

Mingling the Real and the Magical: Deconstructive Epistemology in Contemporary Fantasy Fiction

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Abstract

The poststructuralist philosophy of Deconstruction proposed by Derrida gives rise to a poetics of disruption and transgression through dismantling of the traditional bases of Western epistemology, i.e., the idea of logocentrism, presence, transcendental signifiers and dyadic pairs which support the notion of fixed meanings and give rise to distinct and isolated categories. The current study argues that the erosion of absolute centers and distinct identities resulting from deconstructive relativism has led to the collapse of the binary opposition between the real and the magical in contemporary fantasy literature. Selected works of postmodern fantasy literature are analyzed to assess how in keeping with the principles of *différance*, supplement and trace these works represent a decentered universe in which the categories of magic and the real are fluid and subject to constant slippage. Consequently, the real world moves parallel to and not distinct from the world of magic and there is a constant overlapping of categories of real and magical. The present study argues that this dissolution of the boundaries between real and magical enables these postmodern texts to interrogate, subvert and dismantle logocentric thought manifested in ethnocentrism and racism and support a liberatory politics in which the voice of the marginalized alterity is recovered. For this purpose the current study is delimited to an analysis of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and J. R. R. Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Key Words: *deconstruction, liberatory, marginalization, alterity*

Introduction

The current paper attempts to explore how the selected postmodern fantasy novels of J. R. R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling function as a critique of logocentric, ethnocentric and racist thought which is manifested in the texts through the construction of Manichean structures of immitigable alterity between the real and the magical. An analysis of the texts under study reveals that the real and the magical are delineated as communities with apparently distinct cultural and racial characteristics.

These communities are shown as forming their identities using a logocentric binary logic and the positing of irreconcilable difference and superiority of the self over the other. It is argued that a pluralist deconstructive space characterized by the free play of *différance*, supplement and trace deconstructs logocentric attempts to foreclose meanings and to elide the voice of the marginalized other through a breakdown of the binary opposition between the magical and the real and the intermingling and overlapping of these two categories. Consequently, the real and the magical, arranged in a hierarchical binary which privileges the self over the other, become porous and amorphous categories which permeate and seep into each other and become the very conditions of possibility and existence of one another. This study thus seeks to highlight the existence of a deconstructive liberatory space in the selected texts of Tolkien and Rowling which repositions and resituates the binary opposition between the real and the magical as a nested opposition in which the metaphysical hierarchy is decentered by showing that the marginalized other is necessary for the self to exist.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The current paper draws its theoretical framework from Derrida's philosophical project of deconstruction which was aimed at exposing and deconstructing the binary hierarchies and dualistic oppositions in which Western logocentrism or metaphysics of presence was grounded. Dismantling of centers and destabilization of the binary logic governing the entire tradition of Western epistemology from Plato onwards formed the primary focus of Derrida's major works some of which include *Speech and Phenomena* (1973), *Dissemination* (1981), *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), *Writing and Difference* (1990), *Of Grammatology* (1998). Derrida's seminal work *Of Grammatology* (1998) inaugurated this project of deconstruction of logocentric binary categories through an interrogation of the privileging of phonocentrism and the marginalization of writing in Western philosophers including Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Ferdinand de Saussure. In the essay "Différance" (1982), Derrida characterized deconstruction as a radical critique of onto-theological binary categories and distinctions such as presence/absence, plenitude/lack, sign/referent, appearance/truth, body/spirit. A number of critics analyzing Derrida describe deconstruction as a strategy aimed at the dismantling of binary oppositions. Wortham (2010) defines deconstruction as "a radical questioning of binary-oppositional thought" (p. 33). Similarly, Berry (2004) also observes that "the vital contribution of deconstruction or poststructuralism to postmodern theory [is] . . . their repeated interrogation of the centrality to

Western thought of polarized categories such as light/dark, good/evil, atheism/belief . . . ” (p. 177).

Derrida’s critique of binary oppositions shaped by logocentric thought and metaphysics of presence centered on how these dualistic patterns installed violent totalitarian hierarchies and hence supported structures of domination. In *Of Grammatology* (1998), Derrida characterizes logocentrism as “the most original and powerful ethnocentrism” (p. 3) and as giving rise to an ethnocentric way of understanding the world which frames and defines “world culture.” Ethnocentrism thus becomes the lens through which we make sense of people, places and concepts (p. 4) and results in a valorization of self and denigration of the other. In this regard Derrida is particularly concerned with how this ethnocentric conception of the world, arising from logocentrism and giving rise to a binary of self and other, is interconnected with structures of power and control. Derrida thus highlights how these onto-theological categories, structured by logocentric thought, give rise to a relationship of subordination in which the privileged central term is viewed as a transcendental signifier imbued with presence and meaning, while the marginalized term representing difference and absence is portrayed in pejorative terms as an inessential appendage or a potentially dangerous supplement which could corrupt the central term (1981, p. 389; 1982, p. 195; 1998, p. 151). Thus Western logocentric thought and metaphysics of presence is seen by Derrida as generating structures of marginality, exclusion and oppression (Anderson, 2006, 2003; Barker, 1995; Royle, 2003; Tyson, 2006; Zima, 2002). In an interview Derrida notes,

