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The Other Side of Redwall: Medieval Othering and Binary Oppositions in *The Outcast of Redwall*

CHRISTOPHER QUAH WAI KHEONG
Research Centre for Languages and Linguistics,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

ANITA HARRIS SATKUNANANTHAN *(Corresponding author)*
Research Centre for Languages and Linguistics,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
aharris@ukm.edu.my

RAVICHANDRAN VENGADASAMY
Research Centre for Languages and Linguistics,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Brian Jacques's Redwall series of anthropomorphic fantasy novels featuring animals divided into the noblebeast and vermin are well-loved, with the medieval images of Redwall Abbey, Mossflower and other noblebeast communities exciting the imagination of its readers. Nevertheless, there exists a binary opposition of the noblebeast and the vermin who are vilified and portrayed as savage and amoral. This article argues that the orientalistic roots of twentieth century fantasy novels which are based on a nostalgia for medieval times is a main impetus for the Orientalism present in Outcast of Redwall. Concomitantly, in this article, the analysis of Outcast of Redwall interrogates instances of Orientalism in the novel through a literary postcolonial framework, connecting Orientalism to the idea of the Other and the Self. Specifically, the character of Veil in Outcast of Redwall is analysed, looking at the ways in which he fails to be assimilated in the medieval society of Redwall because of his vermin heritage. The findings from this article reveal that Orientalism is baked into the Redwall novels and how the depiction of the vermin correlate with the ways in which the West conceived of the Orient from the age of colonial exploration and beyond, a legacy of the ways in which the twentieth century fantasy novel derived much of its inspiration from a medieval aesthetic that incorporates binary oppositions and a fear of the Other.

Keywords: Redwall; Othering; Orientalism; Colonialism; Binary Opposition; Anthropomorphism

INTRODUCTION

This article interrogates the instances of Othering found in Brian Jacques's *The Outcast of Redwall* (1995) from the perspective of unpacking the markers of Orientalism within the text. Jacques's *Redwall* novels are a series of fantasy novels that features anthropomorphic animal characters in a medieval-type setting, with the mores and values of a society infused with the nostalgia of medieval life found in both Romantic and fantasy narratives. Jacques's narratives follow a particular form of epic fantasy that derives its narrative heft from a representation of medieval European life and culture. Therefore, the noblebeast communities of Redwall Abbey, Logalog, and Salamandastrom, and Mossflower, are places where the medieval-type civilised characters (the noblebeast) live, which is the representation of the Self, at the centre of the narrative. Ayobami Kehinde (2006) writes that the interaction of Other and Self are created in "unequal relations of power based on binary opposition such as "Us" and "them", "First World" and "third world", "White" and "black", "Colonizer" and "colonized", "Powerful" and

"powerless", "Torturer" and "tortured", "Master" and "slave", "Civilized" and "savage", "Superior" and "inferior", "Human" and "subhuman" (p.108). These interactions may be viewed in the Redwall novels, creating a binary relationship between the groups that appear as civilized and nobles, and those portrayed as savage and cruel.

The nostalgia-tinged descriptions of life in the communities of "noblebeast" find an Othered counterpart in the lives of predatory animals known as "vermin". Tabish Khair (2009) elucidates that the Other "is seen as a Self waiting to be assimilated (and hence effectively internal or secondary to the Self), or the Other is cast as the purely negative image of the European Self, the obverse of the Self. Either as lack or as an absolute incomprehensibility-read-negatively, this reduced Other is posited as inferior or secondary to the European Self – and utterly knowable in its …unknowability" (p.2). Herein lies the binary opposition found at the heart of the classic struggle between the Orient and the Occident which has a lot of its history in the Middle Ages and the conflicts of the Crusades.

In general, apart from some outliers, the twentieth-century epic fantasy genre is rife with Orientalism motifs, beginning from the novels that inspired a whole genre of fiction, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*. Margaret Sinex (2010) writes that Tolkien, in his trilogy "mirrors the Western Europeans' methods of constructing their imaginary Saracen", the embodiment of the Orient which are as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes, "fantasy products of the Christian imaginary, that, like all monsters could take on an uncanny life of their own" (cited in Sinex, 2010, p.175). Therefore, following the template of medieval Othering, these elements were transposed upon *the Lord of the Rings*, creating a marginalisation in a fantasy world. Sinex (2010) observes that this "degree or gradation" rests upon "the geographical distance between the targeted group and the European intellectual (p.176). Sinex notes that Tolkien's mirroring of the othering processes of medieval Europe in relation to the Haradrim rests upon the following binaries: "inner/outer, light/dark, Scythian/Ethiopian, saved/damned) (2010, p.176). Sinex (2010) therefore admits that there is the use of "color as a tool" which guides audience response, present in both the literature and "visual arts of the late Middle Ages" (p.175). These visual and literary binary oppositions therefore serve as a template for most of the big battle and conflicts in epic fantasies spanning from Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* to the depiction of Calormenes (Easterners with a strongly Middle Eastern appearance) in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Anna Fore Waymack and John Wyatt Greenlee (2020), in commenting about the influence of medieval texts and cartography in the creation of fantasy worlds and their maps, highlight the genesis of this practice in genre from Tolkien's deployment of medieval cartography in his envisioning of Middle-Earth (p.196) and how this influenced other fantasy authors. These authors who drew from the binaries of Tolkien's fantasy vision include Brian Jacques. His spatial envisioning of Redwall includes "that leftmost sea, a continent continuing on past the right-hand border" (p.198). Waymack and Greenlee point out that this practice impacts the ways in which people think about the "historical past" and that this mode of thinking privileges "a unique and distinctly civilized western tradition, one naturally bounded by a centering geography and assailed from without by barbarism" (p.198). These elements are evident in the Redwall books and are particularly obvious in Jacques's *Outcast of Redwall* (1995).

