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## **Comparison of *The Lord of the Rings* Books and Film Adaptations**

Bakalářská práce

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## Annotation

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## **Abstract**

This bachelor thesis focuses on a comparative analysis of the books and the films of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Specifically, it will compare the books with the version of filmmaker Peter Jackson. In the first part, it should give you some insight into J. R. R. Tolkien and filmmaker Peter Jackson's life and work. Then we will move on to compare the media by exploring similarities and differences in the books and films, encompassing narrative structure, character portrayal, and atmosphere. The thesis will also attempt to explore the reasons behind some changes and how they changed the story. Lastly, we will talk about the reception of the films by the audience. Based on these comparisons, the thesis concludes with whether the films correspond to the original.

## **Introduction**

*The Lord of the Rings* written by J.R.R. Tolkien is one of the most famous books in the world. People were fascinated by the beauty of the invented world, the well-developed characters, and the captivating story. Not only the books, but the film adaptations also got a lot of praise and they are one of the most popular films of all time.

This work aims to compare the three movies' extended DVD versions of the *Lord of the Rings* made by filmmaker Peter Jackson with the three books of Tolkien and see whether the adaptation responds to the spirit of the original story and whether it is a successful medium on its own. By concentrating on the differences in the storyline, characters, and atmosphere we should be able to resolve this question. The first part of the bachelor's thesis will focus on the authors of both books and films, adaptation theory to see what is essential for comparing the two media and what is important for the viewer to regard the portrayal of the novels as successful. The second part will focus on how close the films come to the original by identifying differences between the novels and the films and how the changes impact the original narrative. First by identifying differences in the scenes, meaning what was removed or added and why. The characters will be compared based on their description and actions. Lastly, the thesis will identify whether the director was able to capture the overall atmosphere and how the adaptations were received by the public.

# 1 J. R. R. Tolkien

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was a prominent English writer who dominated the fantasy genre ever since his books *The Hobbit* and its sequel *The Lord of the Rings* were published and inspired many following writers in this field.

J.R.R. Tolkien was born in South Africa but moved to England when he was four years old. After finishing his studies at Exeter College, he enlisted in the World War I. where he lost all his close friends except one. During the war, he married his lifelong lover, Edith Bratt. In 1920, he took a job as an English language and literature teacher at the Universities of Leeds and later in 1925 at the University of Oxford. At the University of Oxford, together with some of his friends he formed a literature group named Inklings where they read and discussed their ongoing work. (Doughan, 2024)

In 1937, Tolkien published his first book, *The Hobbit*. After its success, his publisher, Stanley Unwin, asked for a sequel, which was first supposed to be *The Silmarillion* but in Unwin's opinion, it would not prosper in the audience. Ten years later, after the release of *The Hobbit*, came out *The Lord of the Rings* that changed the history of the fantasy genre. (Doughan, 2024) The uniqueness of Tolkien's work lied in creating a fictional universe that felt almost like the real world. He drew from mythology and his personal experiences – especially from war, and incorporated elaborate descriptions of the setting and background of the world with a map and languages that he himself designed – Quenya. Some of his other works that revolve around Middle-earth is the already mentioned *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*, or *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. Worth mentioning might also be his scholarly publication *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics* which was highly acclaimed. (Garth, 2022)

## 2 Peter Jackson

Forever known as the creator of the Lord of the Rings adaptations from 2001-2003, New Zealand's filmmaker Peter Jackson belongs to the most acclaimed directors of all time.

Jackson took interest in film from a very young age and tried making his own short movies. Unlike many, he did not even finish high school. At 16 years old he started working in a newspaper's photography department and after getting a better camera he started shooting his first film, *Bad Taste*. With the help of a grant from the New Zealand Film Commission, the film released in 1987 and was also featured at the Cannes festival where Jackson first came into the public eye. His third movie, *Braindead* earned him recognition as an accomplished horror film director. (Sir Peter Jackson, 2022)

During the 1980s he met and wed his screenwriter, Fran Walsh. Together they made the movie *Heavenly Creatures*, starring yet unknown Kate Winslet in her first big role. Afterwards came the biggest project of their life – the Lord of the Rings trilogy which met with a much greater success than the pair could imagine and it obtained many Oscars, and Academy Awards. Additionally, he was named a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2002 by Queen Elizabeth II. The Lord of the Rings trilogy was followed by *King Kong* (2005), a film that inspired Jackson as a child to become a director. In 2012-2014, another fantasy trilogy, *The Hobbit*, was delivered to the audience. Though it was not as successful among the fans as the first trilogy, it still earned over 3 billion dollars worldwide. (Sir Peter Jackson, 2022)

### 3 Adaptation Theory/Film Adaptation

To compare the books with their film adaptation, we have to understand some basics of how a book gets adapted into a movie – the film adaptation theory. Film adaptation is the transfer of a written work to a feature film. It started developing and becoming popular at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first-ever film adaptation of a novel is said to be Cinderella done by Georges Méliès. Soon after Méliès, others tried to transform popular classical pieces of literature into successful movies, and it became a common practice. Some of the most famous adaptations are said to be The Godfather I and II, Harry Potter, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, and The Lord of the Rings. The reason why film adaptation became popular is the fact that the directors choose acclaimed novels. It became a way to pay tribute to a significant work or author and also a way to make a great profit. According to McFarlane: "The filmmaker's reasons for this continuing phenomenon appear to move between the poles of crass commercialism and high-minded respect for literature"(1996, p.7). The more popular the title, the more people watch the movie and the more money it brings to the filmmakers.

