

# **Shaping the Mythical Middle-Earth**

A Comparison between the Setting in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* and the Film Adaptation by Peter Jackson.

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## Introduction

A most common trait for fantasy novels is that they provide the reader with a map in the beginning. This tells us something important about the genre that might not be obvious because of all the important plot twists: the setting in fantasy is of great importance to the rest of the work. Stefan Ekman says that “[s]ome critics go so far as to suggest that in fantasy, or in some kinds of fantasy, or in some fantasy works, the landscape can be equated with a character on one level or another” (10). While I do not fully agree with the critics who suggest so, I do acknowledge that the setting is of great importance and that it sometimes carries a lot of symbolism.

The setting is certainly an important feature in the works of one of the fantasy genre's most prominent authors, J. R. R. Tolkien. His most famous work(s) *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) trilogy revolves around a part of the history of Arda, or Middle-earth. Kelley Griffith lists four aspects that are included in the concept of setting: the physical place; the time; the social environment; and the “atmosphere” (61). These are all aspects that are of great importance in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first novel in the trilogy, and are all well worth examining in light of the importance of setting. Not only are there several cultures to study, but the cultures are vastly different; they are located in different parts of Middle-earth and the races connected with each culture have very different life-spans and thus also different views on time.

When adapting a work like *The Fellowship of the Ring* onto the screen, these are all aspects that must be taken into consideration, and I believe that the depth that Tolkien has added to his story by creating a whole mythology behind it<sup>1</sup> has crossed over to the screen in Peter Jackson's film adaptation from 2001 with respect to setting. To make the film a richer experience for the devoted Tolkien fans, and a more correct representation of Middle-earth, I believe that Jackson, who is himself a Tolkien fan, has incorporated material that is not in the *The Fellowship of the Ring* novel and alludes to historical happenings of Middle-earth developed in other of Tolkien's books via the setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Other of Tolkien's works concerning the history of Middle-earth are: *The Silmarillion*, *The Book of Lost Tales*, *The Children of Húrin*, *Unfinished Tales* and *The Hobbit*.

With this essay I will examine how Jackson has rendered the setting of Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, consider why he has chosen to render it thus, and examine if he has added layers of culture to his adaptation by drawing upon material from secondary sources. In this essay I will also attempt to provide answers to the following questions: What has he adapted onto the screen? Why and how has he adapted it? Has he changed something in the process of adaptation, and if so, how does this change the way the setting is perceived?

In the novel there are many different settings and this essay will not be long enough for all of them, nor are all of them rendered in Jackson's film adaptation, making the comparisons that are the main object of this essay impossible. While I will deal with the major settings, The Shire, Moria, Rivendell and Lothlórien, and the minor setting Bree, I think it important to mention that there are other settings that would have been interesting to consider.

## **Adaptation Theory**

“Adapting is a bit like redecorating” - Alfred Uhry<sup>2</sup>

Adaptations are everywhere, and many adaptations are adaptations of another adaptation of an original work. This phenomenon is not new, nor is it exclusive to any artistic genre. Linda Hutcheon says that “[t]he Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything—and in just about every possible direction; the stories ... were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again” (xi). This is a habit that has been inherited by contemporary media, but because media has such a prominent role in modern society it is perhaps more distinct and visible today than it was a century ago. However, Hutcheon also claims that because we “have even more new material to our disposal” such as “the various electronic media” and “theme parks, historical enactment, and virtual reality experiments” adaptation “has run amok”, and therefore it simply cannot be understood by only considering novels and films, which

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, the page after the title page.

are the two media most often considered in adaptation studies (xi).

However, the most obvious place to look for famous adaptations is on the big screen as the movie business is notably fond of adapting good stories. Chuck Leddy offers an explanation by stating that “Hollywood loves to adapt successful books because of the built-in audience” (par. 3). Though, as he also says that readers generally end up preferring the book to the film adaptation (par. 4), a built-in audience has the disadvantage of expecting the adaptation *to be true* to the original work, which means that they are more likely to criticise the film. They are also more likely to find the movie shallow as psychological depth is often sacrificed in favour of fast-paced action. Novels that emphasize the physical aspects, i.e. the action, have been turned into very successful films (e.g. *Bond*, *The Godfather*) (Leddy, par. 4), but psychological depth is not as easily translatable to the screen as action is.

The aspect of what staying true to the original work means is debatable though. In the case of psychological depth, things can come down to the preferred interpretation of what seems to be true, and sometimes the character whose psychological depth we see might not understand the world around him/her correctly. Thus an adaptation of a work containing a lot of psychological depth could, for example, be made to reflect either the character's perception of the world and its truths, or the actual world and its truths. Disregarding the possible discussion about perception of truth, the audience that is “built-in” are likely fans of the original work, and no matter what, they will all have different opinions of what is “true” and essential in/to the work. They have all used their own imagination to put faces and voices to the characters, their own experiences to imagine what a special place looks like, and interpreted what they have read to determine what they think is true. Staying true then, becomes a very difficult concept, because whose opinion is it the producer is supposed to stay true to when adapting the work into another medium?

So, while some novels are more adaptable than others and the concept of truth is subjective at best, a novel and the film adaptation of that novel neither can be nor are ever exactly the same work. Jennifer Martin states that “a film adaptation is not the book: adaptations are, in fact, different manifestations of an artistic work” (5) and according to Leddy “[a] film adaptation is necessarily a selective version of the original

story” (par. 2), which he explains by referring to the disparate strengths of the different media (par. 1). He also mentions the difference in length between the script and the novel. While novels may be hundreds of pages long, an “average screenplay is only about 120 pages long (one page per screen minute)” (par. 2), making prioritizing very important, as economizing the dialogues.