In considering the binary opposition at the heart of Orientalism, this article will be referring to Edward Said's Orientalism. Even though this seminal text was published in 1978 (and reissued in 1995 via Penguin), the markers of Orientalism are still very much a concern in present day scholarship, particularly when it comes to the interrogation of binary oppositions in twentieth to twenty-first century fantasy fiction. Elleke Boehmer (2018), in a critique of how postcolonial studies was deploying Said's concept of Orientalism, notes that it is the "empire's underpinning system of knowledge exchange and appropriation" (p.154). Boehmer

elucidates that it is important to consider the manner in which exchanges discussing Orientalism considers the impact of it on the way "we do postcolonial critique" (2018, p.155). For this article, this vigorous line of thought by Boehmer is in tandem with the research objective: interrogating the binary oppositions in the conflict between the Other and the Self in fantasy fiction and investigating the ways in which these conflicts have a medieval origin. Pursuant to the interrogation and investigation of binary opposition in fantasy narratives, this article contends that the conflict that arises from these binary oppositions is strongly delineated in Jacques's *Outcast of Redwall* (1995). These binary oppositions may be seen in the two different anthropomorphic animal classes found in the Redwall society by problematizing the ways in which Orientalism is enacted within fantasy narratives. Concomitantly, this article interrogates the ways in which the representation of the vermin as Other in Jacques's novels relate to the binary oppositions which create the process of Othering and Alterity. In the world of Redwall, the protagonist and antagonist of the books are determined based on species; an animal is born into the "good" side or the "bad" side of the Redwall universe through species. The good animals or noblebeast are connected to the Western concept of civility. This article contends that the values, culture and behavior pattern of the noblebeast are Occidental in nature, with some elements such as the way of life in the Redwall Abbey corresponding to the mores of medieval society. The food of the Redwall novels are lush and the descriptions of the setting of the noblebeast dwellings are lyrical and poetic. Cast as binaries to this are predatory animals who are called vermin. Vermin may be seen as savages that share certain description with the Occidental "Other", which is to say, beings who do not share the values and moral code of the noble beast and who are seen as being unable to be reformed. Animals such as squirrels, rabbits, mice, hedgehogs and badgers, are known as the heroes and noblebeast of the series. Opposing them are the bad animals who are referred to as hordebeasts, or vermin, who are seen as more predatory opportunistic animals, such as weasels, polecats, foxes, rats, wild cats and even wolverines. The binary opposition presented in the Redwall books are complex and specific to how Jacques has framed the animal kingdom, but a lot of it is couched in Orientalist terms, suggesting that the bestial Other is antithetical to the Eurocentric values and morals exhibited by the noblebeast communities.

Outcast of Redwall (1995) is different from the other books in the Redwall series because close to the centre of the narrative of the novel is a vermin ferret raised by Redwallers, named Veil. The introduction of Veil into the narrative at about the halfway point in the novel shifts the focus from battles between the Redwallers and vermin, to examine the nature of the vermin. This disrupts the harsh binary opposition present in other books which depicts the Redwallers as good, while the vermin are positioned as grotesque and bad. Therefore, this article contends that the descriptions, rules, and customs of the vermin in the Redwall series show similarities to that of Occidental observations towards the Orient as the Other which are deeply influenced by the medieval framing of the Orient against the morality of medieval knighthood and Christianity, as depicted in various acts of nostalgic literary valorizing of the medieval era, particularly those found in twentieth century fantasy fiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BRIAN JACQUES'S REDWALL NOVELS

A slim body of criticism exists in relation to Jacques's Redwall novels, mostly connected to children's literature. Jacques was a British author who "left school at 15," before working as a "docker, seaman, truck driver, policeman, comedian, broadcaster and playwright," (Patricia Lee Gauch, 2003, p.401). Gauch (2003), who was also his publisher, notes that Jacques felt

"impassioned about the rights and wrongs of social structures, particularly in his native England" (p.403). This is an admirable sentiment, but nationalism is oft a double-edged sword, and in the universe of Redwall, it takes the shape of the Orientalism-infused binary oppositions problematized in this article.

