

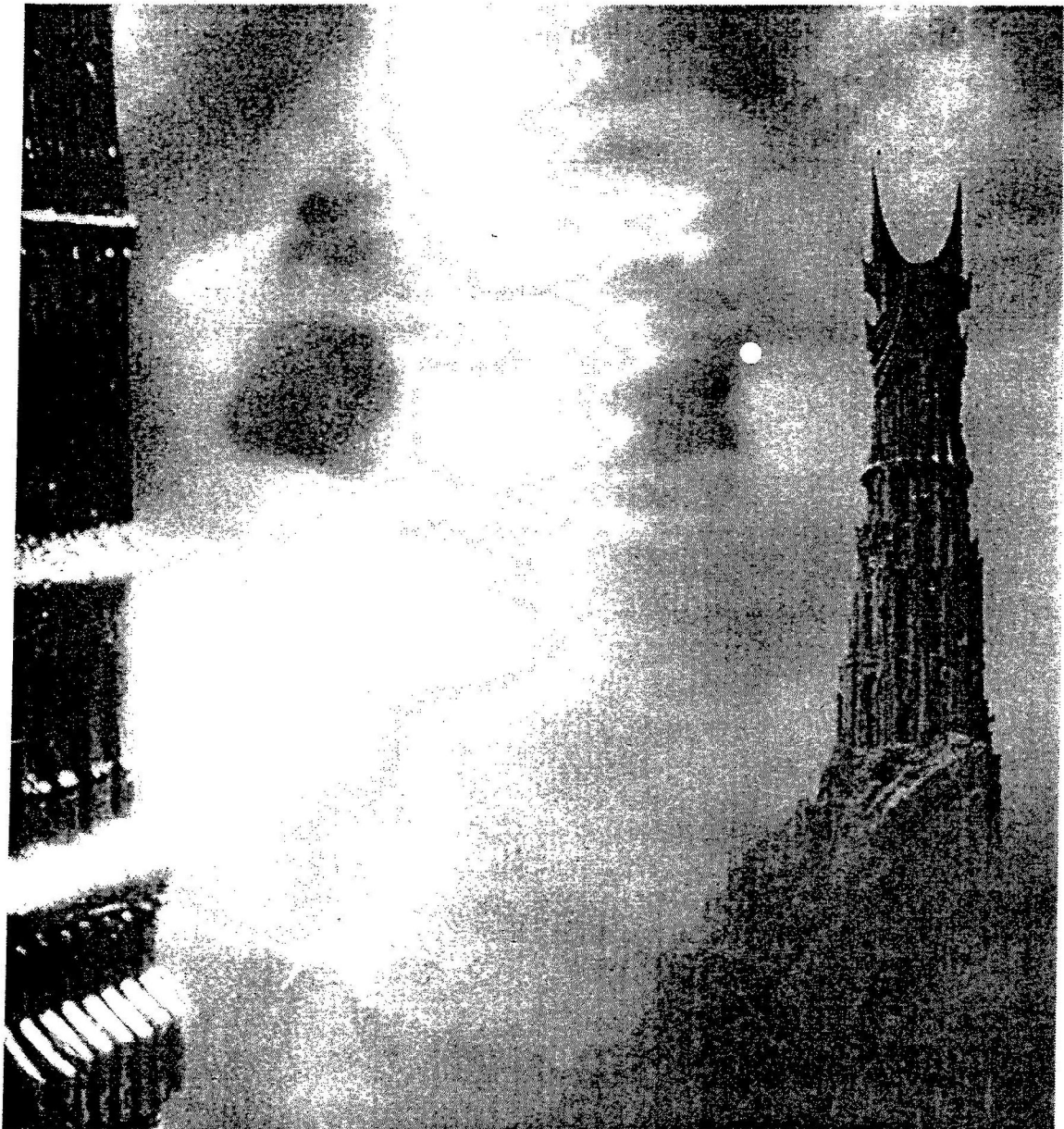
# MYTHPRINT

The Monthly Bulletin of the Mythopoeic Society

Vol. 40 No. 1

January 2003

Whole No. 250



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## Illustrations

Cover: “The Two Towers” (New Line Cinema © 2002)  
*Butterbur’s Woodshed* logo by Kevin Farrell © 1994 (p. 9)

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See inside back cover

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DEADLINES for receiving material for each issue of *Mythprint* are the 1st of the preceding month (eg, February 1<sup>st</sup> for the March issue).

