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## Writing Back With Light: Postcolonial Film Adaptations of the Literature of Empire

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jerod R. Hollyfield entitled "Writing Back With Light: Postcolonial Film Adaptations of the Literature of Empire." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Charles Maland, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Urmila Seshagiri, Christine Holmlund

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting a thesis written by Jerod Ra'Del Hollyfield entitled "Writing Back With Light: Postcolonial Film Adaptations of the Literature of Empire." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts with a major in English.

Charles Maland  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis  
and recommend its acceptance:

Urmila Seshagiri

Christine Holmlund

Accepted for the Council

Carolyn R. Hodges  
Vice Provost and Dean  
of the Graduate School

Writing Back With Light: Postcolonial Film Adaptations of the Literature of Empire

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master's of Arts  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jerod Ra'Del Hollyfield  
May  
2007

## Abstract

Since decolonization began after World War II, citizens of colonized nations have attempted to subvert the literature of empire in order to write back to their oppressors and construct national identities. With visual media, such as film, surpassing print as the dominant form of artistic communication, many artists from former colonies have begun using the film medium as another channel to forge identities for their nations. However, in the wake of a decolonized world marked by the increasing power of multinational corporations, artists desiring to write back must address not only their colonizers but also a new form of imperialism that places its citizens under corporate rather than nation-based control.

In this thesis I argue that filmmakers from former colonized nations write back to empire by adapting the literature of their colonial oppressors for the film medium, accenting the original source material with historical and cultural references to their native countries. By interjecting their own cultural perspectives into the literature of empire in the adaptation process, filmmakers assert their historical perspectives into the cultural history of their oppressors in a manner that escapes the confines of the literary canon, creating a presence in narratives that otherwise mute or exclude their cultures' influence. While using the financial backing of film studios run by global conglomerates, the filmmakers' adaptations also critique the impact of the neo-colonial presence of the corporation. Focusing on Irish filmmaker Neil Jordan's discussion of the repression of Irish Catholicism in his 1999 adaptation of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), Australian filmmaker P.J. Hogan's use of allegory to depict Australia's multiethnic population in his 2003 adaptation of J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan* (1904) and novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and Indian filmmaker Mira Nair's integration of Bollywood conventions into her 2004 adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), I demonstrate how the three filmmakers assert their national heritages through the adaptation process by using the financial assets of the film industry to criticize the evolution of empire.

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## **Introduction: King Kong and the Shifting Empire**

When Universal Studios released Peter 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, an independent filmmaker from New Zealand 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 a trend that has recently permeated the film industry: filmmakers from former 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 at the nadir 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 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). As a result, Jackson's film articulates a layered criticism of colonialism. Using Hayes and Jimmy's relationship and *Heart of Darkness* allusions to, in the words of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin "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 (Ashcroft et al 101). 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 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write in their 2000 book *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 gigantic apes that serve as primary attractions for an elite few.

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 in a similar manner as Jackson 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 20<sup>th</sup> century, the imperial critiques Conrad and his modernist contemporaries conveyed to their audiences 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.

In this thesis I argue that filmmakers from former colonized nations working within the American film industry write back to empire by adapting the literature of their colonial oppressors for the film medium, accenting the original source material with historical and cultural references to their native countries. By interjecting their own cultural perspectives into the literature of empire in the adaptation process through narrative and stylistic choices that emphasize the roles of their native countries, filmmakers assert their historical perspectives into the cultural history of their oppressors in a manner that escapes the confines of the literary canon, creating a presence in narratives that otherwise mute or exclude their cultures’ influence. While using the financial backing of film studios run by global conglomerates, the filmmakers’ adaptations also use references to their cultural perspectives to critique the impact of the neo-colonial presence of the corporation as the oppressors of the globalized world. Focusing on Irish filmmaker Neil Jordan’s discussion of the repression of Irish Catholicism in his 1999 adaptation of Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair* (1951), Australian filmmaker P.J. Hogan’s use of allegory to depict Australia’s multiethnic population in his 2003 adaptation of J.M. Barrie’s play *Peter Pan* (1904) and novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and Indian filmmaker Mira Nair’s integration of Bollywood

conventions into her 2004 adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), I demonstrate how the three filmmakers assert their national heritages through the adaptation process by using the financial assets of the film industry to criticize the evolution of empire.

**Chapter I**  
**Confessions of an Irish Nationalist: Neil Jordan, Graham Greene, and Colonial Suppression in *The End of the Affair***

During his two decade film career, Academy Award-winning writer/director Neil Jordan has transcended conventions, crossed national boundaries, and subverted the financial constraints of Hollywood to create an oeuvre of critically acclaimed films in a variety of genres. However, despite his reputation as an internationally recognized filmmaker who funds his artistic visions from both American and European financiers, Jordan has remained, first and foremost, an Irish artist, injecting his interpretations of the struggle for Irish identity into both his film and novel work. While Jordan's films such as *Michael Collins* (1996), his historical dramatization of an Irish revolutionary, and *The Butcher Boy* (1997), his adaptation of novelist Pat McCabe's account of an Irish adolescent's life during the Cold War, directly address tumultuous political periods in Ireland's history, his films *The Crying Game* (1992) and his second McCabe adaptation *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) employ transgendered characters within the framework of Irish Republican Army conflicts to emphasize the liminal identity of his homeland. Even Jordan's North American-funded films, such as his adaptation of Anne Rice's novel *Interview With the Vampire* (1994), the psychological horror film *In Dreams* (1999), and *The Good Thief* (2002), Jordan's remake of Jean-Pierre Melville's *Bob le flambeur* (1955), concern outsider protagonists attempting to solidify their identities in alienating establishment cultures. Whether dealing with revolutionaries, transsexuals, vampires, or the institutionalized, Jordan's films demonstrate a fascination with constructing what Frederic Jameson refers to as a tangible "intrinsic essence" that defines the facets of a

particular nation's culture (8).

In a body of films so concerned with formulating a coherent Irish identity, Jordan's adaptation of Graham Greene's 1951 novel *The End of the Affair* (1999) initially appears as an anomaly. Detailing a four-year long affair between author Maurice Bendrix and Sarah Miles, the wife of a British civil servant, against the backdrops of pre- and post-World War II London, the novel never deviates from its English setting, completely ignoring not only the existence of the Irish, but also the other colonial holdings over which the waning British Empire was losing its authority. Taking into consideration Greene's career as a journalist and travel writer who often discussed the implications of colonialism in works such as *Journey Without Maps* (1936) *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and *The Quiet American* (1955), *The End of the Affair* appears as a novel more concerned with portraying a semi-autobiographical account of Greene's struggles with Catholicism and real life romantic triangle with Catherine and Harry Walston during a stint in Capri than discussing the twilight years of British imperialism (Gale 109). However, despite the obvious differences between Jordan's thematic concerns and the content of the novel, he employs the sheer Britishness of both the work and Greene's status as a late modern writer to retextualize his adaptation as a critique of Britain's subjugation of Ireland. Though viewed as a critic of empire, Greene still maintained an elite status in British culture that prevented his indictments of colonialism from removing the inferior status from colonized lands (Boehmer 156). As Elleke Boehmer writes:

Bourgeois, Britain centered, and basically still imperial in their perceptions, the 1930's writers did not come close to committed anti-colonial critique. In theory they sought challenged to the system, but in practice they stayed just this side of cultural frontiers. Most of their work, therefore, both illustrates

and enacts the difficulty of escaping the confines of British male class privilege and its assumptions of global authority. (152)

Fully aware of the British-centric culture that spawned Greene and his contemporaries, Jordan harnesses the veiled traces of empire present in the novel's imagery and conflicts between reason and Catholicism and positions them as pointed critiques of Britain's disregard for the colonized nations over which it presided, allowing him to respond to the imperial power that continues to assert political and cultural control over his native Ireland. Through his adaptation of the novel to film, Jordan assumes control over Greene's semi-autobiographical work of fiction, greatly altering the last two books of the novel by reframing the narrative's preoccupations with the Catholic faith and the state of the British Empire after World War II through the lens of an Irish perspective that criticizes Britain's assertion of imperial power and suppression of the Irish Catholic faith.

