety of a nearby convent. With title cards reading "a manly temptation" and "Fleshpots! Fleshpots!," Harker's anxiety upon meeting the women remains relatively true to Stoker's text:

I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat... I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with beating heart. (43).

Despite Harker's anxiety in the passage, Stoker describes her within the context of providing a sexual service to her victim, existing to fulfill his "languorous ecstasy." The brides of Maddin's adaptation still seem to arouse Harker's interest. Yet, at the same time, they also engage him in a subversion of the dance between Lucy and her suitors in which Harker assumes the role of object among three powerful women. In addition, with the exception of Souster, Maddin's brides all play dual roles in the film as either nuns or Lucy's maids. As a result, Maddin depicts vampirism as a form of feminine liberation from Victorian social codes, opening up a site where his female characters possess an autonomy unavailable to them in the subservient trifecta of maid, fiancée, and nun that defined women's roles of the late 19th century.

Through recontextualizing Lucy and the vampire brides of Stoker's novel, Maddin articulates a resistant space defined largely through dance that mirrors a settler colonial positionality within the imperial project. However, the film complicates its alliance between feminism and anti-imperialism through its depictions of Lucy's mother (Stephanie Ballard) and Mina (CindyMarie Small). Despite her relatively minor presence in the novel, Mrs. Westenra and her caretaking of Lucy is indicative, according to Anita Levy of how "a traditionally female function is negated and reassigned to an expert" upon the arrival of Van Helsing and transitions into "fatal interference" when pitted against a body of knowledge nearly completely controlled by men (166). As she sees her daughter suffer, Mrs. Westenra consistently and ignorantly sabotages Van Helsing's attempts to save Lucy, including accidentally letting Dracula in the house by "tearing away" the "wreath of flowers Dr. Van Helsing insisted" Lucy wear as protection (131). While Maddin's film is much more positive in its depiction of Mrs. Westenra, her

central dance sequence calls into the question the resistant role of women that preoccupies the film. As Mrs. Westernra sleeps, a host of gargoyles flood her room and wake her by dancing around the bed, leaving her to shriek with terror and open a window that Dracula uses to enter Lucy's room. The scene may displace Lucy's mother's ignorance and superstition from the source text with unbridled terror, but its ambiguity also calls into question Dracula's alliance with the film's female characters against patriarchal figures. Though one could interpret the gargoyles as perverse figments of Mrs. Westernra's imagination conjured by her general uselessness after Van Helsing's arrival, Maddin is ambiguous about their origin, especially considering their absence from the source text. If, as the film implies, the gargoyles act as an example of Dracula's mythical power, then they mark the only time in the narrative that Dracula interacts with a woman not to broaden her agency but to employ her for his own purposes in much the same way as the Western men he seeks to oppose.

Maddin further complicates his endorsement Dracula's alliance with female characters through the drastically reduced role that Mina plays in the adaptation. Despite the Madonna/whore dichotomy of Lucy and Mina in the novel, the friendship of the two females presents both a sense of solidarity and a signaling of Dracula's invasion that results in Mina becoming integral to Dracula's defeat. In addition to using her secretarial skills to organize events and formulate a plan, Mina's verbal support of the men serves as a vital source of inspiration, as Harker notes in his journal: "Mina says that perhaps we are the instruments of an ultimate good. It may be! I shall try to think as she does" (275). Likewise, the men idealize her as a manifestation of the ultimate good for which they fight as evidenced by Van Helsing's characterization of her as the paragon of

womanhood: “She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist - and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so skeptical and selfish” (168). Though Mina serves as both an active participant in Dracula’s defeat and as his final conquest, even her victimhood represents a resistance to evil since, according to Patricia McKee, Dracula’s fatal mistake is “invading Mina’s body, where space opens up despite his occupation of her and leaves room for her to represent others’ interests as well as her own” (52).

Though Maddin’s film removes Mina from her position as an idealized angel of the house, his positioning of her as an ideal settle colonial subject comes with the consequence of divesting Mina of her vital role in Dracula’s defeat—so important that critics position her as the narrative’s true editor—as well as the friendship with Lucy that provides her the opportunity to exhibit her intelligence and skill (Marshall 295). Excising all references to Lucy and Mina’s relationship as well as Mina’s role in defeating Dracula, Maddin presents her as yet another female who would gain agency from her conversion to vampirism were it not for the masculine violence Dracula’s presence incites. Rather than learning of Dracula’s location and plan through Mina’s investigation, Van Helsing and Lucy’s suitors gain all the knowledge they need by torturing Renfield. Likewise, Mina opts to form an alliance when she realizes Harker’s mental and sexual deficiencies upon her journey to care for him at the convent. Dancing with Dracula amid Van Helsing’s voyeuristic gaze during the film’s climax, Mina is stripped of her newfound agency when a jealous Harker stakes her under a title card reading “Cuckhold’s Counterblow!” Mina survives the attack, but with Dracula destroyed in an

orgy of stabbing that mirrors Lucy's death, she is left to return with the men to London, succumbing to the fate from which Lucy would have escaped if not for her murder.

Attempting to highlight the fragmentation of settler colonials subjugated by the imperial project yet not quite belonging to categorizations of the "other," Maddin's depiction of Mina ultimately demonstrates an inability to break out of binaries he subverts, calling into question the ability of the settler colonial to engage in the resistance "from within" that Carlson advocates.

Hollywood Hegemony and the Model Minority

If Maddin's allegorical alliance between his film's female characters and settler colonials demonstrates the contradictory identity of citizens from nations such as Canada, his representation of Dracula in the film addresses the anxieties of postcolonial peoples, especially those in a nation with such close cultural and geographical proximity to the United States. Through his casting of Zhang as Dracula, Maddin clearly means to satirize what Yaying Zhang refers to as "the double standards prevalent in the Canadian literary establishment and the racist nature of Canadian literary nationalism, which is preoccupied with a Canadian identity defined in settler terms" with "contested homogenizing ideologies that do not account for the historical legacy of racism, colonization, and white supremacist assumptions" (100).¹⁵ However, Maddin's obvious choice risks falling victim, according to Christopher Lee, to the same "sedative politics" as the nation's Multiculturalism Act, which "preserves and even celebrates cultural differences without transforming the social and institutional structures that maintain and reinforce racism" (34). Similar to other settler colony nations such as Australia, Canada has seen an influx of Asian immigrants over the past century, making the ethnic group the largest minority

in the nation. Canada's treatment of its Asian immigrant population has occupied a central and often embarrassing role in the nation's political discourse from the internment and deportation of Japanese immigrants during World War II to the War Measures Act that allowed for a suspension of civil liberties to quell public unrest until its repeal in 1998 (Goellnicht 77-78).

Through his representation of Dracula as an Asian presence, Maddin must also contend with both the influence of United States racial attitudes on Canadian policy and with Hollywood's iconic depictions of Dracula that have arguably had more influence over the character's iconography than even Stoker's novel. Writing about the U.S. response to the "yellow peril" economic threats of the 1980s, Marie Lo discusses the concept of the "model minority" depiction of Asian-Canadians that "reconfigures Asian immigration within a settler colonial history and illuminates the particularities of Asian Canadian racial formation within a transnational US-Canadian framework" (96).¹⁶ According to Lo: "Model minority discourse is essentially a discourse of containment in which the economic success of Asian Americans is not only invoked to police other minorities, but also renders Asians and Asian Americans as intelligible only in terms of capitalist accumulation, as opposed to political participations and social activism" (99). Viewing Lo's comments about capital accumulation through a transnational framework within the context of Adorno's discussion of the culture industry that opened this chapter, the influence of American hegemony on numerous facets of Canadian culture becomes apparent. While Hollywood has long engaged in what Mike Gasher refers to as "media imperialism" through Hollywood film's domination of the Canadian box office, mainstreaming of convention on Canadian cinema, and continentalization of locations

such as Vancouver for production, the machination of transnational imperialism also has ramifications on Canada's distinct racial issues that seem relatively localized (133).

Resulting from the complexities of Canadian identity within a globalized economy, Maddin positions his Asian-Canadian Dracula as a figure who calls attention to Canada's internal problems of racial representation while presenting a distinctly Canadian Dracula directly opposed to dominant Hollywood representations of the iconic figure. Employing gothic literature's predilection for, as Stephen Shapiro writes, recording "the anxieties about the historical return of the repressed social collectives like aboriginal or agrarian (folk) populations, seeking revenge for the traumas they suffered in the name of modernity or civilization," Maddin indicts the lingering racial exclusion of Asian-Canadians, linking the settler colonial tradition's contemporary anxieties about the minority group to the Victorian "otherness" of Stoker's text (33). After a close up of an extremely phallic cross that foreshadows the film's use of sexuality I have already discussed, Maddin crosscuts between Renfield awaiting Dracula's arrival and the ship carrying his master, interspersing a series of title cards that establish the film's satirical bent: "Immigrants!," "Others from other lands," "From the East!" Maddin then cuts to a close-up of the hibernating Dracula, a move that not only calls attention to Dracula's "otherness" but also, when viewed in conjunction with the overtly racist title cards, implicates the film's audience for their registering of Dracula's ethnicity. Maddin's introduction to Dracula directly opposes the vampire's introduction in Stoker's novel in which Harker records his first impressions of the Count in his diary:

Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white
moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of

colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without a chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation. (21)

While Harker depicts the Count as a pale, old man who cannot quite pass for English, one must remember that the reader encounters Dracula for the first time entirely through Harker's own impressions. Though Dracula eventually becomes a threat with whom Harker cannot contend alone, the young British solicitor immediately dismisses him as an unassuming "other," focusing on his inability to truly pass as English in a document that serves as the narrative's official record. Through decentering the narrative's control by the British subject complicit in various arms of the imperial project, Maddin presents his Dracula directly to the viewer, employing the camera's visuals to suit his own postcolonial perspective. Freed from the constraints of colonial discourse, Maddin presents his film's central figure as directly opposed and threatening to the Victorian society into which he is about to enter.

In focusing such attention on Dracula's physical difference from the narrative's "Western" characters, Maddin runs the risk of operating within the same binary that Lo and Zhang discuss. However, Maddin extends his satirical depiction of settler colonial representation of Asian-Canadians into the realm of the model minority and global capital, linking his focus on Dracula's body to the underlying racism of the global economy. Throughout Stoker's novel, Dracula's invasion hinges on his mastery of the English financial system, a factor that leads Stoker to often associate the count with, as

Yu writes, “modern forms of exchange” from the deeds that motivate Harker’s journey to Transylvania to the bundle of banknotes Dracula accidentally drops late in the text (162). Amplifying Stoker’s association between Dracula and currency in the adaptation, Maddin positions Dracula as inseparable from imagery of hand-colored green banknotes and gold coins. Not only is Dracula’s crypt filled with coffins full of currency but also Dracula’s own body appears to consist of gold coins, a fact Van Helsing discovers after he stabs Dracula and gold money gushes from his abdomen in the place of blood. While much of the Western men’s anxiety about Dracula stems from his status as sexual competitor, Dracula’s accumulation of capital also serves as a direct assault on the men’s status, leaving Van Helsing to immediately exclaim that the notes in the crypt are “Money stolen from England” upon entering the space. Through his seemingly biological association between currency and Dracula’s body, Maddin exhibits what David Harvey refers to as the infringement of capital on the “web of life”: “Once the body becomes an ‘accumulation strategy,’ then alienation follows (though whether this is greeted by revolt or passive resignation is an open question). ‘The commodification of everything’ infects every aspect of daily life” (*Spaces* 113). In positioning Dracula’s body as a site of accumulation, Maddin makes his most radical deviation from Stoker’s text. Dracula ceases to act as an invading “other,” becoming instead a victim of the invasion of capital accumulation so vital to the enduring success of Britain’s imperial project.

Maddin’s rendering of Dracula’s body as a site of invasion also has direct implications for the innate “otherness” central to the vampire’s identity. Discussing the effect of multiculturalism on Canadian minority groups, Lee highlights the importance of the body in national representation:

The presence of a critical mass of racially marked bodies, understood as material evidence of an existing multicultural society, has been effectively mobilized in order to construct versions of Asian Canadian identity defined by consumption. Commercial multiculturalism is, after all, dependent on a critical mass of bodies that can be turned into potential consumer demographics...Moreover, forms of consumption—food, fashion, recreation, culture, and so on—have been presented as (pan-) Asian activities in order to cater to an emerging market of young, cosmopolitan, and affluent consumers. (35)

Though multiculturalism hinges on the isolation and public identification of “otherness,” it acts as a microcosm of Harvey’s larger point of bodily commodification as an accumulation strategy of capital. In both calling attention to Dracula’s “otherness” and status as a living form of capital accumulation, Maddin exposes the purely economic root of multicultural ideologies. Yet, the anxiety and ultimate violence Van Helsing and his band unleash upon Dracula after discovering his market value also taps into the latent racism inherent in the construction of the Asian-Canadian “model minority.” Conceived by capital run amok, Dracula’s body poses little threat to England’s power structure until he deploys his accumulation against the power structure that victimized him through his relationships with Lucy and Mina. Only after he oversteps his bounds does Dracula embody a direct challenge to film’s male characters who promptly deem him an other and seek to prevent his invasion through the desecration of his body.

Through his intense focus on Dracula's body in the film, Maddin extends his indictment of imperial control beyond Canada's internal racial conflicts and into the realm of Hollywood's international dominance. As Manjunath Pendakur writes:

The American film industry has been a pioneer in setting the pattern for the one-way flow of cultural commodities to countries around the world. The American film producer-distributor combines, through their subsidiaries and investments, have also set the pattern for exporting Hollywood-style film with all its intent ideological ramifications as part of the structure of domination. (36)

Considering Canada's national film industry's close proximity to Hollywood, this one-way flow of commodities leads to both Hollywood's omnipresence at Canadian theatres as well as a national cinema identity crisis in which Canadian films attempt to conform to Hollywood convention as a way to compete with American product, in effect sacrificing their distinct differences for commercial acceptance domestically and internationally (Pratley 144). For Maddin, an adaptation of *Dracula* provides the framework to simultaneously assert Canada's presence onto Stoker's narrative as well as develop a depiction of Dracula that directly opposes the figure's numerous reiterations within Hollywood cinema.

While Maddin's Asian-Canadian Dracula clearly works within the tradition of its predecessors, it defines itself against Hollywood iterations of the character largely through Maddin's intense focus on the vampire's body and sense of "otherness" that sharply contrasts with the film's European characters. As the benchmark depiction of Dracula that has influenced the vampire's iconography in productions ranging from *The*

Munsters (1964-1966) to *Van Helsing*, Browning's 1931 film with Bela Lugosi as the titular Count is perhaps one of Hollywood's most enduring and imitated screen icons. Yet, despite making Lugosi an internationally recognized star and inspiring a wave of European cinema imitations of its central figure, the film actively avoids focusing on Dracula's body, minimizing shots of his attacks and even executing the film's climax off-screen in silhouette. What results is a depiction of Dracula that, according to John L. Flynn, minimizes "contrasting the repressed sexual urges of Victorian morality with Dracula's irresistible sexuality" (39). Though Flynn's assessment is largely correct, one must take into account that Browning produced his film during the early days of the studio system, which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was as concerned with developing the distinctly American narrative style that would become "Hollywood convention" as creating a successful—and profitable—adaptation. As inseparable as Lugosi's jet-black hair and cape would become for the character of Dracula, the film's compression of Stoker's novel into 90-minutes, invisible editing, positioning of Van Helsing (Edward Van Sloan) as the indisputable protagonist, and treatment of Mina (Helen Chandler) as the helpless female victim would have an even greater effect on the horror genre as a whole.

Reacting against the asexual nature of Browning's film, Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is indicative of a Stoker adaptation at the pinnacle of Hollywood's global power. With its explicit sexual content, elaborate Gothic sets, and subtle allusions to Victorian Era Orientalism such as Lucy (Sadie Frost) and Mina (Winona Ryder) viewing a sexually explicit copy of *Arabian Nights*, the film appears as a radical project from an American auteur so self-reflexive and postmodern that it contains no visual effects unavailable to

turn-of-the-century filmmakers. However, despite the film's ambition, it also demonstrates how ingrained Hollywood convention has become for an even a filmmaker as vocally independent as Coppola. Amid the nudity, sex, and violence, the foundation of the film hinges on the tragic romance between Dracula (Gary Oldman) and Mina. Likewise, despite the nods to the inherent "otherness" that fueled the British Empire, Coppola's Dracula is no longer a mysterious Eastern presence, but, as the film's prologue details, an aristocratic relic of Christianity mutated by the Catholic Church and played by one of Britain's most renowned actors.

In comparison to the aforementioned films, Maddin's Dracula adaptation revels in the racial and historical contexts that Hollywood cinema has gradually diluted during its endless reiterations of Stoker's novel. Refusing Hollywood depictions of Dracula, Maddin aims for a politicized mining of the same early cinema tropes that Coppola employs to shroud his film in atmospheric spectacle. Similar to Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Maddin foregrounds Dracula's physical body and distinct sense of otherness, but opts for a distinct Asian-Canadian context rather than grotesque monstrosity. Through Maddin's barrage of ballet sequences, montages, and title cards, Dracula's body and the impressions of his body on others remain central to the text, culminating in the final sequence when Van Helsing impales the lifeless Dracula on the roof of his castle, essentially marking his newly conquered territory. Unlike Browning's off-screen disintegration of Dracula or Coppola's final ascension to heaven for his anti-hero, Maddin's film exhibits its preoccupation with the dead body of its central figure. Opposing Hollywood narrative convention to the last frame, Maddin openly displays the

aftermath of imperial violence, characterizing it as an open and enduring problem that merely transforms itself into new iterations, be they colonial, migrant, or cultural.

Deeply concerned with negotiating Canadian identity amid a contemporary climate marked by an amalgamation of settler colonial history and global capital, *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* runs the risk of propagating the very stereotypes and cultural hierarchy it seeks to indict. As an internationally recognized and affluent Canadian from a settler colonial background, Maddin has access to both financial support from the Canadian Film Board and a cultural position that allows him to represent minority issues in a manner palatable for a general audience. At the same time, the effectiveness of Maddin's commitment to independent national cinema and opposition to Hollywood dominance comes into question when taking the limitations of the film's distribution into consideration. While the film opened in the United States and received an international release, it only played on a total of two American screens in comparison with the 3,000+ multiplexes that screened *Van Helsing* its opening weekend. In undertaking a strategy of operating via Carlson's "from within," Maddin may subvert Canada's racial hierarchy and Hollywood's globally disseminated ideology. Yet, as a result of his quirky, cultish filmmaking style and limited appeal, Maddin may be operating from within a position that barely conforms to the margins of the dominant ideology. Serving as a prime example of the evolution of Hollywood cinema in the wake of studio films like *Gunga Din*, Maddin's filmmaking articulates an extreme strategy of resistance to Hollywood production. However, his methods also provide a useful entry point in identifying the subtle internal subversion practiced by postcolonial filmmakers working within Hollywood that are the subjects of the next three chapters.

3. DEFINING NEVERLAND: P. J. HOGAN, J. M. BARRIE, AND *PETER PAN* AS ALLEGORY OF EMPIRE

While undertaking a similar allegorical strategy as Maddin's *Dracula*, Australian filmmaker P. J. Hogan's 2003 adaptation of *Peter Pan* serves as an example of postcolonial film adaptation poised to directly address the legacy of British colonialism and Hollywood's influence over international cinema through its engagement with and participation in both forms of imperial control. At its core, Scottish author J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is a children's adventure tale in the Victorian tradition that, while seemingly rebelling against adult authority, conforms to the tropes of the adventure narratives of the time used to reinforce imperial attitudes in the young (Boehmer 30-31). Throughout the texts, Barrie alludes to Australia's colonization by naming the otherworldly Neverland after an actual colonized district in Australia (Hollindale 232). In addition, Barrie's play refers to Neverland's Indians as Piccaninnies, a word commonly used to describe the children of Australian aboriginals during the time as well as a generic American racial slur (Hollindale 315). Yet, aside from Barrie's literal references to England's imperial endeavors in Australia, his construction of Neverland as a multiracial society allows for easy allegorical comparisons between Barrie's fiction and Australia, a factor that may have made the story one of the most popular plays in Australia during the early 20th century (Pierce 80). With a population consisting of Caucasian Lost Boys and pirates, native "redskins," and racially ambiguous fairies and mermaids, Barrie's Neverland mirrors an Australian population demarcated by actual English settlers, their children born in Australia (deemed creoles by the Empire), Asian immigrants to, and the aboriginal natives of the island nation.

Budgeted at over \$100 million, Hogan's adaptation of *Peter Pan* provided the filmmaker with an opportunity to assert control over a blockbuster Hollywood production that the majority of both his Australian contemporaries and contemporaries from other former colonies have never received. Yet with Universal Studios's large investment in the film, corporate control far exceeded the typical studio influence over smaller films made by foreign directors. Though the studio put pressure on Hogan to deliver a hit, the director's increased prominence in the realm of studio filmmaking gave him the ideal opportunity to write back to a corporate imperialism that often values return on investment over personal vision. Through a clout earned through seemingly apolitical romantic copes and Hollywood success, Hogan convinced the studio to shoot the movie in Australia rather than London, fostering both his country's economy and prominence within the industry.¹⁷ Yet, Hogan's writing back far exceeds the rudimentary preproduction work on the film. Using *Peter Pan*'s near mythic status in popular culture, Hogan's film slyly subverts traditional depictions of Barrie's characters, integrating a strong sense of sexuality in the narrative that both contradicts Hollywood conventions of a children's film and equips the film's narrative with an increased femininity that hints at the power of the colonized to rebel against its oppressor.

Unlike many of his Australian filmmaking contemporaries, Hogan has remained a relatively inconspicuous filmmaker during his career, releasing only five features in 17 years.¹⁸ Despite the widespread critical acclaim and modest international box-office success of his first distributed feature *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), the film's suburban focus and obvious Hollywood-infused romantic comedy conventions marked a departure from his fellow Australian directors who came to prominence with films that directly

addressed social problems in their homeland. In contrast to the Australian filmmakers who began their careers in Australia before migrating to Hollywood such as Gillian Armstrong (*My Brilliant Career* (1979)), Peter Weir (*Picnic and Hanging Rock* (1975), *The Last Wave* (1977), and *Gallipoli* (1981)), Bruce Beresford (*The Club* (1980) and *Puberty Blues* (1981)), Fred Schepisi (*The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978)), and George Miller (the *Mad Max* trilogy (1979, 1981, 1985)), Hogan forgoes obvious political connotations in *Muriel's Wedding*, diluting overt critical undercurrents to focus on his protagonist's romantic whimsy and ABBA obsession. While one could attribute Hogan's lack of political concern to the fact that his career began a decade after The Australian New Wave film movement of the late 1970's and 1980's that made Australia a burgeoning film center and ignited the careers of Armstrong, Weir, and Miller, his work's seemingly innocuous focus on suburban Australia is indicative of Australian cinema's identity crisis in the wake of the 1992 *Mabo* decision that overturned the doctrine of *terra nullius* and serves as the first official acknowledgement of aboriginal land rights.

As a result of *Mabo*, the Australian film industry began to engage in the process of "backtracking" that, as Felicity Collins and Therese Davis write, involves how "Raking over the national repertoire of icons serves as a vernacular mode of collective mourning, a process involving both grief-work and testimony" (172). This new wave of post-*Mabo* films negotiates the nation's postcolonial anxieties through a new wave of films that address *Mabo* through a revisionist approach to the national cinema's most prominent genres: road movies that serve as public apologies such as Rolf de Heer's *The Tracker* (2002) and Philip Noyce's *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), reappraisals of Australia's vast desert landscape such as Manuela Alberti's *The Missing* (1999) and Jane

Campion's *Holy Smoke!* (1999), and the suburban comedy such as Rob Sitch's *The Castle* (1997) and *Muriel's Wedding*. However, unlike the first two types of post-*Mabo* films, the suburban comedy of manners serves as a subtle, though politically engaging, examination of the settler colonial's relationship to aboriginal Australia. As Collins and Davis write:

If, in the case of cinema, the desert has become the place for spiritual road journeys undertaken by unsettled Australians in the aftershock of *Mabo*, and the bush (or the country) is the frontline for reconciliation-in-practice, then the suburbs, the city, and the beach might best be thought of as the future-oriented, amnesiac places in Australian settler identity, the places where the residues of traumatic histories take, on the surface, mimetic forms. (115)

Within this context, Hogan's depiction of his titular character in *Muriel's Wedding* as an out-of-place twenty something fails to conform either to the idyllic façade of her seaside hometown, Porpoise Spit, or the international hub of Sydney, positioning her as a figure who encompasses the identity crisis of the generation of Australians coming of age in the wake of *Mabo*, a thematic occupation he would again embrace in his *Peter Pan*.

Considering Hogan's status as one of the first Australian filmmakers who migrated to Hollywood after earning his fame in Australia's post-*Mabo* cinema, his seamless integration of *Muriel's Wedding*'s aesthetic into Hollywood convention mirrors the identity crisis of his debut film's heroine. With *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997), a blockbuster film that grossed over \$120 million at the domestic box office and revived the career of Julia Roberts after a string of failures, Hogan adapted the frothy style of

Muriel's Wedding for American audiences, creating a film that preserves the obsessions with marriage and pop music sensibilities of his first career success, but abandons the anxieties of the Australian suburban film. Situating *My Best Friend's Wedding* within the context of the films made by the Australian New Wave directors working in Hollywood during the same time indicates the effect *Mabo* had on the second generation of Australian filmmakers. The year Hogan released *Wedding*, Armstrong revisited the feminist concerns central to both *My Brilliant Career* and her Hollywood-funded adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1994) in *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997), her adaptation of Peter Carey's postcolonial Australian novel. Establishing a successful career meditating on the role of the outsider in institutionalized cultures in critically acclaimed Hollywood films such as *Witness* (1985), *Dead Poet's Society* (1989) and *Green Card* (1990), Weir refined his thematic preoccupations in *The Truman Show* (1998) and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003). Though making the transition from post-apocalyptic action to children's entertainment, Miller continued to meditate on the corruption of the industrialized urban environment in *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998) and the animated *Happy Feet* (2006). Even Australian New Wave filmmaker turned Hollywood blockbuster director Phillip Noyce critiques geo-political corruption both indirectly in the political thrillers *Patriot Games* (1992), *Clear and Present Danger* (1994), and *Salt* (2010) and directly in a trilogy of films concerning colonized countries: *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, his adaptation of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American* (2002), and the South Africa-set *Catch a Fire* (2006).

Seemingly in concert with the politically vague nature of his Hollywood work, Hogan spent the six years after *My Best Friend's Wedding* adapting *Peter Pan* for a live-

action film. However, taking Hogan's status as a post-Mabo filmmaker into account, *Peter Pan's* Hollywood funding, contrast of domestic life with wild landscape, and historical context make it a central film to negotiating Australian identity after the rejection of *terra nullius*. A story fully integrated into the international cultural fabric, Barrie's tale of the magical boy who refused to grow up has passed through generations and mediums to become an iconic symbol of childhood innocence and individuality (White and Tarr vii). However, Peter's narrative exhibits a strong political undercurrent in the guise of children's fiction. First performed as a play in 1904 and adapted by Barrie into the novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911), the narrative encapsulates the social mores of an England at the height of its imperial power and a new era of history after the prosperity of the Victorian Era. Centering on Pan's integration of the three British children Wendy, John, and Michael into the realm of Neverland's fairies, pirates, mermaids, and Indians, the narrative appears as a simple mediation on the inevitability of maturation unconcerned with the particulars of early 20th century British politics.

However, the critical reception of both *Peter Pan* and Barrie's other works hinged very much on the political nature of his fiction. Growing up in Scotland, Barrie mined his heritage as a citizen of a country colonized by the British as a primary source for his work, often resulting in satiric jabs at his homeland's culture (Dunbar 80-81). As a result, Barrie's harshest critics accused him of betraying his national heritage for financial and social gain in London, viewing him as a conformist to the perspective of the British Empire (81-82). While such works as the novels *A Window in Thrums* (1889) and *The Little Minister* (1891) demonstrate direct satire of the Scottish, Barrie excludes references to his native country in *Peter and Wendy* and *Peter Pan*, opting instead to

thread the social customs and culture of Britain throughout both works. Regardless of the moral nature of his characters, Barrie's Pan narratives exhibit two distinct types of characters: those firmly steeped in the culture of the British Empire such as Peter, Wendy, and even the villainous Captain Hook, and those natives of Neverland like the mermaids, fairies, and "redskins" who exhibit the traits of "the other," what Elleke Boehmer describes as "a distinction of the self from what is believed to be not self" (76).

In their construction, Barrie's original texts appear ripe source material for a post-*Mabo* Australian filmmaker not only through conforming to the dichotomy of colonial discourse but also in their direct applicability to the Australian landscape. Harnessing Barrie's use of the conventions of Empire writing and employing his descriptions of Neverland for allegorical purposes, Hogan rewrites Barrie's original narrative, positioning the journey to Neverland as a rebellion from the social conventions of the British Empire while giving distinct personalities to the "others" depicted in the original text. As a result, Hogan creates a film that breaks from the indirect politics of his previous films and demonstrates a concern with Britain's imperial influence on Australia as strong as the films of his contemporaries.

Role-Playing and Rebellion in Barrie's Empire

Throughout the novel and play of *Peter Pan*, Barrie exhibits a preoccupation with the role of the child in British society, attempting to draw comparisons between child and adult lives through the games of pretend his child characters play. As both narratives begin, Wendy, John, and Michael engage in a role-playing game in which they assume the roles of their parents on the days each of the three children are born. Barrie writes in the novel of Mrs. Darling walking in on the game:

She had found her two older children playing at being herself and father on the occasion of Wendy's birth, and John was saying: 'I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling that you are now a mother,' in just such a tone as Mr. Darling himself may have used on the real occasion. Wendy had danced with joy, just as the real Mrs. Darling must have done. Then John was born, with the extra pomp that he conceived due to the birth of a male, and Michael came from his bath to ask to be born also, but John said brutally that they did not want any more. (80).

