

# Lost in Translation

## Ralph Bakshi's Adaptation of Dialogue in *The Lord of the Rings* (1978)



Zoë W. Tabak, 6521835

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Utrecht University

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Franssen

Second Reader: Dr. Roselinde Supheert

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## Summary

*The Lord of the Rings* and its many adaptations have taken the world by storm since 1954. However, among these many works based on Tolkien's Middle Earth, Ralph Bakshi's animated adaptation from 1978 has been critically neglected. Similarly, the study of film dialogue has received little to no attention from scholars since the birth of the medium in the late 19th century. This study aims to aid in filling in both gaps by examining and exploring the ways in which Bakshi has adapted the great amounts of dialogue from Tolkien's original work for his film. It does so by first establishing a theoretical background concerning the studies of adaptation, film, and film dialogue, and then using this background in the subsequent chapters. These subsequent chapters involve the examination of the film in a general sense, as well as the close reading of several scenes that play great roles in the development of characters and the furthering of the overall plot. These analyses show that, while valiant efforts have been made by Bakshi to adapt the novel's dialogue for film, he often ends up working against himself through his efforts to preserve the dialogue itself while neglecting its context. As a result, the film has become unnecessarily convoluted and has great shortcomings, both as an adaptation and as a film in its own right.

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## Introduction

“One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all, and in the darkness bind them”. So begins a trilogy that has held the world in its grip since 1954. It has spawned radio shows, stage plays, countless fan works, and, as will be discussed here, multiple films. Each of these adaptations is received differently by audiences, some finding success, while others end up as critical and commercial failures. The influential scholar Linda Hutcheon, in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, argues that this failure often lies not with the adapting author’s inability to perfectly copy the source text, but rather with their inability to creatively make the original work their own and creating an autonomous work in the process (pp. 20-21). This is hard work, as in order to produce an adaptation that is simultaneously reminiscent of the original as well as the adapting author’s own, the identification of critical elements that make the original work so recognisable is necessary. This process is highly subjective, and audiences may perceive different elements as critical than the adapting author, which often leads to negative criticism of adaptations (Hutcheon, p. 22).

This rings even more true for adaptations of works as beloved as J.R.R Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Such a work contains many aspects that allow for differences of opinion between the adapting author and audiences, thus providing many possible points of contention. One such aspect is Tolkien’s, and the adapting author’s, use of dialogue. The written trilogy is rife with spoken interactions, of which an adapting author whose chosen medium faces time constraints can only preserve precious few, and their selection might differ from the preferred selection of an audience member or critic. Furthermore, in the visually oriented medium of film, excessive use of dialogue, particularly dialogue that is used for exposition, is frowned upon (Jaekle, p. XIV). This problem generally does not occur in novels, where such world-building forms of speech are seen as more natural and approved-of, as will be discussed further below (Thomas, p. 16).

Perhaps this poor reputation of film dialogue is the reason the study on this subject has been tragically neglected. Although Jeff Jaeckle and Sarah Kozloff have developed a method of close listening, as well as a small corpus of various case studies, little else is to be found, creating an academic gap in the study of film. A similar gap can be found in the case of Tolkien studies. Extensive research has been conducted on the original *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* novels, the extended universe of the *Silmarillion*, and even on various adaptations, including Peter Jackson's recent film trilogies by the same names as the novels they represent. Among all this research, however, Ralph Bakshi's 1978 adaptation, an animated film simply titled *The Lord of the Rings*, which depicts the majority of the first two installments of the original trilogy, has slipped under the radar. As such, this study aims to fill the two aforementioned gaps by providing another case study concerning film dialogue, one which addresses a neglected aspect of Tolkien studies. Additionally, this will be one of the few case studies which concerns itself with the adaptation of dialogue, rather than dialogue written for a film without source material. In order to achieve this objective, this study will focus on the following question:

How did Ralph Bakshi adapt dialogue in his 1978 film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and how did these choices affect the filmographic quality of his work?

This question will be answered in three distinct steps. In the first chapter, a theoretical background will be established using influential works such as Pam Cook's *The Cinema Book*, Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, and many smaller essays concerning film and film dialogue. This theoretical background will be used in the subsequent chapters to evaluate the choices Bakshi made in adapting the spoken word in the novels, and compare these choices to those made by Jackson, where appropriate. The second chapter will focus on Bakshi's film as a whole, analyzing not only its general way in which Bakshi has retained, changed, and removed dialogue in his adaptation. The third and final chapter will look more closely at two

scenes, each chosen for the large role they play in characterizing their central figures through the use of dialogue, namely the introduction of Aragorn, and the debate between Gollum's two personalities. This analysis aims to both to evaluate the value of dialogue in the characterization of figures in a film, and to more closely identify and observe the choices Bakshi made when adapting such individual scenes.