. . . all of history being a conflictual field of forces in which it is a matter of making unreadable, excluding, of positing by excluding, of imposing a dominant force by excluding, that is to say, not only by marginalizing, by setting aside the victims, but also by doing so in such a way that no trace remains of the victims . . . (1995, p. 389)

Thus logocentric structures are viewed as violently positing a binary relationship of self and other in which inferiority and absolute alterity of the other is objectified as an essential truth (Derrida, 1982).

An analysis of Derrida’s theoretical conceptions reveals that deconstruction is a liberatory philosophy and reading practice which gives rise to a transgressive poetics aimed at dismantling hierarchical binary oppositions and recovering the voice of the marginalized. The need to dismantle structures of domination and oppression and to recover the voices of the marginalized and suppressed is a central theme in several of

Derrida's works including *Speech and Phenomena* (1973, p. 77), "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* (1981, pp. 168), "White Mythology" in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982, p. 270), *Of Grammatology* (1998, pp. 19-20). In this regard, Barker highlights how Derrida interrogates the metaphysics of presence and critiques the structures of marginality it generates and in the process supports an "aesthetic of disruption" (1995, p. 5). Likewise the critics Begam (1992) and Aycock (1993) show how the deconstructive strategies proposed by Derrida help to deconstruct the structures of otherness informing Western culture and give voice to the marginalized and silenced. Expanding on the subversive nature of deconstruction, Bertens (1999), Tyson (2006) and Wortham (2010) outline how Derrida's theoretical conceptions enables the readers to critically evaluate and dismantle the binary opposites posited by various ideologies through language. This radical nature of deconstruction is summed up by Goodspeed-Chadwick (2006) who observes, "Derrida's deconstruction enables exposure of the mechanisms, such as binary constructions, that exert a dominant and domineering-influence over marginalized people, places, and concepts" (p. 1). A similar observation is made by the theorist Johnson (1980) who notes that deconstruction is a critical enterprise aimed at the identification and dismantling of the sources of textual power. Derridean deconstruction thus adopts a non-metaphysical posture (Brogan, 1988) and seeks to dismantle hegemonic metaphysical discourses in order to emancipate structures of alterity (Reynolds, 2001) and to emphasize plurality (Goodspeak-Chadwick, 2006, p. 3). In *Writing and Difference* (1990), Derrida highlights how critique of ethnocentrism and its related binaries is central to the project of destroying the history of metaphysics (p. 356).

Derridean deconstruction rehabilitates marginalized voices through a revision of the dialectical concept of alterity, difference and otherness (Derrida, 1982, p. 78; Llewelyn, 1988, p. 57). Derrida rejects the absolute alterity of the other and undermines the notion that difference is absolute, immitigable and unbridgeable. Instead, for Derrida, otherness becomes an expression of mutually interdependent differences (Reynolds, 2001). In *Writing and Difference* Derrida questions "whether history itself does not begin with [some] relationship with the other" (1990, p. 94). Thus the other is viewed as inhabiting the self and without this interdependency alterity and identity could not be established in the first place. Derrida notes, "Just as . . . simple internal consciousness could not provide itself with time and with the absolute alterity of every instant without the irruption of the totally-other, so the ego cannot engender alterity within itself without encountering the other" (1990, p. 94).

This revised concept of alterity is rooted in Derrida's concept of *différance* which operates in a chain of trace, supplement and iteration and results in an "infinite redoubling," reinscription, "combination" and "dissociation" of "signs, representations, words, concepts . . ." (Ormiston, 1988, p. 42). Thus in *Speech and Phenomena* (1973) Derrida highlights how the very term "*différance*" represents a structure of difference which is predicated on a sameness which is not identical (pp. 129-30). This paradox is used by Derrida to postulate a concept of alterity which does not correspond to a fixed identity as other. Instead *différance* labels an economy and movement of differing and delay or deferral which generates a free play or dissemination of differences as redoubling and duplicity that cannot be arrested or fixed in metaphysical logocentric structures and generates traces of signs within other signs, and in this way breaches the ideology of identity (Ormiston, 1988). In an interview in *Positions*, Derrida argues that *différance* ensures that no sign is ever simply "present in and of itself . . . Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces" (1981, p. 26). Begam (1992) highlights how for Derrida, *différance* is simultaneously both the common ground which joins opposing terms and is also the irreducible difference that separates them (p. 873). Anderson (2006) notes that in Derridean epistemology, the other is present within the sign through the movement of *différance* as deferral.