Likewise, Barrie recreates the scene in the play:

John: (histrionically) We are doing an act; we are playing at being you and father. (He imitates the only father who has come under his special notice)

A little less noise there.

Wendy: Now let us pretend to have a baby.

John: I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling that you are now a mother.

(Wendy gives way to ecstasy) You have missed the chief thing; you haven't asked, 'boy or girl?'

Wendy: I am glad to have one and all. I don't care which it is.

John: (crushingly) That is just the difference between gentlemen and ladies.

Now you tell me. (89-90)

Rather than engaging in childlike adventure games that inspire Barrie's construction of Neverland, the children role play as typical English adults, assuming the characteristics of their parents for amusement. Influenced by the rigid social and gender classes of British society, the children's imaginations seem unable to extend past the realm of British

culture and into the unreal. However, the scene also recalls the focus on paternalism so inherent to the colonizing process. Writing about the relationship between Western aid organizations and developing nations, Maria Eriksson Baaz writes of the contradiction between a partnership “which denotes and emphasizes equality and disavows paternalism” and a discourse of development still rooted in colonial discourse in which partners exist on an evolutionary scale “at a different stage of development and enlightenment” (167). By including the rote, unimaginative game early in the text, Barrie establishes that his children are not mere young people, but youth being groomed for their gendered, paternalistic roles in Empire, a factor that Barrie further develops through Wendy’s reticence to go with Peter to Neverland that she exhibits in both texts: “Of course she was very pleased to be asked, but she said, ‘Oh, dear, I can’t. Think of mummy! Besides, I can’t fly’” (97). Though Peter offers Wendy proof of a world of imagination and fantasy she has never known, she remains tied to the British family structure, valuing her present and future roles in society more than Peter’s opportunity.

Breaking from its source texts early, Hogan’s film adaptation portrays the Darling children not as complacent youths mimicking their elders, but as imaginative children whose freedom comes under attack by the rigid structure of the British Empire. As the film opens, Hogan cranes the camera high above the streets of London, capturing the vast uniformity of the urban structures. He then cuts to the Darling family nursery as a wide-eyed Wendy (Rachel Hurd-Wood) tells John (Harry Newell) and Michael (Freddy Popplewell) a story about Neverland before she leads them in a rousing house-wide game of pirates. Unlike the children in Barrie’s novel and play, Hogan endows the film’s Wendy, John, and Michael with passionate imaginations that see beyond the rigidity of

their society. In addition Hogan's inclusion of the children's imagination allows him to create a conflict between imagination and reason not present in Barrie's texts. The film excises Liza, the Darling's servant, replacing her with Aunt Millicent (Lynn Redgrave), a high-society British woman who constantly critiques the Darling family for their uncouth tastes and behavior. When Wendy tells her Aunt she wants to be a novelist, Millicent replies, "Novelists are not highly thought of," before castigating Mr. Darling (Jason Isaacs) about his lack of ambition that may keep Wendy from marrying a higher-class man later in life and suggesting he, "make small talk with superiors" to get ahead at work. After Wendy humiliates her father in front of his boss in an attempt to stop delivery of a letter from school reprimanding her for doodling pictures of Peter in class, the furious Mr. Darling punishes Wendy by telling her that she will begin lessons with Millicent the next morning in order to "become a proper English young lady." Through the introduction of Aunt Millicent into his narrative, Hogan repositions English society as an oppressive force that inhibits individuality and promotes a society as uniform as the London skyline with which he opened the film. Consequently, his child characters become, not the children who emulate the British power structure in Barrie's works, but victims of an imperial force that will lay claim to them as they mature.

The social conflict Aunt Millicent introduces to the narrative also alters the logic of Wendy's choice to visit Neverland with Peter (Jeremy Sumpter). In Barrie's texts, Wendy becomes torn between her allegiance to her societal role and her desire to experience a world of which she has never been a part. However, in Hogan's film, Wendy ceases to act as a passive observer who needs Peter's cajoling to visit Neverland. Instead, she asks Peter if she can flee England and return home with him, in effect

forgoing the paternalistic power structure of which she is a part to engage in the type of partnership that Baaz discusses. As a result, Wendy's decision to leave England ceases to act as a desire to fulfill childlike wonder and becomes an act of rebellion against the society that has threatened to suppress her imagination and individuality. Hogan not only alters Wendy's justification for running away from home, but also shifts Barrie's pathos for the parents in the novel to Wendy through the use of music in the film. In Barrie's original novel, the narrator remains sympathetic to the Darling parents during the children's departure: "Will they reach the nursery in time? If so, how delightful for them, and we shall all breathe a sigh of relief" (101). Despite that his story revolves around the children's adventures, Barrie implies that their parents remain loving individuals who experience pain at their children's departure. Though Hogan does not abandon all sympathy for the Darling parents, he portrays them as oppressors during the escape sequence. Cross-cutting from the nursery as Peter and Wendy fly out the window to the staircase as the Darlings attempt to reach their children, Hogan builds suspense, framing the parents as pursuers who endanger Wendy's sense of adventure, a cue Hogan accents through his use of fast-paced music similar to that of a horror film's chase sequence to score the scene.

Using cinematic space, Hogan further attempts to critique the British Empire by comparing the geography of London and Neverland to isolate the differences between the colonizer and the colonized. Throughout both of his texts, Barrie remains vague on the geographical space that separates London from Neverland, describing the space his characters' travel as: "Sometimes it was dark and sometimes light, and now they were very cold and again too warm" (102). Likewise Barrie's stage directions for the play

remain vague on the space between London and Neverland, merely saying, “The first thing seen is merely some whitish dots trudging along the sward, and you can guess from their tinkling that they are probably fairies of the commoner sort going home afoot from some party and having a cheery tiff by the way” (105). Though Barrie’s descriptions of the space leave much to the imagination, his stage directions include a solid reinforcement of the British class system, opting to discuss the social status of fairies rather than the journey of his protagonists. In order to enter Neverland, Peter and the Darling children must traverse the same ground that “common fairies” travel on their nightly routines, a detail that demonstrates a concern with class structure that spills into his depictions of a fantastic society.

In his adaptation, Hogan again deviates radically from Barrie’s source texts, spending considerable screen time detailing the Darlings’ flight with Peter. Contrasting with Barrie’s description, Hogan fills the screen with outer space imagery as his characters leave London’s confined cityscape and travel into the vast reaches of space, passing stars, comets, and several large planets, highlighting the vast differences between London and Neverland through the visual cue. In his attempt to define the space between London and Neverland, Hogan underscores the otherness of Neverland, addressing Empire by creating a cultural space that, in the view of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin acts as:

The “absence” which occupies the gap between the contiguous interfaces of the “official language” of the text and the cultural difference brought to it. Thus the alterity in that metonymic juncture establishes a silence beyond which the cultural Otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the

colonial language. By means of this gap of silence the text resists incorporation into 'English literature' or some universal literary mode, not because there is any inherent hindrance to someone from a different culture understanding what the text means, but because this constructed gap consolidates its difference. (54-55)

By calling attention to the space that Barrie omits from his original texts, Hogan denotes the inherent differences between the imperial city of London and the otherworldly Neverland. Geographically, an entire universe separates Neverland from the corrupt and industrialized London that forces its citizens to conform to the doctrines of Empire. Hogan's Neverland acts as a place untainted by any lasting impact of the British, resisting British influence through the space Hogan defines.

However, while Hogan uses his definition of the space between London and Neverland to denote the differences between the two locations, his use of the space during the children's return to London constitutes a direct writing back to that allows the colonized to encroach directly on the imperial centre. After Peter's final battle with Captain Hook (Jason Isaacs) at the end of the film, Neverland's fairy population sprinkles fairy dust over Hook's ship, the Jolly Roger, making it levitate above the sea. As the ship rises in the air, Peter, the Darlings, and the Lost Boys don pirate costumes, taking over the ship from their former oppressors. Setting sail back to London, the ship returns to the realm of outer space Hogan defines earlier in the film, transcending the interplanetary scenery and entering the airspace of London. Rather than quickly traverse London's space as Hogan's camera does at the beginning of the film, the Jolly Roger flies high over the city, lingering over Big Ben and the rest of the skyline. Through yet another radical

departure from Barrie's texts, Hogan provides a visual manifestation of writing back to the oppressiveness of London. Only after defeating Captain Hook and his men, who act as the last vestige of Empire in the film, can Peter and the Darlings not only overcome the entrapping space of London but tower over its landscape. Despite the fact that the agents of Empire such as Hook and Aunt Millicent attempt to control and inhibit the space of Neverland in the narrative, they fail, leaving only the children of the "other" world to roam both spaces freely.

In order for Hogan's ending to achieve its full effect, the director repositions Barrie's original references to the British Empire in the film, stripping away the allegiance to Britain of every character except for Captain Hook. Though Barrie's original texts draw distinct moral barriers between the Darling children and Captain Hook, all of the British characters in the works exhibit a sense of conformity to British social mores. When Wendy first meets Peter in the novel, she worries that she has failed to introduce herself properly. Barrie writes: "When people in our set are introduced, it is customary for them to ask each other's age, and so Wendy, who always liked to do the correct thing, asked Peter how old he was. It was not really a happy question to ask him; it was like an examination paper that asks grammar, when what you want to be asked is Kings of England" (92). Through directly addressing the members of his own "set," Barrie demonstrates a deep regard for British middle class etiquette, giving the novel a didactic digression.¹⁹ However, the passage also delves into children's understanding of the inner workings of the Empire. Though the two topics of Barrie's fictitious examination paper are the monarchy and language integral the British colonial enterprise and the nation's own nationalism, Barrie implies that, even for a child still cultivating

proper English grammar, the power of the monarchy appears as a source of excitement and pride. By associating knowledge of monarchy and language with Wendy, and implying Peter's ignorance of both, Barrie portrays his heroine as a loyal subject of the Empire despite the trip to Neverland she is about to undertake.

In a similar passage from the play, Peter and John attempt to assert their masculinity to each other. As Peter shows the Darlings how to fly and John fails miserably, Barrie writes: "He tries; no, he has not got it, poor stay at home, though he knows the names of all the counties in England and Peter does not know one" (103). While John fails at the task of flying, he attempts to overshadow Peter through his knowledge of British geography. Likewise, Barrie demonstrates Peter's ignorance of official geography as he attempts to give directions to Neverland in the novel: "That, Peter had told Wendy, was the way to the Neverland; but even birds, carrying maps and consulting them at windy corners, could not have sighted it with these instructions. Peter, you see, just said anything that came into his head" (102). Through his references to geography, Barrie emphasizes the importance of the map for British imperialism, an institution that along with the census and museum, according to Benedict Anderson, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion—the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (164). Though Barrie relegates John's geographical knowledge to within England, the asides allude to the "infinitely reproducible series" of maps during the colonial era which pervaded British domestic items from tablecloths to children's textbooks (Anderson 174). As a result, despite that the uneducated Peter can fly better than John and hails from a nation that surprisingly cannot be found on an official map,

the British characters maintain a sense of superiority over him as a result of their knowledge of the Empire.

The most obvious form of allegiance to the British Empire from Barrie's protagonist occurs as Hook captures the Darlings and the Lost Boys with the intention of making them walk the plank. As John and Peter prepare for their deaths in both texts, Hook gives them the option of joining his crew. Barrie writes in the novel:

‘Shall we still be respectful subjects of the King?’ John inquired.

Through Hook's teeth came the answer: ‘You would have to swear,

“Down with the King.”

Perhaps John had not behaved very well so far, but he shone out now.

‘Then I refuse,’ he cried, banging the barrel in front of Hook.

‘And I refuse,’ cried Michael.

‘Rule Britannia!’ squeaked Curly. (191-192)

When faced with impending death, Barrie's heroes would rather sacrifice their lives than make declarations against the British King, a decision that Curly emphatically endorses during the sequence through his “Rule Britannia” exclamation. Later in the passage, Wendy even states, “We hope our sons should die like English gentlemen” (192). Barrie both demonstrates a sense of loyalty to Empire through the inclusion of the dialogue and insists in the narration that John's decision to even consider Hook's offer constitutes unruly behavior. While Barrie's novel reinforces ideas of childhood freedom and independence, the influence of imperialism over the construction of his characters remains an unexamined force in the novel, acting as simply the proper way for his characters to behave.

Elaborating on his conception of Neverland as a place where the Darling children go to rebel against their roles in Empire, Hogan eliminates all references to the children's allegiance to Britain, portraying them as victims of British oppression that long to escape. Yet, Hogan makes a subtle jab at Barrie's unquestioned subservience to Empire by turning one of his positive comments about Empire into a satirical comment on the British. In a scene absent from Barrie's texts, Hook captures John and Michael upon their entrance to Neverland, threatening them with death. With Hook's hook waving in front of his face, John delivers a variation of Wendy's line from the original novel: "Englishmen don't beg." Immediately following John's declarations, Michael drops to his knees pleading with Hook, "Please! Please! Don't kill me." Through his rewriting of the line, Hogan strips the reverence for the English from Barrie's original text, turning the fastidious Empire of the novel into a platitude that quickly crumbles when Hook endangers the children. For Hogan's characters, self-preservation acts as a natural inclination greatly exceeding the rhetoric the Empire has imposed upon them.

While Barrie conveys Hook's allegiance to Empire largely through British cultural references that appear archaic to modern audiences, Hogan endows the Captain with traits commonly associated with imperial explorers, positioning him as a colonizing force in the world of Neverland. In the play, Barrie describes Hook's appearance: "In dress he apes the dandiacal associated with Charles II, having heard it said that he bore a strange resemblance to the ill-fated Stuarts" (108). Through his costuming of Hook, Barrie harkens back to the reign of the Restoration King who ended the tumult of the English Civil War and brought England back into a position of power that led to its position of imperial authority during the time of *Peter Pan*'s first performances. Yet,

Barrie's characterizations of Hook as a citizen of Empire do not end with his appearance, allowing the author to characterize him through references to Eton, a public school Barrie admired and the Davies boys who inspired him to write *Peter Pan* attended (Dunbar 244). Throughout both texts, Hook makes constant reference to Eton portraying it as an institution whose influence "clung to him like garments" and had lasting effects on his dedication to "good form" (*Peter and Wendy* 188). Even when Hook screams his last words in the play, "Floreat Etona," they reference the British school's motto. Though Hook exhibits some influence from Empire in the play, Barrie largely meant Hook's Eton declarations as a joke for the Davies boys and other alumni of the school, leaving those in the audience (and modern readers) who did not attend Eton largely unaware of the references' implications (Hollindale 238). As a result, Hook's connections to Empire seem far more diluted to mass audiences than those of the Darlings and other children, allowing Barrie's interjections of pro-Empire sentiment in his child characters to appear more pedantic than the same sentiments in his villain.

Freeing himself from the archaic Eton references, Hogan's film characterizes Hook as the physical manifestation of British imperialism who not only dresses like the Stuart King of Barrie's text but also embodies the most ruthless attributes of Empire. Paying homage to Barrie's tradition of the same actor playing Mr. Darling and Hook, Hogan casts Jason Isaacs in the dual role, allowing him to portray two characters that serve as agents of Empire in both London and Neverland. Hogan's Hook appears to have no moral center beyond his personal ideology, mechanically shooting and slitting the throats of his own crewmembers whenever they fail to carry out his orders successfully. When Peter frees the Darlings and Tiger Lily (Carsen Gray) from the pirates' captivity,

Hook shoots the pirate he ordered to kill them in the chest without giving even a word of reprimand. In addition, Hogan endows Hook with attributes he does not possess in Barrie's works to position him as the colonial authority of the film. While Neverland ostensibly belongs to Peter, Hook owns the Black Castle on the outskirts of the island, where he takes his prisoners for torture. Hogan's Hook is also far less concerned with good form and swordsmanship in the film, using rifles and cannons in his attempts to kill Peter that are absent from Barrie's original texts. Through the basic alterations to his characterization, Hogan's Hook ceases to act merely as a British born gentleman who happens to be a pirate, assuming the form of a colonizer who has laid claim to part of Neverland's landscape with his castle and uses his country's technologically-advanced weaponry to maintain order over his own crew and the territory's population.

Hogan most clearly exhibits his depiction of Hook as a colonizing force in the final battle scene between Pan and the Captain that deviates greatly from the ending of both Barrie's works. As Hook reaches the brink of defeat, he threatens the Lost Boys in order to figure out how Pan flies. Once the boys reveal to him that Peter uses fairy dust to take flight, Hook forcefully grabs Tinkerbell (Ludivine Sagnier), sprinkling the dust on himself before levitating in the air. Through this action, Hook embodies the most basic tendencies of colonial forces to strip colonized nations of their resources in order to reinforce the strength of their own presence. Armed with the commodity that allowed Peter to gain power over him, Hook combines his imperial power with that of the nation he attempts to repress, resulting in a force even Peter is, at first, unable to combat.

Yet, Peter eventually defeats Hook, not through his intelligence as in Barrie's texts, but through an instance of "speaking back" to Hook by using the English language

against him. At the beginning of both Barrie's texts and the film, Peter and Wendy have a misunderstanding over the definitions of the words "thimble" and "kiss." Nervous over her desire to kiss Peter, Wendy changes her mind after asking Peter if she can kiss him, giving him a thimble instead. A few moments later, Wendy asks if she can give him a thimble before making an attempt to give him a kiss, which Tinkerbell curtails out of jealousy. Through the misunderstanding, Peter displaces the meaning of the words, taking a thimble to mean a kiss and a kiss to mean a thimble. During the battle sequence, as Hook stands over Peter ready to kill him, Wendy asks the Captain if she can give Peter a thimble before he dies, an action Hook permits. After kissing Peter lovingly on the mouth, the boy revives, emitting a pink glow and flying with greater force than he exhibits earlier in the film. Seeing Peter levitate with newfound strength, Hook responds with one of Barrie's original catchphrases for the Captain: "Split my infinitives."

Through the execution of the scene, Hogan alludes to the concept of appropriation, one of the colonized's primary forms of resistance that, as Boehmer writes, permits the colonized "staking a claim to European tradition from beyond its conventional boundaries. Take-over or appropriation was in its way a bold refusal of cultural dependency. It signified that the powerful paradigms represented by Europe's canonical texts were now mobilized in defense of what had once been seen as secondary, unorthodox, deviant, primitive" (195). In the scene, Peter and Wendy take advantage of Hook's conventional knowledge of the words "thimble" and "kiss," using the established definitions against him to speak in a new language all their own. Realizing his defeat, Hook's utterance of "Split my infinitives" demonstrates how Peter and Wendy have subverted his orthodox knowledge (and largely impeccable use) of the English language

in an attempt to break free from his control. Within this context, the scene serves as both an allegorical address to the colonizing force of Hook in the narrative and as an example of Hogan altering Barrie's original texts to write back to the British Empire in which the author lived.

The Diverse Colonized

Similar to other writers of Empire working during his lifetime, critics have accused Barrie's texts of exhibiting traits of latent racism in his depictions of the play and novel's native characters. As Paul Fox writes: "The nomenclature employed by Barrie makes occasionally for uncomfortable reading to a modern audience and seems to place the text firmly in the tradition of colonial masculine romance, of the boys' own (*sic*) adventure stories made so popular in the late nineteenth century" (39). Yet, while Barrie's depiction of the Indians in his texts conforms to the general perception of the "dark" colonized of the time, his depictions of the mermaids and the Irish pirate Smee merit analysis within the imperial context as well. Throughout the novel and play, Barrie forces a wedge between the characters steeped in British tradition and those others he depicts as outside the norms of the Empire. As a result, he creates a sense of imperial superiority, which Hogan writes back to by depicting Neverland as a democratic, diverse island that the English pirates attempt to colonize.

The most obvious others present in Barrie's narrative belong to the Indian tribe with whom Peter shares Neverland. Throughout his depiction of the tribe and their princess Tiger Lily, Barrie expresses their communication in rudimentary English, never giving them their own language. As Tiger Lily and her tribe notice the pirates during Peter's return to Neverland with the Darlings, Barrie writes:

Tiger Lily: Pirates!...Have um scalps? What you say?

Panther: Scalp um, oho, velly quick.

The Braves: (in corroboration) Ugh, Ugh, Ugh. (110).

Likewise, after saving Tiger Lily from Hook, the princess expresses her gratitude:

Peter: The Great White Father is glad to see the Piccaninny braves protecting hiswigwam from the pirates.

Tiger Lily: The Great White Father save me from pirates. Me his velly ice friend now; no let pirates hurt him.

Braves: Ugh, ugh, wah!

Tiger Lily: Tiger Lily has spoken.

Panther: Loola, loola! Great Big Little Panther has spoken.

Peter: It is well. The Great White Father has spoken. (128-129).

Through their lack of understanding of the English language, the Indians appear as inferior to even the characters such as Peter that Barrie depicts as uneducated. Still, Barrie's attempts at portraying the natives' own language as a pattern of "um" and "ugh" demonstrates even more the imperial literary traditions of the narratives, parodying an outside culture's complex language as a series of guttural sounds. By having Peter refer to himself as, "The Great White Father"—ending the conversation despite Tiger Lily and Panther's final statements that they have spoken—Barrie portrays his protagonist as a figure whose whiteness allows him to subjugate entire cultures despite his youth and inexperience with the outside world. Before Peter saved Tiger Lily, the Lost Boys and Indians acted as worthy adversaries. Yet, in light of Peter's rescue of the princess, the natives have "taken their place" and made peace with their white enemies.

Largely informed by the tumultuous history between white settlers and aboriginals in his native Australia, Hogan's depictions of the natives in the film strive for a complex characterization engages with the vastness of the Neverland that Hook attempts to conquer. Though Hogan relegates the natives to one scene, the conflict between them and the Lost Boys is absent from the film. Instead, the natives openly invite the Darlings and Lost Boys into their village, a medicine woman going so far as to repair Michael's teddy bear, which Hook decapitated. Rather than speak in broken English and grunts, Hogan's natives possess their own Indian language that the director leaves untranslated throughout the film, a decision that allows the natives to demonstrate their friendly relationship with Pan and his friends through gestures and facial expressions. In addition, Hogan's depiction of the natives as a cohesive community of children engages with importance of the lost child motif integral to Australian culture. While European children lost in the bush—such as the schoolgirls in Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*—highlight Australian settler colonial anxiety over their relationship with the Australian landscape, the post-*Mabo* period permitted the motif to extend to the Stolen Generation of aboriginals victimized by removal from their parents in an effort to breed out the indigenous population (Short 87). As Peter Pierce writes:

Where once the land indifferently took lost Australian children of European origin, now Aboriginal children were systematically taken from their land. If these bodies of suffering and story can be taken together, then the process of reconciliation between European and aboriginal Australians, which can be glimpsed at times in the colonial tales of lost

children, might be advanced in ways that do not allow regression to an age that once we thought of as less enlightened than this. (xiv)

Through its depiction of the “Indian” children as a cohesive society that embraces the Lost Boys and Darlings, Hogan’s film offers an imagined space of reconciliation between European and aboriginal Australians. As symbols of Australian anxiety, the three groups of children have cultivated a space and community within Neverland that unites the two types of lost children so important to Australia’s national formation. The bond between the groups is so strong, in fact, that only Wendy expresses a desire to return to her London home: “We’ve forgotten our parents. We must leave at once before we, in turn, are also forgotten.” Though Wendy eventually convinces John and Michael to return home through expressing her anxieties about being forgotten, her indication that Neverland is a space that allows the forgetting of authority engages with the potential reconciliation so important in the wake of *Mabo*. Through his depiction of the native characters within the context of the lost and stolen children, Hogan creates a distinct and unified Australian identity within the realm of Neverland, demonstrating a mutual relationship absent from Barrie’s texts that directly applies to the current anxieties of Hogan’s homeland.

Furthering his depiction of Australia’s ethnic diversity, Hogan associates the mermaids of Neverland with the nation’s Japanese immigrant population. Though Barrie does not formally characterize the mermaids present in his texts, the species acts as another culture of Neverland that factors prominently into the makeup of the society. When describing the mermaids in the novel, Barrie writes:

It was among Wendy's lasting regrets that all the time she was on the island, she never had a civil word from one of them. When she stole softly to the edge of the lagoon she might see them by the score, especially on Marooner's Rock, where they loved to bask, combing out their hair in a lazy way that quite irritated her; or she might even swim, on tiptoe as it were, to within a yard of them, but then they saw her and dived, probably splashing her with their tails, not by accident, but intentionally. (140)

Despite her numerous encounters with the mermaids, Wendy remains ignorant of their customs and demeanors, making assumptions about the group's vanity and animosity toward humans. Though she knows little about them, she continues to criticize their behavior, irritated by their laziness that serves as a sharp contrast to Wendy's role as a mother on the island. Through the passage, Barrie minimizes the importance of the race, portraying the mermaids as just another inhabitant of Neverland, not meriting discussion and subordinate to the conflicts between Peter and Hook in the narrative.

While Hogan's film does not feature the mermaids in a prominent role, he infuses their brief scene in the film with a sense of mystery that still characterizes their species as an autonomous and diverse society. Hogan depicts the mermaids as a cavalcade of beautiful women from the East, shooting them through a haze of smoke with a blue lens filter that increases the mysterious atmosphere of their scene. The mermaid race appears as wholly different from any of the other cultures on the island, and, unlike in Barrie's narrative, the characters in the film exhibit no disdain for the race, save for Peter's warning to Wendy that they—similar to Homer's sirens—often drag humans to the depths for a reason unknown to him. Through his depiction of the mermaid culture,

Hogan exhibits a partial resistance against characterizing them in Said's Orientalist terms:

At the outset one can say that so far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual.

Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing. (*Orientalism* 40-41)

Unlike the Wendy of Barrie's novel, who deems the species as lazy simply because their actions differ from her own, the characters in Hogan's film simply let the mermaids exist, a decision that establishes the mermaid culture as free from the control and subjugation of Hook's colonial endeavors and the categorization of the other white characters in the film.

However, the depiction still conforms to some semblance of Orientalist stereotypes, most notably the "shivers of delight in—or fear of—novelty" that characterizes the mystique of the Orient and leads to the type of paranoia that Peter exhibits in his claim of the mermaids' whimsical dragging of boys to the seafloor (*Said Orientalism* 59). Through this uneasy depiction of the mermaids as Eastern females, Hogan addresses the tumultuous relationship between Australian Europeans and Japanese immigrants to the nation, which bears a striking resemblance to the settler colonial situation so vital to Maddin's film. Establishing contact with aboriginal Australians

through the pearl trade, Japanese citizens and immigrants experienced much hostility from European Australians, especially during World War II when their close associations between aboriginals and the Japanese led to myths that they communicated via smoke signals (Stephenson 131-133).²⁰ By allowing the mermaids to remain shrouded in mystery, Hogan compromises their depiction with a *tabula rosa* identity for Japanese Australians, providing the potential (but not an actual solution) for coping with the lingering hostility toward the culture and integrating them into his multiethnic, mystical Australia.

While critics of Barrie's depictions of the colonized in his texts often focus on his portrayal of the Indians, the author also presents another colonized character that goes largely unexamined in critical readings: Smee, the Irish henchmen of Hook. Only mentioned twice during the novel, Smee's Irishness serves as a characteristic that differentiates him from the other pirates and associates him with the nation that Ellen Meiksins Wood deems the laboratory of early British colonialism, which practiced transforming nations through the plantation of colonists onto already-owned land (79). Barrie writes in his initial description of Smee: "The Irish bo'sun Smee, an oddly genial man who stabbed, so to speak, without offence, and was the only Nonconformist in Hook's crew" (114). Referring to Smee constantly as a simple man throughout the text, Barrie only mentions his Irish heritage again during the chapter when Peter rescues Tiger Lily, referring to his "Irish voice" (143). Through characterizing Smee as an Irishman, Barrie attempts to offer justification for Smee's complacent behavior by using Irish stereotypes. As the rest of the pirates fight, Smee often shies away, not possessing the bravery and gusto required to be an active member of Hook's crew. Consequently, Smee

is the only pirate to escape during Peter's final assault on the Jolly Roger, jumping overboard in the middle of the battle claiming to be the "Only man Jas. Hook has ever feared" upon his return to Europe (204). Though Barrie portrays Smee as a coward, his prominent, albeit few, references to Smee's heritage endow the character with a sense of Irish otherness that explains his inability to conform to the conventions of pirate life as a result of belonging to a colonized race. Ironically, Hogan's film excises all references to Smee's (Richard Briers) Irish heritage, portraying him as just another bumbling pirate on Hook's crew. By removing the Irishness from Smee, Hogan presents Hook and his band of pirates as concrete colonizers of Neverland out to subjugate the vast array of cultures on the island with their English uniformity. Yet, the choice also simplifies the film's depiction of colonial rule, positioning colonized subjects as strictly white children or members of "other" ethnic groups instead of including the very criminal types that settled Australia in its early penal colony days. Regardless, Hogan still revels in the diversity of an island that very much resembles his native Australia's rich cultural identity and amalgam of numerous racial groups in contrast to Barrie's depictions of Neverland as a place filled with mysterious others inferior to the British characters.