These choices, in the end, will have contributed greatly to the final product of the film, and as such, may expose whether the negative criticism of the film and its neglect within an academic context is truly justified.

## Theoretical Background

Before being able to determine how Bakshi adapted dialogue in his adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, certain theories and terms that will play a major role in this study need to be defined and elaborated on, the first of which being film dialogue, and the study thereof. Of the many aspects which constitute a film, dialogue mainly serves to establish and further the narrative. As Richard Neupert states, the concept of narrative pertains not only to the story that is told, but also to the way in which this story is conveyed (p. 534). Neupert himself defines the narration of a film as an abstract force consisting of various visual and aural elements (p. 534), yet when techniques such as voice-over<sup>1</sup> or expositional dialogue are used, the narrator becomes more concrete, being pushed to a priority position in the audience's experience, as opposed to the more abstract elements of narration (Seeger, p. 25). Furthermore, dialogue can serve to establish the nature of the characters within the narrative, and help construct the fictional time and space (Kozloff, p. 33), which Neupert considers to be important aspects of the abstract narrator in film (p. 534).

Dialogue itself consists of two main aspects, each of which aids the narrative in its own way. The first aspect consists of the spoken word, of which the influence on the narrative largely depends on what is said, while the second consists of the surrounding information, such as speech tags in written works, stage directions in plays (Thomas, p. 20-

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<sup>1</sup> Voice-over differs from expositional dialogue in the fact that voice-over usually comes in the form of a monologue by a singular off-camera narrator, whereas the term expositional dialogue indicates a conversation between two characters within view of the audience, in which the framework of the film's world is explained. In this study, voice-over will be considered as a form of dialogue, one which breaks the fourth wall and uses the audience as the listener in the conversation.

21), and a combination of visual imagery and intonation in film (Kozloff, p. 33-34). The spoken dialogue can, in film, serve a secondary purpose alongside the characterization of the speaker and the conveyance of the story, namely that of anchoring the narrative. Kozloff defines this process as the usage of dialogue in order to emphasize or more narrowly define the information which the visual aspect of the film already offers (pp. 34-37). For example, through dialogue a location can be specified, or audiences can be offered more information on a character who was visually already introduced to them. Speech tags and stage directions, on the other hand, serve to specify the spoken word through the use of elements such as intonation or body language, which can be either described in written works, or acted out on stage or in film (Thomas, p. 21). With all of the above in mind, the conclusion can be made that dialogue plays a large and influential role in the conveyance and emphasis of the narrative, and it is therefore surprising that the study of dialogue as an individual aspect of film is not more widespread (Kozloff p. XIV).

Perhaps the lack of dialogue studies among film scholars, as opposed to dialogue studies in literature, can be explained by the fact that film is more often seen as a visual medium, rather than an audio-visual one, Jaeckle speculates, leading to a misconception of how film conveys its narrative, and thus a disregard of the many narratological elements provided by dialogue (p. 2). In other words, “showing” is, in film, regarded as the more natural way of relaying the narrative, as opposed to “telling”, to the point where certain methods of “telling”, such as voice-over, can even be regarded by some as disruptive of the overall film (Seeger, p. 25), or as literary elements that do not belong in film at all (Elliott, p. 83) in spite of the fact that such elements can serve as effective ways to build tension or aid the audience in understanding the story that is being told (Hutcheon, p. 55). In written works, “showing” is similarly regarded as superior over “telling”, yet “showing” is defined differently. Here, dialogue is more often regarded as “showing”, as opposed to the “telling”



function it inhabits in film. This is due to the fact that in written works, dialogue between characters is the most direct way for the reader to experience the world, and experience it alongside the characters, as opposed to the disruptive intervention of an omniscient narrator (Thomas, p.16). This difference in attitudes towards dialogue can make it a difficult and complex aspect of adapting a written work, such as a novel, to a visual or audio-visual work, such as a film.