The Derridean economy of *différance*, trace and supplementarity is the principle which fissures, fractures and subverts the boundaries and order of Manichean metaphysical logocentric structures through the logic of contamination, dissemination and reinscription (Derrida 1981, 1982, 1998). Differences, in this context, are produced in a contradictory double movement which while apparently upholding distinction also collapses it into similarity. This redoubling of difference is made possible through the play and function of trace and supplement. In the essay "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), Derrida contends that closure of metaphysics can be resisted through the notion of trace. Trace is viewed as the irreducible imprint or mark of the repressed other within the self. In his essay "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference* (1990), Derrida characterizes the trace as the impossible, the unthinkable, the incomprehensible or the unsayable within the self which undermines logocentric structures of presence. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida defines trace as that which "cannot be thought without thinking the retention of difference within a structure of reference where difference appears as such and thus permits a certain liberty of variations among the full terms"

(1998, pp. 46-47). Thus trace involves a form of conceptual or historical dependence between the present and absent concepts leading to the dismantling of logocentric binary categories, distinct identities and irreducible alterity and the recuperation of voices that have been silenced and excluded in metaphysical thought (Balkin, 1990; Bernasconi, 1998; Royle, 2003). Goodspeak-Chadwick also observes that for Derrida *différance* constitutes meaning and identities through an interplay of “difference (differ) and distinction (deferral)” (2006, p. 6) with the result that trace and absence become part of the sign and part of presence (Anderson, 2006, p. 410).

Under the influence of the deconstructive concepts of *différance* and trace, the supplement is thus no longer viewed as a marginal and inessential term or an auxiliary and useless appendage which in fact impedes access to presence and full meaning. Instead for Derrida, the supplement is indispensable to the center and forms its very condition of possibility. The supplement or the marginalized term is in fact seen as exposing and compensating for a lack at the very origin of the central term. Similarly, in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), Derrida highlights that deconstruction critiques and displaces binary oppositions by showing how the central term in the hierarchy cannot be explained except with reference to the non-privileged marginal term (p. 329). Royle (2003) elaborates that deconstruction alters, transforms, destabilizes and contaminates conceptual categories through the logic of parasitism whereby the original is shown to be haunted by the supplement (p. 50). The logic of supplement corrupts the dichotomies themselves by showing how the secondary term leaves its trace without being totally present or absent. In *Of Grammatology* (1998), Derrida characterizes supplement as an element of substitution and addition which infiltrates presence and results in “the splitting of the self” (p. 163). As a matter of fact, the supplement is at the very origin of presence and generates ambiguity, undecidability and plenitude in relation to the originary term and supplementarity becomes a disruptive site (1998, p. 144). The concepts of supplement and trace dominate Derrida’s discussion of the pharmakon, i.e., the ambivalent and shifting status of marginalized entities in conceptual oppositions such as speech/writing, remedy/poison and good/bad that destabilizes the Western metaphysics of presence by highlighting an incongruity or a rupture (1998).

The concepts of *différance*, trace and supplement enable Derrida to highlight how the other is never completely erased. Rather it is only deferred and put under erasure and can always erupt to subvert and destabilize conceptual categories. Wortham (2010) observes that Derrida

sees the supplement and the trace as the heterogeneous repressed other and “non-present remainder which exceeds all structures and systems while making them possible” (p. 32). Reynolds (2001) highlights how in the Derridean conception of alterity, the other is always already within the self and the self encroaches upon the other. Otherness thus becomes an expression of mutually interdependent differences.

Based on Derrida’s conceptual chain of *différance*, trace and supplement and on his radical revision of the concept of alterity, Balkin (1990) repositions and reinterprets binary oppositions as nested oppositions to highlight that the terms in the conceptual relationship are connected not only in a relationship of difference and distinction, but also in a relationship of similarity and dependence. He observes, “A nested opposition is a conceptual opposition each of whose term contains the other, or each of whose terms shares something with the other” (p. 8). He argues that deconstructive argument reveals “similarities where before we saw only differentiation” (p. 8). He further highlights how the deconstructive concepts of *différance* and trace help to describe the mutual dependence and differentiation of concepts. Thus redefinition of the notion of alterity under the effects of supplementarity, trace and *différance* enables deconstructionists to show how the terms in the binary are in fact inseparable and how each signifier carries a mark of its other which completes its identity and value. In this way deconstruction seeks not merely to invert, rather to corrupt and contaminate the hierarchy in which the two terms operate in a continuous movement which is a multi-dimensional movement and not a dialectical interaction (Derrida, 2002; Reynolds, 2001). This enables deconstructive readings to challenge dualistic thinking and to show how identities as shaped in structures of interdependencies and overlapping. In a similar vein Anderson (2006) terms *différance* as the “middle voice” or “the between of all oppositions” which opens a space for alterity, difference and otherness, which has been suppressed by logocentric culture and morality, to operate (p. 417).