To Hollywood From Neverland: Writing Back to the Corporate Colonizer

Though intended as a benign family release for the 2003 holiday season, Hogan's *Peter Pan* underwent a tumultuous production and distribution process. Released in the wake of the pirate film revival that *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* ignited the previous summer and the holiday box-office hegemony of *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of The King* its opening weekend, the film died at the domestic box office, earning back \$49 million on its \$100 million investment. Even more

disconcerting, Miramax's moderately-priced Barrie biography *Finding Neverland* (2004), which the studio held for a year to avoid competing with Hogan's film, not only outgrossed the adaptation of Barrie's original work, but also earned a cascade of critical accolades and awards attention, including five Academy Award nominations. While many factors contributed to the financial failure of Hogan's film, arguably the greatest blow for the production came when Disney pulled out of co-financing the film with Universal as a result of having to pay royalties on both its own animated film and Hogan's adaptation (Hastings and Milner 2002). Embroiled in a firestorm of studio politics, Hogan underwent his own form of corporate colonization as two of the largest entertainment companies in the world attempted to assert control on his film as its budget became less concrete. Employing the studio squabbles surrounding the completion of his film, Hogan uses *Peter Pan* to lampoon conglomerate control over the filmmaking process by both subtly critiquing corporate iconography and subverting the established conventions on which Hollywood operates.

Hogan's most blatant attempt to address corporate imperial control occurs through his morally ambiguous construction of Tinkerbell in the film. Used for decades as a logo by the Walt Disney Company, Tinkerbell served as a symbol of the wholesome family entertainment Disney produced. As Hogan's film went into production, Disney was involved in multiple copyright infringement lawsuits, claiming ownership to Barrie's original characters in addition to its controversial role in funding Hogan's film (Hastings and Milner 2002). However, the Tinkerbell of Hogan's film assumes a much darker role than her Disney counterpart, allowing her attraction for Peter to lead to her betrayal of the Lost Boys. After Peter banishes Tinkerbell for telling the Lost Boys he ordered them to

shoot Wendy, the fairy vents her frustrations by colluding with Hook and the pirates to destroy Peter and the Darling family. Only after Hook imprisons her and she escapes does Tinkerbell return to help Peter defeat the pirates and save Wendy and the Lost Boys from Hook's grasp. Within the context of Disney's influence over Hogan's film and the company's increasing claims that it owned the rights to Barrie's characters, Hogan's brutal depiction of the fairy directly critiques the disparity between the innocence of Disney's Tinkerbell and the unseemly business practices of her parent corporation.

Unlike Disney's and other adaptations of *Peter Pan*, Hogan's film relishes subverting traditional filmmaking conventions, resulting in an interpretation of Barrie's texts that does not shy away from depicting the sexual undertones of Peter and Wendy's relationship. While drawing pictures of Peter at school, the bland teacher Miss Fulsom (Kerry Walker) quickly confiscates Wendy's artwork, shocked at her depiction of Peter hovering over her in bed. Hogan continues to inject similar references to Peter and Wendy's budding sexuality throughout the film, including a romantic fairy-lit dance high above the trees that is absent from Barrie's texts. In Hogan's film, even Peter's defeat of Hook hinges on his need for Wendy's affection, the couple's passionate kiss inspiring Pan to defeat the Captain during the film's climax. Hogan's portrayal of children's sexual curiosity into the narrative caused a firestorm of criticism in the press with critics depicting Wendy as a "Lolita experiencing a sexual awakening" (Hastings and Milner 2002). Through his overt treatment of Peter and Wendy's relationship, Hogan echoes Foucault's claim concerning sexual repression's transgressive power: "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of deliberate transgression. A person who holds

forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom” (6). Like the adults who repress the children’s sexuality in the film, the media companies that control filmmakers’ livelihoods attempt to use sex as a mechanism of control, regulating content to maintain power, especially in the context of films marketed to children. Using the propensity of the media corporation’s shying away from sexuality in cinema, Hogan draws attention to his oppressor’s shortcomings by speaking openly about children’s sexual inclinations.

Borrowing a convention of postcolonial discourse from those writing back to colonial powers, Hogan also instills in his film a sense of femininity through the presence of a female narrator (Saffron Burrows). Turning the narrative agency of the film over to an omniscient female voice, Hogan subverts the novel’s Eton-educated narrator and his penchant for Empire allusions.²¹ Taking into account the imbalanced ratio of male to female omniscient narrators in Hollywood films, Burrows’s narration provides Hogan with an opportunity to remind his oppressors that, though colonized by their economic influence, he still holds some semblance of storytelling power within the film industry. Though the corporate Empire controls the financing and distribution of films, Hogan uses their power against them to communicate his own individual voice through his creative input on the project.

Through adapting Barrie’s novel and play to film, Hogan integrates his own post-*Mabo* Australian perspective into the adaptation, positioning Barrie’s island Neverland as an allegory for the diverse population of the island nation of Australia. In adapting Barrie’s texts, Hogan demonstrates an acute sense of politics diluted in the early films

made before he was fully initiated into the world of Hollywood. However, with the commercial failure of *Peter Pan* much more recent than the surprise success of *My Best Friend's Wedding* fourteen years ago, Hogan's career outlook remains as precarious as any postcolonial filmmaker desiring to critique imperial power's subjugation.

4. IMPERIAL VANITIES: MIRA NAIR, WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, AND ANGLO-INDIAN CULTURAL COMMODITY IN *VANITY FAIR*

Like her contemporary Hogan, Indian filmmaker Mira Nair occupies a dual space in film culture, fully integrating herself within the Hollywood film community while making films in and about India. Nair has built her career on films that contribute to the Indian identity in diaspora while attesting to the prominence of Indian filmmakers in international cinema. For a filmmaker concerned with Indian heritage, Nair's adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's 1847-1848 novel *Vanity Fair* (2004) appears as an outlier. However, this chapter argues that Nair's film maintains overarching fidelity to the source text's plot as a strategy to imbue the narrative with an Indian perspective. Nair subtly rewrites the narrative by eliminating the novel's omniscient narrator and his complicity with the imperial project in favor of her own postcolonial Indian narrative position largely through her use cinematic style and the camera's point-of-view capabilities. The film includes numerous sequences of the Indian landscape, which are absent from the novel, even though India provides the majority of the characters with their livelihoods. In asserting India's physical presence in her adaptation, Nair also incorporates elements of Bollywood cinema into the production, including an item number dance sequence that brings Hollywood and Bollywood convention in dialogue with each other. As a result, Nair imbues images into the narrative that directly challenge both the power of the British Empire and its agents as well as Hollywood's continuing influence over Indian cinema.

Hailing from Orissa, India, Nair moved to the United States at 18 to study film at Harvard University, using the American school's equipment and connections to make student films about Indian subcultures on location in her native country. As Nair told

Stephen Lowenstein in 2000, “I made my difference my strength. You know: ‘I am an Indian woman who has access to worlds that you will never have access to’” (Lowenstein *Movie* 247). While Nair’s films such as her debut feature *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), *Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love* (1996), and *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) probe the connections between India’s traditions and history and its contemporary cultural climate, her films such as *Mississippi Masala* (1991), *The Perez Family* (1995), and *The Namesake* (2007)—her adaptation of Jhumpa Lahiri’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel—discuss the ethnic and diasporic conflicts inherent in a globalized society dominated by Western influences.²² Despite the settings and thematic concerns of her work, Nair’s oeuvre embodies “accented cinema,” films that in the view of Hamid Naficy, “Are in dialogue with the home and host societies and their respective national cinemas, as well as with audiences, many of whom are similarly transnational, whose desires, aspirations and fears they express” (6). Though eschewing direct politicization in her work and often working within the realm of domestic drama, Nair’s films subtly convey the conflicts and consequences of immigration and assimilation through the accents her Indian-American perspective bring to her work.

Yet, Nair is also a filmmaker whose early career especially was steeped in controversy, largely because of her dual associations with America and her homeland. As Alpana Sharma writes:

Nair approaches filmmaking with a high level of tolerance for complexity, irony, contradiction, and ambiguity, qualities in short, which demand a subtle, sideways approach. . . Criticisms of her have generally targeted her orientation to the West, maintaining that her films are made with an eye

toward Western consumption; she has been accused of a class-based replication of racist colonial gestures; her increasing use of Hollywood style budgets and formulas of glamour and romance has also come under attack, as has her presumed arrogance in assuming she can speak for those who cannot speak for themselves (180).²³

In her assessment of the problematic aspects of Nair's career, Sharma highlights a problem facing filmmakers who traverse the East/West dichotomy that we have, up until now, not encountered in this study: the question of the subaltern's ability to speak, which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has so thoroughly discussed. Working with the "interpreter class" of Indian subjects idea made infamous by Thomas Macaulay's 1835 "Minute on Indian Education," Spivak exposes the contradictions of postcolonial intellectuals from nations such as India representing subaltern groups:

For the (gender-unspecified) 'true' subaltern subject, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself: the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been left traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual ...The question becomes: How can we touch the consciousness of the people even as we investigate their politics? (Spivak "Can" 2201).

Spivak's discussion of intellectuals who share Nair's positionality highlights the potential problems of representations of India in Nair's cinema. However, it also evokes questions regarding political criticisms of postcolonial cinema in general. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, while representations of ethnic minorities by settler colonials like

Maddin and Hogan are certainly open to criticism, their problematic depictions have not led to a general dismissal of their work. Likewise, as we shall see in chapter 5, Pakistani filmmaker Kapur has undergone a similar Hollywood/homeland career trajectory as Nair, but has remained relatively free of controversy, largely due to his focus on India's middle class, postcolonial groups outside of India, or British icons such as Queen Elizabeth I.

Though it may be true that Nair's subject matter and representations of her homeland are diluted by her intellectual position and complicity with a Western, often Orientalist lens, such contradictions make her work both more interesting for an interfidelity approach and indicative of the globalized postcolonial subject. Spivak's contention certainly still serves as an important caution for postcolonial theory, but it runs the risk in the globalized world of dismissing important work from ethnic and gender groups that, while privileged, are still marginalized—such as a female Indian filmmaker with a transnational presence.²⁴ Advocating an interrogation of the foundations of globally disseminated images that does not merely fall back on the tropes of postcolonial theory, Simon Gikandi writes: “There is no reason to suppose that the global flow in images has a homological connection to transformations in social or cultural relationships. . . Global images have certain salience for students of culture, especially postmodern culture, but this does not mean that they are a substitute for material experiences. . . We cannot stop at the site of their contemplation” (474). As Gikandi indicates, dismissing a text as politically troubled, Orientalist, or compromised does little to further discussion of how the image reflects and relates to the legacy of postcolonial theory in the world of global capital and transnational corporations. Only through interrogating such contradictions and placing them into the framework of the globalized

world are such criticisms relevant to fruitful discussions of class, diaspora, and subalternity.

For a filmmaker so consumed with and criticized for her preoccupations with representing India, Nair's film adaptation of *Vanity Fair* appears not to conform with the rest of her oeuvre. Published in 1847 at the height of Britain's pre-Rebellion imperial endeavors in the nation, the novel centers on Becky Sharp, the daughter of an impoverished artist, and her attempts to rise in England's rigid class structure through her interactions and associations with the noble Crawley family and the wealthy merchant-class Sedley and Osborne families. Born in Calcutta to a father who amassed his wealth through military and independent economic endeavors in Indian territory, Thackeray enjoyed a life of prosperity and prominence as a result of his father's imperial successes (Stevenson 7-8). Working as a journalist and humorist for *Fraser's Magazine*, Thackeray ridiculed the British class system and its concern for title over wealth in biting satires for the conservative publication before beginning his career as a novelist (Stevenson 75). However, though Indian culture permeates his novels and journalism, Thackeray's work ignores detailed discussions of India, portraying it simply as a foreign land ripe with financial opportunity for his English characters. Through his depictions of India in his work, Thackeray's writing echoes Said's claim that the 19th century European novel contain allusions to Empire more regular and frequent than in any other cultural product (Said, *Culture* 63). As Said writes:

Whether or not to look at the connections between cultural texts and imperialism is therefore to take a position *in fact taken*-either to study the connection in order to criticize it and think of alternatives for it, or

not to study it in order to let it stand, unexamined and, presumably, unchanged. One of my main reasons for writing this book is to show how far the quest for, concern about, and consciousness of overseas dominion extended-not just in Conrad but in figures we practically never think of in that connections, like Thackeray and Austen-and how enriching and important for the critic is attention to this material, not only for the obvious political reasons, but also because, as I have been arguing, this particular kind of attention allows the reader to interpret canonical nineteenth and twentieth-century works with a newly engaged interest. (68)

Through her film adaptation, Nair far exceeds Said's call to criticize the imperialism embedded in Thackeray's novel, instead using the characters and conventions of the original text to write back to Empire by integrating her accented Indian perspective into the film. Dispatching with Thackeray's omniscient male narrator and infusing the mise-en-scene of the film with costumes, props, and set decorations inspired by India as well as by shooting scenes on location in her native country, Nair endows India with a voice in the narrative that both challenges Britain's cultural dominance and critiques the imperial power for its consumption of India as a culture and nation in the narrative. Yet, while Nair may actively criticize imperialism in a manner that conforms to Said's statement, her attempts to integrate India into Hollywood cinema fall victim to a caution Said made much earlier in his career: depictions of the Orient as a fragmented, "unusual experience." Resulting from the Orient's alien relationship to the West, representations of countries such as India appear as fragments to the West in which "The Orientalist is

required to *present* the Orient by a series of representative fragments, fragments republished, explicated, annotated, and surrounded with still more fragments” (*Orientalism* 128). As a result, while Nair’s focus on India cultivates a space for the nation that the source text denied it, her Indian representations never amount to more than fragments surrounded by the context of the narrative’s colonial discourse, a version of India that, albeit present, remains tied to the Orientalist structures it intends to subvert.

Budgeted at \$23 million and distributed by Focus Features—the art-house film distribution arm of General Electric-owned NBC/Universal—Nair’s adaptation of *Vanity Fair* provided the filmmaker a forum to address a corporate Empire that has further asserted its presence on Bollywood, India’s most prominent national film industry, in the last decade. Originating as an attempt to define cultural identity during English occupation, Bollywood cinema has become India’s primary model of national unity, using its immensely popular “item numbers”—musical scenes reminiscent of Hollywood films from the studio era—to foster nationalism and highlight similarities among its ethnically diverse population (Rao 58). As Bollywood has increased its financial strength and film output, producing more than 300 films a year and becoming the national film industry with the highest output in the world, Hollywood media corporations have begun to make prominent financial investments in Indian cinema, diluting its national attributes for global consumption (UNESCOPRESS 2009). With Bollywood films such as Rajkumar Hirani’s *3 Idiots* (2009), Anurag Basu’s *Kites* (2009), and Karan Johar’s *My Name is Khan* (2010) becoming international box-office successes and Western public relations firms, distributors, and critics began devoting increased attention to Bollywood, recent releases within the industry have demonstrated a greater Western influence,

adopting an MTV-inspired sexuality and cinematic style (Rao 70).²⁵ While such alterations to Bollywood films may increase their marketability internationally, the conformity to outside influence has alienated many members of the working-class audiences within India that constitutes a substantial portion of Bollywood's domestic demographic (Rao 70-71).

Using her increased clout after the international success of *Monsoon Wedding* to achieve more creative control over her adaptation of *Vanity Fair*, Nair comments on the increased corporate influence on Indian cinema by making the adaptation an amalgam of Hollywood and Bollywood style, allowing Bollywood to influence the dominant Hollywood narrative conventions within her film. Embedding India's presence onto the narrative even further, Nair added several scenes to the film she shot in her native country with the goal of avoiding, according to screenwriter Julian Fellowes, "That same old palm tree and man-in-a-tent with cicadas going in the background always tell(ing) you so clearly that the whole thing was shot in Surrey" (Nair 12). Through including the stylistic conventions and locations from Bollywood films, Nair reasserts the cinematic identity of her country, suggesting that nations outside the dominant power can attain influence in the process of cultural hybridity despite the problems of subaltern agency and conformity to Orientalism on display in her adaptation.

Power and Influence in the Thriving Empire

Subtitled "A Novel Without a Hero," Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* constantly changes the focus of its narrative, creating an epic ensemble story that conforms to the narrative of Empire rather than defining a central protagonist. Yet in his narrative construction, Thackeray creates an omniscient third-person narrator that acts as an imperial voice by

threading the stories together and constantly alluding to his omnipotence within the realm of early 19th century England. Despite the views of critics such as Micael M. Clarke that *Vanity Fair* acts as a potent critique of British imperialism, the narrator's control over the novel complicates the narrative's admitted anti-imperial undercurrent (16). Appearing in many of Thackeray's later works such as *The Newcomers* (1855), the narrator evolves as a character that, while separate from Thackeray, also holds a role as an Empire writer who affirms his allegiance to the power of the imperial project (Shillingsburg 66-69).

When discussing the Battle of Waterloo in which the English defeated Napoleon's forces and cemented their status as an imperial power in Europe, Thackeray writes: "All of us have read of what occurred during that interval. The tale is in every Englishman's mouth; you and I, who were children when the great battle was won and lost, are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action" (326). Through his narrator's comments, Thackeray reveals that while the plot of the novel fails to establish a central character, his audience already possesses the characteristics necessary to identify with the novel: a shared reverence for the military and cultural prowess of England as Empire.

Vanity Fair acts as a novel without a hero, because the British Empire and its citizens already act as heroes by default as a result of their shared allegiance to their native country. Thackeray's narrator continues to affirm his omnipotence throughout the text, reaffirming his ethos through statements such as "The novelist, who knows everything, knows this also" (329) in reference to Becky writing all of her husband Rawdon Crawley's correspondence, and, "The novelist, it has been said before, knows everything" when discussing how Becky and Crawley lived extravagantly without an income (362). Taking into consideration Said's advocacy of reading colonial discourse

contrapuntally, one can perceive Thackeray's narrator as an unseen imperial force who controls the novel's narrative in a manner similar to the way England's colonial endeavors enhance the wealth of the characters in the novel.

Throughout her film adaptation, Nair uses the camera's objectivity to strip the novel's narrator of his agency, allowing her to integrate the perspective of colonial India into a narrative that originally muted its voice, mirroring Roland Barthes's contention that, "The signifiers of narrativity, for instance, are not readily transferable from novel to film, the latter utilizing the personal mode of treatment only very exceptionally. . . . Once again there is no relation between the grammatical 'person' of the narrator and the 'personality' (or subjectivity) that a film director puts into his way of presenting the story" (121). Nair eliminates the presence of a third-person narrator from the film, telling the story solely from the perspective of a camera which she controls. However, Nair's use of point-of-view conforms much more to Seymour Chatman's definition of slant—a term that captures "the psychological, sociological, and ideological ramifications of the narrator's attitudes, which may range from neutral to highly charged"—than the vague, apolitical connotations of the term point-of-view (143). As Chatman writes:

Attitudes, of course, are rooted in ideology, and the narrator is as much a locus of ideology as anyone else, inside or outside the fiction. The ideology may or may not match that of any of the characters. And it may or may not match that of the implied author or real author. It might be argued that in a sufficiently broad definition, attitudes are *all* that "narrator's point of view" feasibly refers to. (*Discourse* 143)

Using Chatman's terminology, one could argue that Nair simply excises the novel's omniscient narrator in favor of a politicized implied author. Yet, given the imperial mentality of Thackeray's narrator and the film's concern with affirming Indian presence, nothing is implied in Nair's elimination of the third-person narrator in favor of a voiceless presence that advances a postcolonial perspective through cinematic style. Instead, the narrator acts as a politicized presence actively seeking to both represent the perspectives absent from Thackeray's novel and critique their absence in the source text. As a result, Nair's silent stylistic "narrator" integrates images into the narrative that directly interrogate the power of the British Empire and its agents.

Nair opens the film's title sequence with an extreme close up of a peacock strutting on the screen against a black backdrop, an image she returns to as the titles roll. Rather than provide a direct establishment of narrative authority, Nair's focus on the peacock acts a metaphorical visual cue that presents an image of an animal associated with vanity to the audience and forces them to make a correlation between the animal and the film's English characters that appear in the sequences that directly follow. In addition, the peacock's origins as not only indigenous to India but its national bird also allow Nair to convey her cultural perspective directly to the audience. In Nair's words, the sequence conveys the "vanity, beauty, mystery, and Orientalism" referenced in Thackeray's novel (76). Through her control over the film's narrative, Nair presents a hybrid image of an Indian bird associated by the Empire with vanity, calling attention to the vanity of the Empire that originally gave the peacock its negative connotations while also eschewing any discussion of the lingering Orientalism present in the sequence.

After establishing her control over the film's narrative, Nair uses her slant to integrate visual depictions of India into the film that are absent from Thackeray's novel. Throughout *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray portrays India as a mysterious, unknown land, omitting descriptions of the country even in the scenes that occur there. However, Thackeray includes detailed descriptions of England in the novel, claiming that its beauty far overshadows the tropical lands of India. When Joseph Sedley and Major Dobbin return home from India, Thackeray writes:

How happy and green the country looked as the chaise whirled rapidly from mile-stone to mile-stone, through neat country towns where landlords came out to welcome him with smiles and bows; by pretty road-side inns, where the signs hung on the shadow of the trees; by old halls and parks; rustic hamlets clustered round ancient gray churches-and through the charming friendly English landscape. Is there any in the world like it? To a traveler returning home it looks so kind-it seems to shake hands with you as you pass through it. (578)

With its detailed description of the English countryside, Thackeray's portrayal of England sharply contrasts with even his most detailed depiction of India that occurs when he describes Dobbin's original deployment: "The astonished reader must be called upon to transport himself ten thousand miles to the military station of Bundlegunge, in the Madras division of our Indian Empire" (430). Though Thackeray describes every facet of the English landscape, touting its merits as superior to other lands, he never describes India as an autonomous land, even denoting the foreign territory as "our" Indian Empire. As a result, Thackeray reinforces the superiority of England over the colonized nation to

such an extent that even a nation thousands of miles away cannot escape a definition removed from associations with its colonizer.

In her adaptation, Nair harnesses the visual capabilities of the film medium to create a depiction of India that contrasts sharply with the scenes that take place in the dreary English countryside. As Nair writes, including India in the narrative allows her to create, “a change of place and light for us to truly understand the impact of the colonies, how far away and utterly different it was from England” (Nair 12). When Dobbin (Rhys Ifans) makes the decision to return to England from his post in India, Nair shoots him writing a letter in an extreme long shot, noting not only the beauty of the Indian desert but also the small stature of the agent of Empire. In addition, as Dobbin enters an Indian palace to tell his comrades of his departure, Nair frames him in a long shot, focusing her attention on the lush red decor of the building. Drastically changing the setting of the film’s ending from Germany to India, Nair also includes a lengthy scene in which Becky (Reese Witherspoon) and Joseph Sedley (Tony Maudsley) ride on an elephant through the packed streets of Bombay, taking in the bright costumes of the crowd, bustle of the city, and exotic animals that literally fill the frame. However, in both instances, India remains defined entirely by the fragments Said discusses. Rather than present a sustained depiction of India through involved sequences that capture life in the nation, Nair operates in a fragmented shorthand of vast landscape, bright colors, elephants, and other Indian exotica not out of place in an advertisement for a travel company or an imports vendor such as World Market or Pier One. Through adding depictions of India absent from the novel, Nair endows her native country with a presence ignored in Thackeray’s narrative, portraying the nation as a lively culture that exists as a world independent of

England rather than in competition with its beauty as Thackeray depicts. Yet, the depiction remains rooted in fragments, merely referencing India as an independent nation rather than actually representing it.

Nair continues using her narrative slant to write back to the British Empire through her treatment of the Battle of Waterloo that serves as a central narrative turn in Thackeray's novel. As Napoleon Bonaparte returns from exile and attempts to reclaim his imperial power over Europe, Major Dobbin, Captain George Osborne, and Captain Rawdon Crawley prepare for battle. However, Thackeray presents the battle not as a precarious conflict that threatens Britain's authority, but as a chance for English forces to demonstrate their power. Thackeray writes:

The news of Napoleon's escape and landing was received by the gallant --th with fiery delight and enthusiasm, which everybody can understand who knows the famous corps. From the colonel to the smallest drummer in the regiment, all were filled with the hope and ambition and patriotic fury; and thanked the French Emperor as for a personal kindness in coming to disturb the peace of Europe. Now was the time the -th had so long panted for, to show their comrades in arms that they could fight as well as the Peninsular veterans, and that the pluck and valour of the -th had not been killed by the West Indies and yellow fever. (184)

Reveling in the bravery and honor that comes from belonging to the British army, the soldiers view the impending war as a chance to cement their superiority rather than as a violent conflict that could end in the death. Thackeray reinforces the patriotic fervor and faith in the British Empire through his description of Osborne's views on the war:

“Bonaparty was to be crushed without a struggle. . .People were going not so much to see a war as to a fashionable tour” (263). Through his flippant treatment of a conflict that would eventually kill thousands of British soldiers, Thackeray reveals a strong faith in the power of the British Empire, a power so strong that, barring the death of George Osborne in battle, he never mentions the destruction and detriment the war caused for the Empire. Using the war as a simple narrative device to move his plot forward, Thackeray presents the British Empire as strong enough to withstand even one of the most difficult battles in his nation’s history.

Deviating sharply from Thackeray’s text, Nair’s adaptation depicts the Battle of Waterloo in explicit detail, a narrative choice that allows her to expose the large death toll and horror of war for the British Empire that Thackeray’s novel ignores. As the battle of Waterloo rages, Becky walks down a street in Ostend, Belgium, flanked on both sides by hundreds of wounded British soldiers returning to the city. Though Becky remains in the center of the frame, Nair shoots the scene in an extreme long shot that accentuates the uniformity of the soldiers while cutting to closer shots of their bloody wounds. After the British finally overcome Napoleon’s forces, Nair includes a scene absent from the novel in which she reveals the death of Osborne (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers) by craning the camera over a battlefield littered with the corpses of dead British soldiers until she rests the camera on Osborne’s body. As a resounding defeat of the French and cementation of British authority, Waterloo became a symbol for the British of what Jeremy Black refers to as “The fortitude of defense,” an event that celebrated the power of “the thin red line” and served as a symbol in future conflicts ranging from the Crimean War to the 1879 conflicts with Zulus in South Africa (222).²⁶ By focusing attention on depictions of the

wounded and dead British soldiers, Nair lingers on the battle bloody and costly reality, directly undercutting the important role it would play in propagating the iconography of the British Empire throughout the rest of the century. Though thousands died for the Empire to survive the threat of Napoleon, Thackeray refuses to acknowledge the deaths in order to preserve the illusion of Britain's strength, a facet of the source text that Nair brings to the forefront of her adaptation.

Nair exerts her slant most explicitly in her deviation from the novel's treatment of native people, highlighting racism and subjugation of nonwhites by the British in the film. Throughout Thackeray's novel, the author depicts Indians and natives of other colonies as either nonentities or sources of scorn for his British characters. When Becky arrives at the Sedley house, she delights the black servant Sambo by calling him "Sir" and "Mr. Sambo" (25). As Becky attempts to cajole a marriage proposal from Joseph Sedley in the novel, the elder Mr. Sedley remarks to his wife, "Better she, my dear, than a black Mrs. Sedley and a dozen mahogany grandchildren" (53). Similarly, as Mr. Osborne attempts to arrange a marriage for George to Rhoda Schwartz, a Jamaican native whose family became wealthy from trade, he laments her race, referring to her as "a Mahogany Charmer" and "the dark object" and to George as "the Conqueror" (208-209). Though the passages may appear flagrantly racist to the contemporary reader, their treatment of natives conforms to conventions of writing during Thackeray's time that concerned characters from the East. As Said writes in *Orientalism*: "Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with,

he could give shape to the great Asiatic mystery” (44). By differentiating the native characters in the novel from those who act as white agents of Empire with derogatory terms, Thackeray firmly distinguishes between those citizens of the stronger culture and those mysterious others his culture neglected to understand, allowing the dichotomy that permitted the Empire in which he lived to maintain control in the unknown Eastern lands.

Rather than neglect and mute the existence of the non-English characters in her film adaptation, Nair accents their differences, allowing them to maintain their cultural heritage while holding positions in the serving class within the Empire. Nair completely removes all references to Joseph Sedley marrying an Indian woman by allowing George Osborne to curtail Joseph’s infatuation with Becky early in the film through a conversation between the two men concerning her class. As a result, Joseph disappears to India for the majority of the narrative, acting as an agent of Empire free from the constraints of Britain’s class structure and able to pursue what Said deems “Oriental sex,” sexual intercourse as commodity free from the societal obligations of Empire, including marriage (Said, *Orientalism* 190). Nair also excises the novel’s depictions of Sambo’s neglect and ill treatment, instead portraying the servant as an Indian migrant wearing a turban who both has no interaction with the Sedleys apart from his required duty and maintains a silent demeanor throughout the film. In sharp contrast to mute native characters such as Friday in Coetzee’s *Foe* who, according to Diana Taylor, serve to remain a fixed object and “maintain a distance between the *pre-* and *post-*: precolonial to postcolonial, premodern to postmodern,” Nair presents Sambo’s muteness as an active refusal to fully conform to his subservient role (72). Unlike the novel’s Sambo, the Sedleys’ servant in the film demonstrates no inclination to participate the sensibilities of

Empire, fully content to remain a citizen of India engaging in a business practice while subtly resisting British assimilation.

Nair's greatest departure from Thackeray's novel occurs during the scene in which the elder Osborne (Jim Broadbent) attempts to arrange George's marriage to the Jamaican Rhoda (Kathryn Drysdale). As Rhoda waits in the Osborne's parlor, George confronts his father in his study, refusing to assent to a marriage arranged for him when he has given his word to marry Amelia Sedley (Romola Garai). During the heated argument between the two men in which the elder Osborne asks his son, "What's a shade or two of tawny when there's a title on the table?" and tells George he must marry Rhoda to get control of her finances, Nair cuts back to a long shot of Rhoda sitting alone in the parlor with a look of anguish on her face. Despite her fortune in the novel, Rhoda remains a character denied a voice in the narrative, spoken of as an anomaly in high society by the white bourgeois. Yet Nair's choice to cut to Rhoda sitting alone in the well-furnished English parlor as the older men argue over her in financial terms endows the young heiress with a presence that allows Nair both to demonstrate the men's rampant disregard for her and to comment on the persistence of "otherness" fundamental to the construction of Empire that transcends even financial security.