When adapting a book into a movie, satisfying the reader's expectations is difficult and there is a lot of pressure on the filmmaker. Even more so when it is a very famous and critically acclaimed book. Fidelity to the original story is a common major criterion to people for judging the film adaptation, yet it is realistically impractical to adapt every single plotline, character, and detail. Some viewers demand a perfect picture and like to complain when something is not faithful to the template, but they do not realize, as Christian Metz says, that:" the reader 'will not always find his film, since what he has before him in the actual film is now somebody else's phantasy.'" (McFarlane,1996, p.7) There will always be something that will not be executed due to its insignificance to the main storyline and the uselessness of prolonging a movie or simply because the director wants to use his own interpretation of the work. Aiming for complete fidelity is a mistake not just because of the missed interpretations but also because it does not guarantee the success of the adaptation. As Neil Sinyard states: "The most successful screen adaptations of literature have, I would argue, one or all of the main characteristics. They aim for the spirit of the original rather than the literal letter; they use the camera to interpret and not simply illustrate the tale; and they exploit a particular affinity between the artistic temperaments and preoccupations of the novelist and filmmaker." (Sinyard, 2000) So, we have established, that fidelity is, in fact, not the major criterion. Instead, the key factor is the creativity of the director, the choice and performance of the actors, whether the story unfolds similarly in the end despite changes, whether the soundtrack suits the film, whether the atmosphere was

captured; and most importantly, whether the movie can be understood by the reader only or it can stand on its own for the non-readers. The changes are often made to bring the movie closer to the contemporary audience that might be different to the original, especially when the book is very old. So, in fact, the adaptation tells as much about us, the audience, as it tells us about the original story.



## 4 General Differences and Omissions

While the movie adheres closely to the source material, for the most part, some major differences can be found. And since the three books are quite extensive and the world of Middle-earth is vast, the filmmakers were forced to alter the script and make some changes. Jackson himself said:” No movie can ever go into the depth that Tolkien did obviously, but we are going to use prologues, flashbacks, and narration to paint a picture of Middle-earth that will hopefully be more than superficial.” (20 questions with Peter Jackson, 1996)

As was mentioned, the world of Middle-earth is very vast. Many beings live there, including elves, dwarves, ents, orcs, the Dúnedain, the Easterling, etc. The descriptions of inhabitants of Middle-earth are similar to what Tolkien originally had in mind. Throughout the film the viewers are able to meet all sorts of these creatures; however, they do not delve deep into their backgrounds except for the Elves. Considering that the viewers would be overwhelmed by the amount of information about the creatures’ background, Jackson did the wise decision. Though we are not able to have the whole, more magical experience of the world, especially those who have not read the book, would get disinterested after receiving a great amount of information that is not relevant to the main storyline. The plot is supposed to be flowing to keep the viewer’s attention. In Peter Jackson’s words:

“One of the biggest problems with adapting the books – Tolkien gave his characters a fairly leisurely journey – I don’t mean the length of the journey, but rather the lack of dramatic tension, especially pre-Rivendell. For the movies, we will have to make motivations a little tighter and more urgent. We have to focus on The Ring, Sauron and the threat to Middle-earth, there is not much room for the other stuff that is not directly connected to this narrative.” (20 questions with Peter Jackson, 1996)

Another difference is in the overall atmosphere of both of the media. Tolkien’s books are filled with long passages slowly building tension and providing vivid imagery and information about Middle-earth. That is the reason why the plotline of the books is much slower, but for the film audience such a pace is unacceptable for its tediousness. On the other hand, they have a more realistic feel to it, as almost nothing in the world, especially achieving challenging goals, happens in a split second. In contrast to the books, films are hurried, leaving out some unnecessary information (for the films) about Middle-earth, and are more about the action that most of the audience desires. Though many dialogues remain similar or the same,

the adaptations lose the nobility of the language in the books as it had to be simplified for the screen and to appeal to a wider audience.

## ***5 The Fellowship of the Ring***

The Fellowship of the Ring adaptation immediately starts with a prologue told by Galadriel, a great way to fill the viewer in with the brief history of Middle-earth and the danger lurking in the shadows and to draw the viewer into the story.

### **5.1 The Shire**

One of the most significant modifications is the time between Frodo getting the Ring and him departing from the Shire. In the movie, it drastically affects the protagonist's age. In the book, he leaves the Shire a day after his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday and at that time, the Ring had already been in his possession for 17 years without Frodo's knowledge about its origin and significance. It is not clear how long after the party Gandalf came to tell Frodo in the movie, but it appears to be only a few days following Bilbo's disappearance which would lead us to believe he is still a very young hobbit. Since the films never mention Frodo's age, it is thought, by the looks of the actor, that he is around 20 years old. The primary reason for reducing such a great amount of time is that for all those 17 years, nothing important or interesting happened and people like younger protagonists better.

From there, as Peter Jackson mentioned, some events had to be got rid of to take up pace; the hobbits do not meet Elves who travel through the Shire to pass the Sea of the Undying Lands and arrive at the Grey Havens, nor walk to Crickhollow where Frodo arranged his new home and where the fifth hobbit Fatty Bolger awaits them, nor do they meet Tom Bombadil.

The character of Tom Bombadil was completely left out of the movies without any mention. We first meet him when the company of the four hobbits venture into the Old Forest right outside the Hobbiton, which was also entirely omitted from the movie, to go unnoticed by their Enemy. Tom Bombadil is described as hobbit-like creature but larger and heavier. He has a long brown beard, blue and bright eyes, a red face that always smiles, and thick brown hair.

Tom was a character that many readers were fond of because of his joyous nature. It struck controversies when people did not see him in the movies as he was very important in terms of the link with the Ring. He was the only character who did not suffer any consequences after putting the Ring on. He did not disappear and laughed about the faces of the astonished hobbits. And even when the Council in the Rivendell gathers and discusses what to do next, Elrond brings up, that he should have invited Tom to join them. Though this fact is really big, there was no explanation for why he was able to do that and remained surrounded by mystery.

