UNIVERSITÉ TOULOUSE JEAN JAURÈS

Études anglophones

Fantasy Fire in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien & Jackson)

GUILLEN Julie

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Sous la direction de M. QUERO MELLET Laurent

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'All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;'

Introduction

In the pantheon of English literature, J.R.R. Tolkien stands as a towering figure whose influence extends far beyond the pages of his novels. With *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien not only crafted a timeless tale of heroism and adventure but also revolutionised the fantasy genre and redefined the scope of epic storytelling. Through his meticulous world-building, intricate languages, and rich mythology, Tolkien created a universe that feels both ancient and alive, inviting readers to immerse themselves in the wonders of Middle-earth. But Tolkien's impact goes beyond mere storytelling; his work has inspired generations of writers, artists, and scholars, shaping the way we perceive and engage with the genre of fantasy. *The Lord of the Rings* is more than just a novel; it is a cultural phenomenon, a literary milestone that continues to captivate readers and scholars alike with its enduring themes of friendship, sacrifice, and the eternal struggle between light and darkness. As we analyse Tolkien's masterpiece, we should explore the origins of his work, among myths and legends.

Within its pages, readers are transported to a world of wizards and warriors, hobbits and elves, where the forces of good and evil clash in an epic struggle for dominion. Yet, amidst its vast tapestry of characters and quests, there exists a seemingly subtle but profoundly influential element: fire. From the fiery forge of Mount Doom, where the One Ring is forged in the heart of darkness, to the beacon fires of Gondor, which signal hope and unity in times of peril, fire serves as a constant presence throughout the narrative, illuminating the moral complexities and thematic depths of Tolkien's world. It is through fire that the forces of darkness seek to assert their dominance, as seen in the fiery wrath of Sauron's armies and the destructive capabilities of dragons and Balrogs. Yet, fire also holds the promise of redemption and renewal, as evidenced by Gandalf's cleansing flames in battle with the Balrog in the depths of Moria and the purifying fire that consumes the One Ring in Mount Doom. Through its multifaceted symbolism and thematic resonance, fire becomes a central motif in Tolkien's epic tale, renewing the mythical struggle between light and darkness.

Transitioning from the pages of Tolkien's literary masterpiece to the silver screen, director Peter Jackson undertakes the monumental task of translating the rich tapestry of *The Lord of the Rings* into images and sounds. With meticulous attention to detail and a deep reverence for the source material, Jackson brings Middle-earth to life in a way never before imagined. The rolling hills of the Shire, the towers of Isengard, Barad-Dûr or Minas Tirith, the characters and their garments, Jackson's adaptation captures the essence of Tolkien's world

with breathtaking precision, while also infusing it with his own cinematic vision. Through stunning visual effects, masterful storytelling, and a stellar cast, Jackson's films transport audiences to a realm of fantasy and adventure, where the fires of Mount Doom burn bright and the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Much like in Tolkien's original work, fire serves as a dynamic force driving the narrative forward. Jackson captures the elemental power of fire, using it to underscore the themes of conflict, despair, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. Whether it's the ominous glow of Sauron's eye piercing the night sky or the comfort brought by the campfire shared by the Fellowship, fire permeates every frame of Jackson's films, infusing them with a sense of mediaevalism, but also urgency that propels the story towards its epic conclusion. Through his expert use of visual effects and cinematography, Jackson transforms fire from a mere plot device into a character in its own right, lending depth and dimension to Tolkien's fantasy world. As we explore the three films, in the extended version, we should pay attention to the way fire has been adapted for the screen and what it brings to the plot. We should also analyse scenes from other fantasy films or series to search for a recurring aesthetic of fire and explore the link between fire and fantasy.

At the heart of this essay lies the central argument that fire is an indispensable element in the construction of a fantasy narrative, particularly exemplified in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and its cinematic adaptation by Peter Jackson. Several scholars have studied Tolkien's work, resulting in a lot of analysis on the subject: on his life and his influences, on the characters he created, on his influence on the fantasy genre. Very few broach the subject of fire: the dichotomies between light and darkness or life and death are prevalent, like in Vincent Ferré's work on death and immortality[1]. We can find a reference to fire in *The Lord of the Rings* in Aurélie Brémont's thesis essay entitled *Les Celtes en Terre-du-Milieu: Inspirations Celtiques Dans Les œuvres De J.R.R Tolkien*[2]. However, it is not extensive, and focuses on its celtic aspect. Through a comprehensive analysis of both the original text and its visual counterpart, this essay contends that fire serves as a catalyst for narrative progression, thematic exploration, and emotional resonance. It argues that while Tolkien masterfully integrates fire into the fabric of his mythic world, Jackson enhances its significance through

[1] Vincent Ferré, *Tolkien : sur les rivages de la Terre du Milieu*, Paris: C. Bourgeois, 2001.
[2] Aurélie Brémont and Leo Martin Carruthers, *Les Celtes en Terre-du-Milieu Inspirations Celtiques Dans Les œuvres De J.R.R Tolkien*, Paris 4, 2009.

the visual spectacle of cinema, thus amplifying its impact on audiences. Furthermore, the essay posits that the portrayal of fire in both mediums not only advances the plot but also contributes to the epic scale and immersive quality of the fantasy genre. From the comforting hearths of the Shire to the flickering torches of the battle in Helm's Deep and the fiery chasms of Mount Doom, fire dances across the pages and frames, illuminating both the literal and metaphorical landscapes of Tolkien's fantasy world.

Part I delves into the essence of Tolkien's work, tracing the evolution of fire from its mythic origins to its indispensable function in shaping the narrative and themes of *The Lord of the Rings*. Within these pages, we uncover how fire serves as a symbol of power, destruction, and salvation, weaving its fiery tendrils through the very fabric of Tolkien's storytelling.

Part II shifts focus to the realm of adaptation, where director Peter Jackson undertakes the monumental task of translating Tolkien's prose into cinematic spectacle. Through meticulous analysis, we unravel the nuances of Jackson's interpretation of fantasy fire, examining how it ignites the screen with cinematic prowess while remaining faithful to the spirit of the original text.

Finally, in Part III, we venture beyond the borders of Middle-earth to explore the broader implications of Jackson's adaptation. As we witness the birth of a new cinematic genre –epic fantasy– we confront the enduring legacy of *The Lord of the Rings* and its transformative impact on the landscape of contemporary cinema.

I. From myth to Fantasy: how fire is essential to tell a story

Stories are meant to be told: the best way to do it, since the dawn of civilisation, has always been by gathering around a fire in the evening. Fire has an impact over one's ability to daydream: according to Bachelard[3], it initiates a state of *rêverie* in a person looking in the flames. Therefore, we could wonder what place fire has in various mythology and how it has impacted Tolkien in his creation of Middle-Earth.

A. A mythology imbued with fire

To start, we should explore Tolkien's mythology: *The Silmarillion*[4] is essential to understand the genesis of *The Lord of the Rings*. It tells the origin of Middle-Earth as we see it in *The Lord of The Rings*.

1. The origin of fire

Fire holds a very important place in *The Silmarillion*. It appears very early in the book as we learn that fire comes from the equivalent of a god in Tolkien's world, like what we can find in Greek and European myths. Eru Ilúvatar is the omniscient being at the origin of the world and of its gods: the Valar and the Maiar. Eru's spirit is named the 'Flame Imperishable'[5] and is at the origin of Ëa, what exists, and of Arda, the world on which Middle-Earth stands. In 'the Ainulindalë', Eru says to the Ainur (the Valar and the Malar) that he has 'kindled [them] with the Flame Imperishable'[6]: the building of Arda is inextricably intertwined with fire. The living things in Tolkien's world seem to all have a link with fire, as if fire were like Bergson's *élan vital*[7], something all living things possess which pushes them to live and fulfil their purpose: reaching harmony in Arda. We should also underline the profound link between this *élan vital* and music as it is the song of the Ainur led by Eru which created Arda.

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[3] Gaston Bachelard, *La Psychanalyse du Feu*, Paris: Folio, 1985.
[4] John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, and all, *The Silmarillion*, London: HarperCollins, 2013.
[5] *Ibid*. 3
[6] *Ibid*. 3
[7] Henri Bergson, and all, *L'Évolution Créatrice*, Paris: PUF, 2013.

Eru's fire hinges around creation, not destruction and punishment like Zeus's lightning. Eru can be compared to Hephaistos and Athena. As he is alone with the largest power in Tolkien's mythology, we could also compare him to a god in monotheist religions: he alone owns the power to create.

The Valar Melkor is at the origin of discord in Middle Earth: he wants to be able to create things like Eru so he searches for the Imperishable Flame but he cannot find it. Therefore, he seeks his own flame and he is consumed by jealousy, so much so that he takes the appearance of a contrasted being, between ice and fire:

> And he descended upon Arda in power and majesty greater than any other of the Valar, as a mountain that wades in the sea and has its head above the clouds and is clad in ice and crowned with smoke and fire; and the light of the eyes of Melkor was like a flame that withers with heat and pierces with a deadly cold.[8]

His search for power is fruitful as it leads him to become 'greater than any other'. A contrast is made between Light, belonging in Eru and with the Valar faithful to him, and Darkness, bred by Melkor in his pride and jealousy: here as well fire appears as both creation and destruction. He is not, however, at the origin of every evil spirits in Arda:

> And in Utumno he gathered his demons about him, those spirits who first adhered to him in the days of his splendour, and became most like him in his corruption: their hearts were of fire, but they were cloaked in darkness, and terror went before them; they had whips of flame. Balrogs they were named in Middle-earth in later days.[9]

The Balrogs were seduced by Melkor's might but they were not created by him and still had wills of their own (unlike orcs which were elves tortured into submission). Balrogs are corrupted spirits, terrifying and made of fire and darkness: we can find here a reminiscence of Hell, as it is described in the Bible.

Moreover, *The Silmarillion* also tells the history of the events before and during the First Age, including the wars over the three Silmarils, that gave the book its title. The Silmarils are representative of Light in its purest form, and a link is made between the jewels and fire:

> And the inner fire of the Silmarils Fëanor made of the blended light of the Trees of Valinor, which lives in them yet, though the Trees have long withered and shine no more. Therefore even in the darkness of the deepest treasury the Silmarils of their own radiance shone like the stars of Varda; and yet, as were they indeed living things, they rejoiced in light and received it and gave it back in hues more marvellous than before.[10]

[8] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, o*p.cit* 11
[9] *Ibid*. 43
[10] *Ibid*. 68

Their creator Fëanor is said to be the 'Spirit of Fire'. The Silmarils are what remains from the Trees of Valinor, Telperion and Laurelin. Telperion was silver, the eldest of the two, whereas Laurelin was: 'the 'song of gold'. Her leaves were edged with gold yet were pale green; her flowers were like trumpets and golden flames, and from her limbs fell a rain of gold Light.'[11] Here again we find fire imbued in everything created by the Valar: gold and light are positive aspects of fire, it underlines the supernatural, divine quality of these trees.

2. Similarities between existing religions and Tolkien's mythology

We could wonder if there are similarities between Tolkien's mythology and other existing religions, implying that Tolkien was inspired by them to create Middle-Earth. Being a mediaevalist, we could imagine that Tolkien might have been especially inspired by Celtic and Norse mythology as well as Old Britannic beliefs.

a) Greek mythology

To explain the origin of fire, the Greeks relied on the myth of Prometheus: it has many versions. In Plato's version[12], Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus were charged by the gods to hand out attributes to the creatures of the world. Epimetheus gave speed, wings, claws, fur, fangs, etc to every creature making them animals, but he left men without any attributes. He handed out this task to his brother who decided to right this wrong by stealing Hephaistos's fire and Athena's craftsmanship and deliver them to men to give them the ability to create their own claws and wings. In this myth, a distinction is made between Zeus's fire, lightning, which destroys when it strikes and Hephaistos's fire, the hearth, which allows to warm oneself and to cook. We can see a dichotomy: there is a 'good' and a 'bad' fire, one which creates and allows men to master themselves in crafting (like Hegel demonstrates in the lord-bondsman dialectic[13]); and one which punishes and destroys.

While we cannot find a similarity between the origin of fire in Greek beliefs and in Tolkien's mythology, we can still find a similarity in the way human beings are created, especially dwarves. Indeed, elves, men and dwarves have been created by the Valar: Eru made elves and men, his children, but Aulë wanted to experiment for himself and created the seven fathers of

[11] David Day, *A Dictionary of Tolkien*, 'Trees of the Valar', Paris: Pyramid, 2014.
[12] Plato, Frédérique Ildefonse, *Protagoras*, Paris: Flammarion, 1997.
[13] Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the lord-bondsman dialectic, 1807.

dwarves in a mountain. Aulë being the Valar responsible for Earth's mountains, we can imagine that he created dwarves with earth and rocks: it is similar to the way men are created in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*[14], by Deucalion and Pyrrha throwing rocks behind them.

b) Celtic mythology: Odin and Gandalf, Grond and Fenrir

Gandalf can be compared to Odin, the latter being the 'elf wizard' in the *Edda*[15]. The magician is part of the Istari, meaning 'the wise' in elvish, 'the wizards' by extension. Marjorie Burns, in *Perilous realms*[16] compares Gandalf's appearance to Odin's when he wanders in Middle-Earth dressed as an old man: his cloak, his staff and his hat are reminiscent of Odin's description when he wanders among humanity. She describes Gandalf as being the positive side of Odin, the negative side being embodied by Saruman and Sauron. She also compares the two mythologies regarding animal affiliations. Odin has several animals associated to him and to battle: eagles, ravens and wolves. All three find their equivalent in Tolkien's world, either on the positive side, with Gandalf, or on the side of evil, with Saruman and Sauron.

On this aspect, the battering ram named Grond and used in the battle of Minas Tirith resembles Fenrir in Norse mythology: wolves that wreak havoc on civilisations.

> The drums rolled louder. Fires leaped up. Great engines crawled across the field; and in the midst was a huge ram, great as a forest-tree a hundred feet in length, swinging on mighty chains. Long had it been forging in the dark smithies of Mordor, and its hideous head, founded of black steel, was shaped in the likeness of a ravening wolf; on it spells of ruin lay. Grond they named it, in memory of the Hammer of the Underworld of old. Great beasts drew it, orcs surrounded it, and behind walked mountain-trolls to wield it.[17]

In *The Lord of the Rings Sketchbook*, Alan Lee explains the origin of Grond[18]: it is a symbol of evil imbued in Tolkien's mythology. Indeed, Grond, called the Hammer of the Underworld, was Morgoth's mighty mace that he bore when he fought Fingolfin before the doors of Angband. Each time Grond struck the ground it shook the land like a bolt of thunder, creating pits from which smoke and fire erupted. It can be similar to Thor's hammer, Mjölnir, as well. The battering ram is similar, it creates pits and chaos when it strikes.

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[14] Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, 1471.
[15] V. Ferré, *Tolkien Sur Les Rivages De La Terre Du Milieu*, *op.cit*.
[16] Marjorie Burns, *Perilous Realms*, Toronto: UTP, 2005.
[17] John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1954. V, 4
[18] Alan Lee, *The Lord of the Rings Sketchbook*, London: HarperCollins, 2008.

c) Brittany: Myth of the wren and Frodo

According to J. G. Frazer[19], it is the myth of the wren, or the robin depending on the location, which explained the origin of fire in Old Brittany: according to this myth, a wren flew to take the fire from God and bring it back to men. In its journey back, fire lights its feathers and leaves it wounded. It was not the biggest bird, but the smallest and weakest who risked its life for others, which can be reminiscent of the journey undertaken by the four hobbits, especially Frodo, as he bears the Ring and ends up wounded like the wren.

d) Judaism: Pillar of fire and Barad-dûr

The Pillar of Fire as described in the Hebrew Bible may resemble the tower of Barad-dûr: during the day it is a pillar of cloud, during the night it is a pillar of fire and it guides the Israelites through Egypt during the Exodus. Barad-dûr is always surrounded by clouds (rather black ones) and is always bright and guides the characters towards Mordor.

> Darkness lay there under the Sun. Fire glowed amid the smoke. Mount Doom was burning, and a great reek rising. Then at last his gaze was held: wall upon wall, battlement upon battlement, black, immeasurably strong, mountain of iron, gate of steel, tower of adamant, he saw it: Barad-dûr, Fortress of Sauron. All hope left him.[20]

In this passage, Frodo sees Barad-dûr as he wears the Ring to escape Boromir's gaze. We can see that it is highly associated with fire, darkness and danger: the enumeration gives an impression of strength. On this aspect it is at the opposite of the Pillar of Fire, a symbol of hope for the Israelites.

3. The strange case of Tom Bombadil's house

The House of Tom Bombadil is a safeplace for the Hobbits in their first experience of the wild. This safe haven offers them comfort and useful counsel, it is a resting place, a pause before the hardships that lie ahead. The house of Tom Bombadil could be compared with a church: it is mostly lit by candles.

In the collective work *Les Hommes Et Le Feu De L'Antiquité à Nos Jours*, it is said that churches are only lit by candles because they display the purest form of fire, when a hearth would light too darkly and invite the forces of satan inside the church.

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[19] James George Frazer, and all, *Mythes Sur L'origine Du Feu*, Paris: Payot, 1991, 48.
[20] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 10

> La flamme représente la valeur spirituelle du feu, elle incarne la vertu solaire car elle vient directement du ciel. Comme l'esprit, elle s'élève [...]. L'homme médiéval a peur du noir parce qu'il a peur de l'enfer et de son feu ténébreux.[21]

The description of light in this chapter helps to create a contrast with the rest of the book as it is in this chapter that the word 'candle' occurs most often. In this passage, the candle is either plural ('many candles' or 'a pair of candles' or 'The board blazed with candles') or singular and held by Goldberry ('holding a candle' or 'she held a candle'): in some way, we could say that she is the master of light in this house. She seems to have a halo around her ('framed in light'), making her a saint-like figure. She even seems to be made of light, or somewhat akin to light: her garment and her hair are reminiscent of the sunlight and summer ('white water-lilies', 'belt [...] gold', 'yellow hair'), and even her name 'Goldberry' conveys the image of a mystical yet warm young woman. This assessment takes a fuller meaning with the following sentence: 'She held a candle, shielding its flame from the draught with her hand; and the light flowed through it, like sunlight through a white shell.'[22] In this sentence, her body is described as a shield from the wind, from what could make her light die. We can see that she is merging with her candle as its light 'flowed through [her hand]'. We can find several lyrical aspects to this sentence, like the consonances in /d, l, ʃ, f, h/: Goldberry can also be associated to a muse or a dryad. This lyricality can also be found in the repetition of 'yellow', first after the adjective 'tall' ('tall and yellow'), then after the adjective 'white' ('white and yellow'). The emergence of the colour white in the chapter can be traced back to the comparison of Goldberry's hand to a 'white shell'. When Tom uses Goldberry's candle to light his own and possibly the others ('The boards blazed with candles, white and yellow.'), we can guess that the colour of Goldberry's candlelight, white, is transmitted to the other candles: it reinforces our hypothesis stating that Golberry is a master of light, and especially the 'pure' light of a single candle. This is very close to Christian beliefs and the use of candles in churches, where one flame is used to light others. Plus, Goldberry is even clad in a 'white girdle' after the little dance, emphasising the mystery that lies around her as we do not know how she and Tom changed their garments.

We have shown that light in Tom Bombadil's house behaves differently and seems to spring from Goldberry's mystical and mysterious powers. Moreover, Tom Bombadil's contact with the Ring is quite compelling: the Ring is akin to fire as it was forged through fire and should

[21] François Vion-Delphin et François Lassus, *Les Hommes Et Le Feu De L'Antiquité à Nos Jours*, Besançon: PU Franche-Comté, 2007.
[22] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 7

be destroyed by it, but also as its contact makes Frodo see an ‘Eye of fire’. The Ring is an overpowerful item. Who is Tom Bombadil not to be affected by the Ring’s power?