The theory of such an adaptation, being the second, and final, theory that will heavily recur in this study, warrants elaboration in this informative section as well. Adaptation, Hutcheon argues, stems from an integral human desire to perform mimesis (p. 20). Often, critics argue that such an imitation must be perfectly true to the adaptation's source text (Hutcheon, p. XV), but even as early as the days of Aristotle, it was generally understood that mimesis does not entail the perfect copying of the source material, but rather the process of making the source material one's own (pp. 20-21). Furthermore, the argument is often made that one medium surpasses the other (Hutcheon, pp. 2-4), leading to statements such as "the book is better than the movie", while, in truth, each medium is simply different, with a different set of values and capabilities (Hutcheon, pp. 11-15). Adaptation can therefore be likened to translation, both across authors, and, in many cases, across media (Hutcheon, p. 16). When speaking specifically of adaptation from novel to a performative medium such as film, the manner in which the novel's narrative is conveyed must not only be dramatized (p. 40), but also streamlined, as film, according to a multitude of screenwriting studies and manuals, favours a linear plot over a non-linear one, and has to content with a very limited timespan to convey its narrative (Kuhn p. 45; Hutcheon p. 43).

The remainder of this study will explore the many ways in which an adaptation's use of dialogue, more specifically Bakshi's use of dialogue, reflects these differences across media, and what necessary changes have, and have not, been made.

### General Analysis

Upon viewing Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings*, it is not difficult to spot the changes that have been made in order to adhere more closely to the streamlined narrative and visualization called for by the medium of film. His film begins with a prologue, a voiced-over narration of Middle-Earth's history, which, in the source material, is revealed over time in segments, first through dialogue between Gandalf and Frodo (pp. 61-77), and then through different speeches at the council of Elrond (pp. 312-333). The condensation of these revelations into one expositional scene which explains the status quo to the audience streamlines the narrative, adhering to the classic Hollywood model (Kuhn, p. 45). Moreover, Bakshi has added a visual background and one of the scenes in the prologue, in which Sméagol takes the ring from Deagol, is acted out, turning the scenes which, in the novel, are strictly dialogue without scenery, into a visual event.

Beyond the use of a prologue the rearrangement and visualization of certain scenes, which are, in the novels, only explained through retrospective speeches, also aids in the adherence to the classic model, and fulfills the medium's need to show, rather than tell. As such, the audience witnesses Gandalf's going to Isengard and knows that he has become trapped at the same moment the incident happens (0:12:58-0:15:40), rather than hearing an account of the incident during the council of Elrond (pp. 335-341). This same tactic has been used on two scenes at Bree, one in which Merry is ambushed by the Black Riders (0:22:10 ; pp. 226-228), and another in which Bree is attacked outright (0:28:11-0:30:17 ; p. 232). These changes come at the expense of the suspense the novel builds through the creation and slow unravelling of mysteries, but in exchange these alterations create dramatic irony, a narrative device in which tension is built through allowing the audience to know more than the characters within the plot, which re-imbues the film with suspense in its own right.

These changes, however, do have some inadvertent effects, not all of which are entirely for the better. To begin with, both the prologue and some of the expositional lines are uttered by an omniscient narrator, whose voice actor remains uncredited. While it is not uncommon for films and shows to implement voice-over techniques, they are usually filled in with voices belonging to characters within the narrative, creating a homodiegetic narrator, who reflects upon the story from within their own perspective (Kozloff, p. 42). Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings*, however, inexplicably exchanges Gandalf and Elrond's narration of the history of Middle-Earth for a heterodiegetic, detached narrator, which approaches the mode of telling, as opposed to the showing that is accomplished through the reflection of the aforementioned homodiegetic narrator (Alber & Fludernik, p. 316). This mode of telling could easily have been avoided by having any character that is anchored within the story narrate the voice-over, as demonstrated by Jackson's adaptation, which casts Galadriel in this role (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 0:00:00-0:07:32).

Additionally, the replacement of scenes by expositional dialogue creates continuity errors in a few places, such as when Gandalf scolds Frodo in Rivendell that "[He is] lucky to be here too, after all the absurd things [he has] done since [he] left home" (0:44:09), while most of those ridiculous things have been cut, or when Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas suddenly possess horses after having chased orcs on foot for days, despite the fact that Eomer's entire appearance, which included his giving the trio their horses, has been replaced by expositional lines offered by Gandalf (1:43:55). None of these errors, however, are as grievous as when the hobbits make their way to the village of Bree. In the novel, Frodo sets out first for Crickhollow, where his cousins Merry and Pippin reveal that they have known about the One Ring for a very long time, and declare that they will be coming along with Frodo and Sam (p. 135-137). Frodo resists, not wishing to lead anyone unnecessarily into peril (p. 136), but the

two cousins, with the aid of Sam, manage to convince him, and the next morning they begin their perilous journey, making their way first to Bree (p. 143).