In sharp contrast to the moral ambiguity of Thackeray's characters, Nair uses her Indian slant to portray the bureaucratic structure of Empire as built on corruption through her treatment of Marquess Steyne (Gabriel Byrne) in the film. In the novel, Thackeray presents the wealthy Marquess as a man enthralled by Becky's wit and intelligence and angered by her inability to attain status in the British class system. As a result, he attempts to better her situation by offering George a colonial appointment as a governor

to Eastern Coventry Island. However, after being released from debtors' prison, Rawdon returns home to find Becky and Steyne alone, misinterpreting their meeting as a love affair. Despite his suspicions, Rawdon accepts Steyne's offer, reading about himself in the paper: "We need not only men of acknowledged bravery, but men of administrative talents to superintend the affairs of our colonies; and we have no doubt that the gentleman selected by the colonial office to fill the lamented vacancy at Coventry Island is admirably calculated for the post which he is about to occupy" (551). Unable to reject the prestige of his newfound occupation within the Empire, Rawdon assumes the position, abandoning any attempts to reconcile his marriage with Becky and eventually dying of a mysterious tropical fever on the island.

In contrast, Nair's use of slant heightens the sexual tension between Steyne and Becky, portraying Rawdon's position as governor, not as a commodity earned through Becky's social climbing, but as an attempt by the corrupt leaders of Empire to sate those whom they have wronged. From the beginning of the film, Nair depicts Steyne as a morally reprehensible figure in a scene absent from Thackeray's novel as he buys a painting of Becky's mother from Mr. Sharpe (Roger-Lloyd Pack) against the wishes of the young Becky (Angelica Mandy). As Steyne reenters the narrative, Nair positions him as a figure on the periphery, gazing at Becky from afar until he makes contact with her by paying off her husband's debts in the middle of a creditor's repossession. As Rawdon catches Becky and Steyne alone together in the film, Nair alters Thackeray's narrative, shooting Rawdon in a tracking shot while he discovers Steyne attempting to make love to Becky on the parlor couch. Until Rawdon uncovers Steyne and Becky's act of infidelity, Nair makes no mention of the colonial appointment. However, once Steyne realizes the

extent of Rawdon's anger, he offers him the appointment, a factor Nair depicts as a payoff by removing all information of the appointment from the narrative until the story later runs in the newspaper. Through her portrayal of Steyne's dubious character, Nair depicts the wealthiest agents of Empire as morally corrupt individuals who abuse their power and influence in the imperial infrastructure to support their indiscretions and subvert the power of others. In Nair's adaptation, Steyne embodies the true colonial power, a man who subjugates all those around him for the accumulation of commodities, whether paintings with sentimental value, a female's reputation, or advanced positions in colonial endeavors.

An Empire of Commodity

As Steyne's obsession with possessing commodities indicates, *Vanity Fair*, similar to other novels of the Victorian Era, exhibits a fascination with the growing wealth of Britain as a direct consequence of its colonial endeavors. As Christoph Linder writes, "Commodities almost jump off the page in Thackeray's writing to be fondled, touched, tasted, circulated, or lavishly gazed upon with any combination of admiration, envy, greed, or desire" (570). Throughout the narrative, Thackeray includes a multitude of references to wealth gleaned from the Indian colonies, using Indian cultural commodities as symbols of wealth and power for his characters. For Thackeray, admission to the wealthy classes carries associations with Eastern tropes such as turbans, elephants and moguls, leaving Becky and other characters to fantasize about wealth by borrowing from the imagery of Eastern texts such as the *Arabian Nights* (Boehmer 44). Viewing Indian objects as commodities from a mysterious land, Thackeray's characters also embody the traits of Marx's definition of commodity fetishism: "A commodity is

therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon it by a product of that labor; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour" (215). Marx's views of commodity relate to the characters in Thackeray's novel, who crave the ownership of Indian items to create their own microcosm of Empire, claiming dominion over Indian commodities in a similar manner to their native country's dominion over India. Such behavior is indicative of what Stuart Hall refers to as "The progress of the great white explorer," figures such as Joseph Sedley whose experiences in Africa, India, and other colonies served as a catalyst for advertisements that "translated *things* into a fantasy visual display of *signs and symbols*" and, in turn, led to the search for markets and raw materials to fuel imperial expansion (240). Engaging with Hall's link between commodity and Empire, Nair's film adaptation addresses the role of commodity in Thackeray's work, using visual cues to accent the Indian influence over British culture and to establish an acknowledged dialectic between the two cultures that transcends the roles of colonizer-colonized for the nations.

As previously discussed, Thackeray most directly embodies ties between Empire and commodity through his construction of Joseph Sedley, the wealthy nabob of the Boggley Wollah Indian district and Becky's initial prospect for a husband. Characterizing Joseph as an epicurean of India's finest cultural products who continually consumes hookah and Indian cuisine, Thackeray presents Indian commodities as symbols of wealth and power known to by in the highest classes and aspired to for individuals such as

Becky. As Mrs. Sedley prepares an Indian dinner to celebrate her son's return to England, Thackeray writes:

Now we have heard how Mrs. Sedley had prepared a fine curry for her son just as he liked it: and in the course of dinner a portion of the dish was offered to Rebecca. "What is it?" said she turning in an appealing look to Mr. Joseph.

"Capital," said he-his mouth was full of it: his face quite red with the delightful exercise of gobbling. "Mother, it's as good as my own curries in India."

"Oh I must try some if it is an Indian dish," said Rebecca. "I am sure every thing must be good that comes from *there*. (22)

Through the passage, Thackeray depicts the Indian commodity as a luxury item only available to privileged classes. As a result of his imperial endeavors, Joseph acts as chief critic of his mother's imitation of the native dish, her attempt to demonstrate cultural awareness of a class that exceeds her own. Aspiring to rise from her status as a poor girl, Becky realizes that consuming the curry acts as a passage from her current class status into Joseph's. By engaging in the consumption of the curry native to *there*, the source of Empire's power, Becky engages in a method of exchange that reinforces the Victorian notion that colonization breeds power, entering into the enjoyment of India's resources on her own domestic scale.

In her adaptation, Nair treats Becky's consumption of the curry in a humorous manner, highlighting the inability of the colonizers to fully integrate Indian culture into the framework of the Empire. As the Sedleys' Indian servant brings the curry to the

table, Becky tries the dish after stating that she is “enraptured by every scent and flavor of the East.” As in the novel, the curry proves too spicy for Becky. However, Nair deviates from the adaptation by cutting to a shot of the Indian servant silently laughing at Becky as she encounters the curry, a choice that mirrors Arjun Appadurai concept of “commoditization by diversion” in which “value . . . is accelerated or enhanced by placing objects and things in unlikely contexts” (418). Within the Sedley household, the curry is a commodity diverted to middle class space for the sold purpose of engaging with “the aesthetics of decontextualization (itself driven by the quest for novelty) that is at the heart of the display, in highbrow Western homes, of the tools and artifacts of the ‘other’” (418). With their family ties to the “great white explorer” Joseph, the Sedleys hold a direct association to the broader imperial context of which their consumption is a part. Yet, Becky, resulting from her humble class position, lacks the ability to decontextualize and consume commodities. After finally completing her task despite her obvious pain, Becky swallows triumphantly, deeming the dish “delicious” to Joseph. Through these alterations to the novel, Nair calls attention to the repressed anxiety stemming from Britain’s “commodification by diversion” of India. Though Becky attempts to mask her discomfort over consuming the spicy curry, Nair’s execution of the scene for humor and shots of the laughing servant exposes her British protagonist’s labors to maintain conformity to an imperialism fueled by commodity and, by extension, the illusion of Britain’s seamless consumption of India and its cultural artifacts.

Nair continues to demonstrate India’s resistance to the consumption of its culture through her alterations to Joseph and Becky’s relationship at the end of the novel. After ending her marriage with Rawdon, Becky moves to Pumpernickel, Germany, where

Joseph finds her in a casino. Still harboring an infatuation for Becky, he immediately rekindles his relationship with her, asking her to be his companion as he travels through Europe. Thackeray writes: “Mr. Joseph Sedley went, she traveled likewise; and that infatuated man seemed entirely to be her slave” (685). However, though the two travel together, Joseph soon dies in France from an unexplained cause. By concluding the novel with the reconciliation of Joseph and Becky, Thackeray attempts to provide a happy ending to his narrative, allowing Becky to achieve the wealth and privilege she has desired from her associations with a man who gained his wealth through imperial endeavors. As the relationship between the couple transitions from novel to film, Nair makes significant alternations to the narrative in order to foreground the importance of India in Becky’s rise from the lower classes. Throughout Becky’s travels in the film, Nair uses her protagonist’s monogrammed trunk as a motif, cutting to close-ups of it as Becky moves to new locations that mark her increase in social status, a choice that allows Becky to quite literally place her mark on the places she visits. As Joseph and Becky reunite at the end of the film, Joseph says, “It’s time to enjoy my fortune now, I’m on my way back to India,” before inviting her to come. Varying sharply from Thackeray’s text, Nair ends the film on the streets of Bombay with Joseph and Becky riding an elephant amid a parade of Indians, cutting to a close-up of the monogrammed trunk resting on the elephant’s back before fading to black. Through her focus on the trunk, Nair directly addresses India’s role in Becky’s class mobility and presents Becky as a colonizing force in the region whose English baggage marks her new territory. Similarly, in his decision to return to India, Joseph embraces the land that led to his fortune, bringing Becky to her

ultimate living situation as she enjoys the financial comfort gained by imperial endeavors in the land responsible for the Empire's financial prowess.

Using the medium of cinema to accent Thackeray's depiction of Empire, Nair comments on the novel's lengthy references to Indian commodities by working with production designer Maria Djurkovic to cultivate an aesthetic for the film that acts as an amalgamation of British and Indian style. In the novel, Thackeray makes numerous references to Indian goods as units of exchange. Upon his return from India, Joseph gives his sister Amelia a cashmere shawl, which she attempts to give to Becky: "She determined in her heart to ask her mother's permission to present her white Cashmere shawl to her friend. Could she not spare it? and had not her brother Joseph just brought her two from India" (16). Later in the novel, after the Sedleys' descent into poverty, Amelia attempts to buy her son, Georgy, new clothes by selling a similar shawl given to her by Major Dobbin: "There was her Indian shawl that Dobbin had sent her. She remembered in former days going with her mother to a fine India shop on Ludgate Hill, where the ladies had all sorts of dealings and bargains in these articles. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes shone with pleasure as she thought of this resource" (462). In both instances, the shawls from India act as commodities that allow Thackeray's characters to cement their social class. Amelia desires to give a shawl to Becky so that her friend will conform to the fashions of a higher class. Similarly, Amelia barter the shawl in order to buy her son Christmas clothes so that he will not look out of place with the other wealthier boys at his school. Through his use of the shawls as commodities, Thackeray references the colonial project's power to frame English citizens' social positions, depicting them as useful symbols of prosperity within the Empire.

Elaborating on Thackeray's use of Indian goods to define social class, Nair's film presents the products of the Empire not only as integral to defining class but also as inseparable from the upper echelons of British culture. When the Sedleys take Becky on a picnic to an English park early in the film, Nair presents the setting as an Orientalist simulacrum of Indian culture, positioning her characters amid a replica of an Indian palace, shooting them riding on Indian boats, surrounding them with Indian natives playing Indian music on sitars, and even including a scene in which Joseph gives Becky a parrot as a gift. In addition, as Becky moves to a fashionable London district after her marriage to Rawdon, Nair includes a scene in which Becky accidentally drops an Oriental rug. As the rug opens in the street, Becky falls to the ground, laughing joyfully on its floral pattern. Through her subtle inclusion of Indian commodities, Nair demonstrates the vital role Indian products play in English social mobility. Only after Becky possesses the agency to become immersed in products of Indian culture is she able to enter into the class position she has so long desired.

Nair continues to refine her commentary on the role of Indian commodity within the British Empire through her costume design in the film. Wanting to create a stark contrast from the Merchant-Ivory aesthetics customary to period films, Nair hired Beatrix Pasztor, a costume designer renowned for her inventive contemporary work in Gus Van Sant's films *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) and *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* (1994), Terry Gilliam's *The Fisher King* (1991), and Charles Shyer's *Alfie* (2004). Choosing Pasztor largely because of her lack of experience with period films, Nair desired to cultivate her designer's contemporary flavor to create costumes that fused English and Indian fashions into a unified aesthetic (Nair 47). As a result, the costumes in the film

borrow elements from fashions of Indian origins popular during the time period of Thackeray's novel, both subverting and conforming to Orientalist depictions. When Becky attends Marquess Steyne's ball in the film, Nair costumes the women in traditional Victorian dresses made with brightly colored fabrics from the East, accessorizing the dresses with feathers from peacocks and other exotic birds. Through costumes that turn fashions from both countries into a cohesive whole, Nair comments on the hybridity inherent in the relationship between colonizer and colonized, implying that the wealth of the British is unattainable without the contribution of commodities from the colonized nation.

Hollywood Funding, Bollywood Aesthetic: Writing Back to the Corporate Empire

With a \$23 million budget and the increased box-office prowess of Reese Witherspoon after the success of *Legally Blonde* (2001), *Sweet Home Alabama* (2002), and *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, and Blonde* (2003), Focus Features released *Vanity Fair* in September 2004 as an early awards contender, using a similar marketing strategy that made Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003) a critical and commercial success the previous year for the studio. However, the film failed at the domestic box-office, earning \$16 million and becoming overshadowed by Zach Braff's quirky-indie *Garden State* (2004) and Focus's Michel Gondry-helmed *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004). Critics lambasted Nair for her interpretation of Thackeray's novel, criticizing her for the simplicity of the adaptation and accusing her of caricaturing the British as gaudy imperialists (Lane 2004). In addition, academic reception for the film often hinged upon allegations that Nair ignored Thackeray's criticisms of his novel's heroine, allowing a blatant revisionist feminism to overshadow the novel's nuance (Moya 74). While many

critics observed Nair's attempts to address the British Empire through her retextualization of the novel, her focus on representing India went either largely unnoticed by critics or analyzed on a superficial level by those such as Michael Agger who said in his *Film Comment* review concerning the film's Bollywood item number sequence: "In the wrong hands, the scene would have come off like a bad Madonna video, but it somehow works" (73).

Despite the critical response to Nair's aesthetic choices, the director's use of conventions from her native country's cinema marks her attempt to address corporate imperialism and its increasing influence on Bollywood. During a reception for King George IV at Steyne's home, the Marquess presents the sovereign with a performance in his honor that Nair refers to in the film's credits as the slave dance. Directly borrowing from the conventions of the Bollywood item number, which Anjali Gera Roy deems, "a sequence of raunchy movements and risqué lyrics with little relation to the plotline," Nair presents the scene as a deviation, relishing in its Indian style as Becky, in Indian dress and covered with henna tattoos, dances amid an array of Indian extras (42). However, as opposed to traditional Bollywood item numbers used to generate publicity for the films, Nair's use of the convention takes on an overtly political dimension (Roy 43). The audience of English aristocrats looks on in a state of shock as they see Becky and a handful of other English women assimilated among the native Indians to such an extent that their ethnicities are unintelligible. Using long takes, a Bollywood-influenced score, and a constantly moving camera, Nair revels in the visual spectacle of the scene, turning her period costume drama into a musical for two and a half minutes. While the scene serves the narrative purpose of allowing Becky to earn the respect of King George, Nair's

stylistic choices permit her to integrate the Bollywood aesthetic into a mainstream film funded by a major media conglomerate. Using Witherspoon's status as an internationally popular and marketable film star, Nair immerses the actress in Bollywood culture, turning her into a communicative tool that conveys the essence of Bollywood cinema to mainstream audiences. Yet, unlike other recent item numbers in Hollywood films such as Luhrmann's pastiche-laden use of the convention in *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) or Boyle's credits item number from *Slumdog Millionaire*, Nair uses the sequence to assert the culture of her homeland both onto Thackeray's narrative and Hollywood filmmaking. As a result, the scene becomes not merely a spectacle put on for a king, but a corporate-funded representation of a nation's culture in a commodity marketed internationally.

Though not visible onscreen, Nair's active role in the production side of the film allowed her to criticize the corporate Empire through steeping the process in her native country's culture. After the \$7 million-budgeted *Monsoon Wedding*'s surprise \$13 million domestic gross for Focus Features, the studio gave Nair an increased level of control over *Vanity Fair*, allowing her to preserve her vision while working on a project with a sizable budget that, unlike her previous films, did not directly deal with issues of diaspora and colonial identity. Despite working in a new element, Nair maintained the traditions and customs she brought to every one of her previous films. On the first day of production of all her films, Nair leads the traditional Indian opening ceremony of "Muhurat" for the cast and crew, in which participants share a meal of coconut, red vermillion paste, rice, and Indian sweetmeats. Before eating the meal, Nair dabs tikka paste between all participants' eyebrows and anoints all film equipment similarly (Nair 81). In addition, Nair provides yoga teachers on set for the cast and crew an hour before

production begins each day, deeming it a traditional way to maintain focus: “When we’re actually shooting, my work is to preserve that space in myself which operates on instinct...I must not operate with the stress of pressure or ego. It’s about instinct. And with yoga, the space for instinct has grown” (Nair 81). Though the production of *Vanity Fair* received funding from a global corporation, Nair used her power within the industry to assert the culture of her native country over the production, maintaining her own values within Hollywood’s parameters without sacrificing her integrity and identity.

In adapting *Vanity Fair* to film, Nair incorporates her Indian heritage, strengthening the presence of India in a work that viewed Indian culture in abstract, economic terms. While the adaptation serves as a departure from the rest of Nair’s oeuvre, the film preserves her thematic preoccupations with outsiders ostracized by a dominant culture and attempting to reconcile the Eastern and Western worlds. Nair’s film allows her to infuse her own nation’s culture into the confines of a text that largely denies its autonomy, writing back both to the British Empire that treated India as a source of commodity and to the contemporary global Empire that threatens to homogenize Indian culture into a diluted international flair palatable enough for globalized distribution.

5. EPIC MULTITUDES: POSTCOLONIAL GENRE POLITICS IN SHEKHAR KAPUR'S *THE FOUR FEATHERS*

When Miramax Films and Paramount released Shekhar Kapur's *The Four Feathers* in September 2002, the studios initiated the year's awards season race with a film that appeared ready to capture international critical and commercial acclaim. Adapted from A. E. W. Mason's late-Victorian adventure novel, the film boasted a pedigree tailor-made for awards contention. In addition to its status as Kapur's follow up to his 1998 Academy-Award nominee *Elizabeth*, the \$80 million epic featured up-and-coming actor Heath Ledger as well as a host of previous Oscar nominees, including cinematographer Robert Richardson (*Platoon* (1986) and *JFK* (1991)), actors Kate Hudson and Djimon Hounsou, and infamous Oscar campaigning producers Bob and Harvey Weinstein. However upon release, the film grossed only \$29 million internationally, becoming not only one of the biggest box office failures in Hollywood history but also receiving nearly universal critical dismissal. While many reviews lambasted the film for its lack of historical context, several critics from prominent publications attacked the film for failure to engage with the repercussions of British imperialism or to make ties to the "Holy War" mentality of Post 9/11 American politics. In his review of the film for *Entertainment Weekly*, Owen Gleiberman deems it, "A stiff-upper-lip rouser that poses the question, can a movie set during the waning days of the British Empire have its colonial cake and eat it, too? And then spit it out for good measure?" (2002). Decrying the film's lack of engagement with relations between Western superpowers and the Middle East, John Petrakis echoes Gleiberman's assessment positing, "If *The Four Feathers* had pursued issues like these instead of falling back on a lot of charging and firing of guns, it might be a more relevant morality

play for the 21st Century. As it is, the film seems like a dusty period piece that has been dragged out one too many times” (49). Even prominent adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon dismissed the film four years after its release in her oft-celebrated adaptation theory landmark *A Theory of Adaptation* as “an attempt to side step imperialist politics” (94).

Though numerous box-office failures receive pointed critical drubbings, the reaction to *The Four Feathers* appears peculiar largely because, apart from its alleged lack of engagement with the anti-imperialist politics critics imposed upon it, its harshest reviews largely ignore discussions of fatal failures or missteps in the film, even going so far as to praise its cinematography, direction, and performances (Tibbetts 311).²⁷ The film’s critical reception becomes even more curious considering Kapur’s career-long preoccupations and stated intent of the project. Establishing his career as an actor in Bollywood before turning to directing with films such as *Mr. India* (1987) and *Bandit Queen* (1994), Kapur made the transition to Hollywood after his 1998 revisionist history of Queen Elizabeth’s early reign became an international critical and commercial success. Working within Hollywood for the first time, Kapur aspired for *The Four Feathers* to both rewrite the colonial politics of Mason’s novel and address the problematic depictions of the Egyptians and Sudanese in the text’s six other adaptations, primarily British director Zoltan Korda’s 1939 classic. As Kapur stated of his source text and previous versions of the story before his film’s release, “I was angered by them because of where I come from...they just did not question colonization. . .If you look at the state of the world today, you can trace it back to one cause: colonization” (qtd. in Jensen and Karger 30).

With a creative team that includes Iranian screenwriter Hossein Amini, Beninian actor Hounsou, Australian actor Ledger and American actors Hudson and Wes Bentley working for two of the most powerful film studios in Hollywood, Kapur's film is a global project that interrogates the foundations of imperialisms past and present through an internationally disseminated medium. Rather than merely addressing the lingering effects of imperialism in India, the film acts as a site for artists from all over the world working together to recreate and dismantle imperial ideologies at their most basic levels. In choosing a seventh adaptation of *The Four Feathers* as a project to address the legacy of colonialism, Kapur situated his political concerns within the tradition of late-Victorian adventure fiction that critics such as Elleke Boehmer describes as an example of the British national imagination growing "extravagantly imperial in its idiom and scope" (30). Detailing disgraced British officer Harry Feversham's attempts to salvage his reputation after resigning from the army, Mason's novel follows its protagonist to the front lines of the Sudan as he disguises himself as a Greek in order to demonstrate his bravery to his fellow deployed officers and fiancée after they gave him four white feathers as a symbol of cowardice. Yet, while Mason treats anxieties over going to war as a character defect that Harry must address, he opts to set the novel during the 1882-1888 time period of the early Mahdi Rebellion—one of the greatest military failures in the history of the imperial project. Though the Sudan was largely controlled by Egypt during the period, the British Empire asserted an unofficial dominion in the area as a result of its occupation of Egypt in the wake of the Urabi Revolt in 1882 (Barthorp 47). Given the Suez Canal's importance in efficient travel between Britain and India, the British maintained a presence in order to preserve stability and fend off French and

Russian attempts to control the canal, but largely ignored local issues such as the Egyptian support of the Sudanese slave trade (Steele 4-5). Investigating these early years of British control in his cinematic depiction of *Empire*, Kapur creates a portrait of domestic England virtually unencumbered by imperial anxieties—until Britain’s neglect of the Sudanese inadvertently serves as a catalyst for the film’s meditation on cowardice.

The events that serve as the foundation of Kapur’s adaptation and the British Empire’s Egyptian blunders occurred when boatmaker’s apprentice Mohammad Ahmed declared himself the “Mahdi,” who would abolish slavery and expunge Egyptian and European influence from the Sudan. In response, Prime Minister William Gladstone sent general Charles “Chinese” Gordon—a former governor of the region—to quell the resulting rebellion (Barthorp 84).²⁸ Though ardently opposed to slavery, Gordon’s fervent Christian zeal further enraged the Mahdi who besieged the city of Khartoum in 1884 and killed the general and his troops before a relief deployment could reach him (Warburg 127). In the wake of his death, Gordon, as Janice Boddy writes, “became a mythic figure, the archetype of a superior race sent to battle ‘heathrens’ on the fringe of the settled world, a martyr for Empire and Christendom both” (168-169). Set during the period after Gordon’s martyrdom reached its peak, but before General Herbert Kitchener’s forces defeated the Mahdi in 1896, the novel serves as allegorized historical fiction, presenting Harry as a British hero willing to atone for his previous blunders while ultimately exhibiting a Kitcheneresque bravery and dedication to regain his position of power within his military circle.

Mason’s novel is ripe for the type of postcolonial revision that Kapur discusses. Yet, its previous adaptations provide the filmmaker with the opportunity to also engage

with the pervasiveness of imperial ideologies in the wake of World War I. While all six adaptations are firmly rooted within the discourse of the British Empire, Korda's adaptation serves as not only the most famous and influential adaptation but also as the quintessential example of the first cycle of Empire cinema, films that, according to Jeffrey Richards, "give glamorous celluloid life to the great folk myths of Empire" during the beginning of the end of British colonialism (3).²⁹ Though the final entry in Korda's "Imperial Trilogy," the 1939 adaptation presents a contradictory image of the British Empire both exhibiting the director's leftist view of colonialism while maintaining fidelity to Empire's ideals.³⁰ A Hungarian immigrant personally affected by the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Korda and his producer brother Alexander knew firsthand of imperialism's innate violence and subjugation, but felt that depictions of the British Empire's strength were vital to combating the rise of fascism engulfing Europe during the film's production (Smyth 6). Shifting the film's setting to Kitchener's successful campaign, Korda presents a compromised depiction of Empire, conveying military officers as arrogant and out of place as they avenge Gordon's death in their scarlet uniforms but refusing to, in the words of J. E. Smyth, "present the Sudanese populations with their own subjective perspective" (11).

Considering the ample opportunity for anticolonial critique that Mason and Korda's texts provide, the disparity between Kapur's intent and his film's critical reception raises questions concerning his treatment of the legacy of British imperialism. Unlike Hogan and Nair's adaptations of Empire literature, Kapur's film does not engage with a source text directly about his homeland, positioning his critique of the British Empire into a broad indictment of its overall structure, a factor that one could attribute in

part to the influence of Kapur's favorite film as a child: a Hindi adaptation of Ryder Haggard's Africa-set *She* (Lowenstein *Take Two* 131). In addition, Mason's novel is relatively obscure and absent from critical work on Victorian and Edwardian literature compared to texts such as *Peter and Wendy* and *Vanity Fair*, arguably more well known through Korda's adaptation than from wide reading of the source text.³¹ Given that Kapur's film engages with at least two iterations of the narrative from distinct historical contexts, his attempt to write back to the imperial center may appear, as the film's detractors concur, unfocused or even relatively absent.

However, through the theoretical approach advocated by one of the film's primary critics, Kapur's primary strategy of resistance becomes apparent. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon argues for adaptation as a form of intertextuality in which, "we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (8). According to Hutcheon, each adaptation has a plurality of audiences whose individual encounters with previous source texts affect the reception. Though one could dismiss Hutcheon's claim as merely updated reader-response criticism, it allows her to make a second claim applicable Kapur's adaptation: each subsequent adaptation builds upon and engages with the tropes of its predecessors. In the case of Kapur's film, audiences' exposure to the source text and previous adaptations have a significant impact on the film's reception. A critic only familiar with the novel may excoriate Kapur for the historical inaccuracy of British soldiers wearing red uniforms in the Sudan, but fail to see how this choice allows Kapur to address the famous long shots of the British "thin red line" in Korda's adaptation (Wilkinson-Latham 36).³² Similarly, critics well acquainted with Korda's film (such as

Tibbetts) who attacked Kapur for switching the time period to the 1884-1885 botched rescue of Gordon conveniently overlook the novel's span from 1882-1888.

While such discussions of textual difference may appear as little more than insubstantial quibbling, they are fundamental to the revisionary approach of Kapur's film. If, as Hutcheon contends, exposure to previous source texts affect audience perception, then audiences native to former British colonial holdings engage with adaptations of Empire literature through a palimpsest founded on both the source texts and the tropes of Orientalism inherent in colonial discourse. As Said writes:

The idea of a representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole east is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (63)

For Said, Orientalism makes no distinction between nations, religions, or ethnicities, creating a stage on which the entirety of the East is presented as a monolithic entity. As a result, postcolonial writers and filmmakers attempting to address the legacy of British imperialism face the problem of resisting a universal organizational system through experience with a colonialism that was very much influenced and governed by localized issues of their native lands. Though Kapur's *The Four Feathers* is both about a nation indirectly controlled by British policy and made by a filmmaker from a nation formerly under direct colonial rule, the Empire employed the same overarching ideology to govern both holdings. Within this context, Kapur's seeming historical inaccuracies and

disregard for realistic depictions of the Sudan act not as a shallow attack on the British, but as a critique of the Orientalism that places the British Empire into a similar binary that allowed for the subjugation of colonial holdings. By implementing such a strategy, Kapur positions the film not only as a subversion of Orientalism but also as a way to address the confluence of capitalism and the nation state embodied by Hollywood film production and the “War on Terror” politics that his harshest critics accused him of skirting.

In this chapter, I argue that through this collaboration with artists hailing from an array of postcolonial nations, Kapur extends the imperial politics of Mason’s novel beyond its setting in the Sudan and into other postcolonial national contexts. As a result, the film presents a unified front that uses the collaborative attributes of film production to compare the totality of British rule and the global reach of Hollywood from a variety of national perspectives. Through revising his source texts’ treatments of landscape, presentation of the other, and veneration of the British Empire, Kapur engages in the process of intertextuality to revise the ideologies of his predecessors as a way to expose how the structure of Empire that fueled the British imperial project remains intact in the policies and practices of a world largely governed by the hegemony of the American economy.

Collapsed Landscapes, Purloined Letters, and Domestic Imperial Spaces

For a late-Victorian adventure novel, *The Four Feathers* appears out of step, largely because its primary action takes place within the confines of Britain. Rather than steep its narrative in descriptions and action sequences occurring in colonized lands as is customary of Mason’s contemporaries such as Conrad, Haggard, and Kipling, the novel

reveals much of Harry's Sudanese experience indirectly through conversations and correspondence between his fiancée, Ethne Eustace, and his accusers in the English countryside, in effect making the novel's central figure nearly absent from the narrative. After Harry's best friend and fellow soldier Jack Durrance relates his encounter with Harry in the Sudanese city Halfa, Ethne interrogates him:

“So, you never knew what brought Mr. Feversham to Halfa?” she asked.