The way Tom Bombadil plays with the Ring is 'both comical and alarming'[23]. Indeed, we have already seen Tom in action: he dances and sings, completely free from the worries of his world. And he behaves the same way with the Ring, as if he were unaware of the danger surrounding this item. Accordingly, he is playfully looking through it, as if he were searching for something hidden inside: this image is reminiscent of Sauron’s Eye, but instead of a fiery eye, there is Tom’s 'bright blue eye' which is at poles apart. Then, he tries the Ring on, putting it on his finger and not disappearing: the way the Hobbits are described as taking a moment to realise the absence of Tom disappearing is quite comical and even cartoonesque. In the next paragraph, Tom even makes the ring disappear, which is alarming for Frodo who cares about it so deeply, and allows us to fully realise what Tom could be: a wizard perhaps? This paragraph is altogether 'both comical and alarming' as Tom is shown as a trickster, a magician who likes to put on a show for his own amusement; and at the same time a father figure who tells stories and welcomes the Hobbits in a comfortable home; and moreover an alarming character as he seems to wield the same amount of power as Sauron, the other known character of the book who does not disappear when he wears the Ring. Tom’s powers are unknown but are made obvious when he calls Frodo, who is supposed to be invisible, to take off his 'golden ring': somehow he can still see him, and even though he does not consider this item as anything else but a 'golden ring', he can still feel the evilness of it as he says 'Your hand’s more fair without it!'. But it still remains only a 'game' for him.

We could wonder if the characters of Goldberry and Tom Bombadil were not inspired by Christian figures like Saint Mary or Jesus. They convey a sort of mystical aura which could signify that they do not belong in Middle-Earth. They could be seen as the equivalent of saints in Tolkien’s world.

4. Dichotomy of fire

Eru and Melkor, creation and destruction, light and darkness: a dichotomy is built throughout *The Silmarillion* and reminiscences can be found in *The Lord of the Rings.* Fire helps to build a dichotomy, being both essential for mankind and a possible doom. The most iconic

[23] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 7

dichotomy can be found in the opposition between Gandalf and the Balrog in the mines of Moria: we should analyse how the dichotomy is built (Appendix 1).

The excerpt under study, Book II, chapter 5, corresponds to the arrival of the Balrog, it takes place deep beneath the earth in the mines of Moria: the only path available across the Misty Mountains, but one Aragorn and Gandalf would have preferred to avoid. Indeed, at this point we already know that the mines are occupied by evil forces: the Company have found Balin dead and buried and they have already encountered orcs, gobelins and trolls. At this moment, they are trying to escape their opponents and to find an exit on the other side of the mountain. The passage introduces a new threat that we will know later as the Balrog: the Company has never seen it yet, so he is only described through other senses and through the presence of fire.

To begin with, the passage is set in darkness. Throughout the excerpt, we can gather a polyptoton of dark: 'dark' is repeated three times as an adjective and as a noun, and there is the noun 'darkness'. As a consequence, every occurrence of light is very striking. At first, the only light which can be seen is the 'faint glimmer of the wizard's staff': the collocation of 'glimmer' and 'staff' aims to make us understand that Gandalf, as he is a wizard, is capable of conjuring a magical light at the point of his staff so that he can use it like a torch. The setting of the first paragraph is very important to create tension in the second paragraph: Gandalf is at the top of the stairs, muttering words –which we understand later to be an incantation meant to close the passage to their enemies– there is very little light. The second paragraph starts with the adverb 'Suddenly' marking the beginning of a new action: it is completed by the change in lighting, 'a stab of white light'. A chain reaction follows: 'a dull rumble and a heavy thud', drum beats playing 'wildly' and stopping all of a sudden, Gandalf falling. This is narrated through the eyes of Frodo and the accumulation of paratactic sentences underlines his immediate perception and his incapacity to understand what is happening and to take action. It also explains the accumulation of sensory perceptions: we can read an account of what Frodo sees, hears and feels and it helps to create tension. What he sees is highlighted by the verbs 'see' and 'peering up' but they are both associated with a negative sense: 'they could see nothing' and they are 'peering up [...] into the darkness'. Except for light, they can see nothing else. Concerning what he feels, it seems rather logical that without light they should 'grope their way' and 'stumble', especially on steps. Tension is most effectively increased by what they can 'hear' when their sight is absent. The onomatopoeia '*doom, doom*' and '*doom-boom*' aim at mimicking the sound of drums, the first

one being a rather slow beat and the second one being an echoing sounding beat: onomatopoeia place the reader among the characters by making him hear what they hear and thus increasing the presence of enemies and tension. But this drumming sound fades away as they escape: it leads to the accumulation of negative clauses 'There was no other sound of pursuit, neither tramp of feet, nor any voice'. This accumulation insists on the silence which can be a good thing as they could be distancing the enemy or a bad thing if the enemy is still close but not making any sound: here again, sensory perceptions combined with a negative form aim at creating tension around the fate of the Company. They are lost in an unknown mine, underground, without light and potentially surrounded by enemies: the Company is not in a position of power.

The enemy they are facing is also unknown and sundry elements in the text make us understand it is large and very dangerous. To begin with, it does not appear visually in the text and not even in Gandalf's account: the only way the reader can imagine it is by what happens around when it is present. At first, we can only see and hear through Frodo's senses, it seems rather normal that he does not understand what is happening, being new to adventure and its hazards. But then, even Gandalf –one of the most experienced leaders of the Company –admits not knowing this new threat: in his direct speech we can find numerous negative forms like 'I do not know', 'I cannot guess', 'I cannot say'. Gandalf's powerlessness is also reflected by the repeated use of the adverb 'nearly', underlining the fact that this new enemy may have the power to kill Gandalf and thus every member of the Company. Even the orcs, which were the primary source of fear and which the company was fleeing from, shunned before this new enemy: the use of the adjectives 'afraid' and 'silent' is a case in point. The exchange of spells between Gandalf and this new enemy proved to be so powerful that the passage ends up being blocked: it also brings to our attention the fact that this enemy is capable of performing spells, as evidenced by the word 'counter-spell'. So we can imagine that it is a magical being, and this assessment is validated by the way the orcs refer to it: '*ghâsh*', 'fire' in orc-speech. Being referred to as 'fire' connotes a powerful and unrestrainable enemy, something that can melt iron and burn forests: it is a primary and uncontrollable source of life and destruction. Moreover, it is also referred to as 'Something dark as a cloud blocking out all the light inside': this image could be referring to a blackhole, an image even more unknown and uncontrollable than fire. This enemy is deadly dangerous and meeting him again will probably mean the end of the Company.

This passage is essential for building the tension up before Gandalf's fall a few paragraphs later. It sets a deadly impression to the reader and begins what will be an epic fight between fire and light: it is a reminder of the epic wars between the Valar and the Maiar and Morgoth and his demonic disciples, the Balrogs, which took place during the first ages of Middle-Earth. This excerpt foreshadows the end of the Company: they are powerless and their leader is strained. It reinforces as well the building of a dichotomy between two fires: one which creates and one which destroys.

A few lines later, the red light is also associated with evil power: it is first a faint light only perceived by Gimli, then it is felt by everyone as the air grows hotter. This fire in their escape is an additional danger to run from and makes the escape even more impossible. Plus, Gandalf's doubt as to what the orcs meant by '*ghâsh*' is quite troubling: Gandalf is the leader of the Company and the wisest, his uncertainty means that they are in real danger and may have to fight. The hall from which they should have come is cracked and soon to be invaded by fire, allowing them to have some hope. The pillars in this hall had been carved out to resemble trees: 'now and again flames licked at the brink and curled about the bases of the columns' give the impression that the flames are burning real wood instead of stones. The return of ' the pursuing drum-beat' and the discovering of the Bridge of Khazad-dum, 'slender bridge of stone, without kerb or rail', and the flight of arrows from the orcs are all participating in the intensification of the scene before the appearance of the Balrog.

The opposition between Gandalf and the Balrog is in fact an opposition between the 'flame of Anor' and the 'flame of Udûn'. These periphrases introduce the contrast between two different types of flame, the white one and the red one. 'Anor' is the elvish word for 'sun' so Gandalf places himself as the servant of Light. On the other hand, 'Udûn' stands for 'hell' in elvish and it is the name of a valley in Mordor where there must have been volcanic activity in the first ages. In this fight, the Balrog wields a 'red sword' when Gandalf wields Glamdring, which is glittering 'white': at the contact of these swords, there is 'a stab of white fire' as Gandalf's powers have disintegrated the Balrog's sword. The nominal group 'white fire' appears once again when Gandalf uses a word of command to destroy the bridge and send the Balrog into the chasm.

With this analysis, we can say that the dichotomy between a creative fire and a destructive one is also linked to light. Destructive fire is associated with darkness and creative fire is associated with light.

5. Fire: an image of the opposition between Good and Evil?

We can see Gandalf as an angelic figure here as he is associated with the Sun and with Eru itself. The Balrog in opposition is diabolical, he is the epitome of Evil. But is it the only way fire is used in *The Lord of the Rings*? To convey a simple opposition between Good and Evil?

Fire is a symbol which conveys different messages depending on the situation. Karin Becker makes a classification in the article 'La Symbolique Du Feu Et De La Flamme Dans La Littérature'[24]. The classification is made as follows: symbol of divine power, symbol of human emancipation, symbol of purification, symbol of reason and creativity, symbol of life and symbol of passions. What is most interesting is that these symbols can coexist, fire being a profoundly ambivalent phenomenon. We can analyse Gandalf's use of fire. He is associated with the 'good side' of the plot but his ability to wield fire can be ambivalent. Indeed, being an Istar, he is supposed to protect Middle-Earth, but he does not hesitate to kill several wargs and to burn half the forest in order to save the Company. This fire can be a symbol of divine power, Gandalf being after all a wizard, but it can also be a symbol of passions, as he acts to protect his friends. Last but not least, it can also be seen as a symbol of purification as he destroys the servants of Sauron, and tries to eradicate a danger. This dichotomy must then be nuanced: more than a simple opposition, the representation of fire is one of the origins of Fantasy.

B. Fire as a tool to create fantasy

Fire is an ambivalent image: it brings comfort, it can cook but it can also blind and burn. *The Lord of the Rings* has an undeniable link with fire, it is omnipresent and helps to create a sense of magic.

[24] Karin Becker, 'La Symbolique Du Feu Et De La Flamme Dans La Littérature', 2016, Linguae, https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/linguae/.

1. Fantasy characters

Indeed, fire can convey a strong sense of magic in *the Lord of the Rings* as it is not always represented as a regular fire, burning in a homely hearth: some characters have supernatural abilities to wield fire. These characters are often essential to the plot, allowing us to venture that fire, when wielded by supernatural characters, may be a tool to create fantasy.

a) Gandalf

Gandalf is a mage capable of wielding fire and using it wilfully. At the beginning of the novel, we encounter Gandalf through his ability to craft fireworks. The first part of the passage, Book I, Chapter 1, offers an introduction to Gandalf's arrival (Appendix 2). There is a description of Gandalf entering Hobbiton with a cart loaded with fireworks: he is famous for his fireworks, so much so that even the children, who have never seen his art before, are following him through the town with high expectations. The fireworks of Gandalf are very famous among Hobbits, but they have not been seen for a very long time ('nigh on a century'). In this aspect, Gandalf's name has been forgotten in this passage, but his fireworks are the object of a repetition and a hyperbole ('fireworks – fireworks, what is more, such as'), underlining their legendary aspect. The tales which have probably been told by the elders of the village have elevated Gandalf to the rank of legend ('belonged to a legendary past'). His legendary status has also been probably acquired by his mysteriousness, 'His real business' being 'far more difficult and dangerous' than making crackers: here, the hyperbole insists on his mysteriousness and his hidden capacities as a wizard. This first part also displays the general atmosphere of Hobbiton as that of a peaceful village: the repetition of 'odd-looking' and the semantic field of strangeness with 'strange', 'outlandish folk', 'to gape' when describing the 'dwarves' arrival underlines the rare foreigners passing through Hobbiton and the eventfulness of Bilbo's party. Gandalf in this aspect is a rather ambivalent foreigner: he is only seen as an 'old man' and for those who have already seen his fireworks, he has become a legend. However, being the 'attraction' of the party, he is by essence a 'disturber of the peace' of Hobbiton, even more so as fireworks and crackers are very noisy and could be reminiscent of warlike explosions: his art is at poles apart with peace. But Gandalf is still presented as an old man, and 'peace' can still be found around him ('The late afternoon was bright and peaceful.'). We can also remark that the flowers around him are related to fire : 'The flowers glowed red and golden: snapdragons and sunflowers'. The enumeration of the different types of fireworks made by Gandalf displays an astonishing play with sonorities, so much so that it

is like the reader can hear the crackers and the explosions: the consonances, which are in [t, k, b, s], occlusives for most of them, give this impression. His fireworks are not only appealing to the sight and the hearing, but they also appeal to the touch and the smell: 'disappearing with a sweet scent just before they touched their upturned faces'. The repetition of the demonstrative form 'there was' allows us to imagine all the colours and shapes of the fireworks which look a lot like illusions for their unlikely forms: this description is a hypotyposis as it allows us to feel what the hobbits feel and to be part of the party. We can underline as well the reference to Bilbo's adventure, with the last firework, evoking the Lonely Mountain and Smaug. We can also find a prophetic vision through Gandalf's fireworks, in the 'eagles', the 'sailing ships' or the 'forest of silver spears' making the noise of an 'embattled army' : these images are going to be encountered later in the novel, in a more realistic way.

Gandalf has a special affinity in controlling the element of fire because he wears the elven Ring of Fire, Narya. It is one of the three Elven Rings and it procures:

> the power to inspire others to resist tyranny, domination and despair, as well as having the power (in common with the other Three Rings) to hide the wielder from remote observation (except by the wielder of the One) and giving resistance to the weariness of time.[25]

He can also produce flames and he does not restrain himself from burning trees in his effort to save the Company from wargs for instance. In Book II, Chapter 4, the setting is reminiscent of Celtic legends as the Company is settling in a 'broken circle of boulder-stones', a stone circle. The link between druidry and stone circles is still quite obscure, but in the twentieth century stone circles were highly associated with druid ceremonies. Gandalf in this scene could be seen as a druid, being the wielder of an elemental power, fire. His incantation is in an unknown language and reported in italics in order to set it apart from common speech: the incantation he uses is the same as in Caradhras '*Naur an edraith ammen*', which means 'fire for saving us'. Gandalf is also described as a legend with the comparison 'like the monument of some ancient king of stone set upon a hill': it echoes with the statues of Isildur and Anarion at the Argonath. The semantic field of fire is predominant in this passage. Fire is also associated with 'lightning' and Gandalf's voice with 'thunder': Gandalf seems to be conjuring a storm of fire. As said earlier, he is quite close to Odin, and sometimes, he appears as he really is, an Istar, like at Elrond's table in Rivendell, Book II, Chapter 1:

[25] Narya https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/Narya

> Gandalf was shorter in stature than the other two; but his long white hair, his sweeping silver beard, and his broad shoulders, made him look like some wise king of ancient legend. In his aged face under great snowy brows his dark eyes were set like coals that could leap suddenly into fire.

We find here again the reference to Gandalf as a legend ('some wise king of ancient legend'). His age is underlined by the colour of his hair: 'long white hair', 'silver beard' and 'snowy brows'. This general whiteness contrasts with the darkness of his eyes and in general with the darkness of fire, of which he is the master. His mastery is underlined as well here by the comparison between his 'dark eyes' and 'coals': he embodies the element he can control, fire. Often, his eyes are associated with a gleam or a spark, emphasising this description. However, his crafty side and the smoking of pipe weed can also turn him into an endearing character, close to a grandfather.

b) Aragorn

At first, Book I, Chapter 9, Strider is described as the topical adventurer. He is dirty ('weather-beaten', 'caked with mud', 'travel-stained cloak'), knows many stories ('he can tell a rare tale') and he is ever wandering ('one of the wandering folk', 'disappears for a month, or a year, and then he pops up again'): in Tolkien's world, he is called a Ranger. They are often seen as strange men, with unknown purposes, and they trigger wondering. His first appearance in the book is quite disturbing for Frodo as he listens to and stares at the hobbits like a dangerous stranger lurking in the shadows of the inn ('sitting in the shadows') with a hood on ('a hood that overshadowed his face'). His attitude is contradictory as he is both 'listening intently' and watching the Hobbits while sitting in a rather relaxed position (his legs 'stretched out before him' and 'smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved'): in addition to this, the fact that he keeps his hood on despite the heat depicts him as a self-confident man in position of strength and knowledge. And indeed, several hints aim at portraying him as a wise man: the smoking of a pipe and the 'gleam of his eyes' are reminiscent of how Gandalf was described a few pages earlier. Gandalf and Strider are both masters of the art of smoking and they display much inner wealth through their eyes: Strider's eyes can be seen through the hood's shadow as though they are emitting their own light and, when revealed, they are associated with the adjective 'keen' twice. His knowledge is, however, quite useful to Frodo (even though it does not prevent him from slipping the Ring on his finger a few pages later) as it is his advice that leads Frodo to prevent Pippin from saying too much.

Aragorn also has an affinity with fire as he can light one quite easily, due to his many years in the wilderness as a Ranger: he lights the fire in their room at The Prancing Pony, probably to

protect the Hobbits from the ringwraiths. Aragorn is presented as the character who knows how to live in the wilderness: his knowledge is strengthened by Gandalf's maxim 'If you bring a Ranger with you, it is well to pay attention to him, especially if the Ranger is Aragorn' (Book II, Chapter 3).

Then, the prophecy in Gandalf's letter reveals that there is much more to him than what meets the eye: he is the pretender to Gondor's throne.

> *'All that is gold does not glitter,*
> *Not all those who wander are lost;*
> *The old that is strong does not wither,*
> *Deep roots are not reached by the frost.*
> *From the ashes a fire shall be woken,*
> *A light from the shadows shall spring;*
> *Renewed shall be blade that was broken,*
> *The crownless again shall be king.'*[26]

This passage can be found in Gandalf's letter to the Hobbits in which he advises them to go with Strider and to head for Rivendell without him: these verses are meant to prove that Strider can be trusted for he is in fact Aragorn, heir to Gondor. These verses are indeed useful to Frodo in determining whether Strider is friend or foe: Strider gives a passage of this prophecy, and proves with it that he is a friend of Gandalf. These verses stand out as they are written in italics as well in the book, they are meant to be a prophecy for Aragorn, heir of Isildur. But, it can also help the Hobbits in their adventure as the first two verses advise not to trust appearances. The word 'glitter' is meant to echo 'gold' with the alliteration in /g/ but it can be quite obscure: glitter may refer to what is bright or to what is good, meaning that what is gold is not exclusively positive but can be negative. The best example (and probably the implied reference) is the Ring: it is gold but it remains wholly negative for Middle-Earth as it is meant to destroy and subjugate. The words 'wander' and 'lost' are not linked by an alliteration but they belong to the same semantic field of the stroll or in the Hobbits' case, the semantic field of adventure. This verse is aimed at Strider, being a Ranger, a man who looks like he is lost but who has in fact important errands to run for the good of Middle-Earth. The two following verses are also aimed at Strider, as they evoke his age and his origins ('Deep roots'): Strider may be old for a Man but his Numenorian origins explain his age and his strength. The two next verses start a metaphor for Strider's, or Aragorn's, fate to become king of Gondor: at the moment, the throne of Gondor is unoccupied, kept safe by the Steward Denethor, waiting for the rightful heir. To convey this situation, the metaphor uses the reference to a phoenix rising from the ashes: 'fire' and 'light' are supposed to emerge and to

[26] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 10

renew hope for a world without darkness and Strider is the incarnation of this phoenix. The final two verses are the ones who make us really understand that this prophecy is meant for Strider: the blade refers to Elendil's sword (Isildur's father) that was broken and then used by Isildur to cut Sauron's fingers and separate the Ring for its master. This blade named Narsil is reforged and becomes Andúril a few chapters later: in Sindarin, Andúril means 'the flame of the west'. Strider is the 'crownless' and 'the blade that was broken' is Narsil, and the condition to Strider's elevation to his rightful rank of king. Strider is the epitome of hope for Middle-Earth, being compared to a 'fire' and a 'light' and we shall expect him to be compared thus again in the book. This prophecy is foreshadowing the third volume 'The Return on the King' in which he reclaims his rightful place as the king of Gondor.

