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Danielle Firnigl

PhD Thesis

Tripping the light fantastic: exploring the imaginative geographies of *Lord of the Rings* 'film tourism' in New Zealand

---

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Submitted: 2nd July 2009

Abstract:

From screen image to imagined spaces, the *Lord of the Rings* film-tourism experience – that is, tourism to New Zealand apparently motivated by the popular film trilogy which was filmed there – has received much anecdotal attention, yet little scholarly examination. In particular, *how* tourists are affected by the "you've seen the movie, now visit the set!" adage, remains under-examined. Whilst sociologies of tourism tend to emphasize the visual, spectatorial and passive nature of mediated forms of tourism, actual experiences of visiting the former film sets tend to challenge such theorizations of the phenomenon. In fact, what we find in New Zealand is a touristic landscape marked only by its absences and virtualities- little remains to show of 'Middle-earth on earth', leaving us with the question of what it is that, as tourists, we actually consume, and on what basis the apparently visual causality of cinematic tourism can be sustained. This research thus employs recent scholarship in cultural geography attuned to the more-than-representational and affective realms, in order to build a conceptually novel approach to thinking through 'the film-tourist'. Rather than starting out from a position of critique, such an approach seeks to explore the 'operational logics' of tourist experience, how meaning is made through practices of popular culture consumption and tourism. Through a consideration of how tourists navigate these complex cinematic spaces, we find that visitors – both those who are fans or enthusiasts of *The Lord of the Rings*, and those who are simply 'doing a rings thing' as part of a broader touristic itinerary – engage in a range of animated practices, that demonstrate both an awareness of these multiply-mediated spaces, and an interest not only in 'walking in the footsteps' of Frodo and the fellowship, but also in the 'backstage' of the films' production, and the very creation of 'Middle earth- on earth' in New Zealand.

Acknowledgements:

"Some people feel
Imagination isn't real
But I tell them that they're wrong
Cause whenever I
Want to play and pretend,
I just sing the imagination song"
(The Mayor of Imagination-Land; South Park 2008)

"The imaginary is not 'shameful' in its essence. It only appears shameful to philosophy"
(Gibson, 1996: 2)

In the words of Avery Gordon, and also very much in the spirit of Frodo Baggin's epic quest; "this has been a massive project, very treacherous, very fragile" (1997: 6). I owe its completion very much to the unrelenting support of my husband Andreas, who was always there, taking care of me, and always believing in me. Thank you.

A deep gratitude also to all the Tolkienites who enthusiastically contributed to this project. Many thanks also to all the individuals and companies who shared their expert knowledge with me and allowed me access to their tours and attractions; to my supervisors and support staff in the geography department; and of course to all my family and friends who have put up with me, and helped me through this rather protracted process.

For Andreas, and our beautiful daughter Eva Simone.

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Chapter One: Setting the scene- mediating the nexus of film, tourism and landscape

Introduction: Welcome to 'Middle-earth on earth'

"You've seen the movie, now visit the set![1],[2]"

In late 1998, a very exciting announcement was made by Peter Jackson and New Line Studios. The long awaited film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, to many just a dream, to many more a cinematic impossibility[3]- was finally to be brought to screen. The announcement was met with much fervour and nervous anticipation by an already considerable global fan base, not to mention some of the enthusiast actors that would end up playing key parts in the trilogy[4]. Over the next few years, this enthusiasm only grew as the news spread, and the magnitude of

[1] Title of a US$15 million campaign run by the US department of commerce in partnership with the TIA (Travel Industry of America) between December 2004 and February 2005 to develop an already healthy domestic demand for film tourism through capitalising on awareness in key overseas markets such as Japan and the UK (Grihault, 2007).

[2] Footnotes are employed in this thesis, following Mol (2002), as a type of subtext that may or may not be read and is not essential to the main text. Their main purpose is to retain a sense of the connection or commentary between the final thesis and what came before it- fieldnotes, readings…the "narrative diffractions and interferences" that are at the heart of doing research (Law, 2000: 28). Following standard academic conventions, they are also used as an alternative to long explanatory notes, or to highlight additional information pertaining to the main text. They are often intended to provide background context on areas that the reader might not be familiar. They are also often supplementary, and intended to add something to the key argument, or to suggest further sources of interest to the reader, in particular trying to be sensitive to some of the different (multiple and fuzzy) disciplinary directions on the subject matter that might be interesting to pursue. Thus they are purposefully tangential in places. Overall, they are a creative attempt to display a sustained sense of self-reflexivity through reflection on the processes of research, in order to represent the (auto)-ethnographic author as more than a monolithic voice (Mol, 2002: ix)

[3] Peter Jackson called the trilogy 'unfilmable'- and Tolkien himself believed that his work was unsuitable for dramatization. The only screened adaptation- the animated Bakshi version (1979) - which was considered by most an 'honourable' failure, tends to support his view (Rosebury, 2003: 207-8).