Bakshi foregoes this scene at Crickhollow, despite Gandalf previously having suggested Frodo employ the guise of moving there to live with his cousins (0:12:23). Instead, the filmmaker sends the hobbits on their way to Bree immediately, and along the way, Frodo states: “Merry and Pippin insisted on coming with us as far as Bree” (0:15:40). By sending the hobbits to Bree, Bakshi has essentially already started Frodo’s journey, on which he would not have allowed his cousins to come along without reason, let alone the fact that any hobbit leaving the Shire would warrant thorough questioning from his peers, and yet Merry and Pippin are here, seemingly without reason. But while this adventure is already on its way, the exact lines in which Frodo’s cousins reveal their knowledge are also retained, yet uttered at a later time (0:18:51-0:20:02; pp. 137-138), causing this decision to be confusing for audiences and frustrating for prior readers of the novel, as this scene not only disturbs the logical continuity of the narrative, but also the classic characterization of Frodo, his cousins, and the general inquisitiveness of hobbits. When Merry exclaims “We’re going with you, Frodo!” (0:18:45), they are, in fact, already on this journey with him, which, according to the rules of Middle Earth as set out by Tolkien himself, is entirely illogical.

The Jackson version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* solves this problem by making Merry and Pippin unaware of the One Ring, allowing for them to discover the danger Frodo is in while on their way out of the Shire, and as a result the cousins are forced to make their decision to come along in the heat of the moment (0:56:02), leaving little room for Frodo’s protests, or natural hobbit inquisitiveness. Thus, Jackson has altered the dialogue from the source material greatly, but as a result has managed to create a more effective linear narrative that is easier for audiences to follow. Such an error in continuity disturbs the linear cause-and-effect narrative which the medium of film calls for (Hutcheon, p. 43), and is caused

precisely because of Bakshi's striving for such a classic narrative, while also aiming to preserve as much of the original dialogue as possible.

This is not the only type of instance in which the words of dialogue have been preserved by Bakshi while their context has been altered. Contrary to the novel, Aragorn reveals his identity and friendship with Gandalf almost immediately upon meeting the hobbits (0:24:30 ; p. 223), Gandalf now utters Black Speech in the Shire instead of Rivendell (0:08:56-0:09:32 ; p. 331), and Treebeard's speech has become, as opposed to his own ideology, hasty, his lines being uttered in swift succession without the many humming noises as is so characteristic of his dialogue in the novels (1:40:33-1:41:53; pp. 603). These latter two instances represent a larger issue present in Bakshi's adaptation, namely the loss of language characterization. In Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the Black Speech of Mordor is described as a language that is too evil to utter in the idyllic innocence of the Shire (p. 66), and is so dark that when the wizard does finally utter it in Rivendell, "The change in [his] voice was astounding. Suddenly it became menacing, powerful, harsh as stone. A shadow seemed to pass over the high sun, and the porch for a moment grew dark" (p. 331). Clearly, this language holds an evil power in its own right, as does the voice of Saruman further into the narrative, of which the sound and sweetened words are enough to enchant the men of Rohan into compliance (p. 755-759). Entish and orcish, too, are given their own qualities, the former being slow and steady, taking into account the long history of the world (p. 606), while the speech of the orcs is hideous, their native language even tainting the common tongue with its ugliness (p. 579).

Of these aforementioned languages and manners of speech, only orcish has maintained its unique qualities in Bakshi's version, through the use of nonsense words and broken English. The others have lost their context altogether. Treebeard's "hums" and "hooms" have been lost, Saruman's voice is far from enchanting, and Gandalf's utterance of

the Black Speech is made menacing only through his exaggerated body language. Compare this latter instance with the same speech in Jackson's extended edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, in which colour fades from the screen, the ground trembles, Gandalf's voice reverberates with deep tones, and the reactions of those around him drive home the fact that this language of Mordor is altogether evil (1:38:50-1:39:15). Furthermore, Christopher Lee's booming and echoing voice in his role as Saruman, alongside Treebeard's retention of his slow and decorated speech patterns, showcase just a few of the many possibilities in which the unique qualities of individual languages can be maintained in an audio-visual medium.