He and Gandalf are also the only characters associated with 'white fire', along with elvish magic. Indeed, we can find several occurrences of the words 'white fire' or 'white flame'. First with Glorfindel's horse, seen through Frodo's eyes as he has been badly wounded by the ringwraith. We can imagine that it helps to show how Frodo is close to hallucinating due to pain and poison. Then, we have two occurrences when Gandalf faces the Balrog. And finally, with Aragorn, Book III, Chapter 2, when he faces Eomer:

> Gimli and Legolas looked at their companion in amazement, for they had not seen him in this mood before. He seemed to have grown in stature while Eomer had shrunk; and in his living face they caught a brief vision of the power and majesty of the kings of stone. For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown.

Here, we can find Aragorn starting to embrace his position as king of Gondor: he literally stands up against the men of Rohan, not only to protect his friends but to gain respect among men. The occurrence of the 'white flame' is not real but happens in Legolas's viewpoint: he sees Aragorn with a crown, made of flame. It can signify that Aragorn is supported by some divinity to become king of Gondor: a divinity's mind which Legolas can access, being an elf. And several chapters after, this white flame occurs again during the battle of Helm's Deep: 'Andúril rose and fell, gleaming with white fire. A shout went up from wall and tower: 'Andúril! Andúril goes to war. The Blade that was Broken shines again!'[27] Here the sword seems to be made of fire. It emphasises Aragorn's strength and shows that he is the one who should rise against Mordor. The way swords are described in *The Lord of the Rings* can be quite reminiscent of *Beowulf*: they have identities, names and even attributes or prophecies associated. A great warrior should have a great sword.

[27] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* III, 7

c) The Ring

Among the ambivalent fantasy characters, we should also evoke Tom Bombadil, Gollum and Galadriel, not only because of their link with fire but because of their reaction in contact with the Ring, which is a character in itself. In this edition of *The Silmarillion*, there is a letter written by Tolkien to Mildon Waltman in 1951, in which he explains the plot of *The Lord of The Rings*. The One Ring is presented as follows: 'It was indissoluble in any fire, save the undying subterranean fire where it was made – and that was unapproachable, in Mordor.'[28] We find here a link made between immortality with the 'undying subterranean fire' and death, implied by the predominant use of negative prefixes ('indissoluble', 'undying', 'unapproachable').

An excerpt of Book I, Chapter 2 is major in the setting of Frodo's quest as the Ring bearer: we learn what Gandalf has been learning himself in the Minas Tirith library. The Ring must not stay in the Shire and should be carried all the way to Mordor to be destroyed in the fire of Mount Doom. Its features as a magical ring are described and used in order to justify the quest: only Orodruin's fire can destroy it. Gandalf's reluctance to bear the Ring himself to Mordor or even to touch it reveals much wisdom and strength. Indeed, the repetition of the sentence 'Do not tempt me!' underlines his curiosity for the Ring's powers and the fact that Frodo would not have to do much to make Gandalf take the Ring himself: he is conscious of the Ring's power and possibly already tempted to use it. He 'spring[s] to his feet' and seems to be 'lit as by a fire within': these indications help us understand that he is struggling with his will to resist the temptation. The Ring's power already holds sway over Frodo's mind as he also struggles to resist its will: the use of a dash in 'with an effort of will he made a movement, as if to cast it away – but he found that he had put it back in his pocket.' reveals a pause in Frodo's mind during which the Ring presumably took control and persuaded him to guard it in his pocket. We can also gather hints that Frodo considers the Ring as something altogether magnificent and 'precious' (a word used by previous owners to describe it). Its perfectness is highlighted by hyperboles as in 'very fair and pure' and in 'how rich and beautiful was its colour, how perfect was its roundness'. The Ring is also associated with the negative prefix un- like in 'cannot be unmade', 'unscathed' and 'unheated' which leads us to imagine the Ring as an object impossible to create and (almost) impossible to destroy: the Ring is set as a magical object. The Ring is associated with extremes: it is at the same time

[28] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, o*p.cit*

perfect and impossible. More than being perfect and magical, the Ring is also associated with fire in many ways. First, it resists regular fires, dwarf furnaces and even dragonfire: this ability to resist fire hints at a great magical power. Second, it ignites a fire in Frodo and in Gandalf: its ability to create temptation and to lead people to do its will signals an inner consciousness and helps to consider the Ring as a character in itself. Moreover, it is supposed to be solely the necessity of destroying the Ring which leads Frodo to leave the Shire but it may very well be the Ring as a character which triggers the preexisting call for adventure Frodo already had: his 'great desire to follow Bilbo flamed up in his heart'. And of course, the Ring is associated with its master Sauron and is essentially evil: even if it is the hobbit Frodo who bears the Ring, without any bad intentions and with no magical powers, the Ring 'will be slow, slow to evil'. The hyperbola in 'The Enemy is so strong and terrible' reinforces the last word of the preceding sentence, namely 'desperate': this quest has not yet begun and is already associated with despair. The quest to destroy the Ring is doomed and should only result in death.

The Ring has a will of its own, it wants to be reunited with its master, Sauron: it has a close link with Sauron's Eye at the top of Barad-Dûr. The Ring's link with fire is made undeniable by the way it works: it reveals its message when casted into fire and it can only be destroyed by the fire from Orodruin, namely lava. Its aspect can also be reminiscent of fire: gold and sometimes darker. In the first chapter, there is a strong link between the Ring and Bilbo's finger, it feels like a magnetic attraction impossible to resist ('I am always wanting to put it on'). The Ring's corruption is even better illustrated by the periphrasis 'My own. My Precious. Yes, my Precious.', already used before by Gollum: the bearer of the Ring ends up with the same image of their burden, proof that it communicates its own image to their mind. Plus its capacity to take over someone's mind, exemplified earlier by Frodo's absence, which has been made visible by the use of a dash is proof that it can actively control someone. In *Master of Middle-Earth*, by P. H. Kocher, we learn that Sauron poured some of his own spirit into the creation of the Ring. Therefore, it takes the destruction of the Ring to fully destroy Sauron. Kocher also makes the assumption that the Ring is a meta literary device which would be meant to show the reader how being greedy and possessive is 'the source of an overweening blindness in not seeing the world as we should – separate, free, and independent from ourselves – really the same blindness that underlies Sauron's lust for domination.'[29] In a

[29] Paul Harold Kocher, *Master of Middle-Earth the Achievement of J. R. R. Tolkien*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1973.

nutshell, we are possessed by what we think we possess: it is highly reminiscent of the myth of the Ring of Gyges[30], also related to the incapacity of doing good when in possession of a secret power.

2. Tolkien's vision of fantasy

The capacity of fire to be two-faced, comforting and dangerous at the same time, helps to create a sense of uncertainty and magic that fuels fantasy. This aspect is analysed by Stéphanie Vié in *Feu et Lumière au Moyen Âge* regarding the occurrence of fire in the Arthurian tales.

> Le feu permet d'installer par le biais de la métaphore le merveilleux dans l'espace de la narration. Ce feu merveilleux consacre la lumière qui connote les valeurs de la richesse, de la beauté, de l'hospitalité. Il est manifestation du surnaturel lorsqu'il est Autre, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il appartient à l'Autre Monde dans lequel les lois de causalité sont régies différemment.[31]

It argues that the image of fire allows the creation of *merveilleux* (which can be deemed close to fantasy) whether fire is seen as comforting or dangerous. How can it be applied to Tolkien's work?

On Fairy-stories[32] is an essay on fairy-tales that is major for our study as it displays Tolkien's own vision of the process of writing fantasy and its challenges. Firstly, fantasy is, before anything, playing with language and creating unusual images: the creation relies on the imagination of the reader. The creator of fairy-tales has the power to create an entire new world as long as the reader has the imagination to encompass it: this exchange is made possible by the volatility of words, able to change signification and evolve with a simple addition, an adjective for instance.

Tolkien's other important feature of fairy-tale is verisimilitude. In order to trust his world and to believe in every supernatural aspect of his fairy-tale, it is necessary to have some verisimilitude. Ferré argues that Tolkien's strategy to create verisimilitude is to build a historical background and to add highly logical details. For instance, he underlines the fact that lembas gives more credit to the long walk of the Company, or that the 'mention of farming resources for the armies of Mordor is a reminder that they do not live off hatred and

[30] Plato, *Republic*, book II.
[31] –, *Feu et Lumière au Moyen Age I*, Toulouse: EUS, 1991, Stéphanie Vié, "Feu merveilleux arthurien"
[32] John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *On Fairy-stories*, London: HarperCollins, 2005.

dust'[33]. Regarding this aspect, regular fire is bound to have logical features: it should be bright, burn with a regular fuel, and be both dangerous and comforting like any regular fire. But even if fire has magical aspects, Vié argues that: 'Le feu appartient au monde merveilleux lorsque le lecteur et le personnage arthurien ne sont pas surpris et ne remettent pas en question son apparition surnaturelle'[34]. Consequently, if Gandalf's ability to create a 'great spout of green and blue flame'[35] does not surprise the rest of the Company in Caradhras, it makes it regular and then fire belongs to '*merveilleux*', or we should say to fantasy.

Another most important passage in this essay is the definition of the three faces of fairy-tales: the Mystical, the Magical and the Mirror of man. This definition can be applied to *The Lord of the Rings*: the presence of magic is prominent and what he calls 'Mystical' and 'Mirror of man' can be found as well in the ambivalent characters like Galadriel or Saruman.

The first face of fairy-tale that needs to be analysed is the Magical, which is said to be turned towards nature: fire that seems natural is magical then. For instance, Gandalf's fire, when it burns like against the wargs, is magical: it is not oddly coloured, Gandalf uses an already lit log to create more flames and even though it is impressive, it is still regular fire.

Bachelard describes fire as being composed of two things, flame and light[36]: from this assumption, can fire still be fire if there is no light or no flame? If so, we could consider that the light summoned by Gandalf at the point of his staff in the mines of Moria is the equivalent of flame-less fire. Gandalf's flameless fire is a good representation of what Tolkien calls the Mystical face of fairy-tale: he says that this face is turned towards the supernatural. A flame-less fire is something supernatural indeed: it gives this scene something mystical. It can be also applied to the elves' fire, most of the time white and ethereal, but not systematically: the Hall of Fire in Rivendell is rather magical, as it burns with fuel and in a regular red colour.

The last face is the 'Mirror of man' which is turned towards men and is the equivalent of Stendhal's sentence '*le roman est un miroir qu'on promène au bord de la route*'. It means that the reader can find representation of himself in the novel: regarding fire we can expect that it will sometimes represent the way society uses fire. We can add that it should contain an ironic aspect as we can read in Tolkien's essay that this face's name is 'the Mirror of scorn

[33] V. Ferré, *Tolkien Sur Les Rivages De La Terre Du Milieu*, *op.cit*.
[34] –, *Feu et Lumière au Moyen Age I, op.cit.*
[35] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 3
[36] Gaston Bachelard, *La Psychanalyse du Feu*, *op.cit*.

and pity towards men'. If we search for such a representation of fire, the most obvious image is that of Saruman's industry, which is quite close to an 'industrial hell'.

According to this essay, a fairy-tale should be a metaliterary device that leads the leader to reflect upon their own world: the way Tolkien describes Saruman's industry as hellish is obviously a critique of the Industrial Revolution and the metamorphosis of England's green lands into cities and factories saturated with toxic vapours and darkened by coal. He aims to convey an ecological message to the reader.

3. Fantasy and ecology

Tolkien creates a strong dichotomy between nature and industry: the difference between Isengard at the beginning and at the end of the books is a case in point. The evolution from 'a circle of sheer rocks that enclose a valley' towards an industrialised hell is emphasised by Gandalf's description at the council of Elrond: 'whereas it had once been green and fair, it was now filled with pits and forges'[37]. Saruman's will to transform Isengard is the same as the directors of companies during the Industrial Revolution: to produce more whatever the ethical cost. The evolution towards more industry is followed by a transformation of Fangorn Forest, which is next to Isengard: to create his industry, Saruman needs fire, and the wood in Fangorn is the perfect fuel. However, Fangorn is a forest of Ents, that is to say living, moving and talking trees: to burn wood from this forest is like burning thinking beings. On this aspect, Saruman and his army of orcs are not the only ones to confuse Fangorn for a regular forest, the men of Rohan also mistake these trees for regular trees and cut some to make a fire in order to burn the orcs they slaughtered. On the other hand, Aragorn is aware of the fact that Fangorn is a strange place and that no 'living tree'[38] should be cut. He advises Gimli not to touch anything but boughs that are already on the ground. Aragorn's character is analysed in *Ents, Elves, and Eriador*[39] as one of the few characters who lives to fulfil the fifth principle of creation inherent in Tolkien's world (as theorised in the book): '5. The mission of people dwelling in the world is to acknowledge the goodness of the earth, fulfil its purpose, and assist in its restoration from evil.' In advising Gimli not to touch living wood, he shows his

[37] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 2
[38] *Ibid.* III, 2.
[39] Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans, *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J. R. R. Tolkien*, UP Kentucky, 2006.

care for living things, acknowledging thus the goodness of the earth and the fifth principle presented by this book.

On a more global scale, Tolkien's work contains an ecological message, imbued in the mythology of Arda. According to Armand Berger, 'la critique ferme de Tolkien à l'égard de la modernisation, de la machinisation et l'industrialisation du monde, dans son œuvre ornée d'éléments traditionnels puisés dans les richesses de notre civilisation, témoigne d'une pensée écologiste.'[40] So we can argue that Tolkien's love for old texts and his will to 'go back to the trees' helps in the creation of fantasy: his world is what our world could look like if we did not have industrialisation and urbanisation. We can project ourselves in a world where nature has more power (the Ents are a case in point) and industrialisation is defeated.

While we cannot deny Tolkien's genius in creating Middle-Earth and its mythology, some links can be made with other existing occidental mythologies: we can find different origins for the representation of fire in Tolkien's mythology. Plus, fire is used as a tool to create fantasy through its ability to be both magical and mystical. In addition, it allows the text to convey messages on our current world : seventy-five years later it can still echo with the struggle against climate change and have an impact on our way of living. Who would not like to live like a hobbit these days?

Having illuminated the central role of fire in Tolkien's literary masterpiece, we now shift our focus to the realm of adaptation, where director Peter Jackson undertakes the monumental task of translating Middle-earth's rich tapestry onto the silver screen. As we transition from the written word to the visual medium, we should analyse how fire brings a sense of mediaevalism to the screen while remaining an essential gear in the plot. Through meticulous attention to detail and a deep reverence for the source material, Jackson's films not only capture the essence of Tolkien's world but also makes an indelible mark in fantasy cinema. In this section, we delve into the transformative power of Jackson's adaptation, examining how

[40] Armand Berger, *Tolkien, L'Europe et La Tradition La Civilisation à L'Aune de L'Imaginaire*, Paris: La Nouvelle Librairie, 2022.

the portrayal of fire on screen enriches and enlivens the narrative, while remaining as faithful as to the spirit of Tolkien's original vision.

II. From text to screen: adapting Fantasy fire

When studying the link between storytelling and fire, it appears obvious that cinema is the next level of storytelling after campfire gatherings. While *rêverie* is still initiated by light and movement, this time colours and sounds allow the audience to be carried into far more imaginary lands, while remaining firmly grounded into verisimilitude. But adapting a novel can be a hasardous task, as it should remain faithful to the original text.

A. Adapting *The Lord of the Rings* for the screen

Cinema has different boundaries than novels: while it cannot be as intricate in its descriptions and its plot, it allows the audience to experiment the story with live actors and real decors. It emancipates from the realm of imagination in order to be more accessible to a wider audience. In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, adaptation is a true ordeal: how to squeeze more than a thousand pages into three films? Some shortcuts and ellipses were essential to create a movie with a viable plot that is capable of creating excitement in the audience rather than boredom: how Fantasy fire was adapted? Was it preserved ?

1. Using fire to modify the story and build the plot

In order to answer these issues, we should explore scenes from the book which were modified in the film but still use fire as a gear to move the plot forward.

a) Prologue, Film I

The Ring is at the centre of Peter Jackson's film and is thoroughly presented in the prologue. The latter is essential to start the film and to make a summary of the plot: it fits the requirement of a prologue, namely being clear and concise. The very first shots of the trilogy depict the forging of the rings: the first image of the film is that of a blazing bright fire on which metal is being melted. By extension, metal becomes similar to a liquid fire, bright and burning, and the forging of the rings is thus associated with a mastery of fire and metal.

I, 00:01:07	I, 00:01:10
	

The rings have an important place at the beginning of the film as we can hear Galadriel telling the story of the rings of power in the same order as the verse seen earlier in the book. The image echoes what is said in voice-over: when we hear about the elven rings, we see the elven rings, etc… This is a transcript of what Galadriel says in voice-over at the beginning of the prologue.

> It began with the forging of the Great Rings.
> Three were given to the Elves: immortal, wisest ... fairest of all beings.
> Seven to the Dwarf Lords: great miners and craftsmen of the mountain halls.
> And Nine ... nine rings were gifted to the race of Men, who above all else desire power. For within these rings was bound the strength and the will to govern each race.
> But they were all of them deceived. ...for another Ring was made. In the land of Mordor, in the fires of Mount Doom, the Dark Lord Sauron forged in secret a Master Ring to control all others. ...and into this Ring he poured his cruelty, his malice and his will to dominate all life. One Ring to rule them all...

We can see that she really begins the story as she starts with 'It began'. The use of the fade to black is frequent and displays a sense of mystery: there is one for instance after the word 'deceived'. It creates a pause before the part on Sauron's Ring. At this moment we can see a zoom-in on the map of Middle-Earth to show where Mordor is situated. It is followed by a

very large shot showing the landscape in Mordor and especially Mount Doom which is a volcano: in this shot we can see a reminiscence of Frodo's image of Fear as a 'dark cloud'[41]: Mordor is, at the very beginning, associated with darkness. It is followed by a zoom-in on Sauron's face, or rather Sauron's helmet, surrounded by flames: they were added in post-production and serve as a transition between the shots. The next shot displays Sauron inside the volcano raising his hand in a show of strength, still surrounded by flames. Then, we have a close-up on the Ring as Galadriel lists what Sauron poured into the Ring as he created it: 'he poured his cruelty, his malice and his will to dominate all life'. The ternary rhythm here helps to understand what P. H. Kocher said[42], namely that Sauron poured some of his own spirit into the ring. Finally, still surrounded by flames, we can see a zoom-in on the Ring on its master's finger: the fine letters of the verse written on it appear in 'fiery letters', in bright radiating orange, at the same time as Galadriel pronounces the message engraved, in the common tongue, 'One ring to rule them all'.

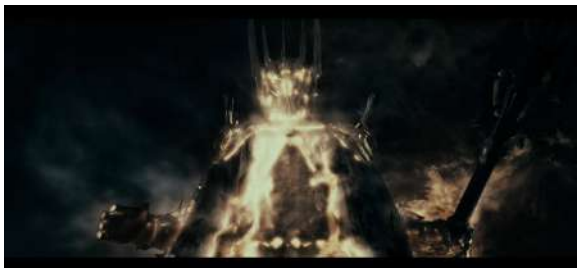
I, 00:01:52 	I, 00:01:54 
I, 00:01:57 	I, 00:02:03 
I, 00:02:05 	I, 00:02:14 

[41] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 2
[42] P. H. Kocher, *Master of Middle-Earth the Achievement of J. R. R. Tolkien*, *op.cit.*

The fact that the Ring displays its hidden message when it is worn by Sauron makes us wonder whether Sauron is always hot or whether he radiates a power that the Ring 'understands' as a fire. In these few photograms, we can see that fire is not mentioned once by the voice-over. However, it is omnipresent on screen. And when there is no fire, the lighting is dark and the transitions fade to black. This omnipresence of darkness and fire allows us to understand immediately that the plot is dark and life-threatening for the inhabitants of Middle-Earth.

In the following photograms, we can see that Sauron's power is demonstrated through several hints. First, he displays extraordinary strength, but more than strength, he radiates light when he strikes. We can also see that a dark smoke emanates from his body at all times: when he breaks Elendil's blade, his plated boot on the foreground is surrounded by smoke. His death is quite troubling as he does not seem to have a body at all: indeed, his cut fingers reveal the inside of his hand and we can see that, where the fingers are missing, there are lighted holes, as if he were entirely shallow and lighted by an inner flame. This inner flame explodes when the finger wearing the Ring falls to the ground: it shows that Sauron's source of power came from the Ring. We can see Sauron's armour being cracked open by this inner flame radiating and trying to escape its confinement. The explosion is shown as this extreme shock wave, making everyone fall over, showing at the same time Sauron's power escaping. The cut finger which wears the Ring makes a dark smoke the same way as Sauron's helmet, emphasising our former hypothesis according to which Sauron is filled with an inner flame (quite reminiscent of Eä). His finger is scattered into some black ash when Isildur grabs the Ring, it still displays the golden inscription: in the following sequence, we can see the Ring worn by Isildur on a chain, without the inscriptions. It becomes a common golden ring in aspect: Isildur probably does not have the same fiery aura as Sauron.