Textual Analysis

The current research aims to explore and identify a space of *différance*, trace and supplementarity in the selected works of contemporary postmodern fantasy literature which functions to undermine logocentric ethnocentric and racist thought and its attending hierarchical binary structures and prejudices. For this purpose, the focus of analysis will be on highlighting how the real and magical, which view each other in terms of a dialectical conception of alterity and as distinct communities with different cultural and ethnic traditions and even

separate racial origins, are in fact co-dependent, permeate one another and carry a trace of the other. The analysis will attempt to foreground how real and magical can be viewed as forming a nested opposition in which both categories share a relationship of distinction as well as dependence and in which the trace of the other is not merely an inessential extra. Rather supplementarity in this case forms the very condition of possibility of each category. It will be argued that this pluralistic space of dissemination, contamination and overlapping shaped by the forces of *différance*, supplement and trace enable these postmodern texts to interrogate and deconstruct logocentric thought, to subvert and dismantle the Manichean dialectic of self and other which materializes in the form of ethnocentric and racist prejudices, and to support a liberatory politics in which the voice of the marginalized is recovered.

An analysis of the *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* shows that the real and magical are portrayed as distinct communities with their own cultural customs and traditions and histories. In Tolkien's text, hobbits, elves, dwarves and men are present as separate distinctive racial communities. The hobbits are shown as an agrarian community, fond of a leisurely existence of eating and merry making, with no interest in scholarly pursuits or learning. On the whole, the hobbits are presented as a somewhat uncouth, childish, simple and care-free community. The elves, on the other hand, are depicted as a refined and wise community with a long tradition of learning. They are presented as imposing and awe-inspiring figures and are termed as the "elders" in the text. While the hobbits are diminutive and ruddy creatures, the elves are tall, elegant and beautiful. In Rowling's text, the community of wizards is distinguished from non-magical people, first and foremost, through their dress. The wizards and witches are shown as wearing bright colored cloaks, coats and top hats which set them apart from the non-magical community. Furthermore, the wizards and non-magical community have their own distinctive monetary currencies, schools, ministries, sports and historical traditions and myths. In both the texts, the figures representing the real and the magical communities are shown to be ignorant of the traditions of the other community and rely on reductive stereotypes to characterize the other.

A close reading of the two texts reveals that the characters belonging to both the real and the magical communities are conditioned by logocentric metaphysical epistemology and a Manichean dialectic of self and other in which the alterity of the other is viewed as irreducible and absolute. This is reflected in the ethnocentric and racist prejudices prevalent in both communities. An analysis of *The Fellowship of the Ring*

(2011) and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998) shows prejudice, suspicion and distrust harbored by the human society against magic which is considered to be a dangerous detractor from reality and normality and hence truth and authenticity. Thus the characters existing in the non-magical real world view their cultural norms and way of life as normal, rational and acceptable. Magic, on the other hand, is associated with deviance, the unexpected and dangerous. This is reflected in the hostility directed towards Bilbo in *The Fellowship of the Rings* (2011) who undertakes mysterious adventures, consorts with "outlandish folks" of different races such as elves, dwarves and wizards and fails to conform to the familiar patterns of behavior of the hobbit's society (p. 24). Consequently, he is viewed as "queer" (p. 24), "mad" (p. 31) and "peculiar" (p. 21). Likewise, the hobbits regard Gandalf as "a nuisance and a disturber of the peace" (p. 41). A similar distrust of other communities and an ethnocentric prejudice is reflected in Frodo's comments to Gandalf, "I didn't know that any of the Big people were like that. I thought, well, that they were just big, and rather stupid: kind and stupid like Butterbur; or stupid and wicked like Bill Ferny" (p. 220). The author also comments on how the hobbits regarded anyone who lived outside the borders of Shire as "outsiders" and considered them as "dull and uncouth" (p. 150).

Similarly in Rowling's text, the Dursleys also view the world of the wizards and witches, which is different from their own "normal" existence, with hostility and suspicion and consider them "strange," "mysterious" and "peculiar" (1998, pp. 7, 8). The Dursleys had disowned their relations with the Potters on account of the fact that the Potters were wizards and their hostility towards the wizarding community at large is reflected in Uncle Vernon's remark, "The Potters knew very well what he and Petunia thought about them and their kind" (p. 61). As a matter of fact, the Dursleys view magic as a dangerous supplement or an inessential extra which detracts from the essential purity and truth of reality and is to be stamped out and gotten rid of. Mr. Dursley terms magic as "dangerous nonsense" (p. 49) and tells Hagrid that "We swore when we took him [Harry] in we'd put a stop to that rubbish . . . swore we'd stamp it out of him" (p. 47).