# *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*

## Principal Cast

|                         |                  |                            |                |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Frodo Baggins . . . . . | Elijah Wood      | Éowyn . . . . .            | Miranda Otto   |
| Gandalf . . . . .       | Ian McKellen     | Gríma Wormtongue . . . . . | Brad Dourif    |
| Aragorn . . . . .       | Viggo Mortensen  | Legolas . . . . .          | Orlando Bloom  |
| Sam . . . . .           | Sean Astin       | Galadriel . . . . .        | Cate Blanchett |
| Pippin . . . . .        | Billy Boyd       | Éomer . . . . .            | Karl Urban     |
| Arwen . . . . .         | Liv Tyler        | Faramir . . . . .          | David Wenham   |
| Gimli . . . . .         | John Rhys-Davies | Théoden . . . . .          | Bernard Hill   |
| Merry . . . . .         | Dominic Monaghan | Gollum/Sméagol . . . . .   | Andy Serkis    |
| Saruman . . . . .       | Christopher Lee  | Háma . . . . .             | John Leigh     |

## Principal Filmmakers

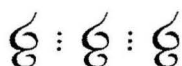
A New Line Cinema release of a Wingnut Films production.

Peter Jackson, Director/Writer/Producer  
Barrie M. Osborne, Producer  
Tim Sanders, Producer  
Fran Walsh, Writer/Coproducer  
Philippa Boyens, Writer  
Mark Ordesky, Executive Producer  
Bob and Harvey Weinstein, Executive Producers  
Rick Porras, Associate Producer  
Richard Taylor, Creature/Miniature/Armor/  
Special Makeup Effects Supervisor  
Grant Major, Production Supervisor  
Ngila Dickson, Costume Designer  
Richard Taylor, Costume Designer  
Howard Shore, Composer

Jamie Selkirk, Post-Production Supervisor  
John Gilbert, Editor  
Michael J. Horton, Editor  
Jim Rygiel, Visual Effects Supervisor  
Alan Lee, Conceptual Artist/Set Decorator  
John Howe, Conceptual Artist  
Dan Hennah, Supervising Art Director  
Peter Owen, Makeup and Hair Design  
Peter King, Makeup and Hair Design

Digital Visual Effects: WETA Digital  
Casting: John Hubbard, Amy MacLean  
(U.K.), Victoria Burrows (U.S.), Liz Mullane  
(New Zealand), Ann Robinson (Australia)

Based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien  
Running time . . . . . 179 Minutes  
Classification . . . . . PG-13



## Film Reviews and Comments

I will start by saying that I loved being back in J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth as conceived by the director Peter Jackson and represented by the incredibly beautiful scenery of New Zealand. The opening shot of snow-capped jagged mountains is breathtaking. This movie has far more scenes that were shot in actual New Zealand outdoor locations than the first, and so continues to be a wonderful advertisement for the natural wonders of this country.

The movie is long, 3 hours, but there are so many different story lines to follow, and the action is so intense, that the time flew by for me. It is quite different in feel from the first installment, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The humor is no longer provided primarily by Frodo's hobbit cousins Merry and Pippin. Their journey has become too life-threatening for them to make light of their circumstances—indeed, they are being forced to grow up. So the humor shifts quite effectively to the dwarf character Gimli, beautifully realized by John Rhys-Davies. He also does quite a take as the voice of the Ent, Treebeard.

One of the most wonderful things about this movie are the many moments allowed in the midst of epic journeys and battles for character delineation, such as Legolas' dealings with Gimli and Aragorn's expression of his love for the elf Arwen and his growing sense of his destiny as a leader of men.

The music score of a movie has always been an important element for me. The score for this movie is deeper, darker and far more complex than for *Fellowship*. It's not as "listenable", but every bit as haunting and memorable.

Jackson has taken quite a few liberties with Tolkien's story line, some of which are being debated by Tolkien aficionados. I think most can be defended as necessary to the demands of a cinematic treatment. Hopefully, in the case of

one character, the Gondor prince Faramir, the third movie will return him to the noble mold he has in the book. Another fascinating change is the acceleration in the hobbit hero Frodo's mental deterioration due to the malevolent effects of the One Ring. Tolkien is much more circumspect in leading the reader along to the realization that Frodo is undergoing profound changes thanks to the ring. Jackson has this happen far more obviously earlier on in the story, leaving me wondering where he can take Frodo in the third film.

The epic climactic battle of Helm's Deep is just simply amazing: it is *The Alamo*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Gunga Din*, and every other movie battle you've ever seen rolled into one incredible piece of filmmaking. But here again, Jackson never sacrifices the individual character-driven moments to the pageantry of the battle. The actors and stunt and special effects people can be proud of their achievement.

If you have read anything about the film, you know that it breaks new ground in computer effects. Even though I knew Gollum was an animated character, it is impossible to not fall entirely under the spell of believing he is there on the screen interacting as another actor with Frodo and Sam. Kudos to actor Andy Serkis who provided the voice and movements that were captured by the computer. Even though Gollum is an evil, fallen creature, Jackson has beautifully captured the schizoid elements in his personality and given him some redeeming characteristics that make him very effective and more pathetic, much as Tolkien thought of him.