I, 00:03:32	I, 00:03:53
	

I, 00:03:56 	I, 00:04:01 
I, 00:04:08 	I, 00:04:24 
I, 00:04:42 	I, 00:04:47 

This passage is essential to set the plot for the rest of the filmic adaptation. It respects what is said between Gandalf and Frodo at the beginning of the first book and also the accounts given in the rest of the books. It also adds a depth to Sauron's character: from now on his power is visually associated with fire. The dark smoke, the ashes and his explosion all participate in the elaboration of a supernatural villain associated with fire. The Ring, which is already presented in association with fire in the book, is literally placed at the centre of the screen on each shot where it appears in this introduction.

b) Amon Sul, Film I, 01:10:50 - 01:14:40

This passage relates the battle of Amon Sûl, a ruined watchtower halfway between Bree and Rivendell. The four hobbits, including the ring bearer Frodo, are led by Strider, later known as Aragorn, who is choosing Amon Sûl as a resting place after their journey. Strider is a Ranger and therefore a more experienced adventurer than the hobbits: in the passage he first leaves the hobbits in order to look around for any sign of danger before coming back to save

them from a danger they probably caused. The menace in this part of the story is embodied by the Black Riders, who are searching for Frodo in order to retrieve the Ring from his possession and in this passage, it is the lighting of a fire that signalled the Ring bearer's position to the Black Riders: we are therefore inclined to associate fire with the idea of danger. But the fire camp was first lit by the other hobbits in order to find comfort with food. And it is also thanks to fire that Strider manages to fight off the Black Riders. We can therefore venture that fire is an ambivalent image in this passage which needs to be analysed and compared to the original scene.

At this moment of the story, we already know that the party is in danger as they have already encountered the Black Riders more than once. But, the setting in the first minute of the passage foretells the fight which is to come. Indeed, the extreme long shot showing the watchtower of Amon Sûl and Aragorn standing on the edge (01:11:00) is striking for its use of colour and lighting: all the hues of sunset are present but overcrowded by huge black clouds so that Aragorn's figure stands out while the rest of the landscape is drowned in darkness. Moreover, the fact that he is handing the swords over to the hobbits only now –and not when they started on their journey– foretells the imminent fight they will be pitted against on their own. After an ellipsis, we find Frodo asleep, filmed in a close-up; he is awakened by the other hobbits talking around a fire: common knowledge here would have advised against lighting a fire when one is pursued by dark creatures. The tilt follows Frodo's gaze to show the campfire –and consequently, the hobbits' apparent lack of common sense– and marks the beginning of more energetic cinematographic choices to underline the danger they are in: there are more cuts, first cutting-in to focus on Frodo extinguishing the fire before cutting-out to show how their fire camp was visible in the dark, this movement in space is underlined by the way Pippin's voice echoes in the dark. The hobbits' lack of good judgement is almost immediately answered by the Black Rider's screech as an off-screen diegetic sound and the beginning of an ominous music. At first, the Black Riders seem to be gliding in the shadows, as they are swift and no clear figure can be outlined in the dark thanks to the white mist. The cinematic choices here underline the Black Riders' demonic traits: they are haunting the hobbits' mind even when they are off-screen as evidenced by the panoramic shots and tilts in view with the hobbit, aiming at showing their gaze searching every nook and cranny. When they appear, the choirs start their ominous song, as if the Hobbits were being bewitched or attending their own funeral, and first we cannot hear their footsteps, although we can hear Frodo's breathing, and when the sword is drawn their footsteps echo: they are the perfect

epitome of Death. The close-ups on their armour and weapons are giving it form and purpose: they are here to wreck havoc. Sam even calls them 'devils' before being pushed aside like a bag of feathers. They take form as white shadows when Frodo puts the ring on: everything is black and white in this dimension except Strider's torch and the ring. The Realm of Shadow has its very own motif, used again several times throughout the three films: the image is blurry and the outlines are moving fast. This effect was obtained thanks to the use of Optical Flow, with the pattern of a blazing fire: the use of this effect is explained in *Making of 'The Lord of the Rings'*[43]. As a consequence, the image is ultimately deformed by fire. Analogically, we can say that this is the world of shadows and that only fire can dispel the shadows. And there is the most important watershed of the excerpt: if Strider's fire can dispel the Black Riders, maybe Frodo should not have put the fire out?

In the book, Strider says: 'There is little shelter or defence here, but fire shall serve for both. Sauron can put fire to his evil uses, as he can all things, but these Riders do not love it, and fear those who wield it. Fire is our friend in the wilderness.'[44]. We understand here that the fire Frodo put out was probably what kept the Nazgûls away until then: the adaptation is transforming the text in order to create tension and to dynamise the passage. When someone watches the movie for the first time, without having read the books, this passage helps to present the characters and move the plot forward. Firstly, the hobbits' character is further exposed. They light a fire in order to find comfort in eating: since the very beginning of the movie, the race of hobbits has been associated with food. Here their gluttony is also synonymous with negligence: eating is more important to them than hiding from danger. They had already been presented this way when they encountered the first Black Rider on the road: collecting mushrooms seemed to be more important than staying hidden. They are also presented as helpless in front of danger. Even though they were given weapons to defend themselves in case of an attack, they prove to be useless: the staging of the confrontation between the four hobbits and the five Black Riders is quite comical. They are very small in comparison: it is enhanced by a high angle shot. In this perspective their swords are extremely short in comparison with the Black Riders': the comparison is made possible by the staging of the Black Riders, advancing on the hobbits and raising their swords at the same height, all pointing towards the hobbits, pushing them into a corner. The comical aspect of these sharp contrasts is highlighted by their helpless attempts at protecting Frodo: they are

[43] Michael Pellerin, *Making of 'The Lord of the Rings'*, 2002.
[44] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 11

pushed aside like bags of feathers. In the case of Pippin and Merry, the way they step towards each other when Sam falls is quite cartoon-like; and when they are pushed aside it is almost like they jumped on their own, they do not use their swords at all: the way they are acting here corresponds to the way they act in the book ('they threw themselves flat on the ground'[45]). The fact that the Black Riders are not even trying to injure or kill them in order to reach Frodo is also quite telling: the hobbits are indeed helpless but more than than, they are essentially harmless. And this is what enhances Strider's all powerfulness: this passage helps further depict him as the extraordinary skilled leader he is. The use of close-ups on his straining face and of slow-motion are underlining his ability to wield a sword and transform his action here into a high feat: in the book, the scene is presented in view with Frodo so that we have no account of Strider's feat. The adaptation aims at presenting him as an epic character, capable of defeating dangerous enemies, when the Hobbits are shown as comical, out-of-place characters.

I, 01:10:57 	I, 01:12:34 
I, 01:13:34 	I, 01:13:52 

To conclude, this passage adapts the text in order to convey several messages to the audience. Firstly, the Black Riders are demonic characters sent out to recover the ring from Frodo. They are all-powerful except when fire is used against them: the fact that they are not comfortable around fire transforms them into ambivalent characters. They are not immune to fire, like ghosts would be. Their supposedly shapeless appearance, conveyed both in the book and

[45] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 11

through the images of the film, allows fire to become a symbol of purity, able to maintain the soulless at bay. Secondly, the hobbits are homely comical characters whose place is not in the wilderness in comparison with Strider for whom leading and fighting seem as easy as breathing. In the end, he way they use fire helps to characterise them: they all are masters of fire, either for cooking or for fighting.

c) The Scouring of the Shire

The chapter at the end of the third book has been adapted in a very small passage in the first opus of the films when Galadriel shows her mirror to Frodo. The vision he has in the mirror is inspired by the chapter of the Scouring of the Shire. We recognise the inn of the Green Dragon which is burning: the dedication to verisimilitude is such that it has really been set on fire in order to shoot this scene. We can see that Galadriel's Mirror is connected to what it reveals since the water is boiling when Frodo starts seeing Sauron's Eye: he is dragged forward by the Ring. The connection between the vision and reality is quite troubling, for the audience as well as for Frodo: it seems that Sauron can watch Frodo and attract the Ring through the water. Only Galadriel remains calm, aware that nothing can happen in Lothlorien, and underlining her wisdom.

I, 02:42:46	I, 02:43:05
	

After these three analyses, we can understand that the image of fire in the film is not the same as in the book: it has been adapted in order to fit the boundaries of a cinematic adaptation. However, we can gather that fire is still essentially the same as it helps to move the plot forward. Even though the text and the chronology are not exactly the same, fire still has an important role to play: we could even argue that it is even more important as it is more present in the film than in the text. Moreover, the way the original scenes have been deconstructed and rebuilt anew is interesting as it keeps an important place for fire. We aim to validate what has been ventured on Fantasy Fire in the books for the films as well: fire is a tool to create fantasy on screen and to anchor it as authentic.

2. Remodelling the aesthetic of fantasy characters

If several scenes have been remodelled in order to fit into the boundaries of the silver screen, but still remaining faithful to the representation of fire as a tool to create fantasy, we should wonder if the characters analysed earlier remain similar in the films.

a) The Fire mage

The wise one, the fire mage, the leader of the Company is given a new lease of life in the films. Indeed, if we simply compare the books and the films, we can find him much more playful at the beginning of the first movie as he allows the children to have some taste of his fireworks before the party. He is also depicted as a not so old character as he dances during the party and he laughs with his fireworks, like a child doing a prank. Then, he is not shown as the stern old man he is in the books. The explosions of fireworks are answered by cheers and music, so much so that we can find a reminiscence of the book's hypotyposis. Nevertheless, the dragon firework, described as Gandalf's last surprise for Bilbo is fired by Merry and Pippin in the film: it allows these characters to be presented as reckless and unpredictable hobbits while still depicting an important passage of the book which brings *The Hobbit*'s plot back to memory.

I, 00:14:46

I, 00:21:07

I, 00:21:18

I, 00:22:57

After this prank by the two hobbits, we could have expected Gandalf to be angry and to impose his authority upon the hobbits. Instead, he merely grabs them by the ear, as would have done a father to naughty children, and he makes them clean the dirty dishes as punishment. He sits next to them smoking and watching them, allowing the audience to have empathy for this endearing character, much like a father or a grandfather to the hobbits. He remains warm and kind throughout the films. The first event in which he truly shows his strength is in Khazad-dûm, against the Balrog. His powers have never been shown like those presented when he faces the Balrog, he even appears as a weird old man whose powers are not so great when he tries to open the gate of Moria, or when he forgets his way into the mine and advises to 'follow your nose'. In front of the Balrog, he truly appears as the mage he is in the book, imposing his power on the dark and ancient creature. However, compared to the text, one of the major differences is the absence of fire. Indeed, in the text, it is said: 'There was a ringing clash and a stab of white fire. [...] A blinding sheet of white flame sprang up.'[46]. 'White fire' is replaced by light, at first circular and similar to a force-field around him and then like a stab of white light emanating from him.

I, 02:26:25	I, 02:26:53
	

Instead of being master of fire, he is shown as the master of light. His mastery of light had already been shown in Bilbo's house when Bilbo refuses to leave the Ring behind and in Lord Elrond's Council: the audience knows he has the ability to manipulate light at his will, but it is the first time we see him use his powers against an enemy. Even against the orcs in Moria, he uses his sword or staff, without magic. When he returns as Gandalf the White, in the second opus, his affinity with light is made even more obvious: his powers are also much greater as he disarms Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli in an instant. The way he radiates light and makes Aragorn's sword grow hot and red without even uttering a word is quite impressive: it is very different from the text, in which he does not make such a show of strength. His

[46] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 5

transformation is made even more obvious by this show of strength, and once again, he is associated with fire, through Aragorn's sword, but mostly with light.

II, 00:52:46	II, 00:52:50
	

However, we can find him much sterner after his comeback as Gandalf the White: the fate of Middle-Earth rests upon him and we can feel his anxiety grow. But even as Gandalf the White he remains a fatherlike figure: the way he smiles when he learns that Frodo is not going to Mordor alone is a case in point.

b) The Ranger and the King

Strider's first appearance is similar to the books. However the setting adds to the sense of danger surrounding him: the way the pipe's light dims his face just after Frodo repeats 'Strider' is quite striking. This editing plays with rhythm and gives the impression that Strider is a danger to Frodo and the hobbits. Moreover, the dark red tone illuminates only his eyes while the rest of his face is hidden under his hood.

I, 01:00:56	I, 01:00:57
	

In the book, Aragorn is often shown lighting fires very easily, his past as a Ranger is quite useful for that. In the films, this ability is imbued in his character and personality: he rescues the hobbits at Amon Sul with a torch, he lights several fires (he tends to the fire in Edoras for

example, after the feast celebrating the victory at Helm's Deep) and he often smokes his pipe as well.

The prophecy of Aragorn can be found in the screenplay of the last film. Following Arwen's decision not to leave Middle-Earth and to stay by her lover, Aragorn, a discussion between her and her father takes place and issues with the sentence 'It is time'. This sentence underlines the fact that the following prophecy was known by them and that they awaited for its realisation. Then, Arwen in voice-over tells the last four verses of the prophecy:

> From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
> A light from the shadows shall spring;
> Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
> The crownless again shall be king.[47]

At the same time we can see once again the images of the prologue, when Isildur takes the broken blade to cut Sauron's fingers, and the Ring with it. These images are triggered by a travelling shot following Arwen into the corridors of Rivendell: she is going to the pedestal where Narsil's shards are displayed. A sense of prophecy is delivered thanks to slower images and an echo in Arwen's whispering voice. The words of the prophecy are echoed by the images: the analepsis showing the last battle against Sauron begins at the end of the third verse, with the word 'broken'. The light in this scene also underlines the evocation of 'fire' and 'light' in the prophecy: it invades the shot from the background, putting Arwen's figure in the dark at first, until the close-up on her face, bent on the broken blade, enigmatic, first hidden by her cloak and then brightly lighted. Her face lights up at the end of the last verse and she lifts her gaze towards the camera: she looks determined. In spite of the lack of the first four verses, this adaptation is much more epic and in fact prophetic. It seems that these four verses and this entire scene were meant to be the trigger of the main second plot of this opus: Aragorn's rise as the King of Gondor. This opus, and the third book, are after all entitled 'The return of the King': this prophecy finds its place at the beginning of this third opus to trigger Aragorn's rise to power. The broken blade is a symbol of Men's weakness and a reminder of Isildur's failure at destroying the Enemy: reforging it means reinstating the race of Men to its rightful place and mending past mistakes.

[47] Peter Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, Film III, 00:40:02 - 00:40:30

c) The Elves

The elves have a special aura in the film. The first elves we see in the first opus are walking towards Grey Haven and passing in front of Sam and Frodo. We can see that the lighting changes almost instantly from warm tones to cold tones: as they seem to radiate their own bluish light, the hobbits's faces are also lighted in the same colour.

I, 00:45:10	I, 00:45:50
	

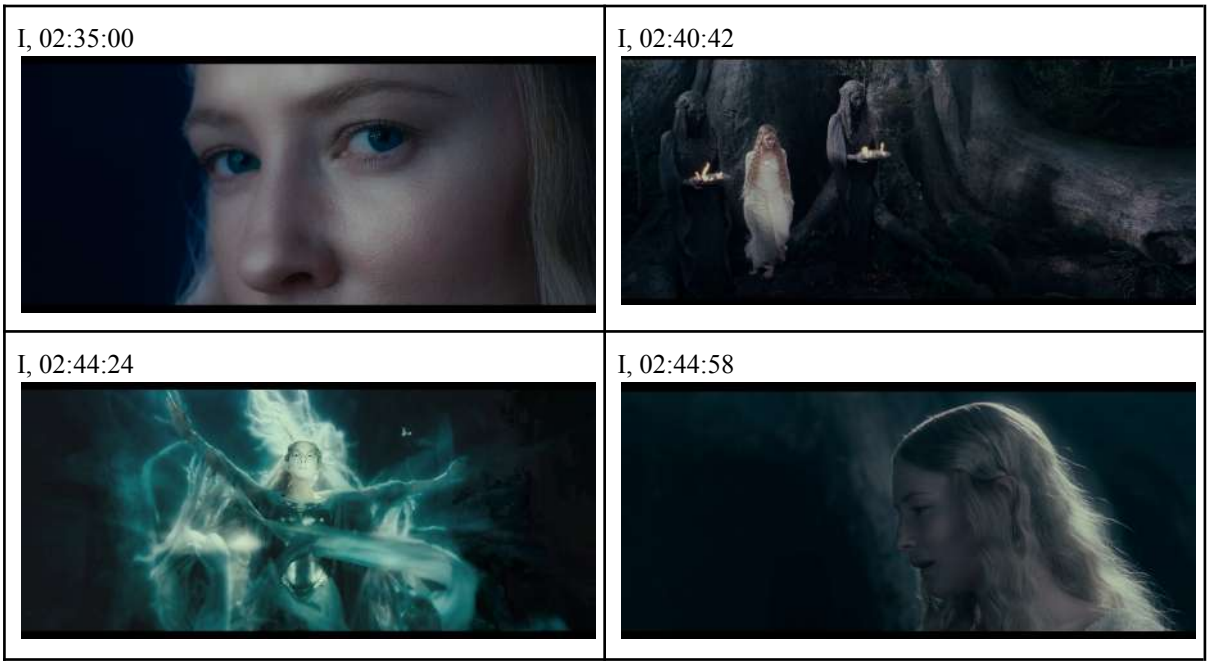
This process of lighting, both during the shooting and in post production, gives an aura to the elves that emphasises their difference with men: they do not simply have long straight hair and pointy ears, they radiate their own light. But it can also serve our study as this white bluish tone is often used in association with the elves: Galadriel's phial has a similar colour, as does every light in Lothlorien. We could venture that this tone is used to underline their many years and their link to the stars and, by extension, to the Valar themselves. Galadriel, who has a special aura in the books that is inherent to her condition as the oldest elf in Middle-Earth, is given the voice-over of the prologue. But, what is more, in order to show her wisdom, there are close shots in which she appears with stars in her eyes which symbolise her many years: this result was obtained by lighting Christmas lights in front of her eyes. Moreover, most of the time she is surrounded by light: in fact most of the elves are represented with a sort of aura. And her ability to talk telepathically is shown with a voice-over, the same tone and treatment as in the prologue. Galadriel is even introduced by Haldir as the 'Lady of Light': according to Tolkien's thesis, she embodies the Mystical face of fairy-tale, even in the films.

In the scene with Frodo, around the Mirror, we can see that she is not exactly represented the same way as the rest of the adaptation. Indeed, it is the scene in which she transforms into a 'terrible queen'. This transformation is foretold by the two fires lit just above the Mirror: as she passes through, she goes from Galadriel the elf to Galadriel the sorceress. These fires

were not described in the book, but we can find an occurrence of 'white fire' in the associated passage:

> 'Turning aside, she led them towards 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 the 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.'[48]

In this passage, 'white fire' is associated with the light of a star but can also be a sign that Galadriel is very powerful: so powerful in fact that this star seems to shine just for her. In the film, the two torches may have the same purpose, showing that she is powerful: as evoked earlier, fire is associated with magic. Moreover, they can still be seen in the background when she has transformed. The way light is treated when she transforms can be reminiscent of the way light is treated in the Realm of Shadows, except for the use of Optical Flow: here the strong wind in Galadriel's dress and the change in lighting is enough to show that the character is not in her usual state. We can also notice how she has a piece of armour, signalling her powerfulness. After returning to her usual state, she says that she 'will diminish': the light setting emphasises this assumption by putting her face in the dark.



Even the 'Lady of Light' has a part of darkness in her and can be triggered by the Ring's corruption like any other mortal. However, compared to the text, she is represented much

[48] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 7

darker and emanating light from her entire body when in the book it is only her ring which emits light and absorbs every other light: 'She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illumined her alone and left all else dark'[49].

