Esmeralda da Conceição Cunha Catalim

A TRIOLOGIA DO *SENHOR DOS ANÉIS*: DO LIVRO AO FILME

THE TRILOGY OF *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*: FROM BOOK TO FILM

Universidade de Aveiro Departamento de Línguas e Cultura
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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Línguas Literaturas e Culturas, variante de Estudos Ingleses, realizada sob a orientação científica do Prof. Dr. Anthony David Barker, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro

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Palavras-chave

Triologia, Tolkien, mitologia, Peter Jackson, O Senhor dos Aneis, os Aneis, linguistica, literatura fantástica, fantasia, ficção, cinamatografia, Nova Zelândia, terra-média, hobbits, elfos, lendas, tradição oral, Weta Digital, fãs, grupos de fãs na Internet, audiências, publicidade e franchisado cinamatográfico, estreia global.

Resumo

Este trabalho é estudo comparativo e analítico da trilogia literária do J.R.Tolkien *O Senhor dos Anéis*, assim como da produção cinematográfica do director Peter Jackson quarenta anos depois da publicação dos livros. O objectivo é demonstrar que apesar de uma adaptação cinematográfica não conseguir substituir a obra literária, pode contudo, com a tecnologia de hoje, ser o seu complemento visual. Igualmente importante neste trabalho é o estudo sobre os grupos de fãs organizados, o franchisado publicitário cinematográfico e marketing criado à volta de uma publicidade virtual e de estreia global na nova era de filmes para uma audiência em massa.

Abstract

This is a comparative and analytical work of J.R.R. Tolkien literary trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the cinematographic production of Peter Jackson forty years after the publication of the books. The goal is to demonstrate that though a film adaptation will never replace the original literary work, it can be, however, its visual compliment or extension. Equally important, is the study of the organised fans and fandom, the publicity, marketing and film franchise that involves an online publicity and global release in a new cinematographic era for mass audiences.

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INTRODUCTION

It is my argument in this thesis that the immense popularity of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy comes not from the escapism that critics have detected in its pages, these latter maintaining that it only appeals to readers who desire to escape from reality, but rather from the converse - the recognition that Middle-Earth, in general terms, is our life on earth reflected in a fantastic mirror.

Popularity and the counting of heads is of course not everything. However it is significant to note that in 2003, viewers of the BBC program *The Big Read*, voted *The Lord of the Rings* 'The Nation's Favourite Novel'. Peter Jackson's release of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy in the early 2000's went on to reinforce the status of the book as a popular favourite, reanimating book sales on a massive scale. Indeed, throughout this dissertation, whether or not *The Lord of the Rings* is a novel will be called into question. Tolkien himself called it a 'heroic romance' – so issues of generic identity and meaning might be considered central to the success of both the books and their adaptation to the cinema.

For the first time since *The Lord of the Rings'* publication in the mid 50's, Tolkien's characters came to life (with live actors) in Jackson's mega-film production, and the Middle-earth took shape in the form of the beautiful landscape of New Zealand. By using the artwork of Alan Lee and John Howe, who had previously designed numerous books covers and illustrations for the various printed versions of Tolkien, Peter Jackson was able to give specific form to the worlds of *The Lord of the Ring's* imagined by Tolkien's many readers. The extraordinary tales were put right before of our eyes on the big screen. That was Jackson's achievement – the ability to produce a cinematographic masterwork that not only powerfully resonated in the minds of readers/fans of Tolkien, but also brilliantly brought Tolkien's epic, developed over three massive books, to the even wider audience of contemporary cinema.

So, what makes supposedly modern, materialistic, rational, apparently grown-up people gravitate toward these re-workings of ancient myths and fantastic epics? What draws them to the Power of the Ring? There are many answers. One of the answers, in light of cultural criticism, can be our need of complex narratives to make sense of life - stories that purport to tell us where we came from, where we are going, and how to live. Apparently, this new technological age we live in has not wiped out the deep human need for traditional stories of this nature. Jackson was also determined to be that kind of storyteller and show us we can use technology in our favour. Amongst the many things he does is to pick up Tolkien's epic, draw out the traditional story

embodying Christian teaching, and present us with the old drama of sin and redemption.

We might also want to explore these theological and spiritual dimensions of the story, distanced from their old familiar biblical-type iconography. It appears that people are desperately searching for related mythical fables in contemporary, fantastical and futuristic contexts. Witness the success of *The Matrix (1999:2003)* films with their Trinitarian structure, for example. This can explain why dramatically rich stories like *Star Wars (1977) or Stardust (2007)* can become obsessions with on-line games that give people an active role in reworking the stories. Cults and groups form around them, and all kind of interactive fan enthusiasm and related craziness developments. Take *The Da Vinci Code (2006)* thriller for instance, a recent example of the spiritual search for an undying divinity, the return to the roots of Christianity, and the raiding of the Bible for occult meaning.

Many Christian writers, including C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Dorothy Sayers, have also used popular story forms, including fantasy and science fiction, to teach Christian truths. But none of them has had the impact of *The Lord of the Rings* where this One Ring seemed to represent power - a weapon of mass destruction – so that after the terrorist attack in New York on September 11 2001 many readers/fans and filmgoers were tempted to associate Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda and other Middle East terrorist organisations with Tolkien's portentous warnings. But there is nothing new in these allegories. In the past, interpreters have associated the Ring with the atomic bomb, Hitler, the Soviet Union, and with a long list of successive "Anti-Christ's", over-powerful threatening nations and other 20th Century political figures.

However, it is not my purpose here to argue for the Christianity of *The Lord of the Rings,* or for the spiritual void that the modern age has brought about, or to discuss the Power of the Ring; others have done so. Tolkien himself dismissed any association or implied allegories of *The Rings* to the Nazis or to the Communists. I only intend with my work to explain the processes affecting adaptation of Tolkien's mythological creations from book to film. Along the way, it might be interesting to ask whether a film can replace a book or if cinema's graphic literalism has done any damage to the book as an independent entity.

What better example could we have than *The Lord of the Rings*? In an age of declining reading habits (and the *LotR* has three exceptionally long volumes), how many ran to a bookstore to supplement their movie experience by buying and reading

the book? Has Peter Jackson's perfectionism and creativity had the effect of making Tolkien's texts less rather than more significant?

I don't intended to argue that a film can replace a book. I don't think that ever can be done. Literary and filmic creations are two distinct forms of activity. They can merge or interact but they cannot replace one another. I am only attempting to show that a fantastic, mythological story, such as Tolkien's epic, cannot help but lend itself to contemporary cinema's taste for spectacle and special effects. From book to film, mythology can gain new shape, colour, and sound. It can become alive and rise before us. From the pen of a talented writer to the camera of a brilliant producer, who, I want to argue, has the capability to capture the spirit of the original with his camera lens, and at the same time, to showcase the best of modern technical accomplishment in cinema.

But as both a book lover and a film fan, I don't have to be in the invidious position of having to choose between them. I will address them both on their merits. I have divided my work mainly into two parts. I will discuss the writer and the book in the first part, and the film on the second part. The books and the films will be discussed for the most part as unified trilogies and not as individual books/films, although I will be finding some points of contrast within the three films as, like the books, they were made and released in response to slightly different market and audience conditions. Obviously this is a very ambitious project, and I can only hope to bring out the main issues in a research work of this size.

In the first chapter I will be discussing Tolkien's life, his works, his love for words and Christianity, the creation of his mythology and the history behind the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. The reason for this is that I feel we need to understand the man before we can understand his work. It will take us back to the need he felt to create a mythology for a troubled England.

From here, I will address the issues involved in making the transition from book to film. In my second chapter I will discuss the specific process of adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* novel cycle to film forms, the available source materials and the issue of exactly what is lost in the translation to a screen adaptation. I give attention in particular to the films' pictorialism. That will lead me into the second part of my work – commentary on the films as part of our wider film culture.

Chapter three is dedicated to Peter Jackson's work. I will discuss the filmmaking and its mechanics, the narrative structure according to Freytag's Triangle, the casting, the settings and the editing of the film trilogy.

Lastly, my fourth chapter is dedicated to the books/films as cultural phenomena. In this chapter I will also briefly discuss the films' franchising created by the New Line Cinema marketing machine and publicity surrounding the films' global launch. I will also attempt to evaluate the film trilogy from a narrative point of view and to assess the critical response to audience identification with the finished films, online fandom and the appearance of new fan-bases as a reaction to the films.

Since its publication, *The Lord of the Rings* has been very popular not only in the United Kingdom but also in other English speaking countries. It has touched three separate generations and has had an enormous impact in America. It has brought about the creation of cults, secret societies, on-line games, schools of Qenya and elfish languages, songs, poems, multiple graphic works, and a worldwide fan-base that worships Frodo and lives in a Middle-Earth of their own imaginative creation.

Of course, many of these interpretations are personal - and they should be. Every story can be interpreted differently, and myths are unending and powerful tools that can be used to make sense of our own personal experience. Like all stories, *The Lord of the Rings* can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. There is no right or wrong way to read a story for its mythic meaning. As a number of commentators on the global popularity of Tolkien myth have opined, that interpretation *"must feel right for you and yields a useful insight in your life. For each reader, culture, time period, gender or society, the myth will mean something different. Therefore, a hero can have a thousand faces."* (Christopher Vogler, *Myth and the Movies,* foreword*)*

CHAPTER I

J.R.R TOLKIEN: THE WRITER AND THE BOOK

1. The Writer – His Life

It is clear that the life of Tolkien could not have been as sophisticated and magical as his mythical world, but it could perhaps have been as quiet and plain as a hobbit's life. Something about Tolkien reminds us of good old Bilbo with his love for the Shire, for the simple pleasures of life, and his secret yarning for adventures but at the same time wishing for wisdom, beauty, and the quietness of Rivandell's halls.

The name "Tolkien" is believed to be of German origin. His father's side of the family migrated from Saxony to England in the 18th century, but Arthur Reuel Tolkien considered himself as an Englishman. Arthur was a bank clerk who left for South Africa in the 1890s in search of a better future and was joined later by Mabel Suffield - his bride from the English West Midlands. John Ronald (called Ronald by his family and friends) was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, on January 3rd of 1892, followed two years later by his brother Hillary. Soon afterwards he came to England with his parents, but it was only after Arthur's death in 1896, that the family settled permanently in Birmingham *(*D. Doughan*; Essay; J.R.R. Tolkien: Bibliography Sketch*, p.1*).* The boys were raised in an environment of a complex combination of the ghastly industrial urban area of Birmingham and the traditional surrounding areas of rural Worcestershire, which explains Ronald's love for nature and a strong dislike for urbanization. As a child, he was particularly gifted at drawing landscapes and trees. But he didn't only like to draw trees. He also liked to be with them, to dwell in their presence and to sense their life. Tolkien's love for trees is reflected in most of his literary works. Tolkien's main early joys were also found in books and words. Unable to afford their tuitions fees, Mabel Tolkien educated her children herself. Ronald was a quick leaner and was able to read and write proficiently before he was four. Mabel realized her oldest son's aptitude for languages and encouraged him by providing many books to read. Thus, Tolkien's imagination was stimulated by fairy tales, books and stories in particular the ones from Andrew Lang and George Macdonald with plots set in far-off kingdoms where misshapen and evil goblins lurked beneath mountains. He was also attracted to the Arthurian legends. But his favourite book was the *Red Fairy Book* of Andrew Lang: the tale of Sigurd, the warrior who slew the dragon Fafnir in the remote and nameless North *(J. Pearce; Tolkien: Man and Myth, p.15).* The harsh and violent world of Scandinavian storytelling would always be more appealing to him than the sunnier Mediterranean mythologies.

Mabel's own life also proved to be as harsh as her son's beloved distant northern regions. She did not get much help from her family to raise her boys. In the 1900s, along with her sister and children, she decided to convert to Roman Catholicism. Mabel's conversion was a hard blow to the Unitarians Suffield and to the Baptist Tolkien families who were outraged by her Catholicism. Both families became extremely hostile to Mabel, ostracizing both her and her boys. Mabel's only aid came from one Tolkien uncle who provided some financial help. Some of Tolkien's biographers argue that Mabel's conversion may have been intended as some kind of selfish act or declaration to prove that her Christianity and citizenship should not be confused. But I think that Mabel's conversation was not a calculated act for her own benefit. Above all, she sought to give her sons a Catholic upbringing at all costs. And unmoved, she relocated her family next door to the Birmingham Oratory, a large Catholic house of retreat, located in a suburb called Edgbaston. The parish priest was the Spanish half-Welsh Father Francis Morgan, who would play a key role in Tolkien's life. The Birmingham Oratory, or Oratory of St. Philip Neri, was a congregation of secular priests living in a community but without the vows of poverty or obedience to any monastic superior order. The Oratorians were introduced in England in 1848 by John Henry Newman and followed a very traditional Christianity. I think that Tolkien's faith was shaped by the Oratorians' attempt to find a middle way between a denying asceticism of the medieval monastic world and a self-indulgent worldliness of an extremely modern Protestantism.

Unable to stay in the retreat for a long period of time, the Tolkien family moved to King's Heath, a grimly Birmingham urban area near the train station. David Doughan in his essay *J.R.R. Tolkien: Bibliography Sketch*, says that Tolkien's "developing linguistic imagination was engaged by the sight of coal trucks going to and from South Wales bearing destinations like" Nantyglo"," Penrhiwceiber" and "Senghenydd"" *(p.2).* The ultimate consequences of this urban life, which he despised and hated, were, according to Joseph Pearce in his book *Tolkien: Man and Myth, the* "basis of the creative tension which would animate the contrasting visions of life and landscape in Middle-Earth" (p.18). In 1902, the Tolkiens moved once again from King's Heath to a run-down house in Edgbaston, close to Birmingham Oratory. Both Ronald and Hillary were enrolled in St. Phillip's School. But soon Mabel realised that St. Philip's could no longer provide the education that Ronald needed, so she enrolled him at Kings Edward's School where Tolkien's linguistic aptitude were able to flourish. Greek and Latin were the backbone of the King Edward's academic curriculum but thanks to his mother's former education, he could read and speak both languages

fluently by the time he finished public school. His biographers recount that once during a school debate he spoke entirely in Greek, and at the end of his final year at King Edward's, he and his classmates performed a Greek play in the original tongue. Later in life, Tolkien would also become fluent in Gothic and Anglo-Saxon.

In 1904 Tolkien's family life worsened when Mabel was diagnosed with diabetes. Fate was unmerciful and she died later that year leaving her two sons completely penniless. Ronald was only twelve and Hillary ten. Mabel's premature death made Tolkien a pessimist and a doom-believer. "Doom" is indeed a word that resounds like a fearful drumbeat throughout *The Lord of the Rings.* It evokes a chilling sense of both fate and judgment. *"*The death of Tolkien's mother filled him with a deep sense of impending loss," says Carpenter. "It taught him that nothing is ever safe, that nothing will last, that no battle will be won forever" (*J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography,* p.50-51). Tolkien firmly believed that the Crucifix was the centre of Catholic worship, both as the sign of God's own sacrifice of his Son as well as the doom that hangs over all living creature. The "Doom of Men" or the "Gift of Men," as he called it so often in *The Lord of the Rings,* both meaning death (doom) and eternal life (gift), were God's gift to men through His Son's ultimate sacrifice. Mabel's death also meant that Tolkien and his brother were now orphans. Therefore, the boys were placed under the guardianship of the Oratory and made wards of Father Francis - a central figure in the Tolkien household even before Mabel's death. At first, Father Francis made arrangements for the boys to live with their aunt Beatrice, Mabel's sister, moving them later to Mrs. Faulkner house. However, both women felt little affection for the orphaned brothers and so they made the Oratory their real home and Father Francis a "surrogate father" (p.26).

Father Francis attended to all practical details of the boys' housing, schooling and finances. He also took them on holidays to the seaside. Ronald and Hilary served as his altar boys for the early morning mass and became closely involved with the community of priests in the church. Though Tolkien remained grateful to Father Francis, the pain of the loss of his mother was never removed. By the time the boys moved to Mrs. Faulkner's house, in 1908, Tolkien was already showing incredible linguistic gifts. He mastered Latin and Greek and was already becoming very skilful in a number of other languages, such as Gothic and Finnish, and began creating his own languages for fun.

It was at Mrs. Faulkner's boarding house that he met Edith Bratt and what began as a simple romance grew into something more serious. Father Francis did not

approve of the relationship and ordered Tolkien to move out from the boarding house and to break off the whole love affair. When Ronald and Edith began to pass love notes and start meeting clandestinely, Father Francis strictly forbade them to see each other for another three years. Tolkien had to wait until he was twenty-one to be able to see (or to correspond with) Edith again. Though Tolkien loved and honoured Father Francis as his faithful guardian and surrogate father, the ban stayed in his heart. Later, it will be reflected in the *Lord of the Rings* when Elrond forbids Aragon to see Arwen. Aragon, himself, has to endure long harsh lonely years until he is worthy of Arwen's hand.   In 1911, before going to Oxford with an Exhibition Scholarship at Exeter College, Tolkien made a summer walking tour in Switzerland. It was an unforgettable experience. The formidable steeps and gorges of the Alps provided a wonderful outward and physical link to his own inward and spiritual landscape, such as led to the creation of the Misty Mountains. It was also in Switzerland that he found a postcard from a German artist named Madelener with a drawing of a mountain spirit, which was the origin of one of his most important characters, the wizard Gandalf. Tolkien would keep this postcard all his life. After his trip to Switzerland, Tolkien went to Exeter College, Oxford, where he immersed himself in the Classics, Old English, the Germanic languages (especially Gothic), Welsh and Finnish, until 1913. He prospered at Oxford. There he learned the joys of good talk, good beer, male friendship, and a freshly filled "weed" pipe. Like many of his Oxford's fellows, he adopted their curious slang and indulged what would become a lifelong love of crude practical jokes. He became quickly bored with Greek and Latin. Instead, he preferred his independent studies in the Germanic languages. He also acquired an almost mystical regard for words. He considered articulate sounds as our greatest gift, the principal thing that animals lack: speech. In Tolkien's view, no word is ever arbitrary or simply accidental. As he would show later in *The Fellowship of the Ring,* a meaningless nursery rhyme like "Hey, diddle, diddle" may have originally served as a drinking song.

