REDEFINING FRIENDS AND ENEMIES IN BRITISH FANTASY: SIDEKICKS AND ANTI-SIDEKICKS IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* AND THE *HARRY POTTER* SERIES

An Abstract of

a Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of

English

Western Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

By

ERICA L. SALMONSON

May 2017

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project examines characters in British fantasy through a sidekick and anti-sidekick lens, specifically focusing on *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series. Before analyzing events in these texts, I first define the fantasy genre, the traditional hero and the fairy-tale hero, and the sidekick trope. These definitions are important to establish because the characters deemed heroes, Frodo Baggins and Harry Potter, are not traditional heroes; they are fairy-tale heroes who cannot be successful without their sidekicks. In Chapter 1, I analyze Samwise Gamgee, from *The Lord of the Rings,* and Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, from the *Harry Potter* series, as sidekicks—ones who fill the sidekick trope and prove they are necessities to their respective stories. While many readers and fans regard these three characters as merely friends, these characters prove useful to the overall story and provide insight into the British fantasy genre. In Chapter 2, I examine Gollum, from *The Lord of the Rings,* and Draco Malfoy, from the *Harry Potter* series, as anti-sidekicks—ones who do not have their fairy-tale heroes' best interests in mind, but are essential to their heroes and their heroes' missions. Both of these anti-sidekicks are complex; they fulfill characteristics of the sidekick trope, but they are never friendly or care for their respective heroes. After thorough examination, I come to the conclusion that these anti-sidekicks are a clear blueprint of what their fairy-tale heroes could have become. An in-depth analysis of these British fantasy stories through the sidekick and anti-sidekick lens provides an enhanced reading of these texts, coming to a new, insightful conclusion of characters who are often cast aside.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis by ERICA L. SALMONSON is accepted in its present form by the Department of ENGLISH of Western Illinois University as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree Master of Arts in English.

[redacted]

Dr. Rebekah Buchanan
Chairperson, Examining Committee

[redacted]

Dr. Margaret Sinex
Member, Examining Committee

[redacted]

Dr. Alisha White
Member, Examining Committee

3/22/17

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis project would not have been possible without the support of many wonderful people. I would first like to thank Dr. Rebekah Buchanan, Assistant Professor of English, for her unwavering support and her ability to make me smile with confidence when I was unsure of myself. Our exhilarating and nerdy conversations, as well as her advice, will never be forgotten. Grateful acknowledgement is also extended to my committee: Dr. Alisha White, Assistant Professor of English, and Dr. Margaret Sinex, Professor of English, for their valued suggestions and support. I especially want to thank the following people: my past professors at St. Ambrose University for encouraging me to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher and scholar; Dr. Marjorie Allison, Professor of English, for urging me to think about why I love stories; Dr. Magdelyn Helwig, Assistant Professor of English, Ms. Barbara Harroun, Assistant Professor of English, and Ms. Kathleen O'Donnell-Brown, Instructor of English, for being my mentors and allowing me to vent at the most inconvenient times; my family, especially Molly Koenig, Hanna Etheridge, and Breanne Ford, for their constant encouragement and love; and my partners in crime, Kate Ivy and Kelly Schloss, for remaining by my side throughout this process, in the stressful times and the celebratory times. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Marcy Salmonson, for reading me my first book, instilling in me a strong desire to read every book I could get my hands on, encouraging me to materialize my ideas on to paper and turn my dreams into a reality, and inspiring me every day to be the best person I can be. This thesis is dedicated to her.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature contains a set of characters who take their readers on an adventure from the first page to the last. No matter the genre, readers create a relationship with these characters. Many novels have a set of main characters who influence the story, even if they are supplemental. Most stories only have one protagonist, who holds a certain title or chooses to lead a mission. The hero archetype is a protagonist who saves the day for mankind and restores society to its natural state. Society has deemed these characters heroes because of their strength, bravery, and courage to combat evil.

These heroes complete tasks and defeat evil, but they still have friends by their side who help them. Through research and literary theory, critics have coined these friends sidekicks. The hero/sidekick pair is a common trope in popular culture, whether it's Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, or Batman and Robin. Although these heroes surround themselves with their sidekicks, many sidekicks fulfill monotonous duties, which is why heroes are admired, and sidekicks are usually cast aside by audiences.

The term hero is problematic because of how society has constructed the hero. When one thinks of a hero, of course he thinks of someone who saves the day and restores order, specifically a superhero. Superhero stories have provided our culture with an immense amount of characters and narratives to root for. These superheroes are larger than life and society admires them because they contain qualities normal human beings don't have.

These characteristics of the superhero influence how readers view heroes in general. As popular culture has shown us, there are many heroes in literature who have powers the natural person would never be able to acquire. They perform pivotal duties on their own and are so unlike the readers that readers wish to be them; other heroes are not as strong, and, perhaps, need to rely on others to fulfill their duties.

Different heroes reside in different genres of literature. Although superhero comics, mysteries, and detective novels contain the hero figure, society has left the heroes of British fantasy in the dark. Superhero, detective, and mystery genres are immensely popular but so are the fantasy works of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling. The conception of the hero and the hero's friends in British fantasy are important areas of study that many have over looked.

Both *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series illustrate rich, dynamic fantasy worlds and include complex characters that make the stories stimulating and worthwhile. Readers cannot help but fight for Harry Potter and his beloved friends, as well as Frodo Baggins and the fellowship against all the evils that exist in these worlds. Although Frodo is the sole owner of the One Ring and Harry is the "boy who lived," these heroes' partners, friends, and, what I prove, sidekicks, are necessities to their journeys.

Samwise Gamgee, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger are viewed as dear friends to Harry. The bond between friend and hero in these stories is undeniable; however, these friends are more than friends. These characters are sidekicks, who are necessities to Harry and the overall series. Without Sam, Ron, and Hermione, Frodo and Harry would not have been successful on their journeys throughout Middle-earth and the

wizarding world.

Furthermore, Gollum and Draco Malfoy, important characters in both *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* Series, are pivotal to their heroes' missions. Although both Gollum and Draco contain characteristics of the villain archetype, I plan to prove, like Sam, Ron, and Hermione, Gollum and Draco are pivotal to Frodo and Harry's journeys, and thus are coined anti-sidekicks.

While focusing on Sam, Ron, Hermione, Gollum, and Draco, I enter various dialogues of what fantasy really means as a genre, the conception of the hero in British fantasy, the definition of a sidekick in popular culture, and the importance of reading characters of fantasy as sidekicks and anti-sidekicks. We need these characters to tell the entire story of both *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series. The dialogue between hero and sidekick, as well as hero and anti-sidekick, and the ways in which the sidekick and anti-sidekick influence the hero are important in showing audiences a different aspect of the fantasy world which is rich and complex. The sidekicks and anti-sidekicks not only help readers understand the hero's quest, but also flesh out the fantasy world that is so popular to so many readers.

Exploring the Genre of Fantasy

J.R.R. Tolkien remains one of the most celebrated authors in the world today, as his most famous work, *The Lord of the Rings,* has been translated into most of the world's major languages; J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series set consumer records for the most copies sold in a single day.[1] Fantasy literature permeates the world to such an extent

[1] Mendlesohn, Farah, and Edward James. *A Short History of Fantasy.* Libri Publishing, 2012.

it is hard for one to escape it. Although fantasy literature has grown in popularity (with fan fiction, cinema, theatre, etc.), many scholars disagree on how the fantasy genre should be defined and what texts should be allowed within the fantasy canon.

Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, two of the most notable scholars of fantasy literature, declare, in their book *A Short History of Fantasy,* the fantasy genre is a genre constructed and founded on the notion that the contents are impossible and cannot be explained. Moreover, these critics point out the common error of fantasy and science fiction being used interchangeably. Science fiction "may deal with the impossible, but [it] regards everything as explicable," states Mendlesohn and James (3).

After the initial construction and agreement that fantasy deals with the inexplicable and impossible, the definition of fantasy becomes hazy. There are only a handful of theorists interested in fantasy literature, due to many scholars not taking fantasy literature seriously. From seeing fantasy as an escape from the real world, to deciding what is real and unreal, scholars can agree on one proclamation: "they understand fantasy as a conversation that is happening, as we write, between the authors of the texts and the readers" (4-5). J.R.R. Tolkien strongly believed in an author's ability to create stories. Tolkien states, in his essay "On Fairy Stories,"

> The story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. (132)

Both Tolkien and Rowling create dynamic worlds comprised of complex characters. Without the complexity of the sidekick and anti-sidekick, these stories would not meet Tolkien's requirements, and the art would fail.

Along with Tolkien's proclamations made of the fantasy genre in "On Fairy Stories," Mendlesohn and James' theoretical texts prove useful in defining fantasy. Mendlesohn and James reference John Clute's *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy,* which constructs and defines fantasy grammatical terms that reveal narrative techniques and tropes. The most informative and important of the grammar sets is the idea of the full fantasy in which the work passes through wrongness, thinning, recognition, and healing. For example, some type of evil emerges (wrongness), the current state, or world, is affected by the wrongness (thinning), the protagonists recognize that the evil needs to be destroyed (recognition), and, finally, the wrongness demands the current state to be restored (healing) (4). Both Tolkien and Rowling's texts use Clute's narrative model to construct their plots.

Along with explaining narrative techniques and tropes, Mendlesohn argues there are four distinct modes of fantasy: portal quest (protagonist enters a new world, which is the fantastic world), the immersive (the protagonist is already a part of the fantastic world), the intrusion (the fantastic world seeps into the primary world), and the liminal (magic may or may not be happening). These modes are defined by the ways in which the fantastic enters the text and the rhetorical choices used to construct these differing worlds.[2] These modes prove useful in critiquing different fantasy works, rather than looking at fantasy through a realistic lens. Although critics have proved the fantasy genre hard to define, it is important to discuss narrative tropes and common rhetorical devices used in this genre. With the help of Tolkien, Clute, and Mendlesohn, readers can grasp the basics of the fantasy genre, which is found to be rather controversial.

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[2] J.R.R. Tolkien imagined *The Lord of the Rings* as a mythology for the English people. The *Harry Potter* series is a portal quest.

Defining the Hero: Frodo Baggins and Harry Potter as Fairy-Tale Heroes

Using John Clute's grammatical terms that construct a common plot structure in fantasy stories, one can uncover the plot rather easily. The structure in both *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series follow Clute's wrongness, thinning, recognition, and healing. Since these stories fit the quest trope where evil needs to be defeated, it is important to first define the British fantasy hero, who is combating evil, to understand the importance of his sidekicks and anti-sidekicks. In this trope, Middle-earth and the wizarding world experience an evil uprising, problems begin to arise from this evil immerging, the characters find it necessary to defeat the evil, and, ultimately, the evil is defeated and the world is healed. Defeating evil requires the characters to go on some type of quest. The quest story is immensely popular in fiction and is explained further by Joseph Campbell's structure of the hero's journey.

Although the hero's journey is coined from traditional quest stories and epics, this narrative structure is common in many genres, where evil is lurking around every corner. Because of this evil or danger, the protagonist, from an ordinary world, is called on an adventure, which is first refused but then accepted. Thus, the protagonist ventures on a journey into the unknown with the help of a guide or an aide. The protagonist and his helpers are tested physically, mentally, and spiritually, and then are rewarded by defeating evil and journeying home. Both Frodo and Harry enter worlds that are unknown to them.

There are many archetypes found within the hero's Journey. For example, there are the heroes, shadows (villains), mentors, tricksters, and allies. Many of these characters are prevalent in stories, and this formula undermines their influence on

narrative movement and character development. If readers find a story to fit the formula, why would they delve deeper into each of the character's uniqueness? I believe this thought process is perhaps why many audiences don't value the efforts of the sidekicks and anti-sidekicks; they see the story in its entirety as a formula.

As I delve deeper into the characteristics of the quest, I will turn to W. H. Auden, who defines the quest hero in his article "The Quest Hero." He claims there are two types of quest heroes. The first type is the hero of the epic: "His superior *arête* is manifest to all" (37). *Arête* means excellence or goodness in Greek. One prime example of the hero of the epic would be Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn is strong, smart, loyal, brave, and courageous, which is why every character, besides Boromir, trusts him. The characters yield to his leadership because he is the classic hero. Marion Zimmer Bradley, in her article "Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship," gives good insight into the character of Aragorn, "he is the *born hero*—son of a long line of kings, born to achieve great deeds in his time" (83). Characters follow him because he contains positive, supreme qualities that they themselves do not contain.