While Jordan's adaptation of Greene's novel permits him to discuss the imperial bias of a literary period commonly associated with an anti-colonial stance, his choice to adapt a novel by Greene and not by one of his contemporaries such as George Orwell or Evelyn Waugh provide the opportunity for him to write back to the corporate empire that defines contemporary imperialism. Unlike many of his British contemporaries, Greene worked steadily in the film industry both as a critic and a screenwriter. Writing for numerous publications, including *The Spectator* and *Sight & Sound*, Greene attempted to craft a definition of what he called "the poetic cinema" in his criticism, a type of cinema that would break largely middle-class movie audiences away from, as Greene wrote, "the crackling of chocolate paper, the whispers of women with shopping baskets, the secret movements of courting couples" (Adamson 5). Echoing Boehmer's criticisms of Greene

for his contradictory status as a member of the English bourgeoisie and an anti-colonialist, Greene's film criticism held a subtle disdain for the lower classes and served as an opportunity for Greene to, as Judith Adamson writes, "cross the border of his own social position and reach those whose lives his class controlled" (4-5). As a critic, Greene divided films into two categories: movies, those films that existed solely as escapist entertainment, and cinema, those films that, while simple, held up to the greatest aspirations of art by presenting the reality of life in its purest form (Adamson 5-8). Noting in many of his writings that director Carol Reed was particularly apt at harnessing the camera to capture the reality of life, Greene began his screenwriting career by writing the film adaptations of his own novels *The Fallen Idol* (1948), for which he was nominated for an Academy Award, and *The Third Man* (1949), endeavors which won him widespread critical acclaim (Adamson 52-53).

Through his theories on using the film medium as an instructional tool to reach the lower classes, Greene's career in film echoes the claims of Hardt and Negri concerning the vital role the communications industry plays in the contemporary construction of Empire. Hardt and Negri write, "The communications industries integrate the imaginary and the symbolic within the biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power but actually integrating them into its very functioning" (33). For Hardt and Negri, the vitality of the new corporate Empire hinges largely upon the ability of communication tools such as cinema to instruct and indoctrinate citizens about the cultural factors that define the biopolitics that govern every facet of their lives. As a writer who wrote about empire during the postwar transitional period from a nation-state

based colonialism to the contemporary corporate Empire, Greene and his aesthetic theories serve as a manifestations of the foundations of Empire that are “formed not on the basis of force itself, but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace” (15).

Using both his strong sense of Irish identity and his artistic experience in both fiction and film media, Jordan’s adaptation of *The End of the Affair* responds to the corporate Empire by portraying cinema’s influence in the transitional period of empires as an underlying mechanism of control in his film, directly challenging Greene’s idea of cinema. As Jordan told *Salon* in 1999, “Greene was tremendously jealous of movies, wasn’t he? He hated Hitchcock, didn’t he? And it’s a terrible pity, because if Hitchcock had done some of Greene’s things—of course, he never would have, because so much of the broader world enters into Greene, and Hitchcock was about pure form” (Sragow). Jordan’s film substitutes the stark reality Greene so admired in films with a veiled sense of mysticism and Hitchcockian detail to form while using Hollywood financing to support his vision. Funded and distributed by Columbia Pictures, the \$23 million production conforms to the conventions of the Hollywood prestige film boasting, in addition to Jordan, Academy Award nominees Ralph Fiennes, Stephen Rea, and Julianne Moore as its leads and respected *Batman* (1989) and *12 Monkeys* (1995) cinematographer Roger Pratt. Working within the American film industry, Jordan has created a subtle, simultaneous critique of the colonialism of Greene’s era and the corporate control of contemporary culture to forge a depiction of Irish identity within a narrative and economic system that largely ignores its presence.

### **World War II and the Images of a Crumbling Empire**

Narrated by its protagonist, Maurice Bendrix, Greene's *The End of the Affair* constructs its eponymous extramarital liaison between Bendrix and Sarah Miles against the tumultuous London bombings of World War II and their aftermath. Yet, unlike other novels set during the time period such as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), *The End of the Affair* focuses not on the soldiers directly affected by the war through battlefield confrontations, but on characters whose interaction with the period is peripheral as a result of their social status. Injuring his leg in an unnamed accident, Bendrix is exempted from serving in the military during the conflict, making a living as a writer who probes into the lives of English bureaucrats. While conducting research for a novel dealing with the lives of civil servants' wives, Bendrix meets Sarah and her husband Henry, a high-ranking, albeit bland, official in Widow's Pensions and the Department of Home Security. From the beginning of the novel, Greene establishes his primary characters as members of the upper-class society to which he belonged, a class of British citizens who, despite their often anti-colonial leanings, earned their livelihood as members of the imperial government or, in the case of Bendrix, were direct beneficiaries of its wealth and power. As a result of their social status, the violence of World War II has no direct effect on Greene's characters, functioning instead as a nuisance mentioned only when it passively encroaches on the outer boundaries of their personal lives. When passing by Eastbourne Terrace, where he and Sarah began the affair during the war six years earlier, Bendrix meditates on how the bombings changed the appearance of the block:

Half of it was gone - the half where the hotels used to stand had been blasted to bits, and the place where we made love that night was a patch of air. It had been the Bristol; there was a potted fern in the hall and we were shown the best room by a manageress with blue hair; a real Edwardian room with a great gilt double bed and red velvet curtains and a full length mirror. (People who came to Arbuckle Avenue never required twin beds.) I remember the trivial details very well. (44)

While in his depiction, Bendrix begins describing the block after its destruction in an air raid, his thoughts quickly shift to a personalized account of how the now destroyed hotel appeared to him in the moments before the consummation of his affair with Sarah, the Edwardian room with its direct connection to the sovereign who fostered empire taking precedence over the war's effects. Bendrix admits his details are trivial, yet behind his description lurks an idealization of the past not uncommon to his social position. Now facing the postwar world in a British society losing the empire that made it an international power, Bendrix finds his social status and inner circle in flux. Though he masked the effects of the war during his affair with Sarah, their end result has forced him into a state of denial that looks upon the past in greater detail than the precarious present.

As Bendrix's affair and the war rage on, he begins to adopt a sense of collusion with the war effort, perceiving it not as a violent struggle that will change the scope of the world, but as an excuse that works in concert with him to prolog his sexual liaisons with Sarah. Greene writes:

War had helped us in a good many ways, and that was how I had almost come to regard war as a rather disreputable and unreliable accomplice in my affair. (Deliberately I would put the caustic soda of that word 'affair', with its suggestion of a beginning and an end, upon my tongue.) I suppose Germany by this time had invaded the Low Countries: the spring like a corpse was sweet with the smell of doom, but nothing mattered to me but two practical facts - Henry had been shifted to Home Security and worked late, my landlady had removed to the basement for fear of air raids, and no longer lurked upon

the floor above watching over the banisters for undesirable visitors. My own life had altered not at all, because of my lameness (I have one leg a little shorter than the other, the result of an accident in childhood); only when the air-raids started did I feel it necessary to become a warden. It was for the time being as though I had signed out of the war. (57)

Though Bendrix demonstrates his awareness of the death and destruction the war causes, he extricates himself from their importance, focusing on how the war efforts relate to his relationship with Sarah, not how his relationship with Sarah relates to the war effort. As long as the war continues, it permits Bendrix to enjoy his illicit romance made possible by the class of himself and his lover. With the other characters' attentions devoted to the war in either Henry's capacity as a government official or his landlady's role as a citizen fearing for her life, Bendrix employs the war to his own advantage, his status made possible by his (and his lover's) role in the machinery of empire.