Cynthia C. Rostankowski (2003) asserts that Jacques is "more sophisticated in his depiction of the Middle Ages than many of his peers", incorporating medieval influences such as iconography, references to Chaucer and the "role of the monastic life" (p.83). In her essay on these elements in the anthropomorphic world of animals Jacques has constructed, Rostankowski (2003) considers the moral dilemmas inherent in such a world. She notes that there are evidences of stereotyping and ruminates that it is "unclear what Jacques intends by ascribing particular dialects to specific groups of creatures, since humans of the same cultural background are not identical in their life paths, and thus, not identical in their patterns of speech" (p.88). She writes that the "consistency regarding dialect in Jacques's writing" may indicate that there exists, "a certain innuendo of stereotyping in the development of the characters of certain animal species due to their consistency of dialect" (p.88). While Rostankowski's (2003) article provides an important insight into the moral imperatives of the novels and of the world of Redwall, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge pertaining to medieval life in fantasy novels, she stops short of the subject of racial profiling, Othering and Orientalism. Nevertheless, Rostankowski (2003) does offer this insight - "Jacques's books are particularly intriguing not only because of what they incorporate of medieval history and lore, but most especially because of what they *exclude*" (p.86). Rostankowski (2003) is not specific about the nature of this exclusivity and falls short of explicitly discussing what these categories may imply race-wise but it was not relevant to an invigorating essay concerning medieval culture and moral values. Nevertheless, this elision is the gap in which this research fits, from a postcolonial perspective, interrogating what is unsaid in the slim body of literary criticism of Jacques works, and what is generally elided in these children's novels, though not the first to exhibit masked racial stereotypes and evidences of Othering, which is a legacy of most twentieth century fantasy fiction based on a medieval aesthetic, as will be discussed in the next section.

MEDIEVAL BINARY OPPOSITIONS AND TWENTIETH CENTURY FANTASY FICTION

KellyAnn Fitzpatrick (2020) writes that Tolkien's Middle Earth reflects his "interest and professional training in the languages, literature, and culture of the European Middle Ages" (p.32). She explains that Tolkien's "medievalism, then, while shaped very much by his professional understanding of the Middle Ages, can also be seen as a means of critiquing the time and place in which he wrote" (p.32). This medieval construction of an epic fantasy world then, has its roots in Tolkien's work as a scholar and a philologist, and Fitzpatrick is not alone in the opinion that this construction of medieval times is also a critique of the times. Sinex, who is of a similar opinion (2010) writes that

> medieval ethnological theory drew a crucial correspondence between a race's inner spiritual state and its outer appearance. Bodily features deviating from the aesthetic canons of the western European analyst—such as a very dark complexion—were often held to be deformities signaling serious, hidden, spiritual defects.
>
> (p.178)

Sinex (2010) asserts that these framings were reproduced in Tolkien's envisioning of the Haradrim. These aesthetic framings included unfamiliar "physical traits such as black skin (unfamiliar, that is, to the European ethnologist) signaled grave spiritual flaws— "vices and sins." (p.179). Tolkien, himself a Catholic, took on the medieval aesthetic binary considerations

in constructing not just the Haradrim and the Southrons, but also in the colours associated with the Dark Lord, Sauron himself (p.186). Tolkien's influence on the fantasy novels that came after him is considerable. Fitzpatrick notes that "As many Anglo-Saxonists have found their way to the Middle Ages through Tolkien's fantasy, Tolkien arguably found his way to them through William Morris, one of the best-known figures of the later part of the nineteenth-century British medieval revival" (p.32). The quest-type fantasy narrative which he himself inherited from the likes of the Pre-Raphaelite William Morris became transformed into the works of Robert Jordan, Lloyd Alexander, and Jacques. Therefore, Orientalism, filtered through a nostalgic medieval lens is baked into these fantasy worlds, setting the stage for the Manichean drama between the Self and the Other.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ORIENTALISM AND OTHERING