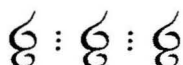
This is not to say I like everything about the film. Jackson has added several scenes involving the elven princess Arwen and her father Elrond that I found a bit confusing and which slowed down the action. There is also a battle with wargs that almost causes Aragorn to lose his life which



is not in the book and did not add a lot to the story. And the demands of so many story lines makes it impossible for any one story to be given much screen time.

Nevertheless, I found the film to be a wonderful tour-de-force. I realize it is not for everyone, especially if you find swordplay and epic battles not to your movie-going tastes. I cannot wait to experience it again.

Carol Aronoff



How frustrating! What a lost opportunity!

The reviews all said *The Two Towers* was end-to-end action, but it isn't. It's perfectly paced, beautifully modulated, a work of cinematic craft its director can be proud of. Unlike the previous film, it never feels rushed (it covers little more than half as much of the book); there's as much orc as there needs to be to tell the story, and hardly a bit more. I was engrossed throughout. This is surely the finest fantasy war adventure film ever made.

But it's nothing more than that, and Tolkien's book is ever so much more. Does Mr. Jackson have the slightest idea how much of the tale he's lost? While my filmgoing self was cheering, my Tolkien reader was wincing. Tolkien's noblest sentiments are rephrased into meaningless mush. The arrival of the Huorns, the book's most magical moment, is—gone. So many characters suffer uncanonical failures of nerve: the revived Théoden immediately wants to run and hide; Frodo *lies* to Faramir; Legolas suffers a nervous breakdown; Treebeard has to be *tricked* into wanting to fight; Aragorn, we learn, had broken up with Arwen before leaving Rivendell. Let's not even discuss the imposter who calls himself Faramir. Only Wormtongue, who *should* lose his nerve, really acts in character. These people are all Wormtongues; this script

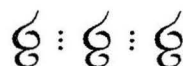
has no faith in its source.

But it should have had! This excision of moral fiber and nobility was so unnecessary: far more than with the previous film, only small changes would have made all the difference. This film could have been the perfect treatment of Tolkien's epic story, without losing one touch of the thrilling adventure it so brilliantly is, without losing any of its popular appeal. What a shame, what a tragedy!

I have one criticism of the film's cinematic art: the special effects. Théoden's revival looks like a miracle cure from a skin lotion commercial. The orc soldiers are swept off the ramp like little toys. If the whole film were CGI, Gollum would impress: but he has to interact with real people. He looks carved from plastic wood, he moves with the naturalness of a mechanical toy dog, and he sounds like Donald Duck.

And I have one compliment for the script: there are still no real songs, but there is recitation of Tolkien's own epic alliterative verse. Out of doubt, out of dark, against all odds, sometimes the nobility of *The Lord of the Rings* breaks through.

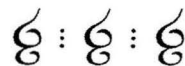
David Bratman



Saw it once; two days later, saw it again! Felt like I was a kid again, not wanting to leave my seat, fully absorbed, wanting to jump into that world, willing it to go on and on....

Can't say fairer than that!

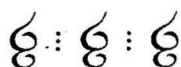
Sophie Masson



Wow! It was so wonderful to see all those unforgettable scenes from *The Two Towers* brought to life on the big screen! Like the scene where Elrond convinces Arwen to forget about Aragorn

and go off to the Havens! And then there's the scene where the orc tells Legolas that Aragorn fell off a cliff and shows him Arwen's jewel as proof! Or what about when Aragorn washes up on the riverbank and is rescued by his horse, Brego? And who could ever forget the glorious army of Elvish archers at Helm's Deep? Then there's the bit where Gimli actually asks to be tossed! That one always makes me laugh! Oh, and I mustn't forget the scene where Faramir decides to send Frodo—with the Ring—as a gift to his father! I was especially impressed, though, by Jackson's depiction of the chilling scene where Frodo comes face to face with the Nazgûl at Osgiliath! I can't wait to read the book again and relive all those amazing moments!

*Arden R. Smith*



As far as the East is from the West is this film from Tolkien. Having gotten that out of the way, let's look at the good and the bad.

The best thing in this film is Gollum. He convincingly manages to be both loathsome and truly pitiable, and except for some very brief lapses, the CGI work on him is some of the best in film history.

The battle between Gandalf and the Balrog is eye-popping, disorienting, and frightening, and one of the highlights of the film. The Dead Marshes are wonderful ... until Frodo takes a header into the water. The "underwater ghouls" add nothing to the story. The mystery and horror of the images seen only from the surface would have been more than enough.

The battle of Helm's Deep is impressive, even if it goes on forever. Théoden appears too young, and that steals some of the poignancy from his character. The filmmakers probably thought that white hair and a white beard would have made

him too close in looks to Gandalf. But Éowyn is well-cast, if given little to do, as is Éomer, who also gets short shrift in screen time. Wormtongue's part is well-acted, even if he comes off as a Middle-earth Goth. Théoden's "exorcism" (and it's Saruman, yet!) was excessive. No subtlety there.