Sadly, according to Peter Jackson, this pleasant character did nothing to advance the main plotline, so he was not included in the adaptations as his dwelling place, the Old Forest.

The movies focus more on battles rather than going deep into the mythology. Battles are more appealing to the movie audience and since most of the people watching did not read the book and thus are not familiar with the world of Middle-earth they are not as picky as book readers who may like better the detailed description of the world.

## **6 *The Two Towers***

The second book divides the plotline into two parts. The first half of the book follows what is happening to Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli and also the hobbits, Merry and Pippin. Subsequently happening, the second half focuses on Frodo and Sam's journey to Mordor. The movie cuts back and forth between these two plots to connect what is happening at the moment to the other members of the divided fellowship.

*The Two Towers* start with the events that were happening at the end of the first book, following Aragorn as he tries to find Frodo who by that time is leaving with Sam without the rest of the Company which now encounters the group of Orcs that had been following them. We see the point of view of Aragorn, so we do not see the battle between Boromir and the orcs, as Aragorn subsequently finds Boromir dying. Jackson shoots an epic scene of the battle and the fall of Boromir to fuel action and emotional reaction from the death of a favoured character. Then both the book and the films follow Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli on their quest to save Merry and Pippin from the Orcs.

### **6.1 Helm's Deep**

*The Two Towers* is often considered as the section with the least action since it mainly describes the breaking up of the fellowship and observes the individual groups' next steps. Nevertheless, there is definitely some action that could be analysed such as the battle at Helm's Deep or the Ent's attack.

Neither of these action sections is described closely in the books. Théoden was on his way to Ford of Isen to reinforce his man but was informed by a messenger that the Ford was lost so he changed his course to Hornburg, fortress in the Helm's Deep. On the way, his company encountered scattered groups of orcs which later came to the battle along with the orcs from Ford of Isen. But the battle is described only in about 10 pages and there is only a slight mention of the battle at Isengard. For the grand finale, Tolkien chose a different event, that is the sequence with Shelob, the spider. It ends with Frodo being poisoned by Shelob and captured by the Orcs and we are left not knowing what happened to him making us eager to know what is next.

Before the battle at Hornburg in the movie, the company of Théoden had to face another obstacle that was added to the narrative – the attack of wargs. There Aragorn is thought to be lost when he falls off a cliff and that is the moment that paves the way for informing us, he viewers, about the great army of Orcs that Aragorn sees coming to Helm's Deep on his way.

Otherwise, there was no way of informing us about the army because of the omission of the Ford of Isen due to saving time.

Unlike in the book, Jackson decided to make the battle at Helm's Deep the climactic moment for the *Two Towers*. He magnified the importance of the battle by reinforcing the Rohirrim by an army of Elves of Lórien which then served as an indication that the creatures of Middle-earth faced the danger together since no one would be spared the evil of Mordor and the Dark Lord, making it a somewhat heartwarming addition.

Some might think that the movie loses tension because of this alteration that makes the ending different and not concentrating on the moment of anticipation about what happened to Frodo. But the movie makes up for it by two epic battles, and ending with the main characters, Gandalf, telling us about the forthcoming battle and then making a different kind of anticipation by focusing on Gollum's monologue of probable betrayal of Frodo and Sam.

## **6.2 The Ent's Attack**

Subsequently with the battle at Hornburg, Isengard was under the attack of the Ents. The battle is not described in the books and is only narrated in retrospective by Merry and Pippin when they tell Théoden and the rest about what happened, since Tolkien does not concern himself much with detailed action.

Contrary to the book, the whole battle was filmed making it a climactic scene along with Hornburg's victory. Also, the film Ents decision whether to go to Isengard took less time and the movie showed them as passive onlookers who claimed that it is not their war, giving them more human feel. The character of Merry got more chance to be helpful for the whole situation of Middle-earth, meddling in the conversation and trying to persuade the Ents and we could better see his gradual growth as in the books he was sort of a bystander until the Return of the King which in the film would not work and he would be seen as useless.

## **6.3 Faramir's Arch**

One of the most important differences in the adaptation was the alteration character of Faramir, an honourable captain of Gondor. He is a noble, wise, and kind man. His meeting with the halflings is very important for that is the moment when Faramir acts differently.

In the book, Faramir questions the halflings but does so not in a hostile manner. Though Frodo and Sam do not tell him everything about Isildur's Bane and other state of affairs he is able to figure most of it out from his keen observations. He understands Frodo told him

everything he could. and then, violating his father's orders to kill anyone without the leave of the Lord of Gondor, he lets Frodo and Sam continue on their journey, giving them supplies and warning them about trusting Gollum and the way they want to take. Not once is he tempted to see or take Isildur's Bane, nor does he press Frodo for answers about it. Frodo himself observed: „Yet he felt in his heart that Faramir, though he was much like his brother in looks, was a man less self-regarding, both sterner and wiser.” (*Two Towers*, p. 665) For these reasons, unlike most of the creatures of Middle-earth, Faramir is one of the only ones who do not succumb to the power of the Ring. There is absolutely no sign of him wanting to take it and use it against his enemy for his will is very strong and he knows the enemy's dark weapon would not help them.