B. Creating an aesthetic of Fantasy Fire

The text uses fire in order to create fantasy: what I call Fantasy Fire. Fire takes an important place on screen as it seems more palpable than in writing: this aspect has been fully used in order to adapt the text for the screen and to make the fantasy believable. In order to do so, it was necessary to create an aesthetic of Fantasy Fire.

1. Candles

Tom Bombadil being absent from the film, the candles which were present almost exclusively in his house do not find any adaptation. However, we see candles everywhere in the films: it is an essential feature of any mediaeval fantasy, given that electricity was not invented in the Middle Age. In order to see in a closed room or in the night, the characters need candles: for instance, Gandalf when he studies old texts in Minas Tirith, uses a chandelier with three candles and we can see that the hall of Meduseld, in Edoras, is lit by several candles on a ceiling light, as well as torches on the walls. There are many other examples of scenes with candles.

I, 00:33:37	III, 00:18:58
	

[49] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* II, 7

We can only find one scene in which a candle is given a special place: when Grima approaches Saruman's gunpowder with a candle. Indeed, in this scene of the second opus, the fire of the candle and Saruman's reaction help us to understand that the powder we saw Saruman pouring into the pot is an equivalent of gunpowder. We can imagine that it is some sort of unknown witchcraft to Aragorn and Theoden as they did not expect such a device during the battle of Helm's Deep. The torch used by the 'kamikaze' to light the bomb during the battle seems to also have some witchcraft in it as it makes a great smoke, emits white light and sparks, and seems to be hard to extinguish.

II, 02:04:40	II, 02:55:33
	

We can say that candles do not signal the same sense of holiness as in the book, but serve a rather logical purpose. It allows the film to display a sense of mediaevalism, essential to anchor the plot in a mediaeval world.

2. Building an aesthetic of Evilness

As we saw in the analysis of the prologue, the Ring is at the centre of the plot and represents Sauron, who is the epitome of Evilness in the films: the way they are represented on the screen helps us understand that they are evil. We should try to isolate an aesthetic of Evilness.

a) The Ring

The Ring is very often at the centre of the shot when displayed on screen. It is at the centre of Peter Jackson's film and is thoroughly presented in the prologue. The forging of the Ring is depicted in the very first shots as a way to mark the beginning of its story: it will end (more or less) with its destruction. The Ring is in fact the plot of these three films and we can see that the Ring has its own building as a character of the film: it makes recognisable screeching sounds, and even has a point of view.

The Ring is presented at the beginning of the first opus[50]: the passage with Frodo and Gandalf presents several similarities with the book. First, we can gather Frodo's reluctance to cast the Ring into the fireplace: in the screenplay, we can find the stage direction 'bewildered' ('FRODO (bewildered) What are you doing?'[51]). The Ring is beginning to have an influence over Frodo: what we can understand from the text has been adapted in the Film in Frodo's clenched hand ('CLOSE ON: THE RING IN FRODO'S CLENCHED HAND'[52]). Of course, the Ring keeps the same characteristics, namely its coldness despite exiting the fireplace (Gandalf says: 'it is quite cool'[53]) and its heavy weight, when it lands in Frodo's hand he has a slight reaction. The Ring benefits from several close-ups, depicting it as a character in itself, worthy of being filmed. And it even has its own theme and voice. Gandalf says approximately the same words, for instance 'Do not tempt me!'[54] is both in the book and in the film. As for the images in this scene, fire is put at the centre of several shots. The first photogram shows Gandalf and Frodo just after Gandalf cast the envelope with the Ring into the fireplace: this shot gives us a vision from the fireplace and we can even say from the Ring itself. We also have several close-ups of the envelope shrivelling on the coals. The association between Ring and fire is repeated when Frodo is fingering the Ring, we can see the flames of the fireplace dancing in the background: the image is even more striking when the Ring reveals its hidden message, surrounded by Frodo's fingers and fire. At this moment, the flames in the background even seem to blaze quicker, introducing the sense of urgency which was already present in the book. This hidden message is given even more depth thanks to its projection on Frodo's face: the red fine lines on Frodo's face are reminiscent of small cuts, the Ring seems to be digging its way into Frodo's mind.

I, 00:36:52	I, 00:37:20
	

[50] P. Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, Film I, 36:30-42:20
[51] Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens and Peter Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, 'The Fellowship of the Ring', screenplay, 2001, New Line Cinema
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 2

I, 00:37:34	I, 00:37:38
	

In the soundtrack, we can notice several things that help to anchor the sense of urgency. When Gandalf recites the message of the Ring in the common tongue ('One Ring to rule them all, etc'), the camera zooms in and we can hear drums and brass going crescendo as the camera approaches Gandalf's face: the rhythm is martial and insists upon each important words of the message. When Frodo says 'Sauron', the Ring emits a little sound that makes them both startle: in the screenplay it is said to be 'A FLEETING, LOW WHISPER OF BLACK SPEECH'[55]. This sound echoes and is emphasised by silence: it is followed by an ominous music going crescendo as Gandalf explains that Sauron is still alive and is coming for the Ring. This whisper is thus the trigger of another crescendo which fuels the growing sense of urgency. The Ring becomes a matter of life and death for every being in Middle-Earth.

We can also notice that the scenes of the book have been condensed in order to serve the plot. In the Book, Gandalf comes back one night from a long absence, he stays at Frodo's house, and he explains the problem the next morning: as evidenced earlier, the sun is shining outside, it is daylight when Gandalf casts the Ring into the fireplace. In the film, Gandalf explains everything to Frodo the same night he arrives and urges him to leave the Shire immediately. This condensation allows the audience to feel a sense of urgency necessary for the plot: Frodo is being tracked down because he has the Ring and no one but him can do anything to save the Shire, not to say Middle-Earth. From this we can gather that the main plot of the film is Frodo and the Ring, both as characters, and both triggering the action throughout the three Acts: this has been validated and claimed in the making of the film by Peter Jackson to justify the absence of several scenes of the book. He kept only what was essential to understand Frodo's quest[56].

[55] F. Walsh, and al, *The Lord of the Rings*, 'The Fellowship of the Ring', *op.cit*
[56] M. Pellerin, *Making of 'The Lord of the Rings'*, *op.cit*.

b) Sauron and the Eye

Sauron is said to be a necromancer, a dark mage. In the Silmarillion, we learn that he was Morgoth's disciple: he also searches for more power on Arda. He is said to be 'the Base Master of Treachery'[57]: he is presented this way in the prologue, as Galadriel says that 'into this Ring he poured his cruelty, his malice and his will to dominate all life'[58]. His link with fire is made obvious in the film with the prologue, as analysed earlier: he is the one who has forged the One Ring and his body seems to be made of an inner fire that explodes when he is separated from the Ring. This representation can be inspired by the description made by Isildur in a letter, read during Elrond's Council.

> *What evil it saith I do not know; but I trace here a copy of it, lest it fade beyond recall. The Ring misseth, maybe, the heat of Sauron's hand, which was black and yet burned like fire, and so Gil-galad was destroyed; and maybe were the gold made hot again, the writing would be refreshed. But for my part I will risk no hurt to this thing: of all the works of Sauron the only fair. It is precious to me, though I buy it with great pain*.[59]

Some sentences of this passage are read by Gandalf in the film when he searches for information on the Ring at the beginning of the first opus. We can add that Sauron seems to be capable of wielding fire as does Gandalf: Strider says that 'Sauron can put fire to his evil uses, as he can all things'[60]. This assumption is transcribed in the prologue of the film in which we can see Sauron creating the Ring, surrounded by flames and close to Orodruin's lava. Sauron's Eye is not extensively described in the book. However, we can find a description when Frodo peers into Galadriel's Mirror[61] which is very detailed and probably helped a lot for the filmic adaptation. The Eye is described with a lot of adjectives related to darkness and even nothingness: 'dark, as dark as if a hole had opened in the world of sight', 'emptiness', 'black abyss', 'the black slit', 'window into nothing'. We understand that Sauron's Eye is something dark and unnatural, in the sense that it does not belong in Middle-Earth and seems to be floating somewhere, surrounded by nothingness. It is also very powerful as it seems to be able to control Galadriel's Mirror, or at least to influence it: it seems to be able to feel Frodo's gaze through the Mirror. Sauron's Eye is behind a window at the top of Barad-dûr: it represents Sauron's omniscience but it is not exactly what we see in the film.

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[57] *Ibid.* V, 10
[58] P. Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, Film I, Prologue
[59] *Ibid.* II, 2
[60] *Ibid.* I, 11
[61] *Ibid.* II, 7

After reading the book, we know that it is an 'eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep'[62]. But its link with fire is undeniable:

> and then he saw, rising black, blacker and darker than the vast shades amid which it stood, the cruel pinnacles and iron crown of the topmost tower of Barad-dûr. One moment only it stared out, but as from some great window immeasurably high there stabbed northward a flame of red, the flicker of a piercing Eye; and then the shadows were furled again and the terrible vision was removed.[63]

Consequently, its representation in the film remains logical and aims at being more frightening: in the film, no windows restraining its field of vision, it can watch everything, everywhere, (almost) all at once.

A more accurate representation of the Eye[64]	III, 03:25:28
	

Moreover, we see it very often in the film as it is a clear representation of Mordor: when the action is in Mordor or when the characters look towards Mordor, the Eye should be represented in order for the audience to clearly recognise Mordor. As a consequence, when Aragorn is talking to Sauron through the palantír, it is the Eye that we see.

c) Nazgûls and the Realm of Shadows

The first real enemy that the hobbits encounter are the Nazgûls. They are introduced progressively to the screen, in a way that enhances their dangerousness: their black cloak and hood and their shrill voices create an image of fear for the audience. When the hobbits are pitted against them in Amon Sul, and Frodo puts on the Ring, their faces appear in the Realm of Shadows. They are skeletons, they appear white and menacing. The treatment of the image

[62] *Ibid.* II, 10
[63] *Ibid.* VI, 3
[64] –, *The Lord of the Rings: The Card Game*, 'The Eye of Sauron', 2011, Fantasy Flight Games, Inc.

is enhancing the opposition between the real world and the Realm of Shadows: they used Optical Flow to deform the image, and the pattern of a blazing fire. In the Realm of Shadows, no colours can be seen other than the gold of the Ring, and the fire of Aragorn's torch as said earlier. These dark and menacing characters come back later in the film, mounted on winged steeds: these can be compared to dragons but they do not breathe fire and are smaller than Smaug for instance. Instead, they have a large, scary head and long claws.

II, 03:20:48	III, 02:46:00
	

They are dark creatures, the same as their riders, and we can say that they represent Mordor and what it stands for: death and destruction.

d) Orodruin, Mordor: the ultimate place of evil

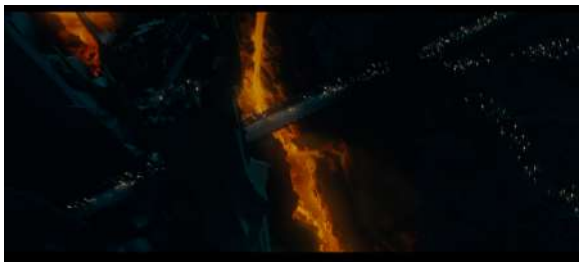
We can see that Jackson respected Tolkien's work by not calling this place a volcano: there is not a single occurrence of the word in the book so it does not appear in the film either. Instead, it is called 'Orodruin', which means 'fire mountain' in Sindarin: according to Dominique Bertrand[65], volcanoes were first considered as mountains of fire since the concept of lava was first explained in the 18th century. As a consequence, we can say that Tolkien was inspired on this aspect by History and we can make a link between Sauron and Vulcain, being both blacksmiths inside of a volcano. In the film, the first time we see Orodruin is in the Prologue. Throughout the three films, we see the mountain getting darker and redder in Mordor as the final eruption is approaching. We have a description of the volcano in the book, through Sam's eyes:

> Far beyond it, but almost straight ahead, across a wide lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires, there was a great burning glow; and from it rose in huge columns a swirling smoke, dusty red at the roots, black above where it merged into the billowing canopy that roofed in all the accursed land.
> Sam was looking at Orodruin, the Mountain of Fire. Ever and anon the furnaces far below its ashen cone would grow hot and with a great surging and throbbing pour forth rivers of molten rock from chasms in its sides. Some would flow blazing towards Barad-dûr down great channels; some would

[65] Dominique Bertrand, *L'invention du paysage volcanique*, 2004, Clermont-Ferrand: PU Blaise Pascal.

> wind their way into the stony plain, until they cooled and lay like twisted dragon-shapes vomited from the tormented earth.[66]

We can see that Orodruin is associated with Barad-dûr, as its lava flows next to the tower. This proximity is shown with a travelling at the beginning of the first film and is shown several times in the films.

I, 00:32:20	II, 00:20:03
	

The way this place is constantly covered by a dark cloud and Orodruin is constantly erupting, makes it obvious to the audience that it is the headquarters of Evil in Middle-Earth.

e) The Balrog

The Balrog is described as follows in the book:

> it was like a great shadow, in the middle of which was a dark form, of man-shape maybe, yet greater; and a power and terror seemed to be in it and to go before it. It came to the edge of the fire and the light faded as if a cloud had bent over it. Then with a rush it leaped across the fissure. The flames roared up to greet it, and wreathed about it; and a black smoke swirled in the air. Its streaming mane kindled, and blazed behind it. In its right hand was a blade like a stabbing tongue of fire; in its left it held a whip of many thongs.[67]

We know that he has a fiery whip, a sword and wings, and that he seems made of fire, smoke and shadow. These features were kept but still we do not really know what he should look like. The drawings of John Howe were the starting point of Weta Digital's work. A creature between the bull and the dog was sculpted so that the digital department could scan it and animate it. The flames were added image by image since, at the time, creating flames that would follow the movement of the animated character was impossible[68]. Here again, we find the same features as the other evil beings or places of Middle-Earth described earlier: the Balrog is dark, surrounded by smoke, it is physically associated with fire as it even seems to be filled with an inner fire, the same way as Sauron. Fire emanates from its eyes, nostrils and mouth as well as through its skin: it seems to pour out of him when Gandalf wounds it.

[66] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* VI, 1
[67] *Ibid.* II, 5
[68] M. Pellerin, *Making of 'The Lord of the Rings'*, *op.cit*.

I, 02:25:36	II, 00:03:09
	

We can conclude by saying that the films associate red fire, darkness and smoke with Evilness: from the Ring to the Balrog, even the Ringwraiths, every single evil being in Middle-Earth has a link with fire. We could have believed that the Ringraiths were the exception if the Realm of Shadows was not depicted this way: the use of Optical Flow with a pattern of fire is a case in point.

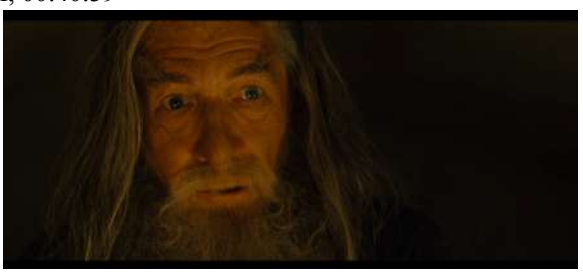
3. Fire and light

Fire has an influence over the scene and the characters in it: whether it is lighting the scene from above or from below, it will not have the same impact on the message and on the audience.

a) Fire from below

The hearth in Bilbo's house spreads a different light depending on the situation. At first, when Frodo receives the Ring but Gandalf does not know it is Sauron's Ring and the most dangerous item in Middle-Earth, the light is a light yellow-orange. However, a large shadow on Frodo's face may be prophetic: this item has a part of darkness. Then, when Gandalf comes back with more information, and is certain that this ring is the One Ring, we can see that the light is redder and shadows on Gandalf's face enhance his stern features as he recites what the markings on the Ring mean in the common tongue: here the zoom on Gandalf's face helps to create tension. Tension is growing as the background becomes darker and darker, especially as Frodo learns that Gollum has given hints on the Ring's whereabouts to the Enemy. And finally, the scene comes to a climax when Gandalf refuses to take the Ring offered by Frodo: here Gandalf's face is lighted by a dark orange with hints of red, but without shadows. The absence of shadows may show that the idea of having the Ring was

entirely rejected by Gandalf, even though the temptation was in his every pores: it is also shown by a play with looks and editing.

I, 00:31:33 	I, 00:38:05 
I, 00:40:24 	I, 00:40:39 

The light coming from below and slightly changing with the scene and the characters' state of mind helps to create tension. Tension can also be found in the scene of the stairs, in Khazad-dûm: here as well fire comes from below. This scene, which is not present in the books, was added in order to create an epic scene where the Company illustrates its capacity at surviving difficult situations as a team. It plays with high heights and emptiness. To enhance the emptiness of the chasm, a red light irradiates from the ground below as if it were a volcano: we see that fires are lit below when Boromir arrives at the brink of the broken stairs and is about to fall. Light flickers in step with the rumble of the ground and the martial '*doom-doom*'[69] reminiscent of the book. The Balrog's arrival is also represented by fire coming out of another room and intensifying. Every time a member of the Company jumps over the chasm, a new difficulty presents itself: after Legolas, the roof starts falling apart with the Balrog's arrival; after Gandalf, orcs start firing arrows; after Boromir, who carries two hobbits, a chunk of the stairs crumble; after Gimli, another chunk of stairs falls and Aragorn and Frodo are left stranded. The distance between the Company and the two stranded characters is enhanced by the red light emanating from below. It reaches a climax when the stairs start moving and the audience is uncertain the two stranded characters will survive.

[69] *Ibid*. II, 5

I, 02:22:25	I, 02:24:19
	

When finally they are reunited with the rest of the Company, the music alleviates the tension. This scene's lighting is similar to the end of the previous scene: the background is dark and the light coming from below is flickering and creating uncertainty and tension. Here, the music also plays an important role, adding rhythm to the passage.

Fire coming from below is also present in scenes which are obvious adaptations of the book: we expect to see fire in Isengard and Mount Doom. Isengard is presented as a forge and has several hellish aspects: it is underground, noisy, filled with monsters and on fire. Everytime we enter Isengard, a red light fills the room. We can see lights in several alcoves, even when the camera is outside. There is a play with what Saruman says in voice-over, and what we can see on screen at the beginning of the second film[70].

> The Old World will burn in the fires of industry. The forests will fall.
> A new order will rise. We will drive the machine of war with the sword and the spear and the iron fists of the Orc.

For instance, at the word 'burn', we can see a large furnace; at the word 'sword', we can see orcs hammering on swords; at the word 'orc', we can see an orc exiting a hole from which they are born. This editing helps to create an impact on the audience: Saruman is organised and his industry is meant to destroy Middle-Earth. We can also notice a play with the lighting in the third photogram, in which we can see the shadows of fighting wargs: it makes them very large and scarier for the audience. And then, even when Saruman's army is ready, the furnace is still lit, as though Isengard were an industry like in the Industrial Revolution: a company never stops functioning to avoid losing money.

[70] P. Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, Film II, 00:20:08-00:20:42

II, 00:20:15

II, 00:20:51

II, 01:36:58

II, 02:05:03

We should also add that the music is essential to categorise Isengard as an ruthless industry: the drums and the martial theme aim to make the audience understand that Saruman is determined.

This scene inside Orodruin is the paroxysm of the three films. It is the moment towards which all the plot is reaching. Here the red-yellow light from below is almost supernatural. How could the Hobbit survive the heat of the volcano?

III, 03:28:56

III, 03:29:33

III, 03:29:47

III, 03:32:12

III, 03:34:12 	III, 03:36:47 
III, 03:37:14 	III, 03:38:57 

All photograms display a similar lighting: the light released by the lava is between yellow and red. What changes is the way the characters are staged: we can see that Frodo and Gollum, being both highly tempted by the Ring, are often staged with lava flowing in the background. Sam, on the other hand, is never placed before lava: he has no interest in the Ring. In this aspect, we can say that lava represents the Ring's influence over the character.

b) Fire from above

Several scenes in the films offer an example of lighting that puts fire above the characters: or, in fact, light. In Helm's Deep, the large ray that appears when Gandalf and the Rohirrim charge signals to the audience that they can hope for the characters' survival. It is accompanied by music, which enhances the sense of epic. It is not the only scene that displays this large ray of light: it can be seen again when Aragorn charges at the Black Gate and the Eagles save Frodo and Sam from Orodruin. In this photogram, we even have a confrontation between light and lava, with a clear separation between both: the hobbits, being still uncertain of their survival are in the middle of the screen, between fire and light.