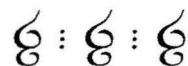
The "Aragorn's dead and Arwen's grieving" scene works well, but the sequence of Aragorn going over the cliff is a waste of screen time. Peter Jackson would have been wiser to put in more of the actual events of the book, rather than this pointless sequence. And Aragorn's being French kissed by his horse was definitely not a Moment for the Ages.

The less said about "Gimli as comic relief" the better. The biggest misstep is Boromir II: The Sequel, also known as Faramir. The changes in Faramir's character are highly questionable, because it makes it seem as if the Men of Middle-earth have zilch nobility. Dragging Frodo and Sam off to Gondor (to Osgiliath!) made no story sense. And Frodo's encounter with the Nazgûl should never have made it past the first draft of the screenplay.

The Ent sequences are a bit of a mess, and one can tell that they have been radically cut. The film in general suffers from an obvious choppi-ness in editing, which was likely a result of the film being over-long. Perhaps missing footage will be restored in the extended DVD version.

This film is bigger and noisier than the first, and because of it, character development noticeably suffers. Jackson admits that this second film takes the most liberties with Tolkien's story. Let's hope that in the final film, Jackson's approach to Tolkien actually has a little more Tolkien in it.

*Paula DiSante*



While I'm uncomfortable with many of Jackson's changes, I do think that he honors a number of Tolkien's most characteristic themes. Two of these are hope in the face of despair and the importance of maintaining alliances rather than retreating into isolationism. Various bits of the "fan fiction" Jackson added to the Helm's Deep section of the film reinforce these ideas. At one point, Legolas yells at Aragorn that the battle is hopeless, that everyone's going to die. Aragorn later—if I'm remembering the sequence correctly—encounters one of the youngsters who's been pressed into service, diffidently holding his sword. The boy says that he's heard that the battle is hopeless. Aragorn asks the child's name, asks for the sword, and swings the sword a few times, looking somewhat grim and desperate. But then he says quietly, "This is a good sword," and gives it back to the boy, adding, "There is always hope." Before the battle begins, Aragorn is standing on the ramparts looking out, and we see the hilt of his own sword being held up behind him; it turns out that Legolas has come to hand it to him, with the words, "I was wrong to despair before. Forgive me." I found this set of scenes—not a word of which appeared in the books—very moving, and an effective illustration of Tolkien's emphasis on hope in the face of seemingly overwhelmingly odds.

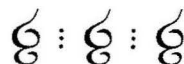
Similarly, when Aragorn is trying to persuade Théoden to send for reinforcements, Théoden gestures at Legolas and Gimli in the background and says something along the lines of, "Who would come? We can't expect help from the elves or the dwarves. We aren't as fortunate in our friends as you are. Rohan is alone." Later, in a huge departure from the book, Haldir arrives with a troop of highly trained elven warriors, who provide a splendid visual contrast to the bewildered, terrified old men and young boys who form the majority of the Rohan militia. He tells Théoden, who is amazed to see him, that the

elves haven't forgotten that they fought side by side with men in the Last Alliance, and wish to honor that allegiance. In the book, Tolkien makes this point in the chapter "The Road to Isengard." When Théoden expresses wonder at the existence of Ents, Gandalf answers, "You should be glad, Théoden King. For not only the little life of Men is now endangered, but the life also of things which you have deemed the matter of legend. You are not without allies, even if you know them not."

That's a beautiful moment in the book, one of my favorites. Why did Jackson choose to handle it so differently? Well, my guess is that it's because what he's done is so much more dramatic and *visually* effective than the original scene in the text. But Jackson does, as it turns out, use the Ents to reinforce the theme of anti-isolationism, when Merry and Pippin try to convince Treebeard and company to go into battle. At one point one of the hobbits says, "Well, we can go home to the Shire, can't we?" and the other answers, "No, because the Shire's part of the world, and nothing's safe anymore." Later, when the Ents say that this isn't their fight, one of the hobbits answers, "You're part of the world, aren't you?" The Ents mutter in response and look thoughtful, but don't actually change their minds until they see the trees Saruman has killed. Jackson thus, albeit in a roundabout way, makes the point that "not only the little life of Men is endangered."

So: despite Jackson's gigantic departures from the letter—many of which pained me, especially in the scenes with Faramir—the *spirit* of the film still winds up emphasizing at least some of what was important to Tolkien and has remained important to his readers.

Susan Palwick



# Activity Calendar

Matthew Winslow, Discussion Group Secretary

## Prospective Groups

### CALIFORNIA

*San Diego: LOTHLORIEN*

Linda Sundstrom,

### CONNECTICUT

*Southington: FANTASTIC WORLDS*

Bill Pierce, E-mail:

Web:

### FLORIDA

*Tampa Bay: HOBBITON*

Paul S. Ritz,

*North Central Florida: ERYN GALEN*

B.L. McCauley, NFCC English Dept., Madison, FL.