Jackson altered Faramir almost beyond recognition. Faramir's meeting with the hobbits does not go as smoothly and friendly as in the book. Though Faramir's qualities of wisdom, kindness, and valour mostly preserve, his qualities that show while questioning the hobbits clash with his gentle and kind behaviour in the book, thus not making much sense. Jackson decided to give Faramir one of his brother's flaws – that is the desire for the Ring and made him an ordinary man unable to resist the power of the Ring. The films lower him to an ordinary man hungry for power and praise from his father. That is not to say that the change was wrong or pointless. Book Faramir was once again a safe point in the hobbits' journey, making it that much less challenging for them and more happy-go-lucky. However, such a plot would not be to the audiences' liking, therefore this alteration created more conflict which was certainly necessary. Showing Faramir conflicted and flawed gave more depth and complexity to his character and made the story more interesting. The change was also necessary because of the structure that Peter Jackson chose to follow. The climax of the second book is the chapter with Shelob's Lair where we are left on a cliffhanger with what will happen to Frodo and Sam, but with Shelob being moved to the third film, there had to be another climax for Frodo and Sam's journey in the *Two Towers*. (Faramir and the Temptation of the Ring: The Book and the Film, 2020)

## ***7 The Return of the King***

### **7.1 Denethor's Fall and the Palantíri**

The books depict Denethor as a selfish yet competent steward of Gondor. He lights the beacons while Gandalf and Pippin are still on their way to Gondor. Even though he was capable of managing the city well despite the threat of Mordor and Sauron, the shadow of his son's, Boromir's, death hurt him deeply, and the fear of Mordor also strengthened his sorrow and despair, and he went mad. He is also in possession of a Palantír, a stone-like "device" that not only allowed communication between the users in possession of these stones, but it also allowed them to see a possible future. For these purposes, the stones were used by Saruman to communicate with the Dark Lord and by Lord Denethor hinting that Sauron or Saruman, who also owned one, have in some way contributed to his madness.

The films make him out to be another villainy character unable of taking necessary actions and managing his reign. The beacons were lit by Pippin, after he and Gandalf arrived, against Denethor's stubborn will to not bow to the Horsemen. The films emphasized the fall of Denethor but made less sense as to how the city was able to resist the evil for so long with such incompetent ruler. The change was also quite sudden, as Denethor's behaviour was not seen as madness but his normal state. Though there is one Palantír present in the adaptations, they are described as a way to communicate with Sauron, which can be deduced from the moments when Saruman, Pippin, or Aragorn use this "device". They are not expanded upon, and we learn nothing further about them.

### **7.2 The Dead Men of Dunharrow**

A significant change was made to the Army of the Dead. Thanks to the army's presence the battle at Pellenor Fields was won by Gondor and its allies. Yet, Tolkien's army is released by Aragorn after taking over the ships coming to help Sauron and never arrives on the battlefield. The allies that join him are his two elvish brothers and sons of Elrond, the Dúnedain, folk of Lebennin and Lamedon, and fiefs of the south. Jackson's alteration is more of a *deus ex machina* solution, but it was required because it would seem more like a miracle that Gondor and Rohan would have won it without any other help. It gives the story more action and create more dramatic climax to the battle.



### **7.3 Houses of Healing**

The soldiers injured from the battle of Pellenor Fields were taken to Houses of Healing to recover. Some of those injured were Merry, Éowyn, and Faramir who were deathly wounded by some dark power that kept them from healing but nobody knew how to heal them. At night, Aragorn comes, and the readers discover that the rightful king of Gondor has the power to heal. The three get better after some time. During their time of healing in the Houses of Healing, Éowyn meets with Faramir and despite her coldness at first, she falls in love with him and they get married after the war.

In the films, it may be confusing as there are scenes where Aragorn takes care of Éowyn after the battle as any other person would. However, there are no signs of him having any such powers as in the books and Éowyn seems to be wounded only lightly and heals automatically on her own. Also, the portrayal of Éowyn and Faramir's love is captured quite well. Although the scenes are quite short, they capture Éowyn's struggle with darkness and her overcoming it and falling in love with Faramir.

### **7.4 Loss of Twists**

The last movie, like the second one, tried to follow a linear chronological order of events and cut between them. Therefore, unlike the books, at the battle at the Black Gate, the viewers already know, that when the Mouth of Sauron shows Aragorn and the rest the clothes and equipment of Frodo and Sam which robbed the company and the readers of the last hope, that the hobbits are not captive and are in fact still heading to the Mount Doom. Ergo, the movie loses a plot twist. On the other hand, skipping from one plotline to another would've been anticlimactic for the films, as when it would get back to one point of view, the viewers would have already focus on the second and forget about the first because of the length of the films. (Fedorová, 2019, p. 17-20)

### **7.5 Scouring of the Shire**

After the War of Ring was won and the hobbits travelled back to the Shire, we are met with very surprising events. The Shire had been taken over by a group of ruffians lead by no other than Saruman. The hobbits homeland has been destroyed by fire and mechanics, same as at Isengard. It demonstrated how War not only affects the people and places near the battlefields but the whole Middle-earth, not excluding their peaceful homeland. This chapter could point to Tolkien's experience and criticism of war and the fact that even though it comes to an end there is an aftermath influencing people's effort to adapt to normal life and that there is no guarantee

that the bloodshed will never occur again. This is described in an article written by one of Tolkien's grandsons: "There is a sense too that the world has been fundamentally changed by Sauron even though he has been defeated ... how terrible it must have been to fight 'the war to end all wars' only to have to send your sons to fight in another war 20 years later." (Simon Tolkien, 2017)

Jackson's approach is more naïve than Tolkien's. The films do not allow us to see this plotline, though it is implied in the *Fellowship in the Ring* when Frodo looks into the mirror of Galadriel and with horror looks at Orcs destroying the Shire and enslaving its inhabitants. Instead, he uses common film trope when the good wins over evil and everything goes back to normal, and everyone can live their happy lives (except for Frodo who embodies the consequences of war and leaves Middle-earth to heal). The hobbits come back to the Shire and celebrate, Sam gets married. The reason for this omission is simple. The main quest which the film is about has already been completed. The climax was when the Ring was destroyed, therefore adding another narrative would be prolonging the already lengthy films while not contributing to the main plot.