While Tolkien often describes the languages themselves, and their effects on others, the way in which speech is uttered is rarely defined through such things as speech tags, as defined above. This leaves much of the audio-visual side of the dialogue, namely body language and intonation, up for interpretation. This being an animated film, it is likely that Bakshi adhered to the common aim of animators to make movements as realistic as possible (Beck et al., p. 1). In this case, rotoscope techniques were used to attain this goal, in which the movement of live actors is traced by animators, which allows the capture of every detail. This feat is not commonly achieved through other techniques such as drawing from reference, in which a live subject merely inspires the animator, or the use of a motion capture model, which can only capture a limited amount of data from a live actor's movement (Beck et al., p. 3). Through Bakshi's interpretation, however, movement has often become overly exaggerated. The line "Frodo welcomed his old friend with surprise and great delight" (p. 60) has been turned into the young hobbit grabbing his own head and jumping in circles (0:07:11), and Gandalf angrily reprimanding Pippin in the mines of Moria (p. 408) has become accentuated with wild movements of the wizard's arms (1:01:02).

Still, while many of these movements may seem odd, they do provide viewers with a clear window into the characters' emotions, and thus in this we see another one of Bakshi's

valiant attempts to visualize *The Lord of the Rings* while preserving many of the words from Tolkien's original dialogue. However, in his rearrangement and decontextualization of the source text, Bakshi has inadvertently worked against his own intent, and, as a result, much that once was, has been lost.

### Close Reading

As argued by Neupert above, the characters within a film plot play a great part in the conveyance of that plot's narrative, and as noted by Kozloff, these characters are often defined and specified through dialogue. Therefore, Bakshi's choices when adapting two scenes that each play a large role in characterizing two main players within the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* will be scrutinized more closely below, in order to identify the ways in which these choices have affected the characters within these scenes.

The first of these scenes is the exchange between the hobbits and Aragorn at The Prancing Pony, which serves to introduce the latter character to the audience. Being a central figure to the narrative, Aragorn's character needs to be conveyed correctly in order to set the tone for his part of the story. This is difficult, however, across media, as the time constraints of film, in particular Bakshi's film with a mere runtime of two and a half hours to cover the span of two novels, do not allow for lengthy introductions of characters such as are seen in Tolkien's original work. As such, cuts and rearrangements have clearly been made by Bakshi, yet, as is seen throughout the film, much of the original dialogue has been preserved in order to convey Aragorn's character as similarly to the novel as possible. Sam still warns Frodo that Aragorn may well be "a play-acting spy" (0:25:20; p. 224), to which Frodo still responds that he thinks "a servant of the enemy would feel fouler and seem fairer" (0:25:30; p. 224), at which the subject of their scrutiny laughs and jests in a friendly manner.

Yet in spite of the preservation of individual lines, the mere rearrangement of dialogue within this scene has altered Aragorn's introduction, albeit in a minor way. Rather than keeping his true identity hidden, as he does in the novel, the film version of Aragorn reveals his own name at the outset of the conversation (0:24:35). In the novel, when his true identity is revealed through a belated message from Gandalf, Aragorn explains that he did not think the hobbits would believe him if he told them outright, and that, after years of being



distrusted and wandering alone in the wilds, he had wished Frodo would have trusted him without his needing to reveal his true name (p. 223). Through this instance, Tolkien provides the audience with a human side to Aragorn. Not only is he a great leader and king, but he is also a lonely man who wishes for companionship. Due to the cuts in dialogue made by Bakshi, this latter side to Aragorn is lost in the film.

