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”One Ring to Rule Them All’: Tolkien on Screen. An  
Analysis of Peter Jackson’s Adaptation of *The Lord of  
the Rings*”

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### **Declaration of Authenticity**

I confirm to have conceived and written this thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references either in footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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## I. Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings* has been fascinating readers all over the world ever since its release in the 1950s. Widely regarded as the foundation work of fantasy literature, it carries the reader off to an amazing world full of strange creatures like hobbits, dwarves and Ents. The desperate journey of Frodo, the hobbit, and the immense task he finds himself faced with forcefully illustrate the importance of friendship, the concept of home and how vital it is to pursue one's goals without ever giving up.

In the early years of the new millennium, the New Zealand film director Peter Jackson took up the huge challenge of adapting Tolkien's elaborate fantasy world to the screen. By using innovative computer animation techniques he managed to create a convincing visualisation of Tolkien's novel, which had been deemed unfilmable due to its wealth of detail. His film version of *The Lord of the Rings* was met with great enthusiasm and its success remains unbroken until today. Among its seventeen Academy Awards the Oscar for the "Best Adapted Screenplay" (2004) can be found.

It soon turned out, however, that fans of the novel were rather critical of Jackson's action-packed visualisation of Middle-earth. Fans of the film, on the other hand, were disappointed when they discovered how slow-paced the original novel was. Startled by this curious phenomenon, I started to research this topic – and was amazed at how little literature there is to be found on Jackson's film in the context of Tolkien's novel. Academic papers tend to focus either on the film or on the novel, but comparative issues are largely neglected.

This thesis sets out to thoroughly explore the art of film-making in contrast to the art of literature and tries to apply these findings to the issue of literary adaptation. What different demands do film and literature have towards a text? Where does "the core of the original" lie? Which elements can be directly transferred from one medium to the other and which cannot? When do changes to the literary source become necessary? And, most importantly, how does a text become dramatically effective in adaptation?

Assuming a thorough knowledge of both novel and film, this thesis provides answers to these questions and illustrates how Jackson and his film-writing team applied the basic principles of adaptation to Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. When references to the "film" are made, they refer to the extended DVD version of Jackson's adaptation, as this longer version corresponds more closely to Tolkien's original text. For the sake of simplicity abbreviations of the film titles are used, namely FS for *The Fellowship of the Ring*, TT for *The Two Towers* and RK for *The Return of the King*. If the title of one of the three parts of the novel is mentioned, its full name will be given. Whenever possible, however, the text of both novel and film is treated as



one coherent text, as the partition into separate parts was never intended by the author himself.

One major area of discussion comprises changes in Jackson's adaptation as far as storyline, kernels, atmosphere and events are concerned. Which episodes were omitted in the film and why? Are there new episodes that do not occur in the original text? How do they affect the flow of events? To which extent did episodes and scenes get rewritten to meet the specific demands of the medium of film? And which changes can be rather ascribed to the script-writers' personal preferences?

Another large field under investigation are characters and characterisation. How did Tolkien characterise his protagonists? Does Jackson's approach to Tolkien's heroes differ from that used in the novel? Do characters' decisions at kernels stay the same or do altered motivations lead to different choices? And if so, how do these changes affect character development and the way the protagonists are perceived by the audience of the film?

An attempt at answering these questions will be made by drawing on the basic principles of adaptation. My analysis does not aim for completeness, which would not be achievable considering the large amount of textual material of both novel and film. My claims are rather illustrated by a selection of examples that I consider most important when comparing Jackson's dramatic version of *The Lord of the Rings* to Tolkien's novel. Contrary to traditional adaptation studies, the main-principle under which these exemplary alterations are analysed is not fidelity to the original source. Consistency, believability and dramatic effectiveness are considered most desirable. It is mainly due to these attributes that any dramatic adaptation can stand on its own and will attract new audiences to the world of its literary source.

## I. From Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation

### 1. The Fascination of Adaptations

Watching an adaptation is like entering somebody else's imagination: When film-makers read novels they are thrilled by the action, feel with the characters and imagine the fictional world between the pages in bright colours – just like any individual reader does. Adaptations are a reproduction of the film-maker's subjective reading of the original, translated into the special language of film.<sup>1</sup>

In the cinema, the audience shares in the film-maker's interpretation and visualisation of the literary source. There are either viewers who have read the novel or those who have not. Knowing audiences tend to have expectations and demands towards the adaptation, because they already have their own mental images and hope to find a fairly accurate portrayal of the original story. The film-maker's phantasy, however, hardly ever correspond to their own. Therefore knowing viewers will constantly compare their own mental version of the story to that which is presented to them on the screen. This can lead to disappointment or provide enriching input to one's own reading of the story. In any case, the reader's imagination of the story will never be the same after seeing the adaptation as it gets "colonized by the visual and aural world of the film"<sup>2,3</sup>

A large part of the audience, on the other hand, will watch the adaptation as a film only, unaware of it being an adaptation or not familiar with its literary source. Therefore, an adaptation has to appeal to unknowing audiences by being both logical and exiting.<sup>4</sup>

Adaptations are a tempting challenge for film-makers, as famous novels already have their audiences. Readers want to see what their favourite book looks like on the screen, while non-readers tend to be attracted by prestigious names of bestsellers and literary classics. This often leads to adaptations of novels being a (financial) success.<sup>5</sup>

If the original novel is not widely known, film-makers have more freedom in their interpretation of the story. If they find themselves confronted with fans of popular novels, however, their success often depends on the extent to which their reading coincides with that of the majority of other readers. At the same time film-makers have to find the right balance between the formal demands of the art of film and fidelity to its literary source, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 7

<sup>2</sup> Hutcheon 122

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 122-123

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 7

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Bowden 177-178

pleasure of watching an adaptation is due to a mixture of repetition and difference. Due to these reasons many well-known movie directors tend to avoid literary adaptations.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. The Field of Adaptation Studies

Adaptations of literary sources have existed since the beginnings of cinema, going back as far as the silent era of film. According to Ray, more than half of all commercial movies can be traced back to literature.<sup>7</sup>

For a long time adaptation studies have been comparative in their nature. They are a field of study located between film theory and literary studies, tending to be closer to the latter. Adaptations were seen in relation to their literary sources and fidelity to the original was considered the most desirable goal. Often the limitations of cinema became the focus of attention and adaptations were widely perceived as inferior to their original texts. Moralistic terms like “betrayal”, “loss” or “violation”<sup>8</sup> were used in this context, setting adaptation in a sinister light as if they were “vampiric [...], draw[ing] the life-blood from [their] source and leave[ing] it [...] dead”<sup>9</sup>. This approach to adaptation goes back to knowing viewers’ thwarted expectations and is neither systematic nor objective.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past two decades adaptation studies abandoned the idea of the novel’s supremacy and moved to the opposite extreme: It became common to regard adaptations simply as films and no longer as adaptations. Leitch boldly declares “The text is dead; long live the text”<sup>11</sup> and Andrew claims that comparing films to novels would be like comparing paintings to poems and thus impossible. As films, adaptations could only be compared to films and not to texts of any other medium even if they were their source of inspiration.<sup>12</sup>

Neither of these two approaches, however, acknowledges adaptation as a confluence of two art forms, which are similar in their narrative nature but differ fundamentally in their signifying systems. Authors like MacFarlane or Hutcheon try to establish relationships between film and novel without evaluating the adapted version. They rather analyse how far a film-maker has chosen to transfer elements that can be transferred from novel to film and give honour to both texts alike.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Naremore 7

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ray 42

<sup>8</sup> Stam 55

<sup>9</sup> Hutcheon 176

<sup>10</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 3-12

<sup>11</sup> Leitch 21

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Andrew 32

<sup>13</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 196-197

These three different approaches illustrate that adaptation studies are an area still in a state of flux and that the interest in comparing the two different arts of film and literature remains unbroken.

### 3. Different Aspects of Film and Literature

Film and literature share the same underlying principle: the art of story-telling. Being narrative in format, they find themselves confronted with similar challenges like timing, pacing and release of information. Events must be linked causally and emotions of characters must develop in a believable way.<sup>14</sup>

This, however, is where the similarity ends. Although related as “sister arts”<sup>15</sup>, novel and film tend to be considered as opposed to each other as words and images. The text of a novel is encoded by a verbal signifying system consisting of written words. Words are conceptual and symbolic, inspiring mental imagery. Therefore, the text of a novel belongs to the realm of imagination.<sup>16</sup>

Film, on the other hand, is a multi-track medium. The text of a film makes use of a system of visual, aural and verbal signs, which form a hybrid. The fictional world is present before the viewer’s eyes and not conjured up by written words only. Set, dialogue, lighting and music all contribute to the creation of this world. This makes film part of the realm of visual and aural perception.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas literature is good at conveying internal action and offers an insight into the protagonists’ minds, film cannot directly show what is going on beneath the surface. Therefore, its strength lies in depicting external conflict. Protagonists are characterised through their actions and not through interior monologues or thoughts and external images (e.g. gestures) are used to mirror inner truths.<sup>18</sup>

Novels depend on the voice of a narrator who relates the events of the story to the reader, usually in past tense. Film, on the other hand, does not have to be narrated because it is presented and therefore it is characterized by immediacy. MacFarlane argues that in film the narrator is replaced by the camera, because the camera directs the viewer’s gaze by focusing on details the film-maker wants the audience to see. The viewer, however, may not always

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ray 39

<sup>15</sup> Elliott 1

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Elliot 1-11

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 23-25

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 57-58

discern these details as films are not seen frame by frame like novels are read word by word. Film is an entity that happens in present tense and offers a huge degree of objectivity.<sup>19</sup>

While novels are usually written by one single author, films are made by a number of people in a collective process: Actors, editors, designers and composers are among the staff that contribute to the success of a film. It is the responsibility of the director to bring all these elements together.<sup>20</sup>

As film is an expensive art, a given budget has to be kept when producing a film. This often hinders creativity as far as film length or the realization of scenes is concerned. Novels, in contrast, are not affected by monetary aspects as all that is needed to write them is paper.<sup>21</sup>

These differences between the media of literature and film must be taken into account, when a novel is adapted for the screen. The ability of each medium should be used at its best when replacing one illusion of reality by another in adaptation. How this works and how the signifying system of literature can be translated into that of film will be shown in the following sections.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. The Nuts and Bolts of Screen-writing

Although screenplays form the spine of every film, they are not considered pieces of art. Written for the single purpose of being turned into a film, they have to meet certain criteria.<sup>23</sup> An overview of these underlying principles of screenwriting, based on Darsie Bowden's textbook *Writing for Film*, will be given in this chapter; for the sake of clarity they will be arranged in a list.

1. Due to the limited amount of film time and the limited span of attention of the audience, the text of a film must be concise and move forward at a quick pace. It is a rule among film-makers that the conflict has to be established within the first twenty minutes of a film or the audience will get bored.<sup>24</sup>
2. The plot has to be as clear and as memorable as possible, because viewers cannot go back to earlier scenes of the film like readers can in a novel if they get confused. Therefore, independent subplots should be avoided.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 17-29

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 80-83

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bowden 4

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 56

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bowden 3

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bowden 18

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Bowden 17

3. The structure of a film has to be defined clearly as well. Good screenplays consist of a beginning, a middle and an ending, which includes the climax. Expositions are largely avoided and action/adventure-films in particular start in medias res. If a film-maker decides to add a resolution, in which he ties up loose ends, this resolution should be short and tranquil.<sup>26</sup>
4. As the audience of a film expects to be entertained, dramatic tension and suspense are crucial elements of any film. This is why scenes should start when the action begins and not earlier. Tension tends to build up well when the pressure on the protagonist increases constantly and the opposition they face is strong. Not only should the entire film head towards a climax, where the conflict is solved and the premise of the film is proven, but each scene should have a climax of its own. Throughout the film tension should rise consistently without getting higher than the climax at any point. Quiet moments of rest must be included as well, because nonstop tension “has the unfortunate tendency to exhaust itself”<sup>27 28</sup>.
5. Action has to be conveyed by the characters, as the audience only knows what the characters tell them combined with the images shown on the screen. Character in its turn is conveyed by action and reaction to the fictional world. This leaves dialogue with the difficult task of fulfilling a number of different functions at once, e.g. exposition, characterisation and advancing the story.<sup>29</sup>
6. Just as the plot, characters have to be clearly defined in their roles, too. Film-makers try to introduce as few characters as possible, because then they will be remembered more easily by the audience. Characters that do not contribute to the conflict of the film should be avoided altogether.<sup>30</sup>
7. All characters of a film should manage to capture the audience. This is achieved if they display extraordinary qualities but stay human at the same time. They have to be capable of strong passions and emotions, which must develop gradually and reach a climax in order to be believable. All this helps the viewer to identify with them. Stereotyped characters work well in comedy, but are to be avoided in general.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Bowden 33-50

<sup>27</sup> Bowden 40

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Bowden 37-45

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Bowden 15-25

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bowden 18

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bowden 57-58

8. The conflict of a film has to be external and dramatic. Internal conflict has to be played out in interaction with other characters and is revealed through the character's actions.<sup>32</sup>

These points do not only illustrate what film-makers have to keep in mind when producing a new film but even more what they have to be aware of when dealing with an adaptation. The temptation of transferring the greater freedom of the novel to the film is strong, but being faithful to the letter does not make an adaptation successful. According to Bowden, exact screen representations of literary sources are "doomed to fail"<sup>33</sup>, because they neglect the special demands of the medium of film. How these principles can be transferred to the art of adaptation will be explored further on in this discussion.

### **5. Some Thoughts on Adaptation as Intertextuality**

As illustrated above, literature and film encode texts by using two different signifying systems. Therefore, the adaptation of a literary source to the screen can be compared to the translation of a text from one language into another. The best translations, however, are not literal, but retain only the meaning of a text by making use of the other semiotic system.<sup>34</sup>

What matters most in translation as well as in adaptation is the equivalence in meaning of a given text. A text is not just copied, but paraphrased and made suitable to an opposed medium of expression. Thus, film-makers first interpret a literary source and then recreate it anew by using the different signifying system of film. Ideally, the resulting text is both faithful to its original material and new in its formal structure.<sup>35</sup>

Adaptation involves a change in the medium of expression, while at the same time it tries to capture the "spirit" and the "tone"<sup>36</sup> of its literary source. Film-makers therefore have to find out what these two might be, knowing quite well that their answers are subjective and unavoidably influenced by personal preferences and beliefs. Two different adaptations of a single novel will thus never be the same.<sup>37</sup>

### **6. Adaptation in Practice**

Despite the subjectivity of any adaptation, there are some basic methods film-makers use when adapting novels to the screen. These techniques draw on the particularities of the

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Bowden 31-32

<sup>33</sup> Bowden 178

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 16

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Bazin 20

<sup>36</sup> Stam 55

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 176

mechanics of film (as discussed in 4.) and help to change the medium of expression of a literary text while retaining its most important elements.

## **6.1. Transferable Elements**

Elements belonging to the narrative function of a text can be transferred directly from one medium to the other as they are not bound to any semiotic system. This is the case for action, kernels, themes and to a certain extent also for character, which must be reshaped according to the ways of expression of the medium of film. The main goal is to keep the underlying ideas of the literary source but to add dramatic tension so that the film will capture its audience.<sup>38</sup>

### **6.1.1. Action**

Adapting the action of a novel is a job of contraction. The text has to be reduced in size and complexity, as it takes longer to perform an action than to write about it and the attention of the audience tends to wane after a maximum of three hours. Film-makers have to decide what events they think are necessary to tell the story and try to simplify the plot. In this process of selection whole plotlines may be dropped and digressive episodes are omitted.<sup>39</sup>

Scenes are modified or replaced by new scenes altogether to have strong transitions. To increase dramatic tension, they are made to contain more action than in the original and rise to a sharper climax. Apart from that every scene of an adaptation has to fulfil several purposes at once: It should provide exposition for scenes to come, contribute to characterisation and further the plot.<sup>40</sup>

The chain of events may be reordered and the pacing is transformed as well. “Temporal condensation”<sup>41</sup> is a common phenomenon, as the passing of time is hard to depict in film. While some elements of the literary source are cut, new elements may be invented by the film-makers to keep the action clear. Sometimes events that happen in the background or are summarized in the novel have to be dramatized as well if they are essential for understanding the plot.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13-20

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bowden 182-185

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bowden 185-197

<sup>41</sup> Stam 71

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 71



### **6.1.2. Kernels**

Other transferable elements are the kernels or cardinal functions of a text. These interchangeable terms are used to describe points of a story that make a choice necessary: Protagonists find themselves in a situation where they can either say yes or no with their choice determining the further direction of the plot.<sup>43</sup>

Film-makers have to select from the kernels of the novel and sometimes their choice creates new kernels that are not present in the original text. MacFarlane claims that different directions at kernels tend to be perceived as major alterations by the audience and are particularly prone to criticism.<sup>44</sup>

### **6.1.3. Characters**

Characters can be transferred from one text to another as far as external attributes and character development are concerned. Thus, characteristics like age, profession or tone of voice make their way into an adaptation. Elements of the plot are used as a means of characterisation and internal conflict gets acted out.<sup>45</sup>

Only characters that are essential to the plot will be kept by the film-makers for the sake of clarity. If the function of a minor character is important at one point, it may be taken over by one of the main-characters. Thus, different characters get combined into one in an act of condensation.<sup>46</sup>

The motivations of characters can be directly transferred into the adaptation as well. According to MacFarlane changes in the motivations of characters usually lead to negative reactions on the part of viewers familiar with the novel.<sup>47</sup>

### **6.1.4. Dialogue**

Dialogue is transferable only to a certain extent. Not the actual words or phrases of what characters say are kept, but they are reinterpreted by the film-makers. They rework dialogue so that it serves more than one function at one time, i.e. exposition, characterisation and

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13

<sup>44</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 14

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Bowden 182-184

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Stam 71

<sup>47</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 24

advancing the story. Sometimes major characters take over lines from minor characters, if the content is important for the plot.<sup>48</sup>

This makes dialogue in adaptation a recreation of what is said in the original source. What is usually kept are characteristic ways of expression that belong to each character (e.g. Gollum's way of speaking in *The Lord of the Rings*).<sup>49</sup>

## 6.2. Intransferable Elements

Even if an adaptation shares actions, kernels, characters and themes with its literary source, it may still evoke responses quite different from the written text. This is due to elements that depend on a specific signifying system and therefore cannot be transferred directly into another medium. Such elements as atmosphere, place, mood and to a certain extent the psychology of characters have to be interpreted by the film-makers and are visualized in a very subjective way as interpretations are always subjective.<sup>50</sup>

Lighting, set and pacing are used to convey atmosphere, while music plays a major role in depicting emotions and linking up individual themes. Emotions and thoughts of characters are visualised by posture, gestures and facial expression. Different camera shots and movements lead to different effects and modes like slow motion or rapid cutting help to increase suspense. Thus, the verbal description of the novel is transcoded into sound and visual images.<sup>51</sup>

Point of view cannot be transferred directly in adaptations, either. As film functions without a narrator, conveying a point of view that is not omniscient poses a great challenge for film-makers. Either the device of voice-over is used to create the illusion of a first person subjective narrator in an adaptation or – what happens more often – the matter is dropped altogether.<sup>52</sup>

Changes in the category of intransferable elements are usually less easy to pinpoint for the audience but just as important to make an adaptation work and to evoke the viewer's memory of the original text.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Leitch 129

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Bowden 196

<sup>50</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13-26

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 23-40

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Stam 72

<sup>53</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 198

## 7. Concluding Thoughts

Any literary adaptation confronts the audience with somebody else's phantasy. Imaginative visualization varies most in fantasy fiction, as in this kind of novels new worlds and strange creatures are conjured up by words.<sup>54</sup>

After the release of an adaptation, the sale of the original novel usually increases. Images of the film make their way onto book covers and are widely used in marketing. Thus, adaptations bring literature to a larger public. They offer an easier access to difficult novels and further the joy of reading. Knowledge of the literary source changes the perception of an adaptation and knowledge of the film in its turn influences the reading of the novel.<sup>55</sup>

Cultural and social phenomena at the time of an adaptation's making can lead to a shift of emphasis in the themes of the text and add new elements to the plot. Thus, adaptations show how stories evolve over time to fit new audiences and to live up to all kinds of new expectations.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 29

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Bazin 22 & Hutcheon 118-121

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 176

### III. The Author and the Director

#### 1. J.R.R. Tolkien

Born in 1892, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien grew up to become the founder of the literary genre of fantasy.

As a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University, Tolkien's interest in the history and development of languages had been keen from childhood on. Already in his youth he enjoyed inventing his own "private languages"<sup>57</sup> and used them in his diaries. As languages do not exist without people who speak them, he decided that they belonged to different tribes of Elves.<sup>58</sup> Deeply regretting that England had no complex mythology equal to the Finnish *Kalevala*, he set out to invent a mythology of his own to provide his Elvish languages with a cultural background. First drafts of this mythology date back as far as 1917 and the work of his life was published posthumously by his son Christopher as *The Silmarillion*.<sup>59</sup>

Aside from his mythology, Tolkien had always enjoyed writing humorous stories for his four children. One of these stories, *The Hobbit*, happened to be published in 1937 due to a friend of the family, who enjoyed reading the manuscript. The immediate success of the story of Bilbo, the hobbit, who finds a magic ring and defeats a dragon, made his publishing company Allen & Unwin eagerly demand a sequel.<sup>60</sup>

This sequel, however, developed a life of its own, as in it Tolkien linked the world of *The Hobbit* to his private mythology. Darker in mood and no children's book, *The Lord of the Rings* took twelve years to be finished, growing to a length of no less than one thousand pages.<sup>61</sup> Although his publisher considered it the work of a genius, he was convinced of it becoming a financial disaster and therefore insisted on it being published in three separate parts. Tolkien detested this idea as the novel was written as one coherent story, but in the end he had to give in.<sup>62</sup>

Published between 1954 and 1955, *The Lord of The Rings* surprised both its publisher and its author with its extraordinary success. Fan clubs were formed and continuing sales brought renown to the professor, who had not been used to wealth before.<sup>63</sup>

Having witnessed the industrialisation of rural England and fought in World War I, Tolkien was a man critical of technology and deeply conservative. When friends of his recorded him

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<sup>57</sup> Carpenter (1995) 47

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 119-126

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 97-106

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 164-186

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 187-208

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 211-221

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 222-234

reading from his novel, he was very sceptical and first spoke the Lord's Prayer into the tape recorder to cast out any devils lurking within this technical device. Being perfectionist and in love with details, he was hostile towards most changes in proposed adaptations of his novel.<sup>64</sup> Although Tolkien died in 1973 the success of his works lives on and remains unbroken until today.

## 2. Early Attempts at Adapting *The Lord of the Rings*

Although *The Lord of the Rings* used to be regarded as unfilmable, first attempts at adapting Tolkien's novel were made as early as the 1950s. In 1955, the BBC released a 12-part radio adaptation by Terence Tiller. Tolkien, however, disliked the vast compression of the story, calling Tiller's version a "sillification"<sup>65</sup> of his novel. Only in 1982 would a second BBC radio play consisting of 26 instalments be successfully produced.

Aware of the fundamentally different nature of drama and prose, Tolkien considered his novel "very unsuitable for dramatic [...] representation"<sup>66</sup> and was not pleased with any attempts of bringing fantasy literature on the stage. In his essay "On Fairy-Tales" he claims that fantasy ceases to be fantasy as soon as it is acted out and therefore adaptation could never be successful.<sup>67</sup>

Still, when an American film company offered to turn *The Lord of the Rings* into an animated film, Tolkien was not averse to the idea at first. Only when he discovered that the film script by Morton Zimmerman showed a "complete lack of respect for the original"<sup>68</sup> did he reject the offer. Apart from several misspelled names, the adaptor had a preference for fairy castles, flying eagles and battle scenes and Tolkien felt that "the heart of the tale[...], the journey of the Ringbearers,[...] ha[d] [...] simply been murdered"<sup>69</sup>.

Only after Tolkien's death, in 1978, an animated adaptation of the novel was released by Ralph Bakshi. Comprising *The Fellowship of the Ring* and a part of *The Two Towers*, it was not followed by a sequel due to a chorus of devastating criticism. In 1980, Rankin and Bass adapted *The Return of the King*, but failed just as Bakshi had two years before.

Tolkien's idea of film-making goes back to the cinema of the 1960s, where the art of special effects was still in its beginnings. In the meantime, new technologies and effects have enabled

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Carpenter (1995) 217

<sup>65</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 198, 19 June 1957

<sup>66</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 194, 6 November 1956

<sup>67</sup> Tolkien (1968) 47-48

<sup>68</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 207, 8 April 1958

<sup>69</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

directors to create life-like visualisations of fictional creatures and fantastic places. It is ironic that only the advance in technology, which Tolkien hated so much, should make a film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* finally possible.