## 8 The Characters

### 8.1 Aragorn

We know that Aragorn is one of the Rangers, otherwise known in the books as the Dúnedain. Not much is known about them in the movie, but in the books, they are believed to have strange powers of sight and hearing. Aragorn, on top of being one of the Dúnedain, is an heir of Gondor's throne and has the power of healing.

In the novels, Aragorn seems like a typical hero who tries to reach his given goal and is almost fully developed when we first encounter him. He does not doubt his role as the king of Gondor in the slightest and is determined to do everything in his power to achieve it. His status is often recognizable by his sword, Narsil, reforged and renamed Andúril in the Rivendell. When talking about his duty he often seems to raise awe in the others: "He seemed to have grown in stature while Éomer had shrunk; and in his living face they caught a brief vision of the power and majesty of the kings of stone. For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown." (Two Towers, 433-434) He is a powerful character, recognized for it by most.

Aragorn in the films is a very different character from the one Tolkien had in mind. Much more modern in a sense of his insecurity about the role of an heir of the throne. Throughout the three movies, he struggles with the burden of becoming king. His predecessor Isildur did not cast the Ring into Mount Doom as he should have done and Aragorn doubts himself, as he has the same blood, thinking he also has the same weakness. In that sense, he is much more human than in the book and viewers can sympathise with him more since he does not seem emotionless. Honegger in his thesis states this: "The basic 'psychological' setup (if we are to use this rather ill-fitting category) does not change (see Veugen 2005) and Aragorn is, in my view, an intentionally 'flat' character. Jackson obviously felt uncomfortable with presenting such a protagonist. He therefore changed him into a 'modern' character haunted by self-doubts and insecurities which he is finally able to overcome, and this way re-shaped Aragorn into a protagonist with whom the audience can identify. As Kaščáková mentions: "...he is less supernatural and stately and more of a modern man. He has human warmth in him that Tolkien's Aragorn only rarely betrays." (2012, p. 68-78) As a result, Jackson's Aragorn is psychologically more realistic and appealing to modern readers, and, in contrast to Tolkien's protagonist, it makes sense to discuss his development within a psychological framework." ("More Light than Shadow? Jungian Approaches to Tolkien and the Archetypal Image of the

Shadow, 2011) Film Aragorn grows into his ability to accept the crown of the realm of Gondor. The time when Aragorn fully accepts his destiny is when he is given Anduril from Elrond.

His appearance in the movie might be more flattering with Viggo Mortensen's handsome face. While his looks in the books are not specifically described, the first time Frodo meets Aragorn in Bree he points out: "You have frightened me several times tonight, but never in the way that servants of the Enemy would, or so I imagine. I think one of his spies would – well, seem fairer and feel fouler, if you understand." (Fellowship of the Ring, p. 171) For the same reason as Elijah Wood as Frodo was chosen, Viggo Mortensen is more modern and likable to the audience as a younger and more handsome protagonist.

Another significant change is his interaction with Éowyn. Book Aragorn did not interact much with her and even though he respected her, he never showed any sign of romantic feelings towards her. It is also suggested that he did not really know how to interact with her (and neither with Arwen, nor maybe any other woman). Most of the time, he is determined to do his duty but when faced with Éowyn's arguments for riding forth to the battle with the rest of the Men, he is at a loss for words and instead of telling her to do her duty he tries to calm her down and change her mind. On the other hand, when facing the Dead Men of Dunharrow, he does not waver in the face of danger and is committed to his task. (Kašćáková, 2012, p. 68-78)

## **8.2 Arwen and Éowyn**

Arwen is an elf living in Rivendell and Aragorn's love interest. As readers, we may meet her only in Rivendell, in the first book, upon the arrival of Aragorn and the hobbits, and later, their love story is told in one of the appendices at the end.

The first time we meet Arwen in the movies is when she comes to aid Aragorn and the hobbits on their way to Rivendell. But in the books, it was an Elf lord named Glorfindel in her stead, who then never appeared in the book again. Arwen does not appear much in the original story (apart from Appendixes), but the movies expanded upon her character, featuring her more prominently in Aragorn's dreams and flashbacks. Showing Arwen only in Rivendell, as there was not much time to include stories from the Appendixes, would be pointless as viewers might forget about. Glorfindel is not a recurring character and thus the decision to replace him by Arwen is understandable. She is the reason why Aragorn goes on and therefore an important part of the story. From a filmmaking standpoint, the change to include her more in the movie makes sense as it helps to develop Arwen's character and make her more than just a love interest of Aragorn as described in the books, and it also makes us see a more emotional side of Aragorn

(which he does not show much in the books). It also makes more sense considering their love story. In the movies, they have more time to expose us to their closeness and so at the end of the movie when they marry, the relationship does not seem out of the blue or forced as it does be in the books.

Together with Éowyn, they were allowed more room in the movie to present themselves as strong women who are not afraid to fight for themselves or their loved ones. Tolkien's portrayal of women might be seen as misogynistic because of them being almost excluded from the narrative, and because of their stereotypical archetypes. They serve as a decorative element being almost irrelevant to the main plotline. As far as Arwen is concerned, she seems just as a divinely beautiful side character; a prize for the male protagonist after achieving his goal. On the other hand, Éowyn, while she possesses beautiful features, is portrayed as strong and independent. On the first meeting with her, Aragorn describes her as: "Very fair was her face and her long hair was like a river of gold. Slender and tall she was in her white robe girt with silver; but strong she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings." (Lord of the Rings: Two Towers, p. 515)

Jackson chose a safe way, as the modern world favours strong, intelligent women characters able to face oppression from the patriarchal society and to look after themselves. Women that are not necessarily dressy, motherly and do not wait for their prince to appear and save them. While Jackson did keep their femininity and used very beautiful actresses to portray Éowyn and Arwen, he made them more "cool" for the contemporary audience and taking action on their own accord. Jackson also used a nice and often appreciated addition in modern films. He adjusted Aragorn and Éowyn's relationship by making them interact more and growing closer to each other, thereupon the viewers would think that the two would have a chance at a romantic relationship. From Éowyn's view, it was obvious she did love him, and it was also implied that Aragorn was interested in her, therefore adding to the romance between Aragorn and Arwen, and Aragorn and Éowyn helping form a love triangle.

