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John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954): a Foucauldian Reading

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Abstract

This paper intends to study John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) from a Foucauldian perspective, and throughout our inquiry, we shall refer to the three parts of the trilogy, namely *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1955) and *The Return of the King* (1955). Unlike the precedent social theorists who asserted that power can only be seen through the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, king-serf relation or the capitalist-proletariat one, Foucault came with a new definition to power and attributed it to every social group. Indeed, in order to study Tolkien's trilogy from the previously stated perspective and to know to which extent Foucault's ideas are present there, our dissertation will take into consideration power and the other terms that are related to it and which define and complete it; that is, discipline, surveillance, discourse and resistance. As far as our findings are concerned, using some of Michel Foucault's theories of power that he presented in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (1980) and in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991) to analyse *The Lord of the Rings* allowed us to deduce that this fantasy trilogy and accurately reflects Foucault's ideas about the omnipresence of power relations and the other phenomena that derive from it, namely discipline, surveillance, discourse and resistance.

Keywords: *The Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien, Michel Foucault, power, discipline, surveillance, discourse, resistance.

To my parents,

To my sisters, brothers, Mr Alliouette and Dr Ferhi,

To my nephews and nieces,

To Minette and her two little kittens,

To me.

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Table of Contents

I. General Introduction

The Lord of the Rings (1954), which happens to be the main focus of this paper, is a fantasy trilogy that is written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. The first part of it was published in 1954 and was entitled *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Then, the following parts were both published in 1955; that is, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, respectively.

The three parts of Tolkien's masterpiece are mainly about casting the One Ring of power into the fires of Mount Doom and this plot may seem superficial in the first sight, but it indeed developed interrelated themes which reflect the subjects of 'power', 'resistance', 'discipline' and 'surveillance' as well. In fact, these subjects are widely expressed in the narrative throughout the interaction of mighty Wizards, wise Elves, Ents, Dwarves, Orcs, Men and Hobbits. In other words, Tolkien's trilogy promotes ideas about the relations of power between the fictional characters which belong to various social classes and separate geographical areas. If we take into consideration the key subjects which are developed throughout the 62 chapters of the trilogy, that is 'power', 'resistance', 'discipline' and 'surveillance', we may immediately think about Michel Foucault's ideas developed in his different writings.

As we already know, Michel Foucault is a French social theorist who published a considerable number of works which centre on the aforementioned subjects. In his writings, he tends to show a contrasting view about some conceptions which were previously defined and known by the medieval and capitalist societies. In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (1980), for instance, he makes some clarifications about the way 'power' is exercised and the way it is always faced by 'resistance'. In that book, he also advocates that knowledge and 'power' are inter related and explains how each of them serves and completes the other. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991) is another work by Foucault in which the main focus of a crucial section in it matches some essential

subjects exposed in Tolkien's work as the institutions' surveillance system, the way it applies 'power' with its architectural structure and the probable forms of 'resistance' which can be found there.

As we may remark from the above paragraphs, we can say that some of Foucault's ideas which were elaborated in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* and in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* can be applied on Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It is therefore on the basis of this context that this master dissertation is intended to study *The Lord of the Rings* in the light of Michel Foucault's thoughts.

Review of the Literature:

In fact, Tolkien's work received a great attention; therefore, film makers and scholars have gradually become interested in it. If we think about the cinematographic adaptations for instance, our attention would first be directed towards *J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* (1978) which is an animation made by Ralph Bakshi. The other example that can be given about the impact that Tolkien's Middle Earth had on film makers is Peter Jackson's trilogy, namely *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003).

Along with those adaptations, a wide range of investigations were and are still interested in studying and analyzing the themes and the different theories in J.R.R. Tolkien's work. A review of some studies which were conducted about *The Lord of the Rings* revealed that the latter has been treated from other perspectives than the Foucauldian one. In 2012, Setve Higham studied the trilogy from a Marxist perspective and highlighted therefore the subjects of social class and power. Jon Michael Darga also worked on *The Lord of the Rings*, but his 2014 dissertation only focused on the power of the female characters in Tolkien's work.

In fact, Power relations is an umbrella term which puts 'power', 'resistance', 'discipline' and 'surveillance' together to widen the perspectives from which it can be investigated, and if a critic studies one of the aforementioned concepts, power relations would consequently be involved. However, instead of literally mentioning the issue of power relations in their analysis, critics indirectly presented it by focusing on some topics which are related to it. To begin with, Jane Chance, in *Tolkien's Art: a Mythology for England* (2001), states that 'in Tolkien's own tales, the Elves appear as guides of good will toward others'[1]. Here, she provides us with an idea about the relationships which bound the characters of Tolkien's world together. The Elves are wiser than the other races and are the ones who governed Middle Earth in the Third Age which is the setting of the narrative. Their powerful stance and the fact that they were given three rings of power makes their realms a refuge of peace not only in *The Lord of the Rings* but also in *The Hobbit* (1937) which is a narrative by Tolkien set before the events of the trilogy. Along with Alfred Siewers, Jane Chance, also in *Tolkien Modern Middle Ages* (2005) came with another view which concerns the introduction of new fictional characters. She states, 'diversity and stereotyping dominate the second volume, one instance of which occurs in the early episode involving the Ents, the tree-shepherds, who are estranged both from other species (like Hobbits) and from their own gendered counterparts, the Entwives'[2]. In this respect, Chance suggests that diversity and stereotyping are helpful element which contributes in the development of the narrative. This also asserts that the story, and so power relations, are not centralized on a particular category for they include characters from different social groups.

As a critic who put into consideration the language and its uses in *The Lord of the Rings*, Michael Stanton, in *Hobbits, Wizards and Elves* (2001) admits that 'if one word –"mellon" or "friend"- can open the doors of Moria, Language itself is the passkey to the world of Middle Earth'[3]. Here, he gives us an idea about the importance of language and its power in the

narrative. He also alludes that language can be considered as a weapon that helps its user to improve his performance in the arena of power relations. However, in the discussion section, we would discover that it is not the only way that facilitates the transmission of power from an individual into another.

The other category of critics explicitly talked about the issue of power in the trilogy and Jane Chance is again one of them. In *The Lord of the Rings: the Mythology of Power* (2001), she insists that 'power […] must be shared with those individuals and peoples who are different, in gender, nature, history and temperament'[4]. According to her, power is not supposed to be only exercised by the mighty lords but also by the other social groups since each one of them tries to impose its own idea of power, and here, so we may say here that her point is the closest to Michel Foucault's definition of power relations.

We understand from the previous quote that females are also an integrated part in the process of power relations. To illustrate this, Nancy Entright admits in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Lord of the Rings* (2008) that 'Tolkien's female characters, though few in number, are very important in the defining of power.'[5] Éowen[6], whose case would be developed in the subsequent chapters, can be considered as an accurate example since she is the one who killed the Witch King who formerly claimed that no man can ever kill him. Her act is not only a basic step which changed the direction of the narrative but also a proof that gender is not an element which defines who should exerise power.

In *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy* (2003), Erik Katz moves beyond Jane Chance's view which considers the issue of power through the characters of Middle Earth and therefore presents another perspective that studies power by the impact of the One Ring. In a way, he shows that even the objects in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ring especially, have the ability to impose a certain kind of power. He indeed questions, 'would the ring provide different kinds of power to different kinds of beings?'[7] and the answer came from Jane Chance herself in

Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations (2008). She says that 'the Ring appeals to the desires of the self for gold, power, and love, as means of mastering that individual'[8]. From this, we may understand that the task of exercising power relations requires some techniques, and the Ring, since it is an object that is desired by many in the narrative, tends to affect the fictional characters differently.

To crown it all, Chance, in a comment that is stated in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Lord of the Rings* says that 'In *The Lord of the Rings* difference, fueled by the power of words, polarizes the forces of good and evil, social class, and political group'[9]. And this, in a way, gathers all the aforementioned views about the significant impact of language and objects in the process of power relations within the various social groups.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

From the above review of the literature in which critics dealt with the issue of power relations in *The Lord of the Rings*, we may notice that they have mainly conducted their studies from the "good versus bad" perspective; however, to our best knowledge, little attention has been made on the Foucauldian perspective. Therefore, to expand the field of its study, we suggest exploring the work from an extended Foucauldian standpoint and to entitle this master dissertation John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954): A Foucauldian Reading.

To reach this purpose, we would try to investigate the ways in which Tolkien's work reflects Foucault's view of power relations, surveillance, discipline and resistance through characters, plot and even the settings of *The Lord of the Rings*. And so that this goal is attained, we have divided the dissertation into three chapters. The first one is entitled 'Power Relations in *The Lord of the Rings*', and as the first part of it analyzes to which extent Foucault's characteristics of power relations are illustrated in Tolkien's trilogy, the second

one moves to study the way in which that same phenomenon take place within some of Middle Earth's characters as well.

The coming chapter which is entitled 'Discipline and Surveillance in *The Lord of the Rings*' first deals with the two techniques of discipline, that is classification and the control of activity, then moves to study the panopticon and surveillance representation in the trilogy. Finally, the third and last chapter would first be about the aspects of discourse in *The Lord of the Rings*, then about the various ways in which Foucault's understanding about resistance is portrayed in Tolkien's work.

Endnotes:

Jane Chance, *Tolkien's Art: a Mythology for England* (Kentucky: university press of Kentucky, 2001), p 93.

[2] ---------------, "Tolkien and the other: race and gender in middle earth" in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance and Alfred. K. Siewers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p180.

[3] Michael N. Stanton, *Hobbits, Elves and Wizards* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p147.

[4] Jane Chance, *The Lord of the Rings: the Mythology of Power* (Kentucky: university press of Kentucky, 2001), p 64.

[5] Nancy Entright, "Tolkien's Females and the Defending of Power" in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Lord of the Rings*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p171.

[6] Éowyn is a fictional character from The Lord of the Rings. She is the niece of the king of Rohan and the sister of the leader of the kingdom's army, and the one who killed the witch king. Tolkien described her as a rebellious, heroic and a courageous maiden.

[7] Eric Katz, "the Rings of Tolkien and Plato: Lessons in Power, Choice and Morality" in *The Lord of the Rings and philosophy*, ed. Gregory Bassham and Eric Bronson (Chicago: Open Court, 2008), p 17.

[8] Jane Chance, " "Queer" Hobbits: The Problem of Difference in the Shire" in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Lord of the Rings*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p 20.

[9] Ibid, p26.

II. Methods and Materials

Since my master dissertation is concerned with Michel Foucault and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), I shall rely in the first place on the three volumes of the trilogy; that is, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1955) and *The Return of the King* 1955) to portray Foucault's views in the narrative in a clearer way. Concerning the theoretical part, I shall first and foremost refer to Michel Foucault's *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (1980) since it will be helpful in the 'power relations' and 'resistance' parts. The second book by Foucault which would be of a great use is *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991), and it would be more referred to in the chapter which tackles 'discipline' and 'surveillance'. Along with the aforementioned basic theoretical sources, we are also intended to use some works by other scholars whose studies interpret Michel Foucault's main works and theories.