### 3. Peter Jackson

At the first glance the New Zealand director Peter Jackson looks like a curious choice for adapting Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to the screen. Known as "the Kiwi prince of splatter"<sup>70</sup> he had almost exclusively produced movies full of gore and horror up to that point and was famous for turning any plotline into a gross comedy full of violence.<sup>71</sup>

Born in 1961, Jackson knew very early that he wanted to work with special effects. By the age of nine he had filmed the first effects of his own in his street and started to shoot tiny films, leaving his parents worried because of his preference of horror. Just like Tolkien, he learned the crafts of his art all by himself, never attending a course on film-making.<sup>72</sup>

His debut movie *Bad Taste* (1987) aimed at shocking the audience by detailed displays of cannibalism. Although it did not have a script and was banned at the Ontario Film Festival, it won the prize for the best gore film at the Paris Festival of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Jackson wanted to make "enjoyable splatter[...], splatter for all the family"<sup>73</sup>. A gross puppet-movie, *Meet the Feebles* (1989), and a zombie shocker, *Braindead* (1992), followed.<sup>74</sup>

In 1994, his wife and long-time collaborator Fran Walsh persuaded Jackson to make a film on one of the most spectacular murder cases in New Zealand history, where two teenage girls brutally murdered one of their mothers. Here, for the first time, working with actors became important for Jackson, as *Heavenly Creatures* did not depend on special effects alone. The success of *Heavenly Creatures* led to Jackson's first big-budget Hollywood film *The Frighteners* (1996), a ghost-hunter movie, which did not become a financial success.<sup>75</sup>

As a teenager Jackson had liked Bakshi's animation of *The Lord of the Rings* and devoured the novel. When plans of remaking *King Kong* were turned down, he decided to take on the challenge of adapting Tolkien's fantasy masterpiece to the screen. His long experience in

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<sup>70</sup> Pryor 13

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Pryor 9-13

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Pryor 25-37

<sup>73</sup> Jackson as cited in Pryor 102

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Pryor 38-104

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Pryor 130-146; 191-210

special effects and his involvement in the founding of the special effects company Weta predestined him for this job.<sup>76</sup>

As a “control freak”<sup>77</sup>, Jackson took on the roles of director, writer and producer and decided to shoot the three parts of the film simultaneously over a period of 15 months. His incredible dedication to his work resulted in a film that won him worldwide fame and no fewer than seventeen Academy Awards altogether. Among these the Oscar for the Best Director (RK, 2004) can be found.<sup>78</sup>

Sir Peter Jackson was knighted in 2010 and went back to Middle-earth with his three-part adaptation of *The Hobbit*, whose first part was released in 2012.

#### **4. *The Lord of the Rings* on Screen**

Tolkien’s “unfilmable”<sup>79</sup> *Lord of the Rings* was Jackson’s first attempt at an adaptation and a great challenge. The script was written in a collective effort by Jackson himself, his wife Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens. For TT also Stephen Sinclair was part of the script-writing team.<sup>80</sup> For the sake of simplicity I will use Peter Jackson’s name only when referring to the adaptors in this thesis, without meaning to disrespect the other members of the team. The first script envisaged Tolkien’s novel as a two part adaptation. When the filming company changed from Miramax to New Line, however, three films were granted to Jackson and the script had to be restructured.<sup>81</sup>

Jackson was aware that he would be confronted with a large fan base and high audience expectations. This meant that he had to remain faithful to the original text but at the same time he had to take the demands of non-readers into account.<sup>82</sup>

In spite of the three hour length of every part of the film, a lot of interesting material had to be cut from the theatrical version of *The Lord of the Rings*. The originally planned extended version of the film was released on DVD only and includes up to 50 minutes more material per part. In contrast to the theatrical version, which focuses on battle sequences, more character driven scenes and quieter moments were introduced. Jackson sees the theatrical and

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Pryor 230-248

<sup>77</sup> Jackson as cited in Pryor 326

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Pryor 251-272

<sup>79</sup> Leitch 145

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Pryor 355

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:04-00:05

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Newman 4

the extended film as alternate versions of equal importance, even if the extended version comes closer to his vision of *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>83</sup>

In analogy to Tolkien's structure of the novel, several hours of bonus material were added to the DVDs in the form of Appendices. As Jackson was aware of Tolkien fans being critical of his adaptation, he justifies alterations in these appendices and meticulously documents the filming process of *The Lord of the Rings*. The film-writers highlight again and again that the film was "made with love [...], with great care and commitment"<sup>84</sup> and that everybody was "mindful of the novel"<sup>85</sup>, knowing the book "inside out"<sup>86</sup>. Claiming that "this should ultimately be Tolkien's film, it shouldn't be ours"<sup>87</sup>, Jackson pleads for kind criticism on part of the fans almost too eagerly. Boyens in her turn adds: "We all love these books [...] and this world. This is our interpretation, our vision, our attempt to bring it to life"<sup>88</sup>

## 5. The Reception of Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*

The three parts of Jackson's film adaptation were released between 2001 and 2003 and were met with great enthusiasm. Focusing on action and adventure, Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* became a mile-stone in computer-generated film making. New software had been developed to visualise vast battle scenes and to bring characters like Gollum or Treebeard to life. The differences in size between the characters were successfully rendered on screen and animations of cities blended in beautifully with the breath-taking landscape of New Zealand.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, Jackson's experience as a director of horror films came in useful in his visualisation of Tolkien's monsters.<sup>90</sup> The details of design imagined by the renowned Tolkien illustrators Alan Lee and John Howe earned great praise as did Howard Shore's haunting soundtrack.<sup>91</sup>

It soon became clear, however, that the people who enjoyed the films were often not identical to those who enjoyed the book. Fans of the film tended to be disappointed by the novel's lack of action sequences, while fans of the novel were irritated by changes to story and characters. Also scholars' opinions on Jackson's adaptation vary considerably.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Mathijs 45

<sup>84</sup> Jackson in Appendices of FS, J.R.R. Tolkien: Creator of Middle-earth 00:49

<sup>85</sup> Mortensen in Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:18

<sup>86</sup> Ordesky in Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:01

<sup>87</sup> Jackson in Appendices of FS, J.R.R. Tolkien: Creator of Middle-earth 00:22

<sup>88</sup> Boyens in Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:20

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Thompson 284-285

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Hall 55

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Jorgensen 45

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Porter XI



The visualisation of Middle-earth was unanimously praised<sup>93</sup> and the modernisation of Tolkien's language was welcomed by many critics<sup>94</sup>. Some noticed a certain influence of *Star Wars* on Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>95</sup>, while others appreciated the quicker pace of the story compared to the novel<sup>96</sup>. Critics like Barker, however, were "seriously aghast"<sup>97</sup> as they found the long battles scenes offensive to Tolkien's work<sup>98</sup> or missed the quieter human moments of the novel<sup>99</sup>. Jackson's rather superficial portrayal of the Elves was widely criticised and not all scenes were deemed to be clear for viewers not familiar with the novel<sup>100</sup>. Even Jackson's biographer Pryor states that "Jackson's strengths are not the ethereal moments but the darker, more immediate qualities of caves overrun with orcs and monsters"<sup>101</sup> and regrets "moments of silliness"<sup>102</sup> he finds in Jackson's film. Tolkien's son Christopher was not in favour of Jackson's adaptation but remained in the background of the discussion.<sup>103</sup> *The Lord of the Rings* also became a topic in queer studies<sup>104</sup> and in gender studies<sup>105</sup>.

Fans of the film, however, ignored the on-going debate and happily bought posters, bookmarks, puzzles or computer games featuring *The Lord of the Rings*. Merchandise reached from these more common items to absurdities like latex masks, Barbie dolls or talking plush Gollums. Fans could collect Kinder Egg or Burger King figurines, order "King of the ring" onion rings or travel to New Zealand, which has been advertised as the "Home of Middle-earth" ever since.<sup>106</sup> Fans share their ideas in uncountable online forums and their enthusiasm led to an unprecedented revival of Tolkien's novel.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Fuller 18

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Alleva 20

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Flieger 72-74

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Shippey 69

<sup>97</sup> Barker (2006) 82

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Davis 67

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Smith 7

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Alleva 21

<sup>101</sup> Pryor 318

<sup>102</sup> Pryor 319

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Fuller 18

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Allington

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Goldberg

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Conrich 122-134

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Brayton 141-148

## **IV. Changing the Story**

In a thesis covering all three parts of Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, it is not possible to take every single alteration in storyline, structure and scenes into account. Therefore, completeness is not the aim of this analysis.

Instead of randomly listing changes a reader of the novel encounters when watching the film, I will focus on a rather small number of alterations which I find important and discuss them in greater detail. My examples will be selected on the basis of the theoretical background presented in Chapter II and will be grouped according to the principles of adaptation stated there. Thus, Jackson's treatment of transferable elements like events, kernels and themes will be illustrated. Episodes that were left out in the film will be closely examined and episodes that were invented anew by the script-writing team will be explored.

An attempt at analysing the impact of these alterations on the progress of the tale and on the overall atmosphere of the story will be made. I will explore if the changes under discussion were necessary to translate Tolkien's novel from the language of words into the visual and aural language of film or if they were rather introduced by the author on grounds of personal preference. My analysis will be complemented by a thorough discussion of Jackson's altered chronology and structure of the story.

### **1. Chronology, Structure and the Issue of Time**

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is structured in quite a peculiar way. Instead of presenting events chronologically, Tolkien splits the narration into two separate strands after the first two Books, each following the story of one of the hobbits. He does not jump back and forth between these strands, but tells Merry and Pippin's story in Book 3 and Frodo and Sam's story in Book 4. This makes *The Two Towers* a novel consisting of two distinct storylines told neatly one after the other with only few references between them. Similarly, Book 5 covers a mix of Pippin's adventures in Gondor and Merry's in Rohan, while the reader meets Frodo again only in Book 6.

The issue of time is another interesting aspect of Tolkien's novel. After Bilbo's birthday party in Chapter I no less than seventeen years pass, before Frodo learns about the true nature of the Ring in Chapter II. In this section Jackson's approach towards Tolkien's rather complicated concept of structure and time will be discussed.

### 1.1. Compression of Time

In the novel, Frodo inherits Bilbo's Ring at the age of thirty-three and sets out on his journey on his fiftieth birthday. Thus, seventeen years lie between the events of the first two chapters. This quick passing of time at the beginning of the novel is slightly confusing for the reader, who has only just got used to time and characters and it would interrupt the flow of events even more in a film.

Therefore, Jackson lets Gandalf reveal his knowledge about the Ring in the aftermath of Bilbo's birthday party to avoid any break in the film. As a result, Jackson's Frodo leaves the Shire in the same night, while it takes Tolkien's Frodo another six months to prepare for his departure. This compression of time keeps the action flowing and turns the Frodo of the film into a youngster, which was regarded as more appealing to the predominately young audience.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, Tolkien heavily protested against a similar approach to time in Zimmerman's script for a proposed adaptation of his novel. Unaware of the special demands of the medium of film, he suggests that rather no definite statement about time should be made as the temporal relations must not be touched.<sup>109</sup>

### 1.2. Interweaving the Different Storylines

Tolkien's story moves forward in – what Shippey calls – a “‘leapfrog’ pattern”<sup>110</sup>. The separate strands of narration, told from the point of view of three different hobbits, are neatly kept apart from each other. Thus, the individual storylines repeatedly overtake one another and narration recommences at an earlier point of the story when the reader returns to a different hobbit hero.

For Tolkien it was “essential that these two branches should each be treated in coherent sequence”<sup>111</sup>. As they were “totally different in tone and scenery”<sup>112</sup>, they should not get mixed up in adaptation. Tolkien, however, did not think in dramatic terms. While it may be acceptable in a novel to let 155 pages pass between Frodo's capture by the orcs and the next mentioning of his name, this is not the case in a film. What causes tension in the novel would make the audience lose track of the quest's goal and of Frodo as its main-character.

For Jackson it was clear from the beginning that the novel's peculiar structure had to be abandoned, if the film should reach non-Tolkien-readers as well. Consequently, he skilfully

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<sup>108</sup> Cf. Porter 49

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

<sup>110</sup> Shippey 70

<sup>111</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

<sup>112</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

interweaves the different storylines and tells the events chronologically, staying true to Tolkien's timeline printed in Appendix B. He even creates new strands of narration by directly showing events that are told in retrospect in the novel (i.e. Saruman building his industrial complex and the Paths of the Dead). By deciding to do so, he provides the audience with the complete picture of everything that happens in Middle-earth at a given moment. The viewer will remember all the important characters, as they appear again and again in the course of TT and RK. Moreover, frequent cliff-hangers between events from different storylines keep the level of tension high.<sup>113</sup>

A side-effect of the adjustment of the chronology of a story is its vast impact on the release of information. As the reader witnesses the events of each strand of the novel through the eyes of one of the hobbits, they do not know what is happening at different places of Middle-earth at the same time. Tolkien uses this mismatch of information between individual characters to create tension, because the reader shares in the bewilderment of the hobbits.<sup>114</sup>

This concept of misinformation ceases to work in Jackson's film. On screen, the audience is presented with the overall picture of events and knows more than the individual characters. This turns a number of scenes of the literary source redundant, if they serve the sole purpose of creating narrative tension based on a lack of information. In RK, for example, the audience knows that Frodo is alive when Sauron's messenger produces the hobbit's coat of mail, while in the novel this is a dramatic moment for the reader, who does not yet know if Frodo managed to escape from the orc-tower. Jackson therefore had to eliminate a number of scenes and replace them by new ones to create strong transitions and to increase dramatic tension. He does so most skilfully in RK, where the audience is riveted to their chairs by the rapid change of scene linked with seamless transitions.

### 1.3. Partition into Three Parts

Tolkien did not conceive *The Lord of the Rings* as a trilogy but as one coherent story. As mentioned in 1.3., the partition into three parts was forced upon him by his publisher and he found it difficult to provide each part with an individual title. Jackson was well aware of this fact – but it is much easier to split a written text into individual parts than to do so with a film. Films demand a much stricter structure into beginning, climax and ending, which had to be

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:02

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Shippey 72

incorporated into all three films of Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*. Therefore, Jackson had to break the story in places logical for the structure of each film.<sup>115</sup>

When comparing the three parts of the film to those of the novel, it soon becomes clear that the distribution of events is quite different: Jackson wanted FS to end with the capture of Merry and Pippin to bring the scene at Parth Galen to an end and to set the topic for TT. Therefore, FS comprises "The Departure of Boromir", which, in the novel, is part of *The Two Towers*.

According to Jackson, the literary version of *The Two Towers* does not have a dramatic beginning or a climactic ending, as it was not written to stand on its own. As the middle part of the story, it proved hardest to adapt and obvious changes in structure were necessary to adapt it to the screen.<sup>116</sup> Whereas Tolkien's *The Two Towers* consists of 21 chapters, only 12 of them made it into Jackson's film. The confrontation with Saruman after the destruction of Isengard was shifted to RK as was Frodo's encounter with Shelob and his ensuing capture. Boyens argues that the episode of Shelob would have been anti-climactic after the huge action climax of Helm's Deep.<sup>117</sup> Even if postponing these two major events conforms to Tolkien's timeline, Jackson robbed the film of the novel's dramatic cliff hanger of Frodo being "alive but taken by the Enemy" (725) at the end of *The Two Towers*. Thus, Jackson's different structure of the text leads to new questions remaining open after the second part of the film.

RK incorporates the missing chapters of *The Two Towers* (Book 3: VIII-XI; Book 4: VII-X) and brings *The Lord of the Rings* to its close, sharing Sam's final sentence "Well, I'm back" (1008) with the novel. Interestingly enough, the title of each film is mentioned by the characters in Jackson's adaptation and is thus highlighted.

Each film starts with a prologue that either provides exposition or links the new part of the film to the one before. Thus, Galadriel narrates the story of the Ring in FS, while Gandalf's fall in Moria is relived by Frodo in a dream sequence at the beginning of TT. In RK, the prologue familiarises the audience with Gollum's past and illustrates his metamorphosis from hobbit to monster.

As the plot and the themes of a film have to be defined very clearly, Jackson makes use of narrator figures in all three parts of his adaptation. Galadriel serves as a narrator not only in FS but also in TT and the idea of Bilbo and Frodo writing *The Lord of the Rings* as their life-story is kept in FS and RK. A special message is allocated to the end of each part of Jackson's

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Porter IX

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:00

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:02

film and is mused on to set the tone for the next part, e.g. Sam tells Frodo of the importance of not giving up in TT.

To clarify the geography of Middle-earth maps are shown on screen repeatedly. This helps the viewer to follow Frodo on his way to Mordor. At the same time it is a beautiful allusion to Tolkien's novel, which includes maps that accompany the written text.

## 2. Omitted Episodes

When a novel of one thousand pages is adapted, it is obvious that only a comparably small selection of events can be transferred to the screen. Certain episodes work well in a novel but would lead to a digression of focus in a film, where action and characters have to be defined more clearly and dramatic tension must be built. Sinker claims that Tolkien's novel contains passages that would be "just extremely boring" if shown in a film<sup>118</sup>. Film length and the audience's limited span of attention must be kept in mind as well. Thus, whole chapters of Tolkien's novel are left out in Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* and many details do not find their way into the film, e.g. Gandalf's letter in Bree, the naming of Aragorn's sword or the Red Arrow of Gondor (to name just a few). In this chapter the most common reasons for omissions will be analysed and illustrated with selected examples.

### 2.1. Speeding up the Pace

Tolkien's novel develops at a leisurely pace and dangerous episodes are usually followed by stays in "safe havens"<sup>119</sup> to give characters and readers a chance to catch their breath. A film, however, has to move forward at a swift pace to keep the audience's attention over the duration of three hours.<sup>120</sup> Well aware of this basic principle of film writing, Jackson eliminates scenes that do not further the plot. His characters stumble from one dangerous episode to the next and many of the quieter scenes are omitted.

This quickened pace changes the overall perception and atmosphere of the story. While some viewers enjoy the fast sequence of battles and monsters, others miss Tolkien's peaceful moments of respite, as continuous high dramatic tension tends to exhaust itself rather soon.<sup>121</sup> Examples of how omissions lead to a quickened pace in *The Lord of the Rings* are given below.

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. Sinker 49

<sup>119</sup> Pienciak 40

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Bowden 18-19

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Bowden 40

### ***2.1.1. Frodo's Journey through the Shire***

In the novel it takes Frodo and his companions 107 pages before they finally leave the Shire. While tramping through the countryside, Frodo, Sam and Pippin sing songs, meet Elves and are saved from the Black Riders by Farmer Maggot. Although the threat of the Black Riders is immanent, these first chapters have the relaxed atmosphere of a camping trip. Later, the friends are joined by Merry at Crickhollow, Frodo's new house, where they sit comfortably together before the real adventure starts.

In a film, however, it is vital to start the story swiftly and to get the audience involved in the main-conflict from the very beginning. After the detailed account of Bilbo's birthday party, setting the conflict and building dramatic tension became essential to keep the audience's attention. Therefore, Tolkien's "pastoral beginning"<sup>122</sup> was replaced by a hurried flight from the Shire with the Black Riders close on the hobbits' heels to satisfy the audiences' hunger for action.<sup>123</sup>

### ***2.1.2. The Old Forest and the Barrow-downs***

Just like Frodo's journey through the Shire, the hobbits' adventures in the Old Forest and on the Barrow-downs do not advance the story. These episodes on the road to Bree serve to characterise the hobbits and to show them managing dangerous situations on their own.

As these episodes do not have any impact on the further story, it was easy for Jackson to leave them out without viewers that are not familiar with Tolkien's novel noticing any gap. In the film the hobbits reach Bree immediately after leaving the Shire.

### ***2.1.3. Choices on the Great River***

When the fellowship travels down the Great River in Galadriel's elven boats, the main-conflict is about the further course of the journey. Boromir wants the Ring to travel to Minas Tirith, whereas Frodo knows that his road lies elsewhere. Two chapters of the novel are dedicated to this conflict, which is finally solved by Frodo leaving on his own.

Realising that this debate about the further road of the fellowship would only complicate the story, Jackson omitted it for the sake of clarity. Instead, his dialogues at that point focus on

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<sup>122</sup> Davis 59

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Shippey 69

the conflict between Boromir and Aragorn about kingship, which is more important to the plot.

#### ***2.1.4. Ghân-buri-Ghân and the Wild Men***

When the army of Rohan travels to Minas Tirith in the novel, they find the road held against them. A safe path is shown to them by Ghân-buri-Ghân, the leader of a tribe of Wild Men living in this area. As a sign of gratitude, Théoden promises to give this stretch of land to the Wild Men after the war and to stop hunting them.

Jackson again chose wisely when he left out this episode, as it would only slow down the action without contributing to the development of the story.

## **2.2. Cutting Minor Characters**

Only characters that are essential for the plot are transferred from novel to film in adaptations. This makes it easier for the audience to remember all the characters and keeps the story simple. Therefore quite a few of Tolkien's characters are missing in Jackson's film (e.g. Prince Imrahil). Sometimes only their role remains in the film but is given to other characters (e.g. Arwen incorporating the Elf lord Glorfindel).<sup>124</sup> Jackson manages to transfer all of the novel's main-characters to the film so that viewers that do not know the novel do not get the impression that any important characters are missing. Examples of such minor characters that were left out are Tom Bombadil, Beregon and Aragorn's kinsmen.

### ***2.2.1. Tom Bombadil***

On their way through the Old Forest on the borders of the Shire, the hobbits meet Tom Bombadil, the singing master of the woods. He is a mysterious figure over whom the Ring does not have any power, and he almost exclusively speaks in verse. "Oldest and fatherless" (258), he is often seen as a representative of nature itself and philosophical issues are linked to his character.

Although a whole chapter of the novel is dedicated to him, he is not transferred into the film, because he does not advance the story of Frodo's quest in any way. Boyens points out that the hobbits might have met him on their journey nevertheless, but this encounter is not shown on

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. Stam 71



screen as it would only have distracted the audience. Some of his lines are taken over by Treebeard in TT to give “honour”<sup>125</sup> to his character.<sup>126</sup>

### ***2.2.2. Beregond and Bergil***

Beregond of the Guards and his son Bergil are Pippin’s companions in Minas Tirith and contribute to saving Faramir’s life on the pyre. In the film, their role is successfully taken over by Gandalf, who does not have any time for Pippin in the novel as he is busy working against the enemy.

### ***2.2.3. The Grey Company***

On the road from Isengard to Rohan, Tolkien’s Aragorn is joined by his kinsmen, who have come looking for him. They bring word from Elrond and Galadriel and give Aragorn a standard woven by Arwen. In the film, the role of this so-called *Grey Company* is taken over by Elrond, who brings Aragorn his finally reforged sword.

There is no doubt that Jackson’s use of an already existing character as a messenger is dramatically more efficient than introducing new faces at this advanced point of the story. What he does not consider, however, is that the road between Rivendell and Rohan is long and full of enemies. This makes Elrond’s sudden appearance in Rohan not very credible and turns the Elf-lord into a *deus ex machina*.

## **2.3. Different Characterisation as a Reason for Omissions**

As the medium of film makes use of a visual and aural signifying system that cannot directly express thought, characters have to be characterised by their actions. Jackson adapted *The Lord of the Rings* according to this basic principle of film-making, which led to a number of changes not only in character development but also in the storyline. Scenes that involve elaborate interior monologues were eliminated or modified, sometimes at the cost of character depth as Porter claims.<sup>127</sup>

As Jackson was not always content with Tolkien’s character development, he modernizes his heroes and sometimes lets them act differently than described in novel. His different approach towards certain characters caused some scenes of the original to be lost as well.

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<sup>125</sup> Boyens in Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:08

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:11

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Porter 16

### ***2.3.1. A Conspiracy Unmasked***

In the novel, Merry and Pippin suspect Frodo of planning his departure from the Shire and therefore watch him closely. With the help of Sam they learn about his quest and decide to follow him on his hopeless journey. At Crickhollow Frodo finds out about his friends' doings and reluctantly welcomes them as his companions.

Jackson's adaptation does not contain any scene of that kind, as Merry and Pippin are portrayed as significantly less mature than in the novel. They do not actively decide to become Frodo's companions but stumble into him by accident. The chapter "A Conspiracy Unmasked" would thus undermine Jackson's characterisation of Merry and Pippin and could not be transferred to the film. (Cf. V.1.3)

### ***2.3.2. The Choices of Master Samwise***

When Sam finds Frodo after he was attacked by Shelob, he believes his master to be dead and does not know how to go on. His despair is conveyed to the reader by a deeply emotional interior debate that forms a whole chapter of Tolkien's novel. Sam crying over his master's body, considering suicide and finally forcing himself to take the Ring is one of the most moving episodes of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Jackson, however, does not include Sam's dilemma in his adaptation, as monologues are not dramatically effective on the screen. Instead, Sam is seen crying at Frodo's side, only to be interrupted by orcs one instant later. Only when he finds Frodo in the orc-tower does the audience get to know that he took the Ring to keep it safe. It is a pity that Jackson did not come up with any dramatic solution to depict Sam's despair in a more obvious way, as most of it is lost to viewers who are not familiar with the novel. Besides, this hurried treatment of Frodo's apparent death shifts the focus of the episode on the rather lengthy fight against Shelob and thus away from the hobbits' emotions (cf. V.1.2.).

### ***2.3.3. The Houses of Healing***

After the battle of Minas Tirith, Tolkien shows Aragorn in the role of a healer, who eases the pain of his subjects: "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known" (844). The reader witnesses Aragorn healing Faramir, Éowyn and Merry and

perceives him as an ideal king, who is not only strong and determined in battle but also a caring father figure to his subjects.

This virtue of Aragorn – stemming from medieval literary tradition – does not find its way into Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*. A scene focusing on Aragorn as a healer would have cost precious film time without furthering the plot. At the same time Jackson's characterisation of Aragorn differs significantly from Tolkien's (cf. V.3.1.) and therefore showing him as a healer was not as important for Jackson as it was for Tolkien.<sup>128</sup>

#### **2.3.4. Faramir and Éowyn**

Tolkien dedicates an entire chapter to the budding love relationship between Faramir and Éowyn. He lets the reader witness their first meeting, explores Éowyn's psychology and traces the blossoming romance between the two characters with great care.