The moment when Aragorn draws his broken sword (0:27:25; p. 224) provides another example of a minute change with great, and possibly unforeseen, effects. This sword, as is argued by John Robinson, serves as a symbol for Aragorn's identity as the heir of Isildur and thus the rightful king of Gondor (p. 408). This symbolism is emphasized in the novel as Aragorn draws his sword at the very moment he finally utters his true name (p. 224), thus implicating the sword, and therefore his kingship, as an important part of his identity. "Not much use is it, Sam?" he then says, attempting to use the blade in order to broker peace between himself and the suspicious hobbit just as a king would broker peace between distrusting nations. Much like the ranger's lonely side, this nuance, too, is lost in Bakshi's film. Aragorn now uses the blade in order to emphasize the words: "... if I wanted the Ring for myself, I could have it. Now", spoken in reprimand of Sam, who had just uttered his suspicion of the ranger once more to Frodo (0:27:10). This aggressive use of the sword makes Aragorn's response to Sam seem harsh, and the latter character bounces back in fear. This intimidating tactic hangs heavily in the air as the scene ends, not merely in the minds of the hobbits, but in the mind of the film's audience as well, whereas readers of the novel will more likely remember Aragorn's calm and peaceful offer of aid. The change is merely the use of a sword to emphasize a different section of dialogue, yet the effects cause Aragorn's character to change greatly. And while he remains recognisable through the retention of many lines from the novel, much nuance has been lost.

Similarly, the scene that displays Gollum's inner conflict, albeit short, reveals integral aspects and nuances of the two personalities, Sméagol and Gollum, who together form the creature. It is, therefore, a pity that much of this scene has received the same treatment as the introduction of Aragorn in Bakshi's iteration of the narrative. The core of it remains, in which Sméagol, who is at this point in the narrative guiding the hobbits into Mordor, struggles to choose between his desire for the One Ring, and his sworn oath to Frodo, who has shown him kindness the likes of which he likely has not felt in five hundred years.

The promise to Frodo appears to hold Sméagol/Gollum tightly in both the novel and Bakshi's iteration, for the dialogue begins with him stating: "Sméagol promised" (1:53:50; p. 827). Immediately, the character of Gollum begins to twist this promise, arguing that the promise was merely not to let "Him", being Sauron, have it. The hobbits' quest is therefore a cause of concern according to Gollum, since it leads them nearer and nearer to the dark lord's lands (1:53:55; p. 827). Again, Sméagol brings up his promise in defence of the hobbits, but this is where Tolkien's original scene and Bakshi's iteration diverge. In Bakshi's version, Gollum immediately begins to juxtapose Frodo's kindness to the fact that he is a Baggins, who are all to be hated ever since it was a Baggins who stole the Ring. This effectively convinces Sméagol to enter into a plot to kill the two hobbits (1:54:00-1:54:30), after which Sméagol's lamentation of his promise goes unheard by Gollum (1:54:35).

As expected, the novel's version of this conversation goes on for much longer, but it is exactly this length of Sméagol's protest which makes a difference, showing the resilience of his character and his loyalty to Frodo through his constant rebuttals of Gollum (pp. 827-828). Furthermore, the novel shows Gollum as a much more manipulative character than the Gollum in Bakshi's film. He continues twisting Sméagol's promise, arguing that his oath of loyalty was only made to the master of the Ring, and that if Sméagol were to take it, he would be its master, and would thus only be bound to himself by this oath (p. 828). Gollum

then goes on to tempt Sméagol with promises of powers great enough to escape the gaze of Sauron, and even stand up to the Ringwraiths, to which Sméagol finally gives in (p. 828).

According to previous annotators of the novel, it is no coincidence that the name Gollum is so similar to the Old Norse “gull” or “goll”, meaning “gold” or even “ring” (Wendling, p. 4). Through this manipulation of Sméagol, Gollum is shown to be as treacherous and stealthy as the Ring itself, perhaps even to the point where he has become a personification of the Ring. The way in which he twists Sméagol’s words to his own will, and perhaps to the will of Sauron as well, resembles the way in which the ring manipulates the fates of its bearers, tempting them with promises of power, making them believe the ring is theirs, and then finally slipping off their fingers and betraying them, as it did to Isildur, Gollum, and even Bilbo and Frodo, to some extent.

But in order to be able to show Gollum in such a way, it is important not only to retain the full dialogue as written by Tolkien, but to adhere to his visual instructions for the scene as well. As Ralph Wood argues, the duality of the creature that makes up Sméagol and Gollum is integral to the showcasing of the latter character as a parasitic entity that feeds off of Sméagol’s good intentions (p. 56). In order to display this duality, Tolkien tells the reader that there are two “thoughts” at work during this dialogue, one using the normal voice of Sméagol, and the other using the same voice, but with squeaks and hisses (p. 827). Furthermore, when the hissing thought speaks, a strange green light glints in his eyes, and throughout the scene Tolkien uses speech tags such as “..., said the first voice”, and “the voice of Sméagol objected” to differentiate between the two entities (pp. 827-828). This duality is lost in Bakshi’s film, as only the spoken words from this dialogue are retained in the film, and as such, the only differences between the two entities are the contents of their words, and the fact that Sméagol uses singular pronouns to refer to himself, while Gollum uses the plural “we”, referring to the whole entity he and Sméagol make up. This is simply