### GEORGIA

*Atlanta area: CENTRAL ATLANTIS*

Irv Koch,

### ILLINOIS

*Peoria: THE FAR WESTFARTHING SMIAL*

Mike Foster,

Ongoing: *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

### INDIANA

*Central Indiana: CERIN AMROTH*

Ellen Denham, E-mail:

Web:

### MICHIGAN

Julie Bailey,

### OHIO

*Akron*

David Staley,

Web:

## Chartered Groups

### CALIFORNIA

*Los Angeles/Pasadena: MYDGARD*

Lee Speth,

January: *The Two Towers* film discussion

February: *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* by A.S.

Byatt

*San Francisco Bay Area: KHAZAD-DUM*

Amy Wisniewski & Edith Crowe,

E-mail:

Web:

January: *The Two Towers* film discussion

February: *Ill Met by Moonlight* by Sarah A. Hoyt

March: *The Curse of Chalion* by Lois McMaster

Bujold

### COLORADO

*Denver area: FANUIDHOL ("CLOUDY HEAD")*

Patricia Yarrow,

Web:

Ongoing topic: Mythcon 33: *Shakespeare and Fantasy*

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

*Washington & Suburbs: KNOSSOS*

Mimi Stevens,

January: *Borderlands of Science* by Charles Sheffield

### HAWAII

*Oahu: SAMMATH NAUR*

Steve Brown,

Web:

### IOWA

*Decorah: ALFHEIM*

Doug Rossman,

### LOUISIANA

*Baton Rouge: ROKE*

Sally Budd,

## MICHIGAN

*Ann Arbor area: GALADHREMMIN-ENNORATH*

Dave & Grace Lovelace, [REDACTED]

## MINNESOTA

*Minneapolis-St. Paul: RIVENDELL*

David Lenander, [REDACTED]

Web: [REDACTED]

January: *The Two Towers* film discussion

## NEVADA

*Reno: CRICKHOLLOW*

Joanne Burnett-Bowen, [REDACTED]

Web: [REDACTED]

January: *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis

## OREGON

*Mid-Willamette Valley Area*

Donovan Mattole, [REDACTED]

Web: [REDACTED]

January: *Byzantium* by Stephen R. Lawhead

February: "Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics"  
and "On Fairy Stories" by J.R.R. Tolkien

March: *War in Heaven* by Charles Williams

## PENNSYLVANIA

*Lancaster Area: C.S. LEWIS AND FRIENDS*

Neil Gussman, [REDACTED]

## SOUTH CAROLINA

*Columbia: THE COLUMBIA C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY*

Nina Fowler, [REDACTED]

## WASHINGTON

*Seattle: MITHLOND*

Matthew Winslow, [REDACTED]

Web: [REDACTED]

## WISCONSIN

*Milwaukee: THE BURRAHOBBITS*

Jeffrey & Jan Long, [REDACTED]

January: *Sailing to Sarantium* by Guy Gavriel Kay

## Special Interest Group

*THE ELVISH LINGUISTIC FELLOWSHIP*

Carl Hostetter, [REDACTED]

Newsletter, *Vinyar Tengwar*. Journal,  
*Parma Eldalamberon*: Christopher Gilson, [REDACTED]

## Correspondence Groups

*BUTTERBUR'S WOODSHED* (general fantasy)

Diane Joy Baker, [REDACTED]

Correspondence circular with set topic. Web:

January: *The Jackal who Begat a God* by Nega  
Mezlekia

March: *The Curse of Chalion* by Lois McMaster  
Bujold

May: 2003 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award nominees

July: History and Fantasy

*ONCE UPON A TIME* (children's fantasy)

Laura Krentz, [REDACTED]

Correspondence circular. Web: [REDACTED]

## Online Discussion Groups

*MYTHSOC E-LIST*

Society activities and general book-related discussion.

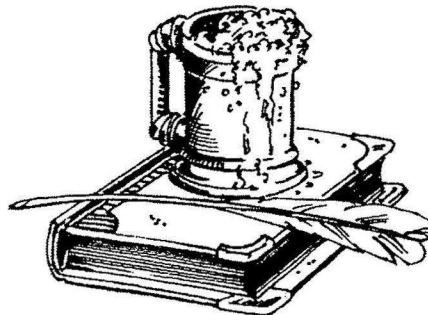
Sign up: [REDACTED] or contact

Joan Marie Verba: [REDACTED]

*COINHERENCE*

Online discussion of Charles Williams

David Davis: E-mail: [REDACTED]





## More Film Reviews and Comments

Realizing that most movies don't have the advantage of using the source material from one of the world's greatest pieces of fiction, one must look askance at the job Peter Jackson and his crew did on the second installment of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Jackson had a lot to cover in one movie, and he did not do it very well.