Jackson, who is not as keen as Tolkien on tying up loose ends, does not tell Faramir and Éowyn's story. What he does include, however, is a short glimpse of the two of them standing together at Aragorn's coronation, bliss written on both their faces. This is a clever technique of showing Tolkien fans that he acknowledges the love story between the two characters, even if he chooses not to tell it. For Alleva this is "compression taken too far"<sup>129</sup> as the allusion will be lost to viewers unfamiliar with the novel.

### **2.4. Shortening the Resolution**

Tolkien's novel does not end after the climactic destruction of the Ring, but continues with a resolution of no less than eighty pages. This is peculiar in a novel and would be even more so in a film, as films usually end shortly after their climax. As was to be expected, Jackson shortened this resolution considerably and focuses only on the aspect of Frodo's departure into the West.

#### **2.4.1 Many Farewells: Frodo's Home-Journey**

Two complete chapters of Tolkien's novel deal with Frodo's journey back home. The hobbits take farewell of their companions, revisit important places of their journey (e.g. Rohan, Rivendell and Bree) and meet again characters that were involved in their adventure (e.g.

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. Ford 72-73

<sup>129</sup> Alleva 20

Galadriel and Bilbo). Tolkien takes great pains to tie up any loose ends in these chapters, including details like what happened to Sam's pony. The atmosphere of this passage is a strange mix of joy and sadness and Frodo's future sufferings are anticipated.

Jackson, on the other hand, visualises Frodo's home-journey very effectively by letting the camera sweep over a map of Middle-earth back to the Shire. Although this kind of shortening is necessary when adapting a novel to the screen, Jorgensen claims that "much of the original novel's richness is hereby lost"<sup>130</sup>. As again many of the quiet scenes between the hobbits are left out, the overall focus shifts to the long-drawn-out battle scenes.<sup>131</sup>

### ***2.4.2 The Scouring of the Shire***

In the novel, the homecoming of the hobbits is a gloomy one. Frodo and his friends find the Shire occupied by evil Men under the command of Saruman, who wants to take revenge on the hobbits for the destruction of Isengard. Trees were cut, modern houses built and industry has found its way into the pastoral Shire. Under the lead of Merry and Pippin the hobbits free the Shire and Saruman is killed by Grima at Bag End.<sup>132</sup>

For Jackson it was an easy decision to leave out "The Scouring of the Shire" except for a short vision of it in the Mirror of Galadriel. It would be "anti-climactic" to start telling a new story "after nearly nine hours of storytelling"<sup>133</sup> and the audience would get confused. Even now the ending of the film is often perceived as too long and slightly out of tune with the rest of the film.<sup>134</sup> Readers of the novel, however, inevitably miss the sense of the hobbits having grown up to manage their own affairs and the idea that even the most idyllic places can be affected by evils from outside.

## **3. New Elements**

Adapting a novel to the screen does not only lead to original scenes being omitted but also to the invention of new episodes by the film-makers. Sometimes it is necessary to fill in gaps of the narration by visualizing scenes that are summarized or told in retrospect in the literary text.<sup>135</sup> Themes have to be clearly defined in a film, so new scenes may become essential to illustrate them to the audience. As character is revealed through action and not through

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<sup>130</sup> Jorgensen 49

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Jorgensen 48-50

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Buhler 247

<sup>133</sup> Jackson in Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:19

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Mathijs 53

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 71

thought, interior monologues have to be replaced by character-revealing events and dialogue. Different character development, on the other hand, has to be visualised by scenes in which new character traits are acted out.<sup>136</sup> Also the quest for dramatic tension leads to the invention of new scenes, if scenes of the literary source are not deemed fit for direct dramatic representation.<sup>137</sup>

These are the most common reasons for new episodes finding their way into a literary adaptation. How Jackson introduces new scenes to *The Lord of the Rings* will be discussed in this section by drawing on a number of examples from the film.

### 3.1. Telling vs. Showing

It is a strength of literary texts that great amounts of information can be conveyed in a very short time: Events may be summarized or told in flashback and information on past events gets inserted into the plot whenever it is needed.<sup>138</sup> Film as a perceptive medium, however, depends on the direct visualisation of events. Any action important to the plot must be shown on screen and exposition must be converted into visual images without disrupting the flow of events.<sup>139</sup>

Jackson found himself confronted with a huge challenge, as Tolkien makes vast use of these literary devices in *The Lord of the Rings*. Entire chapters of the novel are concerned with exposition presented in the form of dialogue, while many dramatic events are told in retrospect only. This gave rise to a large number of new episodes that are present in Tolkien's novel but were witnessed only indirectly by the reader. Apart from the examples drawn upon below, this is the case for e.g. Gollum's story, past events at Théoden's court, Gandalf doing research about the Ring in Minas Tirith and Sam's wedding.

#### 3.1.1. Exposition: *The History of the Ring*

Tolkien introduces the reader to the history of the Ring in two long chapters, where past events are the topic of discussion among the characters: In "The Shadow of the Past" Gandalf relates the origins of the Ring to Frodo, while missing details are provided in "The Council of Elrond" 170 pages later.

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Bowden 57-58

<sup>137</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13-20

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Bowden 15-17

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Hutcheon 23-25

As lengthy dialogues about expositional issues do not capture the audience's attention in a film, Jackson presents the viewer with a prologue that covers the history of the Ring as a continuous narrative. Although this prologue prevents the audience from having any open questions about the Ring and the nature of the Black Riders, it is a clever solution and sets the tone of the film from the very beginning.

### ***3.1.2. Making the Ring Visible***

Apart from its history, the secret nature of the Ring is another challenge for anyone adapting *The Lord of the Rings*. As its temptation exists in Frodo's mind only, Jackson had to come up with a number of ways to make the Ring's increasing influence on the hobbit visible. Thus, he lets Frodo take out the Ring on many occasions to remind the audience of its physical existence and shows it dangling from the hobbit's neck very often. At the Council of Elrond it sits in the middle of the table with the reflections of the fellowship dancing on its golden circle as they argue about it. When Frodo loses the Ring in the snow and Boromir picks it up, the Ring's temptation on both characters is visualised very effectively. Frodo's unfair behaviour towards Sam in Osgiliath and on the Stairs of Cirith Ungol is another translation of the negative influence of the Ring into images. In Mordor, the Ring's chain cutting into the flesh of Frodo's neck beautifully illustrates the wounds inflicted upon the hobbit by his long burden (cf. V.5.1.).

Jackson successfully manages to keep the image of the Ring and its negative effects on Frodo present in the viewer's mind at all times. Sometimes, however, this happens at the cost of credibility, as it is unlikely that Frodo would take out the Ring when confronted with an angry Nazgul like he does in Osgiliath.

### ***3.1.3. Saruman and his Industrial Complex***

In Book 2 and 3 of the novel, the evil wizard Saruman is a more immanent threat to the fellowship than Sauron. Still, before his downfall he only appears indirectly in the novel, as none of the hobbits ever come to Isengard to see him at the height of his power. Even after the destruction of Isengard, descriptions of his industrial complex are scarce and the evils of Saruman's technological inventions are largely left to the reader's imagination.<sup>140</sup>

Referring to one of the most important villains only indirectly is unusual for a novel, but in a film it would be nothing short of anti-climactic. Therefore, Jackson turns Saruman and his

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Davis 57-58

creation into an additional strand of the story and intercuts it with the hobbits' tales in FS and TT (cf. 1.2.). He painstakingly depicts the evils of industrialisation by images of trees being felled to feed his furnaces and of orcs being spawned. The audience sees Saruman commanding his armies of orcs and planning his assault on Rohan. Thus, dramatic tension is created and kept at a high level. Whereas Tolkien's descriptions focus on the peaceful life in the Shire that is being threatened, Jackson visualises the villain who poses this threat.<sup>141</sup> It is a powerful interpretation of what Tolkien left out in his novel and Saruman's stronger presence again shifts the focus of the story to the louder, action packed scenes of the film (V.5.2.).

#### ***3.1.4. Boromir's Death***

The battle leading to Boromir's death is not shown in the novel. The reader only learns that it has taken place when Aragorn finds Boromir's dead body and discovers that the hobbits were captured by orcs. Jackson, eager for any battle scene *The Lord of the Rings* has to offer, dedicates eight minutes of FS to the battle between the fellowship and the orcs, turning it into one of the climaxes of the film.

#### ***3.1.5. The Destruction of Isengard***

The destruction of Isengard by the Ents is another example of an episode that is reported in flashback only by Tolkien. Merry and Pippin give a detailed account of the Ents' vengeance when they are reunited with their companions amidst the ruins of Isengard.

It is uncommon for a novel to abandon one of its climaxes so readily by letting it take place "offstage"<sup>142</sup>. Jackson uses the attack of the Ents on Isengard as a very effective parallel plot to the battle of Helm's Deep. His visualisation of this episode is impressive and the images of the tree shepherds devastating the home of the tree slayer stay with the audience even after the film.

#### ***3.1.6. The Paths of the Dead***

Aragorn's adventures on the Paths of the Dead are not told directly in Tolkien's novel either. After Aragorn's summoning of the dead direct narration stops and the end of the episode is told in flashback by Legolas after the battle of Minas Tirith.

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. Davis 68

<sup>142</sup> Shippey 71

Jackson turns the Paths of the Dead into another separate strand of narration and returns to it several times during the battle of Minas Tirith (cf. 1.2.). Thus, the audience knows that Aragorn took the ships of the enemy and his arrival on the Great River does not come as a surprise like in the novel. This robs the story of one unexpected turn, but the close depiction of Aragorn's encounter with the dead (as invented by Jackson) adds dramatic tension and provides the story with even more action.

### ***3.1.7. Osgiliath***

In the novel, the ruined city of Osgiliath is nothing more than a name. All the reader knows is that Faramir is sent there by his father and almost dies in its hopeless defence.

Jackson, on the other hand, turns Osgiliath into an important setting of his adaptation. In TT Frodo is taken to Osgiliath by Faramir and the desperate battle between Faramir's men and the orcs becomes a new episode of RK. Here the audience is once again confronted with Jackson's personal interpretation of Tolkien's novel and not with a direct transferral of elements from book to film.

## **3.2. Themes: Illustrating Old and New Themes**

As discussed above, themes can be transferred directly from novel to film in adaptation (cf. II.6.1.). This happens to most of the themes of *The Lord of the Rings*: Friendship, the hidden heroism of common people, man's relationship to nature and the evils of technology are all implied in Jackson's film like they are in the novel. The visualisation of themes may differ, however, as they have to be depicted more clearly on the screen to become obvious for the audience. Apart from that, film-makers sometimes decide to introduce new themes into an adaptation if they consider them important for the plot or for society in general.

### ***3.2.1. Silver Glass: Death and Immortality***

In his letters Tolkien claims that “[t]he real theme [of *The Lord of the Rings*] is about something much more permanent and difficult: Death and Immortality”<sup>143</sup>. This message is not conveyed directly in the novel but has to be inferred by the reader into the events they read about.

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<sup>143</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 186, April 1956



Jackson, in contrast, chooses a direct approach to the theme of death. By transferring Arwen from Tolkien's Appendices into the film, the conflict of her giving up immortality for Aragorn is present in all three parts of his adaptation. Death as a theme is also addressed by Gandalf in RK. Using the imagery of the last chapter of Tolkien's novel, the wizard comforts Pippin, saying that

[d]eath is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain curtain of this world rolls back and all turns to silver glass. And then you see it. [...] White shores and beyond. A far green country under a swift sunrise. (RK: Disc 1, 00:35)

Although this scene turns Frodo's journey into the West into an allegory of death (which was not intended by Tolkien), it forcefully illustrates the issue of death and the hope for a life hereafter.

### 3.2.2. *The Children of Rohan: The Human Side of War*

In contrast to Tolkien, Jackson turns the "human quality"<sup>144</sup> of battle into a theme of his adaptation. By inventing the story of two children of Rohan, he shows the impact of war on the individual: Freda and Éothain are sent to Edoras by their mother during a raid on their village and are reunited with her after the battle of Helm's Deep. The despair of the villagers is conveyed in vivid pictures as is the fear of the women and children hiding in the caves of Helm's Deep during the attack. The heroes' compassion for young boys being fitted with battered weapons underlines the terror of war for those who are forced to fight:

**Aragorn:** Farmers, farriers, stable boys... These are no soldiers. [...]  
**Legolas:** They're frightened. I can see it in their eyes. [...] Aragorn, they cannot win this fight. They are all going to die. (TT: Disc 2, 00:50)

All this illustrates the devastating effect of war on the civilian population and the damage it does to individuals. This new theme is not only dramatically effective in its representation but it enriches Tolkien's story by highlighting the horrors of war on a personal level.

## 3.3. Character Development

Characters can be transferred directly from one medium of expression to the other, as far as their psychological development and their motivations are concerned.<sup>145</sup> Sometimes, however, film-makers introduce new characters to convey important messages or they change the

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<sup>144</sup> Jackson in Appendices of TT, Editorial: Refining the Story 00:13

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Bowden 182-184

development of already existing characters to add emotion or suspense. As character has to be acted out in film, this gives rise to a number of new scenes in Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*.

### **3.3.1. Romantic Tension**

Romantic subplots are considered essential for a film to appeal to female viewers.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, Jackson turns Arwen into a major character and her love to Aragorn becomes an additional strand of the story in all three parts of the film. The events of this narrative strand bear little resemblance to Tolkien's Appendix A, in which Arwen's story is told, and are a product of Jackson's imagination.

Jackson also invents a softer and sweeter version of Tolkien's rather harsh and unfeminine Éowyn to make her love for Aragorn more believable for a modern audience. Her girlish qualities are explored in a number of new scenes in TT, which involve Aragorn, his film-horse Brego and her poor cooking skills. All this provides *The Lord of the Rings* with romantic tension, which is almost entirely absent in the novel. (For a closer discussion of Arwen and Éowyn cf. V.4.)

### **3.3.2. Boromir and Faramir as Brothers**

The character of Faramir is interpreted quite differently by Jackson: Whereas Faramir is a wise young captain in Tolkien's novel, Jackson shows him mainly in his role as Boromir's little brother. He is neither as clever nor as popular as his brother and feels inferior to him in the film. As he is constantly compared to Boromir by his father, Jackson adds two scenes to the story that shed light on the relationship between the two brothers and on Faramir as a boy. Jackson imagines this fraternal relationship as close and affectionate, e.g. Boromir is seen defending his little brother when his father sneers at him. In the novel, the only allusion ever made to the relationship between the two brothers indicates that Boromir was very dominant and did not care for his brother's wishes when he insisted on going to Rivendell instead of Faramir (cf. V.3.4.).

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. Kuipers 115

### ***3.3.3. Merry and Pippin's Farewell***

In Jackson's FS and TT, Merry and Pippin are much more foolish and careless than in the novel, but in RK they finally grow up. To make this rather abrupt change in personality credible, Jackson needed a scene to smoothen the hobbits' transition from irresponsible youngsters to more mature versions of themselves. Therefore, Jackson shows Merry and Pippin saying farewell to each other before they are separated by Gandalf. This scene provides a first step towards growing up, as the seriousness of the War of the Ring is finally brought home to the hobbits. Merry scolds Pippin for looking into the palantír and gives him his pipe-weed as a token of farewell. The bond between the two hobbits is shown in a very sensitive way and mused about by Merry, who stays behind alone. In the novel, this farewell scene never takes place as Pippin's departure with Gandalf is very sudden and leaves no time for words (cf. V.1.3.).

### ***3.3.4. Saruman's Death***

Also earlier changes in the storyline can lead to the invention of new scenes in literary adaptations. An example for a new episode due to a new arrangement of events is the death of Saruman in Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*. As the Scouring of the Shire is omitted in the film, Saruman cannot be killed in its aftermath like he is in the novel. Jackson therefore had to find a new way to dispose of his evil wizard. He does so very cleverly at the parley with Gandalf at the beginning of RK. Only the setting but not the way of Saruman's death is changed, as he is stabbed by Grima like he is in the novel. Unfortunately, this scene is not part of the theatrical version of the film, which leaves the audience at the cinema in the dark about Saruman's further fate.

### ***3.3.5. Pippin's Song***

Pippin singing to Denethor in RK is one of the most skilfully constructed scenes of the entire film: By choosing a melancholic melody for "The Old Walking Song" of the novel, Jackson establishes a mournful atmosphere and shows the change towards seriousness in the nature of the once foolish hobbit. At the same time he characterises Denethor as heartless and cruel, as the steward is untouched by Pippin's song and keeps on eating. The scene is intercut with images of Faramir losing against the orcs in Osgiliath, which adds action and suspense. In their turn, the images of Men dying serve to shed an even more negative light on the steward, who continues his meal, chicken blood trickling down his chin. Thus, Jackson very effectively

characterises Pippin and Denethor (1), advances the plot (2), increases dramatic tension (3) and creates a wistful atmosphere (4) in one single scene.

### **3.4. Suspense and Comic Relief**

New scenes may also be inserted into a literary adaptation to add suspense to the plot. Jackson tends to prolong suspenseful sequences of *The Lord of the Rings* by inventing more details and new turns.<sup>147</sup> He also comes up with humorous scenes that are not present in the literary text to lighten the overall dark atmosphere of the film.

#### **3.4.1. *The Attack of the Wargs***

An example of a newly invented suspenseful episode in RK is the warg attack on Théoden's company on the road to Helm's Deep. Having slain many wolves and their riders, Aragorn falls off a cliff and is thought to be dead by friends and audience. Saved by his horse Brego, he arrives at Helm's Deep as a hero before the battle against Saruman's armies begins.

Although the fellowship is attacked by wolves before the gates of Moria, no episode similar to Jackson's warg attack can be found in Tolkien's novel. Warg-riders are mentioned by Tolkien but they never enter the stage. Fascinated by the idea of these fiendish, wolf-like creatures, Jackson decided to show them in action to provide Théoden's journey to Helm's Deep with more suspense.<sup>148</sup> Smith, however, claims that this episode "adds nothing to the narrative except more sweaty, sword-wielding action"<sup>149</sup> and that it does not "transmit [any] elements of the original that cannot be otherwise conveyed"<sup>150</sup>. The invention of this action packed scene happens again at the expense of restful scenes of the text and instead of furthering the plot it rather delays it.<sup>151</sup>

#### **3.4.2. *Sam Slipping at the Black Gate***

When Frodo and Sam reach the Black Gate, they find themselves confronted with the difficult choice of whether to trust Gollum to lead them to Mordor by another way. Jackson took this rather quiet episode of Tolkien's and transformed it into a scene full of suspense. In TT, Sam slides down a slope, gets stuck with his leg and is almost discovered by the enemy. He is

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Leitch 138

<sup>148</sup> Appendices of TT, Cameras in Middle-earth 00:41

<sup>149</sup> Smith 83

<sup>150</sup> Smith 84

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Smith 83-84

saved by his elven cloak, which takes on the colour of its surroundings and makes the watchman's gaze pass him by.

### ***3.4.3. Pippin Lighting the Beacons***

In the novel, the beacons of Gondor are blazing brightly, when Pippin rides with Gandalf to Minas Tirith. Jackson takes Tolkien's image of the beacons and turns it into a dramatic element: As Jackson's Denethor refuses to defend his city, Pippin heroically climbs the beacon of Minas Tirith and lights it with a torch. On one mountain top after the other the beacons of Gondor flash up until the signal reaches Théoden in Rohan and alerts him to Gondor's plight.

This new episode does not only provide dramatic tension but it enthrals the viewer with amazing images of the landscape of Middle-earth. It would be interesting to know, however, if Denethor's passive attitude really inspired the scene of Pippin lighting the beacons or if it was the idea of this beautiful scene that led to the different characterisation of Denethor (cf. V.3.2.).

### ***3.4.4. Faramir as an "Obstacle"<sup>152</sup>***

The omission of Shelob from TT left the middle part of Jackson's film without a climax as far as the Frodo/Sam-strand of the story was concerned. Jackson gave the task of providing a new climax to Faramir, which led to a radical change in the role of the captain of Gondor. Jackson practically reinvents Faramir and turns him into an obstacle to Frodo and his quest. Instead of being cooperative like in the novel, Faramir wants to take the Ring to his father and leads the hobbits to Osgiliath. They get caught up in battle and Frodo is confronted by a Nazgul, which puts the Ring into great danger.

Jackson thus constructs a new climax for TT by adding another battle scene and by letting Faramir choose differently at one of the text's kernels. This was a daring move as different decisions at kernels are usually perceived as major alterations by readers of the novel. Straying far from his literary source, Jackson does not stay consistent in his new characterisation of Faramir and drifts off into the realm of incredibility by letting Frodo finger the Ring right under the Nazgul's nose.<sup>153</sup> (Cf. V.3.4.)

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<sup>152</sup> Jackson in Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:03

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Smith 84

### ***3.4.5. Gollum's Fateful Bread Crumbs***

Tolkien makes the selfless friendship between Frodo and Sam one of the main themes of *The Lord of the Rings*. Not once is the friendship between the two hobbits questioned, let alone threatened.

This loyal kind of friendship was regarded as too harmonious and steady for a film. Therefore, Jackson invents a new scene in RK that shows Gollum managing to separate the two friends. Throwing away the hobbits' provisions and spreading bread crumbs over Sam's coat, Gollum makes Frodo believe that Sam has eaten the remainder of their food. Angrily, Frodo sends Sam away and enters Shelob's tunnel with Gollum. Only when Sam finds their food does he realise Gollum's treason and comes to Frodo's aid.

Boyens explains that this scene makes Frodo appear more human, as he "is not always right [... and] does not have complete faith in Sam"<sup>154</sup>. Apart from that, they wanted Frodo to enter Shelob's tunnel without Sam to make his confrontation with Shelob "more tense"<sup>155</sup>. Jackson may have achieved an increase in dramatic tension by this alteration, but at the same time he took a great risk, as major changes in a character's psychology tend to be looked at critically by viewers familiar with the novel (cf. V.1.).

### ***3.4.6. Drinking Games at Edoras***

To lighten the serious atmosphere of the film, Jackson includes a new scene in RK that shows the characters celebrating the victory of Helm's Deep. Merry and Pippin dance and sing, while Gimli loses a drinking game against Legolas. Collapsing over a pile of empty mugs with his beard full of beer, Gimli reminds the audience of a binge-drinking teenager that does not know when to stop. It is one of the few quieter scenes that Jackson adds to his adaptation, in this case making heavy use of coarse humour.

## **4. Modifications and Alterations**

When a novel is adapted to the screen, it is translated into the perceptive signifying system of film: Scenes are remodelled to become dramatically efficient, dialogue is rewritten to fulfil more than one function at a time and plot and characters must be defined more clearly than in

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<sup>154</sup> Boyens in Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:04

<sup>155</sup> Boyens in Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:03

the literary text to enable the audience to follow the story. There is hardly any scene that remains in its original form in literary adaptation.<sup>156</sup>

All this turns an attempt to document every single change between Tolkien's novel and Jackson's cinematic adaptation hopeless. One could fill hundreds of pages and still be far from completeness. This chapter discusses the most common reasons for scenes getting modified in Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* by relating adaptational theory to selected examples from the film. Moreover, the topics of atmosphere, language and point of view will be touched upon and Jackson's approach to Tolkien's poetry will be explored.

#### **4.1. Dramatic Visualisation and Suspense**

If a scene works well in a novel, it is not necessarily effective on screen. Novels contain lengthy descriptions and dialogues, while a great part of the action takes place in the characters' minds only. All this has to be dramatized and acted out by the characters to make the scene fit for the screen. Often suspenseful elements are added to keep dramatic tension high, while passages lacking action are condensed for the sake of pace.<sup>157</sup> One can draw from an abundance of examples when looking at the way Jackson recreates entire episodes to make *The Lord of the Rings* dramatically effective. A small choice of these is to be discussed below.

##### ***4.1.1. Introducing Merry and Pippin***

In Tolkien's novel, Merry is introduced in passing as one of Frodo's friends, who helps to clean up after Bilbo's party. Pippin, on the other hand, enters the scene seventeen years later on the eve of Frodo leaving the Shire. Boyens rightly states that "you need more energy [when you...] introduce two of the main-characters"<sup>158</sup> in a film. Therefore, Jackson uses the fireworks display at the party as a means of introducing Merry and Pippin. Always up to mischief, the two hobbits steal an enormous rocket and set it off, only to be caught by Gandalf moments later. This scene characterises Merry and Pippin as carefree trouble-makers right from the beginning and is very effective on the screen (cf. V.1.3.).

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Bowden 15-50

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Bowden 15-17

<sup>158</sup> Boyens in Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:13

### ***4.1.2 The Council of Elrond***

Taking up thirty pages of the novel, the Council of Elrond consist of no fewer than thirteen characters sitting together reasoning about the future of the Ring. Faced with an abundance of expositional facts, the reader soon gets lost in the vast amount of names and places and their endurance is put to a hard test. As information is conveyed through dialogue only, it is probably the scene least fit for dramatic use of the entire novel. This makes it hardly surprising that Jackson found the Council of Elrond “fiendishly difficult”<sup>159</sup> to adapt.

Jackson transfers expositional matters to the prologue to reduce the chapter’s vast amount of information. As Saruman’s doings are presented as a separate strand of narration, Gandalf’s report of Saruman’s treason is shifted away from the Council as well. Moreover, Jackson eliminates all minor characters and gives the speaking parts to the future members of the fellowship. Thus, the episode no longer focuses on the history of the Ring but turns into a heated debate of what should be done with it. As exposition has already been provided in the prologue, the audience knows what the characters are arguing about and can easily follow their “shouting match”<sup>160</sup>. The conflict between Boromir and Aragorn about the kingship of Gondor is established and Elrond is very directive in appointing a Ring-bearer.<sup>161</sup>

Focusing on aspects that further the plot, Jackson does not overburden the audience with background information and manages to turn Tolkien’s rather dry account into a dramatically effective episode.