Assuming then that the adaptation is inspired by the original work rather than an attempt to retell it perfectly, the question is what element it is that a producer tries to keep intact from the original work and tries to actually translate onto the screen? Peter Jackson says in a documentary concerning *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

... and so, you know, whilst we're changing plot ... we're changing characters, we're losing characters, while we're doing all the normal stuff that you have to do to adapt a movie ... we did want to be as accurate as possible to, to putting [Tolkien's] thematic material into the film. (Jackson, "From Book to Script")

Thereby Jackson, as a producer, suggests that staying “true” to the original work does not necessarily mean retelling and portraying the plot, the characters or the setting, as described in the original work, but rather staying “true” to the themes of the work. Jackson says in an elaborate explanation that

The themes of Tolkien are another way of honouring the book, because ... as we were saying: there's so much detail that you ultimately can't, you can't recreate the world of *The Lord of the Rings*, you know, with everything in the books but the thematic materials are obviously critically important to translate that from book to film, because the themes are ultimately the heart of any book, and Tolkien's themes ... in particular were in his heart. (Jackson, "J.R.R. Tolkien: Creator of Middle-earth")

What can be concluded from this is that fidelity to a work is subjective, and that not all novels are translatable the way they are written. Further, it is understood that “the heart” of a novel is what should ultimately be that which is being translated in the process of adaptation.

However, although Jackson implies that the setting is something of less importance in the process of adaptation, it is an important aspect to take into consideration, because in fantasy the setting often reveals a lot not only about the characters, but also about their alignment to good or evil, the races, and sometimes it even provides motive for the characters' actions. Setting is the background that makes

the rest of the world believable, and the closer to the descriptions the setting is rendered in an adaptation, the more the audience might be willing to forgive when the plot deviates from the original. Setting is about making the imaginary world real, and that is in many aspects what adapters should strive for. In *The Lord of the Rings* the setting is of special importance, because to some extent it is in the center of conflict. To some extent industrialization is what Frodo fights against, as the Shire is this rural place that he is trying to save. Ekman has noted this anti-industrialism theme as well, and claims that it is “brought out even more plainly in ... Jackson's movies” (269, footnote 91).

## **Hobbit Territory**

On the map of Tolkien's Middle-earth you will find the Shire in the middle of the region named Eriador. The Shire is divided into four farthings and stretches from the Far Downs to the Brandywine Bridge, which is forty leagues, and from the northern moors to the marshes in the south, which is fifty leagues (Prologue, 17). As it lies far north-west in a world where evil comes from south-east and Mordor, the location of the Shire is symbolic and tells us as much about the Shire itself as about the hobbits.

Ekman states about the “landscape of evil” that “the land is an expression, through its physical characteristics as well as through its flora and fauna, of the evil that resides there” (249). If it is actually so, then it stands to reason that the same would be true for the opposite and that the “landscape of [good]” would be “an expression of the [good] that resides there”. From the story perspective of Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, it is evident that the hobbits are on the good side, as is the landscape portrayed as an ecological and “good” place. This, as well as Tolkien's writing, has clearly had an effect on Jackson's rendition of the Shire.

The Shire is a peaceful place, and has been ever since Bandobras Took defeated an invasion of orcs at the Battle of Greenfields, the only battle to ever have taken place within the borders of the Shire. This battle is “beyond living memory” though (Prologue, 17), and as hobbits in general have no inclination towards violence, there has been none since then. Because the weather has become milder, the wolves that once

used to cross the frozen river in the winter are now a grandfather's tale (Prol., 17), and the hobbits are safe in the Shire. The safety comes from two things: the hobbits do not care for the outside world or the “Big People” and keep to themselves, and the outside world and the “Big People” have more or less forgotten that hobbits exist. The land is described by Tolkien as “rich and kindly” and even before the hobbits came to the Shire it was used for farming and well tilled (Prol. 17). The hobbits are not interested in technology and they grow what they need. It is therefore possible to conclude that the Shire is a green place, with fertile soil, and that it is not over farmed. The land is also described as well-ordered, meaning roads, bridges, and possibly a well planned town plan rather than buildings that have just appeared randomly over time.

In Jackson's film adaptation the first visual of the Shire the audience gets is that of a small open glade. It is at the end of September, the vegetation is light green, the sun is flowing through the branches of the trees, and there are small white flowers on the ground. Although this is a patch of forest, it looks more like a secluded area in a park in which Frodo is sitting under a tree reading a book. Frodo hears Gandalf singing and runs over there to greet him as Gandalf drives a cart down a small, dry and bright road. In this manner we are introduced both to the road network and the general nature of the Shire: they are well ordered, well maintained and, overall in the film, nature in the Shire has the wildness of a well-maintained park. There are some wild patches where the trees, flowers and plants are allowed to grow as they will, and the kept after parts - like the roads, and the gardens, which are still a bit overgrown and beautifully run-down - are the same. There is also evidence of the hobbits' dislike of technology, because the most technologically advanced thing there is a water-mill.