There were whole scenes which added nothing to the movie experience and which should have been removed in favor of a more fluid presentation. Though Aragorn and the shield-maiden did have a budding relationship to investigate, some of the personal interaction between the two characters, as it was developed in the film, made little sense given the small amount of treatment Jackson gave to it. Other problems like this abound: the movie is stymied by a drawn-out display of the emotions between Aragorn and his elvish love, and Frodo's gradually increasing sublimation into the Ring's power looked more like an onset of the flu ... but these were both better developed than the Gondorian captain's sudden reversal from power-hunger to understanding of the Ring's danger. His leap from total lack of comprehension to absolute sacrifice to aid Frodo was inspired, in the movie, by one senseless action on Frodo's part. Readers of the book understand Frodo's actions, but the movie's presentation makes Frodo just look tired and stupid for walking straight into danger.

It appeared, in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, that Peter Jackson had a little trouble understanding combat and action sequences. Though lack of realism is to be expected in the fantasy genre, the odds taken on by the Fellowship and the few remarkable actions they displayed did little towards explaining their survival. This problem was amplified in *The Two Towers*, as characters charged moronically into overwhelming odds and survived through doing nothing more brilliant than waving their weapons haphazardly

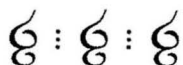
around. Furthermore, Jackson should have reconsidered the appearance of the banished Rohan warriors who saved the day. For one, they appeared at the top of the hill that appeared just as suddenly and without warning as the warriors themselves did. For another, I don't know what Peter Jackson thinks should happen when a massed unit of cavalry charges down a slope that is over 45 degrees in angle straight into ranks upon ranks of polearm bearing infantrymen set for a charge, but he obviously thinks the result is much better than what would most likely happen. Yes, you can explain all these problems by indicating that the good guys were really really excellent fighters, or that Gandalf's magic provided so much aid, etc., but if you are going to use that as an excuse, then by all means *show* those abilities being used. For all of Gandalf's magic, the pikes were still set at the end of the charge; for all of Aragorn's skill, he still did little more than charge headlong into enemies.

In summation, Peter Jackson may have had a little too much book to fit into one movie, and he certainly did not do a good job of trying. His understanding of *The Lord of the Rings* is impeccable, but his understanding of presenting it in a movie format is abysmal. The only saving grace of this movie appears to be the Ents—their animation, design and voices were impressive indeed. Gollum's conversation with himself was a refreshing and surprising bit of cinema also, and it is too bad that the originality displayed there was not applied to the rest of the movie. A few good points do not make the movie, and on the whole this movie rests purely on a Tolkien fan base for its worth.

I would not change much from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, I'll watch it again and again. As far as *The Two Towers* goes, I wish Peter Jackson had made us wait a little longer for him to rethink the second installment in what could have been the

best trilogy ever made for the big screen.

Shane Fox



I fear we Tolkien “fanatics” have been snookered. Peter Jackson enticed us with *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which in my opinion deviates from Tolkien’s story line minimally and defensibly. I was willing to put up with a lot of revision in order to enjoy a good movie; and was excited to find that *FotR* was good Tolkien as well! Unaccountably, however, with *The Two Towers* Jackson presents us with his own vision of what would have happened in Rohan if only J.R.R.T. knew how to craft a good plot. I fear that having been lured in and hooked, we are now being played for suckers. I despair for what we will receive in *The Return of the King*.

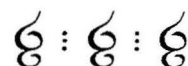
There are a few bright spots. The special effects, other than Éomer’s charge down the impossible slope, are quite good. Gandalf *vs.* the Balrog struck me as well done. The characterization of Gollum is frankly brilliant, whether one refers to sound, sight, or psychology. The distinction between Orcs and Sauron’s human minions, Dunlending or Southron, is a subtlety that I was pleased to see maintained. And my wolf-loving friends will be relieved to see how Wargs were handled.

On the other hand, Faramir fails, rather than passes, the test of the Ring, at least at first. Worse, Gimli is reduced from the chosen representative of a proud and stern people (who may indeed be unintentionally funny on occasion) to a short buffoon who happens to wield a mean axe. This Gimli is not Tolkien, he is an Anime character. And Treebeard! I was ready to see a leaf pop out of his mouth, *a la* Bakshi, when he spoke.

I saw *FotR* in the theaters about a dozen times. I do not expect to repeat my viewing of *TT*,

although I will of course obtain the videos when they come out on VHS/DVD.

Darrell A. Martin



Once again Peter Jackson was able to leave me with the feeling that I had just watched another installment of *The Lord of the Rings*, as he did with *The Fellowship of the Ring* last year.

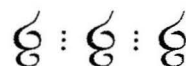
There were parts of both movies that didn’t seem to have occurred in the book. In *The Two Towers* this is especially true regarding the portrayal of my favorite character, Faramir. Jackson did the same thing to Boromir’s character in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. He did redeem the character with the added material in the special extended version. I’m hoping this will be the case with Faramir.

My level of excitement was a bit dimmed compared with last year. We didn’t travel to a special screening event or collect glass or toys because there weren’t any. We were all excited. My son has finished *The Lord of the Rings* and is now reading *The Silmarillion*.