Methods

Definition of Concepts: Power, Discipline, Surveillance and Resistance

1. Power:

1.1. The Previous Conceptions of Power:

The meaning of power changes according to the prevailing characteristics of each historical era, and 'this makes [it] a much less stable element.'[1] The first perspective from which we would study power is the old one, and Feudal society is the representative model which would be taken into consideration. At that time, the basis of the repressive power of the monarch was social organization. In other words, the king relies on nobles to provide soldiers to his armies and to afford their political support. Nobles, on their part, need the knights for security and protection, and the power is therefore gradually transferred from a class into another until it reaches the bottom of the social ladder which is represented by the serfs or the

villains. This, in fact, allows the king to have a complete authority in order to impose his power on every individual in his kingdom since his power was 'an original right that is given up in the establishment of sovereignty,'[2] or, in other words, a Devine right.

The absolute power of the monarch defined laws and prohibitions, and it 'functioned essentially through […] signs of loyalty to the feudal lords, rituals, ceremonies and so on.'[3] Therefore, a king shows his ultimate power through public executions for instance. Peasants, on the other side, in order to avoid this kind of punishment, render the king's exercise of authority more delicate with their restricted behaviours. And since they do not take part in the task of bettering their position of power, we may understand that power, from this old view's perspective, 'is taken to be a right, which one is able to posses like a commodity.'[4]

After the medieval conception of power which 'exercised itself through social production and social service'[5] and the fact that it was a Devine right for the king, Karl Marx, who is one of the most notable social theorists whose works harshly criticised capitalism, came with a quiet similar view about power. In his criticism of the capitalist system, Marx sees that 'the question of power [is] kept subordinate to the economic instance'[6] and that the only individuals who maintain power are the ones who belong to the upper class and who basically posses the means of production.

As Foucault states in *Two Lectures*, 'power is not primarily the maintenance and reproduction of economic relations, but is above all a relation of force.'[7] Therefore, for him, power is not a matter of an 'economic functionality of power.'[8]

1.2. Michel Foucault's Conception of Power:

It is made clear that for the medieval and the capitalist societies, power depended on the social and economic position of the individuals and it was therefore only held by the upper classes. Taking into consideration the way power was conceived by the aforementioned

societies, Foucault reshaped the understanding of power by leading a new path that challenged the old conceptions of power which only considered it oppressive and exclusionist. Therefore, he came with the result that power is 'found everywhere in our lives and in our society.'[9] As Gaventa argues in *Power after Lukes*:

> [Foucault's] work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed.[10]

From the above quote, we may comprehend that the old model of power that is found in the feudal and capitalist societies 'sees power as pyramidal [and] flowing from a single apex'[11] and that Foucault came with a contrasting and an opposing view about it.

Indeed, Foucault challenged the idea that power is only held by some categories and argued instead that it 'can issue from 'anywhere','[12] form every social level and every social class. Furthermore, he asserts that 'it is impersonal because it is neither possessed nor exerted by individuals, groups or institutions.'[13] That is, power, according to Foucault, is a phenomenon that includes everyone, even the ones who may seem marginalized.

Foucault believes also that 'power is a set of actions upon other actions.'[14] Therefore, owning an object or a commodity that the others may want to possess is not power, but imposing your presence and opposition on the others is what counts as 'power'. Next, after viewing power 'as a verb rather than a noun,'[15] Foucault asserts that 'discourse is essential to the operation of power'[16] since it is both an instrument and a result of power. As a matter of fact, 'discourses are about what can be said and thought, also about who can speak, when, and with what authority,'[17] so we may consider them as techniques used by the individuals who seek to exercise their power on the others more efficiently.

Finally, for Foucault, power is not only negative for it initiates other phenomena as well; therefore, he states:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces: it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.[18]

As Foucault explains in the above quote, power should be seen as a positive force since it produces knowledge and new forms of behaviour as well.

2. Discourse:

Discourse, which is 'a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and [which] expresses a particular way of understanding human experiences.'[19] The following six ways explain how discourse operates:

A. Discourse creates a world, and 'it can be used to refer to all utterances and statements which have been made, which have meaning and which have some effect.'[20] That is to say, it models and shapes the perspectives from which we see and perceive life since it plays 'a key role in the social construction of reality.'[21]

B. Discourse generates knowledge and truth.

C. Discourse helps us to identify the individual who produces it because it reflects his identity, class and social rank.

D. Discourse is related to power because it gives its producer both the political and the social power.

E. Discourse is in a constant evolution.

F. Cultures are not only affected by a single discourse.

3. Discipline:

Power is an entity that may operate through discipline as well, and Paul Rainbow, in his interpretation of Foucault, says that it 'is a type of power […] comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application [and] targets.'[22] Indeed, there are

two main ways in which discipline can be applied on people; the first one of them is 'classification'.[23] In this procedure, people are intentionally separated according to their skills, competences and abilities to avoid any attempt to revolt. The second way that is used to apply discipline is 'the control of activity'[24] which generally aims at improving the supervised persons' performance, and Foucault describes its main procedures as follows:

> Enclosed areas such as factories, prison and schools serve as places that establish presences and absences […] know when and how to locate individuals […] set up useful communications […] interrupt others […] be able at each moment to surprise the conduct of each individual, asses it, judge it, calculate its qualities.[25]

Here, Foucault suggests that controlling the activities requires a set of well defined procedures which render the general process discipline more efficient.

4. Surveillance:

As was discussed earlier, discipline controls activities and separates individuals from each other thanks to the strict system of surveillance that is applied on them. In *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault provides us with a detailed description of a surveillance method that is called the Panopticon. This peculiar building, which is a prison designed by Jeremy Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century, is composed of a tower on which a guard can see each of the cells that are scattered all along the surrounding ring shaped building.

This particular architectural design intends to keep a watchful eye on every prisoner, so its first characteristic which would be discussed in the subsequent chapters is that power comes from its central tower since it 'allows a small number of people to guard a large crowd with the least possible effort.'[26] As a second characteristic, the panopticon requires an enclosed space for a better and a more practical process of surveillance. Finally, taking into account the fact that they are always visible, prisoners begin to assume responsibility upon their own

actions and tend to play the role of the 'guard' and the 'prisoner' simultaneously to avoid punishment.

5. Resistance:

Power, according to Foucault, is a set of interweaved relations in which every action affects another action throughout every sphere in society, therefore, it 'must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something that only functions in the form of a chain.'[27] Basically, power is found everywhere, yet whenever a force attempts to overpower another, an opposed force shows.

For Foucault, resistance is everywhere since it is 'formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised,'[28]and it functions as a 'counter-discourse'[29] because the refusal of being oppressed by an individual is a refusal of his discourse and a form of resistance at the same time. In fact, Foucault also asserts that the relation between a slave and his master is not a relation of power but rather a relation of oppression for there have to be quarrels, actions and reactions between the different sides so that it can literally be labelled a relation of power. Indeed, he argues that 'if these possibilities are closed down through violence or slavery, then it is no longer a question of relationship of power,'[30] so we can say here that the intentional and voluntary decisions that individuals make contribute in widening the territory of power relations.

In sum, it is shown that power with which Michel Foucault has come is challenging idea, since it contradicts in a clear way the precedent exclusionist views which only attributed it to some social classes. Moreover, it argued that discipline, surveillance, discourse and resistance are the phenomena that Foucault uses in many of his works to expand the meaning of power.

Materials:

The Lord of the Rings, is a fantasy trilogy written by J.R.R. Tolkien and is divided into three parts which are respectively *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1955) and *The Return of the King* (1955). The vents of the trilogy turn around Bilbo Baggins, who after obtaining the One Ring in *The Hobbit* (1937), which is a prior work by Tolkien set sixty years before the events of his trilogy, hands it to Frodo (his nephew) on his thirty third birthday. Afterwards, when Bilbo leaves the Shire, Gandalf the wizard tells Frodo that the Ring does not only render its wearer invisible but also launches an incontrollable amount of darkness and malice in his heart; therefore, he advises him never to put it on and to leave his home.

In the council of Elrond of Rivendell, the Elvish lord chooses Sam, Merry, Pippin, Aragorn, Borimir, Legolas, Gimli and Gandalf to join Frodo in his mission in order to cast the Ring into the fires of Mount Doom. However, after Gandalf's fall and Borimir's fits of madness, Frodo decides to carry the mission alone, and Sam joins him. Indeed, they got closer to Mount Doom, but with Gollum's malice, the harsh surveillance system of the Dark Tower and the Ring that Frodo protected from the beginning made him so weak, it was then Sam who carried him to fulfil his mission. After their success and the death of the Dark Lord Sauron, Aragorn becomes the king of Gondor, the Elves, along with the two Ring bearers, leave Middle Earth forever and head to the Undying Lands on ships and the Fourth Age begins.

Endnotes

[1] Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), p 52.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p90.

[3]-------------, "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 125.

[4]-------------, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p88

[5]Ibid, p125.

[6]Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972),p116.

[7] -------------, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p89

[8]Ibid, p88.

[9]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (New York: Random House, 1978),p 1.

[10]John Gaventa, *Power after Lukes* (Brighton: Institute of development Studies, 2003), p 1.

[11] Mark Kelly, *Foucault and Politics: a Critical Introduction* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2014) ,p 87.

[12] Ellen Feder, "power/ Knowledge" in *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*, ed. Dianna Taylor (Ashford: Ashford colour press, 2011), p 56.

[13] C. G. Prado, *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder: West View Press, 2000), p 100.

[14]Ibid, p 69.

[15] Ashkan Rezvani Naraghi, "*The Foucauldian Concept of Power*," (lecture, Univercity of Tehran, Tehran, December 7, 2012).

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[18] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 104

[19] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p 281.

[20] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002), p 80.

[21] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p 6.

[22] Paul Rainbow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p 206.

[23] Sümeyye Güllü Aslan, ''*A Foucauldian Reading Of Power In Harry Potter Series: Speciesism And Discrimination Based On Blood Status*'', Master dissertation, (Middle East Technical University, 2018), p 23.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 143

[26] Suerre Rafensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: a Research Companion* (Hampshire: Palgrave Mac million, 2016), p 184

[27] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,*
ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 98

[28] Ibid, p 42.

[29] Suerre Rafensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: a Research Companion* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillion, 2016), p 209.

[30] Claire O' Farrel , *Michel Foucault* (London: sage publications, 2005), p 99.