Auden claims that the second type of quest hero, who resides in fairy-tales, is the hero "whose arête is concealed. The youngest son, the weakest, the least clever, the one whom everybody would judge as least likely to succeed, turns out to be the hero when his manifest betters have failed" (37). Frodo's arête is not obvious, since he is a hobbit; although, Gandalf has faith in Frodo because he has seen his uncle, Bilbo, do great things. Harry's arête is known by everyone in the wizarding world because he is the "boy who lived"; however, Harry doesn't know this and, since he is young, survives through the help of his sidekicks and anti-sidekicks. The fairy-tale heroes' betters would be

Gandalf, Aragorn, or Dumbledore. Respectively, these characters either know they would succumb to the power of the One Ring or understand that they do not have the power to defeat the presented evil. Katherine Grimes also gives good insight into the fairy-tale hero, in her article "Harry Potter: Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero." She states, "Our fairy and folk tale heroes suffer, struggle, and triumph…Rowling's books show young Harry at least temporarily triumphs over those who would destroy him and those he loves, although he cannot always save the people around him" (98). Both Frodo and Harry struggle throughout their missions, which is why Sam, Ron, Hermione, Gollum, and Draco's presence are so important. These heroes are not perfect, not larger than life, and they need sidekicks and anti-sidekicks to help them.

Although Frodo and Harry are not weak, they are young at the beginning of the stories. It is important to note that both characters accept roles they do not fully understand when they are young. Christopher Wrigley, in his book *Return of the Hero,* states, "These epic tales begin with childhood, but they do not stay there…" (3). Harry is young at the beginning of the series and ages throughout the series; Frodo's growth cycle is different because he is a hobbit. Hobbit stature is viewed as weak because they are so short; they mimic young boys because of their height, although, when Frodo accepts the One Ring from Gandalf, he is still "in his *tweens*, as the hobbits called the irresponsible twenties between childhood and coming of age at thirty-three" (Book 1 21). Both characters have attributes that work against them. Frodo is a hobbit and Harry remains a teenager throughout the series. With these qualities, readers may view these heroes as weak; however, instead of viewing them as weak, readers must view them as who they are, not as a middle-aged, insanely strong Batman, but as heroes in their own ways. These

fairy-tale heroes owe their successes to the people who are determined and want to help them. They can accept their help because they are humble enough to do so, since they are not larger than life like their superhero counterparts.

A very popular opinion is to look at Harry and Frodo as heroes, because they are main characters who ultimately defeat evil; however, this assignation becomes problematic when we define Harry and Frodo compared to Batman or Sherlock Holmes. The hero cannot be an umbrella term. If audiences read these protagonists as the typical hero, they read the supplemental characters as stereotypes, instead of who they truly are and their importance to the story as a whole. The friends, enemies, professors, etc. fit a stereotypical mold in these novels containing a hero; however, Frodo and Harry are not superheroes. They are fairy-tale heroes. This definition changes the way audiences read the novel, the main characters, and the supplemental characters. Because Frodo and Harry are not larger than life, they need characters to help them out. It is undeniable that Sam, Hermione, and Ron are friends of Frodo and Harry, and Gollum and Draco are enemies, respectively. They fit those molds, but those are superficial readings. A closer read shows how these characters are a necessity to their stories and their heroes, for their heroes to complete their missions.

From *Don Quixote* to *Nancy Drew:* Defining the Sidekick in Popular Culture

When readers think of cartoons, comics, superheroes, or mysteries, they think of Batman and Sherlock Holmes. These characters are the first to come to mind and for good reason. These stories are extremely popular among a variety of audiences. Batman and Holmes represent the strong, intelligent, unique character that readers would like to become but never can; however, the audience can relate to their sidekicks because they

aren't larger than life. Sidekicks contain aspects of the average citizen, so the audience can relate to the story.

Many scholars view the sidekick through different lenses. For instance, Ron Buchanan, in his article "Side by Side: The Role of the Sidekick," comments that popular culture is full of the hero/heroine and sidekick pairings, and, because of these pairs, "it is nearly impossible to separate one character from the other" (15). Buchanan asserts that the sidekick is a lesser character; however, he also states that the sidekick has an important role to play to assist the hero/heroine or act as a "narrator or quasi-audience" (15). Although the sidekick always maintains a subordinate position to the hero/heroine, many evolve into an "essential figure, assuming a higher degree of relevance" than the hero/heroine (15). Although, Buchanan uses many examples such as Holmes and Watson, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and Hamlet and Horatio to discuss the job of the sidekick, he does not talk about sidekicks in British fantasy. Just like Watson or Horatio, characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series fulfill the characteristics Buchanan is writing about. Buchanan ends his piece asserting sidekicks are the characters who are needed to fulfill the daily, monotonous tasks that are inferior to the hero/heroine's duties. Furthermore, the sidekick is relatable, provides comic relief, and acts as a confidante for the hero/heroine. Although Buchanan mentions the essentialness of the sidekick, he does not emphasize the importance of the sidekick enough.

Like Buchanan, Julie O'Reilly discusses the sidekick as a character who helps the hero/heroine remain mystical and unique, in her article "The Legacy of George and Bess: Sidekicks as Normalizing Agents for the Girl Sleuth." Reilly references two works, Janet Evanovich's *Two for the Dough* and the *Nancy Drew Series.* Stephanie, the protagonist in

Two for the Dough, and Nancy Drew contain qualities that make them unlike normal girls because they are in an unfeminine profession. The sidekicks of both Stephanie and Nancy are placed in the story to make the girls normal and feminine, or idealized versions of what a woman should be. For example, Stephanie and Nancy's sidekicks are either too thin or too fat, making Stephanie and Nancy's shapes normal. This is not the case in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series. Each character in these texts has flaws, and, although there are distinctions based on social class, normalizing isn't a constant device used in these stories because Frodo and Harry are established as fairy-tale heroes, who welcome the help of others.

Like Buchanan and O'Reilly, Ann Cameron defines the sidekick as one who offers insight for the reader, does the dirty work, and is subservient and uneducated. Cameron's primary focus is on sidekicks in American literature; however, her themes of the sidekick are applicable to other genres, like British fantasy. Cameron proclaims the sidekick "has endured throughout literary history because the sidekick serves important thematic, rhetorical, and narrative functions" (158). Cameron, unlike Buchanan and Reilly, discusses the sidekick's role in enacting dialogue: "The multitude of tones, registers, words, and inflections contributes to the complexity of the novels" (161). Although the sidekick aids the hero/heroine, he or she is also there to speak. Through speaking, the sidekicks influence their heroes in a way that wouldn't be possible without them. Cameron places greater emphasis on the importance of the sidekick in these spaces, which is important when viewing British fantasy through the sidekick lens, which has not been done before.

Furthermore, Carl Yoke, in his article "Zelazny's Black: The Sidekick as Second

Self," discusses how the sidekick, Black, fits the stereotypical sidekick definition, as mentioned above by Buchanan, O'Reilly, and Cameron. Yoke asserts the sidekick is much more than these stereotypical archetypes. The sidekick is substantial to the quest because he accompanies the hero on a quest he could not do himself. Yoke continues to delve deeper into the functions of the sidekick by explaining the sidekick as a "second self" (116-117). The sidekick, or the second self, is the protagonist's subconscious. Through the display of the sidekick, the audience sees the deep desires of the protagonist, while the protagonist is confronted with his own desires. Although I agree with Yoke that the sidekick is a necessity to completing the quest or mission, after close examination, I do not believe Gollum is Frodo's subconscious. Both characters are their own selves but share common experiences, which I will elaborate on in chapter two.

These scholars point out the common characteristics and functions of the sidekick: to complete daily tasks, provide comic relief, act as confidante, be the relatable character for the audience, enact dialogue, and act as a tool in moving the plot forward. While each author notes the importance of the sidekick, I believe it is pivotal to discuss the sidekick's function as it relates to the hero's journey throughout the story, the journey as one focused on the development of the hero and the sidekick and the journey of defeating evil.

The Controversy of the Companion

Companions are a common stereotype in literature. Many companions are stereotypically female and categorized by always being at the main character's side. As mentioned above, a component of the sidekick is being a companion. Because I plan to prove that certain characters in both *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series are

sidekicks, I must also recognize that these sidekicks are companions. Although signifying characters as companions seems to be undermining them because it negates all the other qualities they contain, I must present that, without first being a companion, one cannot be a sidekick. For example, Sam, Ron, and Hermione would not be able to display their important characteristics without first wanting to be by Frodo and Harry's side, respectively. Thus, I will assert, in the following paragraphs of chapter one, the ways in which these sidekicks demonstrate the qualities of the companion and sidekick.

Sidekicks and Anti-Sidekicks in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* Series

As many scholars discuss the functions of the sidekick in *Batman* and *Sherlock Holmes,* I believe it is equally important to discuss the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series*,* not just as friends, but also as sidekicks who are important to the overall functions of the stories. As the scholars mention above, sidekicks serve important narrative functions, and, because *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series are so successful and reach a wide range of audiences, it's important to gain insight into the less major characters who are equally as valuable to the story. Because the sidekick is generally of lesser status, I find it important to discuss Sam, the gardener, or Ron, the poor boy, as pivotal characters, showing the contributions that can be made not only by superheroes or geniuses, but by people of any class in society.

In chapter one, I examine what the common audience would call friendships and prove these friends, Samwise Gamgee, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger, are sidekicks in both *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* Because Frodo

and Sam are on one mission throughout the entire novel, I will look at the novel as a whole when analyzing Sam's role as a sidekick. Due to constraints of this project, I will only look at the first, middle, and last book of the *Harry Potter* series. These three novels are crucial in looking at the formation of the relationship between Harry and Ron, and Harry and Hermione, as well as exploring pivotal moments and milestones of the series as a whole. Sam, Ron, and Hermione provide readers insight into the world of fantasy, how the fantasy world treats characters of different classes, and the relationship between the hero and sidekick, fleshing out both the hero and sidekick and enhancing the overall plot.

In chapter two, I examine the supposed villains, Gollum and Draco Malfoy, analyzing events in *The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Instead of defining Gollum and Draco superficially, I believe it is important to look at the complexity of these characters. Even though both characters have villainous traits, they are not the villains. These villainous characteristics are important in how we evaluate their functions and purposes in these stories. Although both Gollum and Draco do not have their fairy-tale heroes' best interests in mind, they are necessities for their heroes to complete their missions. While being malicious at times, Gollum and Draco prove their usefulness through their knowledge and determination. Because these two are not villains but are still unlikeable, while proving to be an asset to their fairy-tale heroes, I demonstrate they are anti-sidekicks.

CHAPTER 1: THE ULTIMATE SIDEKICKS: SAM, RON, AND HERMIONE

The love, humor, and support between the hero/friend pair are what compels readers to remain fans of certain novels. Once Gandalf tells Frodo to keep the One Ring safe and transport it to the Prancing Pony, readers realize Frodo cannot go alone on this vital mission. While Harry is sitting in his lonely compartment on the train to Hogwarts, readers yearn for him to be met with warm, welcoming eyes so he will not have to venture into this new world by himself. This is where Sam, Ron, and Hermione come in. Readers are introduced to these characters as friends of the protagonists, aids in their heroes' journeys so the heroes do not have to go alone. These friends provide love, support, and a presence the reader can relate to when the heroes present qualities that are above and beyond those of an average reader. These characteristics, often mundane, are key characteristics of the sidekick in popular culture. Sam, Ron, and Hermione do contain these characteristics; this fact should not be undermined. Without these characteristics, Sam, Ron and Hermione would not fit the trope of the sidekick, and they most definitely perform these characteristics and should be noted as such. Although, as readers dig deeper into the readings of Sam, Ron, and Hermione, they notice how much Frodo and Harry are reliant on their sidekicks. Although these sidekicks are of lesser status than their heroes (since they do not choose to be the Ring-bearer or are not the "boy who lived"), they prove to be vital in the story, commenting on the idea that lower classes have a bigger part to play than their society realizes. Without Sam, Ron, and Hermione,

readers wouldn't get an important understanding of the fantasy world or an understanding of the sidekick in British fantasy.

Samwise Gamgee: A Gardener, Dear Friend, and Indispensable Presence

Sam is one of the four main hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings.* The background of the hobbit character is explained by Mendlesohn and James in *A Short History of Fantasy.* The creation of the hobbits "allowed [Tolkien] to shift the perspective of fantasy; instead of writing about great wizards and warriors whose motives are hard to understand, he introduced us into Middle-earth through the eyes of a very ordinary *little man*" (45). Tolkien admired the little men who were the middle-class workers who became soldiers during World War 1. These little men served honorably and were loyal to their officers. Mark Hooker gives insight into the creation of the English Batman in "Frodo's Batman." He states, "the batman equated to an officer's valet, who, among other things, also took care of his officer's baggage" (37). Hooker quickly notes that the batmen were more than just luggage carriers. These batmen were extremely loyal, devoted, and fought in the war. While Sam is loyal to Frodo and acts as his batman, it is important to note that Frodo and Sam do not possess the qualities of soldiers. There is nothing military about either of them, and, when they reach the Shire at the end of the novel, neither of them want to carry a sword. In a sense, both Frodo and Sam are little men because they are hobbits. Through reading *The Lord of the Rings,* readers gain insight into the concept of the fairy-tale hero, as Frodo goes on his mission with his own type of English batman.