The crowd at this first showing was much younger than last year. They seemed to groan, laugh and cheer at the right spots. There is nothing like a first viewing, or first reading for that matter. It was great! I remarked to my colleagues that I think it is the best movie I have ever seen.

I’m glad *The Return of the King* will include more Ents. I will enjoy viewing the siege of Minas Tirith and yearn for my favorite scene, Éowyn, Merry and the slaying of the Lord of the Nazgûl. Waiting for *The Return of the King* film is not the same as anticipating the next chapter, but it is close.

J. J. Schultz, II



**The good:** The filmmakers' depiction of Rohan was terrific: set design, cinematography, costumes, music and casting all worked beautifully to create a rich culture and impelling characters. I'm very excited to see what Miranda Otto, who plays Éowyn, will do with her character's development and increasing importance in the third film (and almost as excited to be able to add her figure to my Action Chicks arsenal). I'm also delighted with Karl Urban's portrayal of Éomer, having thoroughly enjoyed his double duty in recurring roles as Cupid and Julius Caesar in *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Love the helm, too!

The design of the Ents was excellent, and the scene of the destruction of Isengard particularly well done.

**The bad:** I always thought the Helm's Deep section of the book went on too long, and the film version gets even more convoluted, bringing in a pre-cavalric squad of Lothlórien elves before the actual appearance of Gandalf and the Rohan exiles. And although I thought the CGI Gollum generally worked well, I got just as tired of his repetitive whining as I did reading these sections of the book. So, ironically, Tolkien can actually be blamed (tangentially, at least) for some of the film's failings ....

**The ugly:** Poor Faramir! And what were they thinking? Passing up one of the juiciest dramatic scenes in *The Two Towers*—Faramir's confrontation with Frodo and Sam, and the subsequent demonstration of his "quality" as he takes a different path than did his brother—was a disservice to the actors as well as to the story's creator.

Eleanor M. Farrell



Every review of *The Two Towers* that I have read so far has left out a very important point—the

story has been cut short on both fronts. The last time I read *LotR* the battle with Shelob was contained in *TT*—I'm sure we'll see this scene in *The Return of the King* but I was greatly looking forward to this.

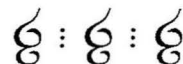
I was even more greatly disappointed that we did not see the ride to Isengard, the parley with Saruman and the episode with the *palantir*—these are all essential events in the story. I am skeptical that something is going to be chopped out completely. *RotK* is going to have to cover all of these loose ends of *TT* and then cover its own ground (Minas Tirith, Mordor, etc.). We'll see.

And what was with Aragorn falling off the cliff and the dream about Arwen? (I knew of course that this was inserted material not found in the book so I put the time to good use by walking out of the theater for a minute to take a leak.)

Wormtongue was all wrong. Making him out to look like something out of *Dracula* is absurd. He's got to be a convincing councilor to the leaders of Rohan. And he should be referred to as Gríma until Gandalf reveals his true intentions. Would you take advice from a man named Wormtongue?

Anyway, enough complaining—on the whole the film was fantastic. Rohan was brilliant. To hell with Arwen, If I were Aragorn I'd grab Éowyn—she was great. The battle was terrific. Treebeard was fabulous. And Gollum, well he stole the show, that little slinker/stinker.

Steven Teti



It is no coincidence that *Star Trek: Nemesis* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* came out at the same time. Both deal with what will become the defining issue of the 21st century: recognizing that our own greatest enemy is ourselves. As usual, Tolkien was way ahead of his time and Peter Jackson has merely recognized

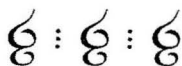
this and built upon it.

Readers of Tolkien know that Frodo's complex relationship with Gollum stems from/reflects the fact that Gollum is the embodiment of what Frodo could become and must fight against, and this is the very quality that allows Frodo to pity Gollum. Jackson goes beyond Frodo's battle with despair to show that every character in the story/film must also fight against his or her own personal despair, thus illustrating the truth that the greatest conflicts of literature or film are not man *vs.* nature or even man *vs.* man, but man against himself.

Of the three *Lord of the Rings* films, *The Two Towers* will probably most clearly illustrate this fact. It is darker than the first, but the inner battle is the most difficult and must be fought and won before the characters can attempt the challenge of the epic battle to come in *The Return of the King*. Yes, there is the big battle sequence of Helm's Deep, but the true battles are fought before that battle even concludes, most before it even starts, individually by each of the characters and against his/her own despair; even Legolas succumbs temporarily.

*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* is a great movie not because it depicts the epic struggle between good and evil on a grand scale, though of course it does this, but because it does not neglect to show that on a much smaller, individual scale, each character fights his own most personal battle, that against himself, and wins. This is the true heroism of *The Two Towers*.