But it was not only the power of words that kept Tolkien at Oxford. He was also sustained by three friendships he made at King Edward's School and continued into their Cambridge and Oxford student years. Tolkien and his friends discovered the wonder of shared books, ideas and dreams by meeting daily at a local Birmingham tea club called The Barrows. They called themselves the Tea Club Barrovian Society, which they shortened to TCBS. These four friends were united not only by their knowledge of Greek and Latin literature, but also by their common conviction that they were meant to kindle a new spiritual light for England. Together, they felt "four times their intellectual size," as one of them confessed.   Perhaps, even more than his Oxford

professors, I believe that these three friends helped to shape Tolkien's sense of himself and awareness of his unique talent and vocation, as much as the three little hobbits of the Shire have helped Frodo in his personal journey. The TCBS can be the origin of the three of the nine walkers in *The Fellowship the Ring* that together, with their unconditional love and support, will help Frodo Baggins to carry out his impossible mission. Nevertheless, Tolkien obtained a second class degree in Honour Moderations and as a result, he changed his studies to Classics English Language and Literature. After his graduation in 1915, Tolkien enlisted as a second lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers and was sent on active duty to the Western Front to be involved in the Battle of Somme in France. By then, he was already working on his invented languages, especially the one he called Qenya, which was heavily influenced by Finnish.

Tolkien reignited his old love for Edith Bratt before going to war and took up his old relationship where it had been left off. Father Francis's ban was finally lifted and they were married shortly before Tolkien was shipped out to war and Edith's conversion to Catholicism. Tolkien began to shape a new story on his honeymoon. It had to do with *silmarils,* the three great jewels of the elves that were stolen from the blessed realm of Valinor by the evil creature Morgoth, and with the subsequent wars in which the elves try to regain them. It would require an entire mythological system to explain it all; hence his lifelong project called *The Silmarillion.* In October of 1916, Tolkien succumbed to "trench fever" and was sent back to England, spending almost a month in the Birmingham hospital. During that time he lost two of his TCBS friends, one killed in action and the other by gangrene. It was a hard blow for Tolkien to learn that his friends had been killed in the "animal horror" (as he called it) of World War I. Like many others of his time, such as Karl Barth or Virginia Woolf, Tolkien sensed that a radical re-shaping of human life had occurred in this war - prematurely named "Great War." Humanity was taking a decisive step towards what he felt it was the "Shadow". Tolkien was permanently affected by his war experience. As mentioned by Carpenter, if his mother's death had taught Tolkien that something is terribly awry with the world, this war showed him the wretchedness of modern life, with its all-powerful means to bring about utterly destructive ends. The central subject of *The Two Towers,* for instance has wars and the weapons of total cruelty and destruction. Yet, Tolkien found a strange hope amidst the horrors of the war - the hope that there was still some goodness in this world that was worth fighting for. He saw it reflected in the eyes of the humble soldiers that played their part in the war without much fuss. Frodo Baggins and Sam Gamgee can be considered "hobbitic" versions of these ordinary soldiers who struggled onward without hope of glory or victory, as they play their part in a war they didn't want but

become involved in. Tolkien also felt a special need to fulfil the dreams and hopes of his two dead TCBS friends. Therefore, as an act of honouring their memory, as well as a reaction against his war experiences, he began to shape his *Silmarillion* stories. Using only his imagination and a cheap notebook, Tolkien developed *The Book of Lost Tales* in which most of the major stories of *The* Silmarillion appear in their first form: tales of Elves and "Gnomes" with their languages in Qenya and Goldogrin. He also wrote here the first versions of the wars against Morgoth, the siege and fall of Gondolin and Nargothrond, and the tales of Túrin, Beren and Lúthien *(*D. Doughan*,* p.4).

In the meantime, while her husband was totally immersed in the fog of war, Edith worked as a secretary. She also proved to be an excellent nurse capable of bringing her war-sick husband back to health. Tolkien would never forget their early happiness, especially their long walks in the nearby woods as he recovered from trench fever*.* "Her hair was raven," he wrote "her skin clear, her eyes bright, and she could sing... and dance"

Figure 1: Edith Bratt

(H. Carpenter & C. Tolkien; *The Letters of J.R.R Tolkien,* p.135).

Edith Bratt sacrificed a lot to be Tolkien's wife. She became a Catholic before their marriage, at his insistence, but he never really shared or explained his deep reverence for the Church of Rome. So, she always resented having to confess before attending mass, regarding it more as superficial duties than spiritual needs. When Tolkien became an Oxford professor, she felt terribly inadequate among other professors' wives with higher educational qualifications and greater cultural achievements than her own. She became known among the academic Oxford circle as the "wife who did not call" and was often excluded from the social gatherings hosted by other Oxford wives. Edith also had a growing resentment of Tolkien's constant need for his intellectual male friends because she saw how he came truly alive among them. Though Edith bore him four children and raised them in a happy family environment, she virtually came to live in a separate physical space from Tolkien's since they occupied different bedrooms and kept their own hours. Nevertheless, I believe that Tolkien was not completely unaware of Edith's sacrifices. As a matter of fact, I think that his insistence on living in a discrete seaside resort near Bournemouth after his retirement from Oxford was a way of paying his huge debt for Edith's sacrifices. He knew she would be happy there, even though it meant almost total isolation from his intellectual friends. Edith remained for him the orphan girl who had rescued the orphan boy from an immense loneliness and sadness. Tolkien's emotional remembrance of her is reflected in his words: "Forever

(especially when alone)…we still met in woodland glade and went hand in hand many times to escape the shadow of imminent death before our last parting" (H. Carpenter & C. Tolkien, p.136).

After the end of World War I, Tolkien began to ascend the academic ladder; first as a researcher for the Oxford English Dictionary (1918-20), than as a Reader in the English Language at Leeds University (1920-25), later as a Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford (1925-1945), and finally, as Professor of English Language and Literature at Merton College in Oxford (1945). He held this last post until his retirement in 1959. According to his former students, Tolkien was a good, but not a great teacher. He was known for his indistinct speech that made his lectures hard to understand. But, on the other hand, he was very passionate about Anglo-Saxon and gifted in bringing his subjects alive. His recitations of *Beowulf* were so famous that W. H. Auden described them as being spoken in the voice of Gandalf. Tolkien regarded the great literary texts as 'events' to be primarily experienced through reading them aloud. Meanwhile, some other events occurred in his personal life. John, his first son, was born in 1917, Michael in 1920, Christopher in 1924 and finally Priscilla, his only daughter, in 1925. As stated by Pearce, "the importance of these four events in Tolkien's life cannot be overstated. Certainly, their importance should never understate or, worse, ignored (*Pearce*, p. 40). Tolkien's children were also a source of inspiration for his role as storyteller. He wrote them beautifully illustrated Christmas letters that were left in the chimney or brought by the postman. One of these stories grew into a book, *The Hobbit.*

After Edith's death in 1971, he was often a lonely, though still active man. He was awarded an honorary doctorate at Oxford in 1972 for his work in philology, not in fantasy literature. He continued in a desultory fashion to revise *The Silmarillion* until his son Christopher (who became an expert in his father's fiction) completed it for publication. He remained a faithful Catholic until his death on September 2 1973, at the age of 81, and was buried next to his wife in a plain grave located in the Catholic section of an Oxford public cemetery called Wolvercote. His son, Christopher Tolkien, would spend the next twenty-five years living away from the public eye in France editing and publishing his father's other works, including *The Silmarillion* and *The Book of Lost Tales* until his own death in the late 1990s. Though Tolkien spent a lifetime working out an elaborate mythology to represent this carefully planned spirituality, I do not think that he ever regarded himself as a spiritual figure or as a linguistic genius. He firmly believed in his own abilities as a scholar and writer, but he did not consider his talents particularly important for the well-being of society as a whole. Quite the

contrary, he regarded himself as just another ordinary man, a fallible member of human kind.   In fact, his family and social life was as straightforward as his academic life, a simple life as described by Shippey in his foreword of the book *J.R.R Tolkien: the Author of the Century.* Shippey also says that Tolkien "refused to distinguish the two" of his worlds. I don't quite agree with this. Tolkien declared on several occasions that 'I am in fact a hobbit'. Obviously, he was placing his own love for beer, pipe smoking and storytelling on a par with one of his characters, thus offering us a detailed identification between himself and his work.   But he had also openly declared several times his dislike and distrust for allegory.   Yet, he secretly hoped that his mythology might be found to be "true" as he expressed it in the Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of St. Andrews in 1939: "every writer making a secondary world wishes in some measure to be a real maker or hopes that he is drawing on reality*"* (Shippey, p. 255). Even so, it is this 'ruling passion' mentioned by Shippey (his love for philology) that remarkably distinguishes Tolkien from other writers of his kind, by his creating a mythology and complex languages in a way that no others did. It is probably true, that during his life he might have refused to distinguish his inner world from his outer world, but with *The Lord of the Rings* he has left us an open door to the enchanting world of his stories, and the key is love, kindness, hope and loyalty. Those are the values that help Tolkien's characters to follow their individual paths, to fight their inner battles, and manage to triumph over the "Shadow", together as a "Fellowship".
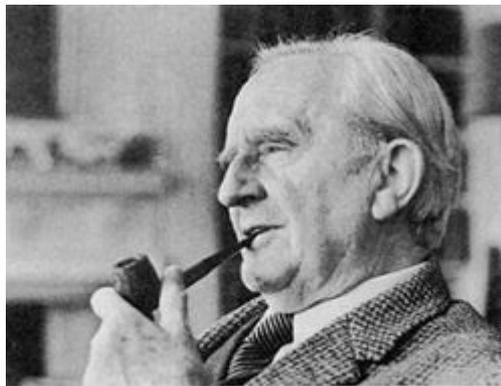
Figure 2: J.R.R. Tolkien in 1972

2. The Book: Creating   an   English Myth - Philology and Historical Sources

The Words

For Tolkien, words were like living beings because, in their unique and unduplicated ways, they can reveal the nature of things. He believed that words give life to the created order. For example, a tree is not truly a 'tree' until someone names it. Thus, according to Tolkien, things can call out their names from us, by signalling to us

to give them their true existence with words. He also thought that words arise from the very nature of things and are, therefore, intrinsic rather than extrinsic to the universe. Here, Tolkien's philological point of view clashes directly with the common paradigms of post-modernism which state that words are just signs that reveal nothing but only their differences from other signs. But for Tolkien language is our crucial way into the 'real' world and not just into an imaginary one. In fact, he came to regard Gandalf, and other central characters of *The Rings,* not as fictional but historical people.

As a religious man, Tolkien believed that our words are embedded in the Word (God) who has become flesh in the human body of Jesus Christ. Following this line, I can say that mythologies are probably the most exemplary forms for this ontological kind of speech. They unveil (through characters, events and images) the fundamental order of things, an order which is not meant for us to invent but for us to find out. Tolkien explained in his numerous interviews and letters, that he had not 'invented' his magnificent mythology but 'discovered' it instead. Once, when asked the meaning of a certain passage, he replied: "I don't know; I'll try to find out. I always had the sense, of recording what was already 'there'" he said, "The tales arose in my mind, as 'given' things, and as they came, separately, so too the links grew," he confessed (Shippey, p. 92). Within this context, Tolkien is implying that we all have the 'knowledge' we just simply need to discover it, and then record it by using the 'words' as a vehicle of expression.

Tolkien's high regard for ancient languages and myths also gave him a high regard for ancient poetry. Like the other Inklings, he remained quite indifferent to the free-verse style of modern poetry. He preferred the Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poems like *Beowulf, The Pearl, Sir Gawain and The Green Knight.* Tolkien was also drawn to the 19th century Catholic poet Francis Thompson. He especially admired the work of William Morris, which also sought to re-tell the ancient English and Northern sagas. Tolkien's own poems are much like poetic inversions, which according to some of his critics resound in drumbeat rhythms and regular rhymes and sound rather like jingling to us. But being always first the philologist and then the writer, it was the invented languages and not the fictional history which was the primary foundation for his works, as he once commented "The 'stories' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse. To me a name comes first and the story follows" (Shippey, p.92). Tolkien's languages are so inextricably bound up with his literary work that creates a beautiful and mythical 'paradise lost.' A longing for a 'once upon a time lost society' is reflected "in much of what he wrote and read," states Shippey; "one can

see him trying to return to the time before the confusion set in, when the traditions of the Shire and the Mark were uncorrupted" (Shippey, p.398).

Tolkien's Christianity

Tolkien was a man of faith, and his beliefs and philosophical notions were reflected in his works. Still there are no direct or explicit references to Christianity or Catholicism in *The Lord of the Rings*, or in *The Hobbit,* or *The Silmarillion.* Shippey, however, points out in his book *The Road to Middle-Earth* that "*The Silmarillion* was based on the Christianity story of fall and Redemption" (p.273). "Is it a rival to the Christian story?" asks Shippey, but then he goes on to explain that if that thought ever occurred to Tolkien it was "only to be repudiated" (p.268). I believe that Tolkien's Catholic roots were too deep to ever write a "rival" story to *The Genesis.* Both Pearce and Shippey agree that *The Silmarillion* is "the most significant, the most beautiful of all Tolkien work" (Pearce, p.84). As for Shippey, he concludes by saying "through the story there runs a delight in mutability, as languages change and treasures pass from hand to hand; the deepest fable of beauty forged, stolen, and lost forever in recovery. Though springing from The Genesis, this is (*The Silmarillion)* at once more ambiguous, more heroic, and more humane" (p.276). But ...what about *The Lord of the Rings*? It also seems to be a book that "sprung" from the *Genesis*, or rather, from Tolkien's own Christianity? Yet, it bears restating, the book has no direct or explicit references to Christianity or Catholicism. In fact, the word God is not even used once throughout the entire story.

Yet, "*The Lord of the Rings,*" Tolkien wrote to a friend in 1953 just before the first book was published, is "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision" (H. Carpenter & C. Tolkien, p. 172). The almost total absence of Christian references in the book can be explained. It was Tolkien's desire to stay theologically orthodox, as he once said to Father Robert Murray, that led him to avoid being too specific despite the biblical parallels in the creation of the story. "That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion,' to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and into the symbolism," (Carpenter & C. Tolkien*,* p. 172) explained Tolkien. Though clearly lacking in specific religious reference or parable, the final result is still an outstandingly ambitious myth that leads us to the beginning of time. Christian believers who share Tolkien's faith can easily

track its roots into Catholic metaphors and tradition. The religious message, though subtle, is still there. It is clear that the 'evil' in Middle-Earth was 'good' twisted and perverted. It is also mentioned numerous times, that Orcs (former Elves), like the Ring Wraithers (ex-human kings), clearly felt under the evil spell of Sauron. The humble and good-hearted (like Bilbo and Frodo) are tempted, yet they still can triumph through sacrificial love. Apocalyptical doom approaches but hope still prevail in human hearts - the "hope of fouls", as Gandalf called it, but nevertheless, still hope.

But it was not only Tolkien's religious devotion that influenced his writing. It was also fed by the Inklings and their main concern to carry on the Christian gospel's validity and vigour amidst a secular age. The biblical stories, like all other myths, are beautiful deceits; mere lovely lies to fulfil wishes and men's hearts. Tolkien explained once to C. S. Lewis that myths were not just the dream-wishes but lonely men project onto an empty universe to cheer themselves up. He believed that great mythic repetitions of dying and rising gods and of heroes battling the forces of evil could be interpreted as signs of something of transcendent significance. We create myths because we have been created. Therefore, we rebuild the fundamental order of the universe, discerning the basic pattern of all things: life-through-death. However sometimes misguided pagan myths can be pointing toward the truth.

Tolkien gave to this argument a careful explanation in his Andrew Lang Lecture of, 'On Faerie Stories' in 1937. He argued that even the most 'unrealistic' story of fairy tales and their happy endings points to this truth. He explained that an 'unhappy' ending does not mean that they end in universal failure and ultimate defeat but in 'eucatastrophe', a good calamity, instead. The disaster acknowledges the reality of death and destruction, but it also reveals the finality of the word Joy - "Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (Pearce, p. 86). Tolkien called these fairy-tale endings "a far-off gleam or echo of evangelium in the real world." The Gospel is the ultimate fairy-story because it contains "the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe," which is the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "There is no other tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits to reject it leads either to sadness or wrath" (Pearce, p. 88-89).

According to Pearce "That is certainly what he set out to do with The Lord of the Rings. But if you tear the myth away from Tolkien's worldview, then the story isn't going to make sense any more. It may, literally, "become incoherent -- a neo-pagan fantasy"

(p.85). Thus, myth as well as medievalism is at the heart of his epic tale. This is especially true since Tolkien's work includes images and ideas drawn from legions of myths, legends and traditions. His goal was to create a myth that combined elements of others "with the whole story illumined from within by a Trinitarian, Christian light" (Pearce, p.85).   Pearce also said "The great strength of Tolkien's work may, in the end, be its weakness. He has created truth in a form that is truly sublime -- myth. Yet that is also a form of art that can easily be twisted. He was writing a myth, but he wanted it to be a True Myth, a myth rooted in Truth with a capital T, take away that truth and you change the myth" (p.87).   The truth is held to the end that literature interprets itself, rather as God reveals himself, in sheer mystery and power.

Sources of Inspiration

Tolkien's inspiration for his heroic tale of Frodo the Ring-bearer and his Fellowship came from many sources. I don't think that a complete and definitive list of these has yet been compiled or published. However, through his biographers, his surviving close friends and his son Christopher, we know that he was mainly inspired by: Norse and Germanic legends, Celtic mythology and language, Icelandic sagas, fairy tales, folk and oral tales, including the Finnish epic known as the *Kalevala* and its language, the poem *Beowulf*, Chaucer, obscure medieval romances known as the Matter of England, the plays of Shakespeare, and the medieval history of Western Europe. Not to mention his early works such as *The Silmarillion*, his Christianity, the Bible, his war experiences and personal reminiscences. From each of these sources of inspiration he adapted his tale of *The Lord of the Rings*, as he often pointed it out, in many different ways.

Tolkien's most recognised source is the tenth-century adaptation of an eighth century oral composition of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*. The poem shows a strange mix of Christian and pagan elements, which suggests (agreed with by most editors and critics) that the existing oral story was probably adapted to fit a new cultural environment after the conversion of Britain to Christianity.   Other sources, less erudite, are the rural "middle" England landscape and Tolkien's own reminiscences of a society before the industrialisation era. Naturally, for anyone who intends to write a mythology for England, linking that mythology with familiar landscapes is quite understandable. In fact, Tolkien himself acknowledged that his love for the English countryside had greatly influenced his creation of The Shire. But not all geographic features of Middle-earth can be easily associated with the contemporary English landscape. Some writers connected the Middle-Earth landscape to "Tolkien's understanding of England's Anglo-

Saxon past," as stated by Lynn Forest-Hill in her article *The Fantastic Seriousness of J.R.R.Tolkien*, published by *TEMA* in April 2004.