The study of Orientalism in the 21st century has branched off from the beginning paradigms of Said's discourse. Boehmer (2018) notes that scholars have "adapted Said's insights in practical critical ways, combining them with diagnostic terms such as *créolité*, mimicry" and they have done so particularly to discourse "critically on opposition, complexity, and difference as reflected in a broad transnational range of literary and cultural texts" (p.45). Boehmer's observation invites the consideration of how Orientalism has shaped the fields of not just postcolonial criticism but the framing and problematising of binary oppositions in literature and art. Schwabe (2020) observes that, "Orientalism is a collection of stereotypes, distortions, myths, and fantasies, which the Occident has imposed for superiority over the Orient" (p.55). In writing about the German romanticism fantasists such as E.T.A. Hoffman, she makes an adroit observation that the ""flight of the bourgeois writers to the realm of fantasy has been associated in Romanticism scholarship with Heimweh (home-longing) and the nostalgic yearning for the past," therefore creating a rose-tinted view of the medieval Occident, "but also with the longing for exotic paradises, alternative worlds, and the Romantics' effort to return to, rediscover, and restore the Golden Age" (p.57). Therefore, both the desire to romanticize medieval culture and the desire to Orientalize and fetishize or demonize the Other may be found in the Germanic fantasies which had an influence in the fantasy literature of the twentieth century. As noted by Rostankowski (2003), the noblebeast society is clearly modelled on medieval notions of chivalry, even though the real-world analogues of Orientalism are not a part of the landscape of the Redwall novels. However, this article will extend the thought by arguing that the Redwall medieval community contain definite markers of Orientalism and Othering. These societies find a binary opposition in the society and culture of the vermin – seen as not having honor or a moral code. This is a form of alterity and alienation that may be connected to the ways in which Asia (notably the Middle East) were perceived through the lens of medieval Europe. Afaf Ahmed Hasan Al-Saidi (2014) writes that the Other is seen as the binary opposite of the Self. For the Self to exist, there has to be the Other. The relationship between the Self and Other is explained by Sami Schalk (2011) as the way in which the self/other binary seems to be an accepted division of how the modern individual comprehends who s/he is, by recognizing what s/he is not it is (p.197). In other words, the realisation of Self only can happen, by comparing oneself with that of an individual or group that is unlike them. It is only through the discovery of difference that Self can find meaning.

In the postcolonial context, the Self is the "Us", which covers those who are like an individual or group versus the "Them", who are individuals or groups who behave, appear or think unlike "Us". Said (1995), in explaining the concept of Orientalism writes that the Orient

represents an "integral part of European material civilization and culture" (p.2). Said (1995) further observes that Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (p.2). The Orient, Said avers, is "not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations" (1995, p.2) Therefore, as a "cultural contestant"," the Orient becomes one of the sources of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said, 1995, p.2). This juxtaposition of the Orient as inimical even as it contributed to Western Civilisation is endemic. Said (1995) notes of this binary opposition that it helped to "define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (pp.1-2). Therefore, it is established by Said (1995) and other scholars that the Orient in the mind of Occidental perceptions exists as a binary opposition. The discussion of the novel will deploy these markers in a lengthy postcolonial consideration of the ways in which Veil and the vermin society are Othered in the universe of the *Redwall* novels.

DISCUSSION

BINARY OPPOSITION AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM

In *Outcast of Redwall* (1995), Jacques highlights Redwall as a sort of civilised Utopia that is often portrayed in the text through songs of praise and joy about the greatness of Redwall. The description Jacques uses, a song about Redwall, is almost patriotic and describes something of a noble history or lineage. One of the Redwallers, Barlom Recorder Mouse of the Abbey would often sing songs or recite poems about the warriors who fought and helped to form our order, battled against tremendous odds, and made this Redwall, this way of life for those whom they never lived to see (Jacques, 1995, p. 197). The history of Redwall is remembered through song and poem, described as a sort of high art. Like a national anthem, the Redwall songs contain great deeds of warriors, and of the formation of Redwall. The culture of Redwall, then, fully delineates who is included and who is excluded, as also observed by Rostankowski (2003, p.86). The warriors of Redwall constantly battle the dreaded vermin who are portrayed as the unseen threat, the tremendous odds needed to be overcome. Jacques therefore utilizes popular fantasy tropes of Otherness, turning the foxes, stoats, ferrets and weasels into a horde of savages. Intriguingly, in *Outcast of Redwall*, Jacques does attempt to provide some context and motivations to the behavior of Swartt Sixclaw and his marauding army of vermin, but these motivations are couched in the lingo and mannerisms of the cunning and base savage. This may be contrasted with the ways in which the noblebeast are portrayed.

Redwall is the pinnacle of civilisation and is depicted as brimming with abundance. The narrative is dense with many depictions of feasting and sharing, complete with songs, creating an air of medieval festivity and jollity. In fact, visitors are always welcomed. There are many songs sung about Redwall, where values of each helping the other, as neighbor and friend (Jacques, 1995, p.187). The homeland is rich in resources, culture, and the people have high moral standards, love and friendship, the definition sung by the Redwallers (Jacques, 1995, p.255).

The praise towards Redwall is sung repeatedly at different strategic chapters of the book, to instill a sense of patriotism towards Redwall. This is in stark contrast to that the description of the vermin. For the 'Other' of these tales, their society is based on values of fear, deceit and cruelty. It is by these values that the vermin leaders gain power, to become leader of a horde. An example is Swartt Sixclaw, the main antagonist of the book, as well as the father of the main character of the tale, Veil the Outcast. Swartt did not want their affection or

comradeship—to Swartt that was mere weakness. Unlike the Redwallers, the warlord Swartt rules by fear. It is not something that he has a choice in however. This is because affection is seen as being a weak leader in vermin society. The writer highlights this point by making Swartt's nemesis, the noblebeast Sunflash the badger. Sunflash is a civilised Noblebeast who has all of the acceptable medieval virtues. He was a prisoner of Swartt's and had lived in their society for many years. After finally escaping from the vermin, Sunflash believes that the Other cannot be treated with civility but with brute force. This is shown in his interaction with other species of animals who belong to the Other.