Chris Barkley



Jackson doesn't just condense the story, he changes it completely and unnecessarily. The inherent limitations of adapting a story of several hundred pages for a three-hour movie must

needs be sins of *omission*, not of *commission*. Jackson, however, adds pieces not attested anywhere in Tolkien's original, and considering how little time there was in the film, these wild interpolations of his baffle me. Why, for example, does Jackson fabricate the Warg attack on Théoden's company riding north to Helm's Deep? He gets a little suspense out of it—Aragorn's friends think him dead, Éowyn despairs, we sit on tenterhooks as Aragorn floats unconscious downriver. And the scene leads to yet a further excursion, with soft-focus shots of Arwen and more artificial suspense—will she sail with her father or won't she? Hardly a worthwhile compensation for five minutes of squandered screen time.

Similarly, crucial decisions which Tolkien used to show his characters' mettle are given to *other* characters, for no other reason than to exalt the heroism of a select few. It should have been Théoden, for example, not Aragorn, making the final decision to ride forth from the Hornburg at dawn. It should have been Treebeard finally deciding to attack Isengard, on his own, without Merry's prompting and Pippin's guile. Small changes, perhaps, but they serve to diminish the accomplishments of the second-tier characters of the story.

With effort I can forgive these changes, but Jackson's transformation of Faramir is unforgivable. Faramir is supposed to be a thoughtful, educated man, cautious yet courteous, not warlike save by need: "I love not the sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love that which they defend, the city of the men of Númenor." (Why Jackson and his collaborators saw fit to strike possibly the best line in all of *The Lord of the Rings* is beyond me.) Jackson's treatment makes Faramir just another noisome bully; that *he*, not Boromir, dreamt of the Sword that was Broken

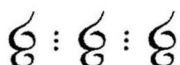


and that “the halfling forth shall stand” seems to have escaped Jackson entirely, and so his Faramir treats the hobbits like captive spies and prepares to drag them in chains back to Minas Tirith.

When Faramir, seeing the Ring, says not, “Not if it lay in the highway would I take it,” but “The Ring goes to Gondor,” I could have cried. The crucial moment of the entire second half of *The Two Towers* and Jackson doesn’t just ruin it, he mocks it.

From the point of view of someone who has never read *The Lord of the Rings*, or who can succeed better than I in treating the series of movies entirely as a separate creation, the filmmakers did an extraordinary job. Every other fantasy movie ever made looks pallid and stupid in comparison to Jackson’s creation. But as a faithful condensation of Tolkien it’s a dead loss. We hates it, we hates it, we hates it forever!

Eugene Tomlinson



When I first saw *The Fellowship of the Ring*, I was underwhelmed. But someone said that if I saw it a second time, my opinion might be more favorable, and it was. Therefore, I came to *The Two Towers* a bit more prepared (and reading spoilers definitely helped). As with *Fellowship*, the visuals were stunning, and in fact Peter Jackson said in his commentary of *Fellowship* that it was his aim, if not to get the text exactly right, to get the visuals right, and he succeeds in that. Edoras, Helm’s Deep, the Black Gate, and Fangorn Forest, among others, appear very much as described in the text. Many of the scenes ring true: the passage of the Dead Marshes; Éomer and company surrounding Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli; the battle with the Oliphaunts; and the Ents attacking Isengard. A lot of the dialogue is there, too, though some is uttered by other characters than in the original—it seemed very strange for

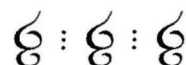
Éomer to voice Gandalf’s lines, but it worked in the movie’s context.

Then again, there are the scenes that are not: Aragorn falls off a cliff and is presumed dead? Where’d that come from? But it turns out to be a minor departure, and gives Aragorn the chance to make a grand dramatic entrance. A contingent of elves comes to help defend Helm’s Deep, which did not bother me, since I wondered why the elves hadn’t done so in the book, Last Alliance or no. Aragorn commanding the elf contingent is encouraging, since what distresses me most about the Jackson adaptation is that Aragorn is portrayed as a reluctant monarch, rather than a man trained, ready and willing to be king when the time comes. I also can’t imagine how the descendants of the Númenoreans became so scruffy. Arwen doesn’t look or act as if she’s the descendant of Lúthien, either. What is she doing, leaving Rivendell to take a ship to Valinor?

Nonetheless, there are some extraordinary scenes. I felt the most spectacular part of *The Two Towers* was Gollum. This CGI character is flawless. The performance is brilliant. Interactions between him and the living actors are seamless. I can’t imagine how Gollum could have been done better.

No, it’s not a precise transcription of the book. I find some of the departures annoying (if they had to have the scene with Éowyn and Wormtongue, couldn’t Éowyn at least have slapped him?) and others interesting (the trolls opening the Black Gate and Théoden mourning Théodred come to mind). But overall, even if it’s not exactly Tolkien, I find it a brilliant piece of fan fiction, and an absorbing piece of filmmaking.

Joan Marie Verba





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