A Commonweal article states that "Tolkien always seemed a little theoretical in his presentation of women," but on screen, Éowyn (as well as Arwen) is "specific, mercurial, and commanding." The result is that when Éowyn defeats the Witch King, audiences could feel "battalions of women cheering her on." (Porter, 2005)

### **8.3 Gandalf**

A wizard who often appears in the Shire and is known there mainly due to his skill with fires, smokes, and lights. He is a character of dignity, kindness, and composure. One of the most helpful characters, who begins the hobbit's journey to destroy the One Ring. The movies portray him similarly but slightly diminish his character. He is prone to lose composure and lash out for example on Bilbo who cannot part with the ring and accuses Gandalf of wanting the Ring for himself. Sometimes, Pippin's stupid actions also make his short temper come out on the surface. Furthermore, he tends to doubt himself or having to prove he is powerful or wise. For instance, he often questions his choice of Frodo as the Ring bearer. In the books, he is more confident in himself. When trying to open the doors to Moria, he does not know the word that will open them, but he does not doubt that he will figure it out. In the films however, he lashes out on Pippin and, annoyed, gives up after few tries. By these changes of his original characteristics, the films make Gandalf more human and bring him closer to the audience.

### **8.4 Saruman**

In both, books and films, Saruman is not seen as often as other characters but is a key persona for the plot. He is a wise and proud wizard and leader of the White Council. His proudness led him to corruptness, and he became a servant of the Dark Lord.

Peter Jackson simplified Saruman's character. He is portrayed just a villain with no dynamic change or progress of character. We as viewers cannot see that he was once a truly great, and wise wizard and instead see his malice and wickedness. The films also make us believe that he is on the side of Sauron, in his opinion the winning side, whereas in the books, he works for Sauron only to get to the Ring and become the most powerful being in Middle-earth and rule the world.

His death plays out differently in both media. In the books, he is killed by Wormtongue after being let go by Frodo even though he took over the Shire and gradually destroyed it. As this chapter was not included in the films his death was altered. In the films, he is killed in Isengard right after the battle with Ent's and arrival of Gandalf and the others. Wormtongue stabs him and Saruman falls down from Orthanc on a spike. Might be seen as unnecessarily gory but served its purpose and closed the characters story.

## **8.5 Frodo Baggins**

In the movie, the character of Frodo is portrayed much younger than in the books. He looks around 20 when originally, he turns 33 when Bilbo celebrates his 111<sup>th</sup> birthday and leaves. Later, when Frodo is departing from the Shire, he is around 50 years old. As to why the actor for Frodo, Elijah Wood, was chosen; nowadays, it is more likable when an actor is young, and Peter Jackson believed him to be the most talented actor in his age group.

In the books, he was, like his uncle Bilbo, an adventurous individual, wandering alone in the far hills and woods of the Shire, he was also found queer by the other hobbits. He learned a little bit of Elvish and was able to catch some words and talk to the Elves when he met them on his journey. The movies do not mention his adventurous nature or his knowledge of the outside world. It depicts him as helpless and scared most of the time. However, in the books, he is quite courageous and does not give up easily. It is shown, for example, in the Old Forest where he saves sleeping hobbits against Barrow-wight. First, he thinks about putting the Ring on and escaping, but he musters up his courage and chops off the arm of the wright. In the Two Towers, while Sam is scared to climb down the rope hanging down the rocks into a mist, not knowing what is underneath him, Frodo does not hesitate because he knows everything depends on him finishing his quest, and he musters up his courage and goes down. Less trusting of Gollum in the books. He knew Gollum was corrupted and Sam was his loyal close friend.

The Ring affected him differently. While movie Frodo was clutching it, making us believe it hurt him, book Frodo mentions that the Ring feels like it's changing its size and weight.

## **8.6 Sam Gamgee**

Sam is a kind-hearted hobbit who sets out on a journey with Frodo and accompanies him on his quest to Mount Doom. He loves him very much and always looks out for him. On the road, he often remarks on something that happened in the Shire, or something his Gaffer would say to him in some situations which unfortunately is omitted in the movies. Apart from being a more comical and sweet character, he is also very heart-warming and emotional – when he realizes he is going to see the Elves, he starts crying from joy.

His character development is more apparent than in the films. He is an innocent hobbit who follows his master and close friend on an adventure knowing nothing about the world and being sort of helpless. The books delve into his inner thoughts, and we can sometimes see things from his perspective. His friendship with Frodo is beautifully depicted in the books thanks to

these thoughts. He is not afraid to stand up for Frodo and give up his life for his. There is also a moment when he puts on the Ring and goes to save Frodo from the Orcs and even though he is a little reluctant to part with the Ring, it is shown that he is not corrupted so easily.

Movie Sam is in demeanour very similar. His friendship with Frodo remains similar even though in the books they were more of a master and servant. The main difference is that he never puts on the Ring but is still hesitant to give it back to Frodo which emphasizes the strong power and corruptness of the Ring and how hard it is to bear it.

## **8.7 Gollum**

The history of Gollum goes way back. His real name is Sméagol and his hobbit-like kin used to live on the banks of the Great River (Andúin) at the edge of the Wilderland. His story from the flashback in the novels is a little bit different. After getting the Ring, he stayed at his village and started to change. He gathered hurtful information and used it against others. All his kin then turned against him and started calling him Gollum because of his murmuring and gurgling in his throat. He was ejected and hid in the mountains.