To further make a distinction between the Redwallers and vermin, Jacques uses a lot of postcolonial descriptivism when explaining the vermin to the reader the same way the colonial portrayals of natives were often cast. Lindstrom (2016) explains that these contrasts were used as a show of superiority, citing examples of records and pictures from books that had missionary imagery that illustrated the master story of savagery and its salvation (p.42). These books featured recurring graphics of whiteness triumphing over the colonised. Colour contrast in the novel is both spiritual and racial, and was further highlighted by missionary sartorial fondness for white garments (Lindstrom, p.42). This show of contrast is evident to illustrate a difference between the superior and the inferior wherein white suits juxtaposed dark nudity, and cummerbund reflected penis wrapper, in photograph and in life alike (Lindstrom, p.42). Jacques's description of the vermin warriors having fierce tattoos is something that is similar to that of the description of the local indigenous tribes which were often described in colonial writings, where "portraits abound of men with painted faces". This is a common function of imperialist and colonial travel narratives into the Orient. Pinak and Lalbakhsh (2019) observe that within the "context of the Self, the Other and the space of the Other, being able to alienate is the key to have, objective, and thus unbiased conception of the Other" (p.42). Pinak and Lalbakhsh further aver that this, "state of otherness is the point between the Self, the Other and the space of the Other" and deploy this thought in understanding the ways in which Romantic travel narratives of Iran play into this dialectic (p.42).

Outcast of Redwall, in the sections concerning the vermin horde, reads like a travelogue into a realm of darkness, with a moral code so alien to that of the noblebeast (1995, p.320). For instance, Swartt is described as having face and teeth that are freshly stained with bright plant dyes, a multi-coloured cloak swirled about him, and his heavily chain-mailed sixclaw glittered brighter than the long-curved sword thrust into his snakeskin belt (p.320). Swartt is described with native ferocity, whereby his face is heavily dyed, and has a snakeskin belt. The description helps to highlight a more savage, and wild air about Swartt, underscoring the savagery of the binaried Other. Therefore, these tribal placements on Swartt's face makes him less and less relatable to the human reader. This is in stark contrast to the ways in which the Badger Lords are outfitted and depicted. Seen as the mighty protectors of the novel, they are described as artistic, peace loving and strong. Sunflash, when he becomes a Badger Lord is described as such, with his golden stripe showing through the open visor of a high black war helmet, massive chest covered by a fine chain-mail tunic, and the great mace balanced easily over his broad shoulder (p.320). The visor, the great mace, chain mail tunic are all medieval accoutrements, again delineating a cultural divide between the noblebeast and the vermin which mirrors the assumed epistemological gap between the Occident and the Orient in narratives that reproduce the tensions of the West with the Orient during the medieval Crusades. When Jacques describes the vermin, most references are similar to that of the cultures of indigenous tribes around the world, presented in less than complimentary framings. While when it comes to the noblebeast, the golden hue of nostalgia-tinged medieval imagery is present.

Jacques's tale also contains such exotic elements when it comes to the description of the vermin. Swartt's camp as well as other vermin camps are referred to collectively as hordes (p.24). Besides vermin, another term used for them is hordebeast (p.24) and they live in hordecamps (p.23). All of these terms subtly refer to the nomadic, and tribal ways of Swartt and his followers. Even the hordebeast customs and culture appropriated elements of the Oriental Exotic such as the use of tribal (and indigenous) drums that beat a fierce tattoo as the entire horde moved forward at double their normal marching pace (p.82). Many of the adjectives and descriptions which Jacques uses are heavy with Orientalist motifs in the ways in which he depicts the vermin. Drums are used by the hordebeast wherever they go. War drums pound relentlessly, and conch shell trumpets brayed aloud over the barbaric banners streaming high over glinting spearheads (p.319). Their songs and instruments are related to war and savagery with no lyrics or song. It is all undiscernible chaos. This is a stark contrast to the songs of Redwall evocative of lyrical songs of joy and of peace. The Redwallers and noblebeast too have instruments and their descriptions are different. Here, Sunflash comes upon a group of shrews. One of them played a small stringed instrument not unlike a mandolin. It had a sweet, tinkling tone, and to it they sang a ballad that they had written that very day, a song that would become a great favourite around shrew campfires for countless seasons to come (p.80). The music of the noblebeast is full of sweet tinkling tones, and soothing to the ear. Even the instruments are used to create a descriptive divide, where the Eurocentric instruments of the Redwallers are depicted superior to the Bongo drums of the hordebeast. This is an excellent example of the kinds of binary Opposition evident in Jacques's narrative universe.