“Did you not ask him? Why didn't you? Why?”

She was disappointed, and the bitterness of her disappointment gave passion to her cry. Here was the last news of Harry Feversham, and it was brought to her incomplete, like the half-sheet of a letter. The omission might never be repaired. (153)

While such a denial of direct descriptions of Harry's interactions with the Sudanese landscape, may seem like attempts to erase or eschew concrete depictions of the colonized territory similar to Thackeray's treatment of India in *Vanity Fair*, Mason's choice to reveal Harry's experiences in the Sudan through conversations and letters is indicative of what Bhabha refers to as the re-cognition of colonial authority. As Bhabha writes, “It is not that the voice of authority is at a loss for words. It is, rather, that the colonial discourse has reached that point when, faced with the hybridity of its objects, the *presence* of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert” (160). In the wake of the Mahdi's defeat of Gordon that frames the events of the novel, the waning Empire cannot simply disregard the agency of the “other.” However, it can attempt to mediate its anxieties over the imperial project by presenting Harry's Sudanese adventure entirely through the discourse of Britain's military class, a strategy

that removes Harry's actions from the realities of the landscape and into a near mythical metanarrative of the Empire. Faced with the reality of the "other's" agency in the Sudan, Mason's movement of Harry's imperial experiences solely to the controlled discourse of letters and conversation demonstrates both a burgeoning sense of anxiety and an acknowledgement that the colonial discourse on which the Empire previously relied on is insufficient for the aftermath of the rebellion.

Though Mason mediates Harry's journey in the Sudan through such dialogue sequences between Ethne and Harry's fellow soldiers, the Sudanese landscape still remains a source of anxiety for the British in the novel primarily through its harsh climate leading to Durrance's blindness in the middle of the campaign. After he accidentally grabs the hot bowl of a lieutenant's pipe while trying to sign a paper, Jack relates the story of his disability:

"There was a high wind," Durrance explained. "It took my helmet off. It was eight o'clock in the morning. I did not mean to move my camp that day, and I was standing outside my tent in my shirt-sleeves. So you see that I had not even the collar of a coat to protect the nape of my neck. I was fool enough to run after my helmet; and—you must have seen the same thing happen a hundred times—each time that I stooped to pick it up it skipped away; each time that I ran after it, it stopped and waited for me to catch it up. And before one was aware what one was doing, one had run a quarter of a mile. I went down, I was told, like a log just when I had the helmet in my hand. How long ago it happened I don't quite know, for I

was ill for a time, and afterwards it was difficult to keep count, since one couldn't tell the difference between day and night.” (97)

An officer in the British army with a consummate reputation, Durrance is not only unable to cope with the Sudan's desert atmosphere but also transformed into an inept, self-proclaimed fool chasing his hat in the wind, a victim of a colonial endeavor for which he was ill-prepared. While one could read the scene as conforming to the racist stereotype of savage and damaging colonized landscapes, the fact remains that, unlike civilians such as Marlow and Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Durrance is an impeccable soldier in an imperial army trained to handle interactions within the various landscapes that Britain claimed, but failing miserably. The blindness serves as such an affront to Durrance's honor that, after asking his Egyptian follows to carry him back to the base, he expresses the “natural wish to hide his calamity as long as he could” and “enjoined upon them silence” (97). Durrance's attempt to hide his injury stems largely from the embarrassment of his blindness, an affliction that, according to Sharon Sullivan, serves as a Freudian symbol of castration, in which the larger genitalia of a father figure manifests “a threat to the child's libidinal self-investment” (199). Considering that Durrance's failed mastery of the Sudanese landscape caused his blindness, the injury serves to invert the paternalistic dynamic of the colonizer and colonized, positioning Durrance as a childlike figure prone to shame over his limited power. With his lifelong dedication to the military, Jack's blindness leaves him “deprived of every occupation” and unable to take on a new role in British society, a striking moment of anxiety in a novel that trumpets the dominion of the British imperial project and its ability to weather even the greatest of failures (109).

However, though blind, Durrance remains a member of the esteemed British military class, allowing him to travel “East” at the end of novel to seek fortune after Harry’s return curtails his plan to marry Ethne:

Attended by a servant, he had come back to the East again. Early the next morning the steamer moved through the canal, and towards the time of sunset passed out into the chills of the Gulf of Suez. Kassassin, Tel-el-Kebir, Tamai, Tamanieb, the attack upon McNeil's zareeba—Durrance lived again through the good years of his activity, the years of plenty. Within that country on the west the long preparations were going steadily forward which would one day roll up the Dervish Empire and crush it into dust. Upon the glacis of the ruined fort of Sinkat, Durrance had promised himself to take a hand in that great work, but the desert which he loved had smitten and cast him out. (284)

Echoing Bhabha’s discussion of re-cognition, Mason’s description of Durrance’s return to the Sudan attempts to bridge the resounding failure to quell the Mahdi Rebellion with a fragmented statement concerning the Empire’s bright future, which Mason underscores through extremely violent language such as “crush into dust.” Drifting back to the East with no official role, Durrance is still able to reap some abstract benefit from Britain’s role in the Sudan, though bearing the physical scars of the time before the desert cast him out—literally reentering the colonial space blind to the ramification and ultimate outcome of the British imperial project. Rather than acknowledging that his blindness was a warning against intervention into the colonized territory, Durrance is drawn closer to the land, an amalgamation of wounded pride, opportunity, and redemption indicative of late-Victorian British imperialism.

In the transition from the novel to Korda's adaptation, Durrance's blindness remains a pivotal scene of British ambivalence toward the Sudan campaign. However, Korda positions the sequence as his central examination of an imperfect Empire necessary to safeguard Europe from the encroachment of fascism. As Durrance (Ralph Richardson) climbs an enormous rock formation in order to survey the desert for Mahdi rebels, Korda shoots him in extreme long shots in which the vast landscape seemingly consumes the khaki-clad officer. Wiping sweat from his brow with a white handkerchief, Durrance is clearly affected by the region's intense heat, but continues to search the desert for the enemy through his binoculars. When he notices a small band of Mahdi rebels approaching, a startled Durrance drops his handkerchief hundreds of feet below him, a seemingly unconscious act of surrender. Frantically looking for the handkerchief, Durrance's hat rolls down the formation, accompanied by an ominous musical score—the trappings of Western civilization coming undone when confronted with the colonized landscape. As the rebels suddenly change direction, Korda cuts to an eyeline match of Durrance looking straight into the sun. With Durrance quickly overcome by the heat, Korda then shifts to a subjective shot from Durrance's point of view in which the landscape before him quickly dissolves into a mirage like blur as he collapses. Rather than act merely as a victim of the Sudanese desert's climate, the Durrance of Korda's film loses his sight only after he is forced to acknowledge the presence of the Other. Isolated and no longer able to perceive his enemy as a faceless entity, Durrance realizes that he is ill-equipped and too far outnumbered to handle the situation, unable to reconcile the limitations of the colonial discourse in which he is steeped. With his privileged imperial position dissolved by the landscape and the presence of the enemy,

Durrance's blindness sets in, an acknowledgement of the harsh realities of the imperial project that originally led to Kitchener's campaign.

Yet, deviating sharply from Mason's novel, the Durrance of Korda's film does not return to the Sudan in search of some role within the colonial enterprise. Instead, he returns home to come to terms with his blindness, eventually "learning to read this Braille stuff." Sharing brandy with Dr. Sutton (Frederick Culley), an old friend of Harry's deceased father, Durrance demonstrates his knowledge of Braille by reading out loud one of Caliban's speeches from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

Through the addition of this sequence absent from Mason's novel, Korda highlights the contradictions and conflicts of his reticent advocacy of the post-World War I British Empire. Irreparably affected by British imperial endeavors, Durrance identifies with a speech the slave Caliban gives in Shakespeare's play as two of the King's servants mistake him for a monster. However, rather than align himself with a subaltern figure in the work of an author native to the Sudan or another colonized territory, Durrance opts

for a native character in the work of England's most canonical author, recalling Bhabha's characterization of the English book as a document that, "Installs the sign of appropriate representation: the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative. But the institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Enstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition" (149). In addition, as Roberto Fernández Retamar writes, Caliban's name derives from a combination of the American Carib Indian tribe and the word "cannibal," positioning the character for Shakespeare as "a savage and deformed slave who cannot be degraded enough" (67). Within this context, Durrance's identification with Caliban in the film represents a subtle acknowledgement of the imperial project as a deviant aberration that conforms to Korda's post-World War I imperial critique. Translated into Braille, the copy of *The Tempest* from which Durrance recites acts simultaneously as a sign of the seamlessness and unity of Empire and of its variations and subversions, accenting the inability of full understanding between the colonizer and the Other but positing a space of alliance so necessary for Korda during the time period in which the film was made.

Working within the tradition of his source texts, Kapur's film excises the ambiguous anxieties over the imperial project that Durrance's blindness exemplifies for Mason and Korda, presenting it as a politicized manifestation of the British Empire's rote violence. During the film's opening, a title card stating, "By 1884 over a quarter of the earth's surface had been conquered by the British army..." appears on screen scored to Arabic music. The film then cuts to a blurred panoramic shot of what appears to be a battle, its colors desaturated except for flashes of red, the color of British military uniforms. Kapur then quickly focuses and colorizes the image, revealing it to be an

intense rugby match between a regiment of British soldiers, including Feversham (Heath Ledger) and Durrance (Wes Bentley). Through his focus on the rugby match, Kapur alludes to the concept of “muscular Christianity,” a Victorian movement that sought to incite fervor for the imperial project by revering, in the words of Donald E. Hall, “Physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape the world,” in males domestically through activities such as sports, military drills, and religious services (5). From the very beginning of the film, Kapur interrogates the inseparable nature of these Victorian social mores and the broader imperial project, presenting it as an extension of the economic and political relationships between metropolitan cities such as London and country towns. As Raymond Williams writes:

The ‘metropolitan’ states, through a system of trade, but also through a complex of economic and political controls, draw food and, more critically, raw materials from these areas of supply, this effective hinterland, that is also the greater part of the earth’s surface and contains the great majority of its peoples. Thus a model of city and country, in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and is seen but also challenged as a model of the world.

(279)

Engaging with ideas similar to those that found muscular Christianity, Williams positions domestic activities seemingly far-removed from the Sudanese landscape such as the rugby match as a microcosm of larger imperial endeavors. Despite the accusations of critics that Kapur fails to engage with the British Empire in a discernable manner, the film demonstrates Williams’s characterization of Empire’s politics. Whether playing

rugby in the countryside or fighting Mahdis in Sudan, the structure of Empire and the undercurrent of violence necessary to maintain it remain intact.

Through establishing the interwoven nature of domestic and colonial politics from the opening of the film, Kapur frames Durrance's blindness not as a manifestation of imperial anxieties and confusion, but as a distinct failure of the British Empire as a whole. Under the impression that his regiment has fended off a Mahdi attack, Durrance leads his troops through the Sudanese desert, when suddenly a group of rebels hiding in the sand ambush the army. Caught in the fog of war, Durrance attempts to shoot his rifle, but it backfires in his face, blinding him as he fails to meet the muscular Christian ideals of, according to C.J. W.-L. Wee, "primitive vigor" that he displayed on the rugby field (68). Left for dead and exposed to the desert's harsh climate, Durrance collapses—near death until Harry secretly pulls him to safety and nurses him back to health. For Kapur, Durrance is not merely a victim of the Sudanese climate that eventually cements his blindness, but of the failures of British technology that, in this case, quite obviously demonstrate the deficiencies in Empire's masculine force.

In sharp contrast to the semi-enlightened veteran depictions of Durrance in his source texts, Kapur uses Durrance's return to England as a catalyst to expose the hollow nature of the Empire's social structure. The Durrance of Kapur's film does not return to the East to profit; nor does he come to terms with his blindness and learn to articulate British colonial discourse in a new form. Instead, he returns home a broken man, spending the remainder of the film relearning the quotidian aspects of British life before his battle injury. As Ethne (Kate Hudson) learns of Durrance's return to England, Kapur introduces him via an eyeline match in which Ethne stares in shock as Durrance

awkwardly rides a horse in her barn while staring blankly. For the remainder of the film, Durrance's appearances revolve around his reintroduction to a social structure which has no place with him: he fumbles his way through his study, he takes rides with Ethne always leading the way, and, during his reunion with Harry, he proudly displays his ability to pour himself a cup of tea, an action which feminizes Durrance and relegates his interactions with Empire merely to the consumption of its commodities. As Mason writes, the Durrance of Kapur's film is truly "deprived of every occupation"—including those of a colonial nature—a figure in the margins of an imperial structure that has all but forgotten him, which allows Kapur to indict the very foundations of Empire by demonstrating how its domination extends to even those within its most esteemed ranks.

While Durrance negotiates the relationship between British and colonized space in all three adaptations, Mason's novel largely hinges on how domestic space and property ownership accumulated through marriage are vital to his characters' social statuses. Given Williams's view on the inseparable nature of imperialist policies and the internal politics of the British nation-state, the roles of marriage, financial stability, and property within Victorian culture are endowed with greater associations with Empire. For much of Victorian literature, marriage functions as a competition between two male suitors over the right to claim a central female character as a bride, demonstrating, in the words of Sedgwick, "the triangular traffic in women" (159). According to Sedgwick:

For each woman, the sexual narrative occurs with the overtaking of an active search for power of which she is the *subject*, by an already-constituted symbolic power of exchange between men of which her very

misconstruction, her sense of purposefulness, proves her to have been the designated *object*" (159).

Sedgwick's contention opens up a discourse on masculine power dynamics within Victorian literature, but the already-constituted symbolic power of which she speaks needs further clarification. Rather than act as figures already established within the symbolic power structure of the British Empire, the male characters of many Victorian novels are—similar to Harry after his act of cowardice—partially marginalized figures themselves, suffering from inferior class positions or public economic and political humiliations that have greatly damaged their reputations.

In order to improve or restore their agency, these male characters initiate Sedgwick's triangular traffic in women, using the marriage union to fuel increased accumulation of property and status, a factor that complicates the status of the Victorian woman as object. As Jeff Nunokawa writes:

Trauma ensues there when wives are called commodities, not because they are thus cast as property, but rather because such property is thus cast among the uncertainties of the marketplace. Trouble arises when women are cast as such property in the Victorian novel less because the proprietor's grasp goes too far when it reaches her than because that grasp is always loosened when the shadow of the commodity falls upon the object that it holds. Undoing the boundary between the woman a man loves and the property he owns, the mercenary marriage dissolves the distinction between a species of property that is normally, or at least normatively, secure and one that is bound to be lost. (7)

Within this context, the females of Victorian novels occupy a precarious position in which marginalized males must simultaneously use them as objects to reenter the framework of Empire while defending them against the marketplace that fuels the imperial project at home and abroad. What arises is a situation in which the male figure such as Harry attains just enough agency to occupy a secure class position, allowing him to create an isolated domestic space that attempts to protect his wife and property from Empire's overarching forces, a space both inside and outside of the British Empire.

Stemming from a line of generals immortalized in portraits that "looked down upon this last Feversham, summoning him to the like service," Harry occupies a stable position in British society with a substantial inheritance and a prestigious military commission (12). However, Harry's greatest claim is his engagement to the Irish Ethne Eustace, a pending marital union that allows Harry to perceive her hometown of Ramelton "with a great curiosity and almost pride of ownership, since it was here that Ethne lived, and all these things were part and parcel of her life" (28). Already firmly entrenched within the framework of the British Empire, Harry has access to its colonizing force, which Mason underscores by having him lay claim to the Irish Ethne whose status as an heiress engages with what Elsie B. Michie refers to as "an unceasing negotiation between the material appeals readers knew individuals felt and the immaterial values novels insist they desired" (423). As both heiress and a colonial subject, Ethne serves as a compromise in the negotiation Michie discusses, able to provide Harry with material comforts while maintaining the illusion of immaterial appeals like love because of her colonized status. Yet, regardless of Ethne's dual role as heiress and inferior, Harry eventually becomes marginalized when he resigns his military commission. Disowned

by his father and sent the feathers that symbolize his cowardice by his friend and fellow officers Captain Trench and Lieutenants Willoughby and Castleton, Harry loses his claim to Ethne when she breaks off their engagement by giving him a fourth feather. Divested of his family ties and the Irish estate that his marriage would yield, Harry loses his privileged position, ousted from Empire's power structure. Viewing a renewed engagement with Ethne as central to reclaiming his place in Empire, Harry secretly follows his former fellow officers to the Sudan, hoping to prove his bravery and initiate his plan that "if the three take back their feathers. . . why, then she perhaps might take hers back too" (52).

In channeling his hope for redemption through the restoration of his engagement with Ethne, Harry echoes Nunokawa's concept of "living property":

What can't be held *to* the heart for long can be held *in* it forever: property that can't be kept up in the external world is sustained in the figure of a woman whose dimensions are defined less by the material shapes of house or body than by a lover's fond thoughts or sorrowful memory.

Correlatively, the limits that the demands of circulation impose on the power of ownership are circumvented when its field of operation is not a physical object, but rather the incessant fantasies of "living property." (13)

Losing his claim to property because of public humiliation, Harry positions Ethne as "living property," endowing an extremely physical mission with a symbolic dimension. Though Ethne broke off the engagement, Harry's view of her as living property circumvents the logistics of the market forces that govern Empire, giving his mission a loftier purpose. As Willoughby tells Ethne on his return home after encountering Harry in

the Sudan and taking back his feather: “Feversham’s disgrace was, on the face of it, impossible to retrieve. . .No, Miss Eustace, it needed a woman’s faith to conceive the plan—a woman’s encouragement to keep the man who undertook it to his work” (130).

In a similar manner to British nationalism’s role in the material endeavors of Empire, the fond thoughts and memory of Ethne fuel Harry’s mission, allowing him to eventually restore his engagement with Ethne and, as a result, his claim to her family estate in Ireland. He has overcome the consequences of his actions through the act of marriage, renovating Ethne’s family property and using his experience in the Sudan to write a history of the war, capitalizing on, as the Feversham family friend Lieutenant Sutch tells Harry’s father, the fact that “he was present while the war went on. Moreover, he was in the bazaars, he saw the other side of it” (282). Though Harry ends the novel with his ties to the British military still severed, the agency he has gleaned from his union with Ethne leads him to a literary career, allowing him to create metaphorical imperial spaces for a living while in the comfort of the domestic imperial space that his marriage fostered.

Considering Mason’s depiction of Ethne as a largely colonized subject of Empire, both Korda and Kapur dilute Ethne’s importance in their narratives to place more focus on the Egyptian Sudan’s colonized population, changing her ethnicity and presenting her as less central to the motivations for Harry’s journey. The daughter of General Burroughs (C. Aubrey Smith) and brother of Harry’s feather-sending comrade Peter (Donald Gray) in Korda’s film, Ethne, (June Deprez) is a fairly marginalized character, important only so far as Harry’s marriage to her unites the film’s two most powerful military families. In the wake of Harry (John Clements) resigning his commission,

General Burroughs shuns his future son-in-law in the presence of Ethne, leaving her to break off the engagement: “When you did this, did you believe that I should be proud of you. . . We were born into a tradition, a code that we much obey even if we don’t believe, and we must obey it, Harry, because of the pride and happiness of everyone surrounding us.” Remarking that he “quite understands,” Harry tells Ethne, “There should be four feathers here,” before plucking a feather from a duster on a table. Harry raises it to Ethne’s face, ordering her, “Give it to me.” She refuses and Harry takes the feather, leaving Ethne alone in her family estate’s foyer.

Though working within the framework of Korda’s depiction of Ethne, Kapur treats her in an equally marginal manner, foregoing not only a scene of her giving Harry a feather in the film but also any background into her family’s history despite her consistent presence at military functions and friendship with Jack.³³ While he retains such a depiction of Ethne, Kapur also subtly acknowledges her marginalized status from the beginning of the film. After the rugby match and a scene of post-game locker room talk, the film cuts to a lavish ball for the soldiers. Following this parade of imperial manners and social mores, Kapur visually foreshadows the love triangle among Harry, Jack, and Ethne, through the execution of a scene of the three dancing on the ledge of an estate’s terrace. When Jack and Harry pass her between them—Sedgwick’s triangular traffic in action again—Ethne stumbles as Kapur cuts to a low- angle shot that reveals just how fatal the fall would have been had it occurred. Out of the arms of her two potential suitors, Ethne reaches the precipice of death, unable to extricate herself from the situation until Harry takes her in his arms.

In their depictions of Ethne, Korda and Kapur exhibit what Oyèrónké Oyêwùmí

refers to as the “bio-logic” of Western culture in which, “the very process by which females were categorized and reduced to ‘women’ made them ineligible for leadership roles” (341-342). Working from Oyêwùmí’s colonial hierarchy of men (European), women (European), native (African men), and Other (African female), Ethne occupies a complicated role in both films, firmly rooted within the colonial system, but stripped of agency to the point that she can neither officially present Harry with his feather of cowardice as her brother did or escape the love triangle in which she finds herself.³⁴ While both Ethnes remain important to the affections and motivations of Harry and Jack, the actions of their romantic doubles take place within the masculine discourse of colonialism. Within this context, the outrage both Ethnes express, but never take actual action over appears much clearer. In opting to resign his military commission, Harry not only removes himself from the opportunities of military life but also effectively destroys the only role in the colonial project for his fiancée, leaving her adrift in the world of tradition the Ethne of Korda’s film so passionately discusses.

While my discussion of Durrance and Ethne’s relationship to the British and Sudanese landscapes may seem indirect at best, these two characters provide Kapur with his most intricate and pointed critique of the British imperial project in the film. For an adaptation occurring equally in England and the Sudanese desert, Kapur’s film neglects to focus any attention on the process of travel between the two locations, save the scene in which Harry surreptitiously watches his regiment’s ship depart. However, transportation between England and the Sudan acts as a fundamental trope integral to the film, largely through Kapur’s use of the letters Durrance and Ethne write to each other throughout the narrative. For the British Empire, the lands of the upper Nile, including

the Sudan, were, according to Boddy, “A liminal zone, capable of erupting into savagery at any time” (176). While military mastery of the region was certainly vital to Britain’s domination of such regions, the transplantation of domestic bureaucracies into the territory serves as an indicator of a much more stable control of the region than even the most successful military campaigns. For Keith Jeffrey, “The establishment of an organized, efficient postal service, complete with stamps, on the model of the British penny post introduced in 1840, is an important indicator (and facilitator) of modernization” (46). In establishing such a lengthy correspondence between Durrance and Ethne, Kapur acknowledges that, despite the embarrassing losses the British suffer in the film, Empire’s presence is strong enough to have already integrated its domestic institutions seamlessly into the region.

Through his focus on the British postal system, Kapur sharply deviates from his source texts. While Harry’s first display of bravery in the novel occurs when he retrieves and delivers a packet of letters between General Gordon and the Mahdi rebels over the general’s surrender and conversion to Islam, the letters reside outside of the scope of the postal service, serving instead as an example of the British erasure of past failures when an officer remarks upon them that “they were hardly worth risking a life for” (87). Likewise, the only letters in Korda’s adaptation are those containing the feathers, which are hand-delivered to Harry and delivered back to their original owners. However, in Kapur’s film, Ethne and Durrance begin to correspond as soon as his regiment is deployed and Harry’s engagement has been broken off. With his affection for Ethne finally manifested, Durrance begins to collect the letters in a pile that he keeps on his person at all times, a source of much amusement to his comrades who rib him when he

takes them out. In the wake of the firearm malfunction and Harry's subsequent rescue of him, the blinded Durrance's first action upon reaching safety is frantically searching for the letters he has dropped. When Harry retrieves them for him, the action marks the first direct contact between the two friends in the Sudan.

Though this focus on the letters does attest to the vast strength and scope of the Empire within the Sudan, Kapur's depiction of the British postal service takes on a less hegemonic effect when viewed in light of Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter.'" For Lacan, the trajectory of a letter acts as a signifying chain that positions its writers and recipients as individuals "more docile than sheep" who "model their very being on the moment of the signifying chain that runs through them" (21). Elaborating on Lacan's contention, Slavoj Žižek applies the purloined letter and its relationship to the signifying chain within the context of a message in a bottle:

This case displays at its purest and clearest how a letter reaches its true destination the moment it is delivered, thrown into the water—its true addressee is namely not the empirical other which may receive it or not, but the big Other, the symbolic order itself, which receives it *the moment the letter is put into circulation*, i.e. the moment the sender "externalizes" his message, delivers it to the Other, the moment the Other takes cognizance of the letter and thus disburdens the sender of responsibility for it.³⁵

In applying Lacan and Žižek's discussions of the purloined letter to the Kapur's film, the director's subversion of the British postal service becomes a potent and extensive critique of the colonialism he intended to demonize. For Durrance and Ethne, the importance of

their correspondence is not the blossoming courtship it documents, but the fact that sending their letters irrevocably ties them to the “big Other” of the British imperial project’s chains of significations. Regardless of their privileged positions, they remain caught within the Real of a structure that subjugates them, albeit in a much less direct manner, than those colonized people of the Empire. Their sentiments, identities, and autonomy are irrelevant to the unbroken chain of significations necessary to Empire’s construction, a factor Kapur highlights when, at the film’s end, Durrance only recognizes the newly returned and restored Harry after he again retrieves the parcel of letters that Durrance haphazardly dropped. Far from neglecting a critique of British colonialism in the film, Kapur interrogates it at the unbroken significations that maintain its foundation, a choice that allows him to decenter the concept of imperialism from merely its late-Victorian iteration and apply it to the world of globalized capital in which his film was produced.

Arabian Performance and the Reinstated Subaltern

Modeled on the tropes of late-Victorian historical fiction, Kapur’s *The Four Feathers* is the first postcolonial film adaptation I have discussed that actually occurs within a depiction of colonized territory. As a result, its presentation of and revision to the figures of the wandering European and native are primary strategies of writing back to the imperial center. For in his quest to reclaim his honor through his Sudanese journey, Harry Feversham must (and does) attempt to disguise himself as various natives from the region, acting as an example of a mobility Said attributes to “The pleasures of imperialism.” As Said writes, “What one cannot accomplish in one’s own Western environment—where trying to live out a dream of a successful quest means coming up

against one's own mediocrity and the world's degradation—one can do abroad" (*Culture* 159). Given the severe break from his social class that his military resignation causes, Harry cannot restore his reputation through any domestic means, forcing him to travel to a land such as the Sudan. However, while traveling through the colonized landscape, Harry's disguise is fundamental to his various levels of success to disprove his accusers in the Sudan. Harry's disguise is, in fact, so necessary that it remains a central component of every rendition of *The Four Feathers*, which allows Kapur's presentation of Harry's performed state to work within and against the traditions of his source texts both by highlighting Harry's difference and by providing a space of representation to previously marginalized Sudanese natives.

Though important to the success of Harry's quest in Mason's novel, Harry's disguise is not as pivotal as in the film adaptations because his time in the Sudan is largely retold indirectly and because it only factors into a few of his plans to prove his bravery. In one of the few instances in the novel when Mason directly discusses Harry, he reveals the disguise his protagonist has undertaken to procure Gordon's letters: "'It will be wise to speak to no one except me,' said the Greek, jingling some significant dollars, and for a long while the two men talked secretly together. The Greek happened to be Harry Feversham, whom Durrance was proposing to visit in Donegal" (61). Through mentioning Harry's Greek disguise in passing, Mason dilutes the importance of the transformation, making it seem as, if not less, important than the "significant dollars" that Harry jingles to the success of his mission. Such a description may mirror Said's claim about the potential to fulfill dreams in colonized lands, yet it also highlights the unacknowledged anxieties Harry, and by extension the British, feels toward the region.

Unable to fulfill his quest under his real identity and unable to pass as Egyptian or Sudanese, Harry settles on an “in-between” ethnicity that recalls Mustapha Chérif’s argument that, for European colonialism, close proximity to the Mediterranean is directly proportional to otherness from the imperial center (38).

In addition to highlighting Harry’s inability to inhabit either the role of colonizer or colonized in his interlocutor state, his disguise also attains a near prophetic pronouncement of his nation’s fate in the region through allusions to the fallen empires of the past. For Britain, the Empires developed during the classical period served as fertile models that founded the nation’s own imperial ideology. As Boehmer writes: “In their plans for enlightened service and development the British discerned the makings of a new Rome. The Romans had laid roads; the British now built railroads and laid telegraph cables. Their rule exhibited inspirational continuities with the past” (40). By traversing a land unable to be governed by the remnants of the Egyptian Empire in the guise of a Greek, Harry retrieves the packet of Gordon’s letters, which highlights an embarrassing breakdown of British imperial control—Mason’s ambivalent presentation of the cyclical domination of the region.

Building upon Harry’s difference from the Sudanese population, Korda’s film spends a great deal of attention on Harry’s transformation into a Sangali—a member of the tribe that the Mahdi allegedly branded and subjected to tongue frenectomies. Knowing that his mission in the Sudan will fail if he does not assume the role of a native, Harry visits an Egyptian doctor who dyes his skin and, in Harry’s first act of bravery in the film, brands Harry with a hot iron. Through feigning muteness and assuming the role of Sangali, Harry is able to blend into the local culture and to experience the savagery of

the British army.³⁶ As the disguised Harry pulls Durrance to safety and slips the envelope containing the feather into his pocket, a group of soldiers mistakes him for a pickpocket and subjects him to a savage beating. Though the disguise is successful, it leaves Harry branded for life with his own battle scar. At the same time, it also forces Harry to surrender his use of English and the agency of Empire built upon it. Becoming a victim of Empire's violence and unable to reveal his ethnicity without foregoing his plan to reenter Empire's society through redemption, Harry's identity becomes contradictory, an ideal opportunity for Korda to inject his compromised views of British imperialism into the film.