Sam is the son of Ham Gamgee, who is well known throughout Hobbiton for

tending neighbors' gardens: "No one had a more attentive audience than old Ham Gamgee, commonly known as the Gaffer. He held forth at *The Ivy Bush,* a small inn on the Bywater road; and he spoke with some authority, for he had tended the garden at Bag End for forty years, and had helped old Holman in the same job before that" (Book 1 22). Both Gaffer and Sam, who are very fond of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, are servants of the Bagginses and live below them. Although Gaffer holds some authority, Tolkien makes evident that, without gardening, Gaffer and Sam would not have any standing in society, for they are not rich like Frodo and Bilbo. Because Bilbo acquired a lot of wealth on his mission to the Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*, he holds lavish parties and supports his nephew, Frodo. While Bilbo and Frodo live lives of luxury, Sam and Gaffer remain good friends of the Bagginses and maintaining their luscious garden.[3] As readers see, Tolkien is quick to set up the dichotomy between the Gamgees and the Bagginses, one group poor and one group rich. As the scholars mentioned above, one of the main characteristics of the sidekick is to be of lower status than the protagonist or hero. Sam's lower status is apparent in the early pages of the novel.

Sam also provides comic relief, which is one of the basic characteristics of the sidekick, at times when anxiety is high for both the characters in the story and the readers. Zimmer Bradley claims, "at first, [Sam] appears to provide little more than comic relief" (84). This is shown through Sam's actions as Gandalf and Frodo are having their meeting. After Bilbo sets out for Rivendell and leaves the One Ring behind, Gandalf entrusts Frodo to keep the One Ring safe, which prompts Frodo to ask Gandalf many questions. While Gandalf is telling Frodo the origin of the One Ring, readers align with

[3] In medieval times, trusted servants had intimate relationships with the families they served, a relationship others didn't have.

Frodo because both parties do not know the full story of the One Ring. Therefore, readers inhabit Frodo's space, one filled with fear and anxiety. Once this anxiety reaches an all-time high and Frodo learns how the One Ring extracts life from its wearer, readers are taken out of Frodo's space by Sam, who is outside the window: "There was another long silence. The sound of Sam Gamgee cutting the lawn came in from the garden" (Book 1 47). A conversation of the utmost importance, including a life or death scenario where the whole of Middle-earth is completely taken over by evil, is interrupted by Sam performing his daily duties. After a break in the page, Gandalf and Frodo resume their conversation. Gandalf is smarter than both Frodo or Sam give him credit for, as he knows that Sam is right outside the window listening to their conversation. Gandalf thrusts his arm outside the window and grabs Sam by the ear:

> 'Well, well, bless my beard!' said Gandalf. 'Sam Gamgee is it? Now what may you be doing?' 'Lor bless you, Mr. Gandalf, sir!' said Sam. 'Nothing! Leastways I was just trimming the grass-border under the window, if you follow me.' He picked up his shears and exhibited them as evidence. 'I don't,' said Gandalf grimly. 'It is some time since I last heard the sound of your shears. How long have you been eavesdropping?' 'Eavesdropping, sir? I don't follow you, begging your pardon. There ain't no eaves at Bag End, and that's a fact.' (Book 1 63)

Sam admits to Gandalf and Frodo that he indeed was eavesdropping on their conversation because he is very curious about such tales. Not only does Sam exhibit curiosity, he also exhibits that he is witty, but also of lower class by his speech, which is unlike Frodo's proper grammar. Sam would not have had the opportunity to spy on this conversation if he was not a gardener, showing the importance of his occupation as it relates to him taking advantage of the chance to go on the adventure with Frodo. Furthermore, Frodo laughs during this conversation between Gandalf and Sam: Frodo was "hardly able to keep from laughing, although he was himself startled and rather puzzled" (Book 1 63).

Readers occupy Frodo's space feeling startled and anxious from the pivotal information but are quickly taken out of this space once Sam enters with his witty antics. Readers enter Sam's space just as easily because they are not only frightened and anxious like Frodo, but also curious about the story like Sam.

Sam quickly becomes Frodo's companion on the adventure, as the reason Gandalf heard Sam outside the window was because he choked with grief once he heard Frodo was going to be sent away by Gandalf. Not only does Sam wish to go on the journey to aid Frodo, he also wants to go so he can see the elves, which is a desire he has held for a very long time. Although, later in the journey, he realizes the heavy weight Frodo holds and isn't interested in discovering different parts of the world. From the beginning to the end of the journey, Sam displays the companion element of the sidekick in many ways by completing tasks that are assumed to be minor, but, in this case, become a key component of survival.

Sam displays the characteristic of the companion by always being at Frodo's side. Both Frodo and Sam take turns in completing the night watch, although Sam takes every opportunity to let Frodo sleep when he looks tired. Since Sam and Frodo are on such a dangerous journey and Sam understands that he needs to protect Frodo, it is no surprise when Sam becomes very upset when Frodo is stabbed by Wringwraiths at Weathertop, despite the valiant efforts of Aragorn and Sam: "Sam choked with tears. 'Don't despair!' said Strider [Aragorn]. 'You must trust me now. Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed…" (Book 1 198). Sam knows it is his duty to protect Frodo, and Aragorn understands how important Frodo is to Sam, when he calls him 'Your Frodo.' After this event, Sam takes the role of watcher and protector even more seriously because his

master is in pain. As the pain from Frodo's wound worsens, so does his overall state of mind. Eventually, Frodo loses consciousness as the Elf-lord Glorifindel takes him to Rivendell. At the beginning of Book Two, Frodo wakes up and is met by Gandalf. After he asks where he is and what time it is, he asks of Sam's whereabouts. Gandalf answers he had to ask Sam to leave so he could get some rest and Frodo understands Sam's dedication to him and the journey. While at Rivendell, Sam talks to Frodo about the joy and merriment that surrounds them stating,

> 'And the music and the singing—not that I have had the time or the heart for much listening since we got here. But I'm getting to know some of the ways of this place.' 'I know what you have been doing, Sam,' said Frodo, taking his arm. 'But you shall be merry tonight, and listen to your heart's content.' (Book 2 225)

Frodo understands how much Sam cares for him and worries about him, and he also knows that this care and worry will likely continue, which is why he urges Sam to have fun. Both Frodo and Sam realize they need to seize every chance of happiness.

Soon after, the fun subsides and Elrond, the Lord of Rivendell, calls for a meeting concerning the One Ring. Elrond supports Frodo's offer to be the Ring-bearer and the council confirms Frodo's choice that he will carry the One Ring to Mordor. Sam's silence ceases once he realizes Frodo cannot go alone:

> 'But you won't send him off alone surely, Master?' cried Sam, unable to contain himself any longer, and jumping up from the corner where he had been quietly sitting on the floor. 'No indeed!' said Elrond, turning towards him with a smile. 'You at least shall go with him. It is hardly possible to separate you from him, even when he is summoned to a secret council and you are not.' (Book 2 271)

Gandalf, Aragorn, and Elrond notice the bond between Frodo and Sam and the great lengths Sam will go to help Frodo and stay by his side. And Frodo realizes this as well, enlarging upon his previous ideas when he believed Sam to be "a conspirator, [then] a

jester. He'll end up by becoming a wizard—or a warrior!" (Book 1 208). Ironically enough, at this point in the book, Sam says he doesn't want to be either a wizard or a warrior, but his actions throughout the novel show readers the importance of his character and how he really is one of the great warriors of the novel.

Moreover, Sam's role as a companion is shown when he chooses to release his pony, Bill, to continue helping Frodo and remain a part of the fellowship. Once the fellowship reaches the Mines of Moria, Gandalf tells Sam that Bill will not want to enter the dark mines because he is too afraid. Gandalf proclaims to Sam, "You will have to choose between Bill and your master" (Book 2 303). Sam has an extremely tough time letting Bill go, which shows how compassionate he is towards humans and animals. Sam begins to cry because he worries for Bill's safety. Although Sam is deeply upset, as shown by his choking and sobbing when he speaks, he "had to choose. 'I had to come with you, [Mr. Frodo]', states Sam" (Book 2 309). Sam places great value on his relationships. Zimmer Bradley shares insight into Sam's kindness stating, "Sam cares even less for heroic deeds; he simply wishes to guard and remain with Frodo" (84). Sam loves Frodo dearly and his actions, as a companion and sidekick, prove that he is a necessity to Frodo and the story as a whole.

Furthering Sam's proof that he is a sidekick is his willingness to cook. Since Frodo does not know how to cook, Sam takes up this role because he loves it. Although cooking is a minor skill in Middle-earth, one that is held by citizens of the working class, this skill is proved to be useful on their journey. Without Sam's ability to cook, Frodo and Sam would have run out of Lembas bread much faster and would not have been able to sustain the physical demands of the adventure.

In Charles Nelson's article "Courteous, Humble and Helpful: Sam as Squire in *The Lord of the Rings,"* he compares the characteristics of the squire to those of Sam. He claims that Sam acts as a squire because he is loyal, courageous, and a servant. In Nelson's articulation, Frodo would be the knight (60). Sam is a knight in the making and is always by Frodo's side. Sam takes Frodo's place later in the novel, although his time as Ring-bearer is rather short. At the end of the novel, Sam becomes mayor of the Shire, is the first audience for Frodo's book, and assumes the role of narrator. Sam's outcome in the novel is what Frodo's outcome would have been if he hadn't been so ruined by the One Ring. Although Tolkien makes Sam's lower class in society clear at the beginning of the novel, Sam is not a character who is bossed around by his superiors. Sam chooses to go on the journey with Frodo; he does not choose to go for financial reasons, nor was he forced. In many ways, Frodo is the servant to the One Ring, and Sam is doing his best to try and help Frodo by being his squire.

Sam displays the common characteristics of a sidekick; he is part of the working class, he provides comic relief, and he is Frodo's clear companion. Sam's characteristics, although simple and mundane, should not be undervalued because they prove he is a sidekick. As the novel continues, Sam's actions yearn for readers to reimagine him as a sidekick who is a necessity to Frodo's mission. Sam will never be the fairy-tale hero because he wasn't the one to bear the One Ring and endure its evil, but, without Sam, Frodo would have never successfully fulfilled the mission that would declare him the fairy-tale hero.[4]

Although this fantasy world is an immersive one, one where the protagonist and

[4] Although Sam bears the One Ring for a very short time after he believes Frodo to be dead, he doesn't bear it long enough to be affected by it.

other characters are already a part of the fantasy world, Frodo still needs Sam because neither of them ever ventured outside of the Shire. Even though Gandalf called Sam a fool at the beginning of the novel, Sam possesses great instincts and insight. Sam is the only character who looks through his pack to make sure he has everything he needs before the fellowship travels out of Rivendell. Sam gets mad at himself because he forgot rope, but at least he is thinking about the necessities, which is something that doesn't even cross Frodo's mind. Sam encounters two situations that require the need of rope and he reproaches himself for it. Even though rope would have been useful, readers see Sam learn from these experiences and become a tougher, smarter, and handy character.

From the time Sam and Frodo meet Gollum, Sam's instincts tell him that Gollum is trouble. He finds him extremely off-putting and very suspicious; however, Sam understands they don't know the way into Mordor and they need Gollum's help. Sam, not Frodo, is the one who readers discover is extremely confused over what to do with Gollum because his instincts tell him that something isn't right: "Sam's guess was that the Sméagol and Gollum halves had made a truce and a temporary alliance…as long as Stinker still had a chance of laying hands on his 'Precious'" (Book 4 638). Moreover, Frodo, less aware of Gollum's evil doing, demands that Sam get some sleep, even though he is tired too. Sam knows not to go along with Frodo's plan until Frodo is fully rested because both will fall asleep and Gollum will steal the One Ring. Sam tells Frodo, "I don't feel too sure of him. There's a good deal of Stinker—the bad Gollum, if you understand me—in him still, and it's getting stronger again. Not but what I'd think he'd try to throttle me first now. We don't see eye to eye, and he's not pleased with Sam, O no precious, not pleased at all" (Book 4 655-656). Sam gives Frodo key insight into the

Gollum's personality, while also providing the reader with a bit of humor by using Gollum's language. Sam's instincts and wit grow stronger as the novel moves forward.

