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The Prominence of Pippin

When building a fictional world as involved and vast as that of J.R.R. Tolkien's multiple drafts are a must in order to work out the exact details and to make sure that all the possible loose ends are tied up and addressed. Characters can come and go, change in temperaments and in how involved they are when it comes to the story itself. Whereas some characters may start off as highly involved in the plot, they may become nothing other than a supporting character after going through multiple drafting processes. For other characters, however, they may start as a walk-on/walk-off character, acting as nothing more than a device to help the story move along, but then end up becoming a highly important and involved character, detrimental to the good of the story's outcome. With the vast amount of drafts Tolkien created for the series, his characters were no less subject to the process of creation. As *The Lord of the Rings* series underwent its development, Pippin grew substantially in his prominence, though his journey of development has different points of emphasis on it when Tolkien's books and Peter Jackson's movie adaptations are compared. Through both types of media, Pippin starts off the story as a foolish side character but then becomes a significant figure in the story who is essential in the society of the Shire and in the preservation of Middle Earth's history.

Pippin's origins as a character within J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* were uncertain at best since he had multiple origins for his name, personality, and involvement. Also known as Peregrin Took, Pippin's name derived from a previously developed character that had been an important part of Bilbo Baggins's story. According to *The Return of the Shadow*, the sixth book

of Christopher Tolkien's *History of Middle-Earth* series, the name Peregrin came from Peregrin Boffin, "the grandson of Bilbo's mother's second sister Donnaimira Took" (*Return of the Shadow* 385). The section goes on to explain how a closeness grew between Peregrin and Bilbo, with Peregrin taking up Bilbo's interest in the "mountains and dwarves, and forests and wolves" (*Return of the Shadow* 385) and acting as Bilbo's original favorite relation. Bilbo's influence, however, lead to a failed attempt at adventure on Peregrin's part and eventually ended with Peregrin disappearing from the Shire completely. The names of Peregrin and of his father, Paladin, were then switched to Took, removing Peregrin Boffin's story completely (*Return of the Shadow* 386). Already the question of where Pippin comes from is a confusing one.

Pippin's personality and lines come from two characters that Tolkien had originally planned to include in the story, known as 'Odo' and 'Frodo Took II', and a third character called 'Folco Took'. In order for the story to run more smoothly, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote and rewrote multiple drafts of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, where he would add characters and then take others out as he would write out his scenes. Odo and Frodo Took II alternate in their roles during Tolkien's drafts. At first they are separate characters; they discuss what to do after they leave the comfort of the Shire, which Christopher Tolkien describes:

"The argument about which way to go is mainly between Odo and Frodo, and is somewhat different from the final form. Odo, not knowing the country, argued that there would be 'all kinds of obstacles' when they got down into the Marsh, to which Frodo replied that he did know it, and that the Marsh was now 'all tamed and drained' (in FR Pippin, who takes Frodo Took's part in that he does know the country, but Odo's in that he has his eye on the Golden Perch, argues with Frodo (Baggins) that in the Marsh 'there are bogs and all kinds of difficulties')." (*Return of the Shadow* 287).

Once their path is decided, Christopher Tolkien adds that “Odo was to be removed from the walking party” and the shift in characterization leans more towards Frodo Took, who “now makes ‘Odo-Pippin’ remarks (as ‘Oh! That was poetry!’ FR p. 116- he would hardly have said such a thing previously.” (*Return of the Shadow* 300). Following this adjustment, J.R.R. Tolkien makes another by combining the characters of Odo and Frodo Took together to form another character, named ‘Folco Took’.

Folco Took is the most similar version of the character that would become Peregrin ‘Pippin’ Took. In *Chapter IV: ‘A Short Cut to Mushrooms’* within Christopher Tolkien’s *Return of the Shadow*, he lays out an explanation for what happened that resulted in Folco’s creation:

“In this new version of the chapter there is only to notice the curious result of the exclusion of Odo Bolger: with Folco Took adding Odo’s part to that which he retained from Frodo Took’s in the former narrative. In the previous version Odo argued against taking a shortcut to the Ferry, because, while he did not know the country, he did not know *The Golden Perch* at Stock, an Frodo Took argued for it- because he did know the country.⁹ Now, the Frodo-element in Folco, retaining a knowledge of the country, uses it to support the desire of the Odo-element in him for the beer at Stock, and his opponent in the argument is Frodo (Baggins); thus Falco is here, and throughout the chapter, Pippin in all but name” (*Return of the Shadow* 325).

Once J.R.R. Tolkien made this change and created Folco, he had the ability to give Pippin his canon name of Peregrin Took, resulting in his permanent placement within the Took family tree.