Jackson did not paint the character of Gollum as evil as Tolkien or at least he made him more redeemable and a little more complex. Gollum finds Frodo's attitude towards him surprisingly friendly. He starts to like the hobbit and he fights his "other self" effected by the Ring to behave. Jackson makes us pity him while showing us his internal struggles which are present in the book, but he still always comes out as a malevolent creature beyond repair. Movies leaves us questioning whether after all he is a good person, and we end up rooting for him to overcome his bad side and the power of the Ring which as in the books unfortunately does not happen.

Despite the events at Mount Doom playing out similarly, Gollum's death in the book is kind of an accident, when he is celebrating, he falls off the cliff into the lava. This would be a somewhat anticlimactic final moment for the whole Frodo and Sam's journey; hence Peter Jackson chose to include a final struggle between Frodo and Gollum fighting for the Ring and Frodo's resistance against despair.

## **8.8 Merry Brandybuck and Pippin**

This comedic duo remains similar to the template, but not quite. The movies depict them as not entirely aware of the danger they are getting into, but in the original, they figure out Frodo wants to leave the Shire and after hearing the story about the Ring they decide to join



and help him, unlike in the film, where they somehow stumble upon an adventure and just tag along. Greg Harvey's says: "Jackson felt compelled to flatten these good-natured and generally upbeat hobbits into buffoons who provide major comedy in an otherwise fairly serious story." (2011)

Book Merry is a future leader of the Brandybucks, quite mature, smart, and responsible from the beginning, though a little naïve and yet unaware of how dangerous the journey is. He helps with the task of finding Frodo a new home and helps plan Frodo's journey, figures out why Frodo wants to leave the Shire, studies map in Rivendell to be prepared for the journey, which comes in handy when he is captured by the group of orcs together with Pippin. He is also quite curious and often asks others about their past or the history of Middle-earth. Other characters (for example Théoden who takes a liking to the hobbit) also perceive him as smart and pleasant, striking a conversation with him on occasion. In both media, he truly realizes the danger when directly facing war. Throughout the movies, Merry has an arch. He does not lack courage but has to grow into his mature and responsible state. However, he seems to be more similar to Pippin in the aspect of naivety and impulsivity. Together with Pippin, they like to have fun and take things lightly which is so in the books as well, but sometimes they act more like children in the adaptations. As Lynette Porter states, young viewers can identify with Merry more as a young and vulnerable person and his "role as an older sibling for younger cousin Pippin". (2005, p. 23-55)

Pippin is more similar to Tolkien's idea, being an accidental troublemaker because of his naivety and curiosity. He causes many problems for himself and his fellow travellers – like making his group's whereabouts known to the enemy or taking the Palantíri – but at the same time tries to be helpful. Similarly to Merry, he also forgoes an arch during which he matures and starts acting according to the danger he faces. In the book, his risky behaviour is redeemable because it is unintended, while in the movie, he gets in the way of the journey making some of the other characters (especially Gandalf) angry. He then recovers, going into the service of Denethor and fighting in the war. (Porter, 2005, p. 56-89)

## **8.9 Legolas and Gimli**

Legolas and Gimli similarly to Merry and Pippin, are more of a comedic relief to disperse of too much dramatic tension in the films. They do not appear as much in either medium. On some occasions, their comedic scenes seem improper for the moment, but they serve to light up the mood of the viewers as the atmosphere is often very dark and helpless.

Legolas is a noble-looking elf. He likes to joke sometimes and describes his kind and their customs to the rest of the fellowship but other than that he is quite bland. The movies, though it does not give him much more to say and keep him as reserved as in the book, allow him a little more screentime by putting him in sometimes unnecessary action scenes like sliding down the stairs on an orc shield like you would on a skateboard or killing an oliphant and all his riders by himself and sliding down the oliphant's trunk. These moments make him memorable and “cool” for the current audience but also make him seem like a much more powerful character than the others therefore less believable since we know that for example Gandalf is an infamous wizard much stronger than him. Since Legolas in the original is mostly quiet and not very noticeable, Jackson had to add more scenes with him to the screen, otherwise there would be almost no point of him in the films with many of the passages from the book missing. (Porter, 2005, p. 144-166)

Gimli is a stout, resolute and slightly quick-tempered dwarf. He is known for his bickering with Legolas and love for his dwarf culture, often talking about the crafts and history of his kind. The difference in his character lies in how he shows his emotions. In the books, he does not show them on the outside, but he expresses his loyalty, concern about the others, or grief through his words and actions. When the fellowship discovers the tomb of Balin (his relatives), Gimli's only reaction was to cover his face with a hood. Though he must have been shaken, he does not show any kind of emotion. Gimli in the films is much more expressive. Unlike in the books, he gets teary-eyed when he finds out about Balin. On top of his expressiveness, he, as Legolas has some added comical scenes that tend to destroy the gravity of the moments and his serious demeanour in the books. (Porter, 2005, p. 144-166)

## 9 Music and poetry

The world of Middle-earth is filled with songs and verses. It evokes a feeling of the real world. Throughout the three books, the reader can catch many of these because they are often sung by the main characters, the hobbits sing on their journey to brighten their mood, Aragorn sings a mourning song about Boromir's death, etc. But the most notable is the hobbit's walking-song with words created by Bilbo:

“...

Home is behind, the world ahead,

And there are many paths to tread

Through shadows to the edge of night,

Until the stars are all alight.

Then world behind and home ahead,

We'll wander back to home and bed.

Mist and twilight, cloud and shade,

Away shall fade! Away shall fade!

Fire and lamp, and meat and bread,

And then to bed! And then to bed!” (Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2022, p. 78)

The song was adjusted and sung by Pippin in the movies and became a nice addition whilst emphasizing the feeling of hopelessness from the whole situation of Middle-earth.