While Sam has great instincts, he also has great insight into Frodo. Before the fellowship breaks, and as Aragorn realizes that Frodo needs time to consider his decision alone in the forest, they, minus Frodo, have a discussion about Frodo's plan for the quest. Sam interrupts the fellowship and says, "Begging your pardon, I don't think you understand my master at all. He isn't hesitating about which way to go. Of course not! What's the good of Minas Tirith anyway?" (Book 2 403). Sam continues to talk about Frodo's effort to take the One Ring to Mordor and sheds light on Frodo's insistence to go alone because he doesn't want his friends to get hurt. Aragorn responds, "I believe you speak more wisely than any of us, Sam" (Book 2 403). Aragorn sees how Sam has grown since their first meeting at the Prancing Pony. This growth proves crucial as Frodo and Sam move forward together. Having great insight into the mind of his master, Sam knows when Frodo is feeling tired, weak, afraid, and taken over by the One Ring, which helps immensely during their venture to destroy the One Ring.

While Frodo continues to be worn down by the One Ring and reminds readers of his pessimistic view that they might not complete the journey or they might not see their friends again, Sam always retorts with a view of hope, even though, in his head, he's doubted the mission a few times. It's hard to say if the story would have progressed the same if Sam didn't counteract Frodo's pessimism with optimism; however, when Frodo expresses his doubts, Sam is there to reimagine a world with a sliver of hope so Frodo is able to move forward. At the beginning of the journey, Frodo reveals his pessimism: "It's

going to be very dangerous, Sam. It is already dangerous. Most likely neither of us will come back.' 'It you don't come back, sir, then I shan't, that's certain,' said Sam" (Book 1 87). Sam gives Frodo the slightest bit of encouragement that he needs to move forward. In this moment, Frodo knows that Sam will not leave his side, even in the greatest danger.

Even though Sam's hope is evident when Frodo is extremely depressed and pessimistic, Sam does show signs of despair. When Frodo, Sam, and Gollum see the black gate to Mordor is closed, Gollum tells them to turn around and go home. Frodo asserts that he must go to Mordor. This is the first time that Sam knows his words of encouragement won't help:

> Sam said nothing. The look on Frodo's face was enough for him; he knew that words of his were useless. And after all he never had any real hope in the affair from the beginning; but being a cheerful hobbit he had not needed hope, as long as despair could be postponed. Now they were come to the bitter end. But he had stuck to his master all the way; that was what he had chiefly come for, and he would still stick to him. His master would not go to Mordor alone. (Book 4 638)

Since Sam understands Frodo, he knows that he cannot change his mind, which is why he chooses not to speak. This shows that when Sam does choose to speak, he knows that his words will do some good. Here, Sam does not give himself enough credit for being brave, loyal, and the light of hope that Frodo so desperately needs. Sam is smart enough to understand that he cannot dissuade Frodo in this situation, and, like a good sidekick, he chooses to stick with him.

Sam remains by Frodo's side even though he despises Gollum. When Gollum leads Frodo and Sam into Shelob's lair, Sam senses that something isn't right: "There's something worse than Gollum about. I can feel something looking at us" (Book 4 719).

Sam realizes it's a trap, but it's too late because Shelob preys upon Frodo while Gollum attacks Sam. All of Sam's hatred towards Gollum is used to fend him off: "Fury at the treachery, and desperation at the delay when his master was in deadly peril, gave to Sam a sudden violence and strength that was far beyond anything that Gollum had expected from this slow stupid hobbit, as he thought of him" (Book 4 726). Even Gollum, a past hobbit himself, thought of Sam with such low standards. Sam proves to Gollum and readers that he is strong, can defend himself, and will stop at nothing to defend his master. This bravery and determination does not stop here.

Once Sam scares Gollum off, he finds Frodo lying on the ground wrapped in Shelob's web. Hoping he's not dead, Sam yells, "Don't leave me here alone! It's your Sam calling. Don't go where I can't follow!" (Book 4 730). Again, Sam's commitment to Frodo is evident. Thinking that Frodo is dead, Sam remembers a conversation: "And then he remembered his own voice speaking words that at the time he did not understand himself: *I have something to do before the end. I must see it through, sir, if you understand"* (Book 4 731). He understands his part to play in all of this and, as of now, he thinks he must go on and destroy the One Ring, so he takes the ring from Frodo and leaves. And yet, he understands that he will never be the hero, "not without Mr. Frodo" (Book 4 735).

Once Sam realizes that Frodo isn't dead and he is being held captive by the orcs, Sam has his final moment of self-shame and pity. Sam thinks, "You fool, he isn't dead, and your heart knew it. Don't trust your head, Samwise, it is not the best part of you. The trouble with you is that you never really had any hope" (Book 4 740). What Sam doesn't realize is that he has enough hope in himself to go forth on the mission and, with that

agency, he runs into Frodo and the orcs and realizes that Frodo isn't dead. Sam's bravery and determination led him to Frodo, who would have been killed if it wasn't for him.

After Sam saves Frodo from the orcs, he notices Frodo is extremely weak so he has the brilliant idea of lightening their packs. Once the walk becomes unbearable for Frodo, Sam realizes the only way to get his master to Mount Doom is to carry him:

> Sam looked at him and wept in his heart, but no tears came to his dry and stinging eyes. 'I said I'd carry him, if it broke my back,' he muttered, 'and I will!' 'Come, Mr. Frodo!' he cried. 'I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you and it as well. So up you get! Come on, Mr. Frodo dear! Sam will give you a ride. Just tell him where to go, and he'll go.' (Book 6 940)

As Sam shows throughout the novel, he will do anything for Frodo. He marvels at his relentless strength, as he "lifted Frodo with no more difficulty than if he were carrying a hobbit-child pig-a-back in some romp on the lawns or hayfields of the Shire" (Book 6 941). Sam continues to surprise himself, although readers know of Sam's bravery and courage and continue to root for him.

Not only does Sam show his importance to Frodo, the fellowship, and the novel by carrying Frodo to Mount Doom, Sam also shows sympathy towards Gollum. Like Sam, the readers were disgusted and furious with Gollum throughout the journey, but readers hold a bit more sympathy towards Gollum because, unlike Sam who must protect Frodo from Gollum, readers don't have anyone to protect. When Sam and Frodo arrive at Mount Doom, Gollum and Sam have their last meeting. Sam has the opportunity and desire to kill Gollum with his blade, but, in this moment, Sam has a moment of reflection:

> But deep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust, forlorn, ruinous, utterly wretched. He himself, though only for a little while, had borne the Ring, and now dimly he guessed the agony of Gollum's shrivelled mind and body, enslaved to that Ring, unable to find peace or relief ever in life again. (Book 6 944)

Readers occupy Sam's space in this moment because they, too, feel bad for Gollum and what the One Ring did to him. Gollum was overtaken by desire and it was not his fault. Moreover, both Sam and the readers see the One Ring gradually making Frodo worse. Since both Sam and the readers see Frodo, a fairy-tale hero, as one who is so close to being overtaken by the One Ring, it is easier for Sam and readers to sympathize with Gollum in this moment and understand that his experience and his actions are not his fault.

Not only does Sam prove he is a sidekick by occupying a space of lesser status, providing comic relief, and showing his faithfulness as a companion, he also provides the journey with useful instincts and insights, provides a sense of hope when Frodo needs it the most, displays his bravery and determination, physically carries Frodo to complete the mission, and allows readers to go on a journey with him and his relationship with Gollum, forcing readers to sympathize with a controversial character. There are no doubts that Sam proves his worth to Frodo, the Shire, and Middle-earth. Countless characters admire Sam's growth throughout the story and understand that he is someone greater than his status as a gardener. Jerome Rosenberg, in his article "The Humanity of Sam Gamgee," provides insight into Sam, "Sam continually grows as a character…responding heroically to the conditions that keep him from the comfort he desires. Throughout these adventures, Frodo's own dependence upon Sam suggests even more fully the stature and humanity of Sam's character" (11). Without Sam, Frodo would not have completed the mission to destroy the One Ring and save Middle-earth, and even Frodo says when talking about tales with Sam, "I want to hear more about Sam, dad. Why didn't they put in more of his talk, dad? That's what I like, it makes me laugh. And Frodo wouldn't have

got far without Sam, would he, dad?" (Book 4 712). You're right, Frodo. Readers want to hear more about Sam, too.

Not Just a Poor Goofball: Ron Weasley as Harry's Crucial Confidante

Ron is the second character, after Hagrid, to befriend Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Although Hagrid introduces Harry to places in the wizarding world such as Gringotts, Diagon Alley, and the Leaky Cauldron, Ron is the first Hogwarts student that quickly takes a liking to Harry, and vice versa. After Hagrid leaves Harry on the train platform, Harry quickly notices the Weasley family: "The speaker was a plump woman who was talking to four boys, all with flaming red hair… and they had an *owl*" (*SS* 92). Harry is quick to receive help from them because they are carrying trunks and one has an owl just like Harry. The plump woman, Molly Weasley, recognizes Harry must be new, so she introduces Ron to Harry because he is also new: "She pointed at the last and youngest of her sons. He was tall, thin, and gangling, with freckles, big hands and feet, and a long nose" (*SS* 93). Ron's physical description aligns with the common description of a sidekick. Gangling is associated with being a nerd and represents a lack of control over the entire body, but this isn't out of the ordinary, since Ron, and all the other children, are still growing. Nonetheless, Ron's description sticks out because of the contrast with the typical hero, but, since Harry is a fairy-tale hero, Ron's awkwardness should not be a stark distinction from Harry. Because Harry begins his journey at eleven-years-old, he encapsulates characteristics of a child, which are extremely different than the characteristics of an adult hero. Harry and all the other students at Hogwarts are figuring out who they are, represent physical features of

children, and do not have the physical strength or confidence of those who are the traditional heroes we see in popular culture.

Much like Frodo and Sam, Harry and Ron become fast friends. Another direct correlation between Frodo and Sam's relationship and Harry and Ron's relationship is the fact that one character out of each pair is rich and the other is not. As Tolkien made Sam's financial status apparent in the novels, so does Rowling with Ron. Not only does Ron express to Harry his experiences being the youngest boy and thus receiving hand-me-downs, he also expresses his family's lack of money, but in an embarrassed, vulnerable way:

> 'His name's Scabbers [Ron's rat] and he's useless, he hardly ever wakes up. Percy [Ron's older brother] got an owl from my dad for being made a prefect, but they couldn't aff—I mean, I got Scabbers instead.' Ron's ears went pink. He seemed to think he'd said too much, because he went back to staring out of the window. (*SS* 100)

To Ron's surprise, Harry doesn't find Ron's financial status an issue because, just a month ago, he had to wear Dudley's hand-me-downs and didn't receive any birthday presents like the average child would. For the first time, Ron shares experiences with someone who isn't part of his family. These interactions build the foundation of Harry and Ron's relationship.

It doesn't take long for Ron to get made fun of, highlighting his characteristic of the nerd, by the mean boy, Draco Malfoy. Draco introduces himself and his friends to Harry, and Ron finds Draco's name funny. Draco replies, "Think my name's funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford" (*SS* 108). Draco's insistence on bothering Ron about his family's financial status does not let up throughout the entire

series. Draco's constant badgering shows his need for attention, as well as a symbol for how one's financial status can label them as one of lesser status in society. Like Draco, Elizabeth Heilman also uses Ron's financial status to make a harsh claim, in her article "Blue Wizards and Pink Witches: Representations of Gender Identity and Power." She states, "His lack of family money weakens his male authority. His formal robes look like a woman's dress, and his broom and other wizarding equipment are substandard" (234). Male authority obstructs the inclusion Rowling creates in the series. As many characters in the series show, one's gender does not determine his or her authority, nor should authority be something of admiration. Ron is not as wealthy as Harry and Draco; he is, however, of great importance to the series and to many of the characters, showing wealth is not something to be admired, especially since the Malfoys, one of the richest families in the wizarding world, are Death Eaters.

Another common characteristic of the sidekick that Ron exhibits is his hilarity; Ron supplies readers with perfect humor, in times that it is needed and in times when the humor works on its own and doesn't need a reason. Readers get a glimpse of Ron's hilarity and goofiness when he and Harry are in the compartment together. Ron is unable to buy any goods from the candy cart, but, since Harry sees Ron's clear wish to have some treats, Harry buys a bunch of candy from the cart. Ron goes wild. He tells Harry all about the chocolate frogs and the collectors cards. What's great about Ron's humor is that he doesn't try to be funny; he just is. For example, after Hermione introduces herself in the compartment and talks about how many books she has read and so forth, Ron states, "Whatever House I'm in, I hope she's not in it" (*SS* 106). These laughable moments represent Ron's humorous side, before readers desperately call for his humor

when events in the book turn anxious.