When the horrors of war finally do encroach on Bendrix and Sarah's relationship, the couple remains enveloped in their own desire, which makes the subsequent dissolution of the affair after a bombing much more harrowing for Bendrix than the war's violence. As Bendrix and Sarah make love and the sounds of dropping bombs fill the air, Bendrix says: "No, the V1's didn't affect us until the act of love was over. I had spent everything I had, and was lying on my back with my head on her stomach and her taste - as thin and elusive as water - in my mouth, when one of the robots crashed into the Common and we could hear the glass breaking further down the south side" (70). Even with the presence of death mere feet from his bedroom, Bendrix remains fixated on his personal life, not letting the violence affect him until it blasts through his apartment complex: "I never heard the explosion, and I woke after five seconds or five minutes in a

changed world” (71). While Bendrix admits that the world has changed after his near death experience, the alterations to his life come not from the war’s direct contact physical contact with his life, but from Sarah’s sudden decision to end their affair directly after the bomb hits. Rebuffing Bendrix’s pleas for her to stay until after the All Clear, Sarah exists, curtailing future encounters with Bendrix by using her husband’s fabricated presence at home as an excuse. Alone in his room and nursing his physical wounds, Bendrix ruminates on the destruction of his relationship: “Henry. Henry. Henry - that name tolled through our relationship, damping every mood of happiness or fun or exhilaration with its reminder that love dies, affection and habit win the day. ‘You needn’t be so scared,’ she said, ‘love doesn’t end...’” (73). For Bendrix, the travesties of the war continue to assume a minuscule position in his life completely dwarfed by his affection for Sarah. Yet, the effects of the war and his affair have lasting impressions on Bendrix’s psyche. While both eventually end, their repercussions for Bendrix define the uncertainty of his future, leaving him a drifter in a world where his love and his social status in an empire remain damaged by the constraints of the war that forces him into a life of aimlessness.

Though Bendrix and Sarah fixate on their relationship rather than the changing landscape of Britain during the war, Greene justifies their self-involvement through his choice of constructing the narrative from Bendrix’s self-reflexive point of view, allowing Bendrix the opportunity to explain the extent to which his love for Sarah consumes him. As he recalls the desolation and heartbreak the end of his relationship with Sarah caused him, Bendrix writes: “We remember the details of our story, we do not invent them. War

didn't trouble those deep sea caves, but now there was something of infinitely greater importance to me than war, than my novel - the end of love" (35). Acting not only as a narrator, but also as the author of the story his audience reads, Bendrix realizes that his wanton disregard for the horrors of war could appear callous and harm the believability of his story. Therefore, he attempts to reconcile any criticisms of him by portraying the end of his love as the dwindling of a desire imperative for humanity that dwarfs work, art, and a finite war. Through Bendrix, Greene constructs his protagonist not as a selfish man immune to other's suffering, but as a romantic trying to prolong the existence of a love dying in the war-ravaged city where it came to fruition.

In adapting *The End of the Affair* to the screen, Jordan employs Greene's choice to write the novel from Bendrix's point of view as his primary tool to use the adaptation as a way to criticize the British empire, subtly portraying the film's two primary characters as insulated from the rest of the world by the physical and economic power of London's urban environment. Though Jordan preserves Bendrix's role in the narrative, he layers Bendrix's perspective by using the natural limitations of the film medium's point of view abilities to dilute Bendrix's agency to justify his actions in his story. Since film production requires the use of a neutral camera, even those stories told in first person via voice-over narration must be communicated to the audience through the camera's neutrality. As adaptation theorist James Griffith writes: "The common notions of objectivity and omniscience, when clarified and sufficiently distinguished, hold true: films can easily assume objective and omniscient perspectives. But, are these the limits? Conventional wisdom asserts that films cannot adapt first-person point of view" (51). By

harnessing the narrative omniscience of the camera, Jordan creates a dual narrative structure in his adaptation: one belonging to Bendrix (Ralph Fiennes) narrating the events of his affair with Sarah (Julianne Moore), and the other belonging to Jordan's camera, limited to recording only the events unspooling in front of its lens. As a result, the point of view of Jordan's camera serves as an additional voice in the narrative, presenting an alternative to Bendrix's point of view absent from the novel.

Jordan primarily uses the camera's omniscient point of view to critique Bendrix and Sarah's role in the British empire during his depictions of their sexual encounters. During the couple's consummation of their relationship in Sarah's home, Jordan shoots their physical interactions through straight-on angles with a camera that dollies throughout the room. While Bendrix and Sarah remain in the center of the frame, Jordan also uses the camera's movement to position his characters in the center of the room's lavish decor, including the blue velvet couch on which the couple lies, a tall liquor cabinet stocked with a variety of exposed bottles, and a side table displaying a stack of magazines featuring British royals. As the couple inch closer to climax, Jordan dollies forward to shoot the characters in a close-up, shifting the focus of his camera away from the room's decor and onto their faces as they reach orgasm. Through his use of the point of view of his dolly camera, Jordan literally shows his characters contained by the luxuries of empire their social class allows them to attain, knowledge absent from Bendrix's description of the scene in the novel. Shielded by the physical attributes of their roles in empire, the couple is able to forget the world around them and focus solely on each other, a correlation Jordan makes with the long takes he uses in the scene that

shift the camera's perspective from the entire room to the couple's passionate facial expressions.

Jordan's use of the camera's point of view to critique Bendrix and Sarah's roles in empire become even more charged as they argue about fidelity during their second depicted sexual encounter. Shooting the scene primarily with close-ups of the characters and using a shot-reverse-shot editing convention, Jordan focuses on Bendrix and Sarah in bed as they argue about Henry's influence on their love. During the couple's argument, Jordan punctuates their sentences with the sounds of sirens and distant bomb explosions occurring outside the confines of their room. As the argument progresses, culminating in a sudden outburst of love making, the sounds of the explosion escalate and the room begins to shake violently with white plaster falling from the ceiling. Despite the aural and spatial disturbances from the air raid, the couple remains focused on each other engaging in sex, ignoring the events outside of their room. Through the juxtaposition of the violence occurring in the city and the couple's sexual activity, Jordan highlights his character's disregard for the events affecting the lives of those around him. With England's citizens embroiled in the horrors of war, Bendrix and Sarah demonstrate ambivalence toward the conflict, allowing their class to supercede any semblance of civic-mindedness. However, while Bendrix's point of view in the novel allows him to justify his fixation on Sarah in a time of war, Jordan's film allows its protagonist no such opportunity, presenting him simply as a man isolated by his status despite the violence of the war around him.

In perhaps his greatest deviation from the Bendrix's narrative authority in the

novel, Jordan uses the camera's point of view to reveal directly Sarah's perspective on the narrative, completely stripping Bendrix of control over his own story. Though Greene constructs Book III of the novel as a series of excerpts from Sarah's diary that Bendrix hires private investigator Parkis to steal for him, Bendrix remains in narrative control of the story, bookending Sarah's journal entries with his own opinions. However, Jordan's film uses the camera's point of view to endow Sarah with her own sense of narrative voice, integrating depictions of the couple's sexual encounters from Sarah's alternate perspective by using the same objective shots employed in Bendrix's narration. Stylistically, Jordan simply recreates the previous scenes from different angles as Sarah narrates her own perspective: reversing shot reverse shot editing to focus on Sarah's reactions rather than Bendrix's dialogue and placing Sarah rather than Bendrix in the foreground of the frames. As a result, the camera's omniscient perspective, removed from the action of the narrative, creates two versions of events with two distinct perspectives, a stylistic device Jordan borrows from Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film *Rashomon* (Rockett and Rockett 236). While the device allows Sarah a narrative viewpoint Greene's novel denies her, it also serves as way for Jordan to integrate the perspective of the colonized directly into a work that ignores its existence. In its construction, empire relies on masculine strength to assert its control over colonized territories, othering the colonized by equating them as the feminine counterpart to the dominant male. As Boehmer writes, "Empire was not only where men as individuals defined their masculinity-or their honour, diligence, prowess. It was where men bonded. Imperial masculinity rested on the closely interactive homosocial relations" (72).