Pippin’s involvement in *The Lord of the Rings* series varies, depending on if one is to read the book or turn to the movie adaptations. Both versions of the story offer positive and

negative aspects to how the story is portrayed. The books offer much more detail into the characters in some ways and yet limit them in others. When it comes down to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Pippin is given more involvement and agency, especially as the group of hobbits leave the Shire and begin to make their way through to Farmer Maggot's land, where Pippin is able to conduct the introductions between the lot of them and Farmer Maggot (*Fellowship* 103-104). In the movie adaptations, this scene and any other involving a physical character of Farmer Maggot is not included and Pippin does not have the chance to be more than another of Frodo's companions. However, the book and the film version of the *Fellowship*, and the following books and films in the series, share in their portrayal of Pippin as a hobbit who does not always think before he takes action. During the novel's scenes at *The Prancing Pony*, for example, Pippin gives "a comic account of Bilbo's farewell party" (*Fellowship* 178), which could expose Frodo's actual identity and put all of them in danger. Though Frodo ends up being the one to expose his group's oddness, having fallen and the ring causing him to vanish in front of everyone as it slipped onto his finger (*Fellowship* 181-182), the situation can be originally blamed on Pippin, for forcing Frodo to draw the attention to himself rather than Pippin's retelling of Bilbo's party. The movie adaptation makes this scene much more dramatic, as Pippin actually uses Frodo's true name, rather than his alias, when talking with the men at the bar. As he does this, Frodo tries to stop him and vanishes in a similar fashion to that of the books, although he is knocked down by someone rather than having caused himself to fall. Overall, had Pippin not spoken so freely due to the beer loosening his lips, the drama at *The Prancing Pony* could have been avoided and the group of hobbits would not have drawn as much attention to themselves than they already had. With the continuation of the plot of *The Fellowship*, Pippin is sorted into the sort of background, aiding in Frodo's race to reach Rivendell but not playing a highly important roll. In the novel,

when it comes down to forming the Fellowship of the Ring in order to bring it to Mordor, Merry and Pippin are described to have been “indignant when they heard that Sam had crept into the Council, and had been chosen as Frodo’s companion” (*Fellowship* 305). Neither Pippin or Merry seem to understand what this journey entails, though their determination to help Frodo in his quest, as they have thus far, is admirable. Pippin’s intelligence is made to sound as if it is lesser than that of normal hobbits, when he comments how “There must be someone with intelligence in the party” and Gandalf takes a jab, saying how that would count Pippin out of the bunch (*Fellowship* 305). The film adaptation allows Pippin and Merry to sneak into the Council meeting, just as Sam does, shortening the amount of time involved in setting up the story and giving the two of them the chance to step up automatically to help Frodo. In either version, however, Pippin is the punchline to Gandalf’s joke. Given the past happenings in the story though, it is not that far off of a judgement for Pippin. Pippin is often fearful throughout their journey and his unfortunate curiosity in the mines of Moria (*Fellowship* 352) leads to the flooding of orcs and quickens Gandalf’s demise, as brief as it turns out to be. Pippin’s foolishness is a hindrance to him and his companions at this point, though he and Merry are able to better their involvement as the first film adaptation comes to an end, allowing for Pippin and Merry to do more than they are said to do in the novel. They distract the orcs away from Frodo as he works to make his own way to Mordor and try to use their fighting skills to help Boromir in his mortal battle. The novel on the other hand does not clearly show that Pippin and Merry have a part in the battle. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, however, offers Pippin many more chances to grow into the important hobbit he was meant to be.

The Two Towers is Pippin’s chance to become a more involved character, offering him many more chances to prove his worth and leave his part as a foolish hobbit. After he and Merry

are taken by the Uruk-hai, Pippin figures out a way to guide the last of the Fellowship in their search for he and Merry, by dropping his cloak pin as a clue to their path (*Two Towers*, 48). This quick thinking on Pippin's part, though more of a hope than a certainty that it would be found, does end up helping the last of the Fellowship, reassuring them that Pippin and Merry are still alive. After looking out for one another and fleeing from the Uruk-hai, Pippin and Merry's have a new chance to increase their usefulness when they become spokes-hobbits for Middle Earth, working to persuade the Ents to fight against Saruman (*Two Towers* 91). With this time, Pippin and Merry are able to have their own active role(s) in *The Lord of the Rings'* story to show that they are capable of much more than journey companions. Once the Palantír comes into the story and Pippin looks into it, he exposes himself and his companions to possible danger, sending him off on a new course with Gandalf and leaving Merry behind. This gives Pippin his own active role to forage, breaking him from the connection he has had with Merry throughout the journey. The book version of the Palantír scene is different from the books; it has Pippin panic over what he has seen but casts Gandalf's treatment of Pippin's fear in a gentler light, giving him a frustrated but worried demeanor. Gandalf still calls Pippin a fool (*Two Towers*, 220) but this comment does not have as much insult to it as the comment he made regarding Pippin's intelligence in *Fellowship*. Pippin is also more reassured than he seems to be in the movie adaptation, where he is almost paralyzed with fear and heavy judgement is placed on him by Gandalf and Merry for his looking into the Palantír. Though the book version of Pippin is still made to know what he has done was wrong and that he must face the consequences, Gandalf is much more supportive as he guides Pippin on his own journey to make up for the Palantír (*Two Towers*, 226). A supportive guide, one that is there for support but not one who is too overbearing, like Gandalf is exactly what Pippin needs to grow into his own person. In *The Lord*

of the Rings: The Return of the King, Pippin is finally able to come into his own and, though he does not act in the most conventional ways, it still allows him to grow into the better character he is meant to be.