Unlike the noblebeast, the villainous vermin Others are shown to show little love even amongst family members, showing very little that is redeemable about them. Swartt treats his own flesh and blood as nothing more than an annoyance that is not part of his concern. His wife, Bluefen, who is a daughter of Bowfleg, another warlord that Swartt killed to gain more power is treated like a war trophy than an actual mate. Swartt had not known that Bowfleg had a daughter. It was the tradition and unwritten law that she became wife to the new Warlord as a matter of course. Bluefen was her name, and she was quiet and pretty enough (p.26). She has no speaking role in the novel. In fact, after she gives birth to Swartt's son, she fades and dies, like a delicate spring flower suddenly embraced by severe frost, though it was said that she had never been a strong creature (p.189). Bluefen's role is that of the faceless subaltern female with neither voice nor agency. Her role is to sire the main character of the series, Veil the Outcast. Her death is not mourned by Swartt who is nicknamed the Pitiless One, and who neither grieved after his wife nor cared for his son (p.189). Bluefen is described to be buried with scant ceremony in a shallow hole hacked into the stone-hard earth, while the baby was given to an old female rat to nurse and guard. Swartt acted as though the whole thing was no concern of his (p.189). This attitude of cold heartedness even to his family is not just a trait that Swartt has but is portrayed as the normal nature of the hordebeasts which adds to their savage nature.

While Swartt, and Sunflash's side of the story helps to establish the nature of the vermin and noblebeast, the tragic account of Veil is Jacques's way of proving his point to the reader that the vermin are the irredeemable Other. Even at birth, Veil is described as savage and wild in nature. Down in the ditch, the ferret baby wriggled from its restricting sling and began gobbling a mess of frogspawn from a muddy pool. It fed voraciously, neither whimpering nor crying (p.245). He is then found and raised by the Redwallers with Bryony, a mousemaid, as adoptive mother. He is given the name Veil by the matriarch of Redwall, Bella the badger, because there is a veil over his life before he came here. As Bella explains, they know nothing of him (p.257). Giving the Other a name shows power of the Civilised over the Other. Borkfelt (2011) explains that if language is, as has been argued, a means of power providing a

"technique for knowing" places, people, animals, and things (p.117). Therefore, a name is a very powerful tool of control. And indeed, Bella's reason for choosing such a name is based on her overall perception of the vermin.

> Some creatures are always hungering after one thing or another. I have a feeling about this one, and if I am proved right in the seasons to come, I will tell you why I really called him Veil. (p.259)

By naming him Veil, Bella has already pronounced the fate of the ferret, as the Other who will always be destined to do mischief and evil, to live as his nature calls. To justify the treatment of the Other, Jacques portrays Veil's nature of being violent even at birth. His first act is to bite his surrogate mother, Bryony's finger. Bella exchanged glances with the Abbess before speaking. "He has bitten you, Bryony." (p.258). Bryony as the gentle Self, defends his actions, telling Bella that he must have done it out of hunger. The mousemaid sucked her paw briefly, smiling. "No, not really, it was more of a nibble. Perhaps he's hungry." (p.258) Yet Civilised blood has already been split by the Other.

As Abbess Meriam clears the drop of blood from the mat, she questions the decision of bringing the Other into their territory (p.259). Therefore, Veil is already condemned due to his species, destined to be portrayed as the violent other. Allen & Santos (2019) pointed that such profiling creates an image of the Other, quoting the example of how in America, black men—particularly men living in urban communities—are regularly depicted as violent, angry, prone to criminal behavior, and hyper-sexual (p.22). This racial profiling disproportionately impacts black men more than other racial groups. The assumption that black men will commit the most crimes contributes to the disproportionate surveillance and encounters with law enforcement (p.26). Due to the way they are perceived, they are treated likewise with suspicion and left as an outcast which lays the foundations of representations and perceptions to come (Borkfelt, 2011, p.117). It is clear that Veil had been profiled since birth due to his species. Jacques justifies Veil's treatment as the Other by establishing to the reader earlier on, the ways and behavior of the hordebeast Other through the narrative of his father Swartt and the other hordebeast. Prior to this, Veil had never met his father, and was abandoned by him (p.86) and so should not have learned all the negative traits of his parent.