Serving as the female protagonist of the film, Sarah also acts as female colonized by her marriage to Henry, forced into an empire-sanctioned contract with a civil servant on whose finances she remains dependent. By harnessing the power of the camera's point of view, Jordan presents the same events that unfold in Greene's novel equally from both Bendrix and Sarah's perspectives, giving a voice to a feminine--and Irish--viewpoint Greene denies.

Continuing with his gendering of England and Ireland, Jordan increases the violence of the bombing that injured Bendrix and ultimately marks the end of his affair with Sarah in the film. Rather than execute the bombing scene as an action that merely lacerates and bruises Bendrix, Jordan depicts the explosion in a torrid of action that his character barely survives. As the bomb impacts the apartment complex, it explodes in ball of fire, violently knocking Bendrix two floors below his apartment amid a shower of debris. Instead of thinking Bendrix is dead from the bombing as she does in the novel, Sarah rushes to his body to find him not breathing and bleeding profusely, making his revival appear much more miraculous than in Greene's narrative. Through the increased violence, Jordan directly attacks the masculine construction of the British empire while increasing the role of his feminine character. In Jordan's film, Bendrix is unable to insulate himself from the war that will eventually destroy Britain's power, nearly dying as a result of one of its battles. To survive, he must rely on Sarah's ability to bring him back to life, an ability Jordan endows his female character with in the film which Greene previously denied her.

With the narrative firmly in his control through his use of the camera's point of

view to provide alternate perspectives to the empire presented in the novel, Jordan also critiques the English empire by accenting Greene's flippant references to Britain's imperial prowess. While England's colonial endeavors remain on the periphery throughout the novel, Greene often makes veiled references to England's status as an imperial power as the narrative progresses. When visiting Henry and Sarah's home for the first time two years after their affair ends, Bendrix surveys Henry's study, noting its decor: "I doubted whether the set of Gibbon had been opened, and the set of Scott was only there because it had - probably - belonged to his father, like the bronze copy of the Discus Thrower. And yet he was happier in his unused room simply because it was his: his possession. I thought with bitterness and envy: if one possesses a thing securely, one need never use it" (13). In his narration, Bendrix reveals that all of the items Bendrix mentions carry connotations of the British Empire's strength. Sir Walter Scott's Romantic works, written during the formative years of the British empire's expansion, note England's pride in its cultural heritage. The image of the Discus Thrower allows Greene to make a comparison between England and the Greek and Roman empires of the classical age, a comparison he ties to Britain's current post-war status through his inclusion of Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* on the shelf. Accumulating his possessions through his role as an agent of empire, Henry acts as a microcosm of British imperialism, treasuring the legacy of his nation and laying claim to the cultural capital of colonies, not for their utility, but for the sake of possession permitted by his social status.

Maintaining a keen attention to the detail in the film's mise-en-scene, Jordan

alters the decor of Henry's home, replacing images of the British Empire with items gleaned from colonized nations. As Bendrix visits the home for the first time in the film, he passes by an array of Oriental vases and pottery that accent every piece of furniture in the room. Throughout the film, Jordan frames his shots so that the Oriental images always remain in the background as the narrative unfolds. Before every sexual encounter that occurs in the house, Bendrix and Sarah pass a display of vases in the foyer that act as a passive and unacknowledged presence. Through his inclusion of the Oriental imagery, Jordan heightens the associations between Henry's desire for possession and his role in empire. As the British Empire enters its waning days, Henry surrounds himself not with symbols of the empire's strength, but with the fruits of its expansionist policy, literally accumulating as much as possible before the ultimate demise of the imperial power.

Despite Jordan's critiques of Greene's depiction of the British Empire, he maintains a sense of fidelity to the novel's original text, emphasizing Greene's few apparent criticisms of colonialism. When Bendrix meditates on his first encounter with Sarah, Greene writes: "We saw each other for the first time, drinking bad South African sherry because of the war in Spain" (25). Though Jordan limits Bendrix's voice over narration in the film, Bendrix delivers the line in its entirety in voice over as he types his account of the story on a typewriter. By preserving Greene's sentiment, Jordan strengthens his critique of colonial possession in the film, portraying his characters as servants of empire who only consume the products of empire they possess when finer goods are not available. Likewise Jordan directly transcribes the scene in the novel when Bendrix asks Parkis about the name of his son. Greene writes:

‘He’s called Lance isn’t he?’  
 ‘After Sir Lancelot sir. Of the Round Table.’  
 ‘I’m surprised. That was a rather unpleasant episode, surely.’  
 ‘He found the Holy Grail,’ Mr. Parkis said.  
 ‘That was Galahad. Lancelot was found in bed with Guinevere.’ ...  
 ‘I hadn’t heard.’ (77)

Through the preservation of the novel’s words, Jordan repositions Greene’s ironic barb meant to attack simultaneously lower-class knowledge of British myth and to compare Bendrix and Lancelot’s affairs as a critique of empire. Within the context of Jordan’s adaptation, the lines reveal both Bendrix and Parkis’s inability to understand the empire to which they belong. While Parkis demonstrates his ignorance concerning the mythic foundations of empire, Bendrix touts a knowledge of Arthurian legend that, when coupled with Jordan’s portrayal of him as a man insulated by the merits of imperialism, positions him as a character living in fantasy and unable to deal with the colonial power crumbling around him.

### **Catholic Mysticism, Irish Nationalism, and the Domineering Empire**

Witnessing firsthand the atrocities, secularization, and weakening of empire caused by the aftermath of both world wars, many of Greene’s modernist contemporaries such as Woolf and Orwell adapted their writing to question the authority of government and religion. However despite the changing world around him, Greene’s fiction demonstrates a central concern with the enduring power of religion in modern society. Converting to Catholicism to win the affections of Vivian Dayrell-Browning, Greene took his faith very seriously, studying scripture and attending church on a regular basis (Bosco 33). From the 1938 publication of *Brighton Rock* to the release of *The End of the Affair*, Greene’s novels demonstrated a resurgence in the tradition of the “Catholic

novel,” a movement that began as a response to the secular Enlightenment thought of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (7). While sharing many characteristics of Enlightenment-era Catholic novels, Greene reinterpreted the form for the modern era, achieving a Catholic ideology that, as Mark Bosco writes, “is never offered as a comforting way out of the discomfoting realities of modernity” (7). Taking into consideration the breakdown of Britain as a superpower and the surge of independence movements burgeoning in the British colonies around the time Greene published *The End of The Affair*, the novel serves as the endnote to Greene’s career as an author of Catholic novels as well as his attempts to understand the changing landscape of empire through a religious lens.

While directly opposing Greene’s religious views through his proclamation that “God is the greatest imaginary being of all time,” Jordan demonstrates an enduring fascination with Catholicism in his adaptation of *The End of the Affair* (Sragow). Maintaining fidelity to the majority of Greene’s novel, Jordan’s adaptation sharply deviates from the original’s treatment of Catholic faith, evoking the conflicts between the religious and secular worlds in a much more blatant manner. Despite the increased prominence of Catholicism in the film, Jordan’s discussions of the faith appear far more concerned with its role in Irish culture than in the truth behind its doctrines. Conquered by an English empire espousing Protestant doctrine, Irish-Catholic citizens suffered a dual subaltern status within Britain’s imperial endeavors, persecuted for their nationality as well as religious beliefs out of favor with their colonizers (Whelan 107). As a result, Irish-Catholics were subjected to increased ill-treatment under English rule, stripped of their land, plagued by regulations when serving in the army, and seen as inferior to their

Protestant counterparts (Whelan 3-10).