Sharply contrasting with his predecessors, the Harry of Kapur's film never even comes close to passing himself off as anything but English. Despite his attempts to become the "other" by foregoing shaving, growing out his hair, and exhibiting a natural tan, it is not Harry's disguise that keeps him safe early in the film, but his employment of a French trafficker and scout who leads him toward Durrance's regiment. Yet, a Sudanese slave and her partner kill the Frenchman in a scene that both mirrors Fanon's characterization of "absolute violence" as the only solution to colonial control and highlights the latent anxieties of the colonial project (*Wretched* 37). When the slave spares Harry because of his earlier role in stopping the trafficker's beating of her, he is left to navigate the desert on his own and quickly succumbs to the heat, which Kapur shoots in extreme long shot to underscore his protagonist's isolation. Even when Harry finally reaches the British outpost, he awkwardly plays dumb as the Egyptians and Sudanese slaves around him speak in languages he does not know, a scene that allows Kapur to satirize the relative ease of Harry blending into the Sudan in Korda's film.

While Kapur uses Harry's failed transformation as an intertextual criticism of his predecessors, he also employs it as a way to engage with the lingering impact of Orientalism on contemporary film audiences. Through the casting of Ledger as Harry, Kapur executes a situation in which an actor from a settler colony in the Pacific Rim acts as a bridge between the Occident and the Orient, exposing the falsity of the binary construction so important to colonial discourse. However, Harry cannot successfully bridge the regions on his own, requiring the aid of a Sudanese character, who positions the opposition to continuing Orientalist discourse as a global unity of colonized peoples rather than the efforts of an individual.

Though Harry's attempt to disguise himself is an abject failure, he still completes his mission in the Sudan and returns home to marry Ethne. But, Harry's success has much more to do with the help he receives from the Sudanese slave Abou Fatma (Djimon Hounsou) than his military training or personal heroism. As *National Review* film critic John O'Sullivan points out in his pan of the film, "Without his [Fatma's] protection, Harry would be a goner, his attempt to redeem his honor and return the four feathers ending in an unknown grave in the desert" (44). A minor character in Mason's novel, Abou Fatma is a native of the region whom Mason introduces as "sleeping under a boulder on the Khor Gwob" (61). Yet, despite his brief appearances in the text, he serves as Harry's informant and assistant, helping him retrieve Gordon's letters and providing knowledge of the landscape without which Harry would have no access. While Abou Fatma is completely absent from Korda's adaptation, Kapur positions him as arguably the central figure of his film, shifting his ethnicity from the mysterious Arab of Mason's novel to a slave who learned English working for the British and has eluded traders, the

Mahdi, and Egyptian forces. In the wake of rescuing Harry after his collapse in the desert, Fatma continues to aid Harry throughout the narrative, protecting him from other slaves and Egyptians who are not fooled by Harry's disguise, helping him track down the regiment, giving him and Colonel Trench (Michael Sheen) a sedative that allows them to escape from a Mahdi prison by feigning death, and even suffering an intense lashing after his attempt to warn Durrance's troops of ambush leads to accusations from feathergiver Lieutenant Willoughby (Rupert Penry-Jones) that he is a Mahdi spy.

While one could easily read Kapur's reintroduction and focus on Abou Fatma as simply giving voice to a marginalized figure in the source texts, his depiction in the film allows Kapur to engage with the unresolved conflict between Islam and the West so indicative of the narrative's setting. Rather than skirt around Islam, Kapur depicts Abou Fatma as a devout Muslim who responds to Harry's constant inquiries into his motivations for help with the refrain, "I had to. God put you in my way." Kapur's portrayal of Abou Fatma mirrors Chérif's advocacy of the acknowledgement of a "friendship" between Islam and the Judeo-Christian world:

There is no inevitable confrontation nor intrinsic clash of civilizations between the two worlds. On the contrary, Islam has participated in the emergence of the modern Western world; through its cultural and spiritual values, it is close to Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman ethics, norms, and principles, regardless of the very real differences, divergences, and uniqueness of each. (21)

Through his depiction of the relationship between Harry and Abou Fatma, Kapur presents a portrait of the Islamic faith largely absent from Hollywood cinema—Post 9/11 or

otherwise. Harry and Abou Fatma make no attempts to convert each other despite openly discussing their religious and cultural beliefs; nor do their beliefs ever appear fundamentally at odds with each other. Instead, the two characters celebrate their differences while forging the bonds of friendship so important to Chérif. As Harry and Abou Fatma sit around a campfire with a group of British-employed Sudanese, Harry inquires about a feather Abou Fatma wears. He responds by informing Harry that he received the feather, not as a symbol of cowardice, but as reward for killing an enemy, an inversion of the Eurocentric discourse that originally led to Harry's journey. Likewise, when resting after tracking the British Army, Abou Fatma responds to Harry's laughter over a God forcing a Muslim to protect an English Christian by telling him that he "laughs like an Englishmen." When Harry inquires, "And how does an Englishman laugh?" Fatma explodes into an exaggerated guffaw similar to the laughter of the Merry Men from Errol Flynn's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). Harry bursts into genuine laughter, soon followed by Abou Fatma as Kapur cuts to an exterior shot of their cave while their blended laughter echoes through the desert. Though the scene began as confrontational, the two allies forge a unity free from the domination of the imperial project.

However, Kapur's central depiction of Harry and Abou Fatma's relationship occurs not during homosocial bonding or battle, but through a seemingly extraneous moment of culture-clash humor. Awakened by the march of troops, Harry bursts out of the cave in search of Abou Fatma. Yelling at him that the troops are leaving, Harry freezes when he finds Abou Fatma engaged in his morning prayers. Waiting for a moment to cut in, Harry embarks on a series of false starts before realizing the length of

the prayer. Not wanting to disrupt his partner, Harry resigns himself to observing the prayer until Abou Fatma finishes. In this moment, Harry both accepts Abou Fatma's difference and recognizes Islam as something other than the fundamentalist Mahdi savagery he and his fellow soldiers remarked upon before deployment. Through this experience, Harry is able to return to England not only with a restored reputation but also a changed outlook. As the film draws to a close, Harry hold hands with Ethne, telling her that "God put her in his way" before cutting to the film's final scene of Abou Fatma riding through the Sudan. Through the juxtaposition of the sequences, Kapur articulates a framework for relationship between "Islam and the West" that preserves differences while fostering a sense of unity capable of overcoming hegemonic forces—be they British, Egyptian, or (within the context of the film's transnational cast) multinational and corporate.

Through his engagement with Mason and Korda's previous iterations of *The Four Feathers*, Kapur uses his adaptation as an interrogation of the evolution of imperial ideologies from the dominance of the British Empire to the hegemony of globalized capital. Yet, Kapur does not seek to reject or excoriate the work of his predecessors. Instead, he cultivates a site of intertextual understanding that evaluates historical precedence and bridges the legacy of colonial discourse with the ramifications European imperialism has had on contemporary politics. In a similar manner to Harry and Abou Fatma's attempts at understanding and ultimate bond, he reaches out on a global scale to collaborators and audience in order to forge a new discourse both within and opposed to the founding ideologies of the imperial project.

6. THREE-WORLDS THEORY CHUTNEY: *OLIVER TWIST* AS GLOBAL ORPHAN IN TIM GREENE'S *BOY CALLED TWIST*

These final two chapters discuss how two vastly different reworkings of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* serve as distinct examples of the problems of adaptation as a method of resistance. We first turn to Tim Greene's 2004 adaptation of Dickens's novel *A Boy Called Twist* and the director's use of orphanhood to address both the poverty and AIDS epidemic that erupted in the wake of Britain's imperial control of the region and the contemporary cooption of the "global orphan" by foreign governments and non-governmental aid organizations (NGOs) that frames transnational aid discourse. Applying Dickens's social concerns to the orphans of post-Apartheid South Africa and appropriating Dickens' racial depictions of characters such as Fagin to represent South Africa's black and Muslim communities, Greene's independent film exposes ties between Victorian England's domestic and imperial policies, making parallels to the contemporary dynamic occurring between industrialized countries and developing nations.

Viewing Oliver's marginalized status within the context of postcolonial theory highlights parallels between the domestic orphans of the "other nation" and those colonized by the British imperial project. However, for a South African filmmaker such as Greene, the orphan trope also bears strong ties to the associations between South Africa and the AIDS epidemic that has gained worldwide attention. As Helen Meintjes and Sonja Giese write, "The notion of the orphan (read 'AIDS orphan') as the quintessential vulnerable child in contemporary South Africa (and beyond) lies at the centre both of policy and programming aimed at addressing the impact of AIDS on children and of much of the child rights discourse present in the context of AIDS" (408).

While the estimated 1.4 million children who become AIDS orphans in South Africa each year create a host of issues ranging from orphanage funding and to increased bullying and mental disorders among AIDS orphans, the group has remained largely understudied and abstractly defined (Cluver and Orkin 1191). At the same time, the image of the South African child orphaned by AIDS has shifted into the idea of the “global orphan” that, while serving as a potent symbol to attract international NGO and charity resources in much the same way as the Victorian Era Poor Law orphan, complicates response to a localized issue by stripping the nuances away from such orphans living in South Africa (Meintjes and Giese 421). For as the pathos-driven image of the (predominantly black and “coloured”) global orphan dominates AIDS relief discourse, vital local issues such as negotiating psychological and medical aid with the Malawian treatment of death with silence or Zulu customs of sequestering a child from the dying become neglected (Van der Heijden and Swartz 46).

With the concept of the global AIDS orphan echoing David Harvey’s discussion of NGO’s as “elitist, unaccountable, and by definition distant from those they seek to protect or help, no matter how well-meaning they may be” as they propagate a form of social problem “privatization,” Greene’s presentation of the South African orphan in *Boy Called Twist* appears as a viable, multifaceted alternative that eschews the transnational myths of orphanhood that control neocolonial and neoliberal representations of South Africa (Harvey *Spaces* 51-52). Bridging Dickens’s portrayal of Victorian orphanhood with the shadow of the global orphanhood, Greene’s *Twist* acts as a distinctly local orphan eschewing the victimization and cypherlike purity of his predecessors.

Published in 1837 as Victoria ascended the throne, Dickens's *Oliver Twist* may appear as a novel not only tangentially related to colonialism but also critical of the imperial project. Throughout the text, Dickens only references the Empire when child thief ringleader Fagin mentions "lagging" (exile) to Australia as a punishment for the captured Artful Dodger and when Oliver's caretaker, Mr. Brownlow, journeys to the West Indies to gather information about Oliver's evil half-brother Monks, who made his fortune and owns an estate there (290). Yet, while the novel's associations between the Empire's territories and nefarious characters seemingly function as subtle attacks on the project as a whole, the novel remains firmly rooted in the tradition of early Victorian literature that attempts to negotiate anxieties over both England's newly minted female leader and the nation's imperial endeavors. As Carolyn Dever writes, anxieties over Queen Victoria's rise to power led to an increased focus on the female body in British literature, producing "an analogy between the Queen's excessive body and the nation's excessive Empire" that led to an "overdetermined identification of Victoria as domestic ideal" (8). Within this context, Dickens's tale of the orphaned child struggling to find his identity in the wake of his mother dying in childbirth takes on a far greater significance for the formation of British imperialism. For while Agnes Fleming, "imprinted her cold white lips passionately on his forehead; passed her hands over his face; gazed wildly around; shuddered; fell back—and died" in the first few pages of the novel, the force of the ensuing narrative revolves around her—much like the newly minted Queen—transcending the physical limitations of her body and becoming legitimized by the force of law in the form of Oliver's birthright (18). Despite its seeming resignation from colonial discourse, Dickens's text is fundamentally about the formation of the Victorian

imperial ideology that would steer the Empire into an unprecedented period of expansion and conquest—creating a very similar sense of imprisonment for writers and filmmakers attempting to reappropriate the text as a foundation for resistance.

In order for a film adaptation to successfully negotiate the colonial trappings of a source text like *Oliver Twist*, it must acknowledge the legacy of the imperial space within which it is working. Yet, defining resistance against the legacies of what Hardt and Negri refer to as “The power of Eurocentrism” in which “Even Indians (and Indonesians, Peruvians, and Nigerians too) have to measure themselves by the standard of European identity” is difficult to articulate (*Multitude* 128). If, as Harvey contends, “place” acts as a localized, oppositional “other,” then the most effective form of resistance lies not in a text in which a self-exile, Western-educated author or film auteur alone speaks *about* a nation but in a text that, though guided by a singular authorial presence, attempts to include the complexities of a particular place against colonial and imperial discourses, in effect, speaking *to* a larger conversation taking place in the nation of origin that can extend to those from other nations (*Spaces* 49). Such a strategy echoes Hardt and Negri’s articulation of singularity as the most cohesive strategy to oppose a transitional imperialism built on the foundations of Eurocentrism. As Hardt and Negri write:

This singularity does not mean, however, that the world is merely a collection of incommunicable localities. One we recognize singularity, the common begins to emerge. Singularities do communicate, and they are able to do so because of the common they share. We share bodies with two eyes, ten fingers, ten toes; we share life on this earth; we share capitalist regimes of production and exploitation; we share common dreams of a

better future. Our communication, collaboration, and cooperation, furthermore, not only are based on the common that exists but also in turn produce the common. (128)

Through this process of singularity, a film adaptation of a colonial text indirectly about the imperial project acknowledges the structure at its source while combating it with an inclusive perspective that attempts to reconcile the disparate culture positions within its nation from an industrial position not beholden to a national film industry or monolithic corporation with a global reach. Rather than attempt to define and propagate an image of the nation with a global audience in mind, the filmmakers behind such adaptations foreground their material's relationship to place, highlighting multiple perspectives by utilizing the collaborative processes of film production.

Considering that Hardt and Negri's primary example of singularity stems from protests over evictions and utility cutoffs in Chatsworth, South Africa, in which Black South Africans and South African Indians mobilized around the chant, "We are not Indians, we are the poors. We are not Africans, we are the poors" that the most prominent example of a singularity-based film adaptation would hail from South Africa attests to the long-term implementation of place-based resistance in the nation (*Multitude* 135). Shifting the novel's setting from London to Cape Town, Greene's film follows the orphan Twist through a South Africa-accented version of Dickens's narrative in which Blacks, "coloureds," Afrikaners, and various Muslim communities engage with identity in the wake of Apartheid. Though the film eventually screened at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival and bears a strong resemblance in structure to David Lean's 1948 film adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, it never received international distribution, likely due to Greene's stated

interest of making the film primarily about Cape Town's "local sound and color" (*Proudly South African* 2004). Eschewing national funding or coproduction deals with multinational film studios, Greene financed the film through an unprecedented strategy of standing at intersections and seeking individual investors from a multitude of ethnic origins (*Proudly South African* 2004). Though such financing methods appear unorthodox even to independent filmmakers in places such as the United States with no national film board, Greene's methods were revolutionary for South Africa, a nation under, as Ntongela Masilela and Isabel Balseiro write, the near total hegemony of "an unrepresentative white minority, consisting not only of diehard upholders of the Apartheid system but also of white liberals and progressives as well, in their roles as academics, as critics, as anthologists, as impresarios, as gallery owners and publishers and as consultants of those who own virtually all the means of cultural production" (2).

While Greene acted as both writer and director of the film and admittedly belongs to the unrepresentative white minority that Masilela and Balseiro discuss, his sensitivity to South African's multiethnic sense of "place" and active attempt to create a film representative of the nation's diversity marks a distinct shift from the other film adaptations discussed in this project. In cultivating a unified sense of place similar to the "we are the poor movement" that preceded the film's release, Greene ceases to act as authorial spokesperson for his nation while favoring collective production over engagements with the Eurocentric, globalized culture industry. Consequently, Greene was able to transcend the problematic racial depictions of other Afrikaner directed films such as Gavin Hood's adaptation of Athol Fugard's novel *Tsotsi* (2005) and Neill Blomkamp's Apartheid allegory *District 9* (2009) that eschewed direct discussion of

settler colonial cultural dominance.³⁷ Though never reaching the international audience of his contemporaries, Greene's film is a prime example of a postcolonial revision that complicates its associations to past and present imperialisms while working toward a singularity that represents the local and serves as global model of resistance.

The "Singular" Orphan of *Boy Called Twist*

Considering independent cinema's associations with the outside margins of popular culture, what is most striking about Greene's adaptation is its utter lack of narrative and stylistic experimentation and absence of overt social and political critique. Greene makes no attempt to either radicalize Dickens's source text or integrate a colonized perspective into a work of Empire literature ala Nair, Hogan, and Kapur. Instead, the film not only transplants *Oliver Twist* into a South African context but also follows a nearly identical structure as David Lean's 1948 film adaptation of the novel, resulting in a film that, apart from its narrative structure, seems wholly removed from Empire's influence.³⁸ Yet, Greene's seeming fidelity to Dickens and Lean serves as an acknowledgement of the omnipresent cultural influence of the Empire over colonial nations, positioning his film as an intervention into strategies of negotiating a coherent, all-inclusive South African identity that situates the nation's colonial past in conjunction with its future. Through his choice to mine Lean's adaptation as a source text as well as the original novel, Greene also engages with a filmmaker whose early-career adaptations of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* (1946) depict a Victorian England inundated with scenes of bright sunlight, a sanitized historical portrait that reveres a society built on the profits of imperialism during the anxiety of the British Empire's fall as it acts as, in the words of Brian McFarlane "a metaphoric letting in of light on British

life at large after the rigours of the war” (111).³⁹ Reappropriating Dickens’s source text and engaging with an adaptation made a decade after the Statute of Westminster declared South African independence, Greene executes the adaptation not by writing back to the imperial center but by writing through the center of colonial discourse, endowing the film with an aware yet nonabrasive depiction of national identity.

Greene’s primary method of situating his nation within and outside of the British Empire is his extension of Dickens’s career-long obsession with orphans into the context of a South Africa in which the orphan serves as a vital symbol of the nation’s difference from “the West” and solidification of its status as a developing nation. For Dickens, the orphan acted as a trope that engaged with the importance of the hierarchal family structure at the center of both Victorian society and the areas under the paternalistic dominion of the British Empire (Ashcroft 190). In the case of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens’s focus on orphans also allowed him to directly attack the Poor Law Board that served as the book’s central target through subverting the status of the orphan. According to Laura Peters orphans underwent the symbolic role of “the child of the Poor Law Board” through the Board’s emphasis on downtrodden orphans in their rhetoric (Peters 8). Throughout the novel, Dickens defines Oliver’s interaction with such forms of social authority almost entirely in the terms of family (Peters 43). Desiring to rid himself of Oliver after the young boy’s iconic request for more gruel, Bumble the Beadle plans to unload the boy onto the nearest tradesman in need of an apprentice. Relating this fate to the trembling orphan, Bumble explains the concept of apprenticeship:

The kind and blessed gentlemen which is so many parents to you, Oliver, when you have none of your own: are going to ‘prentice you: and to set

you up in life, and make a man of you: although the expense to the parish is three pound ten!—three pound ten, Oliver!—seventy shillin’s—one hundred and forty sixpences!—and all for a naughty little orphan which nobody can’t love. (33)

While the concept of becoming “a’prentice” terrifies Oliver and leaves him trembling, Bumble attempts to dictate the terms of Oliver’s exploitation within the context of the family as a way to position employment as an establishment of a family unit, an association Dickens undercuts when Oliver’s apprenticeship to undertaker Mr. Sowerberry swiftly ends when Oliver collects “his whole force into one heavy blow” and attacks the elder apprentice Noah Claypool over his remark that Oliver’s mother was “a regular right-down bad’un” (52). Despite Bumble’s characterization of apprenticeship as a familial enterprise, it is ultimately Oliver’s recognition of an absence of family in his current situation that leads to his resistance and subsequent journey to find a family structure whether through Fagin as patriarch who refers to Oliver as “my dear” or the surrogate families of Maylies and Brownlows that will reintegrate him into Victorian society.

Through this portrayal of orphans as exploited individuals outside the legitimate framework of Victorian society that Sheila Smith refers to as “The Other Nation” of the lower classes that Londoners refused to see, Dickens’s descriptions of orphan characters such as Oliver also often bear close associations with the slaves that drive the economies of colonized territories such as the West Indies so vital to Monks’s social position. As Bumble delivers Oliver to Sowerberry’s shop, Dickens writes:

Mr. Sowerberry was closeted with the board for five minutes; and it was arranged that Oliver should go to him that evening “upon liking,”—a phrase that means, in the case of a parish apprentice, that if the master find, upon a short trial, that he can get enough work out of a boy without putting too much food into him, he shall have him for a term of years, to do what he likes with.

When little Oliver was taken before “the gentlemen” that evening and informed that he was to go, that night, as general house-lad to a coffin-maker’s; and that if he complained of his situation, or ever came back to the parish again, he would be sent to sea: there to be drowned, or knocked on the head, as the case might be... (39)

In his characterization of Oliver in purely economic terms, Dickens provides a clear example of the extensions of domestic policy into colonized territory so central to Williams work. As long as Oliver conforms to the wishes of “the gentlemen,” he can maintain a position in servitude that contributes to Sowerberry, Bumble, and the board’s agency. However, the local board also retains the power to send Oliver to the colonies via the vague otherness of “the sea,” in effect, benefiting from his labor if he survives the journey. While firmly entrenched in the hierarchy in which early Victorian England processes its fringe subjects, the landscape outside the boundaries of the island, as Dickens’s description indicates, remain somewhat controlled by the same officials from London despite its status as a mysterious place where the Empire sends its rebels and refuse.

If, as Wendy S. Jacobson contends, Oliver comes from the modern tradition of “the empty, eroticized, androgynous child and “is looked on by everyone,” this gaze of authority belonging to those such as Bumble that controls Oliver acts in a similar manner as the colonial gaze that Bhabha discusses (36). Consequently, it is only in the instances when Oliver engages in gazing upon others, when Fagin sees that “the boy’s eyes were fixed on his in mute curiosity; and although the recognition was only for an instant—for the briefest space of time that can possibly be observed—it was enough to show the old man that he had been observed” as “the Jew” peruses a box of his sacred treasures, and when he gazes “with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go” at the Artful Dodger stealing from Mr. Brownlow—that Oliver encounters direct moments of confrontation (67-68, 73). Applying Bhabha’s discussion of the “displacing gaze of the disciplinary double” to Dickens’s novel, Oliver acts as a figure who, while subjugated by every form of Victorian authority including the family, uses these moments of gazing to isolate “some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself,” forcing those who attempt to erase or overlook his existence as a member of the “other nation” into a direct acknowledgement of his presence (123).

Working with a similar concept of a “colonized” Oliver from the beginning of his film, Greene directly deals both with the continuing influence of imperial policies on South Africa and the role of his nation in the globalized world through his depiction of the orphanage, Weltevreden. After the scene of Twist’s mother’s death that opens the film, Greene cuts to a low, straight-on angle shot of a group of orphans playing “Ring around the Rosie” in which only the children’s feet are visible. As the camera begins to pan, the feet of an Afrikaner woman in high heels bursts into the frame, disbanding the

circle on her way up the stairs to the orphanage's entrance. Upon reaching the door, the woman, who is actually Weltevreden's director, Mrs. Corlet (Terry Nortan), finds a black nurse holding the baby Twist lovingly. With the nurse looking at her boss guiltily, Corlet stoically censures her: "Have we or have we not discussed mothering the babies? . . . Sorry doesn't help. Just don't do it. God I wonder why I bother." In establishing the orphanage, Greene economically situates it as a multifaceted space in which the various imperial powers that have asserted dominion over South African merge into one bureaucratic entity. Named after a city in the Netherlands, the orphanage is run by a woman whose lineage is clearly rooted in Britain, a coupling that defines the space entirely through an amalgamation of South Africa's original Dutch and British colonizers. The harsh tone in which Corlet addresses the nurse appears to characterize her as a simplistic and latently racist Afrikaner, yet Greene seeks to humanize her with comments she makes directly after the scolding. Noticing the nurse's humiliation, Corlet responds by saying, "It's to protect new patients. They die you can't love them. Some live longer, others not, but they all die. And it will break your heart," before asking the nurse to give the baby some formula and run a PCP, T-Cell count, and other blood tests. While she does not explicitly say it, Corlet's futility-tinged comments about the lifespan of orphans is a direct result of the prominence of AIDS in the nation, which dictates that an orphanage—coincidentally housing no Afrikaner children—must test baby Twist for the virus as well as order him clean formula. Despite her clear knowledge of medical protocol and strict professionalism, Corlet's orphanage is not an affluent NGO entity, a fact Greene makes clear during a meeting between Corlet and the social services agent Mr. Bedel (Goliath Davids) in which she reveals that she hires out orphans for farm work

because “Every cent goes into keeping this place open.” In retaining a bureaucratic structure from the legacy of European imperialism, the orphanage is an attempt to deal with local challenges of a post-Apartheid South Africa such as the AIDS epidemic. Yet, without the support of the global entities of which Harvey is so critical, Corlet propagates the legacy of exploitation of the nation’s non-white population even in a South Africa in which a black citizen such as the stuttering farmer Boese (Ivan Abrahams), to whom Bedel leases the orphans, owns land—Greene’s subtle commentary on the influence of a transnational imperialism that coopts local issues to maintain its own hegemony.

While the ramifications of the AIDS epidemic serve as an undercurrent throughout the film, Greene again avoids a simplistic characterization of his nation by rejecting the idea of the “global orphan” through structuring his film around an orphan not suffering from the disease. As Twist (Jarrid Geduld) makes his journey from Boese’s farm to the funeral parlor of the Afrikaner Mr. Brakwater (Johan Malerbe) to the streets of Cape Town, Greene’s dialogue makes constant references to Twist’s “HIV Negative” papers, a document that both allows for his mobility and his exploitation by the film’s various adults. However, the spectre of childhood AIDS remains apparent throughout the film via Greene’s adaptation of scenes from the novel within the AIDS context, not only when Twist enters the service as a funeral procession leader “since,” in Brakwater’s words, “we’re burying so many children” but also when Twist’s only friend at the orphanage, Dickie (Remi Lawrence) reveals that he cannot join Twist on the journey to Cape Town because he’s dying and “had a dream he went to heaven” and “saw his sister there.”⁴⁰ Though he does not suffer from the disease, the death AIDS causes remains a

source of anxiety for Twist so strong that Greene includes a dream sequences soon after his employment with Brakwater in which a coffin crushes Twist as he is digging a grave.