A similar metaphysical hierarchy of us and them governs the thinking of the wizards and other magical folk present in both the texts which results in racial and ethnic prejudice. In *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2011), hobbits are viewed as ineffectual diminutive creatures that are overlooked by all the bigger and more powerful races of elves, wizards and men. The wizards and elves are regarded as wise and powerful masters of lore and learning. Even men, in the form of Aragon and Boromir, who are

mighty lords and kings, are viewed as inferior to elves and wizards on account of their mortality. The indifferent and condescending attitude of the elves towards the hobbits is reflected in Gildor's statement to Frodo, "But we have no need of other company, and hobbits are so dull" (p. 80). Even Gandalf, the wizard who specializes in hobbit lore, talks of them in patronizing terms and terms them as "charming, absurd, helpless . . . kind, jolly and stupid" (p. 49).

In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998) a similar sense of superiority shapes the consciousness of the wizards belonging to the magical world who view Muggles or non-magic individuals as "stupid" and dumb (p. 13). This translates into a dangerous racist prejudice against the non-magical community with wizards such as the Malfoys deriding the Muggles and people of mixed racial origin as inferior and impure. An attitude of racist and ethnocentric prejudice is reflected in Malfoys' query from Harry about his parents, "But they were our kind, weren't they?" (p. 66). Logocentric essentialist and purist thinking is reflected in Malfoy's remark when he says about Muggles, "I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways . . . I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families" (p. 66). Hence metaphysical logocentric thought governed by dualistic patterns engenders intolerance and contempt for the other that results in a vile atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Otherness is thus viewed through the lens of logocentrism and is marked as irreconcilable alterity and inferiority.

Ethnocentric and racist prejudices arising from logocentric thought and structures of alterity result in an estrangement and enmity between the communities of magic and real in both the texts. In *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2011) this can be seen in the hostility between the race of elves and dwarfs and the gradual distancing between elves and men of the West at the start of the text. It is revealed that the last alliance between men and elves had been formed several ages ago to counter the threat from the dark overlord Sauron. However, the death of Gil-galad and Elendil in the war against Sauron and the consequent murder of Isildur and the dwindling of his line resulted in the distance between the realm of elves and men to grow. A similar hostility is shown to exist between dwarfs and elves. Likewise, there is little interaction between hobbits and elves with the exception of Bilbo and to a lesser extent with Frodo. As a matter of fact, the places of habitation of these different races can be said to function as relatively self-contained and stable signifiers insulated from the contamination of the outside world and other signifiers. Thus the Shire has clearly defined borders which are seldom crossed by outsiders and

inhabitants alike. Likewise, Rivendell and Lothlorien are presented as insulated timeless unchanging islands unaffected by the events and concerns of other inhabitants of Middle Earth. Similarly, in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998) Voldemort is shown as having initiated a battle and raised an army to kill all Muggles and to create a domain of a pure race of wizards. The wizards supporting Voldemort's cause, such as the Malfoys, are shown as harboring deep resentment towards non-magical humans. Furthermore, there is an attempt to keep the world of magic concealed from outsiders. The wizards make use of a number of charms and spells to conceal their existence from the common people. According to Hagrid the "main job" of the ministry of magic "is to keep it from the Muggles that there's still witches and wizards up an' down the country" (p. 57).

A close reading of the two fictional texts reveals the existence of a space of *différance*, supplementarity and trace which reveals cracks and fissures in the metaphysical structures that produce estrangement between the two communities. Instead real and magical are shown to be present in each other as an irreducible trace and supplement and the play of *différance* reproduces and generates differences through a double movement of similarity and distinction. In this way, the real and magical are recast as a nested opposition based on interdependence, mingling and overlapping.

The world of magic presented by Tolkien and Rowling bears a close resemblance and affinity with the real non-magical world. As a matter of fact, the magical realm imagined by the writers is firmly grounded in reality and several parallels with the real world can be traced in all of its structural aspects. Thus in keeping with the economy of *différance*, a relationship of difference and sameness is discernible between these two conceptual realms which renders them indistinguishable in many ways. The chain of signifiers and signifieds of real and magical in the two texts constantly differ as well as refer to each other and resists closure which is necessary for metaphysical binary hierarchies to emerge.

Tolkien's Middle-Earth is inhabited by both magical and non-magical people. Wizards, elves, orcs, balrogs, dragons and anthropomorphic animals represent the magical realm and dwarfs, hobbits and men represent the non-magical realm associated with the commonplace and the real. The world of all inhabitants of Middle-Earth, both magical and non-magical, is based on a similar agrarian existence. Furthermore, the communal life of the elves with their loyalty to their lord and lady mirrors the tribal and feudal structure found in the society of

men, hobbits and dwarfs. The bonds of kinship, loyalty and friendship, deeds of heroism and valor, tales of romance, the love of feasting and music, presented in relation to the elves are elements that bind them with men, hobbits and dwarfs. Permeability and impermanence of borders erected to keep out other species is a recurrent theme in the text. Thus Gildor says to Frodo

But it is not your own Shire . . . Others dwelt here before hobbits were; and others will dwell here again when hobbits are no more. The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot forever fence it out. (p. 83)