III. Results

The current research has allowed us to better our understanding of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* by studying it from a Foucauldian perspective. Throughout reading the trilogy, we have noticed that the author has put an emphasis on some key ideas, namely the diffusion of resistance in every part of Middle Earth, the presence of mighty towers of surveillance and the involvement of the different races in the process of power relations. Therefore, we have applied some of Michel Foucault's theories and ideas that he elaborated in *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison* and in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* and which happen to coincide with the aforementioned subjects that Tolkien has presented in his trilogy.

As was previously mentioned at the level of the introduction, this paper allowed us to study the extent to which *The Lord of the Rings* reflects some of Michel Foucault's theories and ideas. To attain this goal, each of the three chapters of the dissertation came with a distinctive result. In chapter one, we have deduced that power in this trilogy coincides with the Foucauldian understanding of it since Tolkien has represented it as an entity that is found everywhere and which is shared by every race no matter which social or economic class they belong to. Subsequently, in the second part of the same chapter, we have also come to see that power relation is a phenomenon that takes place within every individual as well.

After drawing parallels between Foucault's conception of power and Tolkien's trilogy, the results of the second chapter demonstrated two things. First, the towers of Middle Earth are effective strategies that the two main antagonists use to strengthen their performance in the arena of power relations. Second, those particular buildings which facilitate the processes of discipline and surveillance are another illustration of one of Foucault's main ideas, notably the panopticon and its crucial role in applying both the constant system of surveillance and an effective program of discipline.

The last chapter of our dissertation, which is mainly about discourse and resistance in *The Lord of the Rings*, completes the first and the second ones. Indeed, the first significant result that emerged from chapter three is that discourse is an effective strategy that is used in the performance of power. The other basic result that the chapter came with is that resistance is not only a phenomenon that goes hand in hand with power but also a reflection and a reaction of it.

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IV. Discussion

Chapter One: Power Relations in *The Lord of the Rings*

Introduction

As was explained previously, the Foucauldian conception of power has five main characteristics, and it happens that J.R.R. Tolkien represented each one of them in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1955) and *The Return of the King* (1955). In other words, through his strategic use of setting, characters and plot, Tolkien managed to incorporate the aspects of Foucault's definition of power into his trilogy.

In the first place, he described power as a phenomenon that is found in every part of Middle Earth and did not exclude any race or social class from practicing it. He then asserted through the 62 chapters of his trilogy that the One Ring (or any other magical object) is not the source of power since a considerable number of characters with no magical object actively apply and practice power on each other. Then, the last Foucauldian aspect of power which happens to be remarked in *The Lord of the Rings* is that it produces discourse, knowledge and new forms of behaviour as well.

In the second part, we shall go deeper with Foucault's definition of power as being a phenomenon that is found everywhere by studying the cases of Frodo, Gollum, Boremir and Denethor which makes their minds another arena, along with the social or external one, where powers are exchanged and exercised.

1. Power Relations in *The Lord of the Rings*:

1.1. Power is Everywhere:

In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault claims that 'between every point of a social body between a man and a woman, between the members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between everyone who knows and everyone who does not, there exist relations of power.'[1] Here, Foucault does not only refer to the diffusion of the relations of power among the various social groups but also eludes to its manifestation in the different geographical spots. In other words, this phenomenon functions in any place, and boundaries cannot be considered obstacles for its mobilization.

When we first read the synopsis of *The Lord of the Rings*, we may think that power is only located in Mordor because of its darkened and sinister atmosphere and the presence of the mighty Dark Tower of Sauron, but it happens that power can also be found in every part of Middle Earth. On the one hand, in Hobbiton, the first setting of the book, there is a female character called Lobelia. The latter is known by her attempts to overpower Bilbo Baggins with her continuous demands and orders, while Bilbo resists her behaviour by ignoring her. Samwise Gamgee, on the other hand, who is also a hobbit, was asked to take care of Frodo's garden, yet, with his free will he decided to stop working and instead he has chosen to eavesdrop and disobey. These acts of resistance and disobedience can be considered as the first forms or indications of a power against another power.

In Hobbiton's borders, some Elves were leaving in groups as a reaction towards the change that was taking place in Middle Earth. Nearly at the same location, the four hobbits (Sam, Frodo, Merry and Pippin) were on their way to Bree and were followed by the black riders. There are two contrasting powers here. The first one is represented by the black riders attempt to capture the hobbits, and the second one is portrayed by the hobbits refusal to be taken.

When the voices of the Elves were heard nearby, the darkened creatures fled. This is another form of power which operates in the book, and it is visible in the Elves and the sinister riders.

In fact, Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* that 'power is mobilized; it makes itself everywhere present and visible, it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilizes, it partitions.'[2] As was mentioned earlier, Foucault tends to see the relations of power as a diffused phenomenon, and the above statement eventually traces in a more precise manner the ways in which the relations of power are diffused. basically, power cannot be found in a single territory, so its exercise extends to the other geographical spots and intermingles with the other ones, and this is how it spreads in every territory.

Since the relations of power are remarked everywhere, we may include some other settings from *The Lord of the Rings* in our analysis. Rohan, for instance, is a fictional cilty where power relations were obviously present and mingled. There, Grema's words were incredibly convincing; therefore, the overpowered king rarely opposed him. In this way, Theodin gives Grema enough power to impose his authority as if he was the true ruler of Rohan. Eomer (the king's nephew) did not like the way his uncle's power was threatened and controlled, so he opposed the mismanagement of the kingdom. Due to this opposition, the king who was already under Grema's spell felt that his nephew's opposition was endangering his power; therefore, he decided to exile him from Edoras.

Isengard is another example through which a remarkable set of power relations takes place. Saruman the White was burning the trees to provide more wood to his furnaces and he did not expect the Ents' revolt. But the walking trees showed an unpredicted amount of power by working together to destroy his underground factories. Far away, in a darkened tunnel near Modor, Samwise Gamgee showed power by his heroic struggle against Shelob (a giant

spider). It was not a fair fight, but in this context, power was shifting, and this is another accurate representation of Michel Foucault's view about the diffusion of power relations.

1.2. Power Belongs to Everyone in Middle Earth:

It is worth mentioning that Middle Earth in the book is inhabited by several races belonging to different social classes whom operate with a distinguishable power. Mark Kelly, in *Foucault and Politics: a Critical Introduction*, notes that 'the relationality of power implies that power is not something that can belong to an individual. Rather, it takes place between individuals.'[3] This means that the relations of power are not only exercised by a single category or a given class but also by the ones who are considered weak and outcast. As a result, power belongs to everyone and social rank is not an element that defines who should exercise it. As far as *The Lord of the Rings* is concerned, we may say now that Sauron is not the only representation of power, for the other races also take part in this interweaved process. When the lord Elrond of Rivendell was making the list of the members who should join the fellowship of the ring, Merry and Pippin were not included, but thanks to their powerful determination and stubbornness, they convinced the Elvish Lord to let them join. Contrarily to Merry and Pippin, Lord Elrond is from a high social position; however, this did not affect the seemingly weaker individuals.

As another example of a quite similar case in which a lord was not the only who applied power on the others, we may mention Lord Denethor. This Steward of Gondor, and his acts and decisions he made when his city went through critical situations prove his involvement in the process of power as well. At first, he had the power to stop one of his sons from going to the council of Elrond and to let the other instead. At the last sequences of his life, he could have ordered his soldiers to fight the swarming Orcs, but he told them to quit instead. They resisted his will at the beginning, but when they followed Gandalf to protect the city, they

proved that they do belong to the realm of power as well. Moreover, on the fellowship's road, the decision making process which enabled them to move forward made the power shift from Gandalf to Aragorn. When the company is in a location that the Wizard knows well, the latter imposes his power and knowledge on the other to follow him, and if it is the ranger who knows the location better, he would have a better chance of becoming more powerful to lead.

However, we should say that the social position of some members of the fellowship does not necessary define the ones who would exercise power. In this regard, we may take the example of Gandalf who is one of the four mighty Wizards of Middle Earth, or Legolas, the prince of Mirkwood and Aragorn who is the future king of Gondor, yet, in this power relations, it is Frodo, who is a mere hobbit, who exercises a powerful stance about not leaving the company. Sam, whose social position is lower than Frodo's, was rejected at first when he asked to join him at the ending of book one, but since power can be exercised by anyone, he succeeded in imposing his will of Frodo and joined him later.

In order to enhance his idea about the diffusion of power relations, Michel Foucault picks some examples from various societal levels. He says that there is an 'opposition of the power of men over women, of parents over children, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the ways people live.'[4] From Foucault's words, we may immediately remark that power is exercised by weaker individuals despite the fact of facing some stronger and more authoritative opponents. For him, a child still belongs to the arena of power relations regardless of the small effect that his actions may produce. More importantly, the inequality of the two sides authority and social position would not affect their clash of power. To enlarge this idea, we may mention two examples, namely the white gulls and the Ents.

As a first example, the white gulls may not seem to represent a threat for the other Middle Earth creatures, yet whenever an elf listens to their cry, he helplessly decides to leave the forest forever. The gulls, in spite of being smaller and weaker, apply a great share of power on the Elves. In book five, Tolkien describes their power and the way it scares Legolas the Elf as follows:

> And now Legolas fell silent […]'Look!' he cried. 'Gulls! They are flying far inland. A wonder they are to me and a trouble to my heart. Never in all my life had I met them, until we came to Pelargir, and there I heard them crying in the air as we rode to the battle of the ships. Then I stood still, forgetting war in Middle-earth; for their wailing voices spoke to me of the Sea. The Sea! Alas! I have not yet beheld it. But deep in the hearts of all my kindred lies the sea-longing, which it is perilous to stir. Alas! for the gulls. No peace shall I have again under beech or under elm.'[5]

If we reconsider the above quotation, we may remark that Foucault's idea about the weak individuals' effective exercise of power is well expressed in it. On the one hand, Legolas is a strong Elf. On the other, white gulls are nothing but small birds. The two sides' authority is obviously unequal, yet the gulls, which happen to be the weaker, are the ones who apply a more effective power on the other. Indeed, their cry was what obliged Legolas to take the decision of leaving a land that was his for centuries.

Along with white gulls, the Ents, who are the walking trees, do also exercise power as do the other individuals. Saruman the White used to send his Orcs to burn them whenever his furnaces required more fire. However, his repetitive attempts to exterminate the Ents made them more powerful and ready to resist so that to impose their own power on the White Wizard. In *The Two Towers*, Tolkien describes the Ents power as follows:

> There is a great power in them, and they seem able to wrap themselves in shadow: it is difficult to see them moving. But they do. They can move very quickly, if they are angry. You stand still looking at the weather, maybe, or listening to the rustling of the wind, and then suddenly you find that you are in the middle of a wood with great groping trees all around you.[6]

Similarly to the previous example, Foucault's idea can be applied on this quote as well. On the one hand, Saruman is not only a mighty Wizard but also the commander of hundreds of thousands of Orcs. On the other one, the Ents are walking and talking trees. The difference in their capacities may seem striking at the start, but the ents, who appear weaker, showed an incredible strength and succeeded in overpowering the White Wizard in the same way he did to them earlier.