### ***4.1.3. Théoden’s Farewell***

When Théoden is slain in battle, his dying words are directed at Merry in the novel. As Éowyn is supposed to be in charge of his people in Edoras, he does not know that she was seriously hurt in battle and asks Merry to say farewell to her on his return.

In contrast to Tolkien, Jackson lets Éowyn survive her encounter with the Nazgul unscathed. This enables him to show a direct farewell scene between Théoden and Éowyn. Contrary to Merry, Éowyn is next of kin to Théoden and their farewell evokes a stronger emotional response in the viewer. At the same time, however, this alteration reduces the importance of the hobbits in the film, as Merry is not present in this scene anymore. Also Éowyn’s deed is put into perspective, as she is not wounded in her defeat of the Nazgul.

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<sup>159</sup> Boyens in Appendices of FS, From Book to Script 00:15

<sup>160</sup> Shippey 69

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ford 80



#### ***4.1.4. Marching with Orcs***

After their flight from Cirith Ungol, Frodo and Sam are mistaken for deserting orcs and are forced to join an orc company on their march over the plains of Mordor. Weakened by his struggle against the Ring, Frodo can hardly keep the quick pace of the orcs, but manages to walk on until the orcs reach their destination.

Jackson includes this episode in RK, but renders it dramatically more attractive by giving the hobbits a more active role. When Frodo cannot keep on his legs any longer, Sam initiates a fight between the orcs and the hobbits use the resulting chaos to escape. Thus, active external action is used to make the scene tenser.

#### ***4.1.5. Mount Doom***

The destruction of the Ring in the fires of Mount Doom is the climax of *The Lord of the Rings*: Frodo claims the Ring for himself, puts it on to become invisible and is attacked by Gollum, who bites off his finger.

In the novel, Gollum, dancing with joy, stumbles and falls into the abyss, taking the Ring with him. Boyens criticises that this solution turns Frodo into a passive bystander, which is inappropriate for the main-character of a film at its climax. Therefore, Jackson lets Frodo wrestle with Gollum for the Ring at the brink of the abyss. Frodo does not manage to take the Ring back and falls with Gollum off the edge. In a breath-taking scene Frodo is seen dangling over the fiery abyss, clinging to the rock with his bleeding hand, while Sam desperately tries to save him. Boyens explains that they wanted to give Frodo the choice to let go and end it all to increase the dramatic tension of the scene and to make the climax of the story even more exciting.<sup>162</sup>

#### ***4.1.6. Horror Film Elements***

To enhance the atmosphere of individual scenes, new visual details are added when a novel is adapted to the screen. As a horror film director, Jackson introduces gory details into his adaptation and replaces descriptions of the novel with new repulsive images. Monsters and orcs are depicted as revoltingly ugly and are shown in close-up pictures, e.g. the name “Mouth of Sauron” is taken literally with the camera focusing on the messenger’s rotten teeth smeared with blood. A man from Dunland cuts his own hand to swear allegiance to Saruman,

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:17

while his orcs rejoice in the idea of eating “man flesh” (TT: Disc 1, 00:15). When the Black Riders approach Frodo in the Shire, they are associated with the picture of worms emerging from the ground to highlight the enemy’s connection with death and decay. In Moria, Pippin does not simply throw a stone into the well, but pushes in a whole carcass.<sup>163</sup> Often the camera captures the perspective of the monsters (e.g. Shelob or Saruman’s spying birds) to create the illusion of the characters being watched by malevolent eyes.<sup>164</sup>

These are only a few examples of how Jackson uses horror film elements to raise the level of suspense in his adaptation. Whereas suspense is derived from the detailed account of the characters’ feelings in the novel, Jackson tries to provoke feelings similar to those of the characters in the viewer by confronting them with revolting images and gory details.

## 4.2. Simplification and Causality

Readers read novels at their own speed and make breaks in between. They do not necessarily have to keep track of everything that happens, because they can reread unclear passages or return to earlier episodes. In contrast to reading, watching a film is not a private pastime and films are usually finished in one sitting. Therefore, adaptors like Jackson try to keep scenes as simple as possible and establish causal relationships between different episodes for the sake of clarity.<sup>165</sup>

### 4.2.1. *Snow on Caradhras*

When the fellowship is defeated by the snow on Caradhras, it is left to the imagination of the reader to decide who is to blame for the blizzard. There are “fell voices on the air” (282), but do they belong to Sauron, to Saruman or to the mountain itself?

“There are many evil and unfriendly things in the world that have little love for those that go on two legs, and yet are not in league with Sauron. [...] Caradhras was called the Cruel [...] long years ago, when rumour of Sauron had not been heard in these lands.” (282)

In a film, clear causalities are important and individual events are linked up to make the audience see how it all fits together. Therefore, Jackson does not offer a number of possible explanations for the origin of the blizzard to the viewer, but shows Saruman as the one who

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Hall 55-58

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Harl 65

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Bowden 15-17

concocts it. As too many open questions can be irritating in a film, the flock of birds flying past the fellowship is also explicitly ascribed to Saruman.

#### ***4.2.2. The Well in Moria***

In Moria Pippin is fascinated by a hole in the ground that once was a well. In the novel, he throws in a stone, which is answered by faint knocks in the deep. It is left open, however, if the attack on the next day is due to this episode.

Jackson once again establishes cause and effect, when visualising this scene in FS. Images of the caverns directly under the well suggest that some evil has been woken by Pippin's foolish action and drum beats echo through the mines. In no time the chamber is swarming with orcs and there is no doubt that Pippin is to blame for the fellowship having been discovered.

#### ***4.2.3. The Hobbits' Swords***

Belonging to a peaceful people not used to fighting, the four hobbits do not carry any swords when they set out from the Shire. In the novel, they get daggers from Tom Bombadil, who finds them among the treasures of the defeated barrow-wight. Except for Frodo, who inherits Bilbo's sword Sting, the hobbits use these swords throughout the novel.

As Jackson omits the episode of the hobbits' encounter with the barrow-wights, he had to find another way to provide the hobbits with swords. Instead of introducing a new scene, he lets Galadriel give them to Merry and Pippin as a present, while Sam continues to use a sword he got from Aragorn on Weathertop.

#### ***4.2.4. The Role of the Palantíri***

The palantíri of Saruman and Denethor are important objects: In the novel, they explain how Saruman can communicate with Sauron and why Denethor seems to be all-knowing. Grima throws Saruman's palantír at Gandalf during the parley of the two wizards in the ruins of Isengard. Pippin saves it from being lost in the water and is discovered by Sauron when he looks into it the following night. Confronting Sauron in Saruman's palantír some days later, Aragorn learns about the dark fleet sailing towards Minas Tirith and uses this information to come to the city's aid on time. Denethor's palantír, on the other hand, is responsible for the steward's growing despair and only shows the image of withered hands wreathed in flame after Denethor died on the pyre whilst holding it.

Jackson keeps Saruman's palantír as an element in his adaptation, as Pippin's attempt of stealing it and his resulting encounter with Sauron are dramatically effective scenes. In the theatrical version of RK it is simply picked up by Pippin amidst the ruins of Isengard without any explanation of its origin. Even in the extended version (where it falls out of Saruman's robe when his body is pierced to the wheel) no background information on its history or nature is provided. It is Pippin who learns of the impending attack on Minas Tirith from Sauron. Although Aragorn's encounter with Sauron is shown in RK, it happens at a later point of the story and does not advance the plot. The palantír of Minas Tirith is left out entirely and Denethor's madness is not due to his knowledge of Sauron's plans. Thus, Jackson simplifies the complex role of the palantíri and keeps them as supernatural tools in dramatically effective scenes only.

#### ***4.2.5. The Battle at the Black Gate***

Jackson lets all the members of the fellowship be present at the final battle at the Black Gate and intercuts the scene with Frodo and Sam's struggle at Mount Doom. Seeing the fellowship united once more, the viewer can fully concentrate on the action and is not distracted by wondering where missing characters are. In the novel, Merry stays in Minas Tirith, as he is still recovering from his confrontation with the Nazgul.

### **4.3. Different Decisions at Kernels**

Different decisions of characters at kernels tend to be perceived as major alterations by viewers familiar with the original text of an adaptation. Sometimes, however, such alterations are deemed necessary by film-makers to make scenes more suspenseful or to illustrate the development of a character if it stands in contrast to the literary source.<sup>166</sup> In Jackson's adaptation, different choices at kernels are repeatedly given to characters in leading positions like Aragorn, Théoden, Faramir and Treebeard. Jackson tends to alter their decisions in a way that action is delayed. Only when conflict can be avoided no longer, do they finally accept the challenge like they do in the novel. (For a more detailed discussion of this topic cf. V.3.)

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<sup>166</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13-14

### ***4.3.1. The Road to Helm's Deep***

Whereas Tolkien's Théoden does not hesitate to go to war against Saruman, Jackson's King of Rohan wants to protect his people by preserving peace. Instead of attacking Saruman, he leads his people to the "refuge of Helm's Deep" (TT: Disc 1, 01:25). When armies of orcs besiege Helm's Deep, however, he finally has to accept the fact that battle must be fought.

### ***4.3.2. Aragorn's Dilemma of Kingship***

Tolkien's Aragorn never falters in his determination to become king and risks his life to achieve this goal. Jackson, on the other hand, portrays Aragorn as driven by self-doubts and therefore presents him with kernels that are not part of the novel. At these kernels, Aragorn decides against kingship again and again. Only when it becomes obvious that the king alone can save Minas Tirith by taking the Paths of the Dead does he accept his inherited role and his ancestor's sword is reforged.

### ***4.3.3. The Hesitation of the Ents***

In the novel, the Ents decide unanimously to attack Isengard in revenge for Saruman's felling of many beloved trees. Jackson's Entmoot, however, ends differently. As Jackson's Ents want to avoid conflict, Pippin shows them the damage done to their land. Overcome with anger, Treebeard changes his mind and leads the Ents to war after all (cf. V.8.).

## **4.4. Action Elements**

According to Bowden, the main reason why people watch films is the human wish for entertainment. Due to established film traditions, any cinematic genre creates certain expectation in the audience. Viewers of a fantasy film like *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, hope to be carried away to a world full of epic battles, dazzling special effects and breath-taking action sequences. If a film falls short of these expectations it runs the risk of disappointing its audience and thus becoming a financial flop.<sup>167</sup>

As an expert in special effects, Jackson eagerly took up the challenge of turning *The Lord of the Rings* into an action-packed film overflowing with innovative computerised effects. Battle scenes are prolonged and many new action details are added, e.g. on Caradhras the fellowship is buried by an avalanche, while the watcher of Moria does not only grab Frodo's leg but

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. Bowden 3

throws the hobbit high into the air. Jackson's preoccupation with loud and suspenseful episode, however, shifts the focus of *The Lord of the Rings* away from the hobbits as the true heroes of Tolkien's novel. The following examples are going to illustrate how Jackson prolongs suspenseful episodes and how he adds excitement even to quiet parts of the text.

#### ***4.4.1. Weathertop***

When Aragorn and the hobbits are attacked by the Black Riders at Weathertop, the scene takes place in a dell at the foot of the hill in the novel. They try to fend their enemies off with flaming brands but do not draw swords. Jackson transfers the scene of the attack to the more spectacular top of the hill and engages the company in a sword fight against the Black Riders. Thus, he adds new details to their fight and draws on the cliché that every battle has to be fought with swords in fantasy films.

#### ***4.4.2. Moria***

To raise the level of suspense, Jackson prolongs the journey of the fellowship through Moria by putting in more obstacles. Tolkien's rather short encounter of the fellowship with orcs in the Chamber of Mazarbul is turned into a complex fighting sequence, in which an enormous troll is taken down after many fruitless attempts. On their flight to the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, the fellowship has to cross a newly invented bridge that crumbles to pieces under their feet. They have to jump over chasms and Gimli and Frodo almost fall into the abyss as the steps dissolve under their feet. Preceded by this lengthy introductory scene, the actual Bridge of Khazad-dûm and Gandalf's confrontation with the Balrog shrink in importance, as the audience perceives them as just one more action sequence. As continuous dramatic tension tends to exhaust itself, it is debatable whether Jackson's attempt at increasing suspense really worked in this case.

#### ***4.4.3. The Dead Marshes***

Jackson introduces new action elements also to Frodo and Sam's journey through the Dead Marshes. In the novel, Sam stumbles and sees the faces of the dead in the water before his feet. Jackson, in contrast, lets Frodo fall into one of the pools. Frodo is attacked by the dead, who look at him with blind eyes and rotten teeth. He is saved in the nick of time by Gollum,

who pulls him out of the water. Thus, Jackson tries to add more excitement to an episode that is rather quiet in the novel.

#### **4.4.4. *The End of Denethor***

In the novel, Denethor dies on his pyre behind closed doors:

[T]hose outside heard the greedy roaring of the fire within. And then Denethor gave a great cry, and afterwards spoke no more. (836)

This indirect reference to Denethor's death is a sensible solution in the novel, but it was not perceived as dramatic enough by Jackson. Screaming with pain, the burning steward jumps from his pyre in the film and falls off the edge of Minas Tirith as a bright ball of fire. This scene contains more action than Tolkien's version of Denethor's death, but whether it manages to affect the viewer's feelings in a similar way is questionable.

#### **4.4.5. *Cirith Ungol***

Also in Cirith Ungol Jackson focuses on action and violence at the cost of the quieter elements of the novel. Tolkien's Sam does not have to fight when looking for Frodo in the orc tower, as the two orc companies eagerly eliminated each other in their fight over Frodo's coat of mail. Instead, his despair at not finding Frodo and his will to continue are depicted very closely. In the film, Sam stabs no fewer than four orcs on his way to the top-chamber, as Jackson replaces the dramatically not effective internal action of the novel with external violence.

#### **4.4.6. *Battles***

Tolkien's emphasis was not on warfare when he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, but on the characters' journey and development. The large battles of Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith each do not take up more than one chapter of the novel and the focus is laid on the hobbits' perception of events.<sup>168</sup>

Confronted with Zimmerman's attempt at adapting the novel to the screen, Tolkien was strongly against inflating the battles scenes, because "battles tend to be too similar"<sup>169</sup>. If either the Ents or Helm's Deep had to be omitted, Tolkien would have preferred the battle to

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. Porter 177

<sup>169</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

be left out, because it is “incidental to the main story” and the final battle of Minas Tirith “would gain by having no competitor”<sup>170</sup>. Tolkien, of course, was no film-maker and did not know the technical possibilities the cinema of the twenty-first century would have to offer. In spite of that, however, his love was with the quiet, character-defining scenes of the story and not with scenes “of screams and rather meaningless slashings”.<sup>171</sup>

Jackson provides *The Lord of the Rings* with much more fighting and violence, attempting to make the story as visually effective as possible. Kellner claims that Jackson’s film is “one of the bloodiest epics in contemporary cinema”<sup>172</sup> and “highly militarist”<sup>173</sup>, as the film-makers spend large amounts of time on creating great battle scenes. While some fans tend to enjoy the detailed battle scenes of *The Lord of the Rings*, Jackson has been severely criticised for his glorification of violence by scholars.<sup>174</sup> Even if Jackson highlights the damage of war on individuals (e.g. the children in Rohan), he tends to depict valour in battle as one of the highest forms of human virtue.<sup>175</sup>

#### **4.4.6.1. Helm’s Deep**

The battle of Helm’s Deep takes up nine pages in the novel: Legolas and Gimli compete over who kills more orcs, the friends get temporarily separated and when prospects are bleak Théoden decides to ride out to meet the enemy. When dawn comes, the battle is over and the remaining orcs flee to the woods never to be seen again.

Jackson turns the battle of Helm’s Deep into the climax of TT and dedicates twenty-eight minutes to it. A large host of Elves joins Théoden’s army to honour the old alliance between the different peoples of Middle-earth: “Do we leave Middle-earth to its fate? Do we let them stand alone?” Galadriel asks (TT: Disc 2, 00:26). This raises the status of the battle of Helm’s Deep to that of the battle of Minas Tirith, as it, too, now decides about the future of Middle-earth. Jackson adds many new details and narrow escapes to make the episode as “exciting and dramatic”<sup>176</sup> as possible, e.g. Aragorn commands the archers in Elvish, Legolas skates down a flight of stairs on a shield and the Elf Haldir is killed. To add a human touch, the arming of young boys is shown and images of frightened women and children hiding in the

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<sup>170</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

<sup>171</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

<sup>172</sup> Kellner 32

<sup>173</sup> Kellner 31

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Davis 67

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Kellner 31

<sup>176</sup> Jackson in Appendices of TT, Editorial: Refining the Story 00:12



caves under the stronghold remind the audience of what the Rohirrim are fighting for (cf. 3.2.2.).

#### ***4.4.6.2. The Battle of Minas Tirith***

The battle of Minas Tirith is even greater in its dimensions than the battle of Helm's Deep in Jackson's adaptation. In the novel, Tolkien focuses on the episode of Éowyn and Merry slaying the Nazgul and no more than sixteen pages deal with the Siege of Gondor and the resulting battle.

Jackson again inflates the battle to huge dimensions, allocating thirty-five minutes of RK to it. Mûmakil and trolls are shown in great detail and uncountable special effects aim at stunning the viewer, e.g. Legolas skates down the trunk of one of the oliphaunts and the head of the massive battering ram Grond is glowing red with fire. Against the enormous masses of orcs the armies of Men alone cannot prevail, but they depend on the help of the computer-generated Army of the Dead, who does not enter Gondor in the novel.

#### ***4.4.6.3 Focus on Aggression***

Apart from the great battle scenes of the film, the audience of Jackson's adaptation is confronted with a general readiness to use violence on part of the characters that is not present in the novel. Sam and Frodo physically abuse Gollum on their way to Moria, repeatedly threatening to kill him. Aragorn initiates a fist fight against Théoden's guards in the halls of the king without any obvious reason and beheads Sauron's hideous but ultimately peaceful messenger at the Black Gate. In Isengard, Legolas shoots Grima, again without any logical reason behind it. While Jackson insists on his changes adding to the excitement of the film, Smith accuses him of introducing some action scenes "solely for the purpose of assuring that not a minute goes by without a noisy, gory confrontation"<sup>177</sup>.

#### ***4.4.7. Magic***

The magic of Tolkien's novel is of a quiet and unobtrusive kind. It can be found in the power of lembas-bread, in the water of Galadriel's mirror and in the silent force of nature as illustrated in the draughts of the Ents. Magic is depicted as a natural phenomenon, which most people do not understand and therefore perceive as a supernatural power. Tolkien's wizards

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<sup>177</sup> Smith 83

are old wise men, who do not produce puffs and smoke with their magic. The power of Saruman's voice is described more closely than his magic powers and there are only a few tastes of Gandalf's magic the reader gets in the novel, e.g. his ability to make light and fire.

In the tradition of fantasy films, however, magic is loud and visible. Since *Star Wars*, a fantasy film is only complete if it contains at least one computerised fight between wizards and Jackson makes use of this cliché in his portrayal of magic in *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>178</sup>

Saruman's powers seem to be endless, as they enable him to conjure up a snow storm, to possess Théoden from afar and to send a mighty fire-ball at Gandalf during their parley. Gandalf in his turn is seen acting as an exorcist freeing Théoden. Whereas the episode of Gandalf's capture in Orthanc is simply described as "they took me" (254) in the novel, Jackson stages an action-packed fight between the two wizards, in which the two old men throw each other high in the air and send glittering beams of light at each other. Although Tolkien heavily criticised the introduction of "irrelevant magic"<sup>179</sup> into any adaptation of his novel, magic has to be made visible somehow to be dramatically effective on screen. Scholars, however, criticise Jackson's depiction of magic as being exaggerated and Fuller cynically observes that the duel between Gandalf and Saruman "looks like it was choreographed in Hong Kong"<sup>180</sup>.

#### 4.5. Visual Characterisation

The need to characterise protagonists through external action also leads to the modification of scenes in adaptations. Typical aspects of the characters' personalities are enhanced if they are considered essential to the story. New aspects are introduced, if different character qualities are perceived as dramatically more desirable. Sometimes, characters are involved in scenes where they are not present in the literary source to highlight their importance, e.g. Pippin rides with Gandalf to the aid of Faramir in RK. Only few examples of characterisation through action will be discussed below, as the issue of characterisation is thoroughly dealt with in Chapter V.

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Flieger 74

<sup>179</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 210, June 1958

<sup>180</sup> Fuller 19

#### ***4.5.1. Frodo in Lothlórien***

Jackson characterises Frodo as a lonely person who is set apart from others by the fact that he is the Ring-bearer. This is first hinted at on their arrival in Lothlórien. Whereas Frodo has been expected by the Elves in the novel and is welcomed with open arms, the fellowship is denied entry to the elven country in FS because of Frodo's burden. Thus, Jackson's Frodo is stigmatised by the Ring and ultimately alone in his quest, which is not the case in the novel.

#### ***4.5.2. The Last Debate***

After the battle of Minas Tirith, Gandalf and the leaders of Men discuss what further steps should be taken to prevent Sauron from prevailing in the War of the Ring. In the novel, it is Gandalf who suggests attacking Mordor to avert Sauron's gaze from Mount Doom.

Jackson gives this role to Aragorn in the film. Thus, the scene becomes character revealing, as it shows Aragorn as a mighty leader, who is finally ready to take on the responsibilities of kingship.

#### ***4.5.3. Aragorn's Coronation***

At Aragorn's coronation, Frodo brings the crown to Aragorn and Gandalf sets it upon the king's head. This is Aragorn's wish, as he has come into his inheritance "[b]y the labour and valour of many" (964). In Jackson's adaptation the roles are different: Although it is still Gandalf who crowns the king, no hobbits are involved in this act and it is Gimli who holds the crown. This change in the cast of the coronation scene shows that the focus of Jackson's film is not on the hobbits but the other members of the fellowship are of equal importance.

### **4.6. Different Point of View**

In contrast to novels, films are characterised by their immediacy and offer an omniscient point of view to the audience. This leads to a different distribution of information compared to the novel, as the viewer shares in the complete picture of events. In individual scenes, however, the camera may take on the role of a narrator and present the events from the perspective of one single character. This character does not necessarily have to be the one the reader identifies with in the novel, as the following examples are going to show.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 17-29

#### ***4.6.1. Through the Eyes of the Villains***

Unlike Tolkien, Jackson does not tell *The Lord of the Rings* from the hobbits' point of view, but presents the audience with the complete picture of the War of the Ring. This enables the viewer to get an insight into the plans of the enemy, which is not provided in the novel. The audience knows what Gollum, Saruman and the Witch-King are planning to do to the fellowship and are eager to find out whether they will succeed, e.g. Saruman tells his orcs before the battle of Helm's Deep that "victory is at hand" (TT: Disc 2, 00:17) and that they should "leave none alive" (TT: Disc 2, 00:18). Thus, suspense is created by showing the enemies' doings in great detail. In the novel, the reader does not know what the fellowship's enemies are up to, which also raises the level of tension but by different means.

#### ***4.6.2. The Reunion of the Fellowship***

The reunion of the fellowship after the destruction of the Ring is witnessed through Sam's eyes in the novel. Sam wakes up and bursts into tears of joy when he finds out that Frodo is alive and fine. Later, the hobbits are joined by the other members of the fellowship. Giving the point of view to Sam in this crucial scene mirrors Tolkien's conviction that Sam is "the chief hero"<sup>182</sup> of *The Lord of the Rings*.

There is no doubt, however, that Frodo is the most important character in Jackson's film. Therefore, Jackson places Frodo at the heart of this scene. His smiling face is shown close up, while his friends jump onto his bed to hug him. This makes more sense in dramatic terms, as Frodo as the main-character should be the centre of attention.

### **4.7. Atmosphere**

Atmosphere is an element that cannot be transferred from novel to film directly. More subjective than transferable elements, it is recreated by film-makers with the help of set, lighting and music.<sup>183</sup> Jackson manages to capture the overall atmosphere of Middle-earth astonishingly well, even if some scenes evoke quite a different response in the viewer.

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<sup>182</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 131, probably 1951

<sup>183</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 13-26

### ***4.7.1. Leaving the Shire***

Although the first stage of Frodo's journey has the relaxed atmosphere of friends going on a camping trip, this is not the case in Jackson's adaptation. As the hobbits' adventures in the Shire are condensed into one exciting flight to the Bucklebury Ferry, the level of suspense is high and the threat of the Black Riders is immediate. Thus, the omission of Tolkien's quieter introductory scenes in the Shire creates a fundamentally different atmosphere at the beginning of the hobbits' journey.

### ***4.7.2. Bree***

A different atmosphere can also be due to minor changes in setting, as illustrated by the arrival of the hobbits in Bree. In the novel, Bree serves as a safe haven: The hobbits receive a warm welcome at the inn, which is a homely place, and the common room rings with laughter. Only when Frodo slips the Ring on his finger by accident does the atmosphere become tense.

Anticipating the fateful events at the inn, Jackson depicts Bree as a hostile place right from the beginning. Arriving in Bree in the pouring rain, the hobbits find the gate closed and the gatekeeper eyes them suspiciously. The inn is swarming with suspicious characters and the common room is far from being inviting. Due to this foreboding atmosphere, it comes as no surprise to the audience that the hobbits soon get into trouble.