Likewise the magical world of Hogwarts, which Rowling delineates in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998), is also unrecognizable without reference to the non-magical British world and society portrayed in the text. As a matter of fact it exists only in relation to the real world and mirrors the institutional structures, cultural norms and linguistic patterns of the non-magical real world. The real as a trace in the magic or as its supplement thus becomes its defining quality and its very condition of possibility and existence. Hogwarts, the location where most of the novel's action, is modeled and structured on the pattern of English public boarding schools found in the Dursleys' mundane world of reality. The pattern of the curriculum, instruction and classes, examinations, the division into houses, appointment of prefects, detentions and punishments are common occurrences and commonly recognizable patterns in the everyday life of non-magical English public school students. Similarly, in Hogwarts we have bullies such as Crabbe and Goyle who prey on and abuse weaker students such as Neville. Even the sport of Quidditch played by the wizards draws its structure on the basis of common sports including football or soccer, basketball and rugby. Although it is played in the air while flying on brooms, it nevertheless has clearly marked defensive and offensive positions involving the manipulation of different balls. It is played using balls and involves goal keeping, scoring and penalties. Harry characterizes Quidditch as, "that's sort of like basketball on broomsticks with six hoops" (p. 137). Likewise, the bank at Gringotts, while being run by goblins and while having underground vaults protected by dragons, is still run on the same principles of security and deposit as ordinary banks. This portrayal of the magical realm as a world similar to the world associated with real but not identical to it is analogous to the structure of *différance* and makes the real and magical as a nested opposition instead of a hierarchical metaphysical binary division.

In *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2011), in keeping with the logic of *différance* and nested opposition, the permeation of the real by the magical is shown in the case of wizards such as Gandalf, Saruman and Radgast who are both human and also possess magic. The permeation of the real and the magical can also be seen in the case of the dark riders, nine mortal kings who were given rings of power which not only bestowed upon them immortal life and supernatural powers, but also turned them into shadowy wraiths with no form or shape. The fate of humans, hobbits and dwarfs is shown as being controlled by the power of the one ring shaped by the evil necromancer, Sauron. As a matter of fact, the relative peace in their lands is attributed to the protective magical powers of the elves and wizards who oppose the evil dark lord. In this way, the binary of real and magical is rendered unstable and is shown to be a false construction.

The deconstruction of logocentric structures and the trace of the magical in the real can also be seen at a number of places in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998). Here magic is anchored in reality. As a matter of fact the magical world exists within the real or the Muggle world and constantly intervenes in the real world. At the very start of the text, it is reported that people in strange looking clothes appear in the middle of broad daylight in the neighborhood where Uncle Vernon lives and works. Similarly, strange sightings of a shower of comets and meteors and owls flying by day are also reported on the British news channel. Likewise Diagon Alley, which is the wizard marketplace where Harry and Hagrid go to purchase his things, is in the middle of a common London street. Gringotts, the Wizard bank is revealed to be found under London. Similarly, platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ where the children board the train to Hogwarts is also found between platforms 9 and 10 in Victoria Station. Hagrid's tapping of the wall in Diagon Alley and the consequent dissolution of the wall to reveal the entrance into the magical marketplace and Harry's running through the wall between the platforms 9 and 10 to enter the magical platform shows the weak and impermanent borders and boundaries between the two categories which are easily penetrable and dissolve without difficulty. Magic is mixed with modern technology in the case of the flying motorbike of Sirius Black.

In a similar manner, magic exists as an indelible trace and supplement in the real world of the Dursleys. The Dursleys define their normality with reference to and in contrast to Potter's strangeness. Their identity as normal individuals is based on a distinction from the magical world represented by the Potters. As a matter of fact, the Dursleys are shown to be similar to Malfoys in their prejudiced outlook on life and their

hatred of those who are different from themselves. This affinity is very ironic in the light of the fact that both are shown to be completely against the other world and disavow the very existence of the "other." The Dursleys are shown as being allergic to any hint of the existence of magic. They completely disown the Potters and when they take in Harry after he is orphaned and left in their care, no mention is made of his parents' connection with the world of wizards. Likewise the Malfoys, too, consider non-magical people as being impure and tainted that can be treated as inferior vermin. Their identity cannot be dissociated from the identity of those they wish to disavow. Furthermore, the Dursleys' obsession with normality and their flight to a remote island in the wake of the letters sent from Hogwarts illustrate the fragility of the boundary they have erected and is an example of the way magic constantly intrudes and overlaps with the real. As a matter of fact, when Uncle Vernon attempts to block the delivery of the letters from Hogwarts to Harry, they keep on multiplying in number. An attempt to contain and suppress the other only results in further dissemination and multiplication of that which is being forbidden and all attempts at maintaining distinct identities are undermined by an inevitable contamination of the self through a mark of the other.