In establishing the proliferation of AIDS orphans and children suffering from AIDS passed onto to them by birth, Greene acknowledges the pervasiveness of the disease within the country. Yet, Greene refuses to allow the idea of the “global orphan” to stand as the primary depiction of South African children in the film. Instead, he cultivates Twist as a “coloured” child character who, while neither possessing the purity of Dickens’s Oliver as a result of older age and his experiences with AIDS nor suffering from the disease himself, is able to serve as a link the disparate demographics of the nation.⁴¹ Greene first alludes to Twist’s hybridity during Corlet’s naming of him early in the film. After the nurse tells her that the baby has no name, Corlet immediately turns to her bookshelf and moves an index card beside a leather copy of *Oliver Twist*, stating that his name shall be Oliver. When the nurse reminds Corlet that they already have an Ollie, she settles on just calling him Twist. As Greene introduces the other orphans—including the obviously named “Dickie”—he reveals that Corlet’s process for naming orphans involves arbitrarily moving the index card through her library shelf and naming the children after the authors and protagonists of the British canon; Mariner, Silas, Middlemarch, Ollie, Gulliver, Emily, and Charlotte live with Dickie and Twist.⁴² In addition to recalling Bhabha’s characterization of the English Book discussed in chapter 5, Corlet’s naming of Twist is indicative of the character’s hybrid status. He is able to twist the cultural legacy of English colonialism within South Africa’s current social problems while transcending the nation’s racial, cultural, and class barriers to act as a unifying force. In stark contrast to the “global orphan” as indicative of South Africa’s

“otherness” from the West, Twist’s very identity openly flaunts the arbitrariness of British influence while presenting South Africa as a diverse nation with multifaceted local color that can also be applied to the, as Harvey writes, “new systems alliance” formed between nations such as India, Brazil, China, and South Africa as a power force in global politics (Harvey *Spaces* 41).⁴³

Victorian Racial Stereotypes and Singular Ethnicities

Employing Twist’s hybridity as a method of revealing the complex ethnic makeup of a South African largely globally defined by the Apartheid struggles, Greene uses the host of eclectic characters from Dickens’s source text in order to cultivate an inclusive ethnic space through which Twist travels. As an author who was, as Liora Brosh writes, “Obsessed with characters who subvert national boundaries,” Dickens conforms to the type of postcolonial revision of central concern to Greene with relative ease (94). However, through his concern with subverting national boundaries, Dickens often created characters who appeared more stereotype than subversive such *Oliver Twist*’s Fagin, “a very old shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair” (65). Arguably the best-known Jewish character in English literature (with the exception of Shakespeare’s Shylock), Fagin, with his exaggerated nose and red hair, conforms to the description of the stage Jew so popular during the rote anti-Semitism of the early Victorian Era (Stone 450). In addition, Dickens’s Fagin appears an extremely effeminate character through his “playful” manner with the male children and pickpocket game in which he places his valuables near his genitals for the children to retrieve—a sharp contrast to Sikes’s rugged masculinity and Monks’s shadowy colonial business prowess (Brosh 90). Regardless of the enduring critical debate

over whether Dickens's depiction of Fagin is a relatively ambivalent sign of the times (which also extends to the Fagin (Alec Guinness) of Lean's film whose large nose and demeanor bordering on homosexual stereotypes led to severe cuts to the film in the United States), the fact remains that the character Dickens refers to as "The Jew" throughout the majority of the novel is, in the words of Juliet John "the archetypal passionless villain who experiences no constructive emotional connection with others" (118)⁴⁴

With Fagin as the only character in the novel whose ethnicity Dickens explicitly defines, he provides an ideal space for a postcolonial filmmaker such as Greene to revise Victorian treatments of race as well as realize a space of identification for marginalized groups within his own culture. Taking Jay Clayton's view that for postcolonial novelists, Dickens fails at consolidating a "coherent national identity" and instead symbolizes "the madness of contemporary existence" into consideration, and Fagin appears as a potent character for connecting the various forms of imperial control that asserted themselves on nations such as South Africa (159). Sharply deviating from the Dickens and Lean characterizations of Fagin as an effeminate other, the Fagin of Greene's film is a black South African with flowing dreadlocks, an intimidating presence who quite literally towers over the other characters in the film, including Sikes and Monks. Rather than advise Oliver to look to the Artful Dodger, "my dear" because "he'll be a great man himself; and will make you one too," Greene's Fagin serves as a model of cunning masculinity for the boys in his charge (69). Fagin's status as a masculine model is most apparent in his "mock theft" performance for the boys. Wearing a long trench coat and placing objects throughout his body, not just in the genital region, Fagin dares the boys to

trick their leader. Though Fagin does not exert violence against the boys as each comes to try to steal from him, he catches them and looks at them cuttingly, positioning Greene's execution of Dickens's original scene as more similar to a training sequence from a war film than a Victorian stage Jew's comedic performance. In his depiction of Fagin, Greene recalls bell hooks's discussion of the pervasiveness of the violent black male. Discussing Black Panther George Jackson's prison letters, hooks writes that those of African descent who embrace the ethos of violence and criminal activity are not "defying imperialist white-supremacist capital patriarchy; unwittingly they were expressing their allegiance. By becoming violent they no longer have to feel themselves outside the cultural norms" (47).⁴⁵

In light of hooks's view, while Greene's Fagin rewrites the ethnic stereotypes of Dickens's Jewish villain that have remained controversial since the narrative's inception, it seems that Greene may well have displaced the old stereotypes with those so pervasive in the postcolonial world. However, Greene undercuts his unabashed depiction of Fagin as the violent black hooks cautions against by situating him into the broader context of South African politics through Fagin's relationship with the film's other criminal personalities. Though Fagin and Sikes have a contentious relationship in Dickens's novel, their interactions are marked by a sense of mutualism in which the two are vital to each other's endeavors despite the latter's insults, including referring to Fagin's hand as a "withering old claw" that reminds him of being "nabbed by the devil" (297). Suffering from a fever that nearly kills him, Sikes lashes out at Fagin for his neglect:

You've been scheming and plotting away, every hour that I have laid shivering and burning here; and Bill was to do this; and Bill was to do

that; and Bill was to do it all, dirt cheap, as soon as he got well: and was quite poor enough for your work. If it hadn't been for the girl, I might have died. (259)

Though the exchange subtly alludes to Fagin's effeminate qualities through implying that Sikes expects him to assume Nancy's role as caretaker, it also demonstrates that the two men are colleagues, associated with each other in both personal and professional bonds. Yet, in Greene's film Fagin embodies the role of a freelance criminal for the Afrikaner Sykes (Bart Fouche), who only employs Fagin's help with small-time pickpocket operations so that he can focus on larger operations such as burglary. Adapting the aforementioned scene, Greene executes the meeting between Sykes and Fagin (Lesley Fong) at a tavern where Fagin, on his way to meet with the Muslim Monks (Peter Butler), encounters a drunken Sykes at a corner table as the all-white patrons glare at him.⁴⁶ When Fagin asks to sit down, Sykes bellows: "of course I fucking mind" and calls him "old scum" before Fagin ignores him and sits anyway. The two engage in strained conversation until Sykes asks Fagin if Fagin is "interested in a loan out" for Twist on a job that he tells Fagin is "none of your fucking business." Fagin then sees Monks enter and asks Sykes to use his room for the meeting "to make a good impression." Glancing at Monks and needing Twist for his planned burglary, Sykes begrudgingly agrees to Fagin's request with a nod and a "nothing worth stealing in there anyway."

Through his changes to Dickens's source text, Greene works within the tradition of Fanon's characterization of colonialism's effect on the black psyche. As Fanon writes:

For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it upon themselves to remind us that

this proposition has a converse. I say this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (*Black* 110)

Influenced by the lingering ramifications of Apartheid and South Africa's colonial past, Fagin is denied access from a legitimate frame on which to base his identity, left instead to assert his power through assuming a leadership role over black and "coloured" orphans or associating himself within a hierarchy of the criminal underworld in which Sykes maintains a privileged position.

At the same time, Fagin's side dealings with the Muslim Monks are an attempt to form an autonomy outside of the framework imposed upon Fagin by the white minority's hegemony in the nation, an alliance that, albeit criminal in nature, bears a striking resemblance to the "we are the poors" unity indicative of singularity. Discussing Monks in Dickens's novel, Mr. Brownlow characterizes him as follows:

Your mother being dead, I knew that you alone could solve the mystery if anybody could, and as when I had last heard of you were on your own estate in the West Indies- whither, as you well know, you retired upon your mother's death to escape the consequences of vicious courses here- I made the voyage. You had left it, months before, and were supposed to be in London, but no one could tell where. I returned. Your agents had no

clue to your residence. You came and went, they said, as strangely as you had ever done: sometimes for days together and sometimes not for months: keeping to all appearance the same low haunts and mingling with the same infamous herd who had been your associates when a fierce ungovernable boy. (329)

Unlike Dickens's Monks who migrates to a colony to transform his "ungovernable" nature into a for-profit dominance of natives, the Monks of Greene's film has worked to overcome the stigma of an ethnicity that originated in South Africa as a slave class through his successful criminal enterprises (Mason 7). Within this context, Sykes's eventual acquiescence to Fagin's request represents an anxious acknowledgement of the shifting power dynamics of postcolonial South Africa. While, if successful, Monks and Fagin's plan to divest Twist of his inheritance will lead to a legitimate wealth denied to Sykes, such success is only attained through a criminal means indicative of the still dominant racial hierarchy existing in the nation.

Though Monks serves as an example of a Muslim character enmeshed in the criminal underworld of South Africa, Greene's most radical break from Dickens's novel is his depiction of Mr. Brownlow, not as a middle class Victorian gentlemen, but as Ebrahim Bassedien (Bill Curry), a wealthy and devout Muslim who lives in Cape Town's Malay Quarter—a neighborhood of liberal Muslims where miscegenation and tolerance are the norm (Mandivenga 351). While still classified as "coloured" citizens within South African culture, the Malay Muslims and the more conservative Indian Muslims within the nation have used Islam as a way for, according to Suleman Dangor, "socially and ethnically marginalized classes" to "secure status and distinct identity" since the religion

was introduced to the region during the period of Dutch colonization (141). As a result of this distinct identity, Islam in South Africa has served as both a unifying and radical force, opposing Apartheid and creating schools open to children of all ethnicities and religious beliefs, traits that Bassedien embodies (Dangor 144). Described by Dickens as an “absent old gentlemen” who speaks “*like a gentlemen*,” Brownlow not only refuses to press charges against Oliver but also reserves his considerable class power against the vicious magistrate Fang for the sake of his future young charge: “Mr. Brownlow’s indignation was greatly roused; but, reflecting perhaps, that he might only injure the boy by giving vent to it, he suppressed his feelings, and submitted to be sworn in at once” (76-78).⁴⁷ Though Bassedien retains Brownlow’s formidable character, he appears just as involuntarily subjected to the Afrikaner judge’s ill-treatment as Oliver, positioning the courtroom scene as a microcosm of racial injustice in South Africa rather than the heralding of industrial and colonial capitalists such as Brownlow over bureaucratic governmental capitalism that is customary of Dickens’s work (Clayton 148). In sharp contrast, Oliver’s release is not due to Bassedien’s ability to pay for the stolen book, but because the judge wishes to alleviate himself of a case involving “racially inferior” citizens that refuses to conform to the stereotypes that hooks and Fanon discuss.

Under the guidance of Bassedien, who Greene eventually reveals as Twist’s grandfather, the boy adopts traditional Muslim dress and begins to attend the aforementioned schools of the Malay Quarter, becoming integrated within a South African community that embodies resistance to imperial controls as well as an all-inclusive minority population indicative of what Abdulkader Tayov views as “the quest for utopia and representation that preoccupies Islamic politics both in South Africa and

elsewhere” (583). Harnessing the political potential of South African Islam, Greene uses it as a viable location for a singular politics in contrast to the failed forms of resistance embodied by Fagin and Monks. As a hybrid figure who traverses the various “coloured” populations of South Africa, Twist’s constant bouncing between Bassedien and the criminal underworld position him as teetering between the two ideologies held by these parental models, a factor Greene highlights through Twist’s costume changes.⁴⁸ When in Bassedien’s home, the elder discards Twist’s streetclothes while Fagin sells Twist’s pristine white robe and cap to a secondhand shop after he recaptures Oliver. Through this constant allegiance shifting, Twist exemplifies Iqbal Jhazbhay’s discussion of Islam’s concern with a map of borders:

...in the world of Islam, it is increasingly not what is inside the texts of Islam that matters but rather it is the map of the borders—the textualisation of reality—that has come to matter most. This approach to Islam keeps at bay what Nietzsche called the ‘breath of empty space’; these textual borders have taken on more substance as the immateriality of postmodernity spreads. For some critics, this study brings no essentialist Islam; rather, it brings news of the nothingness that lurks outside essentialist Islam. (225)

In the wake of past and present imperial forces, this news of nothingness has clouded methods of resistance in nations such as South Africa. As Greene’s depiction of Fagin and Monks indicates, opposition based on the perversion of the laws dictated by the imperial structure remain tied to the very hierarchies against which individuals rebel, allowing such figures to fall into the same trappings that Harvey discusses. However, by embracing the utopian politics of Bassedien’s Islam, the marginalized can cultivate a

relatively autonomous space such as the Malay Quarter and practice an inclusive politics that advocates a sense of singularity for those hailing from an array of ethnicities and religious positions. While Greene ultimately reveals Twist to belong to the Islamic faith and Bassedien's substantial wealth, the fact remains that without his grandfather's inclusive ideological position that gratefully welcomed the orphan into the fold, his identity would have remained that of a marginalized orphan more akin to the "global orphan" than an autonomous individual moving toward a singular politics within his nation.

CONCLUSION: FROM RESISTANCE TO REAPPROPRIATION IN *OLIVER TWIST*,
Q&A, AND THE CURIOUS CASE OF *SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE*

The day after Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* swept the Golden Globes on a path that would eventually lead the film to win eight Academy Awards and earn \$362 million internationally, film critic David Gritten published an editorial in London's *Daily Telegraph*, proclaiming the worldwide hit, "the first film of the Obama era" for its globalized worldview (2009). As Gritten writes, "The first striking thing about this British-made film is its even-handed, generous spirit of universality. It is set in India and it's about Indians. There is no hint of Merchant Ivory decorum, the predicaments of rich westerners far from home, nor any notion that Boyle and his team were engaged in a David Lean-style imperial adventure in what was once one of the pink regions on the globe" (2009). Yet, despite the article's evisceration of Merchant-Ivory's aesthetic and David Lean's imperial undertones, Gritten resoundingly credits *Slumdog Millionaire*'s success to his own nation, imploring his audience not to forget that the film is, in fact, "a British triumph" (2009). For Gritten, the film's status as an adaptation by British screenwriter Simon Beaufoy of Indian author Vikas Swarup's 2005 novel *Q&A* goes as uninterrogated as his editorial's neocolonial undertones, leading to his positioning of Swarup's source text as merely the rudimentary outline for the film's unprecedented brilliance: "Screenwriter Beaufoy profoundly altered his source material, Indian author Vikas Swarup's agreeable, amusing novel *Q&A*. Swarup's hero was called Ram Mohammed Thomas, a name with Hindu, Muslim and Christian connotations, suggesting an Indian everyman. Beaufoy deliberately plumped for a specifically Muslim hero" (2009).

Despite the drastic changes to Swarup's novel during the adaptation process, discussion concerning the film's relation to the source text was conspicuously absent from the film's criticism as the press opted to focus on coverage of the film's child stars' living conditions and accusations that Boyle's representation of India exploited poverty (Gehlawat 7-8). While Boyle's representation of Mumbai and the film's production practices certainly deserve critical attention, the near-total dilution of Swarup's imperial and neocolonial critique and the lack of media commentary on the alterations indicate a much keener insight into Western media depictions of postcolonial nations than even the most vocal charges of "poverty porn" aimed at the film. Sharing a similar narrative structure as *Slumdog Millionaire*, Swarup's novel uses Ram's appearance on *Who Will Win a Billion?* as a site to negotiate the relationship between India and a globalized entertainment industry in which the Indian version of game show with multiple international iterations becomes integral to the nation's culture. However, while the novel directly engages with the rise of transnational corporate imperialism, it also employs a similar strategy as postcolonial authors such as Rhys and Carey of rewriting a canonical text of colonial discourse—in this case *Oliver Twist*—complete with the Faginesque gangster Maman, who blinds children for use in his street begging con operations, and a Victorian twist ending that allows Swarup to examine the lingering ramifications of British colonialism on an Indian culture now firmly entrenched in the globalized world. Yet, rather than adapt Swarup's nuanced critique of postcolonial India's interactions with the globalized world, Boyle's "British triumph" appears more as a primer on contemporary India for a global audience, an updated late-Victorian adventure tale of the Kipling and Mason variety than a cinematic extension of Swarup's political concerns.

For postcolonial writers such as Swarup, the problematics of resistance become even more compounded when taking into account the relationship between author and the representation of the native land in question. Though born in Allahabad to a middle class family of lawyers, Swarup has spent the majority of his adult life abroad, acting as minister and high commissioner of India in a variety of nations, including England, Pakistan, and—most recently—South Africa. Telling the press, “I’m no Arundhati Roy,” in the wake of *Q&A* and *Slumdog Millionaire*’s success, Swarup explained his intent of a novel he wrote primarily in London as a thriller that displaces Major Charles Ingram’s real-life quiz show scandal into an Indian context, a novel that “isn’t a social critique” (Jeffries 2009).⁴⁹ Regardless of his stated intent, Swarup’s novel still acts as a devastating social critique of past and present imperialism in his homeland, applying his diplomatic insight into a depiction of India marred by religious violence that stems from colonial influence and reeling from the corruption of national film and television industries hoping to situate themselves within a profitable position in globalized media. Yet, in his dismissal of *Q&A*’s social significance, Swarup concisely alludes to the structure that made the seamless integration of his novel into Hollywood International so easy. In his discussion of Rushdie’s contributions to the “Third World” novel, Ahmad distinguishes between the postcolonial writer in exile—whose readership is “materially absent from the immediate conditions of their production” and “more vividly and excruciatingly present in the writer’s imagination because their actuality is deeply intertwined with the existential suffering of the exile—and the writer in self-exile, who “has no such irrevocable bond” and “is free to choose the degree of elasticity in that bonding” (131). While Swarup’s diplomatic responsibilities allow him a closer bond with his homeland

than a migrant author such as Rushdie who willingly moves from home, they also account for conditions of production and a readership more global in scope and removed from national concerns, which may contribute to Swarup's reticence to join the ranks of Roy and Rushdie and acknowledge the political undercurrents of his fiction.

Working from a position both within and outside of a national culture, a self-exile such as Swarup serves as a mediator between his native land and its role within the globalized world. Though such a relationship appears ripe with potential for a global solidarity of colonized nations, it also runs the risk of aiding in the transition from 19th century colonialism and the rise of transnational imperialism. As Ahmad writes:

This idea of the availability of *all* cultures of the world for consumption by an individual consciousness was, of course, a much older European idea, growing in tandem with the history of colonialism as such, but the perfection and extended use of it in the very fabrication of modernism . . . signaled a real shift, from the age of old colonialism *per se* to the age of modern imperialism proper, which was reflected also in the daily lives of the metropolitan consumers in a new kind of shopping: the supermarket (128).

Entrenched in the already established colonial discourse foundational to *Oliver Twist's* narrative from the perspective of a cosmopolitan self-exile writing the majority of his novel in London, Swarup—despite *Q&A's* resistant strains—exists within a context steeped in past and present imperialisms that allows its depiction of India to easily be reintegrated into the global order with relative ease and adapted into a film coproduction between Hollywood and the British film industry. As a result, Swarup's distinctly Indian

perspective is coopted into a global economy where a film like *Slumdog Millionaire* seemingly embraces the globalized worldview of the Obama era as DVD copies of the film are available at checkout aisles and vending machines in supermarkets around the globe a few feet away from ethnic foods aisle in which instant chai and frozen curry share self space with variations of other international cuisines.

With the cultural and ideological differences between *Q&A* and *Slumdog Millionaire* so glaring, one could easily dismiss Boyle and screenwriter Simon Beaufoy's apparent neocolonialism as well as critics' lack of attention to the film's erasure of Swarup's critique of imperialism as systematic of their embroilment within the very corporate-owned media entities so vital to the propagation of contemporary imperial politics. However, such criticism overlooks not only the overarching narrative similarity of the two texts but also the continuing influence of British colonialism on the cultures of its former colonies. In his discussion of the constructions of "space" and "place" central to current understandings of geography discussed in the previous chapter, Harvey cautions that postcolonial critiques are often "secretly imprisoned within a cartographic image of India bequeathed by British imperial rule, all the while trying to stuff it full, as it were, with hefty doses of Heideggerian mythology" (*Spaces* 49). Defining space as the territory conquered by imperialism and place as a local, oppositional "other," Harvey writes:

How Indian nationalists took all of this apparatus to construct their own sense of national identity is a major study in Indian colonial and postcolonial history. They could not and indeed would not abandon the map they were inheriting and refill it with a meaning that was distinctly

their own, even as it replicated part of that ‘structure of feeling’ that the British legacy imparted. Herein lay the origins of a powerful constructed myth of Indian statehood, a myth that to this day has enormous power in the Indian political consciousness (49).

While Harvey’s contention deals specifically with overt political actions and government policy, one can also extend his critique to the influence of colonial literature on postcolonial writers’ attempts at writing back to the imperial center. If as Jameson contends, “All third-world texts are necessarily. . .allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I call *national allegories*,” then postcolonial rewritings of British texts such as *Oliver Twist* remain as, if not more, imprisoned within the cultural confines of Empire, calling their effectiveness into question (69).

In discussing the networks of control stemming from the legacies of British colonialism and the rise of global imperialism, my aim is not to dismiss the critical interventions of Swarup’s novel or Boyle’s film adaptation. Despite its complex associations with imperial discourses, Swarup’s text retains a keen insight into India’s role in the globalized world. Likewise, apart from its problematic representations of India and skirting of Britain’s role in the nation’s contemporary political situation, *Slumdog Millionaire* expresses an extremely relevant, albeit often compromised, postmodern critique of globalization and constructions of a “flat” world. Instead, my aim is to grapple with the question of how a film adaptation of a Victorian novel such as *Oliver Twist* that does not directly deal with a specific imperial context it can write back to such as Thackeray’s India, Barrie’s Australia, Mason’s Sudan, or even Greene’s South Africa can interrogate the legacy of colonial discourse without remaining tied to the imperial

structure that Harvey cautions against and *Slumdog Millionaire* typifies. Seemingly, Harvey's conceptions of space and place serve as vital starting points toward a coherent answer.

In contrast to Greene's "singular" adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, I argue that with the release of *Slumdog Millionaire*, the use of adaptation as a form of resistance for postcolonial filmmakers was usurped by the globalized imperial presence of the transnational media corporation. Diluting its source text's subversive rewriting of *Oliver Twist* and status as national allegory, Boyle's film streamlines the narrative into Hollywood genres accented with Bollywood conventions while presenting India as a nation of others, far removed from the ramifications of British imperialism and benefiting from the structures of the globalized world such as the transnational quiz show that fuels Jamal's rise from the slums. Through my examinations of Swarup's novel and Boyle's film in this concluding chapter, I demonstrate the importance of the interfidelity approach in navigating the influence of positionality on the adaptation process, especially as Hollywood and other national film industries embark on a globalized business model that not only controls representations of postcolonial nations in Hollywood and other national film industries but also has begun to appropriate the concept of "writing back to the imperial centre" for its own purposes.

The Global Spectacle of *Slumdog Millionaire*

As the critical and commercial success of Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* indicates, Hollywood's adaptation of postcolonial texts without regard to the source material's politics has increased with the rise of transnational corporations consolidating national film industries over the past decade. Swarup's *Q&A* is a hybrid text that interrogates the

cultural commodities of British imperialism and transnational corporate Empire. In addition to the aforementioned Faginesque gangster Maman—who is “no angel” but gives his pickpocket gang “two square meals a day”—and a Dickensian twist-ending, *Q&A* positions Ram Mohammad Thomas—a character whose name directly addresses the hybrid nature of India—as a passive spectator relating stories of individuals destroyed by the intersections of India’s colonial legacy and Empire’s mass media influence as he attempts to justify his grand-prize winnings on *Who Will Win a Billion?* (91) In the profound alterations to Swarup’s novel during the adaptation process, *Slumdog Millionaire* substitutes a topical and universal politics for Swarup’s presentation of India’s hybrid status in the wake of British influence and its effect on the Post-Independence religious clashes that Ram Muhammad Thomas’s name addresses.

However, Beaufoy’s renaming of Ram Muhammad Thomas to Jamal in the film is merely the most obvious of the radical thematic and political alternations that occurred during the adaptation process. In usurping the conventions of the Victorian novel—a cultural product with a narrative form that mirrors, according to Said, “the complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency to imperialism”—Swarup examines the lingering ramifications of British colonialism on an Indian culture now firmly entrenched in the globalized world (*Culture* 70). Likewise, Swarup uses the novel’s quiz show structure to present *Who Will Win a Billion?* host Prem Kumar as the film’s primary antagonist, an Indian character whose corruption by the machinations of the globalized entertainment industry manifests itself in his serial beating and burning of sexual partners with cigarettes, including the prostitute Nita with whom Ram falls in love. Negotiating both the impact of British colonialism and the imperial endeavors of the globalized

corporate Empire to consolidate power, Swarup's *Q&A* subverts the cultural formations of Empires past and present, creating a potential model for resistance and preservation of identity for a culture long suppressed by imperial endeavors.

Slumdog Millionaire streamlines Swarup's narrative, positioning it within the conventions of genres common to Hollywood International such as the romantic drama and gangster film.⁵⁰ Such conforming of international narrative traditions to Hollywood convention served as a means of resistance for a United States asserting its own cultural identity during the time of *Gunga Din*'s release. Yet, the case of *Slumdog Millionaire* demonstrates a pivotal, if not the first, instance of a globalized Hollywood transforming its former strategy of opposition into an imperial force. While Beaufoy somewhat retains Swarup's structuring of the narrative as an extended quiz show with flashbacks, his adaptation excises Swarup's central concerns with India's relationship to imperial forces, largely through the dilution of the narrative's revisions to Dickens's novel. Beaufoy expands Nita's role from a prostitute Swarup introduces near the end of the novel who alludes directly to *Oliver Twist*'s Nancy into the character Latika (Frieda Pinto), Jamal's childhood true love and motivation for his quest to appear on the game show. Maman still retains his Faginesque qualities, but he serves an anecdotal presence, primarily included in the narrative for his assassination by Jamal's now brother Salim to serve as an introduction to Mumbai's criminal underworld. Beaufoy erases references to British colonialism to such an extent that Hindu-Muslim clashes such as the one that claims the life of Jamal and Salim's mother act as devices to propel the story forward, slices of life in a dangerous foreign country that its inhabitants must contend with daily. Similarly, he positions Jamal's game show appearance on the Prem Kumar-hosted *Who Wants to be a*

Millionaire? not only as a way of escaping poverty but also as a force that will forever unite him and Latika. In its universality so championed by Gritten, *Slumdog Millionaire* annihilates Swarup's political intentions, curtailing his interrogation of Indian identity in the wake of British colonialism and Empire and presenting India as a nation of others, insular and far removed from the imperial foundations and structures of the globalized world.

However, though Boyle's film warrants criticism over its problematic depiction of India and its people, an outright dismissal of *Slumdog Millionaire* as a neocolonial or even racist film overlooks its merits and provides little insight into either its motivation or the curious lack of critical focus on its alterations to the source text. Produced within a society marked by globalization and cultural fusion, Boyle's film operates under the presumption that, the world is, indeed flat, allowing for an unmitigated sense of cultural borrowing and diffusion in which British, America, and Indian cultural attributes can traverse boundaries and become part of the same international *mélange*. Within this context, Boyle articulates a critique of the ramifications of globalized capital, mirroring Debord's critique of the spectacle of a transnational economic system, a mechanism of control that is "at once united and divided" (36). As Debord writes:

Just as the development of the most advanced economies involves clashes between different agendas, so totalitarian economic management by a state bureaucracy and the condition of those countries living under colonialism or semi-colonialism are likewise highly differentiated with respect to modes of production and power. By pointing up these great differences, while appealing to criteria of quite a different order, the spectacle is able

to portray them as markers of radically distinct social systems. But from the standpoint of their actual reality as mere *sectors*, it is clear that the specificity of each is subsumed under a universal system as functions of a single tendency that has taken the planet for its field of operations. That tendency is capitalism (36-37).

For a film steeped in quick cuts, warm colors, and a general music video aesthetic set to a soundtrack by Indian superstar A. R. Rahman and British-Sri Lankan rapper M.I.A., *Slumdog Millionaire* appears the perfect embodiment of the spectacle, showcasing India's difference under the guise of the sleek aesthetic of Hollywood International. Yet, within this sense of difference, Boyle seeks to demonstrate the far-reaching and all encompassing reach of global capital.

From the opening shots of the film, Boyle calls attention to the dissemination power of global capital using an Indian boy wearing a T-shirt bearing the title of his film (in English) as the title sequence. Similar to the logo shirts featuring sports teams, musical acts, and other popular culture symbols, Boyle establishes the pervasiveness of global capital, positioning the film not merely as an Orientalist depiction of strange land, but as an examination of the sheer scope of the type of transnational corporate dominance executed by multinational entities such as NewsCorp, which owns the film's distributor, Fox Searchlight.⁵¹ Though positioned as a land of difference, India remains under the same capitalistic influences as the other "Western" nations in which the film achieved its greatest popularity. Such an interest in depicting global capital's reach also extends to Boyle's choice to change the game show at the center of the narrative from Swarup's fictional *Who Will Win a Billion?* to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, a program that

originated in Britain, become a late-1990s cultural fad in America, and exists in numerous iterations across the globe. In the novel, the quiz show is run by an “Indian subsidiary of NewAge Telemedia” for which Ram’s win becomes a problem because such shows, as Neil Johnson, a representative of the company tells a police commissioner, “have to follow a script. And according to our script, a winner was not due for at least eight months, by which time we would have recouped most of our investment through ad revenues” (7). While Swarup’s depiction of NewAge Telemedia calls attention to the influence of global capital, the subsidiary structure and exploitation of Mumbai’s natives such as “penniless waiter” Ram demonstrate a form of global capital modeled directly after the structure of British colonialism (1). Though retaining Swarup’s concern with globalization, Boyle situates the quiz show within the context of a media property that, despite existing in various iterations across the globe, retains a brand owned by one media entity, a method of exposing the tendencies of global capital that Debord discusses.⁵²

In what is perhaps the most drastic change from novel to film, Jamal (Dev Patel) works not as a waiter at an the vaguely named “Jimmy’s Grill and Bar” but as a chaiwallah for the employees of a global telecommunications firm whose customer service line operates out of Mumbai (30). As Boyle details Jamal’s time in the workplace, he largely focuses on the employees’ attempts to seem like they are located “right down the street” from the Scottish clients they service, holding group meetings to learn about Scotland’s geography, history, and contemporary culture. When Jamal sneaks onto a computer to find Latika’s phone number as his superiors abandon their stations, he mistakenly takes a customer call. Awkwardly trying to pass himself off as a customer-

service representative, he tells the Scottish woman on the other line that he lives near the “Bog Sean Connery,” before hanging up on her and fleeing the call center. Swarup often undertakes a similar critique of globalization, but his critiques remain rooted within the context of British colonialism such as the scene in which Ram, working at the home of an Australian diplomat inquires to the cook about a bra from Victoria’s Secret:

“Who is Victoria?” I ask him.

“Victoria. I don’t know any Victoria.”

“This bra belongs to Victoria. It even has her name. Where did you get it from?” (115)

Though discussing the international popularity of an American commodity, Swarup ties it to the lingering influence of the Queen (and the body of the Queen) who reigned during the time of his source text’s publication, creating a distinctly Indian discussion of the confluence of colonial and transnational corporate imperial endeavors. Through his focus on the reiteration potential of the international commodities, Boyle sharply differs from Swarup’s depiction of global capital, more in line with Jameson’s criticism of pastiche—“the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask” (*Postmodernism* 17).

However, through undertaking a line of criticism more postmodern than embroiled within a complex web of postcolonial concerns, Boyle and Beaufoy ultimately rely on the same forms of domination, the focus on difference that Debord mentions, through their neglect of the distinct manner in which British colonialism influences India’s contemporary position within the globalized world. Such abandonment of a distinctly Indian context and focus on global concerns explains the film’s lack of

engagement with Dickens's source text. If, as Jean-François Lyotard contends, "Narratives allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand to define its criteria of competence, and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed and can be performed within it," such an abandonment of colonial discourse's influence over the national narratives of countries such as India undercuts a description of the nation's individual concerns and contexts, leaving its representation to rely on relatively shallow depictions of various cultural attributes (20).