As the series goes on, and tensions rise from discovering Lord Voldemort has resurfaced, Ron continues to provide relief from the tension with his humor. During *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry is busy at work preparing for the Twiwizard Tournament and Hermione is putting all her energy into advocating for the rights of house elves, who are treated like slaves. Hermione wishes for the elves to stop working at Hogwarts because of their poor labor conditions. She wants Ron and Harry on her side, and she creates S.P.E.W, the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. Hermione is urging them to go talk to the elves and Ron states, "'Hermione! You're trying to rope us into that spew stuff again!' 'No, no, I'm not!' she said hastily. 'And it's not *spew*, Ron—' 'Changed the name, have you?' said Ron, frowning at her. 'What are we now, then, the House-Elf Liberation Front?'" (*GF* 374). In times when each character of the trio has a lot of stuff going on, Ron includes a bit of humor that lightens up the mood; on the other hand, Hermione isn't too pleased, but no matter. Along with being funny, yet a little catty, talking about girls with crooked noses, Ron also takes readers back to reality under the most stressful conditions. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,* readers understand that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are not going back to Hogwarts; they are venturing out to find Horcruxes to destroy them. Even though they are taking on such a dangerous, courageous task, Ron's humor brings readers back to reality reminding audiences they are still teenagers. For Harry's birthday, Ron gives Harry a book, which is not what Harry was expecting: "'This isn't your average book,' said Ron. 'It's pure gold: *Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to Charm Witches*. Explains everything you need to know about girls…I've learned a lot. You'd be surprised, it's not all about wandwork, either'" (*DH*

113). Ron's remark is a reminder that every person desires trivial, normal things. Even though readers and characters in these books expect so much from this trio, readers must remember Harry, Ron, and Hermione are still teenagers, who want simple things, like a girlfriend or boyfriend, just like everyone else.

Through many examples, Ron contains the basic characteristics of a sidekick, which are his physical traits, socioeconomic status, and ability to provide comic relief. These characteristics are important because they classify him as a sidekick, instead of just a friend; however, Ron's actions in the story go leaps and bounds above just providing comic relief and being the poor one. Without Ron, Harry would not be successful in the wizarding world and in defeating Lord Voldemort.

Although Hagrid first introduces Harry to the wizarding world, Ron is the one who explains many different terms and concepts to Harry as Harry begins his portal quest in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. While in the compartment, Ron tells Harry about the famous Albus Dumbledore and his accomplishments that have altered the wizarding world for decades. Ron also tells Harry about the suspicions surrounding saying Lord Voldemort's name out loud. Harry states, "I'm not trying to be brave or anything, saying the name. I just never knew you shouldn't. See what I mean? I've got loads to learn…I bet" (*SS* 100). Ron comforts Harry in telling him he will learn the ins and outs quickly and he will be fine.

Moreover, Ron also explains two very important concepts attributed to the wizarding world, which shape Harry's life for the rest of the series—Quidditch and Severus Snape. Although Ron's actions do not force Harry to get on his broom when he is explicitly told not to, Ron does intrigue Harry by explaining Quidditch to him, which

he would have never known without Ron. Ron also stops Harry from making an absolute fool of himself in front of Snape and his peers on the first day of class. Since Ron has heard about how harsh Snape is from his brothers, he tells Harry not to encourage Snape. "This was so unfair that Harry opened his mouth to argue, but Ron kicked him behind their cauldron. 'Don't push it,' he muttered, 'I've heard Snape can turn very nasty'" (*SS* 139). Without Ron there to advise Harry to keep quiet, Harry would have gotten into a lot of trouble, which may have changed the entire course of the novel.

Although Ron is the goofball and carries around a bad reputation from his jokester brothers, he exhibits a certain skill that Harry and Hermione do not have. This skill is very important in the outcome of the first novel and the steps Harry must take to ultimately defeat Lord Voldemort. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry, Ron, and Hermione must complete a series of tasks so Harry can reach the location of the stone. The three of them are able to get through a series of protections, like gigantic monsters and killer plants, but when the trio reaches the chess task, Harry and Hermione are stumped. They don't know how to play chess; however, Ron quickly takes over as the leader with this task because "don't be offended or anything, but neither of you are that good at chess" (*SS* 282). Without Ron's knowledge of chess, the trio may not have been able to complete the task, which would change the entire series of events from then on.

It is hard for Ron to hone an abundance of skills when around Hermione because she is so brilliant; however, an important trait that Ron embraces is his extreme loyalty and understanding of when to sacrifice himself for his friends, which compares to Sam and his loyalty to Frodo. Ron and Harry care for each other so much because they were each other's first friend and don't care about where the other comes from. They

genuinely like each other for who they are and they are willing to stick by each other. From the very first book to the last book, Ron shows readers his willingness to be loyal to Harry and help him with all his missions. Whether it's accompanying Harry to get the sorcerer's stone, staying up after hours to help Harry research how to breathe underwater for the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, willing to drop out of school and join Harry on his mission to find Horcruxes, saving Harry from dying at the bottom of a pool, while Harry tries to obtain a Horcrux, or having the brilliance to venture into the Chamber of Secrets by speaking Parseltongue to retrieve the basilisk fang in order to destroy Horcruxes, Ron is always right there for Harry, whenever he needs him. An example of Ron's explicit loyalty and selflessness is when Ron chooses to sacrifice himself during the game of chess so Harry can reach the stone: "'It's the only way…I've got to be taken.' 'NO!' Harry and Hermione shouted. 'That's chess!' snapped Ron. 'You've got to make some sacrifices! I'll make my move and she'll take me—that leaves you free to checkmate the king, Harry!'" (*SS* 283). From the beginning of the series to the end, Ron makes sacrifices for Harry and continues to remain by his side, fitting the aspect of the companion and going above and beyond as a sidekick.

Like any relatable, true character, Ron does show signs of imperfection. Because he does come from a poor family and doesn't get much attention because he has so many siblings, Ron gets very upset when Harry is selected to compete in the Triwizard Tournament in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* Ron comes to terms with Harry getting the spotlight because he is the "boy who lived," but he wasn't ready for this to happen and he loses it. Ron doesn't understand how Harry got chosen because there was a strict age requirement, so he thought Harry tricked the age line to compete, and "win a

thousand Galleons prize money, and not have to do end-of-year tests" (*GF* 287). The last thing Ron says to Harry before not speaking to him for a while is "You want to get to bed, Harry. I expect you'll need to be up early tomorrow for a photo-call or something" (*GF* 287). This hurts Ron so much because he thinks Harry chose to be in the spotlight this time, whereas Harry never chose to be the "boy who lived." Ron comes to his senses and realizes that someone put Harry's name in the goblet once he sees how dangerous the first task is. Ron and Hermione watch the players compete in the first task and, after Harry successfully completes the task, Ron "was very white and staring at Harry as though he were a ghost. 'Harry,' he said, very seriously, 'whoever put your name in that goblet—I—I reckon they're trying to do you in!'" (*GF* 358). Ron knows Harry would never wish this competition on himself and from here on out, Ron helps Harry in any way that he can.

Another pivotal moment that shows the development of Ron's character and Ron and Harry's relationship is when Ron chooses to leave Hermione and Harry to see if his family is safe in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* Ron and Hermione have a talk between the two of them about how unsuccessful their Horcrux mission is thus far and Harry finds out about this and they have an argument. Ron expresses his disappointment with how they have done so far and Hermione blames his choice of words on the locket: "'Take off the locket, Ron,' Hermione said, her voice unusually high. 'Please take it off. You wouldn't be talking like this if you hadn't been wearing it all day'" (*DH* 307). This moment is comparable to Frodo's moodiness due to the One Ring eating at his soul. Although Frodo's moodiness never separates him and Sam, this situation is very familiar to that of *The Lord of the Rings.* Ron's clearly upset about his family, but he isn't

thinking clearly with the locket on, and so he decides to leave and see if his family is safe. Ron eventually comes back and saves Harry's life in the pool. Ron tells Harry the locket affected him "worse than it affected you and Hermione, it made me think stuff—stuff I was thinking anyway, but it made everything worse, I can't explain it…" (*DH* 374). Ron thinks clearly when he is away from the locket and knows he had to come back and help Harry and Hermione in any way he can. Ron shows his importance at this moment because he saves Harry's life, whereas if he wasn't there to save him, the course of the rest of the story would have been different.

Ron's humor and goofiness is what keeps Harry, Hermione, and the readers sane in a world surrounded by so much fear and dread. Ron's ability to be such a loving and loyal friend saves Harry's life many times, and, if Ron weren't there to save Harry, the course of events in the series would change drastically. As any character, Ron shows signs of imperfection, either sparked by a need to have attention or the weakness of being succumbed by a physical object. Readers see these themes in *The Lord of the Rings* as well. The fantasy world would be much different without these important sidekicks. It would be especially dull without Ron Weasley.

She Is Fierce!: Hermione Granger as an Intelligent and Essential Figure

Hermione is the first female student Harry engages with in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. She is a mudblood, a person who has magical powers but whose parents don't. On the train, she runs into Harry and Ron looking for a friend's toad. "She had a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth" (*SS* 105). Rowling's description of Hermione isn't a very good one, as bushy hair and big teeth are seen as unattractive. So again, like Ron, readers have been introduced to another sidekick

based off physical imperfections. Both Hermione and Ron's physical descriptions deem these children as imperfect, which works out because children aren't perfect; no one is perfect. Not even the fairy-tale hero.

Harry and Ron do not befriend Hermione right away. Because she is bossy and very smart, she comes off as a know-it-all and a control freak. She does like to play it safe and not break any rules, and she comes off rather pretentious when she corrects Ron on the pronunciation of a certain spell. Due to these traits, many of the students do not like her. Ron says to Harry, "It's no wonder no one can stand her" (*SS* 172). Hermione hears Ron's comment and runs away into the girl's bathroom, not knowing there is a troll on the loose at Hogwarts. Harry and Ron like her enough to go find her and warn her about the troll. The trio manages to knock out the ginormous troll, but not before Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape find out, and Hermione takes the blame for the entire occurrence: "Harry was speechless. Hermione was the last person to do anything against the rules, and here she was, pretending she had, to get them out of trouble" (*SS* 178). Hermione takes the blame because she knows not many people would come and save her, but Harry and Ron did. She wanted to return the favor because she is a fair person, who does the right thing. "From that moment on, Hermione Granger became their friend. There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them" (*SS* 179). Although I find this scene pivotal to the basis of Hermione, Ron, and Harry's friendship, Hellman finds the scene unsatisfactory because it displays Hermione as weak, since she cowers from the troll, while Harry and Ron defeat it. Heilman states, "I was disappointed by scenes like this and by the absence of powerful females" (222). Hermione is a powerful

female. The situation she was in does not negate this fact; Hermione was alone in the bathroom unaware of a troll on the loose. If Harry, Ron, or any of the students at Hogwarts were in Hermione's situation, they would have been scared too.

Even though Hermione's brilliance gives her some trouble at the start of the school year, she uses it to her advantage to help herself and her friends. She memorizes all the course material, is the only student able to transform her match into a needle on the first day of transfigurations, and uses her knowledge of spells to get Harry and Ron out of trouble. Hermione's dedication to her studies allows her to be the smartest student at Hogwarts. Her knowledge of spells and potions, and her ability to solve riddles are particularly important, and come in handy several times in the series.

For example, in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* when Draco challenges Harry to a Wizards duel at midnight, Hermione winds up saving of all them from Argus Filch by using a certain spell. Moreover, during the Quidditch match when Harry's broom is acting out of control, Hermione walks over to Snape, thinking he is the culprit, and attempts to cast a spell on him. While doing so, she knocks over Professor Quirrel, who is the actual culprit. Hermione's stunt saves Harry from falling off his broom and possibly dying and allows him to find the snitch to win his first Quidditch match.