Logocentric attitudes and Manichean binary structures of self and other are closely connected with the desire of domination in both the novels. In *The Fellowship of the Rings* (2011), Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor, is shown as the primary manifestation of metaphysical supremacist attitude. In his quest for total domination, Sauron forges one ring as the ruling ring to bring all of the free people of the Middle Earth under his control. Likewise, in Rowling's novel, Lord Voldemort is also shown to be obsessed with power. Quirrell tells Harry, "Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it . . ." (p. 235). In keeping with the logic of deconstruction, it is the marginalized, those who exist as a trace or the supplement in the central or dominant term, that act as a disruptive force to overturn the metaphysical hierarchy.

In both texts, the formation of inter-communal alliances and friendships represents the pluralist space of *différance*, trace and supplementarity, which recasts alterity as difference with a similarity, enables deconstruction and dismantling of ethnocentric and racist ideologies of domination, development of inter-racial and inter-ethnic understanding, harmony and cooperation and the recovery of the voices of the oppressed and the marginalized. It makes possible the emergence of a pluralistic ethos in which it is impossible to privilege one over the other.

Furthermore, the texts do not substitute the dismantled metaphysical structures with a new hierarchy.

Thus in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2011), Tolkien highlights how the fear of a common enemy, the evil wizard Sauron, who threatens both the magical and non-magical inhabitants of Middle Earth with enslavement and destruction, forces the Elves, dwarfs, men and hobbits to overcome their differences and prejudices and to unite resulting in the erosion of the division between real and magical. Under the threat of the power of the master ring wielded by the evil wizard Sauron, these different cultural and racial communities, overlook their differences in favor of similarities and form a fellowship and alliance. This fellowship with its eclectic mix of men, wizards, hobbits, elves and dwarfs can be viewed as a hybrid space of *différance* emerging from a nested opposition where real and magical intermingle to generate a relationship of interdependence and cohabitation and better understanding. Thus Sam who starts out with a naïve conception of elvish magic as something dangerous and awe-inspiring, develops a more nuanced understanding of the magical community during the course of his journey. Likewise, the other members of the party develop a deeper appreciation of the courage and resilience of the hobbits. Hence the consciousness of all members of the fellowship, previously governed by logocentric prejudices, undergoes a gradual alteration and they develop enduring friendships in the course of their perilous journey. The dismantling of differences and forging of alliances is reflected in Lady Galadriel's decision to allow humans, dwarves and hobbits into the secret elvish realm of Lothlorien and in her recognition of the common bonds that tied all the communities together. By recasting alterity as a nested opposition, Tolkien enables the deconstruction of metaphysical hierarchies of ethnocentric and racial prejudice.

Furthermore, by placing the fate of Middle-Earth in the hands of the hobbits, a diminutive race completely overlooked by the other bigger and more powerful races and cultural communities, Tolkien's text can be read as a destabilization of power centers and as the recovery of the voice of the marginalized. Thus unlike the ring-wraiths, powerful kings, who fade away and become enslaved to the will of Sauron under the influence of the magical ring, Gollum, Bilbo and Frodo resist the influence of the ring and prove to be the main hurdle in Sauron's quest for total domination. As a matter of fact, the quest to destroy the ring proves to be a leveling force and according to the Elven Lord Elrond, "This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere" (p. 269). Elrond's

tribute to Frodo, Bilbo and the hobbits portrays the deconstruction of hierarchies and liberation and celebration of the voice of the weak when he observes

This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or, if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck? (p. 270)

Also in Rowling's text the characters, who are marginalized and oppressed by racism, class and ethnic hatred and prejudices, spearhead the struggle against Voldemort's logocentric quest for total domination and erasure of dissent. Consequently Harry, who is a poor orphan without any connections and has a half wizard and a half muggle background, spearheads the resistance against Lord Voldemort and helps to recover the Sorcerer's stone. As a matter of fact, Harry's character, who through his lineage and upbringing has a connection with and experience of both the real and magical communities, enables the opening of a plural space of a nested opposition in the text where these prejudices and structures of dialectical alterity can be contested and dismantled. The protagonist Harry, serves as the connection or the vehicle, that enables Rowling to highlight the inevitable overlapping and interconnection between the two worlds of magic and real which are apparently opposed to one another. Rowling makes it clear that Harry would have been unable to succeed in saving the Sorcerer's stone from Voldemort without the help of his friends Ron, from a poor wizarding family and Hermione who hails from a muggle family. In fact the hurdles that Harry and his friends have to clear in order to reach the philosopher's stone require both the use of magic as well as reason and intellect. Furthermore, it is the characters, who are on the margins of the magical world and face prejudice and discrimination, like Hagrid, the half-giant and half-wizard, and Firenze, the half-human and half-horse centaur, who aid Harry in his struggle against the evil Lord Voldemort and emerge as heroic figures. Harry is also protected by the reviled Professor Snape, the head of Gryffindor's rival house, Slytherin, who counters Quirrell's spell to throw him off his broom during the Quidditch match. This fellowship or alliance of marginalized figures enables the breakdown of prejudices and normative Manichean categories and structures of alterity and the development of solidarity across ethnic, cultural and class divisions. In the same way Hogwarts, as a place where children from both muggle and non muggle families, and magical species such as centaurs, three headed dogs, unicorns, etc., exist together also functions as a space where some of these prejudices and boundaries

between the real and the magical, center and margin, superior and inferior, pure and impure, can be broken down. Thus the marginal or the supplementary in the text becomes the site of transgression which undermines metaphysical logocentric structures of domination and estrangement.