### ***4.7.3. Pippin and the Palantír***

In Rohan, a change in setting has an effect similar to the scene discussed above, but this time the forbidding atmosphere occurs in the novel: When Pippin steals the palantír from Gandalf and gets questioned by Sauron, the company is camping in the open in Tolkien's novel. This creates a strong sense of danger, as they are far from shelter and an easy prey for the Nazguls. Jackson abandons this element of danger by transferring Pippin's encounter with Sauron to the halls of Edoras, where the company is safe and able to defend themselves if necessary.

## **4.8. Miscellaneous**

In this section Jackson's approach to poetry and to the rather archaic language of the novel will be the topic of investigation. As these two issues do not fit into any of the categories

above, they are combined to form the final chapter of this part of my discussion about changes between Tolkien's novel and Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*.

#### **4.8.1. Poems and Songs**

A characteristic feature of Tolkien's novel is the author's frequent use of poems and songs. Varying in length between some lines and several pages, they are a means of characterising the characters that sing them and often set the mood of the scene they occur in. Tolkien uses songs to familiarise the reader with the history of Middle-earth (e.g. "Gil-galad was an Elven-king") and to enhance the historical importance of the events at the time of the novel. Instead of giving a detailed account of the battle of Minas Tirith in prose, for example, he includes a song of the events as it was sung by bards in the years to come. This adds to the authenticity of *The Lord of the Rings* and makes the world of the novel come alive to the reader.

Obviously, it is not possible to recite long poems in a film, as they do not further the plot and would only delay action. Therefore, the score of Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* is mainly instrumental. Leitmotifs link up the themes of the film and make them easily accessible to the audience.<sup>184</sup>

Songs, however, do play a role in Jackson's adaptation. Gandalf and Bilbo hum "The Old Walking Song", while a drinking song combined of the "Bath Song" and "Ho! Ho! Ho!" is sung by the hobbits in FS. Pippin's song for Denethor in RK is a stanza of "A Walking Song". Jackson also invents new songs, i.e. another drinking song in RK, Éowyn's lament at Théodred's funeral, a number of Elvish songs and Aragorn's coronation chant. It is striking that most songs in Jackson's adaptation are in foreign languages (i.e. Elvish and the language of Rohan). Thus, songs are used to create an authentic cultural background for the different peoples of Middle-earth on the screen. Although Jackson makes an honest effort to preserve a taste of Tolkien's poems in his adaptation, it is unavoidable that the hobbit music so rich in Tolkien's novel is largely lost.<sup>185</sup>

#### **4.8.2. Language**

Tolkien employs a broad range of linguistic styles in his novel. Whereas the hobbits' language is rather colloquial, human characters like Aragorn tend to use a rather archaic form of language. Antiquated pronouns (e.g. "Wilt *thou* not let me ride with this company?" – 768

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<sup>184</sup> Cf. Jorgensen 45

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Jorgensen 45

[emphasis added]) and archaic phrases (e.g. “to break [one’s] fast” instead of “to eat breakfast” – 765) are frequently used in dialogue.

Jackson modernises Tolkien’s language, as archaic expressions might irritate the audience and distract them from what is said. Therefore, the actual words of Tolkien’s dialogue hardly ever make their way into Jackson’s adaptation, but are rewritten in a neutral style that is easily understood by the audience.<sup>186</sup>

Kozloff argues that Jackson also adds a melodramatic touch to the language of his characters, e.g. “I would rather share one lifetime with you than face all the ages of the world alone” (Arwen in FS, Disc 1, 01:32). Such florid turns of phrase are considered to work well on the screen, as they lead to a strong emotional response in the viewer.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Cf. Leitch 138-142

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Kozloff 165

## V. Changing the Characters

For Tolkien, the characters of *The Lord of the Rings* were sacred. “I should resent perversion of the characters [...] even more than the spoiling of the plot and scenery,”<sup>188</sup> he wrote in 1958, referring to Zimmerman’s fruitless attempt of writing a screenplay of Tolkien’s novel.

Characters are indeed transferable from novel to film as far as psychological development and character motivations are concerned. Internal realities, however, have to be dramatized to make them accessible to the audience.<sup>189</sup> Jackson and his team try to modernise Tolkien’s heroes, “[straying] in cinematically valid but character-changing ways”<sup>190</sup> at several points. Thus, some of Jackson’s characters act differently from their literary counterparts and often the focus of character development is a new one.<sup>191</sup>

In this part of my thesis I will take a close look at the main-characters of *The Lord of the Rings* and discuss the different approaches Jackson chose to bring them to the screen. The following chapters (with the exception of 5.3.) are structured identically: An analysis of Tolkien’s character in Section 1 will be followed by a detailed discussion of Jackson’s interpretation of the same character in Section 2. Changes between the two versions of each character are highlighted and an attempt at evaluating the effects of changes on the audience is made.

Jackson’s characters will be looked at independently from the novel as far as character development is concerned. Common trends in Jackson’s way of characterisation will be explored and their effectiveness on the screen will be discussed. Here, above all, the main criteria will be the consistency and believability of Jackson’s visualisation.

Unfortunately, in a thesis of this scope not all characters can be given credit. Minor characters like Bilbo, Éomer or Grima will be omitted and so is Gandalf, whose characterisation in the film is astonishingly faithful to the novel. The focus of my analysis is laid on the hobbit characters, as they are the heart of Tolkien’s story and its true heroes. Again, I do not aim at completeness, but I will focus on what I consider the most important aspects. Rather than offering a complete discussion of each character I try to provide an overview and a starting point for further thought.

The findings of *The Lord of the Rings* Project, an international survey conducted by Martin Barker and Ernest Mathijs from Aberystwyth University (2003), will be taken into account as

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<sup>188</sup> Cf. Tolkien in Carpenter, Letter 210: June 1958

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Bowden, Darsie 182-184

<sup>190</sup> Porter 11

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Porter 16



well. This highly interesting data from more than 24,000 viewers provides a remarkable insight into character preferences and identification in RK.

## 1. Hobbits

Hobbits are the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien's most remarkable creation. They illustrate that common people are capable of great acts of heroism if they have something to fight for. As a peace-loving, joyful and simple people, who are not interested in events outside their idyllic Shire, hobbits are the characters to identify with in Tolkien's richly coloured fantasy world. Therefore, the events of the story are largely perceived through their eyes.

Whereas most of the hobbits in Tolkien's novel are adults (with an age difference of thirty-two years between Frodo and Pippin), Jackson chooses to give them all the same age, barely out of adolescence. This makes it more likely for them to be close comrades in the eyes of a modern audience and thus even easier to identify with.<sup>192</sup>

In this chapter the characterisation of Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin will be looked at closely and differences between novel and film will be traced.

### 1.1. Frodo

Frodo, the Ring-bearer, is the central character of *The Lord of the Rings*. Resisting the temptation of the Ring and bravely carrying on through all kind of dangers, he belongs among the most heroic characters of the novel. Perceiving large parts of the story through his eyes, the reader suffers with him on his strenuous journey to Mordor.

Jackson calls Frodo "the spine of the movie"<sup>193</sup> and claims to have kept his film "Frodo-centric"<sup>194</sup>. At the same time, however, he makes a number of significant changes to the character of Frodo so that the hobbit tends to react differently than his counterpart in the novel in many scenes. Thus, Frodo ranks among the characters that changed most when transferred to the screen.

#### 1.1.1. Novel: A Wise and Mature Hobbit-hero

Fifty years old but physically "well-preserved" (42), Frodo is the oldest of his hobbit companions. Unlike typical hobbits, he is interested in events outside the Shire and knows

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<sup>192</sup> Cf. Porter 49; Kozloff 163

<sup>193</sup> Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:19

<sup>194</sup> Appendices of FS, Editorial 00:06

how to speak Elvish. He is a mature character and a competent leader of the hobbits on the first stage of their journey, e.g. making plans for an early departure at Crickhollow or deciding to keep off the road in the Marish.

When Gandalf tells him of the power of the Ring, Frodo does not panic or seem helpless. Instead, he agrees to take the Ring to Rivendell of his own accord in order to protect the Shire. He is melancholic at leaving home, but at the same time his heart has been yearning for adventures. As it takes him half a year to set out on his journey, he is well prepared. Completely aware of the dangers that await him, he knows that his road will probably take him to Mordor and that it is unlikely that he will ever come back.

As a clever and careful hobbit, Frodo is diplomatic in conversation with strangers, which makes Aragorn take a lot of effort to convince him of his good intentions. In Lórien it is left to Frodo to (successfully) negotiate with the Elves to let Gimli enter their realm and he is greeted as a guest of honour by Galadriel and Celeborn. When he is questioned by Faramir later in the story, he skilfully avoids the truth without telling lies and is an equal partner to him in conversation, giving witty retorts.

As the most important member of the fellowship, Frodo finds himself in a responsible position and many decisions are delegated to him. It is his task, for example, to decide whether the company should enter Moria or which way they should take at Rauros. In the first case he chooses very wisely by letting the fellowship vote over their way by daylight. He even takes on responsibility when he is not asked to, e.g. by keeping watch on the river when he suspects Gollum of pursuing them. He has a keen insight into the minds of others and is called “wise” (357) by Galadriel.

Frodo is reluctant to take his friends along on his hopeless errand, although he values their friendship highly. Deeply concerned about their wish to follow him anywhere, he tries to give them the slip twice: first, when leaving the Shire and later at Rauros, where he succeeds but for Sam. When danger is close, however, Frodo would never leave their side but fight for them like at the Ford of Rivendell. He fully appreciates the selfless friendship of his faithful servant Sam and would never distrust him.

When it comes to Gollum, Frodo always treats him respectfully, calling him Sméagol, and never touches him roughly. Throughout the story Frodo remains Gollum’s master, praising him for his good guidance and rebuking him when his craving for the Ring becomes too obvious. He protects Gollum against Faramir’s men because “the servant has a claim on the master for service, even service in fear” (672). At the same time, however, Frodo is well

aware of Gollum probably “[being] up to some wickedness” (698) and never once takes Gollum’s word over Sam’s.

Even if Frodo’s struggle against the power of the Ring gets harder with every step he takes, his will to continue remains unbroken. His selflessness and his great sense of duty in spite of all private suffering make Frodo appear almost saint-like:

What he had to do, he had to do, if he could, and [...] whether Faramir or Aragorn or Elrond or Galadriel or Gandalf or anyone else ever knew about it was beside the purpose. (692)

He never questions his quest or gives in to despair, even when hope seems lost: “I’ve still got to do the best I can” (903), he says, and “I can manage it [...], I must.” (913). Only once does Frodo depart from this perfect picture, namely at the very end of his quest when he does not manage to destroy the Ring.

Tolkien portrays Frodo as a very mature, clever and selfless hobbit, who is independent in his choices and heroic in his deeds. Thus, he creates a complex main-character, whose suffering after the loss of the Ring seems believable so that his decision to sail into the West in the end does not come as a complete surprise to the reader.

### ***1.1.2. Film: An Immense Task for a Naïve Hobbit-youngster***

Actor Elijah Wood’s round, staring eyes and his anguished look give the audience the impression that Frodo is a hobbit that must still be looked after. Indeed, Frodo seems to be the youngest of the four hobbits setting out from the Shire and he is very inexperienced.<sup>195</sup>

When he learns the truth about the Ring of power he panics and his flight from the Shire is a headless one. Being told where to go by Gandalf, he does not have any plans of his own at all. Not once in FS does he take on the role of a leader. Instead, his vulnerability is highlighted when he is the last to reach the safe ferry.

Also in the course of the story Frodo never finds himself in a position to make decisions and simply follows his companions. Thus, he is portrayed as helpless and passive. He does not grasp the meaning of his quest at first, naively believing that “the Ring will be safe in Rivendell” and that he can “go home” (FS: Disc 1, 01:25) after taking it there. His lack of geographical knowledge shows that he is not prepared for his journey at all and it prompts him to ask whether Mordor is “left or right” (FS: Disc 2 00:03) when the fellowship sets out from Rivendell.

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<sup>195</sup> Cf. Smith 4

Again and again Jackson portrays Frodo as not being able to stand on his own: When the Black Riders chase him to the Ford of Rivendell it takes Arwen to defend him. In one scene even his thoughts are voiced by Gandalf:

You feel its power growing, don't you? [...] You must be careful now. Evil will be drawn to you from outside the Fellowship. And, I fear, from within.  
(FS: Disc 2, 00:11)

Moreover, important information (like the fact that Gollum is following them) is withheld from Frodo by Aragorn, which makes him seem like a child that is too fearful and immature to face the truth.

Making conversation is not Frodo's strength, either. He trusts Aragorn in Bree without asking any further questions and when talking to Faramir he foolishly gives his quest away. After being wounded at Weathertop he does not speak at all in contrast to the novel and only groans with pain. On the other hand, it is Frodo who solves the riddle at the Gate of Moria (instead of Merry in the novel). It is interesting that Jackson should change this scene to emphasize Frodo's intelligence, when he portrays him as rather slow on the uptake in general.

The influence of the Ring on Frodo is even stronger in the film than in the novel. This is shown right from the beginning by Frodo's tormented expression when he loses the Ring in the snow and by him taking out the Ring at the most unlikely occasions (e.g. when confronted by a Nazgul in Osgiliath). Under the Ring's power he attacks Sam fiercely, pointing his sword at him, and sends him away. Thus, Jackson provides Frodo with an evil side that remains hidden in the novel.<sup>196</sup>

Although friendship is important to him, Frodo is not concerned at all about his friends following him into danger. When he leaves the fellowship at Parth Galen, he does so primarily out of fear of Boromir and not because he wants to protect his friends. On witnessing Merry and Pippin being captured by orcs, he does not turn round to help them. This – as well as his cruel behaviour towards Sam – stands in marked contrast to the caring Frodo of the novel.

Jackson stresses the fact that “to bear a ring of power is to be alone” (FS: Disc 2, 00:57). Different from the novel, Frodo is almost denied entry to Lóthlorien because of his burden. The fight against the corrupting power of the Ring is Frodo's and ultimately no one can aid him to resist that power. “You cannot help me, Sam” (FS: Disc 2, 01:06), Frodo says repeatedly and seems like a desperate, lost child when he looks at the Ring. This feeling of being utterly alone leads him to side with Gollum, who knows what he is going through, having borne the Ring himself.

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<sup>196</sup> Cf. Fuchs 262-263

Gollum and Frodo are portrayed as equals, allying against Sam. Frodo trusts Gollum and shows pity for him, because he sees his own struggle mirrored in Gollum. His wish to help him is mainly selfish, as he wants to see that the evils of the Ring can be cured and that he himself will be able to find peace one day.<sup>197</sup>

Frodo's will to continue on his quest is not as adamant as in the novel and it often takes Sam to motivate him to keep going, e.g. in Osgiliath or Minas Morgul. Suffering greatly from his burden, Frodo is desperate and always close to giving up: "I can't do this" (FS: Disc 2, 00:56 and TT: Disc 2, 01:31) and "I don't think I want to" (RK: Disc 2, 00:01) are sentences that are given to Frodo by Jackson. Another new aspect is Frodo's strong sense of foreboding of future sufferings, e.g. when he observes "I don't think I'll be coming back" (RK: Disc 1, 00:48).

Unlike in the novel where Frodo's journey into the West is meant to be taken literally, Jackson uses his departure at the end of the story as a metaphor for death. This is made explicit by Annie Lennox's song "Into the West" at the end of RK, which recalls Gandalf's explanation of death:

Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns *to silver glass*. (RK: Disc 2, 00:35)  
[emphasis added]

Joining Bilbo on his journey into the West therefore comes as a surprise to Frodo as well as to the audience and is not as carefully prepared as in the novel.

On the whole, Jackson chooses a different approach to the character of Frodo that contrasts sharply with Tolkien's characterisation. By emphasizing Frodo's weaknesses and vulnerability, he makes Frodo appear even more like a martyr, as his deeds come at a greater personal sacrifice.<sup>198</sup> On the other hand, he shows that Frodo "is not always right"<sup>199</sup> by exploring the unfair and selfish side of his personality brought to light by the overwhelming influence of the Ring. All this turns Frodo into a believable character that is not free from mistakes – but at the same time he is not particularly likeable. This is mirrored by the results of *The Lord of the Rings* Project, where Frodo is not among the favourite characters of RK. Viewers who do not have any knowledge of the book ranked him significantly lower than readers of the novel.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. Fuchs 258

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Kozloff 169

<sup>199</sup> Boyens in Appendices of RK: From Book to Script 00:04

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Barker (2005) 364; 369-370

## 1.2. Sam

Frodo's faithful servant and friend Sam is the secret hero of *The Lord of the Rings*. Strongly characterised by his unconditional friendship to Frodo, he is "the most closely drawn character, the successor to Bilbo of the first book, the genuine hobbit,"<sup>201</sup> as Tolkien wrote in a letter to his son. Jackson manages to capture the nature of Sam quite well, except for a number of alterations to his character, which will be discussed below.

### 1.2.1. Novel: Frodo's Faithful Servant

Right from the beginning Tolkien makes it clear that Sam is Frodo's gardener and servant. Therefore, Sam addresses Frodo very formally (i.e. "Mr Frodo", "sir", "master", "begging your pardon") and always remains respectful towards him. Frodo in his turn calls Sam "lad", establishing their difference in age as well as in social status. Even when Sam becomes Frodo's "dearest hobbit, friend of friends" (610) in the course of their journey, this distanced way of addressing each other is kept. Also Sam's rather colloquial way of expressing himself shows that he is not as learned as Frodo.

As a simple and cheerful hobbit, Sam has a very childlike nature. He is easily moved to tears, like when Gandalf chooses him to be Frodo's companion or when he has to part from his pony at the Gates of Moria. He blushes when Galadriel looks at him and in his clumsiness he tells Faramir of Frodo's quest. Both grief and joy are feelings he shows openly.

At the same time Sam is clever, mainly by trusting to his instincts. He identifies their pursuer as Gollum without any effort and instinctively knows how to handle the Ring when he carries it. At the breaking of the fellowship he is the only one to read Frodo's mind, consequently becoming his only companion on the road to Mordor. He knows very early that their road will take them to Mount Doom and always keeps their luggage ready even in the safe valley of Rivendell.

His bond to Frodo is very close and the two hobbits come to share an ideal form of friendship: Sam puts his own needs and wishes behind Frodo's, always caring for him in a loving way, protecting him, keeping him warm and giving their last drops of water to him without any negative sentiments. Sam's unconditional friendship is best shown in the chapter "The Choices of Master Samwise", where he cannot leave Frodo's dead body (as he thinks) because he does not want to be parted from him. "[H]elp Mr. Frodo to the last step and then

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<sup>201</sup> Tolkien in Carpenter (1981): Letter 93, 24 Dec. 1944

die with him? Well, if that is the job then I must do it.” (913) – This illustrates Sam’s attitude and the depth of his friendship very well.

When Gollum joins the two hobbits as their guide, Sam deeply distrusts him. He does not care whether Gollum hears him say nasty things about him, but he understands his longing for the Ring and the struggle between the two sides of his personality. Sam is far too good-natured to do any harm to Gollum, though: Even when Frodo asks him to bind Gollum at their first meeting, his knot is “hardly tight enough” and Sam is “gentler than his words” (603). When Gollum is not present, Sam even shows traces of pity for him, calling him a “poor wretch” (609). Only after Gollum’s betrayal does Sam attack him physically, but even then he spares him in the end, because “he could not strike this thing lying in the dust, forlorn, ruinous, utterly wretched” (923). Also Sam’s humour is partly derived from his ability to imitate Gollum’s way of speaking, as the following exemplary dialogue illustrates:

“Sméagol always helps, if they asks nicely.”

“Right!” said Sam. “I *does* ask. And if that isn’t nice enough, I *begs*.” (638)

[emphasis added]

All this makes the relationship between Gollum and Sam very complex, but at no point does it ever threaten the friendship between Frodo and Sam.

Sam’s heroism stems from his devotion to Frodo, which makes him attack the huge spider Shelob and take the Ring when he thinks Frodo has died. He does so although he is fully aware of the Ring’s evil power, performing a deed neither Gandalf nor Galadriel dared to do when offered the Ring. Sam, however, never perceives himself as a hero and always keeps his “plain hobbit-sense” (881):

The one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command.  
(881)

At his return to the Shire he is not changed, being as kind and selfless as he was when he set out on his journey. He uses Galadriel’s gift (a box of earth from her garden) wisely to restore the beauty of the Shire and is rewarded by having the only mallorn tree outside Lórien growing in his garden.

### ***1.2.2. Film: Sam’s Darker Side***

Jackson did not want to show Frodo as Sam’s superior in the film so that the audience would not feel offended by the idea of different social classes in the Shire.<sup>202</sup> Consequently, Sam

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, Tolkien: Origins of Middle-earth 00:23

does not act servile towards Frodo and the use of “master” or “Mr” when he addresses Frodo is inconsistent in the film. The two hobbits are equals, with Sam seeming more like Frodo’s elder brother than his younger servant. Only towards the end of TT is it mentioned at all that Sam is a gardener.

As Frodo is characterised as very young and helpless, it is not hard for Sam to appear more mature than him in the film. He seems to be the oldest of the four hobbits and the most settled one, being in love with Rosie right from the start. Being self-confident and cheeky, he complains about Galadriel’s present of elven rope, immodestly asking her if she has “run out of those nice, shiny daggers” (FS: Disc 2, 01:01).

Due to Jackson’s characterisation of the hobbits as being younger and more naïve in general, Sam is slower on the uptake than in the novel: In Rivendell, for example, he is sure that the hobbits will be “off home” (FS: Disc 1, 01:25), as he does not grasp the importance of Frodo’s quest. He is also ignorant of Gollum following them. At the breaking of the fellowship Frodo is sure that Sam “will not understand” (FS: Disc 2, 01:15) his leaving on his own and they become companions only by accident.

Like in the novel, Sam is characterised by his strong friendship to Frodo, which Jackson portrays very well with Sam wading into the water to follow Frodo or carrying him on his shoulders. Still, their friendship is not free from conflict. When Frodo sides with Gollum and sends Sam away at the Stairs of Cirith Ungol, Sam actually leaves Frodo to his fate. Only on finding the wrapping of the lembas bread Gollum threw away does he turn back and follow them. It would be unthinkable for the faithful Sam of the novel to desert Frodo, especially under these circumstances.<sup>203</sup>

Jackson characterises Sam as tougher than in the novel, e.g. he sheds no tears at the parting from his pony. When Gollum enters the scene, he even displays a rather disquieting side of his character. He does not shy from physical violence, often hitting Gollum without a reason and almost killing him if Frodo would not interfere. Sam does not have any insight into Gollum’s personality, believing that “there’s naught left in him but lies and deceit” (TT: Disc 1, 01:33). He also abuses him verbally and their conflict is an open one between two bitter enemies. He never imitates or pities Gollum like in the novel.<sup>204</sup>

Another major difference to the film is the fact that Sam is not given the status of Ring-bearer like in the novel when he takes the Ring from Frodo, as the chapter of “The Choices of Master

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Fuchs 258

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Fuchs 263



Samwise” is omitted. His role at coming back to the Shire is also diminished, as the Scouring of the Shire does not take place and therefore there is no need for planting new trees.

Aware of his role as “the genuine hobbit”, Jackson turns Sam into a narrator at the end of TT.<sup>205</sup> In this speech, Sam does not only muse about the importance of stories like in the novel but he also identifies his reason for fighting as the belief “that there is some good in this world” (TT: Disc 2, 01:33). This seems a rather lofty principle for an ordinary hobbit and not entirely believable to the audience.

Interestingly, Sam is depicted as corpulent by Jackson (as already before by Bakshi), although he is never described as such by Tolkien, who emphasizes his physical strength. Actor Sean Astin had to gain more than thirty pounds to take on the role as Sam so that he could be addressed as “stupid fat hobbit” (TT: Disc 1, 01:37) by Gollum in the film.<sup>206</sup>

All in all, Jackson’s characterisation of Sam is in tune with Tolkien’s and Sam’s strong capacity for friendship and hope endear him to the audience. Although Sam is not as flawless as in the novel as he displays unnecessary violence towards Gollum, he is one of the favourite characters of RK.<sup>207</sup> By freeing Sam of the role as Frodo’s servant and assimilating their age, however, Jackson makes the four hobbits resemble each other rather closely and they are less easily kept apart by the audience at the beginning.

### **1.3. Merry and Pippin**

Frodo’s companions Merry and Pippin are young and cheerful hobbits, who often lighten the serious atmosphere of both novel and film. Although they are distinct characters, they undergo a similar development from rather inexperienced hobbits to responsible heroes in the novel. Also Jackson chooses to modify these characters in a similar way, adding even more similarities between the two hobbits. Therefore, Merry and Pippin will not be discussed separately in this chapter but general trends in Jackson’s characterisation of the two hobbits will be shown.

#### ***1.3.1. Novel: Easy-going but Faithful Heroes***

Although Merry and Pippin are younger than Frodo and less learned in the old lore than him, they are responsible hobbits their companions can rely on.

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, Editorial: Refining the Story 00:16

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Mosher 302

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Kuipers 106

Merry in particular is a mature character, even if he has kept a cheerful, childlike nature and is not brought down easily. At Frodo's departure from the Shire he is in charge of Frodo's new house in Crickhollow, fulfilling his task to Frodo's satisfaction. It is him who leads the hobbits through the Old Forest and who solves the riddle at the Gate of Moria when even Gandalf himself fails to do so.<sup>208</sup>

Pippin, who has not come of age yet, is more childlike in his behaviour than Merry, who is eight years older. As he enjoys being the centre of attention, he leads the topic of conversation to Bilbo's disappearance in Bree, not thinking of the consequences this might have for Frodo. He still has to learn from his mistakes, like when he throws a stone into a well in Moria and is punished for it by Gandalf. His blunders, however, are due to the "curiosity of the young" and not to "a lack of [...] intelligence"<sup>209</sup>. The latter is an attribute he certainly has, as he proves, for example, when preparing their escape from their orc capturers.