1.3. Power is an Action:

Sauron is the One Ring's forger, and Frodo Baggins is its bearer, but this does not mean that owning the One Ring is what bettered their exercise of power. Frodo's power came from the action of deciding with whom to continue his journey while Sauron's was observed through his continuous task of making the others feel that they are constantly watched. In fact, the Dark Lord uses this technique to scare Pippin so that he provides him with more details about the ring's bearer. The Hobbit tried to resist despite the tremendous power that was applied on him, and yet, he could not do anything but freezing. Here, Sauron's power is purely an action, and it happens to be the same idea that Michel Foucault expressed in many of his works. In *The Subject and Power*, for instance, he asserts that power is 'an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future.'[7] In other words, Foucault tries here to make us understand that actions are what fuel the relations of power and not possessions. In the light of this, we may say that *The Lord of the Rings* contains a great number of examples about power relations which do not take into consideration possessions.

Before discussing our first example, it is worth mentioning that Lord Denethor of Gondor has a Palantir, which is a magic globe from which he can see every section of his city and the surrounding areas. This; however, does not mean that it is the source of his power. First, he knew that his son's army would be outnumbered; hence, he forced him to fight. He then

ordered his city's soldiers to surrender in spite of being able to resist more. In those two examples, Denethor's power resulted from his actions and not from the fact that he owns a Palantir.

Another outstanding example where power is something that is exercise rather that possessed is the case of the Hobbits and the Ents, who refused to serve Saruman the White. As we know, neither of them were given one of the 20 rings of power[8], but their performances in the arena of power relations created some outstanding turning points in the narrative. As Foucault asserts again in *What our Present Is*, 'Power is relations; power is not a thing, it is a relationship between two individuals… such that one can direct the behaviour of another or determine the behaviour of another.'[9] As can be observed from Foucault's words and Tolkien's description of the Ents and the Hobbits, we may conclude that the above showcases consolidate Foucault's opinion about the fact that power is gained through actions but not possessions.

1.4. Power Operates Through Discourse:

When reading also the book, one notices that Saruman is a quiet accurate example of how can power operate through discourse. Indeed, we are told that he is one of the four mighty wizards of Middle Earth and his magical voice has the power of hypnotising the Orcs or any other creature that listens to it. The longer they do listen to him, the weaker their possibility of resistance becomes. This works first because of their ignorance and fear, and second because of his incredibly convincing words. Every speech that he gives from the tower of Isengard is a means of discourse that he cunningly uses to spread the territory of his power and clout. Within this context, Victor Pitsoe and Moeketsi Letseka in "*Foucault's Discourse and Power: Implications for Instructionist Classroom Management*." (2013) argue that 'Discourse, as a social construct, is created and perpetuated by those who have the power and means of

communication.'[10] In other words, and as we have previously explained, power is created and would operate through the use of a certain discourse.

Another form of power that might operate through discourse is to be found in the case of Rohan. In fact, the latter's discourse functions because of men's domination which shapes 'identity to the point where women act out and behave according to what has been labelled as acceptable about females.'[11] In other words, Rohan's tendency to remind women that staying at home and serving the family is their only duty is in a way a constant reminder of the discourse of masculinity and of patriarchal domination. Concerning this, Claire O Farrel, in *Michel Foucault Sage* argues that discourse 'is a matter of rules which, a bit like the grammar of a language, allow certain statements to be made.'[12] Here, the author first puts an emphasis on the strong relation between rules and discourse and subsequently admits its importance in shaping it. Indeed, this aspect is portrayed by the discourse of masculinity in Rohan because men, on their part, decide which statement should be made and which should not. Therefore, the act of excluding women from the decision making process strengthen men's performance of power and discourse in society.

1.5. Power is Productive:

In *Truth and Power*, Michel Foucault admits that 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it […] forms knowledge, produces discourse.'[13] Power relations, as was mentioned in the above quote, is an entity that does not repress the whole time; it produces knowledge, new forms of behaviour and discourse as well. Indeed, the fact that power produces knowledge can be clearly remarked through the case of Samwise Gamgee. After his many confrontations with Gollum, the Hobbit came to realize that he is nothing but an evil creature whose main aim is stealing the One Ring and killing Frodo and

him. Thanks to their two contrasting powers, along with the hatred they exchange and the fact that each one of the was trying to drive the other from the ring bearer (Frodo), Samwise gained a better knowledge about Gollum and realised then that he is an enemy.

Éowyn of Rohan is another good illustration about power that produces knowledge. In the one hand, disguising as a male soldier and keeping that secret identity for a while is an act of power. On the other hand, Angmar (the witch king) saying that no man can ever kill him in the battleground is a contrasting power that she faced. Through his statement, her enemy produced knowledge that was directly analyzed by her. She was 'no man'; therefore, she stabbed him and it eventually lead to his death. If Éowyn was not involved in an intermingled set of power relations, she would not realize that the witch king can be killed. So it can consequently be remarked here that power relations in her case led to forming a certain knowledge, and this aspect coincides with Foucault's remark that was quoted earlier.

Along with knowledge, power does also produce new forms of behaviour. Frodo, after confronting the black riders' power and being stabbed then by one of their Morgol blades, he decides to make a change by wearing the Mithril coat wherever he goes out. In this case, the relations of power which were exchanged between them caused Frodo to modify his acts and habits. This can also be seen in the case of the four adventurous Hobbits. After leaving the peaceful shire and being involved in a process of interweaved relations of power in Rohan, Gondor and Mordor, the Halflings came back to their home with an obvious change in their behaviours, as the following quote suggests: 'they were indeed more faire spoken and more jovial and full of merriment than ever before.'[14]

2. Power and the Self in Tolkien's Characters:

Power is an entity that is found everywhere, but in chapter one, we only associated the word 'everywhere' with 'every geographical spot and every social class'; therefore, the

following part is dedicated to widen that definition by analyzing the word 'everywhere' from another perspective, namely the individuals' bodies. As a starting point, it is worth mentioning that the amount of power in each person is not stable and that its intensity keeps changing. In other words, besides being present in every geographical spot and every social class, relations of power coexist in our bodies as well. Foucault calls this phenomenon 'technologies of the self', and he defines it as follows:

> Technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.[15]

Foucault suggests here that the instability of our contrasting internal powers can either be induced by ourselves or by external factors. Then, he subsequently asserts that the functioning of this peculiar type of power relations, namely the technologies of the self, is what helps the individuals to attain certain states and behaviours.

As defined above by Foucault, technologies of the self are portrayed by the sudden shift in an individual's state of mind and behaviours, and it happens that this phenomenon is observed on four fictional characters from *The Lord of the Rings*. The first one is Gollum or Sméagol, whose behaviours and process of thinking was constantly changing. Accordingly, 'Gollum' embodies the power that causes his anger fits whereas 'Smeagol' represents his good hearted side's power. When the nice Smeagol's side is the one which dominates, his behaviours become respectful and kind as the following quote suggests:

> 'I don't know. I can't help it. Master's got it. Smeagol promised to help the master…'But Sme´agol said he would be very very good. Nice hobbit! He took cruel rope off Sme´agol's leg. He speaks nicely to me.'
> 'Very very good, eh, my precious? Let's be good, good as fish, sweet one, but to ourselfs. Not hurt the nice hobbit, of course, no, no.'[16]

As can be observed here, helping the Hobbit, being a good individual and not hurting the others are what reflect the momentarily domination of his good hearted side; however, when

the Gollum's power is the one that wins, his behaviours and thoughts change radically as mentioned below:

> He was getting lower now and the hisses became sharper and clearer. 'Where iss it, where iss it: my Precious, my Precious? It's ours, it is, and we wants it. The thieves, the thieves, the filthy little thieves. Where are they with my Precious? Curse them! We hates them.'[17]

Basically, after the Smeagol's state of mind which overpowered at first and which showed through his positive behaviours, the dangerous and angry thoughts that are described above reflect Gollum's side's temporarily domination. This said, it is now worth mentioning that his body and voice change as well whenever one of the two forces within him overpowers the other. In book four, indeed, his powers alternation is described as follows:

> Gollum was talking to himself. Sme´agol was holding a debate with some other thought that used the same voice but made it squeak and hiss. A pale light and a green light alternated in his eyes as he spoke.[18]

Here, the idea of holding a debate with himself seems to be convincing enough about the quarrel of powers which takes place within him, and the changes which occure to his voice and eyes whenever a side dominates reflect the intensity of his internal relations of power. Indeed, Tolkien confirms that the longer his debate was the more stressful his situation becomes, and the following dialogue, which happens to be uttered by Gollum himself, is an accurate illustration of Foucault's notion about the technologies of the self:

> 'But the precious holds the promise'. The voice of Smeagol objected
> 'Then take it,'said the other, 'and let's hold it ourselfs ! then we shall be master, Gollum ! make the other hobbit, the nasty suspecious hobbit, make him crawl, yes, Gollum !'
> 'But not the nice hobbit ?'
> 'Oh no, not if it doesn't please us… we hates Bagginses.'
> 'No, not this Baggins.'[19]

Along with Gollum, whose previously quoted utterances reflect the instability of his internal contrasting powers, Denethor, who is introduced as the steward of Gondor, is the second character who is known by his unsettled temper. We are told that he loves his son

Boromir so much that he selected him to attend the council of Elrond in Rivendell and that he simultaneously targeted all his hatred, violence and disgust towards Faramir; his other son. In fact, when his beloved son died, his fits of anger worsened, and his behaviours towards Faramir became more unstable.

What launched his internal alteration of powers is his city's being attacked. At first, in spite of his awareness that Faramir's army will be outnumbered and beaten, he intentionally ordered him to face death, so his son desperately obeyed. However, when the latter came back with a fatal injury, Denethor's evil side overpowered the tender one, and his sudden inhuman decision of burning his son alive was described as follows:

> 'Better to burn sooner than late, for burn we must. Go back to your bonfire! And I? I will go now to my pyre. To my pyre! No tomb for Denethor and Faramir. No tomb! No long slow sleep of death embalmed. We will burn like heathen kings before ever a ship sailed hither from the West. The West has failed. Go back and burn!'[20]

In other words, his cruel decision of burning his son alive is what illustrates the permanent domination of his first power.