Bag End is a house in a hill and no exception to the green or the half-tamed nature. As the Bagginses are well-off hobbits, they live in a traditional hobbit hole in the ground. This is only done by the poor and the better-off hobbits, which explains why Bag End is exceptionally big and mansionesque. There is a well-tended garden in connection to Bag End that Sam Gamgee takes care of, and on top of the hill there is a tree with roots that grow into the house (film, 12:01, again at 28:39), although this is not mentioned in any of Tolkien's books. The door is described as “perfectly round” and green with a “shiny yellow brass knob” in *The Hobbit* (3), and that is what it looks like

in the film. However, in *The Fellowship of the Ring* the colour of the door is never mentioned, nor is it mentioned at the end of Tolkien's *The Return of the King* when the hobbits return home and find the Shire controlled by “ruffians”.

In *The Hobbit* a hobbit hole is also described as “a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort” meaning that it is not “a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat” (3). About Bag End, more specifically, Tolkien writes:

The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats ... The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill ... and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes ..., kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river. (*Hobbit*, 3)

This description of what Bag End looks like inside provides details that are not there in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Further, in the film the interior of Bag End also sports yellow walls, which is not mentioned anywhere in the books at all, though it is mentioned that hobbits are notably fond of yellow and green. It looks ever so comfortable, and with the round front door, the round windows and the round door-openings inside the whole gives an impression of cosiness, comfort and safety. It is a bit like a stronghold, or the safety of the womb of the hill, and of course it is a bit mysterious to both the readers of the book and the audience of the film as this is a kind of building that most people are not accustomed to. In the film, the things lying around everywhere tell something about the hobbits' habit of gathering things and about both Bilbo's and Frodo's personalities. The adventurous streak that may, disapprovingly, be found in both Bilbo and Frodo is mirrored by the things that lie around in the hole, e.g. the map that shows The Lonely Mountain (~12:34-12:43) – which is a copy of the map that is on the inside of the cover of *The Hobbit*.

In the beginning of the movie the Shire is small; There is only the east-west road that runs through the Shire and the map to really account for a world outside of the Shire. There are no wide-angled views that show the world beyond the Shire and the

horizon, not even when Gandalf's fireworks are displayed during Bilbo's party. The Shire is safe, confined and secluded, and the hobbits are happy to ignore the world outside in the same way that the world outside ignores them. The further away from home Frodo travels though, the wider the world becomes. Hills and mountains and fields stretch out before him, and the horizon expands the borders of his world even further.

With the revelation of Bilbo's ring being the One Ring, there is also an element of danger introduced in the setting. The forests become darker, wilder and less "domesticated." First it is mostly at night that the shadows turn menacing, but soon, when the Black Rider finds Frodo and his friends, it is clear that the setting is changing and that it is foreboding the perils of the journey that lie ahead of them.

A popular opinion is that the Shire is the Middle-earth equivalent of England. Martin states that "[i]t is no mystery that Tolkien wrote parts of *The Lord of the Rings* to reflect the English landscape" (4). The location of the Shire in Middle-earth is in agreement with this, but while the Shire does have similar features to England, and is most likely based upon England, it is not the England contemporary to Tolkien, but rather the idealized rural England a century earlier. Tolkien writes in his letters that "It is in fact more or less a Warwickshire village of about the period of the Diamond Jubilee" (230 (#178)) and that

There is no special reference to England in the 'Shire' – except of course that as an Englishman brought up in an 'almost rural' village of Warwickshire on the edge of the prosperous bourgeoisie of Birmingham (about the time of the Diamond Jubilee!) I take my models like anyone else – from such 'life' as I know. (235 (#181))

As the general representation of the Shire in the film seems to lend the portrayal of the hobbits an English character, and hint at the Shire as a part of England, it is not unlikely that this is something that Jackson has used to give the culture more life. That the Shire should be a representation of England is, however, as Tolkien says, not explicitly stated in any way in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Architecture is another trait in the film that connects the Shire to England, besides the general feeling of Englishness. Hobbiton lies in a valley, and the land of the Shire is generally "low-lying and flat". For hobbit holes you need hills, and as there

were not enough hills, long ago the hobbits started to build houses above ground. They build their own kind of houses, low, long and with the round windows and door-openings, but they do build above ground (Prol., 18). This is something Jackson has rendered in his adaptation, and he has chosen to render the houses half-timbered, an architectural feature that was common in England during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

All in all, the Shire is idyllic. It is written as a near perfect place, and it is certainly depicted as such a place in the film, but then, it has to be idyllic to contrast with where Frodo is going. There has to be something worth saving, and the Shire certainly is. Bilbo describes both Frodo and the Shire beautifully when he says “I think in his heart Frodo is still in love with the Shire. The woods and the fields. The little rivers” (13:47).

## **The Bree-land**

Another important setting largely connected to hobbits, although outside the Shire, is the village of Bree. Bree is the main village of the Bree-land which is described by Tolkien as “a small inhabited region, like an island in the empty lands round about.” The village of Bree is one of four villages centred around a hill called the Bree-hill, and is located on the western side of the hill. The other villages are: Staddle, which is on the opposite side of the hill from Bree; Combe, which lies in a valley a bit further eastward; and Archet, which lies of the edge of the Chetwood. Most of the hobbits living outside of the Shire live in Staddle, but a number of hobbits inhabit Bree, though they live slightly above the village, in hobbit holes in the Bree-hill (165-66).

According to Tolkien, when the hobbits journeyed from their original home – supposedly somewhere in the upper vales of Anduin, the Great River, between Greenwood the Great, later called Mirkwood, and the Misty Mountains – due to the multiplying of men in the area, they journeyed to Eriador and found that there was plenty of room for newcomers. Many of their first settlements are long forgotten and gone, but among the first to become important and endure was that in Bree and in the

Chetwood around it (*Fellowship* Prologue, 15-6).