Even so, with all its Anglo-Saxon historical reminiscences and the similarities of the English countryside landscapes to The Shire, Middle-Earth did not originate in *The Lord of the Rings*. It was born in a much earlier Tolkien work, *The Silmarillion*, which is probably, the main source for his tale of Frodo and the Ring. Using Pearce words "*The Silmarillion* delved deep into the past of the Middle-Earth" and it is from the pages of its "vast landscape of myth*"* (p.83) and oral legends that the Middle-Earth was created, and with it, the entire history that lays behind *The Lord of the Rings.* Basically, still using Pearce words, "Tolkien could not create from nothing. Only God can do that. But he was able to sub-create an entire world using his imagination, his beliefs and his experiences in the world around him" (85).

3. The Book – The Story of its Publication

The story behind the publication of *The Rings* is like a long battle that lasted sixteen years, leaving us wondering if *The Rings* would ever finally make to the bookstores. Initially, *The Lord of the Rings* was supposed to be just a sequel to Tolkien's earlier book, *The Hobbit*, a sequel that he did not really want to write and yet turned out to be one of his bestsellers. So, before *The Lord of the Rings* there was *The Hobbit,* and the "hobbit" was born out of a blank page left by one of his students where he casually wrote "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." And because names always triggered stories in Tolkien's mind he thought "I'd better find out what hobbits were like" (Carpenter, p.239) and it was the beginning of a story that was merely started for his personal amusement. Apparently Tolkien never intended to publish *The Hobbit*, and it seems, according to Carpenter, that the "typescript of the nearly finished story… was occasionally show to favoured friends, together with its accompanying maps (and perhaps already a few illustrations). But it did not often leave Tolkien's study, where it sat, incomplete and now likely to remain so" (p.239). But among his "favoured friends" was an ex-student called Elaine Griffiths who had some connections with the London publishing firm George Allen & Unwin. It was through Elaine that *The Hobbit* made its way to George Allen & Unwin's printers.

Stanley Unwin decided to give the typescript of *The Hobbit* to his ten-year-old son Rayner to read and write a report in exchange for ten shillings. Rayner wrote: "This book, with the help of maps, does not need any illustration it is good and should appeal

to all children between the ages of 5 and 9" (Carpenter, p.241). He earned his ten shilling and *The Hobbit* its first publication on September 21st 1937. By Christmas the book was sold out and the second reprint, along with an American edition, was published with Tolkien's own illustrations. Months later, when the American edition was awarded the "New York Herald Tribune" prize and received the acclamation of most literary critics, Unwin realised that there would be a much larger public than he initially expected demanding hobbits. So he wrote to Tolkien asking for more hobbits. But Tolkien did not have more "hobbits". He had several other children's stories and an unfinished novel called *The Lost Road.* He had his beloved mythological work *The Silmarillion* and wanted it published; so he sent it to Unwin. But in mid-December of 1937, Unwin wrote to Tolkien saying that though *The Silmarillion* was a wonderful material "what we badly need is another book with which to follow up our success with The Hobbit(…) I still hope that you will be inspired to write another book about the Hobbit" (Carpenter, p.245). To Unwin's great surprise, three days later he received a letter from Tolkien saying "I have written the first chapter of a new story about Hobbits – A long expected party" (p.247).

The Ring should be the connection between *The Hobbit* (Bilbo) and the "new hobbit" (Frodo). Frodo Baggins was born and with him the *"Fellowship of the Ring" -* the first volume of the *Rings* trilogy. But the idea was one thing and its realization another. It was not until 1954, sixteen years later, that the first two volumes of the *Rings* were published. They still had a long way to go. Initially, Allen & Unwin hoped to be able to publish the new book two years after *The Hobbit.* But soon their hope faded away when by December 1942 Stanley Unwin received a letter from Tolkien reporting that though the "new hobbit" was almost completed he will need at least another year to finish it. He had only reached Chapter XXXI and he needed to add at least six more chapters to tie up its conclusion.   In the meantime, the Second World War had erupted and as C. S. Lewis observed, "real events began, horribly, to conform to the pattern [Tolkien] had invented" (Carpenter & C.Tolkien, p.190). I believe that there were other less weighty reasons for the delay. Tolkien's academic work burdens and his own perfectionism and procrastination were in reality the main obstacles - not to mention his linguistic tendency to chase after name-making and introducing elvish languages (and other invented languages) into *The Rings.* He was such a perfectionist that he had to be sure that every single detail (included all geographical and chronological details) was consistent and fitted properly into a coherent pattern.   He drew, with the help of his son Christopher, elaborate maps of the Middle-Earth. But the maps were not enough. He also added endless charts of events, dates, calendars, and even maps

showing the direction of the wind, the phases of the moon and calculations of time and distance. Carpenter states that this perfectionism "was partly his habitual insistence on perfection, partly sheer revelling in the fun of 'sub-creation,' but most of all a concern to provide a totally convincing picture." Tolkien said: "I want people simply to get inside this story and take it (in a sense) as actual history" (p.259-260).

At the end of Book III, by the summer of 1943, Tolkien became "dead stuck" and did not touch the manuscript for six months. He finally started working again on *The Lord of the Rings* in 1944, at Lewis's instigation. He used to read parts of it out loud to the Inklings, his small intellectual group of friends. The Inklings use to meet weekly in a local pub to exchange ideas and read each other's literary works. But when in 1945 he was afflicted by "writer's block" again, *The Rings* simply remained unfinished on his desk. The war in Europe had come to an end, but had also brought an end to his friend Charles Williams. The death of his friend Williams was a bitter loss and a sign to Tolkien that "peace would not bring an end to all troubles" (Carpenter & C. Tolkien, p.266). During the Second Great War he wrote to his son Christopher "We are attempting to conquer Sauron with the Ring." But after William's death he bitterly wrote, "The War is not over (and the one that is, or part of it, has largely been lost). But it is of course wrong to fall into such mood, for Wars are always lost, and the War always goes on; and [it] is no good growing faint" (p. 267). The end of the war also brought another reprint of *The Hobbit* but *The Lord of the Rings* was far from being finished, though he wrote parts of its unfinished chapters in his letters to Christopher besides its reading to the Inklings.

In the summer of 1946 Tolkien considered himself defeated. He confessed to Allen & Unwin than despite his great effort to finish *The Lord of the Rings* he had failed. By now, Rayner Unwin (Stanley Unwin's son) was a graduate student at Oxford and met Tolkien. At his insistence Tolkien showed him an almost finished script of *The Rings.* Once again, Rayner reported to his father that the despite the fact he considered it a "weird book" it was, nevertheless, "a brilliant and gripping story" (Carpenter, p.270). Stanley pressed Tolkien to finish his book, passing along his son comments about the story. Tolkien was pleased with Rayner's remarks but could not bring himself to finish the story saying, "the thing is to finish the thing as devised and then let it be judged" (p.270). By 1947 he managed to revise, re-write, and correct some of earlier chapters but spending so much time with it that most of his friends started to wonder, if in fact, *The Lord of the Rings* will ever be finished. He completed the final revisions and appendices only in 1949, typing the successive drafts with only two fingers on the typewriter balanced on his attic bed, since there was no room on his

desk (p. 272). He lent a copy of the completed typed script, but still not completely finished, to Lewis who congratulated him because "all the long years you have spent on it are justified" (p.273).

Tolkien spent twelve of his best years writing *The Lord of the Rings,* finishing it as he was approaching his 60th birthday. When he finally handed it to Stanley Unwin he said: "It is written in my life-blood, such as that is, thick or thin; and I can do no other" (Carpenter, p.273). Little did he know that it would take another four years and a long quarrel over the actual printing before it would be able emerge to readers. The publisher insisted on publishing three volumes rather than one and refused to include *The Silmarillion.* But Tolkien was determined to publish *The Silmarillion* and to find an audience for it. So, when in 1950 Milton Waldman from Collins Publishing House showed interest in publishing both works, Tolkien decided to leave Allen & Unwin and join Waldman. In fact, it was Waldman's interest in publishing *The Silmarillion* that hurried Tolkien to make the finishing touches to *The Lord of the Rings* and handing the manuscript to Waldman.

Waldman was delighted with the story, which he considered a "real work of creation," but he did not hide the fact that he was worried about the length of the book. However, since Collins was also a printer and a stationary manufacture, the shortage of paper in a post-war was not a problem. I think what Collins really wanted was to profit from the already lucrative *Hobbit* and since Tolkien was quite unhappy with its latest re-print, which for economic reasons lacked the coloured illustrations, he believed that Collins would be a better option for his books. However, there still was a small problem to deal with - how to break his professional relationship with Allen & Unwin. Waldman wanted to be sure that Tolkien was under no moral or legal commitment or obligations to Allen & Unwin and as an answer Tolkien wrote, "I have had friendly personal relations with Stanley U. and especially with his second son Rayner. If all this constitutes a *moral* obligation, then I am under one. However, I shall certainly try to extricate myself, or at least *The Silmarillion* and all its kin, from the dilatory coils of A. and U. if I can – in a friendly fashion if possible" (Carpenter, p. 279). In fact, Tolkien did not think of Allen & Unwin as an enemy but just a very unreliable ally unlike Collins, who seemed to represent everything he hoped for. Most of all, they were willing to publish *The Silmarillion.* So, after a brief exchange of angry letters with Stanley Unwin, Tolkien was able to detach himself (and his works) from Allen & Unwin (after giving them an ultimatum) and be free to publish with Collins. Tolkien and Milton Waldman were quite certain that Collins will publish the books. But things did not

exactly turned out to be that way. In May 1950, Waldman asked Tolkien to "urgently" cut down *The Lord of the Rings.* Quite appalled, Tolkien answered that he had "cut often and hard already" but he will try it again. There was also the problem of *The Silmarillion*, which, according to Waldman, the manuscript seemed to be longer than *The Lord of the Rings*. I think this was probably a misunderstanding since *The Silmarillion* was, in fact, nothing compared to the 500,000 words of The *Rings.* The truth is that the negotiations became quite confusing. In the meantime, Waldman left for his annual trip to Italy became ill and his trip to London was delayed, and so it was the publication of Tolkien's books. As a consequence by the end of 1950 - a year after the completion of *The Lord of the Rings* - the book was still not published. Tolkien received a letter from Stanley Unwin still hopping "to have the privilege of being connected with its publication" (Carpenter, p.283), but his response was a mere friendly letter with no reference to the books whatsoever.

Meanwhile, Tolkien's time was taken by his academic and administrative duties and another year went by without achieving the publication. Finally, in 1951, Tolkien wrote a letter to Waldman outlining an estimate of about 10,000 words for his mythology, but by March 1952 he still had not signed any contract with Collins for publication. I think the real problem here was the price of the paper that soared due to the post-war economic climate. The length of Tolkien's books would have been a very expensive project at the time, and the publishers were uncertain of its profitability due to his unique manner of writing. At last, tired of the delay, Tolkien wrote a letter to Collins saying that "his time had been wasted. Either they must publish *The Lord of the Rings* immediately or he would send the manuscript back to Allen & Unwin" (Carpenter, p.284). The result was predictable. Collins simply replied that it would be better for Tolkien to send the manuscript back to Allen & Unwin. And so he did, and through Rayner Unwin *The Lord of the Rings* went back to Allen & Unwin, once again.

In November 1952 Tolkien received a letter from Rayner Unwin saying that his firm had agreed to publish *The Lord of the Rings* under a profit-sharing agreement - that meant that Tolkien would receive nothing until the sales of the books had covered its costs (Carpenter, 276). Rayner also suggested that the book should be published in three volumes, although the book was one continuous story and not a trilogy (apparently a point always emphasized by Tolkien) but it will considerably reduce the cost of the paper. Needless to say, Tolkien was never very pleased with the division of the book and insisted on keeping *The Lord of the* Rings as its overall title. But after much discussion with Rayner he finally agreed on the volume titles as *The Fellowship*

of the Ring, The Two Towers and *The Return of the King.* The first volume of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* was finally published in the summer of 1954, four years after its completion. The other two volumes were then published, one by one, after brief intervals, in 1955. The reviews were mixed and contradictory. Obviously W. H. Auden and C. S. Lewis praised the books generously, but Edwin Muir and Edmund Wilson damned them as mere juvenile work. Wilson complained that the characters were not men but only boys who knew nothing of women and were, therefore, merely concealed as heroes.

Nevertheless, readers happily ignored the critics. The books were bought everywhere and hundreds of thousands people read the books, turning an elderly, unknown Oxford professor into a wealthy man and a world celebrity. Gifts and fan letters kept pouring in. American fans telephoned in the middle of the night, completely unaware of the time difference. Visitors began to arrive without appointment. Strangers and reporters began to snap photographs through the windows of Tolkien's house. A Tolkien cult soon arose. In the 1960's, it was rumoured among California hippies that Tolkien wrote *The Rings* while smoking marijuana. Graffiti were scribbled in places such as the New York underground declaring, "Frodo Lives" and "J. R. R. Tolkien is hobbit-forming." Demands for film versions and translations arrived from everywhere. In the 1970's there was an attempted to transpose *The Lord of the Rings* into a moody live-action and cartoon version by Ralph Bakshi, which was a total commercial disaster, but did not diminished the enthusiasm of Tolkien's fans. And where stood Tolkien in the middle of all this? He simply never lost his sense of irony about it all. "Being a cult figure in one's own lifetime," he wrote, "is not at all unpleasant. However, I do not find that it tends to puff one up; in my case at any rate it makes me feel extremely small and inadequate. But even the nose of a very modest idol cannot remain entirely untickled by the sweet smell of incense" (Carpenter & C. Tolkien, p.399).

Over time *The Lord of the Rings* continued to increase in popularity. The books have been translated into over 25 languages and it became one of the most read books of the 20th Century. Thousands of illustrations, calendars and posters had been published along with the books. *The Lord of the Rings* has been hailed everywhere. It raised religious issues and endless discussions about its "true" meaning. It was associated with political allegories, such as that the Ring could mean the atomic bomb, or Sauron could be the Third Reich or the evil East being associated with the Soviet Union. What was the secret of its success? What caused this popular social

phenomenon? As Peter Jackson later said during the making of his movies, the phenomenon of its contemporary popularity can be attributed to endless fundamental issues of human existence, unconsciously or consciously raised by Tolkien more than half a century ago.

Figure 3: Tolkien's own book covers designs published on their first edition

CHAPTER II

FROM NOVEL TO FILM

1. Adaptation to Cinema

"Everyone who sees films based on novels feels able to comment, at levels ranging from the gossip to the erudite, on the nature and success of the adaptation involved […] And it ranges backwards and forwards from those who talk of novels as being 'betrayed' by boorish film-makers to those who regard the practice of comparing film and novel as a waste of time […] newspapers and journal reviews almost invariably offer comparison between a film and its literary precursor; from fan magazines to more or less scholarly books, one finds reflections on the incidence of adaptation; works serious and trivial, complex and simple, early and recent, address themselves to various aspects of this phenomenon almost as old as the institution of the cinema" (Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film – An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 3)

Unlike previous film adaptations such as *Awakenings,* written by Dr. Oliver Sacks (1973) and adapted by Penny Marshall (1990), or *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, written by H.G. Wells in 1889 and adapted for the screen in 1996 by director John Frankenhiemer (which were poorly done and left audiences with a sense of being cheated), *The Lord of the Rings* film adaptations were a tremendous success at the box-offices, despite some fairly harsh criticism from both readers and film critics. The success of the adaptations is mostly because they are part of an adaptive process, which is a characteristic of Tolkien's own creative writing technique. This technique is part of the founding principles and practices of medieval literature from which he drew his inspiration, and is a process in which the films now participate and make their own special contribution. The main one of these was not to worry overly about issues of originality and personal authority. The medieval artist was a 'maker' before he was an author; most narrative content was borrowed or lifted from some other source, very little was invented, and what was original often pretended not to be.

Through this medieval adaptation process of accretion of sources, the books successfully take us into the literature and culture of the European Middle Ages. It also reminds us of our perceptions of ideals such as honour, heroism, friendship, loyalty, love, and where in the past they come from. Tolkien's writing is so convincing with accurate (and detailed) descriptive narratives that can even appeal to readers who know little about the Middle-Ages period. The films try to continue this process by capturing the medieval

ambience and values through attention to imagery, sound track, scenery, architecture, lighting, wardrobe, special effects and performance.

Yet I am not suggesting that the films are entirely successful in their representation of Tolkien's epic. When plot elements are reconfigured they generally fail to impress, but when filmmakers adapt other sources as references they can mirror cinematically (up to a point) Tolkien's technique of adapting the source material to serve the narrative and the plot, and simultaneously, inform them with reflected meaning. In fact, most successful film adaptations reflect and build upon the success of the adapted material, such as *Sin City* (2005)*,* which can be considered a fairly faithful Quentin Tarantino film adaptation of the Frank Miller comic series or Stephen King's horror novel *The Green Mile*, brilliantly adapted to film by Frank Darabont in 1999. However, it's curious to note that both films involved a close participation of the two writers during the filming process including screenwriting, while Peter Jackson's *Rings* had no personal involvement from Tolkien as he was long dead by then. In fact, Tolkien was always quite sceptical of film or stage adaptations of his work. When in 1968 he received a screenplay for a proposed movie adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* by Morton Zimmerman, he criticized it (scene by scene) writing:

> "I would ask them to make an effort of imagination sufficient to understand the irritation (and on occasion the resentment) of an author, who finds, increasingly as he proceeds, his work treated as it would seem carelessly in general, in places recklessly, and with no evident signs of any appreciation of what it is all about [...] yet one more scene of screams and rather meaningless slashing" (Carpenter & C. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien,* p.207)

Perhaps in order to understand Jackson's films adaptation process better, we should discuss first Tolkien's own writing and adaptive process technique. The book of *The Lord of the Rings* has been called a pastiche because of Tolkien's method of working from diverse sources, but this is to mistake his reference back to medieval methods of composition for something archaically postmodern. The texts from which he drew inspiration are now printed editions of manuscripts written in the form of stories, which were typically composed for oral presentations. What we see in *The Rings* books is an entire process in keeping with Tolkien's medieval scholarship. As a scholar and teacher of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English literature, he would have known the medieval literary convention, universally understood, which placed great value on referring to other

important literary works as if to show how one's own text fitted in and to claim authority by association with them. This doesn't mean that Tolkien was plagiarising. On the contrary, he used this medieval technique of reference discreetly, preferring irony and word-games which, in their own way, were able to direct the perceptive reader's attention to earlier literature and languages. This adaptation of the medieval technique enabled the writer to position his epic tale in the lineage of Northern European medieval literature, and give it a mythic dimension. This is also consistent with his desire to write a mythology for England and to provide the necessary mythical elements that make his characters unique. And as part of this desire (creating a mythology) and journey to the cultural past, Tolkien set his story in a place called Middle-earth. Or is it not a reference to the Middle Ages, when the centre of the Western world was concentrated in Middle-Europe?