Furthermore, Hermione hones her abilities for Harry's most important mission in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.* When the trio embarks to find the stone, they need to get through certain obstacles. One of the obstacles is overcoming Devil's Snare. Hermione saves Harry and Ron when they are attacked by Devil's Snare by casting the spell that kills it. Without Hermione's knowledge of spells and her willingness to go with Harry and Ron, both boys would have died. Once they surpass a few more obstacles, and

after they leave Ron on the chess board, Harry and Hermione reach the final task—a riddle. Hermione states, "'This isn't magic—its logic—a puzzle. A lot of the greatest wizards haven't got an ounce of logic, they'd be stuck in here forever'" (*SS* 285). While Harry is a great wizard, he lacks the superior knowledge of logic, but Hermione balances Harry out with her supreme knowledge of logic. She solves the riddle. Although Hermione helps Harry reach the next step of his mission, Heilman is not impressed. She states, "though Hermione's knowledge is sometimes useful, it is Harry's *stupid* bravery that really saves the day. It is important that both Harry and Ron have knowledge when they need it, but they are not bookish like Hermione" (224). Harry would not have been able to save the day if he did not have Hermione by his side because she is the only character who holds immense knowledge and can solve the riddle. Heilman negates Hermione's usefulness in this situation and glorifies Harry's bravery. After solving the riddle, Hermione discovers friendship and bravery are more important than intelligence: "'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery—and oh Harry—be *careful*!'" (*SS* 287). What Hermione doesn't realize yet is she does encompass the qualities of a good friend and she is brave based on her actions throughout the series. Her intelligence should not be undermined; it is a necessity for Harry's mission. Hermione is essential to Harry throughout the series.

Because Hermione is sort of a control freak, she exuberates much preparedness in times of crisis. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the dementors attack Bill and Fleur's wedding. Hermione gets the trio out of the crisis through apparation, which is like teleportation. Hermione is the only one out of the trio who can apparate, an important, but tedious skill to learn. They land in Tottenham Court Road and need street clothes to look

like Muggles. Of course, Ron and Harry freak out about not having supplies, and Hermione proves again she is able to save the day.

> Harry asks, "When did you do all this?" Hermione answers, "I told you at the Burrow, I've had the essentials packed for days, you know, in case we needed to make a quick getaway. I packed your rucksack this morning, Harry, after you changed, and put it in here…I just had a feeling…" "You're amazing, you are," said Ron. (*DH* 162)

Hermione is very diligent. She understands that danger is near and is smart enough to prepare in case something happens. Not only is Hermione prepared, she has keen instincts, which she displays in this instance. Like Sam and his instincts, Hermione proves her instincts are useful in the outcome of the story.

Although Harry and Ron do well enough in school to not get kicked out, they, and other students who are males, are not talked about as having a high intelligence or excelling in school. Hermione is the character who represents extreme brilliance. Because of Hermione's intelligence and dedication to her studies, she challenges the stereotype that sidekicks cannot be as smart as the hero. For example, Sherlock Holmes and Batman are very intelligent and are shown as contrasts against their sidekicks who are not as smart as them. Not only does Hermione challenge the sidekick norm, she challenges the hero characteristic that assumes the male heroes are the intelligent ones. Although Hermione is very brilliant, she also has her flaws, which is what makes British fantasy so great. The entire trio has its flaws whereas in other stories with a hero and sidekick pair, the hero very rarely has its flaws, and the sidekick's imperfections are highlighted against the absence of the hero's flaws. With this series, each character in the trio has strengths and weaknesses and they balance each other nicely. Unlike Batman, who is physically strong and can save the day, Harry, a fairy-tale hero, cannot accomplish tasks and

ultimately defeat Lord Voldemort without the help of Ron and Hermione.

Many note Hermione as the companion because she exemplifies stereotypical gender roles like being smart and by caring about the elves in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.* Once one of the elves, Dobby, is set free by Harry, he is invited by Albus Dumbledore to work in the kitchen at Hogwarts along with many other elves. Hermione sees the elves' working conditions and is extremely upset with how they are treated and the amount they get paid for the work they put in. Besides helping Harry learn certain spells and charms for the Twiwizard Tournament (she teaches him the summoning charm to defeat the dragons in the first task), Hermione focuses all her energy on advocating for the rights of the elves in the entire book. Hermione is so diverse and interested in many things and can be successful at many things. She is the brilliant female who has a lot of compassion for the underdog and remains by Harry's side.

Like Ron, Hermione shows fierce loyalty to Harry by always being by his side, which also means she is very brave because she chooses to endure many dangerous events. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Hermione tells Harry, "We're coming with you [to find Horcruxes]. That was decided months ago—years, really" (*DH* 96). Hermione knew the amount of courage and bravery it would take to be a true friend to Harry and she takes this role seriously. She takes this role so seriously that she finds out Dumbledore kept books on the Horcruxes in his office so she steels them and reads up on them. Because she did this, she is able to explain the enormous amount of information on Horcruxes to Harry and Ron, who don't know a thing about them. Without this knowledge of Horcruxes, there is no way Harry would have been able to successfully destroy the Horcruxes and ultimately defeat Lord Voldemort.

Moreover, Hermione saves Harry's life while in Bathilda Bagshot's house in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* Hermione thinks Harry is furious at her because she destroyed his wand, but he replies, "No, Hermione, I know it was an accident. You were trying to get us out of there alive, and you were incredible. I'd be dead if you hadn't been there to help me" (*DH* 352). Hermione shows immense bravery to defeat Nagini, Voldemort's snake, and, again, if she was not there to accompany him, Harry would be dead. Another example where Hermione saves the lives of Harry and Ron is when she apparates the trio out of Xenophilius Lovegood's house. Once they apparate out of the house, Ron and Harry tell Hermione, "You're a genius. We don't know what we'd do without you" (*DH* 425). Hermione proves her intelligence, bravery, courage, and undeniable loyalty to both Harry and Ron, who would literally be dead without her.

Mimi Gladstein, in her article "Feminism and Equal Opportunity: Hermione and the Women of Hogwarts," states, "Hermione is not only just as good as one of the boys; she is often better than they. She excels in school but also in moral character…She plays key roles in the plow of all the novels, and without her friendship Harry would surely be lost" (55). Although I agree with Gladstein on her thoughts of Hermione's essentialness, I disagree with Gladstein when she says, "She is not just a sidekick to Ron and Harry, but an equal and essential member" (50). Gladstein's definition of sidekick assumes the place of inferiority; however, the sidekick in British fantasy is defined differently than the sidekick in superhero stories. These sidekicks prove they are essential and are needed because the heroes in British fantasy are not the normalized heroes. Hermione's bravery, courage, intelligence, and loyalty are necessities in the trio's survival throughout the series and the overall outcome of the novel. At the beginning, many were put off by

Hermione's extreme intelligence, but she soon showed how important she is as a highly intelligent woman, who is also able to value people and friendships, showing her importance as a sidekick.

Marking characters as sidekicks is a dangerous task because of the stigma of inferiority surrounding sidekicks. Many scholars place much emphasis on the minute tasks sidekicks carry out, and not enough on the importance of the role of the sidekick. By reevaluating the sidekick in British fantasy, showing how they fit the trope but also how they are essential, we discover the complexity of these characters' roles that has not been done before. Sam, Ron, and Hermione prove how essential and valuable they are to their heroes' missions and the overall stories. Without these characters, Frodo and Harry would not have succeeded. Perhaps there will always be the one character who is destined to lead the mission, and, with that said, the importance of reevaluating the sidekick is of dire need now more than ever.

CHAPTER 2: GOLLUM AND DRACO: THE ANTI-SIDEKICKS

Defining the Villain: Are Gollum and Draco Villains or Anti-Sidekicks?

Gollum's distasteful and unpredictable attitude invites readers to root for Frodo and Sam along their journey, in hopes that Gollum won't suddenly attack the hobbits. Draco's snooty and mean personality makes readers defend Harry, Ron, and Hermione because they see themselves in that group of friends; readers can relate to being uncool and dorky. Both Tolkien and Rowling set up a dichotomy between good and evil; it's easy for readers to pick which characters they would want to be friends with. Although Gollum and Draco's actions can be easily marked as villainous and therefore spark a sense of contempt in readers, Gollum and Draco are very much affected by their environment.

Gollum was once a hobbit and had friends, just like Frodo and Sam. Before the One Ring overtook him, his name was Sméagol. Overtaken by the One Ring's beauty and power, Sméagol murdered his only friend, Déagol, to possess the One Ring. After a time of keeping the One Ring, the power of it transformed Sméagol into a skeletal creature and he became Gollum. Sméagol was not entirely lost, however, as readers see the creature of Gollum has two personalities.

Draco Malfoy was born into the Malfoy family. His family, especially his parents, is very rich and lives a lavish lifestyle. His parents, notably his mother, Narcissa, care for Draco and his success, although, his parents also pledge their allegiance to the dark Lord

Voldemort. As readers see, if one serves Lord Voldemort, it is hard to care for anyone else; therefore, Draco is inferior to Voldemort on his parents' list of priorities. Draco is a snob because of the environment he grew up in, but he is also very insecure because he continuously tries to uphold the Malfoy name and compete with Lord Voldemort for the love of his parents.

It appears Gollum and Draco are the bad guys or the evil ones, especially when they are contrasted with Frodo, Sam, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and countless other virtuous and good characters in these stories, but, Gollum and Draco are not evil. They are not the villains of these stories. Villains destroy anyone and anything in their power to reach dominion over all beings. Villains yearn for complete control and this control is sparked by hatred. The villains in these stories are Lord Sauron and Lord Voldemort. These two characters crave supremacy. While Sauron created the One Ring, readers see Lord Voldemort throughout the series attempting to regain complete control. Enrique Camara Arenas, in his article "Villains in Our Mind: A Psychological Approach to Literary and Filmic Villainy," describes villains as characters who "must have the ability to transform the world around them by exercising their will. And they must have some sort of reactive and adaptive intelligence, so that they can choose alternative ways of reaching their goals, defend their interests, and fight back" (7). Sauron created his large eye, so he has view, and thus control, over a large part of Middle-earth. Once he lost the One Ring, he manipulated Lord Saruman into being his puppet. Lord Voldemort also executes many different plans attempting to regain power. As readers see, both characters will stop at nothing to get what they want and they are smart and manipulative in the ways they go about it.

Anna Fahraeus and Dikmen Yakali Camoglu, in their article "Who Are the Villainous Ones? An Introduction," describe the relationship between the hero and the villain, stating,

> The hero—who usually wins—cannot exist without an opponent in one form or other. The villain embodies this opposition…The conflict that in the end produces and constructs the hero is the battle to overcome the antagonist or opposition, and resolve the transgressions that disrupt harmony, order, etc. (vii)

Although Gollum and Draco pose obstacles for Frodo and Harry to overcome, Gollum and Draco do not construct the overall evil or battle that needs to be defeated. Gollum is a pawn to the One Ring, completely controlled by its power, and Draco is merely a teenager who is trying to navigate the world just like Harry and please his parents in the process.

Reevaluating Gollum and Draco as Essential Characters

If Gollum and Draco are not the villains of these stories but do contain negative, undesirable qualities and are created as a contrast against the characters that readers see in themselves, who are they? What are their purposes? Like the efforts of Sam, Ron, and Hermione, Gollum and Draco act as a necessity to their fairy-tale heroes and move the plot forward. In this way, Gollum and Draco are sidekicks, but there is a catch. Gollum and Draco do not always look out for their fairy-tale heroes' best interests. They are not friends with their fairy-tale heroes, and, at times, they despise them. Like the contrast between a hero and an anti-hero, I posit there is an integral, complex series of characters in British fantasy: the sidekick and the anti-sidekick. To read the fairy-tale hero's friends and enemies both as sidekicks would be detrimental to each individual character and minimize the purpose of each character. There needs to be a specification of these

characters to better understand British fantasy and the fantasy world in general. These characters' motives move the story forward, but without understanding their motives, readers cannot understand the story. Therefore, I propose Gollum and Draco are anti-sidekicks, which I will prove in the coming pages.

Crazy or Misunderstood?: Gollum as Pivotal Guide for Frodo and Sam

When Gandalf tells Frodo the origins of Gollum, Gandalf comments that Déagol was not as quick and strong as Sméagol. Gandalf also notes that Sméagol was the "most inquisitive and curious-minded of that family" (Book 1 53). Sméagol had positive qualities, but he was also an outsider. "He ceased to look up at the hill-tops, or the leaves on trees, or the flowers opening in the air: his head and his eyes were downward" (Book 1 53). Sméagol was more curious than the average hobbit and he didn't fit in with those who surrounded him. He didn't have a strong sense of belonging and, when the One Ring presented itself, the beauty and power overtook him and forced him to murder his only friend. Perhaps readers feel bad for Sméagol and his loneliness, but one cannot avoid the villainous qualities of what Gandalf describes next: "No one ever found out what had become of Déagol; he was murdered far from home, and his body was cunningly hidden" (Book 1 53). One cannot deny that Sméagol was not a pure soul; he had malicious and cunning qualities; however, his goal was to never be the most powerful. He used the One Ring to find out his families' secrets, almost like a child would when he discovers a ring that can make him invisible. Of course, Sméagol's family didn't like this, and "they kicked him, and he bit their feet. He took to thieving, and going about muttering to himself, and gurgling in his throat. So they called him *Gollum,* and cursed him, and told him to go far away…" (Book 1 53-54). Gollum was shunned by his family, who didn't

provide him with the proper concern and care that he deserved as a troubled character.