In the novel, Merry and Pippin are characterised by their great capacity for friendship, which is already shown at the beginning of their journey in the chapter "A Conspiracy Unmasked". Having watched Frodo closely over the past months, they secretly found out about his quest and expected him to try and set out on his journey alone. Therefore, they confront him with the truth at Crickhollow and persuade him to let them be his companions:

"You can trust us to keep any secret of yours – closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word. We are your friends, Frodo. We are horribly afraid – but we are coming with you; or following you like hounds." (Pippin; 103)

In spite of being cheerful souls who serve as comic relief sometimes, Merry and Pippin are well aware of the dangers they get themselves into when joining Frodo on his quest. Even when it becomes clear at the Council of Elrond that Frodo's road will lead him to Mordor they insist on coming with him. Thus, they actively decide to be Frodo's companions twice although they are fully aware of the (probably fatal) consequences of their decision. There is no doubt that they would have followed Frodo to the end of his journey, if they had not been captured.

Later in the story, Merry and Pippin mirror each other in their development: Being separated at the end of Book III, both of them swear fealty to either Théoden or Denethor and manage to save their liege lord's child. Merry in particular becomes a hero when he assists Éowyn in slaying the Nazgul and is wounded himself. Their heroic deeds are acknowledged in all the

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. Porter 25-33

<sup>209</sup> Porter 63

western lands and their (not only physical) growth is illustrated during the Scouring of the Shire, where the two friends lead the attack against Saruman's ruffians.

In the novel, their humour mainly stems from their cheerful nature and the fact that they stay down-to-earth through all their adventures. Their plain hobbit-sense set against the lofty speech of kings forms a contrast the reader cannot help but laugh at.

### ***1.3.2. Film: Comic Relief***

Different from Tolkien, Jackson portrays Merry and Pippin as two foolish teenagers who constantly try to surpass each other in the mischief they cause.<sup>210</sup> As they are mainly characterised by their preoccupation with food and drink, they seem interchangeable and can hardly be kept apart by the audience at first.

Not a trace of their sense of responsibility is transferred into the film: They are silly and immature, stealing Gandalf's biggest firework rocket and setting it off at their first entrance. In Bree Pippin gives away Frodo's name in conversation with strangers; at the Gate of Moria Merry wakes the watcher by unmotivatedly throwing stones into the pool (instead of solving the riddle like in the novel) and in the mines Pippin cannot keep his fingers from a skewered carcass, pushing it into the well.

As "A Conspiracy Unmasked" is omitted, Merry and Pippin's motivation to join Frodo changes dramatically: In the film the two hobbits stumble into Frodo and Sam perchance only to be chased by a Black Rider one moment later. Thus, they do not follow Frodo on their own account but become a part of the fellowship by accident.

They do not have any knowledge of the Ring or of the dangers of their journey, either. Even after the company's flight to Rivendell they do not grasp the greater context of Frodo's quest at all, as Pippin's naïve question "Where are we going?" (FS: Disc 1, 01:41) shows. His volunteering for the fellowship is a purely selfish act, as he wants to enjoy any privilege granted to others.

Due to these changes, the aspect of friendship between the hobbits is weakened. Although Merry and Pippin save Frodo at Parth Galen by heroically sacrificing themselves to the orcs, they are fully aware that this will lead to their separation from him. In the novel neither of them would ever have done that, as the excerpt cited in 1.3.1. shows.

The main-function of Merry and Pippin in FS and TT is that of comic relief, achieved through physical humour that usually refers to eating or drinking, e.g. Pippin drinks an enormous pint

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<sup>210</sup> Cf. Smith 4

of ale or belches after eating too many pieces of lembas. According to Porter, this makes the hobbits nothing but “a naïve, silly counterpoint to the serious nature of the Quest”.<sup>211</sup>

Only in RK does Jackson put more emphasis on the characterisation of Pippin and Merry. As soon as the two hobbits are separated from each other, they seem to be growing up. This is illustrated by the development of Pippin in particular: Although he still seems helpless and slightly naïve, he lights the beacons of Gondor, sings a melancholic song for Denethor and talks about death with Gandalf.

Even if Jackson lets the two hobbits act more heroically in the film by making them rouse the Ents and light the beacons, their importance in the War of the Ring is greatly diminished. Merry’s role in slaying the Nazgul is downplayed and their heroic deeds are never mentioned by any of the other characters.<sup>212</sup> They do not become heroes at their return home either, as the Scouring of the Shire is omitted in the film. Their development for the better, however, is shown by them sitting quietly over their mugs of ale, when earlier in the story they would have been up to mischief in a situation like that.<sup>213</sup>

As demonstrated above, Jackson’s characterisation of Merry and Pippin contrasts sharply with Tolkien’s in the novel. The two hobbits are reduced to minor characters and comic relief in FS and TT, hardly ever advancing the story. This changes drastically in RK – but in spite of their great deeds in the last part of the film, they do not become the celebrated heroes they are in the novel. This undermines Tolkien’s concept of common people becoming heroes and decreases the importance of hobbits in the film. Hobbits rather seem to be “in the background of [Jackson’s] epic”<sup>214</sup> as a childlike people in need of protection while Men and Wizards fight their battles. By focusing on the heroic deeds of Aragorn and Legolas, Jackson takes even more glory from the hobbits’ struggle. Young viewers of the film, however, often identify with Pippin’s lively character, as the *Lord of the Rings* Projects shows, where he ranks among the favourite characters in RK.<sup>215</sup>

## 2. Gollum – Between Hobbit and Monster

Gollum, the treacherous former owner of the Ring, is a character no reader of Tolkien’s novel is likely to forget. His peculiar manner of speaking, his craving for his “precious” and the conflict between the two sides of his personality make him one of the most complex

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<sup>211</sup> Porter 59

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Porter 44-45; 52

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Porter 46

<sup>214</sup> Porter 24

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Barker (2005) 372-373

characters of *The Lord of the Rings*. In the film, Gollum is a masterpiece of computer animation. The audience, however, perceives him as significantly different compared to the novel, as Jackson gives away Gollum's evil intentions at a much earlier point of the story.

### **2.1. Novel: A Tragic Character**

The reader gets to know about Gollum's tragic past as a hobbit already in the second chapter of the novel. Gandalf tells Frodo how Gollum came by the Ring by killing his friend, hints at the fact that he might play a role in destroying the Ring and muses about him being cured, although "there is little hope of that for him. Yet not no hope." (54). Thus, Gollum is not introduced as an utterly evil character. Right from the beginning, he is shown as an individual driven to ruin by the power of the Ring – a dangerous and false companion, but he is not yet lost beyond recall.

Bearing that in mind, Frodo and the reader alike constantly have to judge Gollum according to his behaviour when they finally meet him in person and decide whether to trust him or not. The hobbits are well aware of the struggle going on inside Gollum's mind and, like the reader, they know that one day either the evil Gollum or the more temperate Sméagol side will prevail. Not knowing what Gollum is up to creates a lot of suspense and keeps the reader involved in the story.

After swearing on the precious "to be very very good" (604), Gollum is eager to please the hobbits, e.g. by catching rabbits for them. He leads them faithfully, never attacking Frodo, and his change for the better is reflected in his manner of speaking. He uses "I" more often when referring to himself or his old name "Sméagol". Although his Sméagol side gets quite attached to Frodo, his "nice master" (624), his craving for the Ring remains unbroken, as his only monologue in the novel (overheard by Sam) shows. He even asks Frodo to give him the Ring at one point, but subordinates when he is rebuked for it (623).

The conflict between him and Sam does not escalate at any point and even though they constantly tease each other, Gollum never attacks Sam verbally or physically as long as they are companions. Neither does Gollum try to put Frodo at odds with Sam.

Witnessing their friendship and Frodo's kindness towards him, Gollum almost changes his mind before leading the hobbits into Shelob's Lair:

A spasm of pain seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo's knee – but almost the touch was a caress. For a fleeting moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that

they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing. (699)

Unfortunately, Sam's rough reaction on waking up makes Gollum's moment of doubt pass irrevocably. Thus, Gollum can be seen as a tragic character, whose only chance of reformation is spoiled by a moment of misunderstanding<sup>216</sup>.

Even when Gollum finally betrays the hobbits in Shelob's lair, he does not touch Frodo, because "Shelob will get him, not Sméagol: he promised; he won't hurt Master at all" (709). This promise is strong enough until they meet each other again on the brink of the abyss on Mount Doom.

Due to his unique manner of speaking and his multi-layered personality, Gollum is one of the most out-standing characters of Tolkien's creation.

## 2.2. Film: Evil to the Core

Jackson knew that there was much at stake when it came to putting Gollum on screen and even observed that it "would have killed the film"<sup>217</sup> if he had failed. Thus, he goes to great pains to present the audience with a perfect animation of Gollum that moves and acts like a living creature.

Jackson's Gollum is more aggressive than his literary counterpart: He is introduced to the audience attacking Frodo and trying to take the Ring from him by force. His conflict to Sam is an open one, which regularly leads to fights as well. In Shelob's lair he is gloating and malicious, seemingly enjoying the show of Frodo fighting for his life. When Frodo manages to escape, Gollum almost kills him in his desire for the Ring, proving that he lied when he swore his oath to Frodo in the beginning.

Gollum is characterised as much meaner than in the novel. He regularly insults Sam, calling him "stupid fat hobbit" (TT: Disc 1, 01:37), "silly" (RK: Disc 1, 00:07) or "horrid" (RK: Disc 1, 00:25). Being an outright liar, he even manages to drive a wedge between Frodo and Sam by making Frodo believe that Sam ate all their provisions. When Frodo sends Sam away, Gollum grins one of his malicious, nasty grins.<sup>218</sup>

At the same time, Gollum acts as Frodo's doppelgänger more obviously than in the book<sup>219</sup>. Frodo's pity for his companion stems mainly from the fact that he sees his own future

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. Pienciak 107

<sup>217</sup> Appendices of TT, The Taming of Sméagol 00:00

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Fuchs 262-263

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Pienciak 23

foreshadowed in Gollum's, as both of them crave for the Ring. "I have to believe he can come back" (TT: Disc 1, 01:33) and "I have to destroy [the Ring] for both our sakes," (RK: Disc 2, 00:08) Frodo says, proving that his help for Gollum is selfish in nature.<sup>220</sup> Jackson even wanted to show Frodo wearing a mask of Gollum in one scene of TT to highlight their connection even more strongly but rejected the idea in the end.<sup>221</sup>

In the film, Gollum seems to have forgotten his real name, as it is brought back to him only when Frodo calls him by it: "My name... my name... S-S-Sméagol" (TT: Disc 1, 00:46). Also his mutation from hobbit to monster is revealed to the audience at a much later point, namely in the prologue of RK, when the audience already has a highly negative picture of him<sup>222</sup>.

Fran Walsh in particular wanted to turn Gollum into an even more "schizophrenic"<sup>223</sup> character than in the novel, as Jackson observes. Thus, there are no fewer than three scenes in which the audience watches Gollum leading heated discussions with his other self. In the first one, Sméagol sends the Gollum side of him away, but not for good, as his second monologue shows: "Kill them both. [...] And then we takes it once they're dead," (TT: Disc 2, 01:42-01:43) Gollum fantasises, only to discuss his plan of leading the hobbits to Shelob in his last private debate, which is overheard by Sam.

Thus, Gollum's ill intent is revealed to the audience as early as at the end of TT (and to Sam at the beginning of RK). This changes the viewer's perception of Gollum immensely compared to the novel. The audience no longer has to try to decide whether Gollum can be trusted, but knows that he will lead the hobbits into a trap. The question shifts from "Will Gollum be cured?" to "What atrocities will he do to the poor hobbits?". Gollum therefore appears in the worst possible light and any pity the audience might have felt for him is gone immediately. The scene of Gollum touching Frodo's knee and almost repenting is made redundant and consequently left out in the film.

Jackson's animation of Gollum is a technical masterpiece and the scenes in which Gollum leads lively discussions with his own reflection in the water illustrate his split personality very effectively. By revealing Gollum's plan of killing the hobbits much earlier in the story, however, Jackson leaves less room for the audience to judge Gollum according to his actions and clearly defines him as evil. This makes Gollum lose in depth compared to the novel, although he is still a complex character.

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<sup>220</sup> Cf. Fuchs 258

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, Cameras in Middle-earth 00:54

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Hall 56

<sup>223</sup> Appendices of TT, The Taming of Sméagol 00:35

### 3. Leaders of Men

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the reader/viewer meets three mighty leaders of Men: Aragorn, the future king of Gondor, King Théoden of Rohan and Denethor, the Steward of Gondor.

It is striking that, when characterising these three rulers, Jackson makes all of them delay action as long as possible. At kernels, all three characters decide against acting in order to avoid confrontation, which is not the case in the novel. How Jackson's characterisation of the leading figures differs from Tolkien's in this respect and how it affects character development will be illustrated in this chapter. Also Faramir, Denethor's son, is included in this chapter, as he too does not reach his final decision by a direct way in the film.

#### 3.1. Aragorn

Aragorn is a classic hero and one of the most important characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, apart from the hobbits. Setting out as Strider the Ranger, he aids Frodo on his quest and is crowned King of Gondor after the War of the Ring. While faithfully transferring the external attributes of Aragorn to the screen, Jackson adds a number of new aspects to his personality, which makes the King's development in the film quite different from that in the novel.

##### 3.1.1. Novel: *A King Never Questioning His Destiny*

Tolkien's Aragorn is an epic hero, who is determined to take on his inheritance as the King of Gondor. Being wise and kind, he meets all the requirements of a king: He eloquently convinces Frodo of his trustworthiness in Bree, mediates between Gimli and the Elves of Lothlórien so that they can all pass through their land in peace, pardons his soldiers who panic on the road to the Black Gate and does not enter Minas Tirith after victory in battle in order to avoid any internal conflict at times of war.

He is aware of his role and his duties as the heir of Isildur, carrying Isildur's broken sword with him until the time is ripe for it being reforged in Rivendell:

Renewed shall be blade that was broken,  
The crownless again shall be king. (167)

“Those verses go with [his] name” (168) and his sword, renamed Andúril, is his trademark throughout the novel. Passages of the novel that show Aragorn having doubts never refer to his aptness as a future king but only to the correctness of his decisions (e.g. about the further



course of the fellowship at Parth Galen). Thus, Aragorn is portrayed as thoughtful and conscious of his responsibility as a leader. That his going to Minas Tirith has been certain all his life is shown by comments like “When have I been hasty [...], who have waited and prepared for so many long years?” (580) and “an hour long prepared approaches” (756).

According to Ford, Tolkien’s notion of kingship goes back to medieval literature, where lineage alone was not enough to be accepted as the rightful king. Thus, Aragorn has to prove worthy through victory in battle and through displaying supernatural powers (e.g. the ability to command the Army of the Dead and his use of the plant *athelas* in healing). Before he manages to do so, his claim (but not the principle of kingship) is repeatedly questioned by Boromir and Denethor.<sup>224</sup>

His future with Arwen is bound up to his becoming king as well, as Elrond states in Appendix A that his daughter “shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor” (1036). This is another reason why Aragorn does anything to prevail in battle against Sauron and never falters in his task.

As Aragorn is a very private man, his amorous ambitions are not part of the novel and his relationship to Arwen is only hinted at very subtly. He mentions, for example, that his “heart dwells in Rivendell” (197) and remembers her in Lórien. The reader learns details from their love only in Appendix A, realizing that in the back of his mind she must have been his guiding star all the time.

Tolkien’s rightful king of Gondor is also a healer who is able to ease suffering by the use of the plant *athelas*. Thus, Aragorn can heal the victims of the Black Breath (e.g. Éowyn and Merry). It is a very philosophical thought that a king should be able to heal the wounds war inflicts upon his people and it superbly illustrates the responsibility of a king, which Aragorn meets very well.

### **3.1.2. Film: A Reluctant King Full of Self-doubts**

Aragorn’s way to kingship in the film differs significantly from the way depicted in the novel. Although Aragorn is Isildur’s heir, he is very reluctant to take on the role of king and full of doubt in his ability to do so. He seems resigned and fairly content with being Strider, the Ranger, who roams the wilderness. Elrond observes that “[Aragorn] turned from that path long time ago” and that “[h]e has chosen exile” (FS: Disc 1, 01:29).

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. Ford 74-75

This state of mind is illustrated by his sword, which lies broken behind glass in Rivendell, useless like in a museum, just a “broken heirloom” (FS: Disc 1, 01:30). There it remains throughout FS and TT and Aragorn confesses that he “[does] not want [the power to wield it]” and “never wanted it” (FS: Disc 2, 00:01). His lineage does not give him any confidence – on the contrary, he fears to have inherited Isildur’s weakness, which might render him unfit to rule.<sup>225</sup>

Only through the pressure of others (i.e. Boromir, Elrond and Arwen) does Aragorn finally face his fears in RK. Still, it is not him who decides that Isildur’s sword should be reforged but Arwen, and it is taken to him by Elrond. Aragorn accepts the sword, but he does so unwillingly and only because it enables him to summon the Army of the Dead to save Gondor.<sup>226</sup>

In spite of his qualms Jackson’s Aragorn is even more heroic in his deeds than Tolkien’s: He alone commands the armies at Helm’s Deep when King Théoden fails to protect his people, stays unchallenged in battle and never doubts his own decisions. Often it is him who saves the day in the nick of time, as he is portrayed as a man who can solve any problem. Characters and audience alike perceive him as a hero while he himself does not.

Jackson also highlights Aragorn’s soft side by dwelling on his relationship to Arwen, by building up romantic tension between him and Éowyn and by letting him develop a special relationship to his horse Brego. His vulnerability is shown as well when he is thrown from a cliff by a warg-rider and believed to be dead.

In two other scenes, however, Aragorn’s aggressive masculine side is put into focus: In Théoden’s hall he knocks down several guards in the presence of the king and at the Black Gate he beheads Sauron’s messenger without any obvious reason. Here the wise king-to-be rather acts like an angry teenager who cannot control his violent impulses. This unnecessary use of violence is neither in tune with Jackson’s earlier characterisation of Aragorn nor with Tolkien’s protagonist.

Jackson shapes Aragorn as a modern, self-doubting hero with romantic ambitions, who has to gain confidence in his own abilities before reaching his goal. This makes Aragorn appear very human and thus easy to identify with for a modern audience. As illustrated above, he is softer and more aggressive than in the novel at the same time. This does not irritate the audience and the success of Jackson’s interpretation of Aragorn is confirmed by *The Lord of the Rings*

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<sup>225</sup> Cf. Ford 78-79

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Ford 82

Project, where 25 per cent of the participants named Aragorn as their favourite character in RK.<sup>227</sup>

### 3.2. Denethor

In the novel, Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, serves as an example that too much knowledge of the hopelessness of a situation can lead to insanity. How Jackson simplifies the complex psychology of Tolkien's suicidal king by ascribing his mental decay solely to the death of his son Boromir will be traced in the following sections.

#### 3.2.1. *Novel: Minas Tirith's Fierce Defender*

Tolkien's Steward of Gondor is a lord of great authority and intelligence. As a learned man, Denethor hides behind fair words when talking to Gandalf and Pippin, asking "shrewd questions" (741). Seemingly all-knowing, exercises absolute power over his servants and has the ability to "see far" (748) by secretly using one of the lost palantíri:

Pippin had an uncomfortable feeling that most of what he had said or done was somehow known to the Lord of the city and much was guessed of what he thought as well. (788)

This makes Denethor seem "much more like a great wizard than Gandalf" (740) and in the "strain between their wills" (796) he can hold Gandalf's gaze surprisingly long. Although the topic of the Ring is never mentioned in conversation, Denethor knows exactly what is going on. The conflict between him and Gandalf, however, becomes an open one only in the end when he has lost himself to despair.

By using the palantír, Denethor is well aware of the threat of Mordor and meticulously prepares his city for Sauron's assault. When Pippin arrives in Minas Tirith, the city is getting ready for war: The beacons of Gondor are lit, the walls are repaired, women and children leave for shelter and armies are gathered. It is clear that Denethor will not surrender to Sauron unfought and that he is able to defend his people.

It is not the news of Boromir's death that finally breaks him, but the certainty of being responsible for his second son's fatal injury. When Faramir is brought in dying it is "as if something had snapped in his proud will, and his stern mind [is] overthrown" (805). Primarily, however, his use of the palantír is to blame for his downfall, as the visions of Sauron's power he saw in it "fed the despair of his heart until it overthrew his mind" (838).

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. Kuipers 106

Thus, remorse and despair lead to Denethor committing suicide. Even on his pyre, however, he is a powerful lord and capable of reasoning with Gandalf, never once losing his authority.

### ***3.2.2. Film: A Raging Madman***

Peter Jackson's interpretation of Denethor differs markedly from Tolkien's portrayal. Leaving out Denethor's shrewdness, Jackson focuses primarily on Denethor's role as a madman. Thus, Denethor is hostile towards Gandalf right from the beginning, using sentences at their first encounter which he utters only on his pyre in the book. Right after his first entrance he is called a "madman" (RK: Disc 1, 00:46) by Gandalf and the term "madness" is taken up repeatedly when he is the topic of conversation (e.g. RK: Disc 1, 01:26).

Denethor does indeed act unwisely: He revolts against the monarchy ("The rule of Gondor is mine and no other's" – RK: Disc 1, 00:45), harasses Faramir openly for not bringing him the Ring of power and does not seem concerned by the war at all ("Where are Gondor's armies?[...] At the whim of a madman [Minas Tirith] will fall." (RK: Disc 1, 00:46).

Whereas Aragorn hesitates to take on his role as a king in Jackson's film, Denethor fails to defend his city and thus avoids confrontation with Sauron. Contrary to Aragorn and Théoden, however, Denethor does not overcome his reluctance to act. This leaves Pippin to light the beacons of Gondor and Gandalf to make arrangements for battle.

Different from the novel, the starting point of Denethor's mental decay lies in the past and is brought about by the death of Boromir, his favourite son. Therefore, the audience meets Denethor already in a state of paralysis that does not allow any further development of him as a character. The fact that Denethor is mad with grief is illustrated best by his hallucinations of Boromir, which hinder him from accepting his second son Faramir.

Seeing Faramir brought back dying, however, pushes him even further over the edge and from this point on there is hardly any reason in his speech anymore. Although he never asked for Théoden's help in the film, he panics and cries: "Théoden has betrayed me! Abandon your posts! Flee [...] for your lives!" (RK: Disc 1, 01:56). Gandalf relieves him from his panic by knocking him unconscious with his staff and takes over the command of the city. In this scene Denethor, the grieving lord, is turned into comic relief. There is little dignity in his death either, when he is seen plunging from the city as a bright fireball. In spite of all its special effects, this scene rather inspires laughter than tears and Jackson's insensitive disposal of Denethor seems inappropriate.

Moreover, Denethor is portrayed as explicitly savage and cruel in the film. While he sends Faramir to his death he does not even bother to stop eating, but enjoys a meal of chicken and

tomatoes. Red traces of food are seen running down his chin like blood, intercut with scenes of battle. Thus, he is depicted as a murderer.

Although Jackson's portrayal of Denethor is consistent in itself, it is still controversial. The transformation of a noble lord, who sacrifices his sanity to the defence of his city, into "an unmotivated psychopath"<sup>228</sup>, is widely perceived as simplification taken too far.<sup>229</sup>

### 3.3. Théoden

Bravely sacrificing his life for his people, Théoden of Rohan personifies an ideal king in *The Lord of the Rings*. His motivation for fighting, however, is a different one in the film, as he shies away from confrontation until the very last.

#### 3.3.1. Novel: A Heroic King of Old

Different from Denethor in the novel, Théoden is indeed in a state of paralysis when the reader meets him for the first time. He is

so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf [...] but his eyes still burn [...] with a bright light. (501)

Due to listening to his counsellor Grima's advice, he does not realize the danger of Saruman, is suspicious towards Gandalf and feels old and spent. When he acts, he acts according to Grima's will, believing it to be his own. However, he is not bewitched in any way and thus able to speak fluently without problems, standing up to greet Gandalf and his companions.

When Gandalf gives him hope by leading him outside and telling him of Frodo's quest, he "feel[s] as one new-awakened" (504) and realizes that Grima has been nourishing his despair and weakness. Kind as he is, however, he does not punish Grima for being in league with Saruman and lets him go unharmed.

Free from Grima's influence, Théoden does not remain passive any longer and declares war on Saruman. He decides immediately that "[he himself] will go to war, to fall in the front of the battle, if it must be" (507). Thus, he becomes a heroic king, who is adamant on righting the wrongs done to his people, even if it may cost his life. At Helm's Deep he does not need Aragorn to encourage him to ride out and meet the enemy, because he wants to do so himself.

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<sup>228</sup> Alleva 21

<sup>229</sup> Cf. Barker (2009) 383-384

He stays true to the old alliance with Gondor, never faltering in his conviction to come to their aid. This is illustrated by the Muster of Rohan, which takes place even before Gondor calls for help in battle.

In the novel, Théoden has a close relationship to Merry and keeps him by his side on the road. Merry tells him about the Shire and his heart “fill[s] with love for this old man” (760) when he offers him his service. “As a father you shall be to me” (760), says Merry and Théoden never fails him, even if he forbids him to follow him to battle.

Théoden can be seen as an example of what a classic hero and king should be like: a courageous leader, who fights for his people and aids his allies at whatever cost.