Probably, it is important at this point, to clarify some misperceptions of what Middle-earth refers to. After the release of Jackson's films, Middle-earth is often confused by the uninitiated with New Zealand where the films were shot. But Middle-earth is only an imaginary geographic area where the story of *The Lord of the Rings* is set against the background of *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien's mythological lifelong work. The map that Tolkien created shows us what it looks like and how its configuration is purely fictitious. According to the map, the Shire lies to the West as part of Arnor, and Gondor lies to the South, with the adjacent realm of Rohan. Across the great River Anduin lies the lost territory of Ithilien with Mordor lurking to the East. Because Tolkien created a fictitious map of Middle-earth, Peter Jackson could use any convenient landscape and location to represent this meta-place in his films. His choice of New Zealand to represent Middle-earth is a concretisation that allows us to understand the scale and range of Tolkien's landscapes, from the rustic peace of The Shire to the majestic splendour of the White Mountains. Therefore, New Zealand provides a visual diversity and grandeur convenient to the filmmakers' needs and as Greg Wright mentioned in his book *Peter Jackson in Perspective* 'It was aesthetics Jackson was after, not a physical characterization of the spiritual sense of the land' (p.71).

The films did not, however, initiate the process of miss-identification. Since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* in the fifties, time and effort have been spent on trying to locate Tolkien's Middle-earth in the landscape of England because Tolkien acknowledged that the English shires were the inspiration for The Shire, the home of the hobbits. Efforts have also been made to claim that, the standing stones on the Barrow

Downs, for example, in an episode that is not included in the film of *The Fellowship*, are those close to Tolkien's former Oxfordshire home. But standing stones and barrows can be found in many places in England (and elsewhere for that matter), and this only reminds us that we should not treat *The Lord of the Rings* so narrowly. If Tolkien drew on and adapted familiar landscapes to create the setting for his epic, or had specific locations in mind when he wrote it, his readers and filmmakers have continued that process of adaptation. The mythology for England has become a myth for the world, since readers worldwide have responded to it and have adapted his vision in their own imaginations. Jackson used an on-going process of adaptation to create his Middle-earth on screen, as is described in the book *The Lord of the Rings; The Films, The Books, The Radio Series* by Smith and Matthews:

> "By basing the look of his Middle-earth on designs that had already graced covers and interiors of numerous versions of Tolkien's works, and various other collections of paintings and drawings inspired by them, Jackson was able to feed into the imagined worlds of a vast number of readers who had, perhaps subconsciously, taken their vision of the places and characters of the book from Alan Lee and John Howe" (p.131).

However, Middle-earth was to some extent real. It was alive in forms such as 'middangeard' and 'myddelerde,' which were the Northern European names for the world as it was known throughout the long and dark Middle Ages period (roughly between 500 A. D. and 1500 A.D.)[1] Therefore, one can say that historically Northern Europe was in some sense Middle-earth, and that Tolkien's choice of this name for the world he created reflects his fascination with the myths and stories that belong to the time when Middle-earth was the name used to distinguish the known mortal world from heaven and hell.

Obviously, in order to enjoy the books and films it is not necessary to know anything about Tolkien's way of working, but while some readers prefer not to know, others have a kind of fascination for this kind of background detail. Though Tolkien said he disliked source hunting, both books and films can be better understood through knowledge of Tolkien's sources of inspiration and his adaptations of them. Tolkien's inspiration for his epic tale, as I have said, came from many sources. Tolkien's work is known to be inspired by Norse and Germanic legends, by Shakespeare's plays and by the medieval history of Northern and Western Europe. This variety of mythological, medieval

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[1] Wikipedia - Online Free Encyclopedia. Accessed on April 27 2009. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midgard

and linguistic sources has caused some misunderstandings, such as feminists concerns about Tolkien's representation of women, or the meaning of the ring and its power and possible association with the rise of technology.

Analogues of Arwen's relationship with Aragon, for example, can be found in the medieval romances, which were the extremely popular action and adventure stories of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Stories like King Horn, Havelok the Dane and Bevis of Hamptoun all tell of a young prince, dispossessed of his kingdom, who must endure hardship and battle to win it back and win the hand of the lady he loves. The ladies in these stories are perhaps less noble in their conduct than Arwen, but the winning of the kingdom and the lady is ennobled by Tolkien through the addition and adaptation of the unattainable princess motif from fairy tales, and by allusion to the courtly love tradition in which the depth of devotion is measured by the lover's humility and suffering. This tradition is played out with infinite delicacy through Gimli's idealised devotion to Galadriel, but this is lost from the film of *The Fellowship*, except in parts of the extended DVD version. Nevertheless, when it comes to dramatic adaptations, it is always worth remembering that, according to Mikal McLendon, "novelists have a lot more creative license and can take greater risks with their writing than moviemakers, who are often slaves to formula and commercial interests" (*Movie Adaptations: Why They Succeed or Fail & the Direction They're Headed)*[2].

2. Lost in Translation – The Screenwriting

At this point, it is proper to acknowledge that Tolkien's adaptations of many sources are different to Jackson's adaptation of the whole epic, but the act of adaptation reiterates Tolkien's process of adaptation, which itself retells in a form accessible to modern readers the actions and ideals he found in his sources and brought back from obscurity. It is also important to ask to what extent we should be talking about translation rather than adaptation when we talk about the films. As a general rule, the success of a film adaptation depends on its faithfulness to the original source, even when the source is a trilogy of 500,000 words like *The Lord of the Rings*. However, when considering the size of the story and the average length of a movie picture, (not to mention the complexity of the writing, specialized linguistic features of the tale and budget problems), it seems

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[2] Online article. July 15 2008. Starpulse Entertainment. Accessed on May 03 2009*http://www.starpulse.com/news/index.php/2008/07/15/movie_adaptations_why_they_succeed_or_fa*

almost an impossible task for the director to remain faithful to the original work and not let it be bowdlerised by the Hollywood moving making machine. Furthermore, the films present spoken words whose meaning has already been interpreted and fixed by the actors and the director's way of displaying them. In combination with the surrounding imagery and action, that meaning may be diminished in the films because their emphasis is on action and performance. Speeches, especially the ones taken straight from Tolkien's text, are then in danger of becoming merely a part of a scene, which in turn is rapidly overwhelmed by new images. One powerful instance of this is Aragorn's magnificent declaration of identity in the fields of Rohan, which is truncated in the film of *The Two Towers* in favour of the spectacle of the Rohirrim forming their circle, and the swift progression of the action.

The problem of adaptation is in part a problem of translation, which has always been a matter of controversial judgment as to whether one should translate word for word, or sense for sense. In a comment on the difficulties of translating *Beowulf* Tolkien once wrote of the possibility of a translation 'strictly true in verbal effect' (Tolkien's Foreword to J. C. Hall and C. L. Wrenn, eds, *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment,* Allen and Unwin London 1950), an idea which is sensitive to the difficulty of translating accurately yet still preserving the idioms and particularly the resonant features of the original. When in 1997 Peter Jackson decided to produce *The Lord of the Rings,* the very first thing he did was asking Costa Botes to write a synopsis of the book (therefore condensing the 500,000 words) and began to re-read the book. From that synopsis, he and his previous screen writer Wash wrote their first draft of the screenplay, or film treatment. The process of condensation was therefore a primary instinct in the whole project.

In this treatment Jackson had proposed two separate films. The first film would include what later became the first part of the trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* and the second part, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers.* The second film would include the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, ending with the death of Saruman, and Gandalf and Pippin going to Minas Tirith. Also, as Brian Sibley states in his book, "Gwaihir and Gandalf visit Edoras after escaping Saruman, Gollum attacks Frodo when the Fellowship is still united, and Farmer Maggot, Glorfindel, Radagast, Elladan and Elrohir are present. Bilbo attends the Council of Elrond, Sam looks into Galaradiel's mirror, Saruman is redeemed before he dies and the Nazgûl just make it into Mount Doom before they fall". Jackson presented this initial draft to both

Harvey and Bob Weinstein who were very impressed by the screenwriting since they had never read the book.

Later in 1997, Stephen Sinclair and his partner Philippa Boyens joined Jackson and Walsh to begin to write what became the final screenplay of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. Apparently it took them a little bit over a year to write two film scripts, reducing a total of 853 pages to 291 pages, with each script of 147 and 144 pages respectively. After Sinclair left the team due to other professional obligations, Jackson, Walsh and Boyens continued to revise their writing, struggling mostly with the length of the Tolkien's book and the complexity of his writing. Amongst their revisions many scenes where changed, deleted or adapted - such as Sam being caught eavesdropping by Gandalf and forced to go with Frodo, instead of, as in the original novel where Sam, Merry and Pippin finding out about the Ring, decide to go with Frodo on their own will. Other scenes, like Gandalf´s account of his time at Orthanc, Denethor attending the council with his son, or Arwen rescuing Frodo in an action sequence involving the cave troll, were deleted or changed. ("*The Making of the Fellowship"* (supplementary material on the Extended DVD Version release of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, New Line Cinema, 2002*).*

But when in the summer of 1998 Jackson met with Mark Ordesky and Robert Shave from New Line Cinema and was asked why he was making two films when the book was published as three volumes, Jackson's hopes were realised, as he always wanted to make a film trilogy. Consequently he decided to write, along with his team, three new separate scripts. Obviously the expansion to three films instead of two allowed them much more room for creativity and they had to restructure the scripts accordingly. Jackson's first decision was to have his screenwriters transform Tolkien's huge epic tale into three distinct stories to make three distinct movies. They couldn't just write one screenplay and break it into three parts. They had to restructure the entire cycle in order to make each film work as a separate story, but be still linked somehow to each other. Basically each movie would need to have its own beginning, climax and denouement but deploying a summative opening scenes as the linking element. During this restructuring, many elements of the plot were added, changed, deleted or simply lost in translation.

Most of these changes can be found in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* film appendices DVD extend version, where one can easily see that characters have been altered in the scripts for extra dramatic effect. For example, the personalities of

Aragorn, Théoden, and Treebeard were modified and have added elements of weakness such as self-doubt or lack of confidence, while Galadriel, Elrond, and Faramir have been darkened with some extra evil elements. On the other hand, Boromir and Gollum's personalities have been lightened and became more sympathetic, while the personalities of Legolas, Gimli, Saruman and Denethor have become simplified. The most remarkable change in these rewrites is Arwen who in the first scripts was a warrior princess but who ends up reverting to her book counterpart, remaining passive and feminine throughout the story. Other things I have noticed, for example, are that sometimes the lines of dialogue are switched between locations or to other characters to better suit the scenes. New scenes were also added to expand on characterization, other sequences, like those involving Tom Bombadil, were simply deleted ("*The Making of the Fellowship,"* supplementary material on the Extended DVD Version, 2002*).*

Some writers complain that Tolkien's words and their tone have been ignored during the film adaptation process despite the efforts of the screenwriters. For instance, in the film of *The Fellowship of the Rings*, Galadriel's patronizing remark to Frodo concerning 'even the smallest person' is a feeble and poor adaptation (and combination) of Gandalf's comments to Frodo 'you have been chosen, and you must use such strength and heart and wits as you have' in the book. Another example is Elrond's remark at the Council 'such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.' These speeches acknowledge a quiet heroism born of impulses and a survival instinct, far removed from experienced warriors like Aragorn or Eomer, and the condescending tone can be considered (arguably) out of context.

Obviously, the films are not completely faithful to the three volumes of the trilogy. There are many gaps and changes in the scripts, mostly because there was a continuous evolution of the screenplays to adjust the possible contributions of the cast as they were exploring their characters. In an interview with Steve Head, an editor from an online entertainment website - INGmovies.com, Peter Jackson admits that he took a more chronological approach to the story than did Tolkien. He had also focused on Frodo's main quest while Aragorn was the main sub-plot *(An interview with Peter Jackson)[3]*. I also believe that Jackson and his screenwriters have put a lot of effort into creating satisfactory

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[3] Online article. *2002-12-13, IGN*. Accessed on May 08 2009. http://uk.movies.ign.com/articles/380/380092p1.html

conclusions and making sure that exposition did not delay the pacing of the action. When asked about the making of *his* film trilogy*,* Jackson said:

> "I think they're different films. And I think that will obviously lead to that reaction. […] *The Two Towers* is a little darker; it has less fantasy in it. *The Fellowship of the Ring* had Hobbits in it, had the elves, Rivandell, and Lothlorian and provides a slightly lighter, more whimsical, more fantastical time. Because [The Two Towers] shifts into the world of humans, with Rohan and the battle and things, it has a different sort of time. So, I think depending on where your sensibilities lie, you will either like the first one or the second one better.   [The Return of the King] has a kind of climactic sense to it. It's wonderfully over the top and epic. And it's as if at the same time really incredibly emotional. It's a lot about courage […] guts and determination and courage, which I find it quite affecting (P. Head, p.2).

Many supporters of the trilogy (among them cast members like Christopher Lee and screenwriter Boyens) state that the films are a valid interpretation of the books and that most of the changes were necessary. Despite the changes I think the films serve as a tribute to the books, appealing to those who have not yet read them. When asked why the stories on the screen were not following the books accurately, Jackson simply summarised his screen trilogy's philosophy by saying: "Sure, it's not really *The Lord of the Rings* ... but it could still be a pretty damn cool movie." (*20 Questions with Peter Jackson*)[4] Accessed on May 10 2009. Question 20.) In other words, the films are simply their best interpretation of the books.

3. Visual Imagery

Besides de the screenplay adaptation, an even greater potential problem lies with imagery. In the books, images and imagery are created in words, which act upon the imagination of individual readers. In the films there is less space for the individual imagination. For this reason, Jackson and his team planned wisely in choosing to work with the artists who created the much-loved Tolkien calendars and other art work, when it came to present some of the key images of the physical landscape of Middle-earth. What the films have given to Tolkien's existing fans is the imagery we already know from the work of Alan Lee, John Howe, and Ted Naismith (his work is in the films and has oddly not

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[4] AINT IT COOL NEWS, The Lord of the Rings Trilogy page, 16 September 2006. Accessed on May 10 2009. Question 20. http://members.tripod.com/peter_jackson_online/lotr/articles/20_questions.htm.

been acknowledged). These visual adaptations give us a sense of visual familiarity, picking up on the experience (common to Tolkien fans) that Middle-earth is a place to which one can go and come back again. A good example is the spider references in the films where script writers had showed good perception in adapting it visually. Since there are several references of such arachnids in the books the scriptwriters added another one in the film of *The Fellowship*, where an ordinary spider crawls over Sam's shoulder as he and the other hobbits hide from the Black Rider. Sam's unconcern here is a measure of his fear of the Rider (and not for spiders), but also prefigures his ability in the film of *The Return of the King* to take on the monstrous Shelob in defence of Frodo.

Jackson's films also owe a debt to the imagery of Ralph Bakshi and Saul Zaentz's 1978 cartoon film. The cartoon images of the hobbits hiding under tree roots, the Ringwraiths' raid on the prancing pony, and the arrowhead pursuit of Frodo in the 'Flight to the Ford' are all translated into live action. However, if the pursuit episode from Chapter 12 of the book of *The Fellowship* is compared with the film, we find that Arwen takes over part of the role of the elven lord Glorfindel, who aids Frodo's solo escape from the pursuing Ringwraiths. Jackson's film echoes the cartoon in reproducing the visual images of the arrowhead pursuit, but adapts both cartoon and book when Jackson portrays Arwen holding Frodo on the galloping horse.

Figure 4: Orcs from Ralph Bakshi and Saul Zaentz's 1978 LotR cartoon film

Besides the cartoon, there are other important visual borrowings. The interiors of Rivandell, for example, are heavily influenced by the art nouveau style, as are the circlets and jewels worn by the elves. The use of this graceful late nineteenth-century style which drew its own inspiration from plants and flowers is justified by the elves' love of trees and their affinity with natural things, a theme constantly reiterated throughout Tolkien's works.

Tolkien's own drawings and maps visual adaptations were also used in the films, such as the map of Middle-earth for instance.

Other elements of the films' imagery track back to medieval times and adapt the artistic style of the Pre-Raphaelites. The brief funeral of Boromir is indebted to representations of the death of Arthur, to the last voyage of the Lady of Shallot, as well as to the ship funerals associated with the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons. The death of Arthur also resonates in the final image of Bilbo and Frodo leaving the Grey Havens. The interlaced patterns used to decorate Meduseld and the clothes of the Rohirrim are rather different, because they are the historical designs used in Anglo-Saxon and Celtic culture. Besides acting as part of the visual definition of Rohan and its people, these patterns recall Northern European history and encourage us to see Rohan as a mythologized part of that.

A visual image derived from a textual source provides additional meaning to the fall of the Balrog at the start of *The Two Towers*. In the book, Gandalf says 'Long I fell and he fell with me. His fire was about me'. The image of this in the film echoes Milton's description of Satan's fall in *Paradise Lost* (*The Complete Poems*, ed., G. Campbell, J. M. Dent and Sons London 1980): 'Him the almighty power / Hurled headlong flaming … / With hideous ruin and combustion.' The imagery also echoes the *Book of Revelations* in which the Archangel Michael defeats the dragon, which is Satan and casts him out of heaven (12:7-9). The use and adaptation of such well-known images offers audiences a depth of interpretation which comes close to doing justice to Tolkien's own layering of meaning through adaptation, since they call to mind the contexts in which the original images belong. The Arthurian echo, for instance, not only recalls stories of chivalry and quest, but restates the title of the last part of the book and film, for Arthur is the legendary once and future king, sleeping on Avalon, and waiting to return when Britain needs him. At a spiritual level the echoes of *Revelations* and *Paradise Lost* hint at the apocalyptical dimensions of Tolkien's work.