Next, Faramir suddenly 'moaned and called on his father in his dream,'[21] and as an immediate reaction, 'Denethor started as one waking from a trance, and the flame died in his eyes, and he wept, and he said: 'do not take my son from me ! he calls for me!'[22] Here, since the steward started 'looking with longing on the face of his son,'[23] we may comprehend that his good hearted side is the one which triumphed; however, the evil steward's side regained its domination once more when he suddenly 'laughed [and] stood up tall and proud again.'[24]

As Foucault argues, 'Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter attack in that same body[…] power can retreat here, reorganize its forces, invests itself elsewhere […] and so the battle continues.'[25] In other words, and as was previously quoted, our internal powers are not inactive, for whenever one of them seems to dominate,

another internal power interferes and leads to a different state of mind and behaviour. In fact, Foucault points here to the continuity of this alteration, and since Denethor is a character in which this phenomenon is observed, his first power regained control again; therefore, instead of keeping his attitude a loving father, his 'eyes flamed again, and taking the Stone under his arm he drew a knife and strode towards the bier. But Beregond sprang forward and set himself before Faramir.'[26] Here, given the fact that he was a loving father for some seconds and that he was about to murder his son right after, we may say that his internal relations of power were so intense and that they coincide with Michel Foucault's view about the organization of such power relations.

The third case study concerns Frodo Baggins, and reading *The Lord of the Rings* allowed us to remark that he felt two contrasting powers within him while carrying the One Ring. As one of them was pushing him to wear it and become the most powerful of all beings, the other was trying to distract him from its dangerous effects. About this, Foucault says that 'the stricter the rules restraining their bodies, the greater the disorder in images and dreams,'[27] and we may add behaviours as well. In short, Foucault argues here that a given set of strict external factors is what makes our internal relations of power more instable. Indeed, Frodo is introduced as a character which is under a great amount of pressure; he has a ring to carry and to protect, he must ignore the evil impulses of power that come with it, and most importantly, he must cast it into the fires of Mount Doom. Frodo 'was somewhat moody'[28] throughout the trilogy. Tolkien describes the sudden alteration of his internal powers as follows:

> He heard himself crying out: *Never, never!* Or was it: *Verily I come, I come to you*? He could not tell. Then as a flash from some other point of power there came to his mind another thought: *Take it off ! Take it off ! Fool, take it off ! Take off the Ring!...*the two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented.[29]

Here, Foucault's view about the previously discussed phenomenon is portrayed through the fact that there is 'some other point of power' within Frodo which leads him to show a different behaviour.

Furthermore, along with the exhausting path that Frodo and Sam followed, the Ring itself was energy consuming, and its effects on him were getting more violent. In *The Return of the King*, Frodo was so desperate of the growing intensity of the non desired power that he was begging his friend Sam to stop him from putting the Ring on. 'Help me, Sam! Help me, Sam! Hold my hand! I can't stop it!'[30] was what he uttered when his two powers clash became uncontrollable, but just as his 'doubting and malicious' side overpowered the other, he considered his loyal friend Sam an enemy, and the unrest continued until the distruction of the Ring.

Finally, Boremir, who is presented as the preferred son of Gondor's steward, is the last character whose case corresponds with Foucault's understanding about the alteration of internal powers. Albeit his early death and faint involvement in the narrative, we were able to detect some sharp shifts in his states of mind and behaviours as well. Similarly to Frodo, the One Ring is what incited the instability of his internal powers. Indeed, while the first one was telling him to be a helpful member of the fellowship, the other one was inciting him to attack Frodo and steal the One Ring, and since 'disorders of the mind and heart all reigned,'[31] his condition was bouncing from an state into another.

When he was first introduced in chapter ten from book one, he was described as a good mannered man; however, just as he saw the Ring, the instability of his internal powers started getting more obvious. Furthermore, when Frodo was advised to head into the forest to think better about their next destination, Boremir, without letting anyone notice his absence, followed him. His commitment to his initial duty could no longer fight the uprising power of

the Ring inside his head; therefore, a demanding and an obsessed personality emerged all of a sudden, and Tolkien describes it as follows:

> 'It should be mine. Give it to me!'…suddenly he sprang over the stone and leaped at Frodo. His fair and pleasant face was hideously changed; a raging fire was in his eyes.[32]

Then almost immediately, when his good side overpowered the other one, Tolkien portrayed his changing behaviours as follows:

> He rose and passed his hand over his eyes, dashing away the tears. 'What have I said?' he cried. 'What have I done? Frodo, Frodo!' he called. 'Come back! A madness took me, but it has passed. Come back!'[33]

As is remarked from the two quotes, Boremir first shows an aggressive behaviour, then he subsequently admits that 'a madness took him' and apologies. In other words, the aspects of Foucault's theory about the internal relations of power are observed through Boremir's regret which came immediately after his unexpected attack on Frodo.

Conclusion

As was explained in this chapter, power, for Foucault, is an entity that is found everywhere and which is practiced by everyone. Indeed, in *The Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien attributed it every race in Middle Earth and made it process as an action rather than a possession, and the multi- dimensional conception of the setting is what rendered the power relations possible.

Subsequently, as another perspective from which power was studied by Foucault and described by Tolkien, the self turned to be another arena of a more complex set of power relations. Indeed, the unstable social and political situation and its alteration with other powers within some of *The Lord of the Rings* characters match Michel Foucault's view about the relations of power and the technologies of the self that he presented in many of his works.

Endnotes

[1] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume I, The Will to Knowledge*. Edited by Mark Kelly, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p187.

[2] -------------------, *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995),p 205.

[3] Mark Kelly, *Foucault and politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p 91.

[4] Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003), p 38.

[5] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p 1143.

[6] Ibid, part II, p737.

[7] Hubert. L Dreyfus and Paul Rainbow, eds *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983). p 220.

[8] The rings of power are magical rings forged by the Dark Lord Sauron. 3 Of them were given to the elves, 7 to the dwarves, 9 to the race of men, and the last one, which happens to be the One Ring of power (the strongest of them) was kept to himself.

[9] Michel Foucault, "What Our Present Is" In: *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, 2nd ed., edited by Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996). p 410.

[10] Victor Pitsoe and Moeketsi Letseka "*Foucault's Discourse and Power: Implications for Instructionist Classroom Management*." Open journal of philosophy, No.1, Vol.3 (2013): 23-28. Accessed August 13, 2019. Url: http://www.scrip.org/journal/o jpp.

[11] Ibid, p 24.

[12] Claire O' Farrel, *Michel Foucault Sage* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), p 79.

[13] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 119.

[14] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p1341.

[15] Michel Foucault, 'technologiess of the self', In *Technologies of the Self*, edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and patrick H. Hutton (London : Tavistock Publications, 1988), 18.

[16] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 827.

[17]Ibid, p801.

[18]Ibid, p 827.

[19]Ibid, p 827.

[20] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p1079.

[21] Ibid, p 1116.

[22] Ibid.

[23]Ibid, p1117.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Michel Foucault, "Body/Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 56.

[26] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1118.

[27]Michel Foucault, *History of madness*, ed. John Khalfa, (London: Routledge, 2006), p436.

[28] Mark R. Colbum et al, *Lords of middle earth, Volume III, Hobbits, Dwarves, Ents, Orcs and Trolls* (Berkeley: Iron Crown Entreprises, 1989), p14.

[29]J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p523.

[30] ------------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1233.

[31] Michel Foucault, *History of madness*, ed. John Khalfa, (London: Routledge, 2006), p 93.

[32] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p 520-521.

[33]Ibid, p521.

Chapter Two: Discipline and Surveillance in *The Lord of the Rings*:

Introduction

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault suggests that there are 'two ways of exercising power over men, of controlling their relations, [and] of separating out their dangerous mixtures,'[1] and it happens that *The Lord of the Rings* highlighted both of the processes through Sauron and Saruman's armies system of discipline. As the first process, that is "classification", works on grouping the individuals – in this case; it is Sauron and Saruman's army-, the second one tries to correct, modify and better their performances.

Then, to complete his analysis about surveillance, Foucault relied in the first place on Jeremy Bentham's panopticon to explain his theory of supervision which renders the process of power on the others easier and more delicate. Thus, the following chapter intends to review the discipline and surveillance findings which emerged from the theoretical discussion presented in chapter one, and subsequently, it moves to describe their implementation in the trilogy in a detailed way.

1. **Discipline:**

1.1. Classification:

Before starting our discussion about classification in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is necessary to return briefly to Michel Foucault's remark that was quoted in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. He says, 'in discipline […] each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others.'[2] Therefore, supervising and applying power on individuals becomes easier and more practical, as the process of classification helps to separate them according to their physical and intellectual abilities. Basically, classification is a technique that was applied on the Orcs, Goblins, trolls and uruk-hais thanks to their

distinctive features and traits. While some of them are better fighters than runners, the others are better tree cutters than messengers. Taking those differences into consideration, the White Wizard[3] and the Dark Lord separated then grouped them according to the tasks they can perform better. The following quote describes first one of the separated groups, the tasks in which they fit better and how it differs from the Orcs:

> There were four goblin-soldiers of greater stature, swart, slant-eyed, with thick legs and large hands. They were armed with short broad-bladed swords, not with the curved scimitars usual with Orcs; and they had bows of yew, in length and shape like the bows of Men. Upon their shields they bore a strange device: a small white hand in the centre of a black field; on the front of their iron helms was set an S-rune, wrought of some white metal.[4]

Here, Tolkien describes the goblin soldiers, some of their physical traits, and how they differ from the Orcs. In a way, he categorises the two races according to their physical and intellectual abilities, and this reflects in a way Foucault's view about the techniques of classification .

In contrast with the first category, 'the Orcs in the service of Barad-dûr use the sign of the Red Eye.'[5] From here, we may understand that the differences in the gear and the outfits of those servants are an indication of the distinction of their tasks. The white hand in the first category's shields is a sign of following Saruman; however, the red eye that the second category bears indicates following another master and another mission.

As the precedent quotes suggests, the physical traits and abilities of the servants is a factor that matters in grouping them in the right place. In the battle of the Pelennor Fields, for instance, there were various groups with different defining skills, and as Foucault puts it, 'the individual body becomes an element that can be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principal variables that define it; but the place it occupies.'[6] Foucault argues here that placing, directing and articulating individuals are the key aspects of classification, and it happens that the three of them are illustrated in *The Lord*

of the Rings. The first one is to position the different groups of soldiers in the right place, and in book five, Tolkien describes this process as follows:

> New forces of the enemy were hastening up the road from the River; and from under the walls came the legions of Morgul; and from the southward fields came footmen of Harad with horsemen before them, and behind them rose the huge backs of the *mûmakil* with war-towers upon them.[7]

Here, Tolkien identifies and lists the exact locations that every legion must come from, and this, by the way, reflects the first key aspect of classification that was mentioned above.

Foucault's second aspect of discipline and classification depicts the soldiers' required movements. Again, the following quote is taken from book five, and it illustrates the right direction that every distinctive group must follow.

> It is reported to us that many kings have ridden in from the East to the service of Mordor. From the North to the field of Dagorlad there is skirmish and rumour of war. In the South the Haradrim are moving, and fear has fallen on all our coastlands. [8]

Here again, Tolkien's way of describing the armies' starting point, displacement and destination matches Foucault's idea which says that soldiers' dedication to some precise movements is an indication of a strict system of discipline.