As ill-treatment of Irish-Catholics at the hands of the British continued, pro-Catholic sentiments merged with the national identity to create a strong sense of Irish nationalism that led to violent political struggles such as the 1916 Easter Rising and later political actions by groups such as the Irish Republican Army (English 232-235). From their political and religious struggles with Britain, the Irish constructed a nationalist narrative that has broken down as a result of its terrorist actions in the last two decades when Jordan rose to prominence as a filmmaker. As Seamus Deane writes: “The nationalist narrative, which told the story of seven hundred years of English misrule (finally brought to a conclusion by the heroic rebellion of 1916 and the violence of the following six years, and now culminating with the unfinished business in the North), has lost much of its appeal and legitimacy save for those who are committed to the IRA and armed struggle” (6). Echoing Deane’s criticism of the Irish nationalist narrative, Jordan uses the Catholicism of Greene’s novel to channel both Irish-Catholic struggle during British rule and mend the criticisms of Irish nationalism by writing back to empire through Sarah’s personal struggles with her Catholic faith in the film and its denial by Bendrix and Henry.

Though the first half of Greene’s novel deals solely with the particulars of Bendrix and Sarah’s affair, *The End of the Affair* truly becomes a Catholic novel after the pivotal moment when Bendrix recovers from the explosion that blasts through his apartment complex. Viewing Bendrix’s survival as a miracle that calls her atheism into question, Sarah reveals a prayer she made after thinking her lover dead: “Let him be

alive, and I *will* believe. Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I'll believe. But that wasn't enough. It doesn't hurt to believe. So I said, I love him and I'll do anything if you'll make him alive. I said very slowly, I'll give him up forever, only let him be alive with a chance..." (95). Suddenly thrown out of the atheistic worldview she shares with Bendrix, Sarah enters a conflict of the unknown, vowing to keep the promise she made to God after her "prayers" are answered. In the wake of Bendrix's survival, Greene depicts Sarah's religious struggle to answer the question she poses to herself-- "Why did this promise stay"-- through the integration of two characters she visits: Richard Smythe, a rationalist street speaker and Father Crompton, a Catholic priest (106). Though Sarah seeks to answer her question throughout the novel, she dies of an unnamed lung disease, leaving Bendrix and Henry ignorant of her true beliefs and forced to decide whether they should give her a Catholic burial or simply cremate her body, which they ultimately do. Only after Bendrix has dinner with Mrs. Bertram, Sarah's mother, does Greene reveal that Sarah was baptized Catholic and that her mother "Always wished it would 'take.' Like vaccination" (164). By remaining ambiguous about Sarah's faith after Bendrix's survival, Greene creates a manifestation of the conflicts facing religious believers in the wake of postwar culture. Though Sarah doubts her faith throughout the final days of her life, she ultimately decides not only to embrace religion, but also to sacrifice her love for Bendrix to honor its power, making her an ironic Catholic martyr that preserves the atheistic views of her lover and husband.

Directly contradicting his personal beliefs, Jordan completely eliminates Sarah's crisis of faith from his film adaptation, streamlining the narrative by renaming his priest

character Father Smythe and completely excising the novel's Smythe. In addition, Jordan removes Mrs. Bertram from the film, opting for Sarah to reveal her Catholic baptism to Bendrix long before her death. As a result, Jordan depicts Sarah not as a woman torn between rationalism and religion, but as a lapsed Catholic whose faith is reignited by Bendrix's survival after the bomb blast. With Sarah's faith firmly established early in the narrative, Bendrix and Henry's decision to cremate her ceases to function as a result of their ignorance of her wishes. Instead, her cremation becomes an active attempt by her partners to suppress and ignore the Catholicism she recommenced late in her life, permitting them to maintain a memory of Sarah that acts in concert with their atheistic views. Through Bendrix and Henry's stifling of Sarah's beliefs, Jordan parallels the attempts of the English to assert control over the largely Catholic spirit of Irish nationalism. Already establishing Bendrix and Henry's participatory roles in empire, Jordan portrays the duo as expressions of the masculinity inherent in imperial powers that assert control over the feminine. Plagued with mutability as a result of her death, Sarah's legacy now rests completely in control of her male lovers, who ultimately decide to cremate her, literally destroying her physical body and leaving only the lasting images of her they decide to construct, a decision Jordan underscores by ending the funeral scene with a long shot of smoke rising from the crematorium that becomes Sarah's final resting place.

### **Irish Perspectives on the Global Empire**

When Columbia Pictures released *The End of the Affair* in December 1999, Jordan was experiencing a pivotal moment in his career that would define the choices he

has made as a filmmaker in recent years. Despite entering into one of the most profitable relationships between a European director and an American film company by signing a three-picture deal with Dreamworks SKG, Jordan's first film for the company, *In Dreams*, opened the previous January to lackluster reviews and an anemic \$11.2 million domestic box-office performance (Rockett and Rockett 272). Even with Academy Award nominations for Moore's performance and Pratt's cinematography, *The End of the Affair* also became a failure for the studio, earning \$10.6 million domestically and receiving only minor notices from critics and review boards enamored with a wave of imaginative and unconventional American films such as Sam Mendes's *American Beauty*, Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, and Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich*. Jordan found himself at a turning point, focusing on smaller, more personal projects since then and using his studio connections to make low-budget films with increased control (Rockett and Rockett 276-278). However, while Jordan's recent professional decisions exhibit sharp criticisms of corporate filmmaking, he also attempts to write back to the corporate empire that has attempted to commodify him. Using Greene's film career and references to cinema in the author's novel, Jordan infuses his adaptation of *The End of the Affair* with a sharp critique of the corporate media culture that funded the film.

Though cinema does not play an integral role in Greene's novel, the author uses references to film as a way to differentiate the classes of his characters. In order to initiate his relationship with Sarah, Bendrix invites her to a screening of a film adapted from one of his novels, inferring from Henry's social status that he has no interest in an art form meant for the lower classes through his line, "I suppose it's no use good asking

Henry” (42). Despite the importance of the screening in beginning their affair, even Bendrix appears reticent to attend the screening, lamenting about the inherent “stock clichés of the screen” (43). Through his characters’ expressions of their disdain for film, Greene reveals a class bias similar to that expressed in his theoretical work on the “poetic cinema,” treating the medium as useful only to placate and educate the masses not firmly entrenched at the top of the British class system.

Using Greene’s class-conscious depictions of the cinema as an entry point, Jordan infuses his portrayal of cinema in the film with a layered critique of both Greene’s film theory and the oppressive means Empire uses the medium to maintain its hegemony. When Bendrix and Sarah visit the cinema in the adaptation, they mock the film meant to be the adaptation of Bendrix’s novel. However, rather than include stock footage or a film-within-a-film, Jordan has his characters watch the 1940 Basil Dean film *21 Days*, an adaptation of a John Galsworthy novel written by Greene (Rockett and Rockett 226). Through his characters’ snide comments on a film written by Greene himself, Jordan harshly criticizes the author and his classist views of cinema as an art form. Criticizing Greene by using his own work against him, Jordan demonstrates the ability of the cinema to create visual cues that break down class barriers by instituting criticisms of those in the ruling classes. Though Greene can critique cinema as an art of the lower classes, Jordan consciously, albeit subtly, reveals that Greene earned his reputation in part by participating in the very medium he criticizes so harshly.