The world of Redwall has a predetermined form of classification. Therefore, Veil as Other is already inborn with a vicious, and untrustworthy nature, that can never be fully redeemed. To prove this point, Jacques places Veil in a very civilised environment, which is Redwall, a place where Veil will not be influenced by the ways and culture of the Other. Yet despite being raised in a Civilised environment; Veil cannot help but remain the same. The reason is that he has been established as the Other in the domain of the coloniser. He can only be a Mimic Man, but never truly change his nature. Pooch (2019) explains that mimicry is an act of replication or camouflage in which the colonized unconsciously tries to become like the colonizer (p.44). Pooch (2019) writes that mimicry in this instance is caused by the love-and-hate relationship between the colonizer and the Other. This explains Veil's attitude to the Redwallers, especially Bryony. His nature here is portrayed by the writer as a thief who takes what he wants, even during childhood (p.277). Tion (2017) explains that mimicry is what the colonised use to get ahead in a (recently made) "white world" by copying "white ways" while simultaneously making a fool out of the material that is mimicked (p.34). Veil himself is a cognate of the "mimic man" who tries to copy the ways of the Redwallers, but ends up looking out of place, and vilified. Bryony, who is the Civilised Self, is painted as the ideal mother, ever loving Veil and trying to educate him. Jacques in his narrative has determined that it is hopeless to do so, as the Vermin can never be the Noblebeast, and Other cannot be Self. He brings the point home, with all the thefts that Veil has committed and always denied.

Veil's nature is drawn out by Jacques's portrayal of the way the Other takes advantage of the kindness of a civilized ideal Eurocentric society (of Redwall) by feigning innocence. He

gains Bryony's sympathy by wheedling and weeping, yet does not feel any remorse for deceiving her, or stealing the pot (p.280). Veil himself hints that he does not belong in Redwall, and has declared to Bryony, that "they're all against me in this Abbey!" (p.125). Since Other can never truly belong with the Civilised, so Veil must be ejected out of Redwall. Jacques does this by finally making Veil commit an unforgivable act, by trying to poison Friar Bun-fold whose honey pot he had stolen, as revenge for ironically rightfully accusing him. Unfortunately, an innocent bystander falls victim to his malicious trap. "Didn't you hear? Myrtle's ill, they say she's been poisoned. "Veil grasped Bryony's paw, his lip quivering. "Poor Myrtle, who would do such a thing?" (p.290). Quickly, he puts on a show without remorse, pretending to be horrified by the deed that he himself committed. But as it is, a trap is set which involves red dye and he is revealed to be the killer. Jacques shows that the Other has no place in Redwall, and will be the cause of death and despair to those around.

> He winked at Veil. "Caught red-pawed, I'd say, laddie buck!"
> Veil's paws were indeed red, as deep a red as Sister Withe's paws had been at breakfast last morning. The herbal mixture was red too, a dark, purple-tinged crimson. (p. 299)

Jacques plays on the trope of being caught red handed, but also adds a deeper meaning, as the red also represents the blood he will shed further on. The Other, dyeing oneself, is also an instance of how the vermin use dyes on themselves to add to their savageness, just like indigenous groups use tattoos. When caught and brought to judgement, he does not show any repentance but instead snarls and growls like a wild beast. This is similar to how the 'Other' is often described in postcolonial theory, more animal-like than Civilised. Despite the characters being animals, one should note that the Redwallers through Jacques's narratives are anthropomorphic representations of how the ideal human should be like as woodland animals. Even in his captivity, Veil shows that he has a hard time changing his nature (p.300). He threatened to kill the other animals with poison when he gets the chance.

Caught and imprisoned, Veil throws off the guise of the Mimic Man, and begins to eat in a very gluttonous manner, without the table manners of the Noble Beast. Veil had earlier assumed the form of the Coloniser, and was therefore forced to undergo a split in personality that was best resolved by its resorting to mimicry – among others– as a means of resistance (Tion, 2017, p.31). He was a creature in turmoil having to act as a Redwaller, while he truly was not. Driven by his instinct to feed, Veil forgets his act of eliciting sympathy and gobbles his meal with unrestrained gluttony. The Friar is disgusted, as he is the civilised Self, superior to the Other. From then on, the author begins to described Veil with more inhumane traits that add to his beast like status. "Veil bared his needle like teeth at the otter." (p.305)

Although in the wrong, Veil was right to believe he was never accepted in Redwall. No longer under the protection of Bryony, the other Redwallers too shed their own masks of politeness, and show their true disdain for him. For example, Skipperjo the Otter, the same Redwaller who found him, shows his true opinions about Veil, which he has hidden throughout the years.

> 'Little sixclaw the poisoner, eh? I knowed who you was, matey, from the day I picked you up suckin' frogspawn in a muddy ditch! Yore the whelp of that other six-clawed vermin, Swartt the Warlord. (p.315)

Even from the start, the Otter claimed that he was no good, exercising power over Veil, that all this while he knew what Veil was destined to be, which is to grow up to be just like Swartt. He even berates Veil further, recounting how he was found, like a feral mindless creature eating filth in the mud. This shows the "Superior vs Inferior" mindset (Kehinde, 2006, p.3) which the Redwaller had against the Other. To further alienate Veil from the reader, the

author shows that Veil will not only refuse to accept his exile, but swears to return for revenge (p. 316).