But if the use of known images can do justice to Tolkien's own adaptive process, there are, on the other hand, some visual aspects of the film adaptations that are hard to justify or explain. For example, why do Merry and Pippin steal vegetables in the film of *The Fellowship* instead of mushrooms and be a little bit closer to the chapter in the book called 'A Short Cut to Mushrooms'? The other aspect is the metamorphosis of Arwen,

from aristocratic elvish lady into a rough-riding, sword-wielding female warrior saving Frodo from the Black Riders when in the book Frodo is saved by a warrior elf sent by Elrond. Other changes in the film of *The Two Towers* can be equally questionable. For instance, Aragorn's plunge off a cliff in Rohan does not take place in the book, and it is hard to understand why Jackson included this scene.

However, the books and its characters have always found an audience who were willing and able to accept their basis in medievalism. Indeed, this old fashion cultural value is a large part of their appeal to Tolkien's world. The films have had to address a much more diverse and a much larger potential audience and, if they were to be financially viable film adaptations, have had to be driven by dominant commercial considerations. But I suggest that this conclusion is too censorious in the case of *The Lord of the Rings* films, which do preserve much of the Tolkien's medievalism. The adaptations reflect the world that is going to receive them, but the success of the films also implies that the ideals, which return from the past through them, do appeal to modern audiences. The act and process of adaptation in them remain true to that medievalism even when individual elements of adaptation are perhaps less successful. Because of these adaptations (in spite of critics would say) the widely acclaimed return of Middle-earth in the films echoes Tolkien's use of myth in his earlier challenge (only this time challenging post-modern cynicism) the is also the return of ancient ideals through actions which are driven by courage, loyalty and friendship.

The success of the film adaptations thus suggests that these ancient ideals, and their mythical settings, still have the power to enchant new generations. As Mikal McLendon mentioned on his article for *Starpulse Entertainment*, "no matter what the purists might say about the intimacy of one text and one person's imagination, one thing that can't be argued is that a film adaptation, even for something as widely read as "The Lord of the Rings," reaches so many more people than a book in our age, and consequently can incite people to go read as well" (p.1)

CHAPTER III

The Film Trilogy

1. The Mechanics: Structuring the Three Films

Before addressing Jackson's attempt to adapt Tolkien's fantastic story to the big screen, I think it is important to discuss first how narratives are structured in movies and films and try to understand the mechanics behind the literary epic and the film trilogy adaptation. The differences between a novel and film are usually not understood by general readers and audiences - public tastes are rarely the same for book and film products. One of the biggest obstacles faced by Jackson were the millions of Tolkien's fans, who were anxiously expecting this first attempt to dramatize Tolkien's fantasy trilogy on the screen with live actors. When asked in an interview how did he balance the need to please both Tolkien fans and a broad audience in the film trilogy, Jackson said: "I just approached it like this: my point of view was... people that saw The Fellowship of the Ring kind of popped out for a popcorn break that lasted a year, and now you're back in on this story and you're just going to roll the next reel. You know, it's going to just rightly carry-on and I wanted it to have that unity, that kind of feeling." (*Steve Head;* "An interview with Peter Jackson." [5]

Both novels and films share a common narrative structure known as the 'Freytag's Triangle,' first described by Aristotle and later officialised in the 19th century by play writer Gustav Freytag. Basically, Freytag affirmed that the first part of a story, known as 'exposition,' sets up the basic elements of the storyline, laying the details that will establish the characters relationship and developing a plot. The second part then moves into the rising action of the story, usually created by a conflict between protagonist and antagonist. It is in the second part where most stories build the tension by developing the conflict between heroes and villains, and working out character relationships. This rising tension will then culminate in the climax or 'central crises' followed by the 'denouement' or wrapping up of the story (Greg Wright, *Peter Jackson in Perspective*, 14). The figure below sums up the Freytag's triangle:

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[5] *IGN*.13-12-2002. http://uk.movies.ign.com/articles/380/380092p1.html. Retrieved on 08-05-2009).

Climax

Rising Action

Denouement

Exposition

←———— Meaning ————
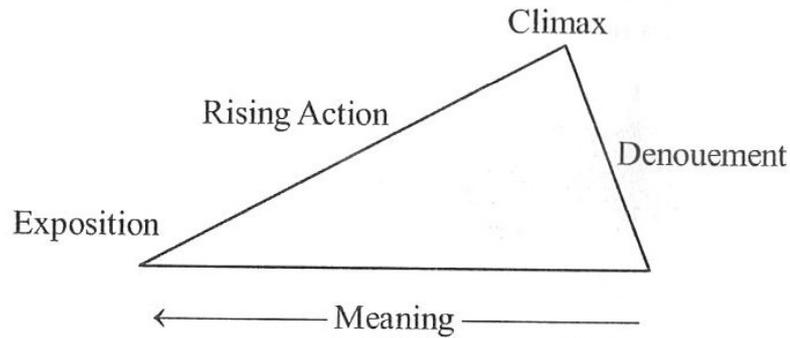
Figure 5: Freytag's triangle

However in a novel, the writer (if she/he wishes) can extend the denouement smoothing the falling action because of the greater story length possible. In complex plots with a great number of characters involved, the writer can actually spend more time tying up loose ends to avoid leaving unaddressed issues in the plot. The following figure illustrates a novel-type structure:

Extended
Denouement
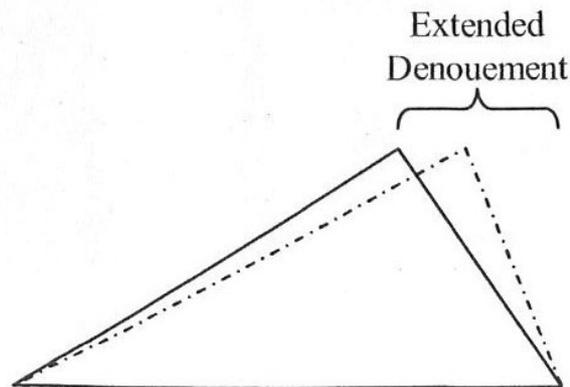
Figure 6: The Novel's Structure

Greg Wright in his book *Peter Jackson in Perspective* explains that in a film, the structure is usually based on a short story structure rather than on a novel. A short story tends to lead its readers to a very specific climax and the conflict is usually resolved very close to the end of the story. A film also tends to develop the plot in this way, building the tension towards a climax, and wrapping up the conflict only seven or eight minutes before the end. The denouement, instead of being extended as it is in a novel, in a film is truncated to get a quick conclusion as the figure below illustrates:

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[6] Greg Wright, *Peter Jackson in Perspective*, p.15
[7] Greg Wright, *Peter Jackson in Perspective*, p.15

Truncated
Denouement
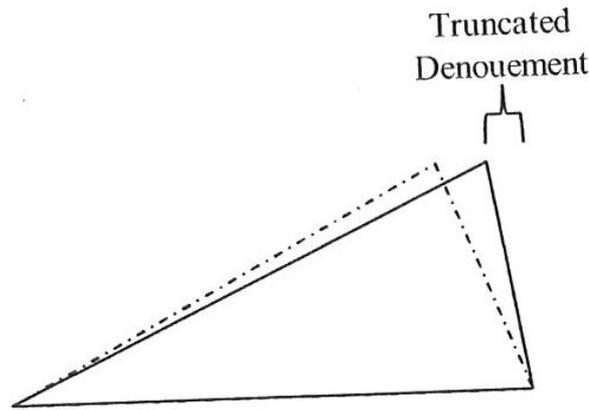
Figure 7: The Film's Structure

However, according to Greg Wright, Peter Jackson's adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* don't completely "conform to the standard short-story structure." (p.17). Wright points out that *The Rings* films are much longer than the average film, and 'the longer the film, the greater percentage of running time that can be allocated to the denouement. But a weightier reason is that there are some very complex factors involved in breaking down Tolkien's 500,000 words novel into three distinct movies" (p.18). Below is the breaking up of Tolkien's story as given by Greg Wright:

9

Climax

Rising Action

Denouement

Exposition

Meaning
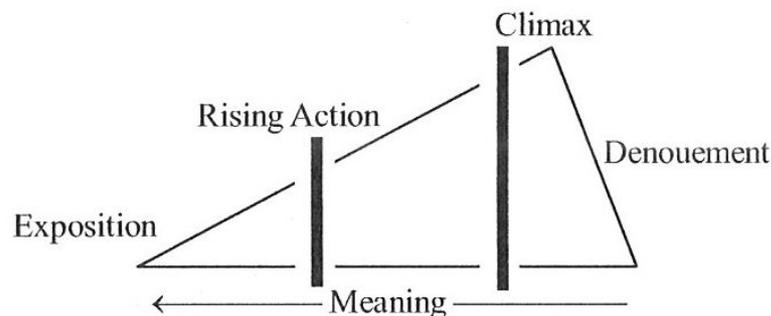
Figure 8: Breaking up Tolkien's Story

This breaking up of the story by Peter Jackson into three parts is explained by Wright when he says that "if we took Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* and filmed it exactly as written, we wouldn't have a very satisfying climax. In the second segment based solely on what Tolkien wrote in *The Two Towers* […] we would have no beginning to our story and virtually no ending either. And the running time of the third segment, *The Return of the King*, would primarily be occupied with the story's climax and a disproportionate denouement" (p.18). The other major problem presented by Greg Wright is that Tolkien, defying the conventions of the narrative structure, takes more than one

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[8] Greg Wright, *Peter Jackson in Perspective,* p.16
[9] Greg Wright, Peter Jackson in Perspective, p. 16

hundred and fifty pages just to close his story. Therefore, the rising action together with the denouement had to be adjusted and shortened, as is shown in the figure below. The films still manage to be considerably longer than is usual for action adventure genres:
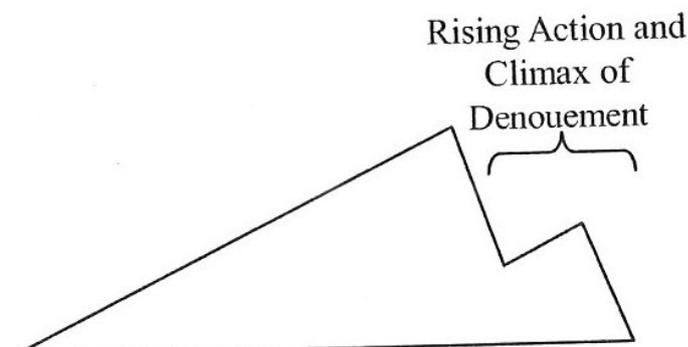
Figure 9: The Structure of *The Lord of the Rings*

Jackson's adaptation was not the first attempt to bring Tolkien's epic to film. In 1978, Ralph Bakish directed an animated feature of *The Lord of the Rings*, breaking the story in two parts instead of three. Bakish's first part ends after the end of Helm's Deep, right where Jackson's *The Two Towers* ends. Bakish's film was considered a commercial disaster and he never finished the sequel due to of lack of funds, thereby leaving his version with no real ending. The second part ended up being produced by Ranking and Bass, who also produced *The Hobbit* for television, but it shared Bakish's version's fate: it became a very unsatisfying version of *The Return of the King* with "only half of the story, utilizing a flashback story structure with very little exposition or rising tension" (p. 20).

So, in order to make *The Rings* trilogy work properly Jackson needed not only to break the epic into three parts, but also to transform it into three different but related stories. Each story was restructured with its own beginning, climax and denouement, as per Freytag's Triangle. With this story line structure, Jackson avoided the inconclusive endings reflected in the previous films versions. He allowed each to achieve "its own self-contained, complete story" (p.24) quite successfully. The other reason why the films were so effective is, according to Wright is because "they are films – and films have three primary artistic components to them while a novel has just one. A novel comprises words on a printed page and the reader and author interaction […] but a film is more complex than that. Film is an art form that employs not only words, but pictures – at 24 frames each second – and music too. The combination of these three parts […] produces art […]

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[10] Greg Wright, *Peter Jackson in Perspective, p. 17*

when well executed, to be more powerful than one of these components individually" (p. 24).

While Tolkien used language as his primary tool to create his mythical world, Jackson, on the other hand, uses special effects, detailed costumes design, set designs, camera movement techniques, sound and musical effects, and even specific Tolkien dialects and languages training to give a more realistic impression of Tolkien's Middle-earth. So probably, in terms of structure, the films not only improved Tolkien's long narrative with visual and technical effects (and making Middle-earth to look more real), but also retained in essence the Tolkien's spirit.

2. The Making of: Casting, Settings, and Special Digital Effects

Once the movie rights of *The Lord of the Rings* became available to Miramax Pictures, Peter Jackson immediately started to work on *The Rings* project that would take seven years before reaching the screen. It soon became clear that the epic would be too costly for Miramax and Harvey Weinstein (Miramax´s owner) started to look for partners to fund *The Rings* – at first with little success. Then, Weinstein proposed that Jackson reduce *The Rings* trilogy to one single movie, to which Jackson responded that he "could not be responsible for cramming one of the most famous trilogies in history into one movie" (Ian Pryor, *Peter Jackson: From Prince of Splatter to Lord of the Rings*, p. 247). By then, only two companies remained interested in *The Rings* - Polygram and New Line Cinema. Polygram was not in a position to finance an already over budget project and Jackson had no alternative but to set up a meeting with New Line Cinema, who agreed to finance not two, but three movies. Jackson's plans were to come to fruition after all. On August 24th, 1998, New Line Cinema announced that they would be making three movies of *The Lord of the Rings*, each to be released at one-year intervals.

To reduce over 500,000 pages to three filmable screenplays without disappointing the enormous Tolkien fan-base was no easy task for Jackson and his screenwriters Philippa Boyens and Fran Walsh. Following the Freytag Triangle structure, Peter Jackson's screenwriters were able to create quite satisfying scripts for the three movies. For each movie they developed a distinct hero and a distinct villain. In *The Two Towers*, for instance, they were able to restructure the story by amplifying the romance between Arwen and Aragon, rearranging story elements and introducing new ones. Jackson knew

that audiences respond well to romance, so it became a significant and constant factor in all three movies. But while some elements need to be added, others, due to the extensiveness of the novel, could not be retained and needed to be cut out. One of the most important cuts from the epic was the scene with Tom Bombadil in the Old Forest and Barrow Downs, though there is a reference to Bombadil in *The Two Towers* in the words of the Treebeard. The cuts were harshly criticized by Tolkien fans as Greg Wright ruefully points out: "one of the most cuts in the movies – and this is spoken as a fan and as a critic – is the effort that is taking Tolkien put into creating a sensible flow of time and space. Jackson's version simply does not do justice to Tolkien's detailed geography and plot orchestration." (p.29)

There was now the question of where to build Tolkien's Middle Earth. Jackson decided (mostly for budget reasons) that it should be either found or built in New Zealand, his home country. He hired a small local digital company Weta Workshop to design and handle the trilogy's makeup effects and prosthetics, the physical creatures, weapons and miniatures. A long-term contract with Weta Workshop proved cost effective as the work could be all done in one single building making it easier for Jackson to supervise its progress. "This all-in one approach," mentions Pryor in his book *Peter Jackson: From Prince of Splatter to The Lord of the Rings* "would help to maintain a consistent vision, the 'singular Tolkienesque brushstroke' that helped to unite every element seen onscreen." (p.254)

Weta hired at least six designers to work on thousands of sketches, paintings and models to create what would become Jackson's Middle Earth. Additionally, it employed blacksmiths, sculptors, digital designers, computer gurus, jewellers, leather-workers and costume designers (including Nigla Dickson who had previously created the costumes and wardrobe for Jackson's previous film *Heavenly Creatures)* to work on armours, sculptures, the hobbit's small and tall outsize outfits, Ringwraith's rags, the Elf's jewellery, including the use of foam-latex ovens to create the big hobbit feet and ears. To this crew of hundreds of people were added Peter Jackson's favourite illustrators of Middle Earth – John Howe and Alan Lee. The artists often went with Jackson exploring New Zealand landscapes to discover the locations for the Hobbiton village, Rohan, Minas Morgul or Rivandell, sketching the landscape and transforming it in their imaginations into Jackson's perfect settings. As Jackson was simultaneously script- writing, hunting for locations, sketching Middle Earth, creating hobbits and orcs and working on the special effects, he

still faced another important challenge – that of getting the right actors, assembling a top-quality cast (p. 254-55)

One of the biggest challenges of Weta, on the other hand, was the digital creation of Gollum. Most of the Uruk-hai warriors' fighting scenes in the Helm's Deep war, or walking trees carrying hobbits around the forest were already computer animated. But another thing was creating a creature that crawls, sneers, and mutters to the moon, with emotional mood swings and abrupt personality switches. Peter Jackson did not want a live actor to perform Gollum because he wanted the creature to be able to jump and climb cliff with a superhuman agility. A digital Gollum screen test was carried out, and English actor Andy Serkis accepted the offer of creating Gollum's voice, and later of playing the hobbit Sméagol before he turned into the creature Gollum in *The Two Towers* ("The Making of the Two Towers" (supplementary material on the Extended DVD version of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, New Line Cinema, 2003). Gollum is briefly introduced and glimpsed in *The Fellowship*. The reason for that is because Jackson had decided that Gollum needed to be completely redesigned with features similar to Serkis, whose performance was important to give life to Gollum. After an enormous effort from both Weta's computer effects staff, make-up staff and Serkis, the final version of Gollum ultimately comes to life with a computerised technique to interconnect the actor's original movements with the digital figure. Though similar digitally created creatures were being developed at the same time, such as Yoda from *Star Wars* or Dobby from Harry Potter, Gollum was the first CGI character whose lips movements were easily understood by a partially deaf person (Pryor, p. 257).

The casting process only began in late 1998, "with half of the world's Tolkien fans standing by on Internet" (Pryor, 258). Most filmmakers are criticised for casting actors more for their looks and celebrity than for their talents, but this is not true of Peter Jackson. He was determined that for his *Rings* the selection of the cast would be based on the right physical type and talent combination, to be able to create a "believable Middle Earth" (p.259). For instance, the elves needed to be thin, tall and have handsome facial features, while the hobbits needed to be short, plump with "round cheeks, round eyes and round tummies" (p.259). The choice of Elijah Wood to play the leading hobbit Frodo Baggins was made after auditioning 200 actors for the part and involved two cancellations of the date to start filming. On this, Jackson said:

"We literally started to panic. We auditioned in London, in Australia, in New Zealand. We'd met 200 English actors and hadn't really seen Frodo […]. And this videotape turned up in the mail in the casting office in England. I had never seen an Elijah Wood film in my life. I had heard his name, but didn't know what he looked like […] He had rented a hobbit custom and got a dialect couch to teach him an English accent, because he knew we were looking for an English actor […]. We put the tape in the machine and I was totally struck by Elijah. I just thought 'Wow, this guy's amazing'" (Pryor, p. 260).