Jordan also attempts to address the corporate empire in his depictions of audience interaction with cinema in the film. As she attempts to cope with ending her relationship

with Bendrix, Sarah goes to see a newsreel in a movie house depicting images of Churchill on VE Day. Though Jordan maintains the camera's focus on Sarah as she comes to realize the war that fostered her affair with Bendrix has come to an end, he also fills the frame with an audience of common people who remain fixated on the pro-British patriotic images gracing the screen. By depicting the audience's reaction to the film, Jordan expresses the potential of communications media to control the populace that Hardt and Negri deem so vital to the strength of Empire. Only presenting one side of the war, the film, distributed to movie houses and disseminated to the population, serves as a reminder of the patriotic sentiments that would spawn the civil liberties atrocities of the Cold War a few years after the novel's setting. By exposing the power of cinema to indoctrinate in a film funded by Columbia Pictures (an arm of Sony), Jordan employs the communicative power of the corporation to shape ideology against itself, alerting his audience to adopt a more critical means of analysis with which to view the media around them.

In adapting Greene's novel to film, Jordan has integrated an Irish perspective into a work of empire written during the transitory period in global history that saw the fall of nation-based imperialism and the rise of the global corporation. Through the adaptation process, Jordan uses both a work of colonial empire and the funding of the corporate empire to evoke the inherent oppression of both forms of imperialism, writing back to the powers that have suppressed him as an Irish citizen and as an artist. However, Jordan serves as only one of the many film artists working today who find themselves extricated from their national cinemas and given the opportunity to make commercially viable films

for an international market reeling from the remnants of colonial rule and under the thumb of globalized economic imperialism that champions demographics and marketability over artistic vision and integrity.

**Chapter II**  
**Defining Neverland: P.J. Hogan, J.M. Barrie, and *Peter Pan* As Allegory of Empire**

Unlike many of his Australian filmmaking contemporaries, writer/director P.J. Hogan has remained a relatively inconspicuous filmmaker during his career, releasing only three features in 14 years. Despite the widespread critical acclaim and modest international box-office success of his first distributed feature *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), the film's apolitical nature 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. While Gillian Armstrong criticizes Australian society's oppression of women in her film *My Brilliant Career* (1979), Peter Weir directly attacks English imperialism in his World War I epic *Gallipoli* (1981) and international political thriller *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982), Bruce Beresford critiques Australian youth culture in *The Club* (1980) and *Puberty Blues* (1981), Fred Schepisi meditates on Australia's aboriginal culture in *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978), and George Miller revels in establishment society's destruction in his *Mad Max* trilogy (1979, 1981, 1985), Hogan forgoes obvious political connotations in *Muriel's Wedding*, diluting critical undercurrents to focus on his protagonist's romantic whimsy and ABBA obsession.

Though 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 continued to exhibit an apolitical nature when he

made the transition to Hollywood. 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 preserved the obsessions with marriage and pop music sensibilities of his first career success. Situating *My Best Friend's Wedding* within the context of the films made by other Australian directors working in Hollywood during the same time, the continuing apolitical nature of Hogan's work becomes more apparent, seemingly tied more to his filmmaking preoccupations than his role in an international film movement. The year Hogan released *Wedding*, Armstrong revisited the feminist concerns she exhibited in *My Brilliant Career* and her Hollywood-funded adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1994) in her adaptation of Australian writer Peter Carey's postcolonial novel *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997). 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 critiqued geo-political corruption both indirectly in the Tom Clancy political thrillers *Patriot Games* (1992) and *Clear and Present Danger* (1994) and

directly in a trilogy of films concerning colonized countries: *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), 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 innocuous nature of his oeuvre, Hogan spent the six years after *My Best Friend's Wedding* adapting Scottish writer J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* for a live-action film. 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 England 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 an Australian filmmaker to use in an attempt to write back to empire. At its core, *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 (Hollindale 315). Yet aside from Barrie's literal references to England's imperial endeavors in Australia, his construction of Neverland as an multiracial society allows for easy allegorical comparisons between Barrie's fiction and Australia. 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) and the aboriginal natives of the island nation. Harnessing Barrie's use of the conventions of Empire writing and employing his descriptions of Neverland for allegorical purposes, Hogan's *Peter Pan* (2003) 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 his apolitical filmography and demonstrates a concern with Britain's imperial influence on Australia as strong as the films of his contemporaries.

Budgeted at over \$100 million, *Peter Pan* provided Hogan 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 the corporate empire that values return on investment over personal vision. Through his clout, Hogan convinced the studio to shoot the movie in Australia rather than London, fostering both his country's economy and prominence within the industry. 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.

### **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 English culture and into the unreal. By establishing the rote and unimaginative game early in the text, Barrie establishes that his children are not mere young people, but youth being groomed for 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 English family structure, valuing her present and future roles in English society more than Peter's opportunity.

Breaking from his source material 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 housewide 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.

Yet Hogan's inclusion of the children's imagination allows him to create a conflict between imagination and reason not present in Barrie's texts. Hogan's 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. When 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 British power structure in Barrie's works, but victims of an imperial structure 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 asking Peter if she can flee England and return home with him. 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. Yet 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 asserts 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 creates an air of suspense, positing the parents as pursuers who endanger Wendy's sense of adventure, a cue Hogan accents through his use of fast-paced music not out of place in a horror film chase sequence to score the scene.

Using the spatial capabilities of the film medium, Hogan further attempts to write back to the English empire by employing 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 English 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 original texts, spending considerable screen time detailing the Darlings’ flight with Peter. Unlike Barrie’s description, Hogan fills the screen with outer space imagery as his characters leave the confined urban space of London 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 the empire's 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 empire that allows the colonized to encroach on the space of the colonizer. 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. However, rather than flying through London's space as Hogan's camera does at the beginning of the film, the Jolly Roger flies high over Big Ben and the city's other landmarks and buildings. 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's influence in the film, can Peter and the Darlings overcome the entrapping space of London by flying high 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 English culture and social customs. 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 etiquette, giving the novel a didactic digression in the middle of the narrative. However, the passage also delves into children's understanding of the inner workings of empire. The two topics of Barrie's fictitious examination paper are the two greatest assets to the British colonial enterprise and the nation's own nationalism: the English language and the power of the English monarchy. By associating both 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's stage directions, Peter and John attempt to assert their masculinity to each other. As Peter shows the Darlings 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). Though John fails at the task of flying, he attempts to overshadow Peter through his knowledge of British geography. Barrie's play also demonstrates fascination with 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). Through his references to symbols of Britain's geography and language in both his moral and villainous characters, Barrie asserts the lasting impact of English culture. While the uneducated Peter eventually surpasses both John and Hook in different manners, both of the British characters maintain a sense of superiority over him as a result of their knowledge of 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 which demonstrates the full indoctrinating power of the empire during Barrie’s lifetime. Later in the passage, Wendy even states, “We hope our sons should die like English gentlemen” (192). However, Barrie not only demonstrates a sense of loyalty to empire through the inclusion of the dialogue, but 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 empire 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 English 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 English. 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 empire into the butt of a joke for the rebellious children. For Hogan's characters, self-preservation acts as a natural inclination greatly exceeding the rhetoric the empire 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). Though 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 both 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 or allegiance to anyone but himself, mechanically shooting and slitting the throats of his own crew members 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 Hogan makes to Hook's characterization, the character 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 defeat.

Yet, Peter eventually defeats Hook, not through his intelligence as in Barrie's texts, but through writing 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 defence 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 of the English language in an attempt to break free from his control. As a result, 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 English 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 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 that permeated his time, his depictions of the mermaids and the Irish pirate Smee merit analysis within the context of empire as well. Throughout the novel and play, Barrie creates a wedge between the characters steeped in English tradition and those others he depicts as outside the norms of empire, creating a sense of English superiority, a wedge 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 his wigwam from the pirates.

Tiger Lily: The Great White Father save me from pirates. Me his velly nice 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 that demonstrates 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 man going so far as to repair Michael's teddy bear

that 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. Through his realistic depiction of the native characters, Hogan creates two distinct, autonomous subcultures within the realm of Neverland, demonstrating a mutual relationship absent from Barrie's texts.