II, 03:17:09	III, 03:39:46
	

This large ray has become the synonym of epic: it gives the impression of a divine intervention.

The cinematic adaptation by Peter Jackon offers an intricate reading of Fantasy Fire, transforming the important items from the books into lighting, decors and smart scenery. The choices made regarding fire can be criticised: in the books, Gandalf is not a master of light but a master of fire, for instance. However, the remodelling of the fantasy characters and the building of an aesthetic of Evilness allows a clear dichotomy between Good and Evil: a much more accessible story for a wider audience.

Having explored the intricacies of Jackson's cinematic adaptation, we now turn our attention to the broader implications of his work and its impact on the landscape of contemporary cinema. As we explore the epic scenes of war, infused with a visceral intensity that leaves audiences breathless, we find occurrences of Fantasy Fire are linked with the sense of epic, creating a new cinematic genre. In this final section, we explore how Jackson's adaptation sets a new standard for the epic fantasy genre and paves the way for a new era of cinematic fantasy storytelling. We seek to uncover the enduring legacy of *The Lord of the Rings* and its profound impact on the collective imagination of audiences worldwide but especially on the representation of Fantasy Fire.

III. From war to peace: an epic conflict that defines a new genre

Having shown that Jackson's films transform the initial ambivalent image of Fantasy Fire into a dichotomy between Good and Evil, we should focus on what is essentially at the centre of the plot, that is to say war. In order to do so, we will try to define what is commonly associated with war: epic. We should then explore the links between epic and Fantasy Fire.

A. Fire and war: a struggle for peace and freedom

Fantasy Fire has an undeniable link with war: the dichotomy between a creative and a destructive fire seen in the book, then adapted into a dichotomy between light and darkness show that fire is meant to represent opposites. War in *The Lord of the Rings* is intricately linked with fire: every battle evokes fire at some point, as torches in Helm's Deep or projectiles in the siege of Minas Tirith. Plus, war on this scale is often associated with epic stories: Tolkien being a mediaevalist, he analysed and probably enjoyed epic tales like *Beowulf*. We should then be attentive to the way battles are described and adapted in the films, as well as to the way heroes are characterised and to the way death is represented.

1. Very vivid battles

The battle of Helm's Deep is the first battle we witness in the struggle against Sauron. In this case, it is Saruman who launches an attack on the Men of Rohan, gathered in Helm's Deep, a fortress resting on the mountain, with his army of Uruk-haïs, namely orcs with enhanced strength and resilience. Saruman wants to help Sauron in his conquest of the world of Men in hope of gaining a place next to him, when he has achieved dominion over Middle-Earth. The battle of Helm's Deep[71] starts with a foreboding storm: dark clouds arrive in the afternoon and cover the sky, even though the light was vivid ('a sombre canopy with great billowing edges flecked with dazzling light'). Then the sun sets in a 'blood-red' shade. This early night and red colour invading the sky though a dark haze sets the tone for the rest of the battle, foreboding bloodshed and death: the red light is even more associated with blood as it is said

[71] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* III, 7

that the ‘spears of the Riders were tipped with fire’, as though their weapons were already blooded. We can notice how fire and blood are linked here. The enemies arrive with torches and burn everything: they are compared with wildfire, propagating fast and burning as they come. Even when their torches are extinguished, and their position is not recognisable, they are ‘running like fire’. More than visual information on the battle, we also have sounds and perceptions: a storm is raging during the battle.

> It was now past midnight. The sky was utterly dark, and the stillness of the heavy air foreboded storm. Suddenly the clouds were seared by a blinding flash. Branched lightning smote down upon the eastward hills. For a staring moment the watchers on the walls saw all the space between them and the Dike lit with white light: it was boiling and crawling with black shapes, some squat and broad, some tall and grim, with high helms and sable shields. Hundreds and hundreds more were pouring over the Dike and through the breach. The dark tide flowed up to the walls from cliff to cliff. Thunder rolled in the valley. Rain came lashing down.[72]

We can hear the thunder and imagine the rain pouring on the armies. Plus, a tension is added by the fact that the only light visible is the white light of the lightning, vivid white for an instant, allowing the men in Helm’s Deep to encompass the amount of enemies amassed at the battlements. This passage is filled with occurrences of binary rhythm: ‘boiling and crawling’, ‘some squat and broad, some tall and grim’, ‘Hundreds and hundreds’ or ‘from cliff to cliff’. Binary rhythm in a text, especially if it relates a battle, is often used to give the reader the impression that the army is marching to a martial rhythm. Here, it adds to the scene by putting the reader in a soldier’s point of view and making him experience battle: the hypotyposis is used again here to convey a soldier’s sensory perceptions. This very vivid battle can be found as well in the film, much more dramatised. Some features of the book can be found again in the film: the enemies advancing like a sea of fire or the storm breaking just before the battle and the rain pouring on the soldiers. However, the way Theoden is put at the centre of the camera when the rain starts, and remains impassive, adds to the severity of the scene: everyone is focused on the battle to come and rain will not change its doomed outcome. It adds to a growing sense of despair, already instilled by the argument in the armoury between Aragorn and Legolas, in Elvish, ending with Aragorn screaming in English ‘then I shall die as one of them’. Despair is growing as we compare the size of the two armies, and as we hear the orcs chanting: the editing alternates shots of the orcs, shots of the men waiting and shots of the women and children hidden in the caves but the muffled chant implies that they can also hear the orcs chanting. It adds to despair and fear: the odds are against the Free People. Then, the sudden stop in the chant as an orc has received an arrow

[72] *Ibid.* III, 7

and fallen also adds drama to this battle scene and marks the starting point of the conflict: as Theoden says, ‘so it begins’.

II, 02:47:01 	II, 02:47:44 
II, 02:49:52 	II, 02:49:58 

The battle occurs on several fronts. First, the ladders rise on the battlements. Then, the group assail the front door of Helm’s Deep, using a battering ram. Then, the explosives and the kamikaze blow a breach in the battlements. Then, Haldir’s heroic death adds despair and horror to the battle. The scenery gives him an important role in this battle as his army of elves is decisive in the battle and really helps the men of Rohan. Aragorn calls him by his name to tell him to ‘fall back to the keep’: Haldir is struck by several orcs and falls to his knees, among a pile of elves and orcs bodies. There is a close-up on a dead elf’s face covered in blood and surrounded by other corpses, probably other elves given the pieces of armour. This scene is meant to convey horror and disgust: the death of an elf, being immortal, seems to have more importance, and thus more impact on the audience, than the death of a man. The close-up on Aragorn’s hand, covered in blood, going from his heart to Haldir’s shows Aragorn’s sorrow and reverence for his friend. In addition with the slow song and the battle raging around, Aragorn’s moment of reverence on his friend’s body elevates Haldir to the rank of hero.

II, 03:00:58	II, 03:01:12
	

The addition of the elves to this battle has been extensively criticised and Peter Jackson was reproached for this choice. But it gives more depth to this battle: if the elves are implied, it is not simply a struggle between Men and Saruman but a struggle between the Free People of Middle Earth and Evil. Moreover, the presence of the elves on screen adds variety to the battle: they do not fight the same way and do not wear the same armour, giving more aesthetic possibilities on screen.

2. Heroes

In an epic tale, heroes must have several qualities: bravery, strength and resilience but also kindness, generosity and loyalty.

a) The Company

In Book 2, Chapter 3, the Company has set out of Rivendell two weeks before and is now resting in the country of Hollin (Appendix 3). It relates the emergence of a new threat, 'the *crebain*', large crows probably sent by Sauron or Saruman to spy on the Company. The passage begins with the lighting of a fire and ends with Aragorn's decision never to light one again: they could have been spotted by the *crebain* if the fire had not 'burned low', this mistake could have cost them their lives and they have learnt from it. We can wonder how this first threatening encounter since they left Rivendell as a 'Company' helps to create tension and to build an exciting adventure for the reader while establishing the different roles of the characters in the Company.

Since the meeting with Elrond and the formation of the Company, the sense of emergency which appeared because of the warnings of Elrond and Gandalf has been slowly underestimated. Their march towards the South is slow and they start to tire. In the first

paragraph of the excerpt, we learn that they have planned to rest for a day and a half: 'that morning' and 'they expected to have all the night to sleep in, and they did not mean to go on again until the evening of the next day' give us a precise account of their plan. Their choice of a resting place seems to be considered: 'in a deep hollow shrouded by great bushes of holly' here the use of both adjectives 'deep' and 'great', plus the use of consonances in [l] and [ɹ], create an emphasis on the quality of their hiding place. They are obviously trying to lie low, but they still light a fire and go on 'laughing and talking'. On this issue, I think the internal rhyme between 'fire' and 'merrier' is very interesting: the lighting of a fire seems to be the cause for their comfort and merriment in this first paragraph. But it is also the cause for their lack of precaution. The fire here is also synonymous with eating: the use of the words 'supper-breakfast' linked by a dash underlines the rarity of their meals. As a consequence, fire and eating cause 'laughing and talking'. Even though they were supposed to keep a low profile, as evidenced by their choice of hiding place and by Aragorn's restlessness, fire seems to be bringing a sense of security to the Company. Only Aragorn perceives the changes in their surroundings. He is physically separated from the Company, he does not participate in the 'feast' of his companions and he is searching for something as evidenced by the verbs 'wandered' and 'listening': his restlessness serves to build up tension as a new enemy is about to emerge.

Aragorn is presented as the character who knows how to live in the wilderness since his encounter with the Hobbits in Bree: his knowledge is strengthened by Gandalf's maxim 'If you bring a Ranger with you, it is well to pay attention to him, especially if the Ranger is Aragorn'. His knowledge serves to bring up the tension which is essential in an adventure: it is the motor of the plot. Here tension is not fuelled by something but by the absence of something: the absence of sounds. We can gather a polyptoton of the word 'silence': 'silent', 'silence'. A striking opposition is created between the general silence and the only other sounds that are evoked: first Merry 'call[ing] up', then Sam's growing awareness of his surroundings with this accumulation of supposedly quiet sounds 'The breathing of sleepers', 'The swish of the pony's tail and the occasional movements of his feet' and 'his own joints creaking' now transformed into 'loud noises'. With the rising of the Sun, the preceding accumulation is lengthened and Sam's watch with it: he had no sleep and stayed quietly anxious in a 'dead silence' for the entire night. This building sense of anxiety is reinforced by Aragorn's absence of answer until the few words 'hissed' before hiding. Our attention as readers is first focused on what the characters can hear before being drawn by what the

characters, and especially Sam, can see: a 'dark patch' coming from the South 'like flying smoke in the wind'. This sentence is foretelling the enemy they are going to meet: indeed, the reference to darkness and 'smoke' is reminiscent of the Black Riders the Hobbits already encountered and, in general, it is associated with the image of Sauron, the bodiless dark lord. Plus, the geographical indication 'away in the South', where Mordor lies, reinforces the sense of foretelling in this sentence: we can already draw the conclusion that the absence of natural sounds in this country is caused by an evil enemy sent by Sauron. The fact that the reader is in view with Sam and entirely reliant on what he perceives helps to create an even tenser environment for the arrival of the *crebain*: he is not an experienced adventurer like Aragorn. His lack of experience is rendered by the adverb 'even' in 'the silence grew until even Sam felt it' and it is also highlighted by his lack of knowledge: what Aragorn identifies as *crebain*, Sam describes as 'a kind of crow of large size'. Moreover, even as the *crebain* are over the Company, they make no sound, only 'one harsh croak' which does not wake the sleepers: it reinforces a sense of danger and tension as we don't know if this croak is an indication whether they have spotted them or something else. They could have passed over them before and not be anticipated by Aragorn like this time.

The Company, thus formed by Elrond, is by definition against the norms. It is composed of at least one representative of every kingdom of Middle Earth, forgetting old petty grievances and wars. Gimli ends up being Legolas's greatest friend but they started as archenemies, being a dwarf and an elf. In this passage, although not every member of the Company is named, they each appear as part of a whole: the use of the pronoun 'We' by Gandalf is a case in point. More than being a team, they become team members through their actions and discourse. Even though he already had the place of leader when he was alone with the four Hobbits, here Aragorn reasserts himself as a leader of the Company through his order: 'It must be put out and never lit again'. His leadership is in part caused by his great knowledge of Middle Earth, its geography and each place's specificities, but here he becomes a father figure to the Company, others turn to him for his knowledge and experience: by taking the watch with Sam, he turns out to be protective of him and eventually Sam turns to him for guidance. Some characters are archetypes: Sam for instance is the topical farmer/gardener, brave and sedentary, using colloquial speech like in 'It don't look like a cloud'; Merry can be seen as the *merry*maker of the group, worrying about (or teasing) Aragorn's state of mind; Pippin is the youngest Hobbit and is described here as the lazy one, complaining and underestimating danger ('All because of a pack of crows!'). Gandalf may also be seen as a

father figure and a leader as he also imposes his plan ('We must stop talking aloud'): the difference is that even Aragorn turns to Gandalf for his advice when in need. He can be seen as the topical grandfather, full of experience but serene, smoking a pipe: he is close to both Aragorn and the Hobbits. His character is all the more complex as his word is foretelling: the 'unexpected feasts' he asks Pippin to look forward to could refer to the feast with Denethor during the battle of Minas Tirith.

In the film, the *crebain* pass over the Company during daylight and the scenery is much changed. Indeed, the first sign of the *crebain* is given by a large shot: the audience can see an ominous pack of black birds. And, like in the book, it is Sam who first notices the flock. However, instead of silence, the scene begins with a friendly struggle between Boromir, Merry, Pippin and Aragorn, which is quite loud. We can also notice a striking change in Aragorn's role in this scene: he is not the only leader here. Gimli is given the role of comic relief, Boromir has a very clever reasoning and Legolas is rewarded for his elvish eyesight: all the characters being awake, they all participate in this scene. Aragorn's only line is 'Hide!': it echoes his 'Lie flat and still!' in the book, with only a difference in the sound level. Fire also has a shot in this sequence, it is however not 'burning low' but blazing red and extinguished by Sam just before the arrival of the flock. Thanks to this short shot showing Sam reacting cleverly, he remains an important character of this episode, even though it is not as important as in the book.

I, 1:52:00	I, 1:52:18
	

This passage may be seen as a watershed in the novel: it sets the scene of the Company's adventure. Before this scene and since their departure from Rivendell, their journey did not encounter any real danger. The *crebain*'s passage helps to remind them that they could encounter more dangerous enemies in the future and that they should be more careful and pay more attention to their surroundings. In the book, it also settles Gandalf and Aragorn as the essential characters of the Company: it makes Gandalf's disappearance in Moria later in this

book all the more shattering for the Company's balance. As readers, we experience the tension and the hardships they must endure thanks to the other members of the Company: characters like Sam and Pippin were ordinary hobbits living ordinary lives and their struggle to accommodate with the hazard of an adventure makes them all the more endearing. We can identify ourselves to them and the adventure seems all the more exciting.

Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas are the companions that should not have crossed road but end up being leaders in the struggle against Sauron. They become friends and they share a complicity that makes them closer to the audience. This complicity is transcribed in the films: the way Legolas and Gimli are competing for being the best orc-killer is a case in point. The hobbits become very heroic characters, despite their liking for comfort and peace. Merry becomes a warrior in the battle of Minas Tirith, riding with Eowyn and defeating the Witch-King of Angmar. Pippin is also clad in the garment of a warrior of Gondor, and he shows his bravery by lighting the first beacon of Gondor, on Gandalf's orders. Of course, Sam and Frodo are the ones who show the most devotion and strength in the fulfilment of their quest. They are consecrated for their heroic deeds at Aragorn's coronation. As they first bow to the new King of Gondor, they raise their heads when Aragorn calls them 'my friends'. Then, the entire assembly follows Aragorn and bow to the four hobbits, accompanied by violins which gives the scene even more drama. The four hobbits appear taller now, as everyone has, not simply bowed but kneeled: the vertical travelling of the camera ending in a low-angle shot helps to make the hobbits taller. They are contextually and visually elevated to the rank of heroes.

III, 03:46:42	III, 03:47:08
	

Then, let us not forget that their story ends up written in a book and probably transmitted through the ages by other hobbits and, by a metaliterary process, to us readers and spectators.

b) Gandalf

Gandalf is not just the master of fireworks but the master of fire. When Strider, Merry and Frodo are on top of the watchtower of Amon Sûl[73], searching for information, they find themselves among scorched ruins: probably made by Gandalf's fire (which is confirmed later). We find a description of a barren hill-top recently burned to the ground: the accumulation of verbs associated with fire like 'burned', 'scorched', 'shrivelled', and even 'blackened' is a case in point. Plus, the negative forms like 'no sign of any living things', 'cheerless and uninviting', 'no water and no shelter' or 'he is here no longer' underline the despair embedded in this scorched hill-top. Despair and eventually danger spring from this passage, thanks also to Strider's inquiry, for which he gathers the hints of Gandalf's passage before giving his hypothesis: 'I guess that he was attacked on this hill-top'. Given the state of living things after Gandalf's passage, we understand that he has used his powers to fight something, and with the rune he left in a hurry and the absence of his enemy's corpse left behind him, Strider cannot be sure of Gandalf's survival ('but with what result I cannot tell'): this uncertainty adds a lot to the sense of danger now surrounding the small company.

When the Company is in the Caradhras, they are pitted against the elements of the wilderness: this is their first hardship since leaving Rivendell. The Caradhras is the name of one of the Misty Mountains and the weather as they climb becomes more and more threatening: the members of the Company are in danger of freezing to death. A blizzard is upon them, which is probably triggered by Saruman to hinder the Company in their advance and force them into Moria. The sense of danger is instilled in the passage thanks to an internal focus on Frodo's mind: he is hallucinating. The semantic field of hallucination is present through 'great sleepiness' or 'sinking fast into a warm and hazy dream' and through the use of italics that helps to understand that Frodo is imagining a discussion around the fire with Bilbo: but, Bilbo is in Rivendell and there is no fire. In this aspect, a contrast is made between the imagined fire of Frodo and where he really is, in a 'nest of snow': this passage is filled with contrasts between heat and cold, culminating in their reunion with the word 'slush'. The problem with this place is that no fire is supposed to be possible in such weather. The fire conjured by Gandalf is unnatural: it is said to be 'a great spout of green and blue flame'. Fire is their only way to survive and they light it even though they could have been watched:

[73] *Ibid*. I, 11

> There they stood, stooping in a circle round the little dancing and blowing flames. A red light was on their tired and anxious faces; behind them the night was like a black wall. But the wood was burning fast, and the snow still fell.

The danger does not lie in being seen anymore but in the Company's health. The sight of fire releases tension and enlightens the night: the contrast between their red face and the black night underlines the release of tension. The semantic field of joy can be found in 'rejoiced' hearts, wood burning 'merrily', 'they warmed their hands gladly at the blaze', 'round the little dancing and blowing flames'. A break in this release is however introduced by the word 'but' at the beginning of the last sentence, and emphasised by the adjectives 'fast' and 'still': danger is still looming.

Gandalf's power is also displayed against wargs in the fourth chapter of the second book[74]. The setting here is similar, as the Company is gathered again in a circle. It is also reminiscent of Celtic legends as the Company is settling in a 'broken circle of boulder-stones', a stone circle. The link between druidry and stone circles is still quite obscure, but in the twentieth century stone circles were highly associated with druid ceremonies. Gandalf in this scene could be seen as a druid, being as well the wielder of an elemental power, fire. According to Aurélie Brémont, fire is the most important element in druidic rituals and that Tolkien found inspiration in celtic legends to create the character of Gandalf[75]. His incantation is in an unknown language and reported in italics in order to set it apart from common speech: the incantation he uses is the same as in Caradhras '*Naur an edraith ammen*', which means 'fire for saving us'. Gandalf is also described as a legend with the comparison 'like the monument of some ancient king of stone set upon a hill': it echoes with the statues of Isildur and Anarion at the Argonath. The semantic field of fire is predominant in this passage. Fire is also associated with 'lightning' and Gandalf's voice with 'thunder': Gandalf seems to be conjuring a storm of fire.