The third element that Foucault includes in his analysis of classification is articulating the individuals properly. In fact, after a careful reading of *The Lord of the Rings*, we may notice that the use of this third element is portrayed by the soldiers' commitment to a certain kind of arms and gear. Again, in book five, Tolkien illustrates what Michel Foucault means by articulating the individuals as follows:

> Gothmog the lieutenant of Morgul had flung them into the fray; Easterlings with axes, and Variags of Khand, Southrons in scarlet, and out of Far Harad black men like half-trolls with white eyes and red tongues. Some now hastened up behind the Rohirrim, others held westward to hold off the forces of Gondor and prevent their joining with Rohan.[9]

In the light of the above description, it is clearly showed that the outfits and the arms that each group should carry are indications of a well made discipline plan.

Sauron and Saruman apply the formerly discussed techniques of separation on Orcs not only to avoid meetings that are not desired but also to illiminate any possibility of revolt amongst them. There is in fact an accurate example about this in *The Two Towers*. When the White Wizard sent some Orcs to take Merry and Pippin, they encountered another group which claimed that it has the same mission. As a result, a quarrel took place. This kind of the incidents is what pushed Sauron and Saruman to separate the various groups of their servants. In other words, they intentionally worked on separating them not only to put them in the territory that most suits their purposes but also to avoid the negative results when they gather.

1.2.The Control of Activity

Besides the classification technique, controlling the activities is the other method that completes the general process of discipline. Michel Foucault, on his part, describes the way in which it 'shape[s] the individual body through a multiplicity of carefully regulated practices,'[10] and uses the example of the soldiers' restricted pace and movements as an illustration. He says:

> The soldier has become something that can be made ; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed ; posture is gradually corrected, a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit .[11]

As can be understood from the quote, Foucault believes that the individuals' ability and readiness to acquire new behaviours is the first aspect that enables other individuals to make some changes in them. He then demonstrates that their behaviours can gradually be corrected, bettered then restricted without even realizing the fact that they became habits.

The control of activities, which intends to restrict behaviours and to improve the performance of some individuals, is illustrated through a consideraable number of examples

in *The Lord of the Rings*. Thus, being the White Wizard and the commander of hundreds of thousands of Orcs, Saruman is a character that uses the control of activity so widely. Basically, he 'had slowly shaped [his tower] to his shifting purposes, and made it better'[12] to watch his armies, control his servants and restrict their actions.

Next, in a turning point of the narrative, 'there came a long rolling of great drums like thunder in the mountains, and then a braying of horns that shook the very stones and stunned men's ears.'[13] Foucault, as we previously mentioned in chapter one, studied the example of the soldiers and therefore asserts that 'this carefully measured combination of forces requires a precise system of command […] that must trigger off the required behaviour and that is enough.'[14]Here, in the same way in which Foucault explains, Tolkien presents two factors which incite the soldiers to show a certain kind of behaviour, namely the horns and the drums. In fact, in *The Return of the King*, Tolkien first states that 'soldiers blew their horns in signal long arranged,'[15] then subsequently mentions that 'the drawing of the scimitars of the Southrons was like a glitter of stars'[16] when horns were blown. In short, since their bodies became something 'that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces,'[17] the army adapt a certain posture and position whenever it receives such stimulations, and this is an accurate illustration of Foucault's system of controlling the activities.

2. Panopticon and Surveillance:

Power comes from the central tower of the panopticon, and it is the first of its characteristics that are remarked in *The Lord of the Rings*; however, before starting our analysis, we should first know what a panopticon is. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault first introduces it as a building in which 'power would be exercised solely through exact observation'[18] then defines it as an 'architectural figure [...] an annular

building; at the centre, a tower... pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the perifiric building is divided into cells.'[19] Furthermore, guards occupy a post that is not visible by the prisoners, and 'this invisibility is [in fact] a guarantee of order...there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future ...no disorders.'[20] In this case, prisoners constantly take into consideration the fact that a certain power is always applied on them, and since guards are in the central tower, we may consequently conclude that power comes from there and not from the surrounding cells.

It is worth mentioning that the setting is what presents and portrays the panopticon in the trilogy; therefore, the two main locations which would be taken into consideration are Sauron's Dark Tower or Barad Dûr and the tower of Isengard. Being surrounded by the mountains, the tower of Minas Morgul is a setting in which the formerly mentioned characteristic is portrayed, and in *The Two Towers*, Tolkien describes the power that evokes from its central building as follows:

> A long-tilted valley, a deep gulf of shadow, ran back far into the mountains. Upon the further side, some way within the valley's arms, high on a rocky seat upon the black knees of the Ephel Dú´ath, stood the walls and tower of Minas Morgul. All was dark about it, earth and sky, but it was lit with light.[21]

Taking into consideration what Tolkien writes in the above quote and the fact that Sam, Frodo and Gollum were standing between the walls of the central tower and the surrounding mountains, it can be remarked that power issued from the centre of Minas Morgul itself, and this coincides with foucault's remark about the first characteristic of panopticon.

Next, Panopticon, as Foucault describes it again in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, is an 'enclosed, segmented space […] in which the slightest movements are supervised.'[22] Here, the second characteristic which is noticed is that it requires an enclosed and a well defined space for a better exercise of power, and the Tower of Isengard happens to be an accurate illustration of it. In fact, Tolkien describes it as follows:

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> There stood a tower of marvellous shape. It was fashioned by the builders of old, who smoothed the Ring of Isengard, and yet it seemed a thing not made by the craft of Men, but riven from the bones of the earth in the ancient torment of the hills. A peak and isle of rock it was, black and gleaming hard: four mighty piers of many-sided stone were welded into one, but near the summit they opened into gaping horns, their pinnacles sharp as the points of spears, keen-edged as knives. Between them was a narrow space, and there upon a floor of polished stone, written with strange signs, a man might stand five hundred feet above the plain.[23]

This quote introduces a surrounding ring which can be considered as the same outer part that Foucault describes when analysing Batham's panopticon, but it happens that is not high enough so that the territory would be viewed as a perfect enclosed area. Instead, Fangorn forest and the mountains of Isengard are the barriers that make Saruman's territory enclosed. In this way, and as the quote suggests, he can watch his Orcs or any approaching individual at the top of his tower.

The other tower that is referred to as being enclosed is Barad Dûr, but before starting our Foucauldian analysis on it, we should first revise the following quote that describes it:

> [...] rising black, blacker and darker than the vast shades amid which it stood, the cruel pinnacles and iron crown of the topmost tower of Barad-duˆ r. One moment only it stared out, but as from some great window immeasurably high there stabbed northward a flame of red, the flicker of a piercing Eye; and then the shadows were furled again and the terrible vision was removed. The Eye was not turned to them: it was gazing north to where the Captains of the West stood at bay, and thither all its malice was now bent, as the Power moved to strike its deadly blow.[24]

As the above quote shows, since the Eye's gaze targeted a location that is not even a part of Mordor, we may imagine that its surrounding area is so vast that it reaches the furthest territories of Middle Earth. As an illustration, Frodo, at the final chapters of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, sensed that he was watched 'and suddenly he felt the Eye'[25] before even crossing the Great River. In this example, the Hobbit was about a month's walk from the Dark Tower, still, his constant feeling of being watched indicates that the geographical spot in which he was standing belongs to the enclosed supervising area of the Dark Tower.

Michel Foucault, again in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, explains that the panopticon must have two impressions on the prisoners:

> Visible : the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable : the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment ; but he must be sure that he may always be so. [26]

As can be understood from the above quote, the panopticon's third characteristic is the prisoner's constant feeling of being observed, and it happens that all the towers of Middle Earth cause that same feeling. We have been told at first that Sam, Frodo and Gollum were carefully moving around the tower of Minas Morgul because of being afraid of the unknown watchers, and the feeling of being constantly supervised was indeed so strong that Sam uttered, 'i feel sick.'[27] Similarly to Sam's case, Frodo sensed that 'there was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep.'[28] Moreover, in *The Return of the King*, Tolkien describes the Hobbits awareness of being watched wherever they go and therefore says, 'Frodo at that dreadful glimpse fell as one stricken mortally…the thought suddenly come to him : 'He's spotted us ! it's all up, or it soon will be. Now, Sam Gamgee, this is the end of ends.''[29]

Another aspect of the panopticon is that the prisoners in the cells are not fully sure whether they are watched or not; therefore, as a strategy to avoid punishement, they behave properly the whole time. Basically, they procede as if they are supervised even when the guard is not in the central tower, and from here, we may immediately guess that the watchers invisibility is the factor that leads prisoners to such behaviour. In a way, they carefully watch themselves, put themselves 'in a power situation in which they are…the bearers'[30] and avoid any prohibited action, and this; however, makes them both prisoners and guards.

Since the panopticon's fourth characteristic is the prisoner's ability of watching and being watched at the same time, the case of Frodo Baggins seems to be an accurate illustration of it. Indeed, the following quote describes his first state, namely 'being watched':

> With every step towards the gates of Mordor Frodo felt the Ring on its chain about his neck grow more burdensome ... But far more he was troubled by the Eye: …that horrible growing sense of a hostile will that strove with great power to pierce all shadows of cloud, and earth, and flesh, and to see you: to pin you under its deadly gaze, naked, immovable.[31]

As Tolkien suggests in the above passage, the tiredness that Frodo is suffering from results from the fact that he is watched by the Eye. And this, by the way, reflects the first effect that the Dark Tower had on him, namely, being watched.

Besides 'being watched', the second estate that Frodo shows is 'watching'. In *The Return of the King*; however, though the Eye was targeting the Captains of the West, Frodo was still carefully watching his steps and movements in order not to be exposed. Therefore, from the two aforementioned examples, we may comprehend that Frodo both plays the role of a guard and of a prisoner, and this is similar to what Foucault asserts about the individuals inside the cells of the panopticon.

Along with its four discussed characteristics, the panopticon perfects the exercise of power as well. Indeed, In *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault argues that the panopticon renders the exercise of power easier in four main ways:

> It can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised…because the constant pressure acts even before the offences mistakes or crimes have been committed, its strength…is exercised spontaneously and without noise…without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives 'power of mind over mind'[32]

Taking into consideration what Foucault states in the above quote have allowed us to understand that the first way in which the panpticon perfects the exercise of power is the scarcity of the number of supervisors in comparison with the number of prisoners. As an example, full armies of Orcs and goblins and thousands of people from the various lands of Middle Earth are solely watched either by Saruman the White or the Dark Lord.

The second way in which power is perfected by the panopticon is the constant cautiousness that it evokes on the individuals who are watched. About this, Foucault admits that this building 'induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility.'[33] So, in spite of being away from the Dark tower, Frodo Baggins was always thinking about the watchful Eye. 'He knew that it had become aware of his gaze…It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him.'[34] As a result, his movements became more cautious despite the fact that the Eye did not target him the whole time.