Pippin's arrival in Minas Tirith during *The Return of the King* opens up the door that allows him to become a stronger character and the hobbit he has been struggling to become throughout the series. The film adaptation frames his and Gandalf's arrival and interaction with Denethor in a short amount of time, it allows the film version of Pippin to convey the sorrow he feels regarding Boromir's death to offer his services quickly in repayment. The book frames this situation in a much more grueling pace, drawing out Pippin's explanation for Denethor (*Return of the King* 15) and slowing down the pace of Pippin's betterment as a character. There are benefits to the book's pacing, however. It gives Pippin the time to show that he is not fearless during his journey, still holding the fear he has had including that regarding the Black Riders (*Return of the King* 25) but his fear is not keeping him from continuing on anyway. He is also able to form friendships with Baragon and his son, Bergil, (*Return of the King* 19, 29), which gives him more of a place within Gondor than the movie does. The movie only really follows Pippin's time in Gondor when he is around as Denethor's servant. It does, however, give Pippin more of a relationship with Faramir and expounds on the connection and devotion he feels towards Faramir. It has them bond over the fact that Pippin is wearing Faramir's Gondor soldier uniform from his childhood. Due to their stronger connection, the movie also makes Faramir's close call with death at the hands of his father that much more dramatic, giving Pippin the ability to be an active part in saving Faramir. With this chance, Pippin is able to jump onto the pyre and push Faramir away from it, rather than having him rely completely on Gandalf and the so-called aid of the servants of Gondor to save Faramir, as he does in the books (*Return of the King* 95).

Both the book and the movie do well with their scenes of Pippin and Merry reuniting after all the fighting and after the both of them have gone through their respective journeys of character growth. In the book, Pippin finds Merry as he and King Théoden's army enter Gondor, with Pippin trying to help Merry to the Hall of Healing, despite his worry, and showing how much of a struggle he has trying to do so (*Return of the King* 135-137). The movie, however, has Pippin searching the battlefield frantically for Merry and the relief he feels in finding his friend alive can easily be seen on Pippin's face as he reassures Merry that he will be fine. Though the both of them have been through so much, they are still able to easily return to the relationship they shared before their separation, comforting and looking after one another. Rather than Pippin looking to Merry for strength, it is the other way around and Merry looks to Pippin in order to get the healing and support he needs after going through the trauma of aiding in killing the Lord of the Nazgûl (*Return of the King* 116). Once the war reaches its end and the journey has concluded, Pippin and the other hobbits are able to return to the Shire, though their return is not as easy as they thought it would be as they must deal with the new gate placed to protect the Shire from the remnants of the war (*Return of the King* 300). With their return, however, Pippin and the others are able to sort their situations out by counting on the resilience they all achieved on their journeys as they work to set things straight again.

With the passing of years that are laid out in Appendix B and C, the rest of Pippin's life is laid out for readers to know just what happened to the foolish-turned-wise hobbit. The book tells readers that he marries "Diamond of Long Cleeve" and the two of them have a son not too long afterward, who they name Faramir (*Return of the King* 418), which brings along new responsibility for Pippin. In the years that follow, he is then made to be "the Took and Thain" of the Shire (*Return of the King* 418), giving him further responsibility which allows him to use his

wisdom to guide the Shire and its military. This new position also gave Pippin the time to create “a library of historical information at Great Smials, especially information relating to Númenor and the heirs of Elendil” (*Tolkien Gateway*), adding to the knowledge regarding Middle Earth and further assisting in keeping that knowledge alive in the awareness of the beings in Middle Earth. He is also made to be a Councilor of the North-kingdom, alongside Merry and Sam, so they may all aid Aragorn as he rules as King Elessar (*Return of the King* 118). Not only has Pippin gained wisdom through his journey throughout the books, he has also gained positions of power which hold him in high regard.

After going through confusing and rigorous drafting on Tolkien’s part and through Sauron’s war for the One Ring, Pippin has grown to become a strong character who holds high importance in the world of Middle Earth and in the story as a whole. As an acting member of the Fellowship of the Ring, a counselor to Ents and kings, Knight of Gondor, and Thain of the Shire, Pippin has achieved stable and important characterizations that have brought him from a once-foolish hobbit to a wise and responsible leader. He is a compassionate and wise character who is able to return home as the much more capable (and taller) hobbit, one who is responsible enough to take up his father’s place as the Thain of the Shire, with enough capability to inquire to and amass the history of Middle Earth, ensuring that the beings of Middle Earth and the readers of *The Lord of the Rings* series will know how the events they have read and heard of came to pass. Though he may not have been of high regard during the beginning stages of his creation, Pippin became a necessary character to the series, leaving the danger of his removal from the story far behind him.

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