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. However, 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 them 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 often drag humans to the depths for a reason unknown to him. Through his depiction of the mermaid culture, Hogan exhibits a resistance against characterizing them in what Edward W. Said deems Orientalist terms. Said writes:

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. (40-41)

Through his depiction of the mermaids as Eastern females, Hogan writes back to the British empire by refusing to let his characters make judgments about the group. 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. By allowing the mermaids to remain shrouded in mystery, Hogan preserves the integrity of their culture and its separation from the other inhabitants of the island.

While critics of Barrie's depictions of the colonized in his texts often focus on his portrayal of the Indians, he 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. 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. While Barrie presents the various cultures of Neverland as mysterious others inferior to the British characters, Hogan revels in the diversity of an island that very much resembles his native Australia's rich cultural identity and amalgam of numerous racial groups.

### **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 series of tumultuous events throughout its production and distribution. Released in an unfortunate position between the pirate film revival stemming from the release of *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* the previous summer and the holiday box-office hegemony of *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of The King* during its opening weekend, the film died at the domestic box office, earning back \$49 million of 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 out grossed 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). 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 write back to corporate powers 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). 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 her for telling the Lost Boys he ordered them to shoot Wendy, Tinkerbell vents her frustrations by colluding with Hook and the pirates to destroy the 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 exposes the inherent contradictions of a media company that brands itself with Tinkerbell's innocence while attempting to lay claim to characters created by other artists.

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 at the end of the film. Hogan's infusing 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). Through his overt treatment of Peter and Wendy's relationship, Hogan echoes Michel Foucault's claim: "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 instills in his film a sense of femininity through the presence of an omniscient female narrator (Saffron Burrows). Employing a tactic similar to Neil Jordan's in *The End of the Affair*, Hogan turns the narrative power of the film over to a female voice, attempting to subvert the masculine establishment inherent in imperial endeavors. 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 into the film.

Through adapting Barrie's play and novel to film, Hogan integrates his Australian heritage 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 to film, Hogan demonstrates an acute sense of politics absent from the early films made before he was integrated into the world of Hollywood. Despite his position as a blockbuster filmmaker, Hogan uses his status to both address the English empire that oppressed his nation during the rise of Barrie's popularity, and the new media empire that threatens to manufacture innocuous art devoid of international flavor. However, with the commercial failure of *Peter Pan* much more recent than the surprise success of *My Best Friend's Wedding* ten years ago, Hogan's career outlook remains as precarious as any colonized citizen desiring to critique the empire that asserts institutional power over the individual.

**Chapter III**  
**Imperial Vanities: Mira Nair, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anglo-Indian Cultural Commodity in *Vanity Fair***

Throughout her career, Indian filmmaker Mira Nair has occupied a liminal space in film culture, fully integrating herself within the American film community while maintaining strong ties to the Indian culture in which she grew up. 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 247). Firmly entrenched in two vastly different cultures, Nair has built her career on the duality of her background, becoming a filmmaker who has made significant contributions to both the Indian identity in diaspora and to the prominence of Indian filmmakers in international cinema culture (Naficy 68). 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. 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.

For a filmmaker so concerned with her Indian heritage, Nair's film adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's Victorian novel *Vanity Fair* (2004) appears as an outlier. Published in 1847 at the pinnacle of the British empire's global influence, 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 Edward W. Said's claim that the 19<sup>th</sup> century British and French novel contain allusions to empire more regular and frequent than in any other cultural product (Said, Culture 63). As Said writes in his landmark postcolonial studies text Culture and Imperialism:

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 a sense of Indian presence into the film. Infusing the *mise-en-scene* of the film with costumes, props, and set decorations inspired by Indian culture and by shooting scenes on location in her native country, Nair endows India with a voice in the narrative that both challenges England’s cultural dominance and critiques the imperial power for its consumption of India as a culture and nation in the narrative.

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 director a forum to address a corporate empire that has further asserted its presence on Bollywood, India’s national cinema, 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).

However, as Bollywood has increased its financial strength and film output, producing more than 300 films a year, corporations have begun to make prominent financial investments in Indian cinema, diluting its national attributes for global consumption. As 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). While such alterations to Bollywood films may increase their marketability internationally, the conformity to outside influence has alienated many members of the lower-class audiences within India that constitute 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. Asserting India's presence on 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 assert influence in the process of cultural fusion.

### **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 the voice of empire by threading the stories together and constantly alluding to his omnipotence within the realm of early 19<sup>th</sup> century England. 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 asserted 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 assert 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 claims that novels from Thackeray's era possessed an inherent sense of imperialism, Thackeray's narrator acts 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 cinema's point of view capabilities 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. As Roland Barthes writes, "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. As a result, her camera integrates images into the narrative that directly critique and question the power of the 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 a bird indigenous to India 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 an 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 associations.

After establishing her control over the film's narrative, Nair uses her point of view 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 full 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 palace. 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. By adding depictions of India absent from the novel, Nair endows her native country with a presence ignored in Thackeray’s narrative, portraying the country as a lively culture that exists as a world independent of England rather than in competition with its beauty that Thackeray asserts.

Nair continues using her agency over the camera 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 assert their superiority rather than 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 ultimately 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. By including depictions of the wounded and dead British soldiers, Nair calls attention to the dehumanizing power of empire. Though thousands died for empire to survive the threat of Napoleon, the empire and its writers refuse to acknowledge the deaths in order to preserve the illusion of England's strength.

Nair exerts her Indian point of view 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 maintained the empire in which he lived to assert 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 a native Indian in traditional dress in a turban who has no interaction with the Sedleys apart from his required duty.

Unlike the novel's Sambo, the Sedleys' servant in the film demonstrates no inclination to demonstrate the sensibilities of empire, fully content to remain a citizen of India engaging in a business practice and far removed from English 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 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 return 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 to comment on the persistence of "otherness" inherent in the construction of empire that transcends even financial security.

In sharp contrast to the moral ambiguity of Thackeray's characters, Nair uses her Indian point of view 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 position 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.

Nair's narrative point of view 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 not in 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 discovers Becky and Steyne alone together in the film, Nair alters Thackeray's narrative, shooting Rawdon in a tracking shot as he discovers Steyne attempting to make love to Becky on the parlor couch. Until Rawdon catches Steyne in his 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 runs in the newspaper. Through her portrayal of Steyne's immorality, 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 to acquire their greatest assets, whether paintings with sentimental value, a female's reputation, or advanced positions in colonial endeavors.

### **An Empire of Commodity**

A novel steeped in Victorian culture, *Vanity Fair* 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 native Indian commodities as a symbol of wealth and power for his characters. For Thackeray's characters, 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 exhibit traits of what Karl Marx refers to as 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” (52). 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, asserting control over Indian commodities like their native country asserting power over India. Expanding upon Marx’s criticisms, 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 a sense of mutualism between the two cultures that transcends the roles of colonizer-colonized for the two nations.

Thackeray most directly embodies the idea of commodity fetishism 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 those only in the highest classes. 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. Attempting 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 film adaptation, Nair treats Becky's consumption of the curry in a humorous manner, highlighting the inability of the colonizers to fully dominate India's native culture. 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. After finally completing her task, Becky swallows triumphantly, deeming the dish "delicious" to Joseph. Through the alterations to the novel, Nair writes back to empire by asserting the untamable nature of her native culture. Though Becky attempts to eat the dish, its spicy nature proves too foreign for Becky's English palate, forcing her into discomfort as she attempts social climbing through her consumption.

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 means. Yet 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 the trunk as Becky moves to new locations that mark her increase in social status. 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 back before fading to black. Through her alteration, Nair directly addresses India’s role in Becky’s rise to the wealthy class. 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 uses the fashionable clout of the shawl 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 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 a 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 an Indian 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 drops to 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 structure she has so long desired.