Next, the silence in which the panopticon operates does also contribute in making its effects stronger. We have been told that the tower of Sauron is a 'wall upon wall, battlement upon battlement, black, immeasurably strong, mountain of iron, gate of steel [and] tower of adamant.' [35] However, albeit its powerful atmosphere and the way it affects the ones who approach it, this Dark tower's surveillance system, namely the Eye, is known by its total silence. The tower of Minas Morgul, which is also known by its noiseless supervision system, made 'the three companions…shrinking [and] staring up with unwilling eyes.'[36]

As Foucault suggests, the last aspect that perfects the panopticon's exercise of power is its psychological impact on the ones who are watched. Basically, Frodo is a character who suffers from sudden shifts in his emotions and behaviours, and reading *The Lord of the Rings* allowed us to remark that his fits become more violent the more he gets closer to the Dark Tower. In other words, the unnerving design of Sauron's supervision tower and the power that issues from it is what affects Frodo's mind.

Conclusion

As was demonstrated in this chapter, Foucault's understanding of discipline was illustrated through Sauron and Saruman's armies. In other words, so that their territory of power and

clout grows, they relied on two main processes. As "classification" tended to groupe the soldiers according to the tasks they can accomplish better, the "control of activities" worked on bettering their performances while keeping a watchful eye on them.

Subsequently, the second part of this chapter was about surveillance and panopticon. Therefore, it highlighted the main aspects of this peculiar building through the tower of Isengard and the tower of Barad- Dûr, that is, the intensity through which power evokes from them and the way it betters the watchers' performance of power by making them invisible and by affecting the Hobbits psychologically makes the towers of Middle Earth an accurate illustration of Foucault's representation of the panopticon.

Endnotes:

[1]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p198.

[2]------------------, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 145.

[3] By the White Wizard, we mean Saruman and not Gandalf because Gandalf was transformed from 'Gandalf the Grey' to 'Gandalf the White'.

[4] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 540.

[5] Ibid, p 541.

[6]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 164.

[7]J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p1103.

[8]Ibid, p1046.

[9]Ibid, p 1107.

[10] Suerre Raffensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillion, 2016), p209.

[11]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 135.

[12] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 724.

[13] ------------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1163.

[14] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 166.

[15] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1167.

[16] Ibid, p1099.

[17] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 136.

[18] Ibid, p171.

[19] Ibid, p 200.

[20] Ibid, p 200-201.

[21] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p920.

[22] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 197.

[23] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p724.

[24] -----------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p1233.

[25] -----------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p 523.

[26] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 201.

[27] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 825.

[28] ------------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p 523.

[29] ------------------, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1233.

[30] Ibid.

[31] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 824.

[32] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1995), p 206.

[33] Ibid, p 201.

[34] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part I, p 523.

[35] Ibid, p 523.

[36] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 921.

Chapter Three: Discourse and Resistance in *The Lord of the Rings*:

Introduction

Discourse transmits power to a great extent since it works on enlarging the territory of power relations through shaping a given set of social norms for instance, and power, on the other side, has a great impact on discourse because the more powerful a person or a social structure is, the stronger and more convincing his discourse gets. Indeed, in the first part of this chapter, we shall analyse the way it shapes the social structure in Middle Earth, the way it generates knowledge and truth and also how it affects and gets affected by power. However, as was argued in the previous chapter, this process of diffusing power is always faced by a certain kind of resistance.

Thus, the second art of this chapter, which will take into consideration the implementation of resistance in *The Lord of the Rings,* highlights its five main characteristics. That is, its interchangeability with power, its strategic diffusion and the fact that it is counter- discourse which is practiced by free individuals.

1. Power and Discourse in *The Lord of the Rings*:

In the introductory chapter, we have mentioned that discourse, which is an intersection of power and knowledge, has a set of defining characteristics, whose primarily goal is to create a world. In his interpretation of Foucault's discourse, Whisnan J. Clayton asserts that it 'play[s] a key role in the social construction of reality.'[1] In Rohan, for instance, the discourse of masculinity created an atmosphere in which females were believed to be only good as housewives:

> Shall I always be left behind when the Riders depart, to mind the house while they win renown, and find food and beds when they return? [...] All your words are but to say: you are a woman, and your part is in the house.[2]

From the above quote, we may clearly see that the main duties that the discourse attributed to women contributed in creating the world in which Rohan lives in.

As a second point, discourse generates knowledge and truth, this phenomenon 'is to be understood as an amalgam of [...] practices and forms of knowledge linked together.'[3] In his discourse of power, and as it is shown in the book, Saruman was spreading messages of domination and superiority to make the Orcs and humans obey him. His idea of being unbeatable is an absolute truth for him and a knowledge that he desires the others to receive, so as to diffuse his discourse. In doing so, he follows three main ways:

A. He uses 'different and contradictory modes of speech with different constituencies in the audience below him.'[4] That is, he utilises his tricky words and hypnotizing speeches to convince the others of his truth.

B. He uses an army of Orcs to spread the truth that he created (being unbeatable).

C. Besides the metallic and sinister architectural design of his tower, he relies on the blowing of his soldiers' horns so that people receive his knowledge faster.

Next, as another characteristic, 'discourse is a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experiences.'[5] Therefore, we deduce that the other function of discourse is that it reflects the one who initiates it. Again, in the book, Saruman is more than just cunning wizard. Indeed, 'about the year 1000 of the Third Age, five of the Maiar […] were sent into Middle-earth. The two greatest of these were Gandalf and Saruman.'[6] Here, the fact that his discourse reached the furthest parts in Middle Earth is an indication of his higher social position, but if we compare his discourse with Sauron's, we would immediately comprehend that the White Wizard's social position is lower than The Dark Lord's. In other words,

Sauron's tower is mightier than the Tower of Isengard, and the effect that his voice produces on the others is more compelling since we have been told that Pippin nearly died of fear when he heard it.

Their fortresses and verbal messages are the tools that help them to spread their discourse, yet the power and intensity within Sauron's is visibly stronger. 'Saruman has fooled himself into believing (or let Sauron fool him into believing) that he has emulated the great fortress of Barad-dûr, whereas in fact he has produced only a cheap copy.'[7] Therefore, besides his more effective discourse, Sauron's power and clout are obviously greater than Saruman's.

The other characteristic of discourse is that it gives its launcher a kind of political and social power. In this case, we would first take Saruman's discourse as an example since it is what contributed in making his decisions powerful and unquestionable. Notably, the social and political power that discourse gave him allowed him to order thousands of Orcs to move to the battle of Helm's Deep, to command his servants to destroy Fangorn forest and to appoint his ruffians to attack Hobbiton. The other example which illustrates the social power that comes with discourse is Rohan. Men, there, had the power to alienate women and to categorise them as weak individuals who can only fit as housewives, and similarly to the first example, the discourse of masculinity is what enabled them to have that social authority.

Apart from the precedent characteristics, it is worth mentioning that cultures are not only affected by a single discourse. As a starting point, the discourse of masculinity is so strong in Rohan that women do not even dare to demand going to war, yet in Hobbiton, it is not much followed and applied. Indeed, in the last chapters of *The Lord of the Rings*, there took place a battle between Saruman's men who attempted to spread his discourse of power and the resisting Hobbits. Since Tolkien mentioned that male Hobbits were proud of Lobelia Baggins' resistance when the ruffians attacked, we may immediately understand that the discourse of

masculinity is not spread with the same intensity in those two territories. It is also remarkable to say that both of Rohan and Hobbiton, to a certain extent, witnessed two kinds of discourse, one of masculinity and the other is the one exerted by the Saruman.

As a last characteristic, discourses are also known by changing over time. Indeed, Clayton, in his interpretation of Foucault, explains that 'discourse assumes that the ideas structure social spaces, and therefore ideas can play a significant role in historical change.'[8] If we take into consideration Rohan's, for instance, we would remark that its intensity did not remain the same throughout the narrative. At the beginning, women were under the mercy of the discourse of masculinity, but after Eowen's revolt and her peculiar performance at the battle of the Pelennor fields, men were proud of her. Furthermore, the kingdom gave her the title of 'the shield maiden' as an act of respect and apology. In this way, Rohan's discourse of masculinity which was once unquestionable became less strict.

2. Resistance in *The Lord of the Rings:*
2.1. Resistance Comes With Power:

In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* Foucault admits that 'Power would be a fragile thing if its only function is to repress.'[9] Considering this, we may comprehend that power is not only utilized to subjugate for it has another crucial function, namely resistance. Barry Smart asserts in *Foucault: Key Sociologists* that 'the network of power relations is paralleled by multiplicity of forms of resistance.'[10] Hence, it can be understood that it is an immediate reaction towards another action, and in Tolkien's work, we may distinguish numerous examples in which this phenomenon goes hand in hand with power.

To begin with, when the Orcs tried to take the Hobbits from Boremir, which is a form of power, he immediately blew the horn of Gondor so that his companions join him against the repressive Orc soldiers. His reaction is a form of resistance, and it would never have happened

without the Orcs' primary act of power. Similarly to the first case, Gondor was swarming with Orcs which aimed at spreading their master's discourse. However, their attack was faced by another form of power. In the eastern part of Middle Earth, whenever a city plans for an effective resistance against the Orcs, it lights beacons at the mountains' summits to notify the other territories. The following quote illustrates the efficiency of the beacons in spreading the messages of resistance.

> The Lord of the City had beacons built on the tops of outlying hills along both borders of the great range, and maintained posts at these points where fresh horses were always in readiness to bear his errand-riders to Rohan in the North, or to Belfalas in the South.[11]

The above quote refers to Gondor's act of lighting the beacons whenever the orcs organize an attack, and if we reconsider it, we would realize that it coincides with Foucault's view about the direct relation between resistance and power. Indeed, the orcs attacked the city and exercised a form of power there, but it was immediately faced by this particular kind of resistance. Therefore, we may conclude that Gondor's resistance came with the Orcs' power.

Moreover, when Rohan moved its armies as a reaction towards Gondor's call of aid, a soldier said: 'I do not doubt that the main strength of the enemy is many times as great as all what we have here.'[12] This soldier shares in fact Michel Foucault's view about the relation that bounds power and resistance, for, he believes that as far as the Orcs' repressive power is exercised somewhere, an opposing power, or rather resistance should also be present.

The last example about the consistency of power and resistance is Frodo Baggins' relation with the One Ring. The ring attempted to impose its will on him from the first chapters and it was about to overpower him in many occasions; however, the Hobbit made some incredible efforts to face that power. Resistance, in this case, is illustrated again by the simultaneous

presence of a given power and of an opposing one, and this reflects Foucault's words that say 'where there is power, there is resistance.'[13]

2.2. Resistance is Everywhere:

As was agreed on in the previous page, 'power relations are to be sought in the belligerent encounter between various opposed forces that seek to overcome each other.'[14] Since power is everywhere and resistance is a part of it, we may therefore say that resistance is everywhere as well. Indeed, in *The Lord of the Rings*, resistance is found in every territory, and it is either performed collectively or individually.