Gandalf's display of power in this passage is part of a crescendo in the book beginning with the scorched hill-top of Amon Sûl, where traces of his power could be found, continuing with the invocation of fire in the Caradhras' blizzard, where he shows his ability to create a small fire, climaxing with this invocation of a wildfire in the night to protect the Company from a host of wargs and ending with his final epic fight against the Balrog. It helps to build Gandalf as an epic character. The crescendo in power we can find in the first book before the encounter with the Balrog is absent in the films. Instead Gandalf seems quite powerless, for

[74] *Ibid.* II, 4
[75] A. Brémont, *Les Celtes en Terre-du-Milieu Inspirations Celtiques Dans Les œuvres De J.R.R Tolkien*, *op.cit*

instance in front of the door that leads into Moria. Then, we truly understand how powerful he can be when pitted against the Balrog. Being a very dear member of the Company, his disappearance has a very profound impact. His heroic deeds differ in the book and in the film but he remains a hero nonetheless.

The second opus of the adaptation begins with a sequence which is not described in the book. It begins with a travelling shot on top of the Misty Mountains, the music theme and the voice of Gandalf echoing in the distance. Then, we have a reminiscence of the scene of Gandalf's fall, but this time instead of following the rest of the Company out of Moria, the camera follows Gandalf falling and fighting with the Balrog. This scene is an addition to the novel but is inspired from the account of Gandalf's fight with the Balrog: 'Long I fell, and he fell with me. His fire was about me. I was burned. Then we plunged into the deep water and all was dark. Cold it was as the tide of death: almost it froze my heart' (Book 3, chapter 5). We should wonder how this addition to the novel aims at introducing the second opus and building up tension. In the first part we should focus on the way this addition brings forth the character of Gandalf and resolves his fate which had been suspended since the last opus. In the second part, we should examine why choosing such an *in medias res* introduction for building up tension at the beginning of the movie.

Since the Company exited the mines of Moria, in the first opus, Gandalf's situation has been unknown. For someone who has not read the book, he is probably dead: he has never shown great magical strength since the beginning of the film. He has only displayed his ability to create fireworks and light. His powers have never been shown like when he faces the Balrog. At this moment, he truly appears as the mage he is in the book, imposing his power on the dark creature embodied by the Balrog. But his fall is tragic and for someone who has never read the book, we should expect him to die from his long fall and struggle with the Balrog. The beginning of this second opus offers more information on the unresolved fate of Gandalf by showing exactly what happened after his fall. Even if this passage is not written at the beginning of the third volume, it offers an illustration of the account given by Gandalf himself in the fifth chapter of the third volume. This passage, given in the introduction, is very epic: Gandalf describes how he felt the 'tide of death' while struggling with the Balrog. As a consequence, we should expect to find reminiscences of the epic-tale in the movie: in my perspective, the last shot of the passage is quite epic. Indeed, the epic is conveyed by the very large shot: they are falling very slowly and we cannot know if it is caused by the use of slow motion or by the vastness of this underground hall. However, since this passage ends at

the moment where Gandalf and the Balrog touch the water, we still do not know if Gandalf survived or not. This mysterious situation aims at bringing doubt back into the mind of the audience and it is backed by various cinematic choices. To begin with, the audience is presented with what seems to be an omniscient view on the scene: the shots on top of the mountain, hovering around the mine convey the idea that the audience is watching through the eyes of a bird, seeing everything from above. However, it still is quite ambiguous: many dark spots appear on screen around the flank of the mountain. These spots are shadows, quite long in the rising sunlight but they can also be hiding places for other dangers the characters are going to encounter. And this idea is reinforced by the darkness of the following shots inside the mountain. Moreover, the colours of this dawning scene reinforce the sense of ambiguity: warm tones in the sky merge with colder ones on the slopes of the mountains. All in all, the first shots present us with a chiaroscuro which echoes the uncertainty of Gandalf's situation after his fall. The audience is presented with an ambiguous opening scene which helps to bring doubt back and to reactivate the plot at the beginning of this second opus: the audience should wonder if Gandalf is still alive.

In order to bring the tension up, this scene can rely on the effect of surprise. Indeed, the absence of this passage in the book allows the audience (especially those who have read the book) to watch an unexpected opening scene. The repetition of what was already seen in the first movie helps to give context. At the moment when the camera dives, the music starts and the unexpected begins. The dynamic *in medias res* introduction also helps to bring up tension, as we are immediately immersed in an action scene with much fight and epic. The shots are dynamic, thanks mainly to the tracking shot focused on Gandalf falling with the background going by at high speed. Gandalf is fighting fiercely, reaching for his sword while diving like a rapace. The representation of his determination is relying on staging: he is fighting while falling with a giant monster, he struggles, at one time caught in the hand of the Balrog like a ragged doll, and at another time holding one of its horns. Even though the struggle appears really dangerous and fatal, Gandalf fights and is thus presented as a warrior and not as an old mage: it updates the image conveyed of Gandalf in the first film as an old man with grey hair and some magical powers and abilities to make fireworks. It adds to the epic of this scene: Gandalf is actually stronger and braver than we could have expected. With this opening, the audience (both those who have and those who have not read the book) is hooked by a cleverly made *captatio*.

II, 00:01:13 	II, 00:02:51 
II, 00:03:28 	II, 00:03:43 

At the end of this introduction scene, the tension of the film is brought up and the plot is re-actualised as well as the character of Gandalf. It results in a successful introduction of the second opus. This opening scene was made possible by the advance in computer-generated images at the beginning of the 21st century: it displayed a technical feat at the time. In this aspect, we could wonder if this opening scene's *captatio* does not also rely on its impressive technical feat, quite revolutionary at the time.

We can also analyse his reappearance as Gandalf the White and the way he is given even more epic scenes: in the Hall of Theoden, in Helm's Deep, in Minas Tirith. He acts as the saviour of Middle-Earth, achieving impossible feats like draining Saruman from Theoden's mind without killing him or travelling from Edoras to Minas Tirith in a few days.

c) Frodo

Book 1, Chapter 2[76] is major in the setting of Frodo's quest as the Ring bearer: we learn everything there is to know about the Ring's properties and the danger of Frodo's quest. This passage acts as the trigger of Frodo's quest. He is given a choice: to protect and get the Ring out of the Shire or to hide it. This choice allows Frodo to be described as a heroic character. He chooses to leave with the Ring in order to protect his friends and neighbours, even though he does not have a very high esteem for them, being 'too stupid and dull for words'. The fact

[76] *Ibid.* I, 2

that he exposes his feelings about this quest helps to create a dilemma: he wants to save the Shire even though he has no special bond with the people, simply to be able to come home, but he is afraid and feels that this quest is desperate.

In the film, Frodo is not given any choice, he 'must leave the Shire'[77], in opposition with the book: it feels like it has been either fated or expected by Gandalf that Frodo would have to take the matter into his own hands. In the book, he offers his help, underlining his heroic will to 'save the Shire'[78].

3. Death

The subject of death and immortality has been extensively researched by Vincent Ferré[79]. According to Ferré and to Tolkien himself, the entire world of Middle-Earth hinges round the subject of death and immortality, and every theme akin to it: fire might be a part of these themes being an instrument of destruction and creation. Frodo's quest is doomed from the very beginning, being so very dangerous for the body and especially for the mind: even though he does not physically die, something in him is broken and his travel to the undying lands might be the epitome of the passage to Heaven after the death of the body in other mythologies. The danger embedded in this doomed quest invites death in every line of the book: the war raged against Sauron will evidently lead to many deaths. The struggle against death sets the playground for several comparisons: between light and darkness, between love and hatred, between hope and despair. These comparisons are very similar to what can be found in other myths or in the Bible: Tolkien's world and its struggles are not so different from the real world.

> La distance semble à la fois temporelle et géographique, conformément à l'intention de l'auteur, qui utilise la notion de *Fantasy* pour marquer l'écart qui existe entre le monde inventé et le monde réel ; toutefois, l'on sait que Tolkien a souvent souligné la parenté qui unit la Terre du Milieu et l'Europe, la Comté et l'Angleterre.[80]

Ferré's analysis on death leads him to defend that death comes to the lonely characters while the groups and couples survive. He explains that within the Company, there is a 'ballet' of

[77] P. Jackson, *The Lord of the Rings*, Film 1
[78] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, *op.cit* I, 2
[79] V. Ferré, *Tolkien : sur les rivages de la Terre du Milieu*, *op.cit.*
[80] *Ibid*.

couples and trios forming and breaking depending on the situation: Merry and Pippin, Sam and Frodo, and the three hunters Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli, which let Boromir and Gandalf alone, both disappear from the story. These groups are reformed throughout the books, Aragorn with Merry, Gandalf with Pippin and Gollum with Sam and Frodo for instance. He makes a link between hybris and death: Boromir dies because he covets the ring for himself, Saruman dies for similar reasons. Love and loneliness, light and darkness, these oppositions are essential to understand death in Tolkien's world. The fact that death and heroes are central in the text might lead us to compare *The Lord of the Rings* to an epic poem. On this, Ferré warns us to be careful, especially as one feature from the genre of the epic poem is missing: the heroes are not compared to gods, but are regular mortals struggling to eradicate evil. The absence of such comparisons set it apart from the genre of the epic poem. However, we can still find this tale epic in different aspects.

B. Epic fantasy, a blooming genre

The plot presents several aspects of an epic tale except that it is not written in verse but in prose and the characters, even though they are often presented as heroes, are not compared to gods. The combination between fantasy and epic elements create the subgenre of epic fantasy: *The Lord of the Rings* is an archetypal work of this subgenre. Plus, the word epic also gained a new definition over the last decades which should also be accounted for: according to slang, saying that something is 'epic' often means that it is spectacular, fantastic, great. Given these parameters, we should try and define the genre while exploring the influences of Tolkien and Jackson over more recent works belonging to epic fantasy.

1. What makes an epic scene?

The Lord of the Rings is known as an epic fantasy for its plot, its battles, its characters and its representation of death. But then what makes an epic scene, in the sense of great and spectacular? We could analyse the scene of the Beacons in the film as it is unequivocally epic and moving. The music and the helicopter shots allow the audience to encompass the distance between Minas Tirith and Edoras. It establishes a link between the two cities over the White

Mountains and miles of nothing. It also links Gandalf to Aragorn, both wishing to fight against Sauron while struggling to convince the leaders Denethor and Theoden. The beacons are a symbol of hope and the setting and music manage to emphasise it, making it epic. The fact that the beacons are lit during the night also participates in a sense of epic as we can imagine soldiers who are posted here night and day to make sure the beacons are lit as quickly as possible, even in very harsh climates.

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But what is epic? We cannot simply say that epicness is achieved by scenery and music. How does this feeling of epicness occur?

a) Building foreshadowing

Throughout the three books, and the three films, the epic final battle in Mordor is foreshadowed. We know that the sky is getting redder as the Ring is getting closer, and the Eye is ever watching. We start by fearing the clouds coming from the South, then the horizon takes this red tone evocative of danger.

II, 01:00:47	III, 00:53:51
	

b) Instil despair

The sense of danger helps to instil despair: we fear, as a reader or as a spectator, that the heroes will not survive this doomed quest. The Company is the Free People's last resort to dismantle Sauron's power: we understand the sense of despair when the Company is shattered. First, Gandalf's fall, then Boromir's death, then the rest going different ways, some captured and all in danger: we really do not know if the Free People will win against Sauron at this point. It makes the great battles at Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith even greater: the characters are desperate to win because if they don't, it is all of the Free People that disappears. Despair is in fact tension.

c) Relieve tension

As the audience fear for the characters, tension is created. To relieve it, the characters must find a viable answer to their desperate situation. Tension in *The Lord of the Rings* is often relieved by heroic interventions, sometimes hinted at and sometimes not. Gandalf and the Rohirrim at the end of the battle of Helm's Deep for instance: Gandalf's return was hinted at but his return with a cavalry was a surprise. Jackson's choice of setting and lighting and music really insist on an opposition between Good and Evil: the light overwhelms the orcs as well as the warriors and tension is relieved as the enemies are defeated.

Surprise also has a role to play in an epic scene: the moment tension is relieved is also the moment we can feel a sense of epic. In the case of the beacons, the foreshadowing is very similar to every other epic scene in the film: evil is growing and threatening to overwhelm the Free People of Middle Earth. To fight it, an alliance between the kingdoms of Men is essential but the two leaders Denethor and Theoden cannot be reasoned with. Battle is imminent and help is desperately needed in Gondor: the light emerging from Minas Morgul and the defeat of Faramir in Osgiliath directly precede the scene of the beacons in the third

film, creating a desperate situation. To remedy it, Pippin, under Gandalf's counsel, climbs the beacon of Minas Tirith and lights it. The scene appears dangerous at first: a high-angle shot shows that Pippin is climbing a cliff and has emptiness below him. Then it is comical, since Pippin puts the beacon on fire while still being on it, but still appears happy with himself and smiles at the camera: comic situations can also relieve tension.

III, 01:04:40	III, 01:05:21
	

The helicopter shots which follow, with music, also create a relief. Gandalf and Pippin's intervention relieves tension and allows the audience to feel hope for the characters' survival: enhanced by scenery and music, this scene conveys a sense of epic.

d) Examples of epic scenes in fantasy cinema

Epic can be found in films including action scenes: it is not an excluding feature of fantasy. We can however argue that epic is a feature very often used in fantasy. Several epic scenes can come to mind, even if we exclusively look for epic scenes with Fantasy Fire.

In *Game of Thrones*, season 7, episode 6[81], a small company of men venture north of the Wall to bring proof of the existence of the undead. Nothing goes according to plan and Jon Snow and his companions end up pitted against a sea of undead, stranded on an iceberg and struggling to stay warm. As the ice starts to form again, it creates a path for the undead to attack them: they try to push them back but they are overwhelmed and some companions die. When despair is at its highest, they get rescued by Daenaerys and her dragons, at the cost of one of them. This episode stages an epic scene respecting all of the conditions listed above, ending in a dramatic surge with Fantasy Fire.

In *Harry Potter*, in the sixth film[82], Harry and Dumbledore are on a quest to find and destroy all the horcruxes in an effort to weaken Voldemort. Their quest brings them to an abandoned

[81] David Benioff, D. B. Weiss, George R. R. Martin, *Game of Thrones*, USA: HBO, 2011-2019. VII, 6
[82] David Yates, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, USA/UK: Heyday Films/Warner Bros. Pictures, 2009.

cave in which they find a lake: Dumbledore warns Harry not to touch the water. They find the horcrux in a basin filled with water which needs to be drunk: it hurts Dumbledore as he drinks it, but once he has drunk all the basin he is thirsty. Harry gives him water from the lake but as he touches the water, undead skeletons wake and reach for him. He tries to defend himself but he is soon overwhelmed and falls in the lake. From underwater, we can see a red orange light: Dumbledore has created a tornado of fire to push back the undead. His display of power comes after a very desperate situation from Harry's point of view: as the audience is very close to this main character, and Dumbledore has rarely shown such power, it is an undeniable epic scene.

Game of Thrones, VII, 6	Harry Potter VI
	

Both of these scenes are foreshadowed, intensified by despair and relieved by a surprising action: in addition with scenery and music, it makes these scenes epic. The addition of Fantasy Fire also intensifies the sense of epic as it is opposed to another element: ice and cold in *Game of Thrones*, and water in *Harry Potter*. Both also have a common feature that is darkness: fire also acts as light. Then we can also say that fire is a purificator since it is used against undead enemies: it purifies the world of unnatural and dangerous enemies. Since these sequences are so similar, we could venture that there is a recurring aesthetic of Fantasy Fire since Jackson's adaptation.

2. A recurring aesthetic of Fantasy Fire

a) Candles

Candles represent faith in Christian beliefs. In *the Lord of the Rings*, they were used to represent holiness in Tom Bombadil's house. Peter Jackson used them to convey a sense of mediaevalism to the decor but not to convey holiness. We are entitled to expect a similar treatment in Fantasy cinema. We can see that, in *Harry Potter*, candles are used to express

magic: the great dining room lit with floating candles, the absence of electricity in the magical world so the use of chandeliers or lanterns to light the way in the night, the way they are lit and extinguished by magic as well. In *Game of Thrones* and *House of the Dragon*, candles also convey a sense of mediaevalism. But we can see that they are also used to represent faith. Indeed, in several scenes linked with the Seven Gods, the characters use candles to connect with the gods, the same way as in Christian beliefs. For instance, the way Rhaenyra and Alicent pray in the second episode[83], lighting a candle for their dead mothers and kneeling in front of thousands of candles in a state of contemplation, is quite close to the way one would pray in a church. A similar scene can be found in *The Witcher*[84], when Cirilla talks with Nenneke, a priestess at the temple of Melitele, where Ciri is supposed to learn how to use her powers. Here again, candles have a link with faith.

I, 2, 12:22	II, 6, 35:40
	

Why use candles in Fantasy cinema, when it often takes place in entire other universes, where magic exists? *The Lord of the Rings* introduced –on paper and on the silver screen– a universe happening in an era similar to the Middle Ages which influenced other writers and directors to anchor their fantasy fiction in the same era. For candles, we have explained their presence as a way to add a sense of mediaevalism but this word should be handled carefully as it has many definitions. We should oppose 'mediaevalism' as the manifestation of mediaeval in our contemporary world to 'mediaevalism' as the historiographical study of the Middle Ages. Ferré argues that Tolkien is an exemplary author for mediaevalism:

> Exemplaire, Tolkien l'est à un double titre. En raison tout d'abord du succès de son œuvre de fiction, qui a donné naissance à de nombreuses œuvres et suscité un renouveau de la littérature de fantasy (même s'il ne se confond pas avec ce genre) ; d'autre part, du fait de l'importance de ses textes critiques, pourtant relativement peu nombreux.[85]

[83] Ryan Condal, George R. R. Martin, *House of the Dragon*, USA: HBO, 2022. I, 2
[84] Lauren Schmidt Hissrich, *The Witcher*, USA/Poland: Netflix, 2019-present. II, 6
[85] Vincent Ferré, "Médiévalisme : Moyen Âge et modernité (XXe-XXIe siècles) : Histoire, théorie, critique", Paris IV Sorbonne, 2011.

As fantasy is a genre of fiction involving magical elements, it is often associated with the Middle Ages: the literary works of this era often involve magic (The Arthurian Tales, *Beowulf*, etc). As a consequence, candles are an essential visual feature to anchor any fantasy fiction in this era: it creates a coherence. The fact that even a fantasy fiction which happens in our contemporary era like *Harry Potter* uses candles is a case in point. But then, we should not include other fantasy fictions which are not related to the Middle Ages like *The Shape of Water*[86]: candles do not systematically convey a sense of mediaevalism.

b) Fire from above, fire from below

The treatment of light in *The Lord of the Rings* is used as a way to emphasise the meaning of fire: it can be found in other films or series. In *The Witcher,* we can find a similar aesthetic in the first episode of the first season, when Cintra is falling to Nilfgaard[87]: in this episode, a large hearth is often blazing behind the characters, projecting its flickering light on their faces. For instance when Cirilla is waiting for her grandmother's return from battle or when Queen Calanthe talks to her granddaughter on her deathbed: each time, we sense that Cirilla's situation is on the edge and about to drastically change. This lighting emphasises the dramatic dialogue taking place. Fire from above can be found as well in the same series, in the fourth episode when Pavetta displays a large amount of chaos in order to protect Duny[88].

I, 1, 30:32 	I, 1, 42:30 
I, 4, 40:25 	I, 4, 40:50 

[86] Guillermo del Toro, *The Shape of Water*, USA/Mexico: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2017.
[87] L. Schmidt Hissrich, *The Witcher*, *op.cit.* I, 1
[88] *Ibid.* I, 4

3. Evolution of the Fire Mage: the necessary character in any Epic Fantasy

The representation of the Fire Mage has greatly evolved since *The Lord of the Rings*. Before Jackson's films, the fire mage was often represented as a mad person: the witch in Conan the Destroyer[89] is a case in point. The latest representations of the fire mage are different: Yennefer in *The Witcher* and Melisandre in *Game of Thrones*. The Fire Mage often has a very important role in an Epic Fantasy, we should keep that in mind when analysing other representations.