The casting of other roles also took unexpected turns. Orlando Bloom, for example, who originally auditioned for the role of the human Faramir end up being the elf Legolas. Christopher Lee who "had long dreamed of playing Gandalf" (p. 260) (and was the only cast member to be a life-long Tolkien fan) accepted the role of the wizard Saruman instead. Some actors, like the Scottish Billy Boyd, just fit easily into the role of the hobbit Pippin, likewise Dominic Monaghan who played Merry after auditioning to play Frodo or the popular British Sean Bean as Boromir. Though Peter Jackson was concentrating his search for his cast among British actors, the role of Frodo's best friend Sam ended up being given to American actor Sean Austin, whom Jackson had asked to "put on thirty pounds" (P.260) in order to get the role.

Figure 10: Liv Tyler as Arwen

Figure 11: Christopher Lee as Saruman

Figure 12: Orlando Bloom as Legolas

Meanwhile, famous fan websites like *The One Ring* kept speculating about several famous names such as the Irish actor Stuart Townsend for the role of Aragon, Liv Tyler for the elf queen Galadriel and Sean Connery for Gandalf. Apparently, according to Pryor, Connery rejected the project "because he couldn't understand the script" (p. 261) and the role was offered to English actor Ian McKellen instead. Liv Tyler ended up playing the role of the elf princess Arwen, the romantic partner of Viggo Mortensen who played the human

Aragon. The elf queen Galadriel was offered to Cate Blanchett instead, for her blond, light and delicate features. Other famous names played minor roles such as Hugo Weaving, who played the noble elf Elrond (Arwen's father) and the British actor Ian Holm as Bilbo. As for New Zealander actors, only a few got roles in *The Rings*. We can see Karl Urban as Rohan warrior Eomer, Martin Csokas as elf king Celeborn and the rising actor Lawrence Makoare as the hideous Urak-hai Lurtz. There was some New Zealand media pressure for star Danielle Cormack to play the Rohan warrior lady Eowy, but the role was given to Australian actress Miranda Otto instead because, according to New Line, it could bring the films more international appeal.

When in August of 1998 the web guru Harry Howles asked Peter Jackson if he was planning to cast famous actors or unknowns, he had simply answered unknowns. Following the example of 'no superstars' in the *Star Wars* films, *The Rings* cast was mostly made of unheard and hardly unknown actors, while the famous names like Christopher Lee or Cate Blanchett played the less important roles. Once the casting was complete, they all flew to New Zealand and started an intensive five weeks training in horse riding, canoeing, fencing, learning Tolkien's several dialects and getting used to the different characters they played. Vigo Mortensen, for example, got so attached to his sword that he was actually seen every day in Wellington with his sword. But besides the main cast, Jackson and his casting directors still had to face the task of engaging the thousands of extras to play hobbits, elves, orcs, horse riders, urak-hais and the diverse races and species of Middle Earth. Pryor says in his book that many stuntmen "would have to endure uncomfortable prosthetics, and a number found a couple of fourteen-hour days filming in the rain of Helm's Deep enough to cure any Hollywood ambitions. By the end of the shoot, things were getting desperate. The casting office then had a sign on the wall: 'If you're breathing, you're hired'" (p.262)

The film trilogy also hired a further army of special effect and visual artists. Jackson had hired about 260 visual and effect artists for the making of *The Fellowship*, and by the time he started with *The Two Towers*, the number of artists had doubled. The special effects crew, led by Jim Rygiel and Randy Cook, had worked long hours to produce special effects under pressure and within a short period of time, always with the constant supervision of Peter Jackson and his active imagination as a driving force.

3. The Post Production: Editing, Music and Sound Effects

Since the films were scheduled to be released in a three-year time period, each film had at least one full year of post-production time before its release. Once all the scenes were shot, Jackson would move to London to supervise the composition of the sound track while he continued to keep an eye on the editing, using computers and online technology to look at the special effects. He organised meetings through video conferencing, and listened to new music and sound effects wherever he was by downloading the music and sounds file samples. He also worked on the extended DVDs editions that were also operating under a tight schedule at the beginning of each year to complete their special effects and music.

Because of the size of the project (and also to reduce pressure) Jackson decided to hire a different editor for each *Ring* film. John Gilbert edited the first film, Mike Horton and Jabez Olsen edited the second, and finally, Jamie Selkirk and Annie Collins worked on the third and last film of the *Rings* project. According to Brian Sibley in his book The Making of the Movie Trilogy, a total of six million feet of film (for the entire trilogy) was edited to 11 hours and 23 minutes (the extended DVD running time). It was during this final editing of the films that Jackson would make some major changes as he realised that even the best script could be sometimes redundant on screen. Because of Jackson's idea of creating a Special Extended DVD Edition later, the editing of *The Fellowship* was quite easy. The most difficult film to edit was *The Two Towers*, as it was the "middle chapter" of the trilogy and theoretically had no beginning or ending of its own, and the final editing process passed the officially scheduled deadline. *The Return of the King*´s editing and post-production was very chaotic due to the deadlines set and Jackson only saw the completed film at the Wellington premiere. Jackson had omitted many scenes because of the film's running time. Many of these scenes can be seen in the Special Extended DVD Edition, including Saruman's death, which was cut from the cinema edition. Other scenes like further epilogue footage after the end of *The Return of the King* that includes the whereabouts of Legolas and Gimli, Éowyn and Faramir's wedding and Aragorn's death and funeral should eventually be included in the "Ultimate Edition" home video release of the film trilogy.

Jackson was also carefully in choosing the right music for his trilogy. The sound track was composed, conducted and produced by Howard Shore, who was hired by Jackson in August 2000. The main musical theme for *The Rings* was composed with many central motifs to represent the various places and characters of Middle-earth, carefully composed and arranged by Shore. He also produced individual musical themes

to represent the different cultures, working with volume and tone variations to give strength or weakness to the characters, or to show the beauty or the evil of a place. Like all members of *The Rings* project, Shore had to rework constantly his musical pieces to best adapt them to the films, as they themselves were being constantly changed and edited by Jackson and his editing team.

Apart from the music and sound track, there were also the sound effects. Most of the sound technicians hired by Jackson had to work harder during the first part of the project to find the right sounds for the films. They found (and recorded) sounds everywhere. While some animal sounds were bought from other sound recording companies, other human sounds, like screams for example, were actually done in-house by some members of Jackson's team. Additionally, Jackson's sound technicians had to work with New Zealand locals to get many of the other sounds. A good example is the sounds of the Uruk-hai army in *The Two Towers,* which were created by thousands of New Zealand cricket fans (with Peter Jackson conducting them) during a break in a cricket match. They also recorded sounds in abandoned tunnels for an echo-like effect in a Moria sequence, sounds in a graveyard at night, or sounds of construction workers dropping blocks of stone to get the sounds of the firing rocks in a fighting scene of *The Return of the King*. A local New Zealand firm did the sound mixing, until Peter Jackson commissioned the building of a new studio in 2003. Like the books, *The Rings* film project also endured a long journey, with Peter Jackson as the Ring Bearer and the cast and crew became his own Fellowship, before it was released to the world. Thus, the success of the films should also be credited to the tremendous collective effort, time and dedication that *The Rings'* team invested in helping Jackson to create his Middle-earth:

> "I have been lucky enough to work with some of the most talented cast and crew any filmmaker could wish for, anywhere in the world," Jackson said in *The Return of the King Digital Press Kit Insert.* "Through the long years of production it was apparent that we all had one thing in common: a great and enduring love of the books, which in turn, resulted in an unfailing commitment to do our best work on these films." (G. Wright, p.164)

CHAPTER IV

THE CULTURAL PHENOMENON

1. Marketing, Publicity, Global Release and Audience Response

On December 19 2001, the world experienced what was arguably the most hyped and anticipated motion-picture opening in film history. *The Fellowship of the Ring,* the first of the much-expected films of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy cinematic adaptation, had finally reached movie theatres.   All three films, shot in continuous production in New Zealand, cost over $150 million each. *The Fellowship of the Ring* was to be a highlight for the holiday season, and the New Line Cinema marketing plan was to release the two sequels on succeeding Christmases: *The Two Towers* in 2002 and *The Return of the King* in 2003.   All over the world fans waited to see Peter Jackson's technical wizardry finally making Tolkien's fantasies possible in a live-action film. The tiny hobbits and dwarfs, for example, were being played by normal-size actors and then shrunk with a computer effect known as forced perspective. Would they meet their expectations? But Jackson always knew that the fans would be the film trilogy's hardest critics. They had waited for so long for the film version that he could not fail them.

Steve Hockensmith, editor of <u>*Cinescape*</u> a magazine aimed at fans of fantasy and science fiction films, said that "in terms of sheer scope, I think this trilogy is going to be vast, one of the biggest things we've ever see," but on the other hand, he was also quite sceptical about the films' meeting public expectation: "in terms of commercial success, in terms of grosses -- well, goodness gracious, I really don't know. That's the $25,000 question, isn't it?" (Issue # 55, Dec. 2001.) Or should I say the $150,000,000 question, to be more precise.

With the release of *The Fellowship* the hysteria for *The Lord of the Rings* reached pandemic proportions among Tolkien readers and the Internet's <u>*Ain't It Cool News*</u> movie fan club members. Hockensmith is not the only film industry observer to wonder how this densely plotted trilogy from a relatively unknown director would be remembered – perhaps as a fantasy classic along the lines of *Star Wars (1977-2005)* and *The Wizard of Oz (1939)*. There have also been big-budget historical fantastic epics that vanished without a trace, like the *First Knight*, the dreary 1995 retelling of the Arthurian legends with Sean Connery as King Arthur and a terribly miscast Richard Gere as Lancelot, or the David Lynch/Dino de Laurentis version of Frank Herbert's science fiction classic *Dune* (1984), which met with little critical or commercial success. Indeed, Jackson's film trilogy was put firmly under the microscope, with movie critics and Tolkien fans ready to scan thoroughly every single pixel of the first *Ring's* sequel.

Having the two sequels planned before the first film is even released was also "a tremendous crapshoot," observed Hockensmith - since in the past studios have given the green light to film sequels simultaneously only after the first film was proved to be a major hit, as with *Back to the Future (1985-1990)* and more recently with *The Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003). "Let's say the first one stiffs, or is just mediocre," Hockensmith said, "The whole thing could be quite a humiliation by the time the third one comes out. New Line is really sticking its necks out for something that is not a sure thing" (*Cinescape Magazine*. Issue # 55, Dec. 2001). However, despite Hockensmith's warnings, when New Line's official *Lord of the Rings* website posted the first Internet trailer from Jackson's first film on April 7 2002, about 1.7 million people downloaded it, proving it to be already a hit and surpassing the previous download record for an Internet film trailer - *Star Wars: Episode I -- The Phantom Menace (1999)* with about one million downloads in its first day.

Against all the odds, *The Fellowship of the Ring,* the first of the series was considered the seventh most successful film of all times in 2001. Because *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone (2001)* immediately followed the release of *The Fellowship*, the *Potter* movie attracted more criticism, and as a result many critics compared *The Rings* favourably with *Harry Potter*. So it was not surprising when *The Fellowship* was nominated for thirteen Oscars Awards and won four (mostly for technical achievements). When the second film, *The Two Towers*, appeared in the cinemas in December 2002, it broke box office records and was number five on the list of top international blockbusters. At the time, many movie critics found *The Two Towers* sharper and faster than the previous film. Others felt that epic nature of the film was too expensive, but almost everyone praised the creation of Gollum. *The Two Towers* was called majestic and "a saga of pace and weight that runs on a kind of demented, wing-and-a-prayer ambition" (Pryor, *Peter Jackson: From Prince of Splatter to Lord of Rings*, p. 306) by *The Guardian*. Other critics, like Roger Ebert, found "the movie visionary, rousing, and 'one of the most spectacular swashbucklers ever made" (p. 306). When Oscar time came around, *The Two Towers* was almost disqualified because it was considered as part of the earlier film *The Fellowship*. Still, it was nominated for Best Picture but failed to get any nomination in acting, writing or direction. It was the last of the series, *The Return of the King*, debuted to the public in December 2003 that received the best notices and won eleven Academy Award Oscars, including for best picture and best director, in all likelihood in the name of the whole trilogy.

The fact is that Jackson's films found a ready-made audience known for its fanatical devotion and scholarly intensity. The New Line Cinema publicity machine, smartly working with this public anticipation, went into overdrive with the release of the

first film, and that publicity effort did not decline until the release of the last film on December 2003. From DVDs, to video games and other licensed products like toys, it probably brought billions of dollars to what Kristin Thompson calls "The Frodo Franchise" (*The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood, University of California Press*, Los Angeles, 2007.) It is worth noting that New Line is a division of the AOL-Time-Warner media empire and that there are very few domains into which this company does not reach. The trilogy had probably the most powerful promotional enterprise behind it, ensuring that no part of LotR went unnoticed and un-praised.

Figure 13: Ent Pewter Wine Glass

Figure 14: LotR Checkers Game

Figure 15: Talking Sméagol Doll

Figure 16: Aragorn Keychain

Because *The Rings* were also made in the cutting edge of the new technologies era, the producer and distributors were able to market the films together with a vast variety of tied-up products and publicity components, such as an Internet campaign, trailers downloads, DVD supplements and video games. "Not just as a film trilogy but as a larger phenomenon" says Thompson, "*Rings* reveals a great deal about changes going on in Hollywood in this transitional era of globalization and new media" (p. 10). Indeed, *The Rings* did not only generated huge gross revenues for New Line Cinema and its "Frodo franchise" it also affected the film industry in general. It helped, alongside with the first three *Harry Potter* movies, to raise the status of fantasy gender and positioned epic movies at the heart of current popular digital animation filmmaking such as *Troy* (2004), *300* (2007) or *Beowulf* (2007).

The global premiere of the films had also a huge impact on the massive international Tolkien fan-base. With the films, a new kind of fan appeared: the fan that would find something largely to his/her taste in *The Rings*. Some of these fans had never read the books and they were just inspired by watching the movies. The fan-base movement that grew over the three-year period of the commercial release of all three films

became consumers on a scale never seen before. For example, all three soundtracks of *The Rings* by Howard Shore were certified Platinum in the United States. Each soundtrack, together with the CD versions and 3-CD boxed set obtained Platinum status and they are still quite popular. Another example is the Play Station video game *The Two Towers*, released by Electronics Arts, also got Platinum status and sold 1.48 million units in the United States alone (*From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings,* Jennifer Brayton, Essay <u>Fric Frodo Slash Frodo</u> p.144.) Needless to say, that a mass-marketing campaign also introduced all kinds of related products, from toys, board games, calendars, trading cards to membership of the official fan club.

This new generation of fans became heavy consumers of *The Rings* cultural products, and probably went to see the films in the movie theatres over and over again. Just in New Zealand alone, according to Dr. Geoff Lealand from the University of Waitkato, "many New Zealanders must have seen *The Fellowship of the Ring* three or four times[11]." To these hordes of fans, were also joined the online Tolkien fan communities who endlessly discuss the trilogy in forums or on community discussions boards and are ready to consume any Ring/Tolkien product. They bought everything, from books, DVDs, replicas of weapons, to computer screen savers and pictures. A quick look on the popular auctioning website, ebay.com, can give us an immense list of all the collectible items derived from *The Lord of the Rings*.

To general audiences, this *Ring* hysteria was just an incomprehensible confusion, extremely exaggerated. Indeed, I think that to someone who has never been under the spell of Tolkien's books it's difficult to understand (and explain) the fans anxiety of seeing for the first time on the screen Middle-earth's inhabitants represented by live actors. I suppose that for Tolkien enthusiasts, his world and its characters have a profoundly mythic seriousness that can be roughly translated into a world of children's playthings. Whether fans are simply audiences to a cultural activity or just share the experience of *The Lord of the Rings* with mass reading the books or watching the films, it is their specialized zeal that distinguishes them from other less committed audiences. The global audience for *The Lord of the Rings* included not just Tolkien fans, but also moviegoers, myth and fantasy lovers, and a new kind of fan spawned by the movement of the Internet into the public realm of blogging, chat rooms, Myspace, Facebook, etc. The Internet has positively contributed to the global popularity of Jackson's cinematographic vision of Middle Earth and had a significant impact upon fan interaction and fan inter-actability.

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[11] Course material compiled for Screen & Media Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand, 2002. Accessed 15-04-2009. http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted_documents/MarketingLOTR.htm

Several professional-looking websites like _TheOneRing.net_ appeared on the Internet even before the release of _The Fellowship_. In addition to the sites driven largely by interest in the films like the _Imladris.net, Planet Tolkien_ and _Company of the Ring_, there are also literally hundreds of Tolkien fan sites on the Internet. Some of these sites focus on the Oxford complex use of myth and language, scrutinising the elements of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse legends and dialects to be found in Tolkien's Middle Earth. Just with a quick search on Google, one can find at least 3,560,000 English sites related to all forms of fan fiction. Not to mention sites in Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Polish, Czech, Finnish, and may other languages.

But despite the online fervour, many fans believed that New Line was also clearly aiming for millions of mainstream filmgoers, who had never heard of Tolkien's work and would have to be convinced that _The Lord of the Rings_ is something more than just a tedious fairyland fantasy in the style of the Dungeons & Dragons game, for example. The truth remains that only a minority within American pop culture for example (the world dealing with movie stars, pop singers and video games), had really ever been exposed to _The Lord of the Rings_, the exception being hardcore sci-fi geeks, the type that were likely to be thrilled by these movies, and who are hugely overrepresented on the Internet. The film trilogy had all three films in the ten top grossing films of all time internationally, with a gross revenue around 3 billion US dollars. The success of the films had triggered the resale of the original Tolkien books, and that, combined with all collectible items, promotional items, DVDs, soundtracks, CDs and so on, made _The Lord of the Rings_ a highly lucrative franchise with an unprecedented commercial success.