The collective resistance generally takes place in the battle fields. As an example, Fangorn forest, which happens to be occupied by the Ents, is the place from which Saruman's servants fuel their furnaces. Those tree-like beings can move and talk; therefore, they reacted against Saruman's oppressive power. Their reaction is considered a turning point in *The Two Towers*, and in order to start their collective resistance, Treebeard says,

> Though Isengard be strong and hard, as cold as stone and
> bare as bone,
> We go, we go, we go to war, to hew the stone and break the
> Door! [15]

This quote describes a form of resistance that takes place in Isengard, and if we take into consideration Tolkien's description of the Ents' revolt, we would associate it with Michel Foucault's idea that resistance is created by power.

Resistance, as Foucault wrote, can be found everywhere. Therefore, in order to enlarge this understanding, we may refer to two distinctive territories of Middle Earth in which resistance is performed individually. At the final chapter of *The Two Towers*, Sam shows an unexpected amount of resistance when Shelob (a giant spider) attacks him. While she tries to use the size difference so that her exercise of power would be more effective, the Hobbit faces it with an

immediate contrasting power. He 'sprang in, inside the arches of her legs, and with a quick upthrust of his other hand stabbed at the clustered eyes upon her lowered head. One great eye went dark.'[16] Along with the Hobbit's process of resistance in the tunnel of Shelob, Éowyn's performance at the battle of the Pelennor Fields is the other example that illustrates the presence of resistance in any geographical spot. In other words, she disguises as a male soldier to resist the discourse of masculinity and to oppose the Lord of the Nazgûl[17]as well.

2.3. Resistance as a Counter Discourse:

Power uses discourse to widen its territory, but the speed of its intended growth depends on whether it is resisted or not. In fact, Lois McNay, in *Foucault and Feminism* admits that 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also [...] makes it possible to thwart it.'[18] In other words, while discourse introduces its rules to the others, some individuals tend to show a power that is against them, and here, we may call this form of resistance a counter discourse.

We have previously mentioned two main discourses in *The Lord of the Rings* which are Sauron and Saruman's discourse of power and Rohan's discourse of masculinity, and it happens that each one of them is faced by a resistance that is a counter discourse at the same time. In the first case, Saruman sends the enchanting Grema Warmtongue to Theodin so that the spread of his discourse of power in Rohan would not be interrupted. However, in a powerful turning point, Theodin regains his consciousness and immediately faces Saruman's plan with a counter discourse. While the White Wizard's discourse attempted to render Rohan and other territories under the mercy of the Dark Lord, Theodin's was of freedom; it opposed and contradicted the first one, and it was successfully used as a way of resistance.

Besides Saruman's discourse, Rohan is also exerts the discourse of masculinity. Hence, in book five, despite of Éowyn's begging to let her join the kingdom's army, Aragorn refuses

and reminds her about the domestic duties and household responsibilities. As any other man in Rohan, Aragorn's view 'leaves women once again reduced to [their] body […] rather than figuring as a culturally shaped, culturally complex, evolving, rational, engaged and noisy opposition.'[19] In response to that, Eowen first decides to abandon her domestic role and decided to disguise as a man and goes to war. Indeed, at the battleground, soldiers saw that 'the rider was a woman with long braided hair gleaming in the twilight, yet she wore a helm and was clad to the waist like a warrior and girded with a sword.'[20]Basically, besides the pride that she obtains with her performance at the battle of the Pelennor Fields, her resisting action can also be considered as an obvious step to oppose the discourse of masculinity.

2.4.Resistance is Exercised by Free Individuals:

In *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Geneology*, C. G. Prado argues that 'when an individual has no options, when his or her actions are wholly dictated by another or others there is only domination.'[21]This quote confirms at first that power cannot be exercised by the ones whose actions are already restricted, but most importantly, it shows that resistance can only be performed by free individuals.

In fact, reading *The Lord of the Rings* have allowed us to notice that Tolkien attributed the adjective 'free' to the characters which resisted some given powers. In the battle of Helm's Deep, for instance, peasants were fighting the Orcs and their discourse, because they were free individuals who decided on their own free will to defend their lands. Furthermore, when Saruman attempted to dominate the Hobbits of the Shire, they faced him with an organized collective resistance, and their freedom was what made their opposition possible. However, as is described by Tolkien, there are hundreds of thousands of Orcs in *The Lord of the Rings*, but it seems that their only mission is to attack and not to defend or resist. They take orders either from Saruman the White or from the Dark Lord Sauron and have never disobeyed them.

Consequentely, the fact of being slaves and the impossibility of attaining an estat of freedom is what explains their total obedience and absence or resistance.

Conclusion:

Throughout the above chapter, we have studied the way through which Saruman and Rohan's discourses are portrayed in Tolkien's trilogy, and we have come into conclusion that the two of the coincide with the main characteristics that Foucault attributed to discourse. In other words, we proved that this phenomenon creates a given set of social and political structures with the strategic use of speeches and horns, and generates truth and knowledge between the White Wizard and the population. Also, we saw that it identifies the social position of its launcher and that it is in a constant evolution.

The chapter has also attempted to explain Foucault's understanding of resistance by taking into consideration several examples from Tolkien's Middle Earth. The first aspect that was studied was the inseparability of power and resistance and the fact that they are two faces of a sae coin. The second point that was also illustrated in the lord of the rings was resistance's intense diffusion and the fact that it reaches every social structure. The third and last aspect of resistance in the lord of the rings that also coincides with Michel Foucault's definition of it is that it is a strategic way that opposes discourses and which is practiced by free individuals.

Endnotes:

[1] Clayton J. Whisnant, "*Foucault and discourse: a Handout for HIS 389,*" (lecture, November 9, 2019).

[2] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1027.

[3] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992),p 27.

[4] Michael N. Stanton, *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p59.

⁵ Clayton J. Whisnant, "*Foucault and discourse: a Handout for HIS 389,*" (lecture, November 9, 2019).

⁶ Michael N. Stanton, *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p19.

⁷ Ibid, p58.

⁸ Clayton J. Whisnant, "*Foucault and discourse: a Handout for HIS 389,*" (lecture, November 9, 2019).

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Body/Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings From 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 59.

¹⁰ Barry Smart, ed, *Foucault: Key Sociologists* (London: Routledge, 2002), p130.

¹¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 978.

¹² Ibid, part II, p 690.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I* (New York: Random House, 1978),p 68.

¹⁴ Suerre Rafensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: a Research Companion* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillion, 2016), p 223

¹⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part II, p 736.

¹⁶ Ibid, part II, p 952.

¹⁷ The Lord of the Nazgul is also known by the witch king. He, along with eight other ones that are also called Ringwraiths, The Fallen Kings and Black Riders are Sauron's servants who were sent to take the One Ring from Frodo Baggins. In *The Return of the King*, The Lord of the Nazgul was described as follows: There ' sat a shape, black-mantled, huge and threatening. A crown of steel he bore, but between rim and robe naught was there to see, save only a deadly gleam of eyes: the Lord of the Nazgûl.' The Lord of the Rings, part III, pp 1099-1100.

¹¹ Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p39.

¹⁹ Kate Soper, "Feminism, Humanism and Postmodernism," *Radical Philosophy 55*, (1990):

p13.

²⁰ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 2008), part III, p 1041.

[21] C. G. Prado, *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Geneology* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p 67.

VI. General Conclusion

The present research work has attempted to study The Lord of the Rings, which is J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece and one of the most remarkable fantasy novels of the twentieth century from a Foucauldian perspective. In the light of Michel Foucault's *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (1980) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991) which represent the theoretical background that our study relied on, we have come to conclusion that Tolkien's trilogy is a literary work which reflect Michel Foucault's ideas about power, resistance, discipline, surveillance and discourse to a great extent. Indeed, we have applied the main characteristics of Foucault's aforementioned studies on *The Lord of the Rings* and therefore deduced that they were not only reflected through the plot but also through characters, setting, dominant themes and even symbols.

In the first chapter, taking into consideration Tolkien's trilogy and Foucault's books that are mentioned above allowed us to draw two main conclusions. The first one is that the involvement of every character in Middle Earth in an intermingled and a diffused process of contrasting powers is a major characteristic that accurately matches Foucault's theory which states that power is everywhere. The second one, however, takes the former result into another level by asserting that exercising power is a phenomenon that can take place within some individuals and that a whole and a complex set of power relations can be witnessed in a single fictional character as well.

As far as the second chapter is concerned, we have shown that the methods of surveillance and discipline that Foucault suggests in many of his works are also portrayed in Middle Earth. Indeed, we first studied the implementation of the two main types of discipline in the trilogy, that is 'classification' and 'the control of activities', and therefore found out that the Orcs or any other Sauron or Saruman's servants can be considered a clear illustration of the separated and controlled categories that Foucault elaborately described in *Discipline and Punish: The*

Birth of the Prison. Subsequently, in the second part of the same chapter, we proved that the architectural design and the supervision of the towers of Isengard and Mordor is what makes them reflect a considerable number of characteristics that Foucault attributed to the panopticon. In other words, this chapter came as a completion of the first one since it shows that discipline and surveillance are forms of power that are manifested differently.

The fourth and last chapter has first studied the presence of discourse in Middle Earth and argued that Saruman and Rohan, which the chapter mainly took as case studies, are accurate illustrations of Foucault's understanding of discourse as a manifestation of power. Then, when we moved to explore the collective and individual forms of resistance in Middle Earth, our second major finding suggested that the diffusion of resistance as an opposing and a reacting force in *The Lord of the Rings* matches to a great extent the characteristics that Michel Foucault attributed to it in a considerable number of his books.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of the study, it is now possible to say that the aspects of power, resistance, discourse, discipline and surveillance that John Ronald Reuel Tolkien showed in *The Lord of the Rings* represent Michel Foucault's views about them in an accurately. Therefore, we may say here that analyzing Tolkien's trilogy from a Foucauldian perspective has not only enhanced our understanding about the studied piece of literature but also made another contribution to it since it proved that it can also be studied from the above stated angle.

To conclude, the results that are obtained throughout our study helped us to set forth a new perspective of analyzing *The Lord of the Rings* by depicting the possible similarities between the trilogy and some of Michel Foucault's theories and ideas; however, despite the logically established arguments in the discussion section, the most important limitation in the current study lies in the interrelation of Foucault's theories about power. That is, selecting only his theories of power, resistance, discourse, discipline and surveillance in this paper

makes us skip some of his other theories and ideas that are related to them and which shall complete them. Therefore, we believe that more research and further studies are needed to better understand the currently examined theories and to widen the other ones that our paper did not take into consideration such as docile bodies and madness.

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