Gandalf is essential to the plot in *The Lord of the Rings*: without his intervention Bilbo would never have found the Ring in the first place and Frodo would never have destroyed it. We can see that his interventions can do good but also precipitate danger. And, as we have seen, his powers are highly linked with fire. We can therefore venture that Gandalf is similar to fire: he can create and destroy and he is quick and powerful. In the films, Gandalf appears more controlled, able to wield light instead of fire: he is more saviour than destroyer. This duality can also be found in Dumbledore, both comforting and dangerous, even cruel with Harry: he knows that the boy is a horcrux and should die with Voldemort, but he raises him 'as a pig for slaughter'[90]. Both characters were adapted for the screen in the 2000s and set a standard for the next fire mages as we can see that they often share the same characteristics. In *The Witcher*, fire magic is referred to as 'chaos': it drains the wielder until they die. Yennefer, main character of this series and mage, has a close relationship with fire as she is filled with 'chaos': in other words, she has a lot of traumas and anger which she can canalise into a magic fire. She does so in the battle of Sodden, in the last episode of the first series[91]: the quantity of fire she manages to create without dying is representative of the very large amount of anger she had buried in her. We can see that light is quite representative of what the characters think: we see Yennefer lighted from below, as she is probably suffering while performing this feat, and we can also see Tissaia, her teacher, who is lighted from above, representing her pride and surprise for her student's powers. However, after this feat, Yennefer is drained of her magical powers and remains powerless. We can see that fire in this representation is only destructive. It allows the audience to understand how Yennefer is

[89] Richer Fleischer, *Conan the Destroyer*, USA : Universal Pictures, 1984.
[90] D. Yates, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (Part Two)*, *op.cit*, 2011.
[91] L. Schmidt Hissrich, *The Witcher*, *op.cit*. I, 8

traumatised and to have compassion for her. It also helps to encompass the devotion of the Nilfgaardians and their cult of the White Flame, namely Emhyr, the emperor of Nilfgaard. They use fire magic during their battles, sacrificing their mages who die systematically in the process. But we can see that fire is seen as a purifier, as it is a 'white' flame.

I, 8, 50:20	I, 8, 50:30
	

In *Game of Thrones*, Melisandre and her cult to the Lord of Light has a lot of similarities with the cult of the White Flame. According to Melisandre, the Red God is 'A god of light and love and joy, and a god of darkness, evil, and fear, eternally at war'[92]: here again, fire is associated with light and darkness, creation and destruction, both good and evil. Most of the worship practices of the Lord of Light involve fire: from bonfires to pyres and sacrifices. We can find a reminiscence of the cult of the 'White Flame' in the way fire is used as a purifier and the way they believe the Red God will lead them to a brighter future. However, the priests in this cult do not actually produce any fire like a mage: they pray to the Lord of Light and sometimes he answers and creates fire. We can select a few passages when fire is magically produced thanks to a priest's prayer: when Béric Dondarrion fights with Sandor Clegane, his sword is lit with his hand's blood[93], or when Melisandre helps defeat the army of the dead at the battle of Winterfell[94]. In both these scenes, darkness is predominant, in order to better accentuate fire and its light on the character's faces.

[92] D. Benioff, and all, *Game of Thrones*, *op.cit*. IV, 2
[93] *Ibid*. III, 5
[94] *Ibid.* VIII, 3

III, 5, 02:56	VIII, 3, 29:08
	

In these series, we can see that power does not come from a magical tool like in *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of the Rings*: the fire mage no longer uses a wand or a staff but simply their hands. In *The Witcher*, Yennefer's hands are glowing before her feat at Sodden[95] and Rience, a mage who uses only fire, can produce flames with his bare hands as well[96].

I, 8, 49:15	II, 6, 49:50
	

More recent fire mages in other series are similar: Bloom in *Fate: The Winx Saga* and the mages in *Shadow and Bone*, for instance. Indeed, in both these series, the mages, or 'fairies' as they are called in *Fate*, use their hands to perform their spells.

I, 6, 10:00[97]	I, 4, 28:10[98]
	

[95] L. Schmidt Hissrich, *The Witcher*, *op.cit*. I, 8
[96] *Ibid.* II, 6
[97] Bryan Young, *Fate: The Winx Saga*, UK/Italy: Netflix, 2021-2022. I, 6
[98] Eric Heisserer, *Shadow and Bone*, USA: Netflix, 2021-2023. I, 4

In both these series, the main characters aim at controlling their powers, and struggle a lot: we may venture that it is more difficult as they use their own body to create fire. The absence of magical tools in more recent series can be explained by the success of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*: other directors would not want to create a film or a series that is too similar, so that it would not be associated. We can also imagine that the use of hands can be seen as more natural and human. The exception is the 2017-Netflix-film *Bright*[99]: in this film, there is a magical wand. However, this magical tool is not common like in *Harry Potter*. In this film, there has not been a wand for a very long time and it is a very powerful and unique item that could drastically change the current world, for better or for worse. Its design is different: it is not a wooden twig but a shining, crystal-like wand. But since the 2010s, magical tools in fantasy cinema have been rather scarce.

[99] David Hayer, *Bright*, USA: Netflix, 2017.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intertwining narratives of fire and fantasy in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* illuminates not only the pages of literature but also the screens of cinema. From the vivid imaginations of Tolkien to the visionary adaptations of Peter Jackson, fire serves as a guiding light, illuminating the fantasy path for heroes and audiences alike.

Through our exploration of Tolkien's mythical world, we have witnessed the transformative power of fire as a symbol of creation, destruction, and purification. We have traversed the treacherous landscapes of Middle-earth, where flames flicker in the darkness, forging bonds of fellowship and testing the resilience of the human spirit. From the forging of the One Ring in the fiery depths of Mount Doom to the lighting of beacons atop the peaks of Gondor, fire serves as a constant companion to Tolkien's heroes, guiding them through the darkness and igniting the flames of hope in their hearts. Through meticulous analysis of key passages and themes, we have uncovered the ambivalent nature of fire in Tolkien's world, exploring its symbolic significance and thematic resonance.

In the realm of adaptation, Peter Jackson's cinematic vision has breathed new life into Tolkien's fantasy tale, capturing the essence of Fantasy Fire. Jackson's films blaze with authenticity and verisimilitude, offering audiences a glimpse into a world of knights and heroes pitted against fearless and pitiless enemies. From the breathtaking landscapes of New Zealand to the stunning visual effects that bring Middle-earth to life, Jackson's adaptation remains faithful to the spirit of Tolkien's work while infusing it with a newfound cinematic grandeur. Through meticulous attention to detail and a deep respect for the source material, Jackson crafts a cinematic experience that honours the legacy of *The Lord of the Rings* while paving the way for a new generation of fantasy fans.

As we have reflected on the epic conflict that defines Jackson's cinematic vision, we have uncovered the enduring legacy of *The Lord of the Rings* and its profound influence on the landscape of contemporary cinema. The translation of Tolkien’s epic ‘faerie’ tale from page to screen, intertwined with the motif of Fantasy Fire, has made an enduring impact on the collective imagination of audiences worldwide. Through Jackson's masterful adaptation, we witness the birth of a new cinematic genre that continues to captivate audiences and inspire

filmmakers around the world. Jackson's films have redefined audience expectations and expanded the boundaries of cinematic storytelling.

As we draw the curtains on our exploration of fire and fantasy in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and its cinematic adaptation by Peter Jackson, we are reminded of the enduring power of storytelling to captivate hearts and minds across generations. We have traversed a landscape rich in myth, magic, and meaning, guided by the timeless wisdom of Tolkien's words and the visionary artistry of Jackson's films. In closing, one cannot overlook the iconic image of dragons and their intrinsic connection to the elemental force of fire. From the majestic creatures of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth to the fiery behemoths of other beloved series and films, dragons have long been synonymous with the allure and danger of the fantasy genre. In another exploration, we could aim to unravel the symbiotic relationship between dragons and fire, tracing their mythic origins and examining their portrayal across various narratives. By delving into the lore of Tolkien's dragons and their role in shaping the fantastical landscapes of Middle-earth, we gain insight into the enduring appeal of these mythical beasts and their ability to capture the imagination of audiences worldwide. Through a comparative analysis with other notable depictions of dragons in fantasy literature and cinema, we could seek to uncover the common threads that bind these creatures to the element of fire, exploring how their presence serves to ignite the flames of adventure and evoke a sense of wonder in the hearts of audiences, further anchoring our thesis on Fantasy Fire. *The Hobbit*[100] could be our starting point and Daisy De Palmas Jauze's thesis essay on dragons[101] could be useful.

[100] John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, UK: George Allen&Unwin, 1937.
[101] Daisy De Palmas Jauze, *La figure du dragon : des origines mythiques à la Fantasy et à la Dragon Fantasy anglo-saxonnes contemporaines*, U. Réunion, 2010.

Appendix

1. Book II, Chapter 5

The passage was lit by no shaft and was utterly dark. They groped their way down a long flight of steps, and then looked back; but they could see nothing, except high above them the faint glimmer of the wizard's staff. He seemed to be still standing on guard by the closed door. Frodo breathed heavily and leaned against Sam, who put his arms about him. They stood peering up the stairs into the darkness. Frodo thought he could hear the voice of Gandalf above, muttering words that ran down the sloping roof with a sighing echo. He could not catch what was said. The walls seemed to be trembling. Every now and again the drum-beats throbbed and rolled: *doom, doom*.

Suddenly at the top of the stair there was a stab of white light. Then there was a dull rumble and a heavy thud. The drum-beats broke out wildly: *doom-boom, doom-boom,* and then stopped. Gandalf came flying down the steps and fell to the ground in the midst of the Company. 'Well, well! That's over!' said the wizard struggling to his feet. 'I have done all that I could. But I have met my match, and have nearly been destroyed. But don't stand here! Go on! You will have to do without light for a while: I am rather shaken. Go on! Go on! Where are you, Gimli? Come ahead with me! Keep close behind, all of you!'

They stumbled after him wondering what had happened. *Doom, doom* went the drum-beats again: they now sounded muffled and far away, but they were following. There was no other sound of pursuit, neither tramp of feet, nor any voice. Gandalf took no turns, right or left, for the passage seemed to be going in the direction that he desired. Every now and again it descended a flight of steps, fifty or more, to a lower level. At the moment that was their chief danger; for in the dark they could not see a descent, until they came on it and put their feet out into emptiness. Gandalf felt the ground with his staff like a blind man.

At the end of an hour they had gone a mile, or maybe a little more, and had descended many flights of stairs. There was still no sound of pursuit. Almost they began to hope that they would escape. At the bottom of the seventh flight Gandalf halted.

'It is getting hot!' he gasped. 'We ought to be down at least to the level of the Gates now. Soon I think we should look for a left-hand turn to take us east. I hope it is not far. I am very weary. I must rest here a moment, even if all the orcs ever spawned are after us.'

Gimli took his arm and helped him down to a seat on the step. 'What happened away up there at the door?' he asked. 'Did you meet the beater of the drums?'

'I do not know,' answered Gandalf. 'But I found myself suddenly faced by something that I have not met before. I could think of nothing to do but to try and put a shutting-spell on the door. I know many; but to do things of that kind rightly requires time, and even then the door can be broken by strength.

'As I stood there I could hear orc-voices on the other side: at any moment I thought they would burst it open. I could not hear what was said; they seemed to be talking in their own hideous language. All I caught was *ghâsh*: that is ''fire''. Then something

came into the chamber – I felt it through the door, and the orcs themselves were afraid and fell silent. It laid hold of the iron ring, and then it perceived me and my spell.

‘What it was I cannot guess, but I have never felt such a challenge. The counter-spell was terrible. It nearly broke me. For an instant the door left my control and began to open! I had to speak a word of Command. That proved too great a strain. The door burst in pieces. Something dark as a cloud was blocking out all the light inside, and I was thrown backwards down the stairs. All the wall gave way, and the roof of the chamber as well, I think.

‘I am afraid Balin is buried deep, and maybe something else is buried there too. I cannot say. But at least the passage behind us was completely blocked. Ah! I have never felt so spent, but it is passing.

2. Book I, Chapter 1

That very month was September, and as fine as you could ask. A day or two later a rumour (probably started by the knowledgeable Sam) was spread about that there were going to be fireworks – fireworks, what is more, such as had not been seen in the Shire for nigh on a century, not indeed since the Old Took died.

Days passed and The Day drew nearer. An odd-looking waggon laden with odd-looking packages rolled into Hobbiton one evening and toiled up the Hill to Bag End. The startled hobbits peered out of lamplit doors to gape at it. It was driven by outlandish folk, singing strange songs: dwarves with long beards and deep hoods. A few of them remained at Bag End. At the end of the second week in September a cart came in through Bywater from the direction of Brandywine Bridge in broad daylight. An old man was driving it all alone. He wore a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, and a silver scarf. He had a long white beard and bushy eyebrows that stuck out beyond the brim of his hat. Small hobbit-children ran after the cart all through Hobbiton and right up the hill. It had a cargo of fireworks, as they rightly guessed. At Bilbo’s front door the old man began to unload: there were great bundles of fireworks of all sorts and shapes, each labelled with a large red G  and the elf-rune,  .

That was Gandalf’s mark, of course, and the old man was Gandalf the Wizard, whose fame in the Shire was due mainly to his skill with fires, smokes, and lights. His real business was far more difficult and dangerous, but the Shire-folk knew nothing about it. To them he was just one of the ‘attractions’ at the Party. Hence the excitement of the hobbit-children. ‘G for Grand!’ they shouted, and the old man smiled. They knew him by sight, though he only appeared in Hobbiton occasionally and never stopped long; but neither they nor any but the oldest of their elders had seen one of his firework displays – they now belonged to a legendary past. When the old man, helped by Bilbo and some dwarves, had finished unloading, Bilbo gave a few pennies away; but not a single squib or cracker was forthcoming, to the disappointment of the onlookers.

‘Run away now!’ said Gandalf. ‘You will get plenty when the time comes.’ Then he disappeared inside with Bilbo, and the door was shut. The young hobbits stared at the door in vain for a while, and then made off, feeling that the day of the party would never come.

Inside Bag End, Bilbo and Gandalf were sitting at the open window of a small room looking out west on to the garden. The late afternoon was bright and peaceful. The flowers glowed red and golden: snapdragons and sunflowers, and nasturtians trailing all over the turf walls and peeping in at the round windows.

‘How bright your garden looks!’ said Gandalf.

[...]

3. Book II, Chapter 3

That morning they lit a fire in a deep hollow shrouded by great bushes of holly, and their supper-breakfast was merrier than it had been since they set out. They did not hurry to bed afterwards, for they expected to have all the night to sleep in, and they did not mean to go on again until the evening of the next day. Only Aragorn was silent and restless. After a while he left the Company and wandered on to the ridge; there he stood in the shadow of a tree, looking out southwards and westwards, with his head posed as if he was listening. Then he returned to the brink of the dell and looked down at the others laughing and talking.

‘What is the matter, Strider?’ Merry called up. ‘What are you looking for? Do you miss the East Wind?’

‘No indeed,’ he answered. ‘But I miss something. I have been in the country of Hollin in many seasons. No folk dwell here now, but many other creatures live here at all times, especially birds. Yet now all things but you are silent. I can feel it. There is no sound for miles about us, and your voices seem to make the ground echo. I do not understand it.’

Gandalf looked up with sudden interest. ‘But what do you guess is the reason?’ he asked. ‘Is there more in it than surprise at seeing four hobbits, not to mention the rest of us, where people are so seldom seen or heard?’

‘I hope that is it,’ answered Aragorn. ‘But I have a sense of watchfulness, and of fear, that I have never had here before.’

‘Then we must be more careful,’ said Gandalf. ‘If you bring a Ranger with you, it is well to pay attention to him, especially if the Ranger is Aragorn. We must stop talking aloud, rest quietly, and set the watch.’

It was Sam’s turn that day to take the first watch, but Aragorn joined him. The others fell asleep. Then the silence grew until even Sam felt it. The breathing of the sleepers could be plainly heard. The swish of the pony’s tail and the occasional movements of his feet became loud noises. Sam could hear his own joints creaking, if he stirred. Dead silence was around him, and over all hung a clear blue sky, as the Sun rode up from the East. Away in the South a dark patch appeared, and grew, and drove north like flying smoke in the wind.

‘What’s that, Strider? It don’t look like a cloud,’ said Sam in a whisper to Aragorn. He made no answer, he was gazing intently at the sky; but before long Sam could see for himself what was approaching. Flocks of birds, flying at great speed, were wheeling

and circling, and traversing all the land as if they were searching for something; and they were steadily drawing nearer.

‘Lie flat and still!’ hissed Aragorn, pulling Sam down into the shade of a holly-bush; for a whole regiment of birds had broken away suddenly from the main host, and came, flying low, straight towards the ridge. Sam thought they were a kind of crow of large size. As they passed overhead, in so dense a throng that their shadow followed them darkly over the ground below, one harsh croak was heard.

Not until they had dwindled into the distance, north and west, and the sky was again clear would Aragorn rise. Then he sprang up and went and wakened Gandalf.

‘Regiments of black crows are flying over all the land between the Mountains and the Greyflood,’ he said, ‘and they have passed over Hollin. They are not natives here; they are *crebain* out of Fangorn and Dunland. I do not know what they are about: possibly there is some trouble away south from which they are fleeing; but I think they are spying out the land. I have also glimpsed many hawks flying high up in the sky. I think we ought to move again this evening. Hollin is no longer wholesome for us: it is being watched.’

‘And in that case so is the Redhorn Gate,’ said Gandalf; ‘and how we can get over that without being seen, I cannot imagine. But we will think of that when we must. As for moving as soon as it is dark, I am afraid that you are right.’

‘Luckily our fire made little smoke, and had burned low before the *crebain* came,’ said Aragorn. ‘It must be put out and not lit again.’

‘Well if that isn’t a plague and a nuisance!’ said Pippin. The news: no fire, and a move again by night, had been broken to him, as soon as he woke in the late afternoon. ‘All because of a pack of crows! I had looked forward to a real good meal tonight: something hot.’

‘Well, you can go on looking forward,’ said Gandalf. ‘There may be many unexpected feasts ahead for you. For myself I should like a pipe to smoke in comfort, and warmer feet. However, we are certain of one thing at any rate: it will get warmer as we get south.

4. Book I, Chapter 2

Frodo took it from his breeches-pocket, where it was clasped to a chain that hung from his belt. He unfastened it and handed it slowly to the wizard. It felt suddenly very heavy, as if either it or Frodo himself was in some way reluctant for Gandalf to touch it.

Gandalf held it up. It looked to be made of pure and solid gold. ‘Can you see any markings on it?’ he asked.

‘No,’ said Frodo. ‘There are none. It is quite plain, and it never shows a scratch or sign of wear.’

‘Well then, look!’ To Frodo’s astonishment and distress the wizard threw it suddenly into the middle of a glowing corner of the fire. Frodo gave a cry and groped for the tongs; but Gandalf held him back.

‘Wait!’ he said in a commanding voice, giving Frodo a quick look from under his bristling brows.

No apparent change came over the ring. After a while Gandalf got up, closed the shutters outside the window, and drew the curtains. The room became dark and silent, though the clack of Sam’s shears, now nearer to the windows, could still be heard faintly from the garden. For a moment the wizard stood looking at the fire; then he stooped and removed the ring to the hearth with the tongs, and at once picked it up. Frodo gasped.

‘It is quite cool,’ said Gandalf. ‘Take it!’ Frodo received it on his shrinking palm: it seemed to have become thicker and heavier than ever.

‘Hold it up!’ said Gandalf. ‘And look closely!’

As Frodo did so, he now saw fine lines, finer than the finest pen strokes, running along the ring, outside and inside: lines of fire that seemed to form the letters of a flowing script. They shone piercingly bright, and yet remote, as if out of a great depth.

‘I cannot read the fiery letters,’ said Frodo in a quavering voice.

‘No,’ said Gandalf, ‘but I can. The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode, but the language is that of Mordor, which I will not utter here. But this in the Common Tongue is what is said, close enough:

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.

It is only two lines of a verse long known in Elven-lore:

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

He paused, and then said slowly in a deep voice: ‘This is the Master-ring, the One Ring to rule them all. This is the One Ring that he lost many ages ago, to the great weakening of his power. He greatly desires it – but he must *not* get it.’

Frodo sat silent and motionless. Fear seemed to stretch out a vast hand, like a dark cloud rising in the East and looming up to engulf him. ‘This ring!’ he stammered. ‘How, how on earth did it come to me?’

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