It is without a doubt that Gollum is an undesirable and at times disgusting character due to the way he was written by Tolkien. Not only is Gollum malicious and cunning, Gandalf calls him a liar because of the way he twists stories. For example, Gollum told Gandalf the One Ring was a gift from his grandmother on his birthday. Besides containing some villainous personality traits, Gollum is also physically disturbing when he gurgles, cackles, and hisses. Perhaps readers would read these qualities as humorous, but when Gollum is contrasted with the delicateness of Frodo and the dedication of Sam, it is hard to view Gollum as anything but a disgusting, pitiful creature. Jorge J.E. Gracia, in his article "The Quests of Sam and Gollum for the Happy Life," states on Gollum's direct distinction from Sam, "Gollum is the undesirable one. His condition deteriorates. He becomes dark and slimy. His eyes enlarge and become pale and luminous…He talks to himself and sometimes makes no distinction between himself and his precious ring" (66). Gollum's condition is enhanced when compared to Sam's normalcy.

Readers may find Gollum talking to himself disturbing as well; however, his dual personality is the symbol of the harmful effects the One Ring has on its possessors. Eric Katz, in his article "The Rings of Tolkien and Plato: Lessons in Power, Choice, and Morality," states, "Gollum is thus a clear example of the corruption of the soul and the loss of a meaningful life caused by the overwhelming desire for the Ring of Power, a life of misery and corruption" (10). Gollum desires the One Ring, but he doesn't desire power. He enjoyed the way it made him invisible because he always felt invisible.

Gollum's villainous attributes force Frodo to keep Gollum by his side and

constantly keep watch on him. While Sam attempts to persuade Frodo that Gollum means to kill them, Frodo is reminded of a conversation he had with Gandalf. Frodo told Gandalf that Bilbo should have killed Gollum when he had the chance and Gandalf told Frodo people should not interfere with death, when they cannot bring the dead who didn't deserve death back to life. As Bilbo pitied Gollum, Frodo does too after he sees him. "We won't let you go, either. You're full of wickedness and mischief, Gollum. You will have to come with us, that's all, while we keep an eye on you. But you must help us, if you can. One good turn deserves another" (Book 4 615). At this point forward, Gollum agrees to help Frodo and Sam on their journey.

Gollum and Sméagol's priority is to keep the One Ring safe and away from Sauron, which means they must help Frodo. Katz states, "The only reason that Gollum cooperates with Frodo and Sam is that the two halves had made a truce: neither personality wanted the ring to fall in Sauron's hands" (9). Like Sam, Ron, and Hermione, Gollum holds knowledge that Frodo and Sam do not and proves his usefulness. Before Frodo and Sam met Gollum, they had no idea where to go because they have never been out of the Shire, like Harry had never been in the wizarding world. Gollum's knowledge of Middle-earth is what keeps Frodo and Sam's journey alive. After they agree to journey together, Gollum provides important topographical information as well as information about other creatures of the land:

> 'Off we go! There's only one way across between the North-end and the South-end. I found it, I did. Orcs don't use it, Orcs don't know it. Orcs don't cross the Marshes, they go round for miles and miles. Very lucky you came this way. Very lucky you found Sméagol, yes. Follow Sméagol!' (Book 4 619)

Soon after Frodo and Sam meet Gollum, he proves his usefulness and knowledge,

although his willingness to help them is driven by the One Ring. “Gollum is the mortal being who possessed the Ring for the longest period of time and he seems almost completely corrupted by the desire for it—every action he takes in the book, even guiding Frodo and Sam on their journey in Mordor, is designed to regain the Ring” (Katz 9). Gollum had no desire to escape Frodo and Sam, even though he was much quicker. “And if they fell behind, he would even turn and wait for them” (Book 4 620). He cares so much for the One Ring that he will do anything to be near it and to protect it, and, once he figures out how to steal the One Ring, he will do so and destroy both Frodo and Sam.

Along the journey through the marshes, the narrator states, “The hobbits were now wholly in the hands of Gollum,” and rightfully so because Gollum is their guide and knowledgeable about the land (Book 4 625). When the trio reaches the black gate to Mordor, they realize they cannot enter. Gollum is smart enough to know when to obey Frodo and Sam so they don’t kill him. Of course, Gollum knows of another way to Mordor and he tells Frodo and Sam, while persuading them that he is a good guide:

> “He does not want to lose nice master. And he promised, master made him promise, to save the Precious. But master is going to take it to Him, straight to the Black Hand, if master will go this way. So Sméagol must save them both, and he thinks of another way that there was, once upon a time. Nice master. Sméagol very good, always helps.” (Book 4 638)

Gollum displays his utter desire for the One Ring but also the desire to be good. He was never loved; his family despised him. Through his language, the way he frantically babbles, readers see Gollum is a lost creature beyond help. Even though he is completely taken over by the One Ring and will do anything to keep it safe, he does prove he is a necessity to the journey and the overall story.

Although Sam is very suspicious of him at many points in the novel and speaks of

his doubts, Sam will go along with whatever Frodo chooses to do. Frodo listens to Gollum's opinion over Lord Faramir, a man they meet on their journey who captures them but ultimately releases them. Faramir tells Frodo and Sam to not go east because great danger and evil await in the east; however, Frodo follows Gollum into the east, showing Frodo's trust and commitment to Gollum. To the dismay of a tired Frodo, Sam, who is suspicious of Gollum and is competing with Gollum to be Frodo's caretaker and guard, agrees with Gollum that they should keep moving, due to the dangerous creatures. Gollum is making all the right moves to possess the One Ring again.

The complexity of Gollum's character is what makes him so fascinating. Gollum is not inherently evil, but he does plan to take the One Ring from Frodo and Sam once the trio enters the lair of one of Mordor's evil inhabitants, Shelob the giant spider. Shelob poisons Frodo; Gollum attacks Sam and tries to kill him. Gollum is unsuccessful in this venture, but he does reenter the story when Frodo and Sam reach the bottom of Mount Doom. Here, Gollum attacks a very weak Frodo. Gollum attempts to get the One Ring and tear the chain from Frodo's chest but he is unsuccessful because he, too, is weak:

> Even so things might have gone far otherwise, if Gollum himself had remained unchanged; but whatever dreadful paths, lonely and hungry waterless, he had trodden, driven by a devouring desire and a terrible fear, they had left grievous marks on him. He was a lean, starved, haggard thing, all bones and tight-drawn sallow skin. A wild light flamed in his eyes, but his malice was no longer matched by his old griping strength. (Book 6 943)

When it seems Gollum cannot get more desperate, more lost, more possessed, he shows readers the lengths at which he'll go to possess the One Ring again. The One Ring is all he cares about, and he will waste away without it.

Since Gollum is driven to regain the One Ring, he tries again to attack Frodo and

steal it but not before Frodo decides in this instant to claim the One Ring as his and not complete the mission he was set out to do. Gollum fights an invisible Frodo and bites the finger that wore the One Ring clean off. Gollum is elated to possess the One Ring once again, so elated in fact that he topples over the edge of Mount Doom and falls into the flames. Walter Scheps, in his article "The Fairy-tale Morality of *The Lord of the Rings,"* provides insight into the complex character of Gollum and his desire for the One Ring:

> His entire existence revolves around his 'precious' to the exclusion of all human, or hobbitlike, concerns. He is much more obsessed with the retention of the Ring than its use, and he is seduced primarily by its beauty rather than its power, the full extent of which he is never able to understand. Gollum's two selves, counterpoint the struggle between good and evil, and the evil self wins out because of Sam's not entirely innocent intervention. Ironically, and significantly, Gollum's desire for the Ring leads to its destruction and his own and, of course, to the destruction of Mordor as well (48).

His desire for the One Ring ends his life, but, in that moment, Gollum is euphoric and dances with happiness.

Gollum is a representation of what Frodo could have very well become. Throughout the story, Frodo grows weaker, angrier, and selfish. Readers do not see what Frodo would have been like and what he would have done because Gollum is there to save Frodo from himself. As mentioned above, Yoke writes about the sidekick as a second-self. In Yoke's articulation, Gollum would represent Frodo's subconscious and Frodo's deepest desires; however, I disagree with Yoke. I think sidekicks and anti-sidekicks are their own persons. Gollum does not inhabit Frodo's space, but he does show Frodo, Sam, and readers what will become of Frodo if he possesses the One Ring for too long. Frodo isn't possessed by Gollum and his attributes; he is possessed by the One Ring and its power.

Frodo is revitalized and his old self after the One Ring is destroyed. Frodo says to Sam, "'But do you remember Gandalf's words: *Even Gollum may have something yet to do?* But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him!" (Book 6 947). Frodo and Sam realize Gollum's unfortunate story and pity him, for Frodo would have given his soul to the One Ring if it wasn't for Gollum. Bonniejean Christensen, in her article "Gollum's Character Transformation in *The Hobbit*," states, "Gollum is an example of the damned individual who loses his own soul because of devotion to evil (symbolized by the ring) but who, through grace, saves others" (7-8). Gollum's actions of saving others continue through the story of *The Lord of the Rings.* I do not believe he was graceful in any of his acts, as he was possessed, but he did save Frodo, Sam, and all of Middle-earth.

Aeon J. Skoble, in his article "Virtue and Vice in *The Lord of the Rings*, claims that Gollum must have contained immoral qualities, like greediness and maliciousness, if the One Ring had that much power to corrupt him: "Bilbo has only one or two passing moments of darkness, and can be quickly brought back to his senses. The ring's power seems partly to be contingent upon people's character" (115). This discussion continues with observations of Sam: "Sam was able to resist the Ring's power, and the reason was his feelings for Frodo. When Sam took the Ring from Frodo in Shelob's lair, he was tempted to keep it, but he did not because his first thought was for his master rather than for himself. Love gave him the strength to resist" (Gracia 71). Sméagol never loved or was loved because he was an outcast. "Gollum cannot resist the desire for the Ring because he has no resources, no friends. One reason, perhaps, why Gollum has no friends is because he has no love for himself. And a man who has good friends is more easily

prevented from going astray" (Gracia 70). Gollum is by no means a virtuous character; however, if readers shift their view of him from a negative view to a more positive one, understanding his qualities of a sidekick and his qualities as a villain, they see he is an anti-sidekick. He is vital to the story because he helps Frodo and Sam on their journey as their guide. He understands the ins and outs of Middle-earth that Frodo and Sam do not. And, of course, without Gollum, the One Ring would not have been destroyed.

More than a Spoiled Brat: Draco Malfoy as Harry's Valuable Peer

In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* when Harry meets Draco in Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions in Diagon Alley, Draco is described as a pale boy with a pointed face. The moment Harry hears Draco's voice, which is described as bored and drawling, Harry is reminded of his bothersome, selfish cousin, Dudley. Draco is defined as the rotten, mean kid at Hogwarts. During Harry and Draco's brief conversation, Draco reveals his lack of knowledge and learned prejudice against certain groups of people. For example, Harry mentions Hagrid's job as gamekeeper and Draco mocks Harry and defines Hagrid as the servant and savage of Hogwarts. He also states he would rather leave Hogwarts than be assigned to Hufflepuff house. The last and most defile sentiment Draco leaves Harry with is that pure blood wizards, who have grown up with magic, should be the only wizards to attend Hogwarts. Draco asks of Harry's parents and Harry says they are dead. Draco replies, "But they were *our* kind, weren't they?" (*SS* 78). Harry doesn't understand what Draco's intentions are and he remarks that his parents were a witch and wizard. Draco's ignorance is clearly displayed in his reply:

> "I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine.

> I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families. What's your surname, anyway?" (*SS* 78)

It's clear in this conversation that Draco is a compilation of his parent's beliefs. Draco has no clear ideas or thoughts of his own; he has grown up with his parents, mainly his father, spewing degrading, hateful language. This hate is all that Draco knows, and, since his father has instilled in him such beliefs of superiority, Draco attempts to uphold these beliefs and carry on the Malfoy name. Draco is mean and obnoxious, but the lengths in which he will go to display his superiority and greatness shows his insecurity. He's a kid who hasn't experienced the outside world; he only knows what his father has told him.

It is clear Draco makes a case for himself as the bully. David Steege, in his article "Harry Potter, Tom Brown, and the British School Story," provides evidence to how the *Harry Potter* series is in fact a British school story, aligning Harry with Tom Brown, the main character in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*, and the other professors and friends the boys have in common. Steege compares Draco to Tom's nemesis, Flashman. "Flashman is precisely the Malfoy type: a high-handed bully who sneers at those he considers inferiors…" (150). Furthermore, Steege makes the claim that Rowling uses themes like Hughes to show the innocence of children who can quickly sympathize with others. While one can make connections between Rowling and the British school story, it is important to view Draco as more than a typical bully or an obstacle the virtuous school boy must overcome. While Flashman's purpose is to be a foil for Tom and show Tom's morality, Draco's purpose is much more complex. Draco is a bully, but this quality plays a larger part in his character's purpose, which is to be an anti-sidekick.