The village of Bree is not only inhabited by hobbits though, there are also men there. The hobbits and the men live side by side, although the hobbits keep to their hobbit holes rather than live in houses like many have started doing in the Shire. This explains why Frodo and his friends are able to find “some nice cozy hobbit-sized rooms” at the Inn of the Prancing Pony, as Barliman Butterbur, the innkeeper, describes them in the film. In the novel he explains more elaborately that “we've got a room or two in the north wing that were made special for hobbits, when this place was built. On the ground floor as they usually prefer; round windows and all as they like it” (169-70). However, in the film the existence of rooms in hobbit size seem to be the only thing that points to hobbits living in and around Bree.

The houses in Bree, as described in the book, are made of stone (166). The houses as seen in the film are not of stone, but they look very much like traditional English houses from the Tudor period of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the movie the houses in Bree are half-timbered and they have upper floors of bigger area than the lower, an architectural feature that they share with e.g. Hall's Croft house in Stratford-on-Avon, which is the house in which Shakespeare was born in 1564. Stratford-on-Avon also happens to be located in Warwickshire, which further implies that Jackson has used secondary sources, such as *The Letters of Tolkien* or possibly biographies, when designing Middle-earth. An interesting change in the appearance of the houses is also that while they look sturdy enough before the Ringwraiths arrive, the houses almost look like they are going to fall over when the Ringwraiths pass through the village. The general impression before that is that the houses are looming over the hobbits, imposing and threatening.

This threatening feeling is not only derived from the buildings. Jackson seems to have aimed more for atmosphere when creating Bree, than actually taking into consideration what Tolkien wrote. It is dark, pouring with rain, and the small street is muddy and filled with big men who look like rogues. This might be a device to reflect how the hobbits perceive the surroundings rather than presenting the place to the audience the way it actually looks, so that the setting in the film amplifies the hobbits' feelings of uncertainty and fright of this new place.

In the book Sam is the one who is mainly overwhelmed by Bree, and in fact scared, but in the film all the hobbits seem lost until they reach the Inn of the Prancing Pony. The Inn may look dark and scary on the outside, but it is quite different on the inside; there is a fire burning, everything is bright, the mood is good, and the reception is amiable. Then the element of fright is brought back when it is revealed that Gandalf is not there. The other guests at the inn are loud, evil-looking and the hearty laugh that was heard when the hobbits entered the inn, is now nastier. Why has Jackson rendered Bree this way? Bree is built by the crossing of the East-West road and the old North Road that is now called the Greenway (166), and according to the book there is uncommonly much traffic on the East-West road as many dwarves are moving from other habitats to the Blue Mountains, sensing the oncoming battle (56). Because of its location, Bree should be more prosperous than it is portrayed, especially the inn, as wanderers should stop there in great numbers. As I see it there are three possible explanations.

First, Jackson has aimed for a threatening atmosphere that the hobbits would feel and allowed the Ring and the Black Riders to affect the setting. As can be seen when the Black Riders arrive, they affect the setting greatly – not only the music becomes very menacing, but the fog rolls in as they enter the inn, literally in their trail, and people hide looking terrified (53:10). Second, Jackson uses the setting as a means to explain the dwindling valour of men. The decay of the former prosperous Dunedains<sup>3</sup>, the men from Westensse, is mirrored in the men's decay and return to a more primitive state where survival is more important than morals. It sets a ground for Elrond's comment on the weakness of men later in the film as well. However, the men of Bree and the men of Westensse do not descend from the same line of men, so that seems a strange thing to do. Third, the changes in the plot called for a different approach to Bree.

Martin states that “[t]o put a text to film requires a significant change in medium; films are visual, aural, and, if one is discussing the full cinematic experience, highly situational” (5). Based on this statement, a plausible explanation for the changes of Bree is that the action taking place there in the film is far shorter than in the book. As Martin says: “One of the confines of cinema is that the audience will only sit in a theatre for so long” (10). Possibly, Jackson wanted to make Bree both memorable and establish

<sup>3</sup> The Dunedains are the last remnant of the men from Númenor, the race of kings, and they now live in the north of Middle-earth and fight off the servants of Sauron.

that the world beyond the Shire is nothing like the Shire, although this fails if one considers the architecture, which is a direct link between the Shire and Bree. By linking Bree to the Shire via architecture and making Bree both more dark and dangerous Jackson is using the connection he creates between the two places to fix the notion that even home is not safe anymore rather than establish the difference between the Shire and the outside world. Martin also writes that “[c]onceptually, making the 'unfilmable' book 'filmable' required a certain amount of reworking of Tolkien's original story, but always with an eye to accuracy. Boyens commented that in order to turn 'prose into filmic moments' any one aspect of the story needed to do more than one thing, and certain parts of the book had to be left out to keep the length of the film reasonable (as cited in Jackson, 2002)” (7). Clearly Bree is not meant for doing merely one thing.

## **The Mines of Moria**

The Mines of Moria, Moria for short, are situated inside a mountain range called The Misty Mountains. They run under the mountains and ultimately straight through, and were once dwarven territory. Moria is a location that is very different from the others in *The Fellowship of the Ring*; not only does it lack any kind of strong link to nature, but it is already lost, having been overtaken by orcs, goblins, a Balrog, and other foul creatures, and what used to be a safe place is safe no more.