In the case of *Slumdog Millionaire*, such decontextualization is most apparent in the stark contrast between the novel and film's depictions of the Bollywood film industry. For Swarup, Bollywood acts more as a national film industry than a national cinema, a distinction, according to Jigna Desai, in which "the latter is thought to represent the nation, which increasingly is seen as threatened from the inside (minorities) and from the outside by the hegemony of Hollywood..." and "the former may be considered a commercial, profit-seeking enterprise that often is protected as a national industry against other international producers of similar commodities" (54). However, as discussed in the introduction to this project, Bollywood and Hollywood have increasingly embarked on coproductions relying on transnational corporate funds, a factor foundational to Swarup's depiction of the film industry. As a result of this concern with globalized media's reach on individual nations, Swarup's novel discusses Bollywood within the context of molestation as a way to critique transnational influence on the Bollywood film industry so vital to India's international cultural prominence and economic viability.

As the novel's first chapter begins, Ram and his best friend Salim ready themselves to watch the latest film starring Armaan Ali at a movie palace, an activity that

Ram speaks of with a near reverence: “The third bell has sounded. The purple velvet curtain is about to be raised. The lights are progressively dimming, till only the red signs showing EXIT remain, glowing like embers in a darkened hall. Popcorn sellers and cold-drinks vendors begin to leave. Salim and I settle down in our seats” (19). Introducing Salim as both his best friend and “crazy about Hindi films. But not all Hindi films. Just the ones featuring Armaan Ali,” Ram proceeds to recount the moments when the screen flickers to life:

First we have advertisements. Four sponsored by private companies and one by the government. We are told how to come first at school and become champions in cricket by eating cornflakes for breakfast. How to drive fast cars and win gorgeous girls by using Spice cologne. (“That’s the perfume used by Armaan,” exclaims Salim.) How to get a promotion and have shiny white clothes by using Roma soap. How to live life like a king by drinking Red & White whiskey. And how to die of lung cancer by smoking cigarettes. (20-21)

While Ram relates his pre-film experience in a rote manner, the passage allows Swarup to examine both the underlying controlling potential of the culture industry and Empire’s ability to consolidate the power of various institutions. The advertisements may be an amalgamation of public service announcements, celebrity endorsements, and international corporate upward mobility claims, but, as presented by Swarup, all entities morph into each other and into the theatrical experience, embodying Hardt and Negri’s depiction of Empire. Establishing this seamless narrative of Empire, Swarup proceeds to

use an older patron's molestation of Salim in the theatre to expose the fissures in mass media dissemination.⁵³

As the boys watch the film, a bearded man sits next to Salim, intermittently brushing his leg against the boy. However, Ram notices that the older man's advances soon become more direct: "I see that the bearded man's left hand has moved. It is now placed in Salim's lap and rests there gently. Salim is so engrossed in the death scene that he doesn't register it. The old man is emboldened. He rubs his palm against Salim's jeans. As Armaan takes his last breaths, the man increases pressure on Salim's crotch, til he is almost gripping it" (30). When Salim attacks the man and pulls off his fake beard, he escapes into the darkness of the theatre, leaving Salim in shock:

. . .in that split second Salim and I have seen a flash of hazel-green eyes. A chiseled nose. A cleft chin.

As the credits begin to roll over the screen, Salim is left holding a mass of tangled gray hair smelling vaguely of cologne and spirit gum. This time he does not see the names of the publicity designer and the PRO, the light men and the spot boys, the fight director and the cameraman. He is weeping.

Armaan Ali, his hero, has died. (31)

Through his presentation of Armaan's molestation of Salim in the context of a movie going experience featuring not only the star's film but also a commercial for one of his endorsements, Swarup explodes the myth of the culture industry's unity, indicating how its corruption taints the lives of the icons so central to its function as well as those who passively consume it. As the novel's first engagement with Bollywood cinema, the

molestation scene establishes Swarup's opposition to the totality of the culture industry that will eventually consume all of his characters.

Despite their harrowing theatre experience, both Salim and Ram eventually become immersed in the film industry. Salim never shakes his "celluloid dreams of life in Mumbai" and works as a day player until Ram uses his quiz show winnings to launch Salim's acting career (85). Ram works as a servant for fading Bollywood icon Neelima Kumari, witnessing her desperation, physically abusive sexual relationship with future *Who Will Win a Billion?* host Prem Kumar, and eventual suicide while clutching her "National Award for Best Actress. Awarded to Ms. Neelima Kumari for her role in *Mumtaz, Mahal, 1985*" (232).⁵⁴ Integrating Bollywood into his narrative in this context, Swarup undercuts his seemingly Neo-Victorian happy ending, positing that regardless of Ram's newfound wealth and opportunity for Salim, he and his friend remain entrenched in the network of Empire's cultural dissemination prowess.

Excising Swarup's focus on Indian national film industries and revisionary Victorian ending, *Slumdog Millionaire* only references Bollywood twice: during the game show's opening question and during the film's end credit dance sequence in which the entire cast dances to Rahman's "Jai Ho" in a train station. In the first instance, Swarup's loaded molestation sequence is replaced by a dubious comedic flashback in which young Salim locks Jamal in a stall after losing a customer at a pay toilet. Hearing that Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan is approaching in a helicopter, Jamal jumps into the excrement pit and runs toward the mob of fans ensconced in feces. Seemingly as arbitrary but much less offensive, the Bollywood item number in the wake of Jamal

winning the quiz show and uniting with Latika, serves as a final ethnic accent to the narrative, which, as Ajay Gehlawat writes, streamlines conceptions of the “real India”:

Bollywood (as its moniker suggests) simultaneously references a multiplicity of identities and repudiates any one, essentialized form other than, paradoxically, one of impersonation. With *Slumdog*, then, we see popular Indian cinema which, in turn, impersonates popular Indian cinema, which, in turn, impersonates popular Western cinema. (5)

Instead of employing Bollywood convention’s impersonation capabilities to directly engage repression of native cultures ala Nair’s Bollywood item number in *Vanity Fair*, the sequence in Boyle’s film serves merely as a surface engagement with the film’s setting—demonstrating no connection to the narrative and existing as an example of global pastiche in a film otherwise concerned with exposing such tendencies.

While the Bollywood-inspired closing-sequence is the film’s most obvious direct engagement with Indian culture, the most problematic aspect of the film, which Gehlawat refers to as “an essentially British operation with the superficial veneer of hybridity” is its graphic depiction of Mumbai’s slum neighborhoods (8). With his on-location shooting and the assistance of Indian co-director, Lovleen Tanden—who incidentally was largely unacknowledged by award nominations boards during the deluge of accolades Boyle received—*Slumdog Millionaire* cannot be accused of creating an unrealistic depiction of life in the slums. Yet, the film’s greatest flaws lie in its evasion of contemporary and historical contexts, factors especially problematic considering the distinct web of colonialism and global corporations present in Swarup’s novel. Despite the film’s depiction of Mumbai’s Dharavi slums as a space one can only escape through the

salvation of a television quiz show, the neighborhood is, as A. J. Sebastian writes, “known for its vibrancy with entrepreneurial activities” that have recently led NGO’s and state policy makers to “acknowledge the residents of the slums as future taxpayers and property holders” (901-902). Situating himself between Boyle’s decontextualized imagery and Sebastian’s revisionary optimism, Swarup presents the slums in a much less decisive manner, opting instead to focus on the web of various influences that have contributed to their existence. As the novel begins, the Indian producer of *Who Will Win a Billion?*, Billy Nanda, nervously remarks on the police’s rough interrogation of Ram: “I’ve enough problems on my plate already without having to be sued by a bloody civil rights NGO” (11). In addition, before Maman’s cohort Sethji takes Ram and Salim “for training” from a juvenile home, Ram speaks of a field trip sponsored by “An international NGO” (79, 83). For Swarup, NGO’s serve a very similar function as the workhouses in *Oliver Twist*, meant to protect and create autonomous individuals, or “future taxpayers,” but easily corrupted as a result of operating under the same mechanisms that govern the controlling forces they seek to counteract.

Reveling in local color yet marketed internationally, *Slumdog Millionaire* largely ignores the encroachment of neocolonial presences such as NGO’s and global capital with the exception of a scene in which an American couple respond to Jamal’s satirical remark, “You wanted to see a bit of the real India, here it is” after a recently robbed cabbie beats him. Outraged, the wife says to Jamal, “Well, here is a bit of the real America, son” before her husband gives the boy a \$100 bill. The scene coyly, although rather blatantly, calls into question the arbitrary pumping of money by American citizens into NGO’s or institutions such as the IMF. But, it sacrifices a sustained critique of

globalization for a throwaway gag, differing sharply with Ram's asides in the novel such as, "The smartly attired waiters at McDonald's look at me suspiciously but don't shoo me away. They can't turn back a customer in Levi's jeans, however scruffy he may be," and "I shake and twist my wrist, hoping the others, particularly the girl, will notice that I am wearing a brand-new Kasio digital watch, made in Japan, with day and date, which cost me a whopping two hundred rupees in Palika Bazaar" (299, 151). Working from a perspective inside India, Swarup provides insight into how individual nations react to the transnational influence while still contending with their colonial legacies, an aspect of the globalized world vastly simplified in *Slumdog Millionaire*.

Though one could attribute much of the glossing over of cultural nuance in *Slumdog Millionaire* to Boyle's Irish/British positionality, the most regressive aspects of the film occur through its focus on global India at the cost of sacrificing a detailed depiction of the British legacy in India, a factor that makes Boyle's gloss of the issue appear a lot more nefarious than he likely intended. As Swarup said repeatedly during interviews, *Q&A*, at least superficially, is an engrossing thriller that does not obviously engage in the wordplay and literary theory allusions of a writer like Rushdie. However, *Q&A* also relies heavily on the contexts of domestic religious clashes and wars between India and Pakistan stemming from the post-independence dividing of the nation in 1947, references that Swarup does not explain to an audience unfamiliar with the nation's history. Detailing his first encounter with Salim, Ram reveals how his friend became an orphan:

Last week in the cold and frosty month of January, an incident took place in the village's Hanuman temple. Someone broke into the sanctum

sanctorum at night and desecrated the idol of the monkey god. The temple's priest claimed he saw some Muslim youths lurking near the grounds. *Bas*, that was it! The moment the Hindus heard this they went on a rampage. Armed with machetes and pickaxes, sticks and torches, they raided the homes of all the Muslim families...Before his very eyes they set fire to the hut. He heard his mother's shrieks, his father's cries, his brother's wails, but the mob would not allow anyone to escape. His whole family was burned to death in the inferno. (77)

As a result of his childhood trauma, Salim expresses a deep hatred of all Hindus throughout the novel, leaving Ram to refer to himself as Muhammad when in the presence of his friend. Similarly, as Ram is holed up in an apartment basement with a Sikh military officer, Balwat Singh, who served in the 1971 war, he waits out the bombings of the 1999 Kargil War as the former soldier entertains his audience with stories of past battles: "You see, we had heard that these Pakistanis, if they found the dead bodies of any Indian soldiers, would never return them to us, Instead they would deliberately bury them according to Muslim tradition, even if the Indian soldiers were Hindu" (173). Throughout the anecdotal snapshots of Ram's life the quiz show interrogation frames, Swarup presents the intricacies of the nation's tumultuous post-Independence history. Employing Ram's hybrid identity, Swarup allows his protagonist to not only transcend the nation's religious clashes and provide insight into often conflicting groups but also embrace a multifaceted, allegorical India recalling Jameson's national allegory and Harvey's cautions concerning imperial structures.

These religious clashes play an important role in Boyle's film, serving as the catalyst for the orphanhood of Ram and Salim (brothers in the film) as a Hindu mob bludgeons their mother to death. Yet, the violence comes suddenly and out-of-context, a two-minute chase sequence shot in sun's glare that removes any British culpability for the religious conflicts and portrays India as a blistering nation of arbitrary violence—conforming more to the valleys of the American western than a formerly colonized East Asian nation. Through the lack of attention Boyle pays to the historical context of the scene, the film recalls Jameson's discussion of historicity in the postmodern era. As Jameson writes, historicity is:

...neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future (although its various forms use such representations): it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the present as history; that is, as a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective (*Postmodernism* 284).

In the case of period films such as Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* (1971), David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), or even Paul Greengrass's *Bloody Sunday* (2002), history becomes collapsed into a reflection of the present, exposing the myths behind nostalgia and the enduring underbelly of the economic and social systems that remain largely unaffected by time. For a radical American filmmaker or even a British sympathizer for the Irish, such films can serve as potent commentaries on founding myths and fissures in nationalism. However, in the case of a film like *Slumdog Millionaire*, such a defamiliarization with history only serves to perpetuate the structure of a colonial discourse relying on the

timelessness of the Orient, the innate violence of the East, and, especially in the Post-9/11 Era, the enduring savagery of “others” in a film that appears to be taking place in a contemporary setting largely because it includes virtually no historical or sociopolitical context.

Such a depiction of religious violence indicates the film’s desire to utilize the postmodern and disregard the postcolonial. However, the disparity between Swarup and Boyle’s depiction of India comes to fruition through the presence of one of Indian literature’s most common tropes: the train. While Swarup neither directly mentions the importance of the railroad to the British colonial imagination nor the mass executions aboard trains between India and Pakistan in the wake of the division, his novel includes numerous scenes aboard trains, almost exclusively associated with acts of violence. Recalling the story behind his answer to the question “Who invented the revolver?” Ram says: “Train journeys are about possibilities. They denote a change in state. When you arrive, you are no longer the same person who departed” (153). Intertwining individual autonomy with the quite literal changes in state through Ram’s comment, Swarup alludes to the enduring legacy of the train murders during the Indo-Pakistan Post-Independence migration, a legacy of violence continued in the novel through scenes as various as Ram shooting a robber aboard Western Express and Salim encountering a suicide bomber.

Yet, in adapting the novel, Boyle and Beaufoy reject the historical legacy of the train in India, instead positioning it as the setting for the orphaned Jamal and Salim to escape from Maman’s control and express their financial ingenuity. Depressed over abandoning Latika after fleeing from Maman, Jamal stares into the horizon while sitting atop the train’s roof. Consoling his brother, Salim tells Jamal “Got to let it go” before

telling him to “Come on.” Jamal asks where, and Salim responds, “I’m starving.” As the opening beats of M.I.A.’s “Paper Planes” begin, Boyle cuts to an extreme long shot of the boys on the train’s roof with their fists in the air, before moving to a montage of them selling fruit on various trains and collecting money. For Boyle, the train appears as his protagonists’ salvation as well as a primary method of including the shots of the Indian landscape that were the hallmarks of imperial cinema filmmakers such as Lean and Korda. Removed from history and rooted in a globalized worldview, the film dilutes one of the most potent symbols of Britain’s lingering colonial influence over India, bridging its Indian setting with an all-inclusive and transnational view as much a part of the ideology it appears to resist.⁵⁵

Though *Slumdog Millionaire* and its source text may seem to have little in common with Greene’s revision of Dickens in *Boy Called Twist*, the two films are indicative of vastly different methods of postcolonial representation and resistance at a time in film history where the concept of independent film is quickly changing. Regardless of Greene’s piecemeal fundraising and Boyle’s financial backing from a subsidiary of NewsCorp, the two films broadly fall into the category of independent cinema. As the transnational film industry coped with the 2008 recession that preceded *Slumdog Millionaire*’s release, independent cinema distribution became an early victim with independent distributors such as Picturehouse closing, specialty divisions such as Paramount Vantage shuttering, and revenues from sources such as on-demand cable becoming more financially viable for independent acquisitions. Within this context, Greene and Boyle’s different appropriations of Dickens’s source texts are indicative of the future of cinematic depictions of postcolonial nations. While a film such as *Boy*

Called Twist emphasizes the local and attempts to actively engage a diverse population through a space of singularity, *Slumdog Millionaire* seeks to capitalize on an international audience through masking both its debt to colonial discourse and Hollywood convention through an overarching representation of a culture largely absent from Hollywood cinema. As a result of the complexities of transnational distribution and increased consolidation, source text revisions and genre play no longer seem adequate methods of resistance, especially after their appropriation by Hollywood International. Yet, through critical engagement with the singularity *Slumdog* feigns and *Twist* imagines, one can work toward methods to address the appropriation of the multicultural within transnational corporate discourse while asserting the singularity so foundational to contending with the colonial past and preserving national identity in the globalized world.

NOTES

¹ Although *Gone with the Wind* would ultimately become and still remains the most popular film in the history of American cinema, its December release led to its box-office dominance of 1940 rather than its release year. *The Wizard of Oz* also later out grossed *Gunga Din*.

² A fictionalized biography of the American outlaw, Henry King's *Jesse James* is a competent western also released in 1939 that was overshadowed by John Ford's convention-bending and stylistically inventive work in *Stagecoach* later that year.

³ RKO also released an adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* titled *Becky Sharp* in 1935. However, the Reuben Mamoulian-helmed project focused almost entirely on the war elements of the text, placing it much more in line with *Gunga Din* than *Wuthering Heights*. The film was renowned for its use of Technicolor, but otherwise a commercial and critical disappointment.

⁴ The film cost \$2 million to make and, despite its box office success, took years to turn a profit.

⁵ The screenplay is by Joel Sayre & Fred Guiol, story by Ben Hecht & Charles MacArthur. William Faulkner also wrote an early, unused draft of the film.

⁶ Jaher and Kling make a convincing case that the Guru bears strong associations to Benito Mussolini, a factor that taps into America's anxieties about participation in World War II.

⁷ With his Cockney accent, Cutter may also be the British character with the lowest social standing in the film.

⁸ Such is a common motif in Kipling perhaps most prevalent in his 1889 poem "The Ballad of East and West."

⁹ The film ultimately spawned only two tie-ins, an eponymous 2004 video game, and the animated prequel *Van Helsing: The London Assignment* (2004), which details Van Helsing's tracking of Mr. Hyde that begins Sommers's film.

¹⁰ See Donald Wilson's "Over There." *Film Comment* 46.2 (2010). While the standard ratio of domestic to international box-office grosses has been 1:1.5 for years, international receipts have steadily made up the majority of grosses of major studio films over the past half decade. Wilson cites domestic blockbusters such as James Cameron's *Avatar*'s near tripling of its domestic gross internationally and David Yates's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*'s earning double its domestic total as indicative of studios needing to "rely even more heavily on simultaneous or near-simultaneous world-wide releases and their international receipts to recoup" (52). The article also discusses how domestic hits such as Carlos Saldanha and Mike Thurmeier's *Ice Age: Dawn of the*

Dinosaurs (\$196 million domestic) and Roland Emmerich's *2012* (\$165 million domestic) became enormous blockbusters for their studios (\$688 million and \$603 million respectively) and how even underperformers such as Ron Howard's *Angels and Demons* and McG's *Terminator Salvation* become solid hits when international grosses were factored in. 2004 was a landmark year for international grosses in Hollywood as underperformers and outright failures like Wolfgang Peterson's *Troy*, Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow*, Antoine Fuqua's *King Arthur*, and Dave Tway's *The Chronicles of Riddick* broke even or turned a modest profit only after international release. Like the previously mentioned underperformers, *Van Helsing* was far less successful domestically than films such as Sam Raimi's *Spiderman 2*, Paul Greengrass's *The Bourne Supremacy*, and Alfonso Cuarón's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, but it still ended the year as one of the highest-grossing films in the world.

¹¹ Hailing from Dallas, Texas, Godden has been working with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet for over 15 years, which has interesting implications for his focus on Texan millionaire Quincey Morris in the adaptation.

¹² After being denied the rights and subsequently sued by Stoker's estate, Murnau attempted to alter the plot and characters of *Nosferatu*, though it still bears a striking resemblance to Stoker's novel. See David J. Skal's *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* New York: Faber and Faber (2004).

¹³ Westenra is also the name of Anglo-Irish barons of Rossmore in County Monaghan in Ireland (Milbank 20).

¹⁴ The contention that the men can only defeat Dracula as a collective also has great influence over the novel *Dracula: The Undead*, the 2009 "official sequel" to *Dracula* by Stoker's great-grandnephew Dacre Stoker and Dracula scholar Ian Holt." Its protagonist Quincey Harker—Jonathan and Mina's son—must defeat a revived Count while an actor in a 1902 stage production of Stoker's novel. A hybrid of the novel's original heroes, Quincey's defeat of the Count is much more manageable than that of his predecessors.

¹⁵ Zhang's article aims much of its criticism at Margaret Atwood's essay collection *Survival* for its simplistic binary of negotiating the remnants of imperial Britain the current colonial relationship with the United States, positing that Atwood's work fails to "acknowledge the hierarchal power relations within Canada; it fails to discriminate between postcolonial settlers and postcolonial aboriginals and racialized minorities" (99).

¹⁶ Throughout the 1980s, Hollywood cinema satirized the idea of the yellow peril, especially the rise of automotive and electronic commodities from Japan and Hong Kong. Joe Dante's *Gremlins* (1984) features a lovable Eastern creature that spawned little green monsters who wreak havoc on small-town America by tampering with electronic equipment. Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive* (1986) concerns an apocalyptic scenario in which foreign machines come to life and massacre Americans after an eclipse. Though much more concerned with the intricacies of the late Cold War military-industrial complex, Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop* (1987) also includes a satirical

advertisement for the 6000 SUX, a foreign car in a television commercial that pays homage to Godzilla.

¹⁷ The fact that Hogan's film was produced as the first installments of the New Zealand-shot *The Lord of the Rings* set box-office records likely factored into the studio's desire for homegrown productions helmed by local directors in the region.

¹⁸ In addition to *Muriel's Wedding*, *My Best Friend's Wedding*, and *Peter Pan*, Hogan directed the Sophie Kinsella adaptation *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009) and *Unconditional Love* (2002), a slapstick caper film not released in the United States.

¹⁹ Barrie's play also demonstrates a fascination with language and grammar through allusions to Peter Roget, the creator of the English thesaurus. Barrie writes in the stage directions that he chose to set the play in Bloomsbury because "Mr. Roget lived there" (87). In addition, Barrie later mentions that Hook, "has a Thesaurus in his cabin" (136).

²⁰ There was also a fair amount of Chinese hostility stemming from Chinese immigration when gold was found in Australia in Queensland in 1877. See Stephenson.

²¹ Hogan's shift from omniscient narrator to a female character's narration is similar to the Irish filmmaker Neil Jordan's adaptation of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1999) in which the character of Sarah (Julianne Moore) undertakes the narration of the film from the novel's male counterpart.

²² *Salaam Bombay!* ignited a storm of controversy during its international release largely because of its alleged exploitation of poor children, a similar criticism that faced Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*. See Gordon Collier's *Us/Them: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures*. Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992.

²³ Perhaps the nadir of Nair's embrace of "Hollywood style budgets" occurred in 2009 with the release of her Amelia Earhart biopic *Amelia* starring Hilary Swank. The film was such a critical and commercial failure with its \$14 million gross that, at the time of this project, Nair has yet to receive funding for a new film.

²⁴ The only other female Indian filmmaker who has achieved similar success as Nair is Kenyan-born Gurinder Chadha, director of *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *What's Cooking?* (2000), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), and *Angus, Thongs, and Perfect Snogging* (2008). However, unlike Nair, Chadha's American success has been relegated to imported British films rather than a formidable Hollywood career.

²⁵ *Kites* was released in the U.S. in 2010 as *Kites: The Remix*, a version of the film edited by Hollywood filmmaker Brett Ratner.

²⁶ The Zulu conflicts were the subject of Cy Endfield's touchstone of Empire cinema *Zulu* (1964) starring Michael Caine.

²⁷ A similar fate befell Sam Mendes's 2005 adaptation of Anthony Swafford's Operation Desert Storm memoir *Jarhead*. Reviews tended to eschew discussion of the film, instead criticizing it for refusing to make ties to the ongoing War on Terror policy in Iraq.

²⁸ Gordon also served during the Second Opium War in China, where he earned his nickname.

²⁹ The other five adaptations are as follows: J. Searle Dawley's silent *Four Feathers* (1915), René Plaissetty's British silent film from 1921, Merian C. Cooper's 1929 Hollywood adaptation, Korda's remake of his own film *Storm over the Nile* (1955), and the 1977 British television movie that directly lifts scenes from Korda's film.

³⁰ The other entries in the Imperial Trilogy are *Sanders of the River* (1935), the story of a British officer in Nigeria, and *Drums* (1938), an adaptation of Mason's India set novel *The Drum* (1937).

³¹ Mason's novel was out of print for decades until Penguin reissued a new edition in 2001 after production on Kapur's adaptation was underway.

³² Many uniforms during the campaign detailed in Kapur's film were a khaki color. All were khaki color during the time period of Korda's film, making the featured uniforms historically inaccurate. See Robert Wilkinson-Latham and Michael Roffe's *The Sudan Campaigns 1881-98*. London: Osprey, 1976.

³³ Given the tumultuous production history of the film and 130-minute running time, this scene could easily have been cut by the studio.

³⁴ Kapur directly addresses the issue of the Other in the sequence in which Harry stops a French human trafficker and guide's beating of a slave prostitute. After an intense scene of voyeurism in which Harry watches her have sex with another slave, the prostitute bludgeons the trafficker to death with a rock, but stops her partner from killing Harry.

³⁵ It is important to note that Žižek's discussion of the purloined letter is taken from his analysis of Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), a film that hinges on the tropes of blindness and recognition in a very similar way to all iterations of *The Four Feathers*.

³⁶ While Harry's muteness serves as a play on the "mute native" discussed in chapter 4, the fact that the muteness under discussion in Korda's film stems from the Mahdi's torture of other tribes complicates the dynamic.

³⁷ Hood's film often stereotypes Black South Africans as innately violent as it revels in the impoverished communities in which it is set. Likewise, though *District 9* allegorizes Apartheid through human engagements with aliens located in camps by the government, it retains racist depictions of blacks, most notably in its characterization of Nigerians as gangs of cannibals. In addition, it makes no reference to the lingering aspects of

Apartheid as its white and black characters are united in their prejudices against the aliens.

³⁸ Lean's film differs from the novel primarily through excising Rose Maylie and, by consequence, endowing Mr. Brownlow with a larger role in the narrative in which he never leaves for the West Indies to search for Monks.

³⁹ *Great Expectations* features an infamous final sequence in which Estella (Valerie Hobson) pulls the drapes away from Satis House that critics such as McFarlane have deemed a depiction of Empire's rebirth. Similarly, *Oliver Twist*'s sequences featuring Mr. Brownlow (Henry Stephenson) are executed in bright rooms and bustling public places, including the final sequence in which Brownlow and Oliver (John Howard Davies) walk into the Brownlow Estate on a beautiful morning.

⁴⁰ Dickie and Oliver's final exchange almost exactly mirrors the one between Oliver and Dick in the novel: "I hope so," replied the child. "After I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of Heaven, and Angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me," said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms round Oliver's neck. "Good-b'ye, dear! God bless you!" (59).

⁴¹ Dickens's Oliver is nine at the beginning of the novel whereas Twist is eleven.

⁴² Though Dickie is an orphan friend of Oliver in the novel, the name may also allude to Lord Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India, who also went by the nickname "Dickie." See Stanley Wolpert's *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

⁴³ See Harvey's discussion of the Cancun Conference in *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. New York: Verso, 2004.

⁴⁴ Guinness's prosthetic nose caused a huge public outcry in Britain and the United States that was again revisited when the stage and film adaptation of *Oliver!* gained popularity in the 1960s. See Michael Sragow's liner notes for the Criterion Collection release of *Oliver Twist*.

⁴⁵ hooks's comments could also apply to the problematic depictions of Nigerians in Blomkamp's *District 9* though their status as cannibals is much more racially problematic than Greene's Fagin and his gang.

⁴⁶ The bar scene is actually appropriated from Lean's film adaptation. Similar to Greene's adaptation, Sikes is disgusted by Fagin's presence at the tavern and exhibits an open anti-Semitism throughout the film.

⁴⁷ It is worth mentioning that Dickens sarcastically refers to Fang as “the presiding Genii” during Oliver’s trial scene, an example of the inherent Orientalist stereotypes embedded within colonial discourse that Said discusses (80).

⁴⁸ Achmat Dangor’s South African novel *Bitter Fruit* (2001) shares a similar movement between family life and criminals for its protagonist.

⁴⁹ Aside from *Slumdog Millionaire*’s depiction of a Hindu massacre of Muslims, Swarup had few objections to Boyle and Beaufoy’s alterations to his source text, even supporting the film’s use of “slumdog” and the changing of Ram’s name and religious affiliation.

⁵⁰ These genres are a staple of both Hollywood and Bollywood cinema.

⁵¹ Fox Searchlight is the specialty division of 20th Century Fox, which specializes in art-house releases with mass audience appeal such as Mark Webb’s *(500) Days of Summer* (2009), Jason Reitman’s *Juno* (2007), Nair’s *The Namesake* (2007), Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Ferris’s *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), and Alexander Payne’s *Sideways* (2004) in addition to all of Boyle’s films since 2003.

⁵² Over the past few years, Boyle has exhibited an increased concern with globalization in his films from his examination of the fall of British nationalism in the age of the Euro in *Millions* (2004) to the corrupt corporation allegory of his science-fiction film *Sunshine* (2007) to the juxtaposition of landscape shots and television commercials in *127 Hours* (2010).

⁵³ Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) has a similar molestation scene in which a concessions clerk molests a young boy during a screening of *The Sound of Music*. For a comparison of the scenes in both novels see Jerod Ra’Del Hollyfield’s article “Imperial Gazes, Hollywood Predators: A Cinema of Molestation in Postcolonial Indian Literature” in *Creoles, Diasporas, Cosmopolitanisms*. Ed. David Gallagher. London: Anthem Press, 2011.

⁵⁴ The scene is also an allusion to Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981).

⁵⁵ Trains also serve as a central trope in Wes Anderson’s 2007 film *The Darjeeling Limited*, which used them as a way to satirize the enduring legacy of Orientalist thought among the educated upper-classes of American society.

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