Nair refines 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 of the costume design 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 native to India and popular during the time period of Thackeray's novel. 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 mutualism 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 Money, 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 idiosyncratic pseudo-indie film *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). However, while many critics observed Nair's attempts to address the British empire through her retextualization of the novel, her use of Bollywood conventions 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 of the film: "In the wrong hands, the scene would have come off like a bad Madonna video, but it somehow works" (73).

Despite the critical reception of Nair's Bollywood-infused aesthetic, the director's

use of conventions from her native country's cinema mark her attempt to write back to the corporate empire 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, Nair presents the scene as a deviation from the central plot of the film, relishing in its Indian style as Becky, in Indian dress and covered with henna tattoos, dances amid an array of Indian extras. 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 traditional Indian 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. 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 control over the production of *Vanity Fair* allowed her to criticize the corporate empire through imbibing the production process with 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. However, 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 a traditional Indian opening ceremony called a “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 tikki 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 from her native country: “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, writing back to empire by working in the system 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 simple 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. In a similar

manner as Jordan's adaptation of *The End of the Affair*, 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 for globalized distribution.

### **Conclusion: A Multitude of Voices in Global Concert**

Through their adaptations of the literature of empire, Neil Jordan, P.J. Hogan, and Mira Nair attempt to define the status of former colonized nations within the context of contemporary geopolitical culture, writing back to the empires that controlled their respective countries at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and addressing the role of national cinema traditions in an industry that has become increasingly controlled by corporations in the last fifty years. Though each filmmaker establishes a resistance to colonial and corporate imperial powers within their adaptations, all three films demonstrate unique forms of criticism shaped largely by the conflicts arising between empire and their countries of origin. As a result, the three filmmakers discussed employ their countries' own historical conflicts with imperialism as a way both to break from the constraints of the colonial powers that controlled them and to criticize the corporations that threaten to homogenize their international visions, essentially using their own nationalism as a defense against imperialism. Through his subtle attacks on the suppression of Irish Catholicism and Greene's ties to colonial England in an adaptation that remains relatively faithful to Greene's novel, Jordan highlights the cultural differences of England and Ireland while making parallels between the British empire and contemporary corporate imperialism's attempts to strip Ireland of its national identity. In contrast to Greene's subtle integration of historical conflicts, Hogan uses the allegorical potential of Barrie's *Peter Pan* to allude to Australia's multiethnic population, blatantly calling attention to his nation's history as a refuge for the outcasts of empire and its potential as a diverse location for film production. Hailing from a country with both a different ethnic makeup than Britain, Ireland, and Australia and a national cinema threatened by the influence of

Hollywood, Nair criticizes past and present imperial powers by using *Vanity Fair* as a showcase for Indian commodities and Bollywood style, asserting her national culture onto the traditions of the Victorian literature often used by Hollywood as fodder for “prestige pictures” meant to garner awards recognition and reputation.

Though Jordan, Hogan, and Mira Nair 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 empire’s power structure does not fully represent attempts by filmmakers to resist imperial and corporate colonizers. The filmmakers in this study all hail from developed nations that enjoy local and international support for their industries. In the cases of Jackson, Jordan, and 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, Nair’s native country enjoys an influx of foreign production revenues that supplement the income of a film industry recognized as the second most profitable national cinema in the world. With the exception of Nair, the filmmakers I have chosen also all hail from predominately white countries that maintain financial ties with Europe. As a result, their native countries have stronger and more cohesive film communities than developing nations such as South Africa, Iran, Brazil, and Afghanistan, where tumultuous political situations and current global military conflicts greatly hinder the ability to finance and market films for global distribution. Numerous films from these developing nations such as Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s *Kandahar* (2001) and South African director Gavin Hood’s *Tsotsi* (2005) write back to former and current colonizers.

Brazilian filmmaker Fernando Meirelles, whose independent film *City of God* (2002) earned him an Academy Award nomination, has even continued to critique colonial and corporate empire after his absorption into Hollywood with Focus Features's *The Constant Gardener* (2005), an adaptation of British spy novelist John Le Carre's novel that indicts Western corporate influence in Africa. As each of these filmmakers' countries reach economic and political stability, such nations 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 End of the Affair* and *Peter Pan* to the screen with their own accented touches.

As Makhmalbaf, Hood, and Meirelles demonstrate, filmmakers do not have to adapt works of empire in order to write back to their oppressors. Jordan and Australian directors such as Peter Weir and Gillian Armstrong have addressed issues of colonialism and corporate control through original screenplays. More recently, three filmmakers who have spearheaded the current Mexican film renaissance have used film adaptation and their relationships with film corporations in a variety of ways to create a series of films critical of colonial and corporate powers that have succeeded critically and commercially. Alfonso Cuarón began his career creating accented adaptations of British empire writing such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1995) and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1998) before writing and directing the Mexican coming-of-age story *Y Tu Mama Tambien* (2002). After adapting J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), Cuarón earned enough control to adapt P.D. James's sci-fi novel *Children of Men* (2006), reimagining it as an allegorical political critique of Orwellian global counter-terrorism measures and immigration policy. Likewise, Guillermo Del Toro

used both the reputation he established with the Mexican horror films *Cronos* (1993) and *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) and the money he earned directing studio comic book adaptations such as *Blade II* (2002) and *Hellboy* (2004) to fund *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), a fantastical allegory that both criticizes the early 20<sup>th</sup> century fascist tendencies of Mexico's former colonizer Spain and makes parallels to current post 9/11 international policies. While not working in the adaptation realm, Alejandro González Iñárritu used the early success and novel intertwining story structure of his Mexican film *Amores Perros* (2000) to receive studio funding for *21 Grams* (2003) and *Babel* (2006), two films that discuss communication boundaries and highlight the similarities of international cultures.

Nor are filmmakers hailing from colonized nations the only ones to write back to colonial and corporate authority. Building on the legacy of Italian director Gillo Pontecorvo and his landmark docudrama indictment of French colonialism, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), several English directors have begun to turn a critical lens toward their own native country. Stephen Frears has exhibited a concern with the repercussions of colonialism throughout his three decade career, helming such films as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Dirty Pretty Things* (2003) that examine the plight of immigrants from former colonies as they attempt to integrate into English culture. Director Paul Greengrass directly critiques English-Irish relations in *Bloody Sunday* (2002), his docudrama concerning the infamous altercation between Irish protestors and British soldiers, and layers criticism of England's current role in international politics within his spy thriller *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004). Even British genre filmmaker Danny Boyle exhibits critiques of globalization and the legacy of English colonialism in his zombie thriller *28 Days Later...* (2003) and family film *Millions* (2005), emphasizing Britain's

fallen stature in an ever-increasing global world.

With so many international filmmakers writing back to former and current colonizers, the role of America in postcolonial cinematic culture is difficult to define. Though global corporations based in America maintain control over the international film industry, movies made domestically account for only 36% of the total films produced in the world every year (Campbell 253). However, these 36% of films make up the overwhelming majority of films seen both domestically and internationally, a fact that demonstrates the extent of corporate control over the film distribution process (Smith 4). Though America is technically a postcolonial country, its presence has increased to such an extent in the past 200 years that it has surpassed its origin within the entertainment industry. The colonized has become the colonizer. Yet films funded within the industry support a wealth of inventive American filmmakers and employ international directors such as Jordan, Hogan, and Nair who respond to their colonizers using the medium of cinema. Whether through direct attack such as in Sidney Lumet's *Network* (1976), subtle allegory as in George A. Romero's zombie films, or the multifaceted adaptations by international directors previously discussed, artists working within the medium have shown a predilection for challenging past and current imperial powers, smuggling their own ideas into the cinema consumed by the audiences of the world.

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