Moria has two openings. One on the west side, the West-door, where the dwarf Narvi and the elf Celebrimbor designed a “riddle” with a password to make the doors open. The design is only visible in moon- or starlight and it is a mixture of elvish and dwarvish symbols: the trees of the Valar, the star of the house of Fëanor, Durin's emblem: the hammer and the anvil with a crown above it and seven stars to represent the first dwarves. By the West-door there is also the river Sirannon that the Watcher of the Water has dammed. On either side of the door stand two holly-bushes grown as high as trees.

In the film, the walls of Moria, a long stretch of smooth stone, are seen first at a

distance, possibly to convey a part of the magnitude of Moria. The door is hidden, as it is not a clear night, but when Gandalf speaks a spell the clouds reveal the moon and the door lights up. The parts that light up are made of Ithildin, a material that “mirrors only starlight and moonlight” and the design of Narvi and Celebrimbor is shown. This concurs with the description in the book. The water however, is perhaps more treacherous-looking in the film than it seems in the book.

In the entry hall with all its corpses you can notice statues of dwarves carved out of the wall (1:41:57). These statues are not mentioned by Tolkien. Of course they could be there simply as a tribute to some ancient unnamed dwarves who were great leaders of the Longbeards which were the dwarves that ruled Moria, or they could be statues of the first dwarves: Durin, the first dwarf to ever awake, and someone of the other six founding dwarves. The dwarves have just as long a history as the elves, although they are not Eru's children, but Aulë's<sup>4</sup>. It would be strange if their story was not alluded to when the elves' history is alluded to several times, something I will cover in the next section.

The East-gate is the exit on the eastern side of the mountain range and it is also called the Dimrill gate. Tolkien describes the fellowship's flight out of Moria and thus also the gate and the exteriors beyond it this way:

They passed into a hall, bright with daylight from its high windows in the east. They fled across it. Through its huge broken doors they passed, and suddenly before them the Great Gates opened, an arch of blazing light. There was a guard of orcs crouching in the shadows behind the great door-posts towering on either side, but the gates were shattered and cast down ... Out of the gates they ran and sprang down the huge and age-worn steps, the threshold of Moria. (350)

Having left Moria, the fellowship stands in the Dimrill Dale. In the dale there are old works of stone, now destroyed, and there is the lake Mirrormere, in which it is possible to see the stars that are in the emblem of Durin. It is “long and oval, shaped like a great spear-head thrust deep into the northern glen; but its southern end was beyond the shadows under the sunlit sky. Yet its waters were dark: a deep blue like clear evening sky seen from a lamp-lit room” (351). From the Dimrill Dale it is possible to see Lothlórien as a golden haze in the distance (353).

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<sup>4</sup> See Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, chapter 2 “Of Aulë and Yavanna.”

In the film, the setting is not so memorable. From outside the Dimrill gate there is a view of the woods of Lothlórien and there is also a pool that could be the Mirrormere, though is likely not. Yet, outside the gate there is just that, stone and blue sky, nothing is further detailed, presumably because the focus is not so much on physical setting as on the feelings of the fellowship, since they have just lost Gandalf.

Inside, Moria is grand. There are at least twenty-one halls, and within the halls are contained chambers (341). It has an unknown number of levels, but there are at least seven and it can be hard to find your way in there if you are not familiar with it (341). The paths wind to and fro, some lead up and some lead down. In the film, the most prominent feature is not the amount of levels that the dwarven kingdom is built in, but rather the scene where Gandalf says that he will risk a little more light: the high pillars and how they go on and on before they fade away into the darkness of the ceiling. That is the scene that really shows the splendor and grandness that once existed in Moria.

The Chamber of Mazarbul is the room where Balin is buried. The light that shines on his tomb is supposed to be a direct opening out, a window towards the east to let the morning light in. Its doorway is described in the book as “high and flat-topped, and the stone door was still upon its hinges, standing half open” (337). There is also a second “smaller door on the other side of the chamber, under the shaft” (339). The chamber itself is described as large and square, and the light is dim, but after the long darkness it seems to the fellowship “dazzlingly bright” (337). The light comes from “a wide shaft high in the further eastern wall” (337). Upon the floor there is “deep dust” (337) and there are items lying in the doorway that are at first unidentifiable, but that will later be revealed to be bones, broken swords and axe-heads. The light from the shaft falls on Balin's tomb in the middle of the room, described as “a single oblong block, about two feet high, upon which was laid a great slab of white stone ... on the slab runes were deeply graven” (337). There are also “many recesses cut [into] the walls” (339).

In the film the room is designed more for the fight that takes place there than it is as a burial chamber. There is a well that is not depicted in the novel but that explains its presence as a plot device when Pippin makes a dead body fall down and cause an echo that alerts all the foul creatures to the fellowship's presence, and the logbook that is

falling apart, which is described in the book. It is interesting to note that in the film the walls are covered by runes and the doors are made of wood and not stone, and presumably this is done so that the orcs can get into the chamber. The second door has been turned into a hole in the wall, and we do not see it until the fellowship flee from the chamber, and they come out in a long hall with grand pillars just like the one they left when they went into the room.

The Bridge of Khazad-dûm is a narrow bridge over a dark abyss of nothingness, into which Gandalf falls when he fights the balrog of Morgoth. In this both the novel and the film are in agreement and Tolkien's description of the bridge can be applied to them both:

Suddenly Frodo saw before him a black chasm. At the end of the hall the floor vanished and fell to an unknown depth. The outer door could only be reached by a slender bridge of stone, without kerb or rail, that spanned the chasm with one curving spring of fifty feet ... They could only pass across it in single file. (347)

On the other side of the bridge is a stair that leads to the Dimrill gate and out.