Draco's character shows readers who Harry could have been and how his meanness is integral to being an anti-sidekick, which proves he is a necessity to Harry's

mission and the overall plot. Although Harry is depicted as innocent and Draco as a brat, they have a lot of things in common. They both hail from rich, well-known wizarding families, are good at Quidditch, and are children who are trying to navigate Hogwarts. One of the pivotal moments for Harry as he chooses the kind of person he wants to be is when he is on the train to Hogwarts. Harry soon befriends Ron, but Draco comes along to persuade him to join his side and makes fun of Ron's poorness in the process. Draco states,

> "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there." He held out his hand to shake Harry's, but Harry didn't take it. "I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks," he said coolly. Draco Malfoy didn't go red, but a pink tinge appeared in his pale cheeks. "I'd be careful if I were you, Potter," he said slowly. "Unless you're a bit politer you'll go the same way as your parents. They didn't know what was good for them, either. You hang around with riffraff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid, and it'll rub off on you." (*SS* 108-109)

In this passage, Draco attempts to befriend Harry, and, even though he did this because of Harry's popularity, it's important to note that Draco did try to be cordial with Harry and shake his hand. Draco is trying. Like any other character in this story, he feels humiliation, which shows his vulnerability and his need to be liked. Draco's understanding of what good means is skewed due to his upbringing. Draco relates good with superiority. Harry doesn't care about superiority; he cares about being virtuous, which is why he chooses to befriend Ron instead of Draco. Children are inherently good, but Draco's environment has altered his innocence.

Draco's insistence on being liked, because he is so insecure, is what moves Harry's story forward. After Neville Longbottom falls off his broomstick and is taken to the hospital in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry, Draco, and their peers are

left unsupervised. After Draco makes a joke about Neville and is reassured of himself by the acquired laughter, he steals Neville's Remembrall and flies off on his broom in the hopes Harry will come after him. Since Harry is a child and is more like Draco than readers would like to admit, he chases after Draco. Both are steadfast in doing what they believe is right and will go to great lengths to achieve it. Nonetheless, Harry flies off after Draco and readers notice Harry is a natural at flying on a broomstick. Professor McGonagall notices Harry's skills and Harry winds up being the seeker on the Gryffindor Quidditch team. This event creates a series of events that lead Harry, Ron, and Hermione to investigate what Professor Snape is up to, ultimately leading the trio to uncovering the Sorcerer's stone. Without Draco's misconduct, Harry wouldn't have wound up on the Quidditch team, furthering the events in the story.

As the series continues, Draco remains an opponent of Harry's as he musters his friends to make fun of him and work against him. It is not until *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* when Draco takes a drastic turn. To keep his family safe since his father became a prisoner, Draco pledges his allegiance to Lord Voldemort and becomes a Death Eater. Even though he brags about being on a secret mission from Lord Voldemort, Draco becomes increasingly anxious and unhealthy. Draco is assigned the task to kill Dumbledore, even though Lord Voldemort doesn't think Draco will succeed and uses this as punishment against Draco's father. Although Lord Voldemort has no confidence in Draco, Draco refines his wizarding skills and dedicates all his time and energy into securing a plan for Death Eaters to enter Hogwarts and kill Dumbledore. Due to the pressure that Draco faces, he starts to fail in school and becomes very thin and sickly looking. Once the time comes for Draco to kill Dumbledore, he cannot muster up the

strength to do so. Draco is not evil like his father or Lord Voldemort. He wears a mark that labels him as such, but, like he has all of life, he masks his insecurities with hardness.

After the events in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* Draco is tired, scared, and weak; however, his true character is shown when he realizes he can't kill Dumbledore. Draco defies his family and Lord Voldemort's requests, and thus saves Harry's life in two pivotal moments in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The first moment is when Harry, Ron, and Hermione are at Malfoy manor. The trio uses a spell to mask their appearances and Draco's father and the rest of the Death Eaters force Draco to identify the trio. They prod him to answer, but all Draco says is "I can't be sure, I…maybe…yeah, it could be" (*DH* 458-459). He doesn't give in, even when his father pressures Draco saying, "Draco, if we are the ones who hand Potter over to the Dark Lord, everything will be forgiv—" (*DH* 458). Draco never reveals the trio's true identities nor does he give in to the pressure his family and the Death Eaters put on him. Although "Draco's expression was full of reluctance, even fear," he doesn't want to give the trio away because he understands the harm that Lord Voldemort will put on them (*DH* 459).

While Harry, Ron, and Hermione are in the Room of Hidden Things trying to find Ravenclaw's Diadem, Crabbe and Goyle, Draco's friends, try to kill the trio many times. Draco insists Crabbe and Goyle stop because Lord Voldemort wants Harry alive. Crabbe and Goyle were nearly successful at killing Harry, but Draco is there to save his life again. Draco gets irritated with Crabbe and Goyle many times throughout the series because of their stupidity; however, Draco yells at Crabbe and Goyle in a way that he has never done before. Crabbe and Goyle are shocked and so are readers. Draco's real self is

becoming apparent, as he cannot handle the stress of trying to uphold the Malfoy name.

Draco's cunningness and cruelness infuriates readers as they fight for Harry's success in the series. Draco holds Harry back by getting him in trouble all the time. Even Farah Mendlesohn, in her article "Crowning the King: Harry Potter and the Construction of Authority," states, "Draco Malfoy, our visible representation of youthful malevolence, is a liar and a cheat…" (170). The moments Draco gets Harry in trouble do not surpass the moments in which he saves Harry's life and moves Harry's story forward. As Draco grows older, readers see less of his cruelty and more of his compassion. His struggle of trying to figure out who he truly is culminates with his revelation that he cannot kill Dumbledore and ultimately saves Harry's life twice.

Draco is a product of his upbringing, his parents' ignorant and hateful ideologies molded by Lord Voldemort. As readers see Draco's evolution, they also see the many ways in which he is vital to the series. Draco is mean; he is not a friend of Harry's, although he wishes to be. Grimes states, "The relationship of good to evil is perhaps the most fundamental question. Little children do not see shades of gray or ambivalence in behavior; instead, they separate the world into good and evil: Dumbledore versus Voldemort, Harry Potter versus Draco Malfoy…" (91). Harry and Draco's relationship evolves throughout the series. At the beginning, Harry and Draco know what side they were on, but by the end, they aren't fighting against each other. They mature and understand the gray areas. By simultaneously being an opponent of Harry's and his motivator, Draco shows he is an anti-sidekick. Harry cannot survive without Draco in his life. He influences Harry to be kind and virtuous, and, when Harry falls short, Draco is there to move him forward.

Viewing Gollum and Draco through a sidekick lens provides readers and fans a new perspective with which to ascertain Gollum and Draco's characteristics and motives. Although at times Gollum and Draco make it too easy for readers to dislike them, I believe it is important to unpack their superficial villainous qualities to discover their true motives. Even though Gollum's sole purpose and motivation is to possess the One Ring and destroy anyone in his path to get it, readers need to understand his past and his dual personality. After all, he doesn't kill Frodo and Sam right away. Even though Draco is a spoiled brat, to unpack his true motive, readers need to understand the environment he grew up in and the pressure that surrounds him daily. Gollum and Draco do not always have their heroes' best intentions at heart because they do contain negative qualities, but they are not evil. Reevaluating Gollum and Draco as their heroes' anti-sidekicks applies new meaning to their characters and shows how important they are to the stories, enhancing the overall reading of these texts.

CONCLUSION

These British fantasy stories contain many complex characters, plots, and themes. The fantasy world is very intricate and, because of this, readers need characters to guide them through this world. Although popular culture thoroughly focuses on superheroes and detective stories, I believe it should emphasize the sidekicks in British fantasy because they help readers understand their stories.

The feelings readers get when the One Ring is destroyed or when Harry kills Lord Voldemort are feelings of joy because evil has finally been defeated. It's easy and instantaneous to award one person that success because that is what superhero and detective stories have taught us—one person does the job of defeating evil. While Frodo is the hero because he volunteers to be the Ring-bearer and Harry is the "boy who lived," readers need to reevaluate the abilities and characteristics of the hero in the British fantasy story.

Frodo and Harry are fairy-tale heroes who do not have the qualities of the normal hero that culture is so familiar with. These fairy-tale heroes need the help from others to successfully complete their missions. Once we reevaluate Frodo and Harry's roles, we view their friends as sidekicks and give credit to these characters. This reevaluation is twofold—readers understand the characteristics of the fantasy genre and readers discover the complexity of the characters these authors create.

Defining the characters of Sam, Ron, and Hermione as sidekicks does not lessen their worth, as culture sees so often with sidekicks of superhero and detective stories.

Reading these characters through the lens of the sidekick forces readers to realize how important they are to the stories. Characters like Sam, Ron, and Hermione are necessities to Frodo and Harry, respectively. Without these characters, Frodo and Harry would not have been able to complete their missions of defeating evil. All three characters are determined to help their heroes and remain by their side. While Sam uses his instincts when the need is dire, Ron shares his knowledge of the wizarding world and Hermione uses her intelligence to get both boys out of certain predicaments. These two groups of characters work well with each other; the hero is not superior to his sidekicks. Every character has flaws, no matter his or her title.

Two characters who also have flaws are Gollum and Draco; however, readers see their flaws as villainous or evil because they do not have the best intentions. Although Gollum is conniving and Draco is a bully, both are so much more than what is examined at first read. They do not have the wits about them or pressing need for power to fit the villain archetype. Gollum and Draco are their heroes' anti-sidekicks. Gollum contains immense knowledge of Middle-earth that Frodo and Sam do not have because they have never been out of the Shire; Draco is one of Harry's main motivators. Because Gollum and Draco do not have their heroes' best interests at heart but do prove to be a necessity to their heroes' missions, they are coined anti-sidekicks.

It's important to give credit to characters that may be pushed aside because they don't hold a certain title or they hold a title that is deemed inferior in society. This project aimed to provide readers and fans of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series a new lens with which to read these important texts. While many scholars write about Harry's role as the "boy who lived" and Hermione's role as a feminist, not many scholars

write about Ron's role, as a sidekick, friend, jokester, etc. Although many articles discuss the Weasley family in relation to economics, Ron as his own character is not written about as much as he should be. I hope the discussion I created sparks many more discussions on his importance, as well as other characters who I have not mentioned in this piece.

As I move forward, there are many other characters I would like to study through the sidekick lens. Many discussions I have had about the importance and relatability of these texts always include the roles of Merry and Pippin in *The Lord of the Rings* and Hagrid in the *Harry Potter* series. Many readers and fans view Merry and Pippin as mere comic relief, which I believe is just exaggerated by the films. I, on the other hand, read Merry and Pippin as pivotal to the story just like Sam. I will not deny they are jokesters; however, their jokester ways move the story forward; it's undeniable. Hagrid's role is also very debatable. Hagrid fills many different roles, and I think a sidekick read of him would be very interesting and rewarding. When evaluating Hagrid as a sidekick, the age difference would have to be taken into consideration, since Hagrid is an adult and much older than the young trio. Although he is older, in many ways, Hagrid fills the sidekick role.

I would also like to examine texts in other genres through an anti-sidekick lens. I believe readers and fans can be very quick to assume certain characters are villains, which is why I would like to read and watch stories that are so popular through an anti-sidekick lens. I think it would be very interesting to read James Moriarty, the antagonist of *Sherlock Holmes* through an anti-sidekick lens and see if anything comes to fruition. Because readers and fans love Sherlock Holmes so much, I think they are quick to defend

him and mark Moriarty as a villain; however, after completing this project, I believe Moriarty has characteristics of the anti-sidekick.

As the state of affairs in our world continues to unfold, I will continue to apply meaning and worth to characters who may remain unnoticed or not receive the credit they deserve. The characters in these texts all have flaws, and, in many ways, they embrace those flaws to help their heroes. As the superhero stories continue to invade the movie theatres and bookstores, I hope readers and fans will keep rooting for these sidekicks and anti-sidekicks who make these stories so worthwhile. This project aimed to provide readers and fans of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series a new lens with which to read these important texts. Reading these characters as sidekicks and anti-sidekicks enhances the reading of the hero and the reading of the text as a whole. Readers need these characters to show the complexity of all characters, no matter who they are; sidekicks and anti-sidekicks create a well-rounded story.

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