### ***3.3.2. Film: A Peace-loving King***

In the film Théoden’s initial inability to act is not brought about by Grima but by a mighty spell of Saruman himself. Théoden is introduced with the words “Saruman has poisoned the mind of the King” (TT: Disc 1, 00:32) and “the king’s mind is enslaved” (TT: Disc 1, 00:59), so there is little doubt about the reason for his mental and physical decay.

Théoden has indeed become nothing more than a puppet of Grima, who makes all his decisions for him in place of Saruman. This is shown best at the banishment of Éomer, where Grima speaks for him and produces the king’s illegible signature, which he must have forced from him. Saruman’s spell is so strong that Théoden cannot speak properly and hardly reacts when he is told about his son’s death in battle. Thus, Théoden is portrayed as completely passive without a single thought of his own left to him.

His eyes do not burn brightly like in the novel, but they are clouded by a thick white layer as if they belonged to man long deceased. This makes Théoden seem like a statue that clings to its throne with withered hands, but no longer a human being.

Gandalf saves Théoden by “draw[ing]” (TT: Disc 1, 01:16) Saruman from him in an act of exorcism that is not in line with Tolkien’s idea of magic at all (cf. IV.4.4.7.). It is a fight between the two wizards that makes Théoden become himself again and not his own realisation that he has been wrong like in the novel.

Whereas Théoden trusts Gandalf blindly in the novel, Jackson’s King of Rohan questions Gandalf’s advice. Here the viewer is again confronted with a different decision at one of the text’s kernels: Jackson’s Théoden takes his time to consider Gandalf’s advice only to decide *against* attacking Saruman. He rather wants to lead his people to safety by hiding in the fortress of Helm’s Deep. When Saruman attacks Rohan, action is forced upon Théoden, but it is Aragorn and Gandalf who save Rohan in the end. When Théoden sees farm-boys being

fitted for war, he asks “Who am I, Gamling?” (TT: Disc 2, 00:51), which shows that he is aware of the responsibility a king has for his people by making the right decisions.

He also questions Rohan’s old alliance to Gondor:

“Why should we ride to the aid of those who did not come to ours? What do we owe Gondor?” (RK: Disc 1, 00:32)

This shows that the safety and well-being of his people are of high priority to him, even if he risks coming across as selfish in front of his counsellors and allies.

At the same time Jackson adds a more aggressive side to Théoden’s character, e.g. when Théoden lets Grima be thrown down a flight of stairs and almost kills him. This reminds the viewer of Jackson’s interpretation of Aragorn, who shows both a softer and a tougher side in the film as well.

Théoden, like Aragorn, is portrayed as a modern hero, who avoids confrontation as long as possible and is driven by self-doubts at times. This shift away from stereotypical characters to characters with a complex psychology, as performed by Jackson, is often perceived as appealing to modern audiences.

### **3.4. Faramir**

As Captain of Gondor and Denethor’s son, Faramir counts among the mighty leaders of Men. He is a character whose actions and nature were changed most strikingly in Jackson’s adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*: Like Théoden, he has to take a detour by making mistakes before he finally arrives at the right decision. (His brother Boromir, on the other hand, stays much closer to Tolkien’s original version, even if his relationship to Merry and Pippin is more developed in the film and his longing for the Ring more pronounced. Therefore, even if Faramir is less of a main-character than his brother, this chapter is dedicated to him, whereas Boromir will not further be dealt with in this thesis.)

#### ***3.4.1. Novel: An Ideal Leader***

In contrast to his brother Boromir, Faramir is a wise character, who never acts rashly and weighs all the evidence to arrive at the right decision. He is characterised by his ability to listen to others in conversation and finds out more than they actually say. Thus, he guesses correctly that Isildur’s Bane must be the reason for Frodo’s journey and that it can only be a mighty “heirloom” (656). At the same time he is cautious enough to keep what he has learned to himself and does not question Frodo any further in the presence of his men.

Faramir does not desire power and would never touch the enemy's weapons, knowing what dangers lie in them. When Sam blunders and tells him about Frodo's quest, Faramir stays true to his earlier words and tells the hobbits to have no fear:

“I would not take this thing if it lay by the highway. Not were Minas Tirith falling in ruin and I alone could save her, so, using the weapon of the Dark Lord for her good and my glory. No, I do not wish for such triumphs.” (656)

As soon as he knows the truth about Frodo's quest, he does not think about hindering him any longer but does anything to help him on his further journey, e.g. he provides the hobbits with food and walking sticks. He is very modest, rejecting Sam's praise: “I had no lure or desire to do other than I have done” (667). Due to his courteous treatment of them, Frodo and Sam seem more like his guests than his prisoners. Faramir also treats Gollum respectfully yet sternly. His thoughtful nature turns him into a rolemodel of a responsible leader and Frodo is moved by his friendship which “turns evil to great good” (679).

Of his sons Denethor always preferred Boromir, the loyal warrior, to Faramir, who had a mind of his own in his wish to be just. However, in spite of his learnedness Faramir is also a worthy captain of the armies of Gondor, adored by his people, who follow his call.

### ***3.4.2. Film: An Imperfect Son***

In TT, Jackson's Faramir bears hardly any resemblance to his literary counterpart. He is characterised as neither intelligent nor gifted and Denethor claims that he “know[s] his uses – and they are few” (TT: Disc 2, 00:32).

Faramir is depicted as a fighter rather than a thinker. Being taciturn, he hardly talks to the hobbits (except for the matter of Gollum) and keeps them prisoners as supposed “orc spies” (TT: Disc 2, 00:27). When his men beat Gollum, he watches the scene unmoved.

Introduced as Boromir's lesser brother, Faramir sees a chance of rising in his father's esteem by bringing him the Ring of power as a “mighty gift” (TT: Disc 2, 01:21). Consequently, he does not hesitate to take the hobbits to Minas Tirith as soon as he finds out that Frodo is bearing the One Ring. This makes the sentence “A chance for Faramir, Captain of Gondor, to show his quality” (TT, Disc 2 00:41/ 665) take on a different meaning: In the novel it stands for Faramir's quality as a wise and generous lord, whereas in the film it means Faramir's quality as a son in the eyes of Denethor.

Instead of keeping Frodo and the Ring safe, however, Faramir makes a detour to the ruins of Osgiliath, where he knows the enemy to be lurking. This is not only irrational but also highly dangerous, as Frodo gets caught up in battle and finds himself face to face with a Nazgul. On



witnessing this scene and Sam's monologue about the importance of tales, Faramir changes his mind for no apparent reason and lets Frodo continue his journey after all.

In this scene Jackson's Faramir is given a number of sentences from the novel, which are all out of context. It is not clear at all why he and Frodo "understand one another [...] at last" (TT: Disc 2, 01:33) or in what way he has shown his "very highest" (TT: Disc 2, 01:37) quality. How Faramir comes to trust a half-mad hobbit, who has just stopped dangling the Ring of power in front of a Nazgul's nose, is also left open.

These ambiguities prevent Faramir from being a round character with clearly defined motivations in TT. In RK, however, he acts in line with Tolkien's characterisation and thus turns into a more believable character, who has found his own voice.

Jackson explains that he had to turn Faramir into "an obstacle"<sup>230</sup> because of the changed chronology of the film that demanded a climax for the Frodo/Sam-strand of the story in TT. As Shelob was transferred to RK, Faramir had to provide that climax by being less predictable and not "the good guy [...] who] offers [the hobbits] a cup of tea"<sup>231</sup>.

Although Jackson manages to add new and interesting aspects to the father-son relationship of Denethor and Faramir, his characterisation of Faramir is not consistent in TT. In the film, Faramir makes different decisions out of new motivations, which are not always clear for the audience. Here, Jackson takes the risk of irritating viewers familiar with Tolkien's novel, as changes in motivations of characters tend to be perceived as major alterations.<sup>232</sup>

By being less impeccable than in the novel, however, Faramir offers more room for development. This can be seen best by his making a stand against his father at his return to Minas Tirith. Thus, Faramir becomes a more dynamic character in the film, even if the audience has to put up with a number of ambiguities in his characterisation in the beginning.

#### 4. Women

*The Lord of the Rings* is a novel featuring astonishingly few female characters, who – like Galadriel, Arwen and Rosie Cotton – do not further the plot and thus cannot be considered major characters. Alleva even goes so far as to claim that "Tolkien always seemed a little theoretical in his presentation of women"<sup>233</sup>.

This peculiarity of Tolkien's work was problematic when the novel was turned into a blockbuster movie. As Jackson aimed at reaching a wide audience with his films, he had to

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<sup>230</sup> Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:03

<sup>231</sup> Boyens in Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:04

<sup>232</sup> Cf. MacFarlane 24

<sup>233</sup> Alleva 22

include more female presence in order to provide female viewers with female characters they can identify with. This was achieved by giving Galadriel the role of a narrator (cf. prologue FS; TT) and by “beefing up” the roles of Éowyn and Arwen. How Jackson enlarges the roles of Arwen and Éowyn and whether he succeeds in creating memorable female characters is discussed below.

#### **4.1. Arwen**

Elrond’s daughter Arwen can be found in Appendix A rather than in Tolkien’s novel itself. Therefore Jackson and his team had to invent her personality in order to turn her into a female main-character.

##### ***4.1.1. Novel: Moving In the Background***

As a minor character, Arwen is hardly mentioned in the novel at all. In three of the four scenes in which she is present she is utterly passive, only moving in the background, never uttering a word (221, 343, 951). Only a very attentive reader registers her existence at all and is not surprised when she turns out to be Aragorn’s bride. Even at her wedding, which is summarised in one sentence only, she remains silent:

Aragorn the King Elessar wedded Arwen Undómiel in the City of Kings upon the day of Midsummer, and the tale of their long waiting and labours was come to fulfilment. (951)

She is described as incredibly beautiful and the most notable thing she does until the final chapters of the novel is sing “a song of Valinor” (952). At her parting with Frodo, Arwen finally speaks and is revealed as a kind and understanding character: She gives Frodo a white gem to wear around his neck as a substitute for the destroyed Ring and offers him her place on the elven ship sailing into the West, anticipating his sufferings.

Her complete story in connection to Aragorn is told in Appendix A, where she is given more dialogue on six pages than in the whole novel.<sup>234</sup>

##### ***4.1.2. Film: From Warrior to Victim***

In the film Arwen is turned into a main-character, appearing on all three film posters, which is an honour granted to the most important members of the fellowship only. The audience meets

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<sup>234</sup> Cf. Porter 119

her for the first time as a warrior queen, who wields a sword and exercises power even over Aragorn, the leader of the fellowship. (Here she incorporates the role of Glorfindel, a mighty Elf-lord of the novel.) She carries the wounded Frodo to Rivendell, challenges the deadly Black Riders and makes the river rise by magic, which in the novel is done by none others than Gandalf and Elrond uniting their powers.

Arwen is actively engaged in FS not only by saving Frodo but also by encouraging Aragorn when he doubts his ability to become king and in RK by making Elrond reforge Aragorn's sword. She angrily confronts Elrond when she finds out that he lied to her about her future and is present in all three parts of the film through visions she shares with Aragorn.

In spite of her active entrance into the film, however, Arwen becomes a much more passive character as the story proceeds: Carrying chiefly the romantic part of the story in TT and RK, she repeatedly exchanges Elvish words of love with Aragorn. This love is threatened when Aragorn and Elrond talk her into leaving Middle-earth and finally even her life itself gets bound up to whether Aragorn will defeat Sauron or not. Thus, she takes on the role of a victim and her fate is largely determined by the actions and decisions of others, which does not fit a main-character. Neither is it appropriate for an important character to be seen passively sitting on a horse or lying on a divan for the greatest part of TT and RK.<sup>235</sup>

This inconsistency in Arwen's behaviour mirrors Jackson's uncertainty of how he should treat his female main-character. Originally he had wanted Arwen to be more participatory in the fight against Sauron by making her a "ruthless fighter"<sup>236</sup> who joins the Elvish army at Helm's Deep. This idea, however, was abandoned – not only at major protests of Tolkien fans – and from TT onwards the focus was laid on her love relationship to Aragorn, conveyed in dreams and visions.<sup>237</sup>

Arwen's frequent use of Elvish can be interpreted as another sign of unease the film writing team experienced when dealing with this character. No other character uses Elvish as often as Arwen, which makes the audience wonder if a foreign language translated in subtitles serves to hide the fact that her dialogues are rather flat and do not further the plot.

Her love and her lost immortality are beautifully symbolized by the pendant of the Evenstar, which Arwen gives to Aragorn as a token of her love at their parting. The idea of this pendant might have originated from the white gem given to Frodo in the novel and it serves as a constant reminder of the bond between the two lovers.

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. Porter 123

<sup>236</sup> Jackson in Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:12

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:12

Although Jackson manages to keep Arwen in the focus of the audience's attention throughout the three parts of the film, her character development is not satisfactory. Introduced as an independent warrior queen in FS, she turns more and more into a passive victim as the story develops. Thus, she does not become a forceful female character and a continually strong presence.<sup>238</sup>

## 4.2. Éowyn

In contrast to Arwen, Éowyn is a character that contributes to the plot also in the novel by heroically slaying the Lord of the Nazguls. Drawing on Tolkien's description of Éowyn, Jackson develops Éowyn's character further by adding more female attributes to her behaviour. How he manages to turn Tolkien's rather cold Éowyn into a warm-hearted girl will be explored in the following sections.

### 4.2.1. Novel: A "Cold Maiden of the Rohirrim"<sup>239</sup>

Even if Éowyn is a woman, she does not come across as particularly female, being described as "a child of kings, slender but as a steel-blade, fair yet terrible" (823) and as a "shieldmaiden [whose] hand is ungentle" (939). When the reader encounters her for the first time, she stands close to Théoden like a piece of decoration belonging to the hall, not allowed to participate in the discussion. She is characterised by silence and takes on the role of a quiet watcher in the background, being rather a shadow than a warm-hearted woman, whose fate it is to be left behind when the men go to war.

Her unrequited love for Aragorn is rather a form of admiration, as she only watches him from afar and never exchanges words with him. She is in love with what he represents, like "a young soldier" who admires "a great captain" (943). When indirectly confessing her love to him, she does so in a stiff and impersonal manner and only her falling to her knees saying "I beg thee" (768) in the end can be interpreted as stereotypically female. Due to the lack of any kind of personal interaction between her and Aragorn leading up to that scene, it is not hard to believe Aragorn's explanation that "in [him] she loves only a shadow and a thought" (849).

Robbed of the chance of taking part in the great deeds of her time by Aragorn's rejection, she wishes to die and thus rides to battle in male disguise. Ironically, only after giving up her

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. Porter 140

<sup>239</sup> 856

female identity by becoming Dernhelm, the soldier, does she become an active character of the story killing a mighty enemy.<sup>240</sup>

When she resumes her female role again in the Houses of Healing, she falls in love with Faramir, with whom she finds happiness.

#### ***4.2.2. Film: A Smiling Girl's Tale***

In a film dominated by male characters, renouncing femininity as a key to success is not an advisable premise if a large female audience should be reached. Therefore, Jackson's Éowyn completely lacks the male attributes given to her in the novel but she is characterised as soft and girl-like instead.

She is introduced as warm and caring, weeping at the death bed of her cousin Théodred and singing a funeral song for him. At other times her merry giggle can be heard (e.g. in conversation with Gimli – TT: Disc 2, 00:00). When Aragorn finds her asleep and adjusts her blanket, she seems young and innocent like a girl, who still needs somebody to look after her. Her motherly side, on the other hand, is highlighted when she calms down the children in the Glittering Caves during the battle of Helm's Deep. Moreover, she is seen crying several times. At the same time, Éowyn also has a tough side: She yells at Grima at the banishment of Éomer, raises her voice when Théoden considers going to war and practises fighting with her sword. When Aragorn rides off to the Paths of the Dead she openly questions his decision and screams "You cannot leave on the eve of battle!" (RK: Disc 1, 01:38). Although she is not allowed to fight and sent away to care for the women and children, she does not stand as isolated as her literary counterpart.

Éowyn is much more present in the film than in the novel. She follows the company to Helm's Deep and back to Edoras, taking part in the Muster of Rohan. This provides many opportunities to create a complex picture of Éowyn as a woman with hopes and fears and a past.

Also her romantic ambitions towards Aragorn are traced with great care. Different to Tolkien's Éowyn, Jackson's Éowyn does not fall in love with an illusion of Aragorn but with a real man, who proves his human qualities to her in many scenes, e.g. he calms down a horse in the stables (TT: Disc 1, 01:26-01:28), practises fighting with her (TT: Disc 1, 01:30-01:32) and covers her shoulders when she sleeps (RK: Disc 1, 00:26-00:27). Their relationship is

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<sup>240</sup> Cf. Porter 91

more down-to-earth than in the novel, as they travel together and have time to get to know each other. Thus, Jackson paints a much more plausible picture of Éowyn's love.<sup>241</sup>

When Aragorn rejects her, she does not despair and her going to war is neither suicidal nor linked up with her disappointment. She rather wishes to fight for her people and to prove worthy in battle. As a very female character, her disguise as Dernhelm is not realized in the film either.<sup>242</sup>

Also her emerging love relationship to Faramir is not shown in the film. It is only hinted at by a short glimpse of Éowyn and Faramir in the Houses of Healing and by them holding hands at the crowning of Aragorn.

Despite Jackson's sensitive approach to the character of Éowyn, there is one scene where Éowyn serves as comic relief, namely when her inability to cook is shown. This unfortunate scene is not only stereotypical but it does not fit the picture neither Jackson nor Tolkien draw of her.<sup>243</sup>

In a film full of battle sequences, Éowyn adds romantic tension to the plot and provides a strong female character that goes to war for the sake of her people. The success of Jackson's modern characterisation of Éowyn is shown best in *The Lord of the Rings Project*, where Éowyn – in contrast to Arwen – scores exceptionally high in identification among female viewers.<sup>244</sup>

## 5. Enemies and Villains

Tolkien has a very peculiar way of dealing with his evil main-characters. Instead of showing their abominable nature directly, he rather avoids them over large parts of the novel. Thus, Sauron remains a disembodied presence throughout the novel, while Saruman has his first actual entrance only after his defeat. How Jackson deals with Tolkien's villains and his seemingly unfilmable way of characterising them is the topic of this chapter. To round off the discussion, some remarks about orcs will be made as well.

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<sup>241</sup> Cf. Porter 102

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Porter 98-99; 103

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Porter 107

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Barker (2005) 363

## 5.1. Sauron

Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor, is the enemy of all decent peoples of Middle-earth and the reason why the events of *The Lord of the Rings* come to pass. He is the “Lord of the Rings”, giving its title to novel and film.

### 5.1.1. Novel: A Disembodied Presence

Although Sauron is omnipresent in the novel, there is not a single scene in which Sauron is seen directly. Instead, he is constantly represented by the Ring and, later on, by the symbol of the flaming Eye. His will is carried out by his many servants, which makes it possible for him to remain hidden in the shadows as an unseen source of evil, always in the background, scheming and planning ruin.

Sauron is part of the old stories told by Gandalf and Elrond and his name is “ominous and disquieting” (42) even for the hobbits in their pastoral Shire, as Sam’s refusal of learning all the verses of “Gil-galad was an elven king” shows: “I didn’t learn that part [about Mordor], it gave me the shivers” (182).

The horror of Sauron increases constantly throughout the novel: First Sauron is associated with the mysterious Black Riders, whose blood-curdling shrieks and animalistic sniffing terrify Frodo and his companions on the road to Rivendell. Later, in Lórien, Frodo sees Sauron’s flaming Eye for the first time:

The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat’s, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing. [...] So terrible was it that Frodo stood rooted, unable to cry out or to withdraw his gaze. (355)

When the Ring whispers words of temptation to Frodo, it uses Sauron’s voice, trying to bend Frodo to his master’s will. Sauron’s will is also inherent in his ruthless orcs and in his flying Nazguls and in all the destruction they cause. When Pippin is questioned by Sauron in the palantír, he feels as if “he was falling to pieces” (579) and is in deep shock, although their encounter lasts only a few seconds.

As an invisible “nebulous evil”<sup>245</sup> Sauron is much more threatening than he would be if he had been given a definite shape by Tolkien. The reader’s imagination makes him more terrible than any description could ever be. Sauron’s disembodied presence, however, is a great challenge to put on screen in a blockbuster movie.

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<sup>245</sup> Sinker 44

### 5.1.2. *Film: The Ring as a Character*

Jackson admits that Sauron “has always proven difficult”<sup>246</sup> and in the beginning he was not sure whether he should give him a physical shape or not. Originally he had wanted to stage a huge duel between Sauron and Aragorn at the Black Gate with Sauron transforming to his angelic form, but decided against it in the end. A brief glimpse of Sauron’s coat of mail, when Isildur cuts off his finger bearing the Ring in the prologue to FS, is all the audience ever gets to see of Sauron.<sup>247</sup>

In spite of his doubts, Jackson lives up to the challenge of visualising Sauron’s disembodied presence on screen very well. He sticks to Tolkien’s representation of Sauron (Black Riders, the Ring, the Eye, the palantír) and makes it work also on the screen by changing astonishingly few details. To keep Sauron and the temptation of the Ring in the audience’s mind, the Ring is shown very often. It is seen hanging around Frodo’s neck most of the time and Frodo takes it out to look at it even at the most unlikely occasions, e.g. during an orc fight or when facing a Nazgul at Osgiliath. At the Council of Elrond it is present as well, lying on the table with the reflections of the fellowship dancing on it, and Boromir’s temptation is illustrated when he picks it up at Caradhras. In Mordor the audience sees its chain cutting into Frodo’s sore neck as a symbol of the tortures Frodo is suffering because of it (cf. IV.3.1.2).

Also the image of Sauron’s Eye searching for Frodo is used throughout the film. Thus, the horror of being watched without being able to see one’s enemy is transferred to the screen very well.<sup>248</sup>

Jackson brings *The Lord of the Ring’s* chief enemy to the screen in a very convincing way. One common point of criticism, however, is Jackson’s extensive use of horrors right from the beginning, e.g. the silent threat of the Black Riders of the novel is replaced by a wild chase and a sense of apocalypse in the film. This leaves only little room for Jackson to increase the hobbits’ (and the audience’s) fear of Sauron in the course of the film.

## 5.2. Saruman

Saruman, the head of Gandalf’s order, dedicated his life to preserving peace in Middle-earth by studying the devices of the enemy. This, however, leads to his downfall and the potential saviour of Middle-earth turns into one of its worst enemies. This is Saruman’s starting point

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<sup>246</sup> Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:09

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:09-00:11

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Harl 62-63; Peirse 41-42



in both novel and film, but as the story proceeds a number of differences in the portrayal of Saruman can be observed.

### *5.2.1. Novel: Sauron's Secret Rival*

Tolkien puts great strain on describing Saruman as a wizard that starts out good but entirely loses himself to evil on the way. Through studying Sauron's ways with the help of his palantír, Saruman's hunger for absolute power grows until he starts to breed an army of his own.

As a mighty and subtle wizard, he manages to trick Sauron into believing that he is in league with him when in fact he is planning to replace him as the Dark Lord. He renames himself "Saruman of Many Colours" (252) and wants to further "Knowledge, Rule [and] Order" (253) by using the One Ring. According to him, wizards should rule over lesser folk for the benefit of all. The reader knows that Saruman works "in rivalry of Sauron" (254) and that he does not intend to join him.

Saruman's magic (like Gandalf's) is of a deep and quiet kind and is never shown directly in the novel. It is due to his voice that he manages to exercise power over others: His voice is

low and melodious, its very sound an enchantment. [...] All that it say[s] seem[s] wise and reasonable. [...] None reject [...] its pleas and its commands without an effort [...] The wise he could persuade, and the smaller folk he could daunt. (553-554)

Saruman cannot deceive Théoden and Gandalf, however, and is cast from the Order after the destruction of Isengard. Given the chance to repent, he only sneers at Gandalf and thus proves that "he has withered altogether" (962). First, Treebeard keeps him under guard in Isengard, but then he lets him go to roam the lands as a beggar. Robbed of his magical powers, he takes revenge on the hobbits "in a small mean way" (962) by devastating the Shire with the help of evil Men. Frodo spares him, but in the end he is killed by Grima at the doorstep of Bag End.

Although Saruman's presence can be felt over large parts of the novel (e.g. at the Council of Elrond or at the battle of Helm's Deep), there are only three scenes of the novel in which Saruman is actually present. Funnily enough, they take place only after his defeat in battle when his power is taken from him. The reader never gets to see Saruman at the height of his power and his industrial complex is only shown after its destruction by the Ents.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Cf. Davis 75-76

This is rather a peculiar way of structuring a story, even for a novel, and it is highly unlikely that this strategy of meeting one of the major villains only *after* his defeat could work on screen.

### 5.2.2. *Film: Sauron's Ally*

Jackson meets the challenge of giving more dramatically effective presence to Saruman with flying colours: In FS and TT the scene moves to Isengard no fewer than eleven times (FS: 5, TT: 6), showing Saruman creating “an army worthy of Mordor” (FS: Disc 1, 01:06) and trying to hinder the fellowship.<sup>250</sup> He even takes on the role as a narrator at one point, voicing Gandalf’s fears before he enters Moria. This keeps him in the audience’s mind and the horrors of his industrial development make the audience perceive him as a greater threat than Sauron. In the film, the dangers of Isengard and of Mordor are interchangeable, as Saruman is nothing more than a puppet of Sauron. His statement “Together, my lord Sauron, we shall rule this Middle-earth” (TT: Disc 1, 00:19) shows that he does not question Sauron, but is willing to join forces. Consequently, the battle of Helm’s Deep has the same dimensions as the future battles against Sauron’s armies.