There is a general sense of destruction in the film that is centred around Moria. It is a convenient and effective way of showing a glimpse of the future and what could come to pass if Frodo fails. The contrast between Rivendell and Moria and Moria and Lothlórien makes the place even darker and foreboding. Grant Major explains that they “built it up in levels” (as qtd in Jackson, “Bigatures”). The layers of destruction give the atmosphere of the dark, abandoned mine a sense of imminent danger in the setting. The audience know before the fellowship enter that it is a bad place to be: the Watcher in the Water tells them that by his mere presence, the dead bodies in the entry room cement it.

From where did Jackson get inspiration for the dwarvish architecture? That he has exceeded the descriptions made by Tolkien is obvious, but then, from where did he get the inspiration for the designs? Some of the inspiration might have come from the proverb “pride comes before fall” that so well describes the reason the dwarves lost Moria in the first place. Moria is almost the only place where mithril may be found, and as it is a most precious and valuable metal the dwarves dug too deep and too greedily to find it. They awakened a balrog, a demon of Morgoth's from the ancient world, and it overtook the mountain. This can be said to be mirrored in the greatness of the

architecture and the destruction of it by the bad things that pride released in the end. It is also possible that Jackson felt that to make the dwarven culture more distinct he had to make it more different from the elven culture, and that this is what is mirrored in the design.

It is believed that Tolkien got a lot of the inspiration for the dwarves from Norse mythology and from traditional European fairy-tales, such as those from the Brothers Grimm. Tolkien himself writes in one of his letters that:

[T]he names of the Dwarves in *The Hobbit* (and additions in the *L.R.*) are derived from the lists in *Völuspá*<sup>5</sup> of the names of *dvergjar*; but this is no key to the dwarf-legends in *The L.R.* The 'dwarves' of my legends are far nearer to the Germanic [legends] than are the Elves, but still in many ways different from them. (Letters, 383 (#297), emphasis in original)

It is not unlikely that the runes on the wall previously mentioned, which do resemble the runes used by the Vikings, and the square shape of the decorations that are on the pillars, are inspired by the Vikings.

The setting of Moria is surprisingly literally rendered compared to that of Bree. Leddy writes that “the overwhelming majority of film adaptations lose a great deal in the process of translation from book to film” (par. 11), but clearly this has not greatly affected the setting in this case. Moria is actually a very accurately depicted setting with few changes. There is a possible explanation to this, unknowingly offered by Martin when she discusses how some people are able to visualize certain parts of the book clearer than other parts; it might be a question of interest (3-4). A place that the reader takes a greater interest in will be easier to visualize, and if that visualization is closely connected to the text, then subsequently the visualised area of interest will most likely resemble that which is described in the text to a greater extent.

## **The Elven Realms**

Two settings will be considered in this section: Rivendell and Lothlórien. These are both

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<sup>5</sup> *Völuspá* is the first poem of the Poetic Edda, a collection of poems mainly preserved in the Icelandic medieval manuscript *Codex Regius*.

places inhabited by the elves, and therefore they share some features that the other settings of *The Fellowship of the Ring* cannot have. Due to this connection between the two settings, this section will not only have one part concerning Rivendell and one concerning Lothlórien, but it will also have a third part in which the relationship between the two places are further discussed.

## **Rivendell**

According to the map, Rivendell is situated on the western side of the Misty Mountains, on the same latitude as the Shire. It is located in a cloven valley between two arms of the river Bruinen, which is also called Loudwater and sometimes thought to be two rivers rather than a forking of the same. To get to the house of Elrond one must first cross the ford of Bruinen and then there is winding path that one must ascend and a bridge that one must cross. The house lies by the river, and there are gardens above “the steep bank of the river” (242). There seem to be some land around the house, and to the north is a pine-wood (256). To the east you can see the Misty Mountains.

The atmosphere of Rivendell is ambiguous, and Frodo recalls that Bilbo once described Rivendell as “a perfect house, whether you like food or sleep, or story-telling or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all” (241). It is also said that “[m]erely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness” (241) and that “a *wholesome peace* lay on the land” (256, my emphasis), which are probably the best words for it. There is also a gay atmosphere to Rivendell that is shown best at the feast when Frodo has awakened and is better after having been healed by Elrond. There is a feast and then they continue to the Hall of Fire, which is a room not generally used, but there is always a fire lit in the room, although little other light. There is singing and eating and good mood and despite the fact that Frodo enjoys this he dozes off.

The atmosphere of Rivendell in the film is very peaceful, but it is not gay. It is autumn when Frodo and his friends arrive at Rivendell, but although it is autumn there, Rivendell is at one instance described in the book to be “as if summer still lingered in Elrond's gardens” (242). This is something that Jackson and his team have foregone and in the film it is not something that can be perceived. Jackson has made use of digital

grading for the light, rendering it golden, and the trees are ablaze with colour. For autumn in Jackson's Rivendell is not only the mere season, it is also figuratively speaking the autumn of the elves. Their time in Middle-earth is coming to an end, and that is one reason why Jackson has emphasized the autumn. Another is that autumn emphasizes the peaceful feeling of Rivendell that Jackson seems to have strived for; the feeling of slowly fading away and being at peace with it, which the elves clearly are.