Although the books contain much more singing, the movie makes up for it with its soundtrack composed by Howard Shore for which he won many Grammys, Golden Globes, and Oscars. The soundtrack itself gave the story a much greater feel of an epic adventure. Enya's soothing and ethereal voice and music evoke the atmosphere of Tolkien's fantasy world as well. As mentioned in the book *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings*, the music takes us into a different world: “It's designed really to transport you into another world,” director Peter Jackson says of the music. It brings “the world of Middle Earth to life” ... “The unreal presence of music is the point of distraction: the musical saturation

allows the audience to hear the musicality of a world that has receded into the mythical past.”  
(2006, p. 246)

## 10 Audience Reception

The fans of the *Lord of the Rings* were thrilled when they heard that there is going to be a film adaptation of the famous books. Every movie was awaited with high expectations and anticipation, how is Jackson going to portray fans' image of the world.

With the positive reception, there is no denying that the trilogy was a huge success, influencing other filmmakers to aim for something of the similar letter. Therefore, from the reception of the audience, we would draw that the films were successful on its own, supposing there was no written form before. Whether it was successful as an adaptation of the books is more complicated as the opinions differ.

Though the reviews of the adaptations vary, Peter Jackson's trilogy was mostly praised for its portrayal of Tolkien's world. Elvis Mitchell from The New York Times wrote that Jackson's ability to recognize what is important in the whole story and what needs to be changed is quite imposing. (Lord of the Rings, 2003) On top of the very skilled makeup and costume team working on the suitable attire of the actors, Jackson was able to use digital technology like no other before him. Jonathan Romney praises The Fellowship of the Ring, saying: "The Fellowship of the Rings disarmed criticism, for it genuinely looked like nothing ever seen. Far more extravagant, more painstakingly artisan-like than previous digital epics, it created a self-contained universe that felt entirely true to the spirit of Tolkien's books." (The Independent, The Return of the King 2003) As for the film adaptations capturing the spirit of the original books, the answer is very subjective ranging from content and approving opinions to conflicting. As mentioned previously by the New York Times's Elvis Mitchell, Londez also supports the opinion that Jackson managed to "bring Tolkien's world to life so perfectly". (Londez, 2005, p. 34) The films are a visual journey through beautiful landscape bringing out Tolkien's detailed description of Middle-earth. Many lines from the books were kept in the story

Some of the changes Peter Jackson made were met with positive reception and even considered an improvement of the book. In the words of Shelton Luke:

"Peter Jackson changes several characters in a way that makes them less self-assured and more approachable. What this does is make these characters more personable for a modern viewership. If we look at characters like Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, and Gimli, all of whom went through these kinds of changes during the adaptation process, this trend looks valid." (Small

Hands Do Them Because They Must': Examining the Reception of The Lord of the Rings Among Young Readers 2020, p. 17)

On the other hand, some of the comedy elements were criticised – like Legolas sliding down an elephant's trunk, or Gimli and Legolas's drinking "battle". While some of it may help the films to feel a little bit more modern, it makes too light of some situations, putting the scenes in "wrong" places, hence interrupting the pacing, or simply being useless and stupid.

In the *Two Towers*, some people mention that with the combining of the three narratives (following Aragorn with Legolas and Gimli, Frodo and Sam, and Merry and Pippin) and jumping from one narrative to the other, the films lose the hopelessness and uncertainty. Suzi Feay brings up that: "This was perhaps an inevitable choice, and it certainly gives the action a reassuring narrative flow, but the effect is to leach much of the despair and loneliness out of the Hobbits' quest." (The Independent, 2002)

On the other hand, the son of J. R. R. Tolkien, Christopher Tolkien, was more than disappointed with the adaptations, calling them action movies for young people from 15 to 25 years old. He states that: "The chasm between the beauty and seriousness of the work, and what it has become, has overwhelmed me. The commercialization has reduced the aesthetic and philosophical impact of the creation to nothing. There is only one solution for me: to turn my head away." (*Christopher Tolkien Trashes Peter Jackson's 'Lord Of The Rings,' Says Films Lack "Beauty And Seriousness" Of The Books*, 2013)

Another not so positive review, regarding the *Fellowship of the Ring*, came from Thomas Sutcliffe from The Independent: "As fable, though, it's likely to satisfy only those who are easily satisfied: either children, or grown-ups who seek a refuge from the more ambiguous moral battles of real life. *The Lord of the Rings* finds its true kinship not with the grand myths of history but with the faded photocopies of recent years." (2001)

## 11 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to compare the Lord of the Rings books and film adaptations. We achieved that through a comparative analysis of the fidelity of the movie, the characters, the atmosphere, and the reception.

The adaptations can definitely be seen as successful on their own. While some of the scenes may have a meaning that is better understood by the readers, it still had a profound impact on the non-readers, taking them into an unknown and beautiful world with complex and likable characters, and great storyline, and an outstanding soundtrack. Whether it successfully portrayed what Tolkien had in mind is a different question. The fidelity of the story is for the most time accurate disregarding changes necessary for a film that the book does not need. Also, as we established earlier, fidelity is important but not entirely and despite some changes, the story progresses very similarly. Although some characters are slightly diminished for the sake of comedic relief or altering them for the main storyline, the characters were also done and performed by capable actors quite well. We do agree with the statement of Christopher Tolkien, that the adaptations are more of an action movies for younger people but despite that and the films' small loss of the world's magic, like Aragorn's healing power, magical creatures (Tom Bombadil) and old historical supernatural beings, and regardless of some people's opinions, according to our thesis it still captured well the original spirit of the story (in its own way). And some creative changes (like the portrayal of Aragorn, adding Elves in the battle of Helm's Deep, or Arwen's portrayal) are considered even better than in the original.

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