Saruman blindly takes on Sauron’s goals, never desiring to have the One Ring for himself, and he does not have any “noble” reason behind his actions like in the novel. Waging war for war’s sake, he proclaims that “the old world will burn in the fires of industry” (TT: Disc 1, 00:19) and that “the world of Men shall fall” (TT: Disc 1, 01:30). It is not clear, however, why his mind is set on destroying mankind, which never is his motive in the novel at all.

Jackson’s depiction of Saruman’s magic is also problematic, according to Smith. It shows Saruman as “a caricaturesque evil wizard”<sup>251</sup>, who sends Gandalf flying through the air with the help of his staff, concocts a blizzard on Caradhras and possesses Théoden’s mind like only the devil would. The scope of his magic powers is far greater than in the novel, but they often seem over the top (cf. IV.4.4.7.)

Jackson bestows constant presence on Saruman in FS and TT – only to eliminate him from the theatrical version of RK completely. In the cinema the audience never learns what happens to him after the destruction of Isengard, which leaves not only illustrator Alan Lee “disappointed and shocked”<sup>252</sup>. In the extended version, however, Saruman is stabbed by Grima on the tower of Orthanc. His body falls off the tower and is pinned to a wheel-like

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. Davis 55

<sup>251</sup> Smith 5

<sup>252</sup> Appendices of RK, Editorial: Completing the Trilogy 00:08

mechanical device. Jackson “loved the idea of Saruman landing on a spike” and “the imagery [...] of the wheel [...] rotating. [...] It felt sort of a just way for him to go out”<sup>253</sup>. This change of Saruman’s death is brought about by the fact that the Scouring of the Shire is omitted in the film (cf. IV.3.3.4.).

By giving a considerable amount of screen time to Saruman, Jackson manages to keep the audience interested in him. As Sauron’s ally, Saruman is a serious threat, which is underlined very well by the close depiction of the terrors of his factory complex. However, Saruman’s magic is not subtle at all and Jackson heavily draws on clichés when bringing it to screen. This turns Saruman, the evil wizard, into a rather stereotypical character.

### 5.3. Orcs

Jackson must have felt like a kid in a candy store when it came to visualising orcs. In the film, orcs are grotesquely ugly with distorted faces, scars and missing eyes, as if they had sprung out of one of the horrors films Jackson used to make. They are a mindless mass bent on fighting, heavily depending on computer animation and special effects, getting uglier from part to part of the trilogy.<sup>254</sup>

Jackson lets his imagination roam free, always coming up with new repulsive images: The audience sees beastly creatures licking blood from knives, witnesses the birth of one of the Uruk-hai, who emerges from a slimy bladder only to kill the orc that assisted his birth and is confronted with cannibalism, when Merry and Pippin’s capturers dine on one of their fellow orcs.<sup>255</sup>

The only orc standing out from the crowd is the captain of Sauron’s orc army in RK, whose pink face is even more hideous than the other orc-faces. He is the only orc that is personalized, making grand statements like “The time of the Orc has come” (RK: Disc 1, 01:09) and is finally killed by Aragorn in battle.

Compared to Jackson’s creations, Tolkien’s orcs almost appear like a civilized people, even if they are unpredictable and violent. Not all of them are stupid and some even guess the greater context of the war. Grishnákh, for example, believes Merry and Pippin to be the Ring-bearers and wants to have the Ring for his own use. The tracker Frodo and Sam overhear in Mordor, on the other hand, feels that war is not going well for Sauron and knows that “even the Top Ones can [make mistakes]” (720). Contrary to the film, orcs talk amongst each other, even if

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<sup>253</sup> Appendices of RK, Cameras in Middle-earth 00:09-00:10

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Thompson 292

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Hall 55-56

these conversations tend to end in argument and sometimes even in murder. Although they are selfish and greedy, they are always aware of their role as servants and never make claims for the sovereignty of their race.

Jackson's approach to orcs is a very sensational one, always out on shocking the audience with new atrocities and sometimes provoking laughter without meaning to. Even if slightly over the top in their ugliness, they are worthy representatives of Sauron and illustrate the horrors of Mordor very well.

## 6. Elves

When talking about Elves, there are four characters that come to the audience's mind: Legolas, Arwen, Galadriel and Elrond. As the characterisation of Galadriel hardly differs from Tolkien's novel and Arwen is discussed in 4.1., this chapter will focus on Elves as a species and their representation in the film, drawing on Legolas and Elrond as examples.

### 6.1. Novel: An Isolated, Fading Race

In Tolkien's novel, Elves are portrayed as a people who keep themselves to themselves. They avoid contact to other races and do not mingle in their affairs. When Frodo asks Gildor's advice in "Three is Company", for example, Gildor is reluctant to answer Frodo's questions, as Elves know that "advice is a dangerous gift" (83).

Elves are fair and beautiful to look at, but they are a fading people. Thus, an air of sadness permeates their songs as they are taking farewell of Middle-earth to return to their lost lands in the West. As Galadriel points out, the Elves'

spring and [...] summer are gone by, and they will never be seen on earth again  
save in memory (366).

Still, they can be merry like children (e.g. in Rivendell) and, as Sam puts it, they are "so old and young, so gay and sad" (85) at the same time. This is illustrated by Legolas, who is the Elf the reader gets to know closest as a reliable member of the fellowship.

Elves

have their own labours and their own sorrows, and they are little concerned with  
the ways of hobbits, or of any other creatures upon earth (83)

and therefore, they value the concept of free will very highly. Elrond, for example, does not force Frodo to be the Ring-bearer but he waits for anybody to volunteer, as this is "a heavy burden [...] that none could lay [...] on another" (264).

Although Elves are skilful fighters, they do not join the armies of Men, but fight their own battles against the servants of Sauron in their own lands, unaided by other races. Unlike stereotypes, they do *not* have pointed ears.<sup>256</sup>

## 6.2. Film: Entertaining Action-heroes

Apart from Arwen, Elrond and Galadriel, Jackson's Elves all look the same: They are tall and athletic with pointed ears and artificially blonde hair.

Although Jackson manages to convey the Elves' melancholy connected to their departure from Middle-earth in FS (e.g. Galadriel), he mainly focuses on their role as warriors in TT and RK. Legolas is not only skilful with his bow like in the novel but he behaves like a kind of "superelf"<sup>257</sup>, surpassing anyone else in battle. Due to a vast amount of special effects he seems to have super powers, gracefully skating down a staircase on a shield and bringing down a mûmakil without any effort. This may illustrate the light-footedness of Elves, but it primarily turns Legolas into a good-looking action hero.<sup>258</sup>

The Elvish language is widely used in the film, mainly in scenes dealing with two completely different notions: love and war. This is in line with Jackson's general characterisation of Elves as fighters and with Arwen as the main-character of the romantic subplot of the film. Thus, Elvish, a language of poetry in the novel, turns into a language not only of love but also of battle.

Contrary to Tolkien's Elves, Jackson's Elves get actively involved in the war of Men at the battle of Helm's Deep. They are not as isolated as in the novel, as Jackson assimilates them to the other races. He calls it "a romantic notion"<sup>259</sup> that the Elves should honour the old alliances and fight alongside Men, although he knows that it is "completely wrong"<sup>260</sup> in terms of the novel.

Elrond is characterised as a stern leader and, according to Smith, he "does not even try to appear noble, fair, strong, wise, venerable or kind"<sup>261</sup>. Indeed, he mercilessly forces the members of his Council to take the Ring and does not care for his daughter's wishes at all.

Although the representation of Elves differs greatly between film and novel, Elves are usually very popular with the audience of the film. Legolas in particular is perceived as "cool"<sup>262</sup>,

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<sup>256</sup> Cf. Smith 5

<sup>257</sup> Porter 155

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Porter 155

<sup>259</sup> Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:09

<sup>260</sup> Appendices of TT, From Book to Script 00:09

<sup>261</sup> Smith 6

mainly by young women who have not read the book.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, Jackson's Elves are a topic of discussion in queer culture, as a "homo-erotic subtext"<sup>264</sup> is inferred from their effeminate looks. By turning Elves (e.g. Legolas) into action heroes, Jackson makes them dramatically effective and very much appealing to a modern audience, who watches a film out of the simple reason of being entertained. These changes, however, lead to a loss of character depth in the film and to a rather superficial representation of Tolkien's Elves.

## 7. Dwarves

Apart from Gimli, Dwarves only play a minor part in both novel and film. Through Gimli's tales and the history of Moria, however, the reader/viewer gets an idea of this tough and sturdy people. To which extent the picture of Dwarves (and of Gimli in particular) differs between novel and film is the topic of the following two sections.

### 7.1. Novel: Gimli as an Intercultural Messenger

As the reader is expected to be familiar with Dwarves from *The Hobbit*, the characterisation of Dwarves is not a major concern of *The Lord of the Rings*. Dwarves are portrayed as "stone-hard [...] in labour or journey" (418), being good craftsmen and reliable companions. Their weakness for precious metals like gold or mithril is their greatest flaw and it brought about their enmity with the Elves.

Apart from being a fearless and worthy member of the fellowship, Gimli is mainly characterised by his ability to overcome the old dispute between Elves and Dwarves. In Lothlórien he slowly gives up his prejudices against Elves because of Galadriel's kind words and becomes fast friends with Legolas. Thus, he acts as an "intercultural hero"<sup>265</sup>, who mediates between two different cultures.

### 7.2. Film: Coarse Humour to Lighten the Atmosphere

Gimli is the only Dwarf featuring in the film – and he is quite a remarkable character. He drinks ale until he collapses, finds funny explanations for all his shortcomings (e.g. his falling off a horse was "deliberate" – TT: Disc 2, 00:00) and entertains the audience with his coarse

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<sup>262</sup> Barker (2005) 372

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Barker (2005) 372

<sup>264</sup> Allington 135

<sup>265</sup> Porter 157

sense of humour (e.g. “It’s the Dwarves that go swimming with little hairy women.” – RK: Disc 1, 00:20).

Although his sturdiness and his beard make him look strong, he is not as tough as he would like to be. Contrary to his looks, Gimli is a coward, who is afraid of the trees of Fangorn harming him after he has insulted them unknowingly. This discrepancy between reality and Gimli’s glorious image of himself creates humour, e.g. when he loses a drinking game against Legolas, who does not even feel dizzy yet (RK: Disc 1, 00:20). Also Gimli’s shortness is regularly made fun of, e.g. when he tries on a mail shirt which is obviously too long for him but he observes that it is “a little tight across the chest” (TT: Disc 2, 00:56). Thus, Gimli often serves as comic relief and makes the audience laugh in a film full of darkness and dread.

At the same time, Jackson manages to convey the growing friendship between Gimli and Legolas astonishingly well. This makes Gimli a humorous and likeable character that will stay in the audiences’ mind. Especially younger men, who found the film too serious and in need of lightening, appreciate Jackson’s interpretation of Gimli, the Dwarf.<sup>266</sup>

## 8. Ents

Ents, the tree-shepherds, are among Tolkien’s most creative inventions and one of the highlights in special effects of TT. Representing nature, they take revenge on Saruman the “tree-killer” (554) for all the destruction he caused. The Ents’ way to their decision to attack Isengard, however, is different between novel and film. This and the not always logical characterisation of Treebeard in Jackson’s film will be the focus of this chapter.

### 8.1. Novel: Treebeard’s “Long Slow Wrath Brimming Over”<sup>267</sup>

Treebeard is “the oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-earth” (488). This makes him wise and considerate and turns him into a philosophical character, whose principle is not to be “hasty” (452). In the novel, he muses about the danger of telling one’s real name (454), the hastiness of language (“hill [...] is a hasty word for a thing that has stood here ever since this part of the world was shaped” – 455) and the sad fate of his race since the loss of the Ent-wives.

He immediately perceives the hobbits as a species not named in the “Old Lists” and means no harm to them at any point. When the hobbits tell Treebeard about Saruman’s doings outside

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<sup>266</sup> Cf. Barker (2005) 371

<sup>267</sup> 488

Fangorn forest, their coming initiates a change in the Ents. As masters of their realm, they had known about orcs felling trees and mourned their losses, but only now they realise that their neighbour Saruman is to blame for it.

“I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop,” (463) Treebeard observes. Thus, Entmoot is not about deciding what to do next, but about “rousing” (464) the other Ents. Treebeard succeeds and leads the Ents to war on Isengard. He points out, however, that this is “not a hasty resolve,” (475) but the result of “his long slow wrath [...] brimming over” (488). Ents are quirky in their slowness, but their real humour is drawn from their “treeish-ness” which is often reflected in their language: Treebeard sleeps standing upright, for example, and he tells the hobbits that his drink “will keep [them] green and growing” (455) as if they were young trees themselves. At the same time, however, Ents are melancholic beings and a fading race.

## 8.2. Film: A Very Hasty Decision

In the beginning neither the viewer nor the hobbits know whether Treebeard, this strange tree-like creature, can be trusted. On his first appearance, Treebeard is seen treading on an orc in order to kill it. This almost becomes the hobbits’ fate too, as it first takes Gandalf to convince him that they are not orcs. Thus, Jackson’s Ents are not as peace-loving as their counterparts in the novel.

They are not as wise as in the novel either. It comes as a great surprise to Treebeard when Pippin shows him how much of his forest was destroyed by Saruman. As the guardian of Fangorn, one would expect Treebeard to know his realm. This makes the viewer wonder if he does not take his job seriously or if he is just too slow to notice even the most obvious changes to his land.

The Ents’ aversion to hastiness is transferred into the film, but Jackson exaggerates it. At Entmoot, for example, the Ents have only just “finished saying good morning” (TT: Disc 2, 00:53) when it is getting dark again. Jackson “loved the idea that Treebeard was boring”<sup>268</sup>, so he makes the hobbits fall asleep when he sings a song to them. Unfortunately, in these scenes where Treebeard acts as comic relief, the audience does not laugh *with* him but *about* him.

The most obvious change in connection to Ents, however, is the outcome of Entmoot. Different Tolkien’s Ents, Jackson’s Ents decide *against* going to war and Treebeard wants to send the hobbits back home (which is ridiculous, if one considers the many miles full of

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<sup>268</sup> Jackson in Appendices of TT, Editorial: Refining the Story 00:07



enemies between Fangorn and the Shire). Just like the leaders of Men, Treebeard, the leader of the Ents, avoids confrontation – only to be forced into action later, when he sees the damage done by Saruman with his own eyes. Thus, the pace of the story is slowed up again by a different decision of one of the major characters at a kernel. Despite Treebeard's unhastiness, this final change of mind happens on the spur of the moment and is not in tune with the way Jackson characterised him before. If it took the Ents a number of days to refuse going to war, how can they revise their decision in a few minutes?

The scenes that show the Ents' fight in Isengard work very well and Jackson brings this part of the story to life, conveying the message of nature taking revenge on industry very clearly. This more than compensates for the omission of Tom Bombadil in the film, who is the second representative of nature the reader meets in the novel.<sup>269</sup> However, due to some contradictions and inconsistencies in the behaviour of the Ents, Jackson's realisation of the tree-shepherds has to be looked at critically.

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<sup>269</sup> Cf. Davis 60-63

## VI. Conclusion

Due to its wealth in detail, J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy epic *The Lord of the Rings* used to be regarded as unfilmable – even Tolkien himself considered the novel “unsuitable for [...] dramatic representation”<sup>270</sup>. Confronted with a failed attempt at turning *The Lord of the Ring* into a film-script in 1958, Tolkien stated that “the failure of poor films is often precisely in exaggeration, and in the intrusion of unwarranted matter owing to not perceiving where the core of the original lies”<sup>271</sup>.

Tolkien, of course, was no film-maker and his principles in regard to dramatic adaptation have to be treated with caution. Contrary to literature, which is conceptive and belongs to the realm of imagination, the medium of film is perceptive and confronts the audience with ready-made pictures. As discussed in great detail, there are a number of rules that apply to screenwriting and to the adaptation of literary sources to the screen: Elements that do not further the plot must be dropped to keep dramatic tension at a continuously high level and internal action has to be acted out. Scenes and characters have to be defined clearly to keep the viewer involved in the film. For the sake of time management dialogue has to fulfil several functions at once.

Thus, alterations to the original text become necessary to make an adaptation dramatically effective. In this respect adaptation resembles the art of translation, as a literary text is rendered in the specific language of film. Some elements (i.e. events, kernels, themes and characters) can be transferred directly from novel to film, while other elements (i.e. atmosphere, mood and emotion) are expressed by entirely different means on the screen. Ideally, the script-writer's interpretation of the story evokes a reaction in the viewer that is similar to that of the reader of the novel. If this is the case, the “core of the original”, as Tolkien calls it, has made its way into the dramatic adaptation. In traditional adaptation studies, fidelity to the original source was considered most important for determining the value of an adaptational work. This approach, however, is obsolete, as any adaptation must be able to stand on its own as a film and manage to capture audiences that are not familiar with the novel as well.

Peter Jackson's three-part adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* was received with great enthusiasm by readers and non-readers of Tolkien alike. It is a technical masterpiece of animation and brings Tolkien's world to life in a multitude of amazing pictures. Still, Jackson's extensive use of special effects and the story's breath-taking pace were perceived as

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<sup>270</sup> Cf. Tolkien in Carpenter: Letter 194, 6 November 1956

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Tolkien in Carpenter, Letter 210: June 1958

irritating by many viewers familiar with Tolkien's novel. Fans of the film, on the other hand, found the original novel too slow-paced and had problems with its rather antiquated language. In order to make *The Lord of the Rings* dramatically effective, Jackson and his team changed the narrative structure of the text and rendered the chain of events chronologically. Thus, the independent storylines of the novel were carefully interwoven and new storylines – often containing material that is told in flashback in the novel – were introduced. This keeps the level of dramatic tension high throughout the film and, most noticeably, it leads to a new distribution of events between the three parts of the film, which stands in contrast to the three parts of the novel.

To simplify Tolkien's complex story and to capture the audience's attention, a number of episodes and minor characters were omitted in Jackson's adaptation. As this was the case for many quiet and peaceful moments of the novel, these omissions lead to an overall quickening of the narrative pace. Scenes tend to start in medias res and suspense rises to a high level at an early point of the story. All this is necessary to keep the audience entertained, but Jackson did not take the fact into account that continuous tension without moments of respite might exhaust itself after some time.

New elements were added to *The Lord of the Rings* as well. Jackson and his team made the characters act out internal conflict in newly invented scenes and visualised episodes that are not told directly in the novel. Themes and character development – which sometimes differ from the novel – are illustrated by additional scenes and episodes. Other episodes were introduced to increase suspense, to add romantic tension or to provide Tolkien's serious story with comic relief. Many of these new aspects are linked to special effects and action, but they also aim at entertaining the female audience by including a touch of romance.

Episodes present in Tolkien's novel had to be modified as well to make *The Lord of the Rings* dramatically effective. On the one hand, complex issues were simplified to make the story accessible to viewers that are not familiar with the original novel. Causal relations were established between independent episodes and the atmosphere of a number of scenes was changed. The characters' language was modernised and suspense was added. At the same time, however, a great amount of new action elements was added to prolong already existing episodes. Thus, the great battle scenes (although of minor importance in Tolkien's work) take up large parts of TT and RK and Jackson's heroes display a disquieting readiness to use physical violence. Although Jackson claims that *The Lord of the Rings* is “not about action [...but] a beautiful story that has action elements in it”<sup>272</sup>, collectible merchandise is usually

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<sup>272</sup> Appendices of TT, Warriors of the Third Age 00:20

fitted with war gear and even figurines of characters that are not present at the large battle scenes carry swords.<sup>273</sup> By introducing action sequences and fights into many peaceful scenes of the novel, Jackson assimilates one incident to another, which tends to have a flattening effect on the single episodes. The horrors depicted in FS, for example, are so impressive that they can hardly be surpassed in the following parts of the film. The focus on the loud, action-packed scenes of Tolkien's story also diminishes the importance of the hobbits, often creating the impression that hobbits are just bystanders while Men fight for the future of Middle-earth.

As far as the characters of *The Lord of the Rings* are concerned, Jackson tends to modernise Tolkien's protagonists. Mighty leaders like Aragorn and Théoden question their role as King and their decisions often delay action for the sake of peace, which is not the case in Tolkien's novel. Only when war can no longer be avoided do they fight to protect their people. Thus, different decisions at kernels prolong the story and lead to new kernels. The role of women is beefed up compared to the novel and invented details of Arwen and Aragorn's love story are a part of all three films of Jackson's adaptation. Éowyn, too, displays many more female attributes than her literary counterpart to provide the film with a strong female character the female audience can identify with. Legolas is turned into an action-hero, whereas Gimli serves as comic relief throughout the film.

The villain Saruman is given more actual presence in Jackson's adaptation than he has in the novel and his rise to power is depicted very effectively. Sauron, on the other hand, remains a disembodied presence also in the film, his influence being visualised by the corrupting power of the Ring and by the ugliness of his servants. As a technical masterpiece, Jackson's Gollum convinces the reader with his split personality, but he is shown in an even more unfavourable light than in the novel. Whereas his intentions are not entirely clear in the novel, Jackson portrays him as utterly false and shares Gollum's plans with the audience at an early point of the story.

In contrast to Gandalf and Boromir, who do not show many differences to their literary counterparts, the minor character of Faramir has new motivations behind his decisions and is not always convincing in his development. Treebeard, while refusing to act in the beginning, makes very hasty decisions in the end, which are not in tune with the picture Jackson paints of him earlier on. Denethor's suicidal development, on the other hand, is shortened and simplified.

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<sup>273</sup> Cf. Porter 167

The greatest changes, however, are found in connection with hobbits. Assimilating their age, Jackson depicts the four hobbits as young and inexperienced and they are overwhelmed by the immense task they have to face. Frodo seems like a frightened youngster and displays an evil side in Jackson's adaptation that is not present in Tolkien's main-character. Sam is not subordinate to Frodo like in the novel and the friendship between the two hobbits is rendered convincingly also on the screen. Merry and Pippin, on the other hand, serve as comic relief in FS and TT and become distinct characters only in the final part of Jackson's adaptation. The hobbits' deeds are diminished in importance and Tolkien's message of ordinary people displaying heroic qualities in times of need does not always make its way onto the screen. Although Peter Jackson created Tolkien's world in beautiful pictures and convincing in its detail, it does not come as a surprise that his former genre used to be that of gore and splatter rather than that of romance and emotion. In his Appendices to RK, Jackson claims that one of his dreams would be that if Tolkien could see his films

“he would be happy with what we have added and what we have changed and what we have simplified. He probably would not be happy with all we have simplified, but I hope he would at least have some sense of delight in the fact that this mythology that he set out to create is now taking on a life separate to him.”<sup>274</sup>

Tolkien's opinion on Jackson's adaptation will never be known – but that does not matter. It probably would be that of an author offended by changes done to his work. Fans, however, love Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* and are not only eager to buy DVDs and merchandise but also Tolkien's novel. Thus, *The Lord of the Rings* is brought to a larger public, experiencing an unprecedented revival. New audiences find access to Tolkien's rather difficult novel by watching Jackson's adaptation and come to appreciate Tolkien's timeless story of Frodo and the temptation of the enemy's Ring.

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<sup>274</sup> Appendices of RK, From Book to Script: Forging the Final Chapter 00:23

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### **English Abstract**

Peter Jackson's cinematic adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings* has been a great success ever since its release between 2001 and 2003. Studies, however, show that fans of the novel do not necessarily like the film and vice versa. This thesis aims at analysing the differences between Jackson's film and its literary source to find out why this is the case. Drawing on the theory of adaptation and film-making, alterations to story and characters are highlighted and their effect on the audience is explored. Jackson and his film-writing team tried to modernise Tolkien's story and its characters by making Tolkien's heroes less infallible. The heavy use of special effects – necessary for bringing Tolkien's world to the screen – led to a shift of focus away from Tolkien's quiet and peaceful scenes to the great battles, which are only minor matters in the novel. This reduces the importance of the hobbits, who illustrate the heroism of common people and form the heart of Tolkien's novel.

### German Abstract

Peter Jacksons filmische Adaption von J.R.R. Tolkiens Roman *Der Herr der Ringe* ist noch immer so beliebt wie zu ihrer Veröffentlichung in den Jahren zwischen 2001 und 2003. Studien jedoch zeigen, dass Fans des Romans nicht unbedingt diejenigen sind, die den Film mögen – und umgekehrt. Diese Diplomarbeit analysiert die Unterschiede zwischen Jacksons Verfilmung und seiner zugrunde liegenden literarischen Quelle um herauszufinden, warum das der Fall ist. Änderungen von Handlung und Charakteren stehen im Mittelpunkt dieser Diskussion und ihre Wirkung auf das Publikum wird erörtert. Hierbei wird auf Grundlagen der Adaptations- und Filmtheorie Bezug genommen. Die Drehbuchautoren um Jackson versuchen Tolkiens Geschichte und seine Charaktere zu modernisieren, indem sie letztere fehlerhafter gestalteten als im Roman. Der großzügige Einsatz von Spezialeffekten, der notwendig ist, um Tolkiens Welt auf den Bildschirm zu bringen, führte zu einer Verlagerung des Augenmerks von den ruhigen Szenen des Romans hin zu den großen Schlachten, welche im Roman nur nebensächlich sind. Dadurch verringert sich die Bedeutung der Hobbits, die das Heldentum herkömmlicher Menschen veranschaulichen und das Herz von Tolkiens Roman bilden.

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