The layout of the House of Elrond is hard to perceive and is mirrored in how Sam describes it to Frodo when he has awakened that “It is a big house this, and very peculiar. Always a bit more to discover, and no knowing what you'll find round a corner” (241-42). There are only a few places in Rivendell that the readers get acquainted with though and that get some kind of description in the book: The Hall of Fire, in which the pillars are described; Bilbo's room, which is the room most described; Frodo's room, in which we get to know that the roof looks strange to him with carvings on the beams; the garden above the steep bank of the river where the counsel is held, and they visit at least one more time. Martin says that Tolkien “describes landscape in almost excruciating detail” (4), and yet he has not done so with Rivendell. The result is interesting. Because of the profound and mysterious lack of descriptions of Rivendell Jackson and his team has had to visualize this culture, this place and the architecture to greater extent than the other cultures and places.

The House of Elrond on the screen is an architectural wonder. It is beautiful. There are long archways between the houses, private places and open places where the trees can grow. This is discussed in the documentary “Designing Middle-earth”, where it is explained that they wanted it to look as if the trees had grown up around the buildings, and room had been left for the trees to grow. Interestingly, the house of Elrond was under siege by Sauron a long time ago, for seven years. In the book this is not strange to imagine, since we never get to know exactly what the house looks like. But considering the history of Rivendell, how would this have withstood a siege? Clearly Jackson has not taken the history of Rivendell into account when he approved the design.

The one who stood for the design of Rivendell was conceptual artist Alan Lee. He drew a place to which he would have wanted to retire. The elvish design is he says

in a documentary influenced by Art Nouveau and chaotic design, because Lee and John Howe, another conceptual artist recruited to the project of filming Tolkien's work, realised that a culture as old as the elvish and forever perfecting itself must have been looking for “the perfect line”, and had time to achieve it, and therefore the design is not that intricate, but rather made of perfect lines that interweave and create simple patterns (Jackson, “Designing Middle-earth”).

Alan Lee did not only design the exteriors of the building, but his work can also be found inside. The frescoes in Elrond's study were created by Lee, and the centerpiece, the image of Isildur cutting the Ring of Sauron's hand, alludes to the history of the elves. There are no frescoes described in the book, and the artworks are additions placed in the setting to stress the long history of Middle-earth.

In the design are also trees. Supposedly this is inspired by The Trees, Telperion and Laurelin, that stood in Valinor and acted as the sun and the moon before Morgoth, the predecessor of Sauron, had them destroyed. In Middle-earth it is from these trees that the sun and the moon were made, when the last light from the two trees was “harvested” after they were destroyed/poisoned (*Silmarillion*, 99). Therefore trees in the design is a common feature in elven places in the film, because the trees are an important part of Elvish history. It seems like Jackson and Lee have embraced this in the design of Rivendell, and in doing so they hint at the history of the elves in the design, probably inspired by Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* in which the story of the elves is largely written down. There are also, besides trees in the design, a lot of statues in Rivendell. These statues could be of almost anyone, but presumably they are the Valar and/or elves who performed heroic deeds in the past.

### **Lothlórien**

Lothlórien is situated on the eastern side of the Misty Mountains, and farther south than Rivendell, so that on the map it appears to be in the middle of Middle-earth. Most of the forest grows between the Misty Mountains to the east and the river Anduin on the west, and to the south there is only a small strip of forest south of the Silverlode, another river.

Lothlórien is first described when the fellowship is in the Dimrill Dale, after

they have emerged from the Mines of Moria; Lothlórien is noted as a golden haze in the distant and Legolas speaks its praise when he describes it to the others:

'There lie the woods of Lothlórien!' said Legolas. 'That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people. There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold. Not till the spring comes and the new green opens do they fall, and then the boughs are laden with yellow flowers; and the floor of the wood is golden, and golden is the roof, and its pillars are of silver, for the bark of the trees is smooth and grey.'  
(353)

The trees described by Legolas are mallorn trees, and in Middle-earth they only grow in Lothlórien under the influence of Galadriel's ring of power, Nenya.

Lothlórien is different from the other places of the novel not in a fashion like Moria, but in a more spiritual way. The atmosphere of Lothlórien is that of walking into a dream. There is peace there, just as in Rivendell, but it is a more living peace. Lothlórien is not a place of fading, but an oasis of timelessness. Stefan Ekman has an intriguing debate about the passing of time in Lothlórien, and he writes that “[y]et, this park imparts a chilling vision of time as well as nature: both are constant in the elven realm, ultimately providing sterile beauty and time without change” (144). In Lothlórien live things that should not thrive in Middle-earth, but under the influence of Nenya do.

The atmosphere of Lothlórien in the film is otherworldly, but with a sinister undertone. The sinister undertone probably comes from Galadriel, as she “desires” the One Ring, and therefore it affects the setting by affecting the elf with most power over the setting. Richard Taylor explains that they, when they designed Lothlórien,

... very much wanted Lothlórien to feel like this ethereal elven home up in the treetops of these huge mallorns, that twinkling amongst the branches were these beautiful, almost dewdrop, spots of light, and that the whole place felt like it was enriched with music and culture, that this was the highest level of cultural sophistication. (as qtd in Jackson, “Bigatures”)

There is a sense of chill in the atmosphere, a distance between that which is Lothlórien, and the fellowship that is so clearly not.