Findings and Conclusion

The current study attempted to highlight how the selected postmodern fantasy works of Tolkien and Rowling developed a space in which the play of *différance*, trace and supplementarity dismantled metaphysical logocentric thought manifested in the form of ethnocentrism and racism through the positing of the real and magic as a nested opposition in which alterity is defined in terms of a double movement of resemblance and difference. A deconstructive reading of the selected texts revealed that by highlighting how magic exists as an essential trace in the real and vice versa and the way in which the supplement becomes the very condition of existence of the self, the two authors revealed that Manichean structures of dialectical alterity, which insist on the absolute otherness of the other, are fictitious and are based on a false opposition. Instead, in the postmodern fantasy novels included in the study, otherness becomes an expression of mutually interdependent differences. Thus the world of the elves and wizards and their destiny and struggles overlap with that of the hobbits, dwarfs and men in *The Fellowship of the Rings* (2011). Likewise Hogwarts and Diagon Alley are geographically as well as structurally synonymous with the real world of the Dursleys' and Voldemort's fight is against both the dissenters within the wizarding world and against non-magical people. Hence these authors expose the false binary hierarchical relationships between magical and real and dismantle an ethnocentric conception of the cultures which fosters a totalitarian worldview in which alterity is denigrated and marked as inferior and dangerous. This study thus sheds light on the way these postmodern fantasy novels undermine the grammar of logocentrism and open a space for an anti-racist and anti-ethnocentric worldview which dismantles the Manichean binary structures that generate exclusion and marginalization. In the process, these texts rehabilitate and recover racial, ethnic and class differences which had been silenced in the essentialist, reductive and normative worldview generated by metaphysical thought and culture.

A close reading of these texts also reveals the way in which these postmodern fantasy works promulgate a pluralist ethos in which multiple voices are permitted and recognized. Thus both Frodo, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and Harry Potter, the protagonist of Rowling's novel, stand

against the rigid purist Manichean worldview of Sauron and Voldemort, which creates rigid distinctions and divisions. Frodo becomes the binding figure who holds together members of the various magical and real ethnic and racial communities in a fellowship in which oppositions and differences are transcended in pursuit of the common cause of defeating the evil necromancer Sauron. Similarly, Harry Potter is a descendent of a muggle mother hailing from a non-magical family, and a pure-blooded father belonging to a line of wizards. He is familiar with both the real and the magical worlds having been raised by non-magical relatives and schooled at Hogwarts, an institution in the magical world and having formed a band of friends including wizards, Muggles, half-giants and centaurs. Consequently, Harry opens a space of redoubling, slippage and supplementarity in which otherness and alterity is constantly reinscribed through structures of trace and supplement and hegemonic binary structures are dismantled.

This space of *différance* and supplementarity brings to the fore marginalized and excluded voices suppressed by ethnocentric and racist structures. Thus in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the unlikely hero is a diminutive hobbit and his friends and in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* the struggle is led by an orphaned boy and his socially stigmatized friends including a boy belonging to a poor family, a girl of non-magical descent who is derided as inferior and a half-giant viewed as an oaf and a buffoon. This liberatory space is made possible by the writers' delineation of a world in which the real and magic is intermingled and interconnected. The economy of the marginal and the supplementarity thus becomes transgressive and a site of disruption which dismantles logocentric structures in the selected texts.

This paper is being written at a time of intercivilizational conflict and the revival of Manichean logocentric metaphysical ethnocentric structures in the wake of 9/11. In the context of the war on terror, discourses of clash of civilizations have attained renewed currency and underpin a global consciousness in which the world is viewed in terms of binary divisions of self and other. In this contemporary climate of suspicion, mistrust and hatred, the self is being valorized and the other is demonized and objectified as dangerous, inferior and irreconcilable, resulting in its stereotyping, essentialization, marginalization and exclusion. In this environment of heroic ethnocentrism, discourses of war are accorded justification through logocentric structures that privilege certain ethnicities and in this way undermine chances of peace and harmony. In the face of a growing atmosphere of hatred and prejudice, postmodern fantasy novels can help develop a grammar of peace,

understanding and harmony through the opening of counter-discursive spaces of pluralism where binary structures are dismantled, alterity is embraced, and hegemonic structures of ethnocentrism are deconstructed.

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