2. The Afterlife in Popular Culture

After Jackson's _Rings_ were finished, the commercial and marketing effort continued frenetically, generating incredible revenues (due to the commercial success of the films) and creating a very prosperous marketable afterlife. The Retail Merchandise online publication reported on March of 2005 that _The Lord of the Rings_ franchise "surpassed one billion dollars in retail sales worldwide (in 2004). The expansion of the overall licensing program for the Oscar-winning film series sees no end in sight as key international licensees commit to rolling out new product throughout 2005"[12]

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[12] AllBusiness.com. Retail Merchandise, _The Lord Of The Rings' Licensees Expand Merchandising Programs._ Published 13-03-2005. Accessed 10-5-2009 http://www.allbusiness.com/retail-trade/4299788-1.html

For New Zealand, who had embraced the trilogy, *The Rings* were like a gold mine. They created a museum to exhibit the various *Ring*'s sculptures and objects used during the filming, organised bus tour of film locations and the government reported a miniature book industry of its own. The first promotional merchandise for *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, (illustrated books, calendars T-shirts, hats, toys, statuettes, etc.) began to appear in the New Zealand and American market by mid 2000 through deals with toys (Toy Biz), and merchandising companies, as well as, through other promotional deals with fast food franchises like Burger King and book publishers. In the same vein, Weta Workshop created the Sideshow Weta to create and sell Rings figures. Basically, the designers and sculptures from *The Rings* were assigned to create *The Rings* collectible items that were then tied in to other figures like *King Kong, Superman Returns, The Muppets, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the *Kingdom of Heaven.* They also launched a publishing company, Weta Worlds, and bought the Stone Street Studios used on the film *Jane and the Dragon* and in animated children series supported by a Canadian television company. Though Richard Taylor founded Weta Workshop in 1987 it was Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* that gave the company a worldwide status and making Jackson one of its main shareholders.

According to Dr. Geoff Lealand from the University of Waitkato, New Zealand, just "the opening weekend (21-22 December 2002)" for *The Two* Towers it "grossed $NZ2.3 million and exceeded all previous opening weekend records. By the end of 2002, *The Fellowship of the Ring* had earned $US14.5 million from the record-breaking 17,837,000 cinema visits made by New Zealanders last year. All these figures are all the more impressive when one realizes that the total population of the country is still some thousands short of four million[13]".

Additionally, Lealand comments that the New Zealand government supported Jackson's Ring Project with "advance international sales [plus) tax incentives [that] effectively reduced the risk investment for New Line Cinema, from around US$90 million (NZ$219m) to US$25 million (NZ$61m) for each of the three films" (p.1). This is also supported by some critics, who affirm that the choice of New Zealand to be Jackson's Middle-earth was mainly made for nationalistic, as well as, for budgetary reasons. As one source explains:

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[13] Course material compiled for Screen & Media Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand, 2002. Accessed 15-04-2009. http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted_documents/MarketingLOTR.htm

"The Lord of the Rings, though frequently marketed as a triumph of the New Zealand film industry, is an example of a "runaway" production—that is, a Hollywood project filmed in a foreign territory to benefit not only from location scenery but from tax breaks offered by national governments to entice high-spending studio productions, cheaper labour costs than the highly unionized U.S. industry, and flexible working arrangements often unavailable in the United States. Unusually for a big-budget production, the film employed relatively unknown actors at cheaper rates, concentrating spending instead on props, stunts, locations, and digital effects. Without a star, the film then needed to be sold on its look and its story[14]"

New Line Cinema was also harshly criticized by media and film industry experts (quite on what moral grounds one is not sure) for cleverly using the existing Ring's fan bases websites and online media to promote the films, and therefore, spread the word-of-mouth advertising and cutting down on promotion costs.

The other advertising medium used extensively during and after the release of the films was Tourism New Zealand. The Los Angeles branch office of Tourism New Zealand handled most publicity activities related to *The Rings* especially during Oscar time. Kristin Thompson states in her book *The Frodo Franchise: the Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood*, that the Tourism New Zealand branch in Los Angeles operated most of The Rings publicity, press releases and other promotional activities. "The Tourism NZ would put up billboards, linking beautiful views with the films. The agency also made the arrangements for the trips to New Zealand won through the sweepstakes run by New Line and its promotional partners [...] also contracted travel agents, giving them information about filming locations and encouraging them to mention *The Rings* in connection with New Zealand" (p.313). With this incredible film franchise marketing machine promoting New Zealand not only as a holiday destination but the "home" of Middle-Earth, tourism in New Zealand went up to 86% in 2002" (see table below). [15]

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[14]   Science Encyclopaedia: Cinema - The Lord of the Rings. Accessed 10-04-09.
http://science.jrank.org/pages/8621/Cinema-LORD-RINGS.html
[15] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood*, 2007, p. 315

TABLE I

Tourism New Zealand Website (NZ.com) Monthly Hits, 2001–2005

Month	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
January	n/a	121,894	238,652	300,625	316,195
February	n/a	96,521	193,677	309,395	281,124
March	52,723	103,287	200,753	386,192	318,816
April	64,132	106,736	195,663	320,591	307,678
May	108,491	119,642	203,567	240,395	306,706
June	67,146	93,665	184,795	205,846	284,291
July	73,909	105,789	202,355	195,430	256,646
August	86,515	117,739	225,957	221,609	326,107
September	73,563	123,715	242,742	254,595	333,166
October	79,166	141,814	278,864	294,296	378,872
November	75,617	149,411	264,620	304,481	369,624
December	84,099	145,376	249,071	256,676	301,655
Total	765,361	1,425,589	2,680,716	3,290,131	3,780,880
Percentage of Increase		86	88	23	15

SOURCE: Tourism New Zealand (2006). Reproduced by permission.

Figure 17: Tourism growth table in New Zealand since the release of the first *The Lord of the Rings* film *The Fellowship of the Rings* in 2001 to 2005

"In March of 2004", according to Thompson, "tourism became the country's biggest single export earner (replacing dairy products), and it has increased its lead since." (p. 313). The world premiere of *The Return of the King* in Wellington, as a media-covered cultural event, also largely contributed to putting New Zealand on the map, and made it one of the most desired travel destinations for *The Rings* fans. It also made Jackson a national hero.

The successful production of *The Rings* also attracted other filmmakers to New Zealand, increasing the number of projects for the New Zealand Film Commission. Jackson and his team had created an outstanding filmmaking infrastructure and become a landmark for the New Zealand film industry. Fans also beneficiated from this *Ring's* marketing expansion by taking advantage of the new technologies. The Internet provides endless opportunities for *The Rings* fans. Using the cyberspace, they were able to produce their own *The Lord of the Rings.* Creating new fan websites based on *The Rings* trilogy became very popular, and all we have to do is type "Lord of the Rings" into the Google browser and literally we can find thousands of LoTR and "Ringers" websites. Fans use their websites for almost everything – to host information and knowledge exchange, to discuss the latest news, to create fan communities, to create quizzes, to create matching personality tests with *The Rings* characters, to write their own articles, to create *Ring* artworks, using traditional art tools or digital media, to share their *Ring* video

productions via YouTube.com or other media upload browser or creating and writing new fictional content based on the film trilogy.

Just in April 2000 alone, according to Lealand, an internet preview of *The Fellowship*, reported 1.67 million views during the first 24 hours and 6.6 million in one week. That led to the launch of *The Rings* official website in January 2001 by New Line, followed by the first trailer released online on May 2001 and The LoTR fan club in October 2001. By way of its parent company AOL-Time Warner, New Line targeted existing fans' websites using pop-ups and other online promotional technology, feeding filming, casting, and inside information on the making of the films to promote freely to a worldwide online audience. *The Rings* trilogy has also inspired the *South Park* comedy MTV show and British comedians (and Tolkien fans) French and Saunders; it has in general become a universally recognised cultural marker for it time. And it also became a watershed for the new digital cinematographic era, and, inevitably, the most successful film in New Zealand's history.

3. The Rise of Popular Cults: From Fans to Secret Societies

Peter Jackson's film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* "reawakened legions of dormant long-time fans, and created armies of new one" (Susan Broker, Essay, <u>*Tales Around the Internet Campfire*</u>, Janet Brennan Croft, ed., T*olkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings*, p. 259). Following the popular success of the original book trilogy many readers became fans and formed the first Tolkien fan clubs and organizations in 1960. The first North American organized fan group was a sub-group formed from the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society called The Fellowship of the Ring. In the United Kingdom, the first fan publication, <u>*The Nazgul's Bane*</u>, was created by Ken Chelsin in 1961, and became the first British fan magazine based on Tolkien's books. In 1965, the first formal fan association, The Tolkien Society of America, was formed by Richard Poltz. The Mythopoeia Society was formed in 1967 to discuss fantasy literature, including Tolkien's works among others. These early Tolkien fans created their own fan communities, journals, publications, pins and t-shirts and their own clothes and costumes.

The first online fan group, The Tolkla mailing list, was started in 1990, but following Peter Jackson's film trilogy announcement in 2001, online fandom became divided between "Revisionists" and "Purists", due to the controversy that surrounds the character of Arwen and the absence of Tom Bombadil for the movies. The films also triggered numerous computer and video games that have been quite successful. According to

Kristin Thompson "*Rings* helped revolutionize the way that games are made from films [...] With studios holding game designers at an arm's length, the result could not closely mimic the look and the story of the films" (*The Frodo Franchise,* p.235). Other popular culture references to Middle-earth have also increased, including satires and parodic websites - the most famous being *Tolkien Sarcasm* (flyingmoose.or / tolksarc), *Ringbearer.org's humour* section and *Figwitlives.net*.

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Figure 18: *Lord of the Rings* comics published online by Australian cartoonist John Cook

One of the most renowned fan sites of Peter Jackson's movies is *TheOneRing.net*, also called TORn. It was originally a small movie-news site that gained in prestige as movie-rumours became reality and gained popularity with the cast and crew of the LotRs films. The website is also known to be responsible for popularizing the term Ringers. The TORn can fund itself and puts special effort into winning over the fans by actively supporting other fan sites. The books (and the films) also inspired hundreds of musical compositions, from classical to rock or heavy metal, all in tribute of Tolkien's world. Musicians such as Bob Catley, the lead singer of the rock band Magnum, can be pointed out as an example of a successful rock musician who has put out a "mythical music" release with his solo album called *Middle-Earth*, inspired by *The Lord of the Rings. Or* most famously, we might note Led Zeppelin, Rush's Geddy Lee and Motorhead's Lenny Kilmister who have appeared in documentaries and interviews talking about Tolkien's influence on their music. Other rock bands and musicians have also taken tentative steps into Tolkien´s world, hinting at Tolkien's influence on their work and inserting Middle-earth names such as Gollum and Mordor into their lyrics. Most recently, in 2006, the *Lord of the Rings Musical* played in Toronto and reappeared in London in 2007 and 2008, but it was not considered to be a commercial or critical success like the films.

If the original book trilogy created a solid fan base from the moment of its first publication, Jackson's films, and its related franchises, have attracted even more fans.

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[16] Faudo of the Rings. Accessed on 15-04-2008. http://www.lordotrings.com/artmedia/comics.asp

These new fans, from the new technologies age, originated entire Internet fan-based groups that were discussing their concerns about the casting and film adaptation even before its debut. It also appealed to all kinds of other fans: fans of Peter Jackson's earlier gross-out films, fans of science fiction and fantasy, and fans of the various American and British actors, such as Viggo Mortensen, Liv Tyler, Ian McKellen or Elijah Wood. A good example of an actor whose career was made by LotR is Orlando Bloom; of all the film's stars, he was the one who rose the quickest. His popularity among teenage girls grew so much that he became the sexiest man alive, and the man of the year. The handsome long-haired elf Legolas posters quickly outsold all other *Ring-* related images on Tolkien fan-sites. Therefore, fans are broadly divided into two categories - Lord of the Rings FPF which are fans of the characters from the books and movies, and Lord of the Rings RPF (also known as LOTR RPS or Lotrips), who are fans of the actors who played them in the movies. Although some archives, communities, and sites include both and some fans read and write for both, many fans consider them to be separate kingdoms.

The relationship of fans to their interest in *The Lord of the Rings* can be very complex. They can share their love and passion for Middle-earth and have divergent and extended areas in which they ground their interests. They consume different forms of content and may not be interested in all aspects of Tolkien's books or Jackson's films. They might be insiders in one fandom and outsiders to another, given the diversity of their interests. That gave birth to other kind organizations and cults related to Middle-earth and its mythical aspect, according to Brayton (*From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings,* Jennifer Brayton, Essay <u>Fric Frodo Slash Frodo</u> p.138-153.)

The rise of cults and secret societies after the release of *The Rings* trilogy, helped by the anonymity of the Internet, has also been a curious phenomenon. Occultism can be defined as the wilful or unwilling association with supernatural beings or powers for ephemeral gains. Tolkien's highly imaginative tales of elves, dwarves, and wizards in a land known as Middle-earth offered good ground to form all kinds of cults - from witchcraft to ancient Celtic or Irish cults. These secret societies (silly too many) can mirror many facets of ordinary life. There is always an exclusivity of membership, with an extravagant importance attached to being or becoming a member. This is found in all human endeavours, even those that are not secret, such as football teams, country clubs or fan clubs. This exclusivity of membership is actually one of the secret societies' most powerful weapons. The most potent tool of any secret society is the ritual and myth surrounding

initiation procedures. These special binding ceremonies usually have very deep meaning for the participants.

Tolkien mythological sources have offered to these groups a ticket to Fantasy Land. Tolkien fans have turned to the sources, which form the basis for *The Lord of the Rings* (the literary heritage of the Celts, Northern mythology and folklore, etc.) and Tolkien's works have become a guidebook into this ordered but poetic, solid and inspired world.   Through the fans, *The Lord of the Rings* still lives:

"Middle-earth has become a kind of fan mall. [...] The commercial success of the films has ensured the longevity of *The Lord of the Rings*, and its fans and fandom's will continue to grow and expand over the years" (Ernest Mathijs & Murray Pomernance*, From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings.* Jennifer Brayton. Essay: <u>*Fric Frodo Slash Frodo*</u>, p 152.)
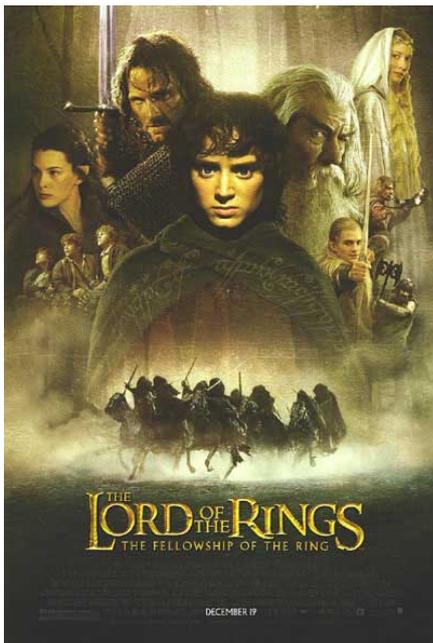
| Figure 19: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) | Figure 20: *The Two Towers* (2002) | Figure 21: *The Return of the King* (2003) |
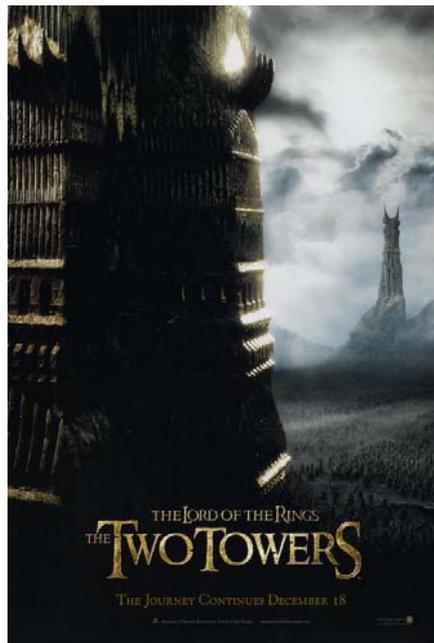
Conclusion

Final Considerations

In an age when false myths of self-fulfilment like James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy* (a 1983 best seller with over 20 million copies sold worldwide by 2005) which approaches various spiritual (and psychological) ideas based in ancient Eastern traditions and New Age spirituality, or *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne (debuted in 2006 and sold over 4 million copies in 2007) that discusses the law of attraction reflecting on people's experiences through logical manifestations of their predominant thoughts, feelings, and words, etc, are considered bestselling truths, Tolkien's mythical creation retains a unique morality – the return of, in his view, long forgotten values such as friendship or loyalty, and some goodness and hope in a world driven by violence and madness. It is no coincidence that *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy found its audience during a decade when the general public was learning to question political power, globalisation, mass consumer marketing, the Internet, mass media, and to how to live their own lives when terror, violence and destruction is a constant shadow on prime-time news. It is worth to remember that Tolkien's book version first found its audience in the turbulence of the revolutionary generation of the 60's. They all could see and identify with Frodo and his Hobbit fellows, the small hero, the average man that still hopes for a better world. So, when Jackson's films were successively released in three-year instalments they found an audience not only made up of fanatical worshipers of Tolkien's world, but also of avid searchers for futuristic and fantastic myths which could somehow fulfil their spiritual longings.

Though it's fair to say that Tolkien's epic has outlasted its cult-status, *The Lord of the Rings* has become an undeniable classic: a work that invites repeated readings without exhausting its potential to deepen and define our moral and spiritual lives. Young and old readers keep returning to these books whether is for wisdom, or just for pure enjoyment. *The Rings* can be considered a true fantasy – a powerful tool to escape to a land of Fantasy, as once Tolkien declared people need to do in his 1939 essay <u>*On Fairy-Stories*</u>. *The Rings* can be seen as an escapist novel in the good sense of the term since it enables us to flee to another kind of reality. The strange new world of hobbits and elves and ents created by Tolkien can free us from bondage to the mundane pseudo-reality that most of us dwell in: a world diminished by blurry familiarity. Fantasy helps us recover an invigorated sense of wonder. Tolkien also observed in this same essay that evil fails, but because of its own greed and fatal character flaws, while good triumphs because of his belief in our intrinsic goodness. This was Tolkien's happy ending or "eucatrastrophe," as

he called it – some kind of "poetic justice" and redemption that he thought was essential for any fairy-tale or fantastic story.