not enough to fully showcase the differences between the two speakers, and allow for audiences to follow the exchange with as much ease as is made possible in the novel. This clearly demonstrates Thomas' argument that speech tags and stage directions are an integral part of dialogue (p.21), as without this extra audio-visual information, much characterization of the creature that is both Sméagol and Gollum has been lost.

The question remains whether this loss of characterization and nuance, as seen in both Gollum and Aragorn, is not simply inevitable when the translation is made from novel to film. In the case of Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings*, time constraint poses a serious challenge, and not all dialogue can therefore be preserved or adapted. In order to combat this problem, Bakshi has, as has been shown above, streamlined the narrative by cutting and rearranging large amounts of dialogue, while trying to preserve as much of the original work as possible by ensuring that the ensuing script contains many lines taken directly from the book. A longer runtime might have aided Bakshi, as it allowed Jackson to devote more time to the duality of Gollum, and divide it across several scenes. Still, Jackson's films also showcase several techniques which Bakshi might have used in his film to differentiate between Sméagol and Gollum more clearly, such as assigning a different camera angle to each personality (*The Two Towers*, 1:38:35-1:41:10), rapidly changing facial expressions (*The Two Towers*, 3:32:10-3:34:08), or allowing for Sméagol to converse with Gollum through his own reflection in a lake (*The Return of the King*, 0:23:11-0:25:38). As noted before, the novel also provides several audio-visual cues, such as the Gollum's green glowing eyes or his hissing voice, by which Sméagol and Gollum might have been represented as two different entities in the film (p. 827), yet Bakshi has employed none. Just like the change in Aragorn's introduction, this change, albeit small, has a great impact on Sméagol's characterization, and neither of these changes have any clear reason.

Both scenes thus show how dialogue is not only integral to the characterization of figures in a novel or film, but also how minor alterations in such dialogue can have great effects. While cuts and changes have to be made in the translation from print to screen, these instances show that it is important that, when attempting to be faithful to the dialogue within the original text, not only the spoken words, but also the surrounding audio-visual information needs to be implemented correctly and cohesively. Tolkien has provided clear instructions for the dramatization of his dialogue, yet the reason why Bakshi has not implemented these instructions remains a mystery.

## Conclusion

Bakshi's efforts in adapting Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to the medium of film and its requirements can clearly be seen in the way he has streamlined the narrative through exposition, the use of a chronological order of events as opposed to the novel's use of flashbacks, and the dramatization through animation. However, for all his valiant efforts, Bakshi often works against his own intent by attempting to preserve as much of the original dialogue as possible, while neglecting the context in which this dialogue is presented to readers in the novel. This decontextualization often leads to continuity errors, which make the narrative harder to follow, and mischaracterization, which may frustrate fans of the original work. Essentially, by neglecting its context, Bakshi has inadvertently changed the dialogue he ventured to preserve.

What this signifies is that perhaps, as Linda Hutcheon would argue, the critical and commercial failure of Bakshi's *The Lord of the Rings* is indeed due to Bakshi's inability to make the source material truly his own (p. 21).

Dialogue is, however, but one aspect of a film, and as such, Bakshi's iteration of *The Lord of the Rings* remains critically neglected within Tolkien studies. The same remains true for the study of dialogue in film. This study has shown the impact which dialogue can have on this audio-visual medium through its influential role in characterization, world building, and the furthering of the narrative overall, and has addressed some of the difficulties that present themselves when adapting dialogue from a novel into the medium of film, such as time constraints and the conflict between "showing" and "telling". However, this essay is but one case study, and film studies would greatly benefit from further research, and from further streamlining of the subject. A clearer definition of dialogue itself, and what does and does not belong to the subject, would make such further research more attainable and accessible, and while models of dialogue studies are currently based around the analysis of film dialogue,

future filmmakers would greatly benefit from clearer studies and guidelines based around the writing and adaptation of dialogue for film.

Perhaps with such models and guidelines, Bakshi's adaptation might have been even more successful than Jackson's.

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