This discourse is a tragic one, as it is the Redwallers who have dyed Veil's paws red. So even though he has left Redwall, Redwall still exercises a sort of power over him. The dye placed on him has become a stigma. Adler-Nissen (2014) writes that stigma is a Greek word that originally referred to a kind of tattoo or identifying mark cut or burned into the skin of animals (p.145). Adler-Nissen explains that stigma can undermine all other claims to normality, rendering the individual less than human (p.145). The dye created by the Redwallers, now defines him, and he accepts it as his identity.

Veil now seeks to find his kind to return to avenge himself against the Civilised. He seeks out his father, not that he might have a sense of belonging, but to take over his father's hoard and become a warlord for revenge. As such, the reunion will be an antagonistic one, thus supporting the narrative that vermin are all bad. For the way of the Other must be the total opposite of the Self. There was no seemingly redemptive trait evident in Veil as the Other. In fact, offspring like Veil are shown to be a threat to their parents (biological or foster parents) , as they will eventually betray and kill their parents, as foreshadowed earlier by Zigu (p.264). In Jacques's Othered vision of the vermin, there is no room for familial love (p.441). However, towards the end of the story, Jacques pulls off a surprising twist. When Veil's surrogate mother Bryony comes after him, she is almost killed by Swartt, but Veil turns around and protects Bryony, allowing her to escape (p.451). However, Swartt manages to throw a javelin at her, which Veil stops in its tracks with his own body, "the javelin protruding horribly where it had exited at his back" (p.451). Veil not only protects her, he ends up sacrificing his life for Byrony. This act of valour appears to show a glimmer of hope for the vermin Other. Perhaps there is hope for the Other, the narrative seems to suggest here.

> The young ferret's eyes were clouding over, his breath was hoarse and shallow; almost from the gates of Dark Forest he heard Bryony's voice echoing, "Oh, Veil, my Veil. You saved me.... Why?" (p. 453)

This is a touching scene for the reader, perhaps indicating that the Other has some redeeming qualities. Even Bella, the badger Matriarch, who has heard of this valiant deed, changes her stance on the Other, admitting that there was some good in Veil, and that Bryony was owed an apology (p.482). Yet, in the world of Redwall, the Other can never be part of the Self. In order to undo this unusual act of bravery done by a member of the vermin, Jacques contradicts Bella's final words with a statement that comes from Veil's surrogate mother Bryony herself, underscoring the point that the Other may never be redeemed in fantasy worlds such as Jacques's.

> I have thought a great deal since he died and wondered if he would have saved me if he knew his father was really going to throw that javelin. I couldn't help loving him, because that's the way I am, but I know that the world is a better place without Veil or Swart bringing death and misery to it. (p. 482)

Here, Bryony utters a statement infused with irony and contradiction. She says that she could not stop loving him but the combination of Veil's harmful actions and her inherited prejudices mar the perception of the Other. To strengthen the point, Bryony has an air of bitter skepticism on her son's daring deed, wondering if he would really have risked his life if he knew it would be in danger. Jacques, therefore, ends the narrative with an unforgiving tone, in which the Other would never be part of the Self. Even in giving up his life, the Other was merely engaging in mimicry, acting out of repetitive training rather than compassionate nature. Thus, as Tion (2017) avers, mimicry, according to Bhabha, at least at first, creates a sense of mockery. Veil only pretended to love Bryony, as he could never love her truly, because that is not the nature of vermin, as Bryony understands, thus making his sacrifice a mere mockery of

the true act of love. In this manner, the Othering narrative of *Outcast of Redwall* removes every layer of humanity from the character of Veil.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of the *Outcast of Redwall* corresponds to the ongoing Eurocentric narrative of extolling a nostalgic historic past that continues to have a complicated relationship with the parts of the colonised world which provided them with their riches and much of the elements that defined medieval history and culture. The complicated relationship can be seen very strongly in the binary oppositions concocted by the Orientalist slant of the narrative of *Outcast of Redwall*. Veil is the anthropomorphised Other in the story, while the Redwallers represent the anthropomophised Self or Superior. Veil, the Other, is raised by the Redwallers, yet turns out to be just like his father. It is the writer's way of saying that the nature of Self and Other is inherent and not learnt. Somehow, the nostalgia of the Middle Ages baked into fantasy narratives, such as *Outcast of Redwall*, elides the suffering experienced by the colonised worlds of the Orient, but such narratives choose to depict the Other as being beyond redemption, proving that some form of bestial nature will always overcome concepts of nurture. The Other, as vermin and hordebeast who are the main villains, have no redeemable factors. Their description heavily borrows the way the natives were pictured by the colonising British during their conquest over foreign lands, such as wearing articles made of bone, and animal skin as well as depending on war paint in battle. The noblebeast is described with more romanticised medieval undertones, of brave warriors, and of valiant knights. Even their speech and mannerisms are of cultured standing. These two contrasting tales are Jacques's way of cementing the medieval and Occidental values depicted in Redwall. The Other, is likened to vermin. And vermin will remain vermin, while the noblebeast, who is Self will always turn out good.

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