"The great strength of Tolkien's work may, in the end, be its weakness" said Pearce in his book *Tolkien: Man and Myth*, "He has created truth in a form that is truly sublime -- myth. Yet that is also a form of art that can easily be twisted. He was writing a myth, but he wanted it to be a True Myth, a myth rooted in Truth with a capital T. Take away that truth and you change the myth" (p. 301). From this it is clear that Tolkien was out of step with modern notions of relativism, and so for many he will also be a taste they will never acquire.

Just like our great books, many films have become respected art works in our culture, and sometimes very powerful and polemic ones at that. When we view a film, we are seeing ideas presented from the director's point of view. So when we go to a movie theatre to see a film like *The Fellowship of the Rings* we are seeing the story retold from another artist's point of view, in this case we see Peter Jackson's interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings*, working in conjunction with his screenwriters and crew. My argument has been that while *The Rings* films contain Jackson's interpretation, they have striven to remain faithful to the Tolkien's original book version. When asked about it being true to Tolkien's spirit, Peter Jackson mentioned several times that, "we made a real decision at the beginning that we weren't going to introduce any new themes of our own in to *The Lord of the Rings*. We wanted to make a film that was based on what Tolkien was passionate about" (Greg Wright, Peter Jackson in Perspective, p. 169.)

Many of Tolkien's passionate admirers, however, have found it difficult to agree with this. While some writers like Greg Wright and Ian Pryor believe that Jackson's film adaptations were quite close to Tolkien's original work, despite the excisions and the editing, others, like Kayla McKinney Wiggins, do not agree. As she states in her essay *The Art of the Storyteller and the Person of the Hero,* "At the centre of *The Lord of the Rings* is storytelling, and at the centre of any good story is character. In contrast, at the centre of any film endeavour, by virtue of the medium, is the visual impulse. Despite the grandeur, Peter Jackson's trilogy film treatment of *The Lord of the Rings* fails to capture the true spirit of Tolkien's writing and of his characters, primarily because it ignores character and story in favour of action and visuals" (*Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings*, p. 103-104). But, as I stated at the beginning of my work, films and books are inevitably subject to these kinds of different reactions, and *The Lord of the Rings* (both the books and the films) have always had more than their share of emphatic defenders and attackers.

Being an avid book reader and a film goer fan myself, I have watched Jackson's *Rings* films and re-read Tolkien's books several times. I must admit that despite the visual grandeur, especially of the battles scenes, the movies on the whole have been fairly successfully in capturing Tolkien's spirit and sweep – especially if one contrasts them with the previous failed animated attempts by Ralph Bakshi. I think that Jackson's film translations retain much of Tolkien's medievalism. The adaptation process remained quite true to that medievalism, even when some individual elements of the adaptation might be considered less successful. Because of these adaptations, the return of Middle-earth in the films was able to echo Tolkien's use of myth, only this time challenging post-modern cynicism as the return of Middle-earth is also the return of ancient ideals through actions which are driven by courage, loyalty, and love. The success of the film adaptations thus suggests that these ancient ideals and their mythical settings still have the power to enchant a new generation.

In the end, I have to agree with Jim Smith and J. Clive Matthews when they state on their book *The Lord of the Rings, the Films, the Books and the Radio Series* , that "what many fans and critics alike have failed to grasp is one simple fact: no film adaptation can ever be the same as the book upon which it is based [...] Above all, it can try to remain faithful to what the book is about – not just to the plot, but to the 'core' of the material. This Jackson and his team have more than accomplished. The films are not perfect, but then – if we are honest with ourselves – neither are the books" (p. 217-218).

Whether Jackson's version of *The Lord of the Rings* are deemed to be either a big hit or a failure, it is always worth remembering that over the long haul Tolkien's work will endure regardless. It is probable that no one today would dream of pasting a "Frodo Lives" sticker on his car bumper. Yet, the bookstores are more crowded than ever before with people on "quests" to bring a sense of the "mythic" into their everyday lives, and who end up taking home Tolkien's journey of a thousand pages. From book to film, the myth of Middle-earth still lives and will continue to feed the imagination of thousands of generations to come.

APPENDIXES

The Lord of the Rings Films Timeline[17]

1995 November: Peter Jackson mentions idea of filming Tolkien's work to Miramax boss Harvey Weinstein

1997 April: Miramax wins rights to turn *The Lord of the Rings* into a film. Script writing, research and development continue.

1998 June/July: Weinstein decides *Rings* should be made as one movie. The films are put in turnaround. Weinstein gives Jackson 4 weeks to find a company willing to make *The Rings*, after which the rights will return to Miramax.

1998 August: New Line Cinema announces three *Rings* movies to be made concurrently beginning in May 1999, and released at six-month interlude over a the space of one year. Pre-production and redrafting the screen player goes into high gear.

1999 July 10: New Line announces Elijah Wood will star Frodo Baggins

1999 October 11: The trilogy begins filming on a hill overlooking Wellington city, for a scene the hobbits first hide from Black Rider.

2000 September 26: New Zealand Film commission certifies to New Zealand tax authorities that the first film, The Fellowship of the Ring is complete to 'double head fine-cut' stage.

2000 December 22: Main shoot finishes around Wellington followed by a party on the waterfront.

2001 May: Twenty-five minutes of the *Rings* footage plays to media at Cannes Film Festival

2001 October: Weta Digital completes its work on *The Fellowship of the Rings*

2001 December 10: World premiere of The *Fellowship* in London

2002 February/March: *Fellowship* nominated for thirteen Academy Awards, and wins four. Its host of other awards include five Baftas, one of them for best picture.

2002 August: *Fellowship* is released on video and DVD, followed in November by an extended version containing thirty minutes of new footage. The two-tiered release pattern will be repeated for the next two *Rings* movies.

2002 December: World premiere of *The Two Towers* in New York

2003 December: World premiere of *The Return of the King* in Wellington

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[17] Ian Pryor, *Peter Jackson from Prince of Splatter to Lord of the Rings*, pp 229 - 300

# The Lord of the Rings Film Genealogy
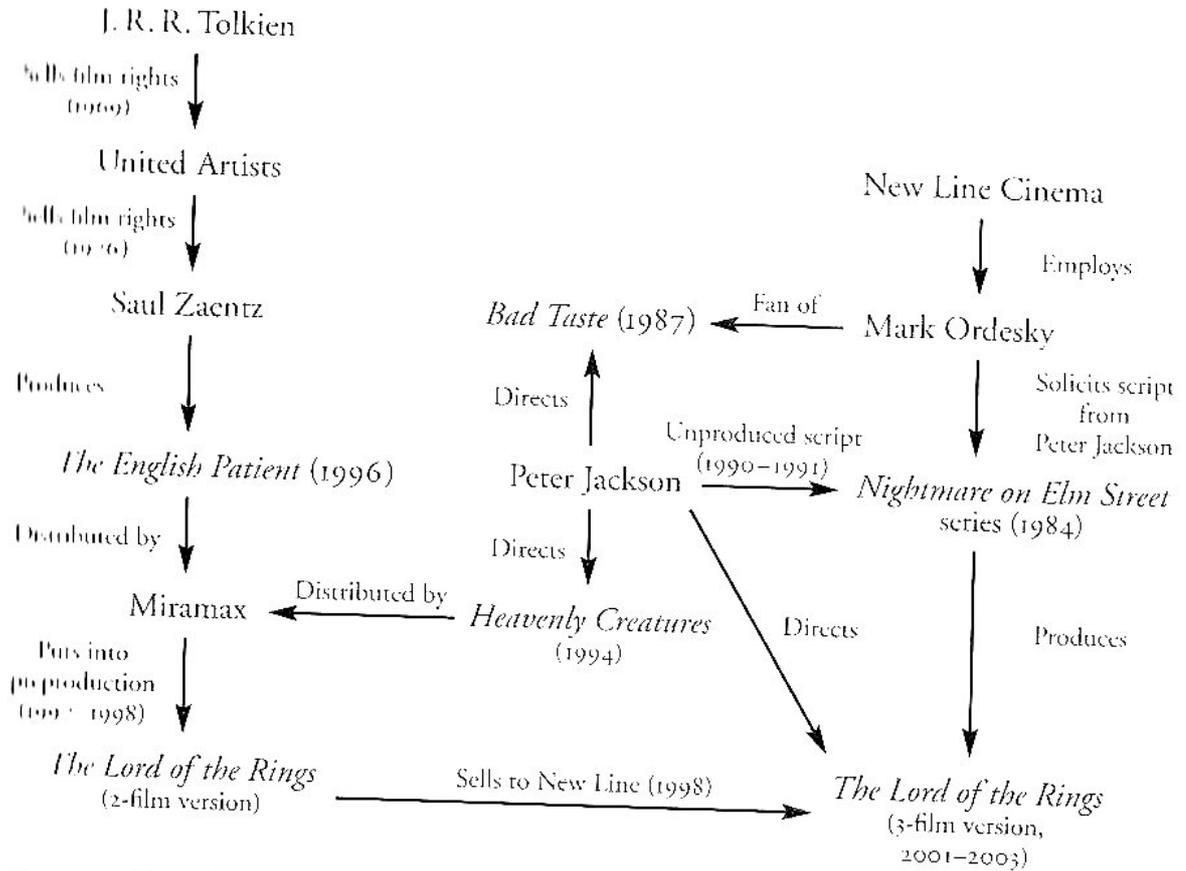
Figure 22: Genealogy of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy by Kristin Thompson

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[18] The Lord of the Rings Film Trilogy Genealogy; Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood*, pp 21.

Middle-earth Maps
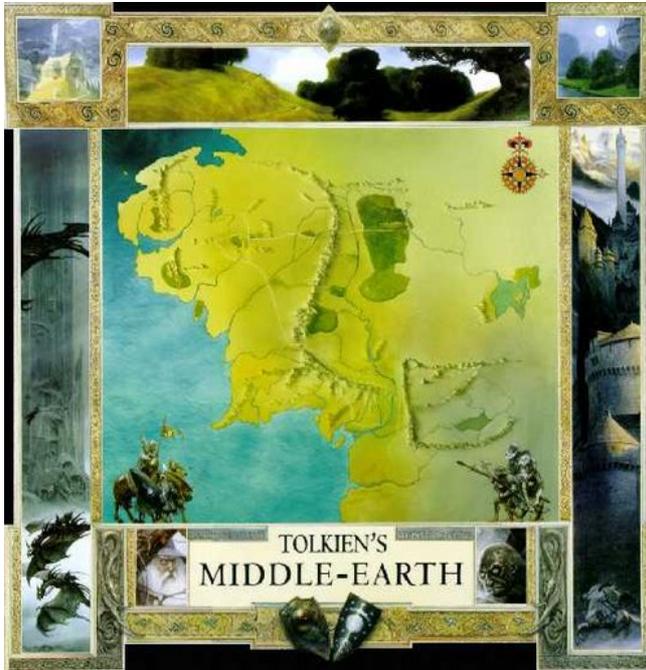
Figure 23: John Howe's Middle-earth Map

Figure 24: Map of Middle-earth used by Peter Jackson on his films
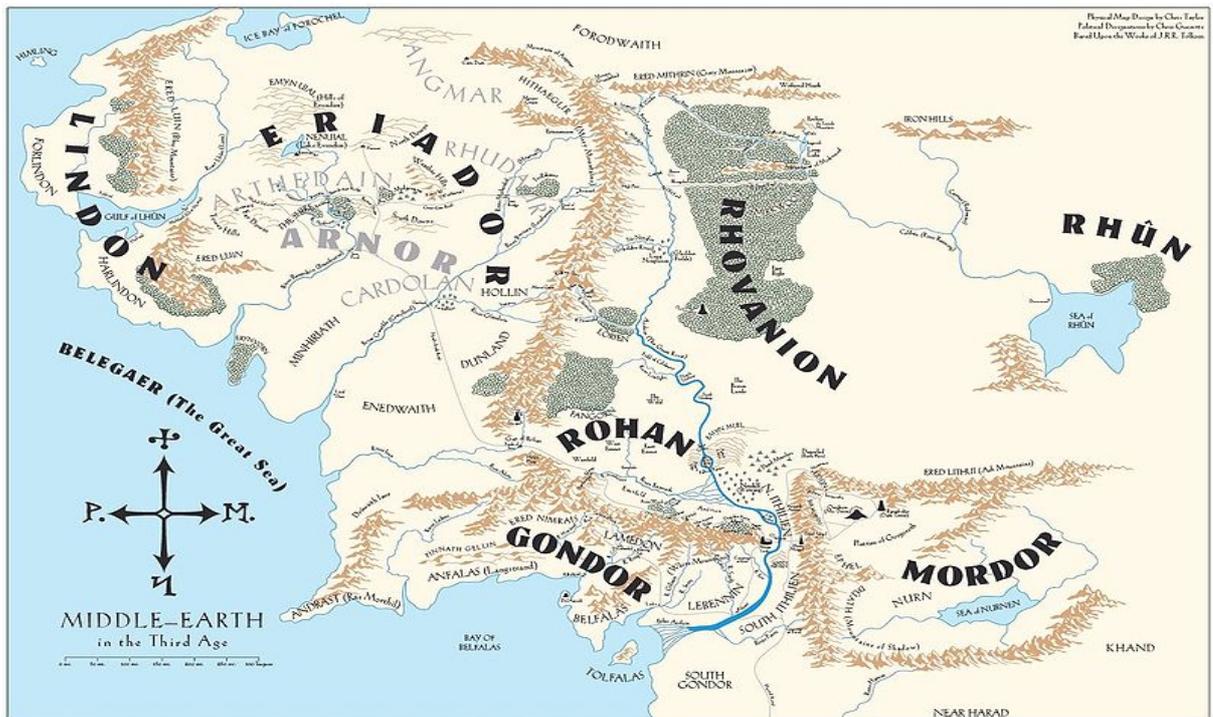
Figure 25: Middle-earth Map redrew by Tolkien and originally published on the LotR (*The Fellowship*) first edition.

Alan Lee and John Howe Original Art Iustrations

Figure 26: Lieutenant of Barad-Dur (John Howe)
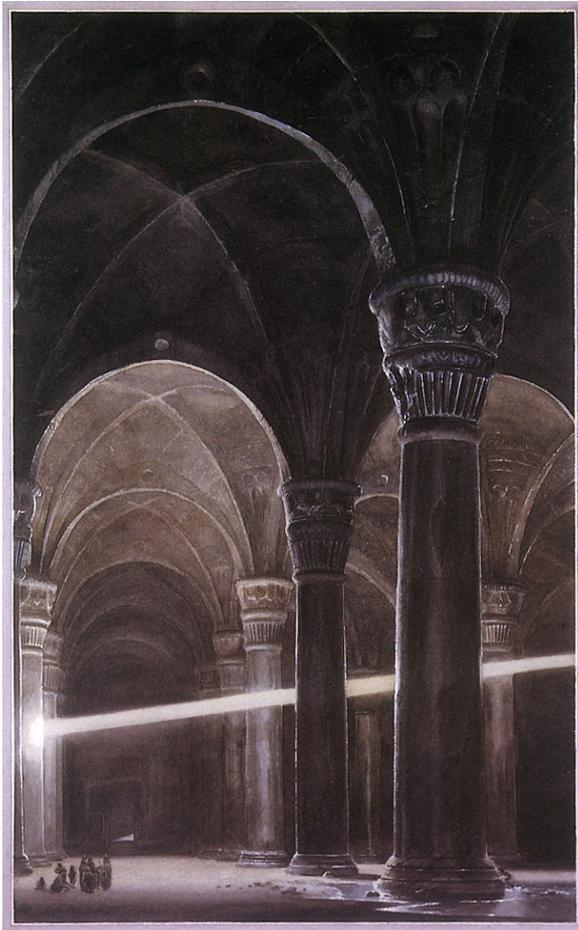
Figure 27: The Mines of Moria (Alan Lee)

Figure 28: Galadriel and Frodo (Alan Lee)

Figure 29: Gandalf arriving at Hobbiton (John Howe)

Figure 30: The Council of Elrond (Alan Lee)

Figure 31: Orc Pursuit (Alan Lee)

Figure 32: Minas Tirith (John Howe)

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  Director: Peter Jackson
  Screenplay: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens and Peter Jackson
  Runtime: 178 min / 208 min (special extended edition)
  Production Company: New Line Cinema
  Box Office Gross (Domestic) $313,364,114 (Foreigner) $555,985,574

- *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002)
  Director: Peter Jackson
  Screenplay: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson and Stephen Sinclair
  Runtime: 179 min / 223 min (special extended edition)
  Production Company: New Line Cinema
  Box Office Gross (Domestic): $341,786,758 (Foreigner) $583,495,746

- *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003)
  Director: Peter Jackson
  Screenplay: Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens and Peter Jackson
  Runtime: 201 min / 251 min (special extended edition)
  Production Company: New Line Cinema
  Box Office Gross (Domestic): $377,027,325 (Foreigner) $742,083,616

- *The Lord of the Rings* (1978) – Cartoon Version
  Director: Ralph Bakshi
  Screenplay: Chris Conkling and Peter S. Beagle
  Runtime: 132 min
  Production Company: Fantasy Films
  Box Office Gross: $30,471,420 (USA)

- *National Geographic: Beyond the Movie: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) - Documentary
  Writers: Rachel Allen, John B. Bredar and Helen Fitzwilliam
  Runtime: 52 min
  Production Company: National Geographic

Secondary Filmography

- *300* (2006); Dir. Zack Snyder

- *Awakenings* (1990); Dir. Penny Marshall

- *Back to the Future* (1985); Dir. Robert Zemeckis

- *Beowulf* (2007); Dir. Robert Zemeckis

- *Da Vinci Code* (2006); Dir Ron Howard

- *Dune* (1984); Dir. David Lynch

- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone* (2001); Dir. Chris Columbus

- *First Knight* (1995); Dir. Jerry Zucker

- *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996); Dir. John Frankenhiemer

- *The Green Mile* (1999); Dir. Frank Darabont

- *The Matrix* (1999); Directors Andy and Larry Wachowski

- *The Matrix Reload* (2003); Directors Andy and Larry Wachowski

- *The Matrix Revolution* (2003); Directors Andy and Larry Wachowski

- *The Wizard of Oz (*1939); Dir. Victor Fleming

- *Stardust* (2007); Dir. Matthew Vaughn

- *Sin City* (2005); Dir. Quentin Tarantino

- *Star Wars: Episode I- the Phantom Menace* (1977); Dir. George Lucas