Caras Galadhon is the city of the Lothlórien elves; it lies in the south-east part of Lothlórien in the land between the Silverlode and Anduin in a region the elves call *Naith*, meaning 'spear-head'. In the film this is also where the mallorns are, although in the books the entire wood seems to contain mallorns. The lack of these gigantic trees is

easily explained, because as Martin points out “[f]inding geographically suitable places to film was a challenge, as well as interspersing real trees with [the fictional] mallern ... (Jackson, 2004)” (11). Caras Galadhon is well protected by both ordinary defences, and by the power of Galadriel. The only entrance is to the south. The elves live in flets, platforms, in the trees. The architecture of the flets is similar to that of the houses of Rivendell. The walls seem to be another example of Art Nouveau and “the perfect line” and the patterns that the walls make continue past the floor of the flet and down below so that they resemble wooden icicles.

The glade of Galadriel is a setting that is intricately described in the book. Frodo and Sam have been walking around, talking about various things and Galadriel appears before them and when she beckons to them they follow her.

Turning aside, she led them toward the southern slopes of the hill of Caras Galadhon, and passing through a high green hedge they came into an enclosed garden. No trees grew there, and it lay open to the sky. The evening star had risen and was shining with white fire above the western woods. Down a long flight of steps the Lady went into a deep green hollow, through which ran murmuring the silver stream that issued from the fountain on the hill. At the bottom, upon a low pedestal carved like a branching tree, stood a basin of silver, wide and shallow, and beside it stood a silver ewer. (380)

This is well-represented in the film, and although it may not be perfectly rendered, the general sense of awe at the beauty that the words create is captured onto the screen. There are additions to the glade in the film though. There are statues of Galadriel holding live fires, spreading light in the glade, and there is also a star carved into a wall. The star is the emblem of Galadriel's house, and possibly an allusion to the history of the elves, ageing Caras Galadhon in the mind of the Tolkien fan.

By the Silverlode, Galadriel and Celeborn part with the fellowship. They stand in a boat that is shaped like a swan. It is an interesting detail to bring to the scene, because already in the book it seems as if it alludes to the history of the elves. In *The Silmarillion*, one of the stories is about how the Noldor, a subdivision of the elves, leave Valinor, and to get to Middle-earth they steal boats shaped as swans from other elves, and kill some of the elves that try to stop them (Chapter 9, “Of The Flight of the Noldor”). The presence of a swan-shaped boat therefore could forebode the separation of the fellowship by alluding to the separation of the elves by the first kin-slaying.

### **Rivendell versus Lothlórien**

Rivendell and Lothlórien are, despite their shared culture, vastly different. It is not explicit, but rather subtle differences that have great impact. In his *Writing Worlds, Reading Landscapes* Stefan Ekman debates the passing of time in Tolkien's Lothlórien, which is so different from time in the rest of Middle-earth. He concludes that “Lothlórien is a Faerie realm which strives to maintain ancient times when the surrounding world moves on, providing a sanctuary for its elven population” (144), which is a very interesting thing to note, as Lothlórien is at the heart of Middle-earth. Ekman also relates this to Rivendell and he notes that “This world is different even from Rivendell, where 'there was memory of ancient things; in Lórien the ancient things still lived on in the waking world' (FR, II, vi, 340)” (141 (the page Ekman refers to is 368 in my book)). Thus the fading of Rivendell is not something that applies to Lothlórien where time remains still and the elves are at their height. What is interesting with this is that the elves seem to have chosen not to change, but rather to try to hold on to things past.

In connection to this it is also interesting to note that in the film the importance of trees is maintained through both the elven realms, although in different ways. In Rivendell the trees are in the art and architecture and they grow around the house. In Lothlórien the elves have actually moved up into the trees. Of course, it is a different kind of trees, the mallorns. The trees could in a way be said to represent the height of the Valar and the spring of the elves, and the elves left in Middle-earth hold on to this past glory. That might be why the elves of Lothlórien have moved into the mallorns, because they remind the elves of that past and the splendour of Valinor.

### **Conclusion**

When a novel is adapted onto the screen it usually does not concur completely with the original work. Although a critically acclaimed film, Peter Jackson's adaptation of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is no exception to this. But it differs from other films in that most changes made have not been made to take the film further away from its origins, but rather to connect it to them.

In several cases the architecture of the Shire and Bree alludes to English Tudor period architecture, and thereby not only to England, but also to the life of the author, J. R. R. Tolkien. Bag End is also full of references to *The Hobbit*, which precedes *The Fellowship of the Ring* and offers the history of the finding of the Ring. The architecture of Moria seems to allude to the architecture used by the Vikings, from whose legends Tolkien took inspiration for the dwarves.

In the case of atmosphere Jackson seems to have taken the interpretations of the different places to near extremes. The Shire is rendered as the idyllic worldly place and Bree as the best and the worst in men, contrasting the cold of outside in the rain and the warmth of inside where there is warmth and light, and also as the fright of the unfamiliar. Rivendell has become an otherworldly place of peace that is ending, a metaphor for where the elves are going - an otherworldly peace that is coming to its end with the autumn as the pointer. The Mines of Moria is portrayed as a fantastic achievement, a wonder of craftsmanship, but where greed took over and darkness was awakened and consumed the place, destroying it and leaving it uninhabitable. Lothlórien is, as a contrast to Rivendell, not fading away, but rather Jackson portrays Lórien as a very mysterious place with a sinister undertone, as if the One Ring has affected the one place it could not touch before and the resonance is spreading throughout Middle-earth.

Although Jackson clearly has made use of secondary sources, it seems as if it is more a case of intertextuality between Tolkien's works that has spawned the use of them. Tolkien himself added a lot of small details in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, alluding to historical happenings of Middle-earth, and when Jackson has used them and gone to the original sources of these details it can be perceived as if he has added them to allude to the history of Middle-earth when he has simply expanded upon Tolkien's intertextual use of details.

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