[4] Christopher Lee (Saruman), for example, is a 'lifelong devotee' of the books, continuing to read the trilogy every year.

producing such a feat unravelled in the director and key film-makers' home country, New Zealand. The production process would become almost as renowned as Tolkien's epic narrative, for its list of 'cinematic firsts' and the extraordinary requirements and demands on a cast and crew numbering upwards of 30,000 during principal photography- when three film units worked simultaneously on the three installments, at over 150 locations on the North and South Islands.

Whilst websites catering to a rapidly growing fan base documented the ongoing trials and tribulations of the filming process, poring over every small detail of the adaptation with heated anticipation[5], in the hallways and corridors of Wellington, the Prime Minister Helen Clarke and specially appointed 'Minister of Middle-earth' Peter Hodgson[6] were also attending to an ambitious range of spin-offs and funding packages that would bring a "cornucopia of benefits" to New Zealand. These included the promotion of New Zealand-made films and film locations, the encouragement of investment in film industry infrastructure, the international profiling of New Zealand and the attraction of global creative talent and innovation (Jones and Smith, 2005: 929). Indeed *The Lord of the Rings* was to become somewhat of a "poster child for a new kind of New Zealand national identity, one which draws on traditional narratives of low-key but unique national ingenuity, while reworking it in terms of an emerging narrative of creative entrepreneurship" (ibid, 2005: 924). The most significant spin-off, however, was seen to be in the 'post production effects' of the film, with potential benefits to the growth of the tourism industry (Jones and Smith, 2005: 927). Already a major sector of the New Zealand economy, tourism is worth 10% of the national GDP, and is a significant socio-cultural aspect of the nation, with two million international tourists a year arriving in a country of just four million.

Drawing upon the perceived benefits of the 'place placement' of New Zealand *as* Middle-earth, a strategic collaboration between the film and tourism industries was initiated. It was a slick and well coordinated effort- Tourism New Zealand's website[7] headlined an engaging flash interactive guide to this cinematic landscape, which quickly and firmly rooted the association of New Zealand's natural scenery with the celebrated fictional landscapes of Middle-earth in the minds of international visitors. Press campaigns also focused on the touristic benefits of the cinematic production- as one enthusiastic New Zealand paper claimed, the *real* star of the show was not Peter Jackson or the bevy of famous and fresh new faces that would become household names through the trilogy, but the beautiful and untouched landscapes of New Zealand.

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[5] Notably www.TheOneRing.net (TORN). For much of the production period, the mood ranged from anxiety to excitement. Nevertheless, the site was attracting over one million unique users a month during the production period. See Pullen for a comprehensive overview of the history and role of TORN in relation to *The Lord of the Rings* online fan community (2006).

[6] Peter's 'official' role in the New Zealand government was Science Minister.

[7] The Lord of the Rings no longer headlines NZ tourism's website, but is still available to view at http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/features/lotr-2003/introduction.cfm. [Accessed 31st May 09].

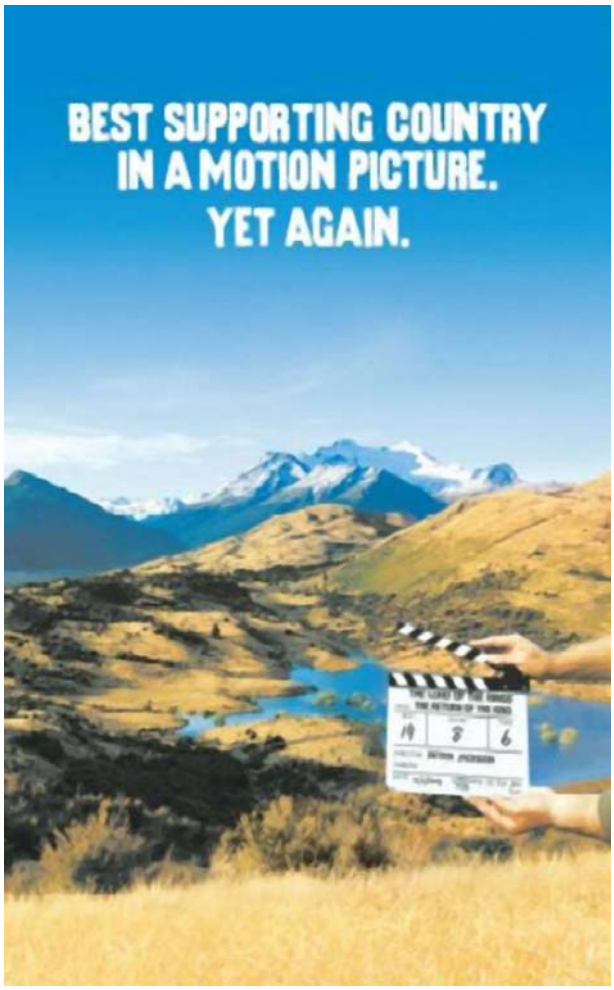

Image 1- 'Best supporting country' print media advertisements, NZ Tourism (2004)

Even the national carrier, Air New Zealand (or the 'airline to Middle-earth' as it was temporarily renamed[8]), adorned two of its Boeing 747's with eight-metre high, sixty kilogram decals of Frodo and Sam, Aragorn and Arwen[9]. International arrivals to Auckland airport were warmly welcomed to New Zealand, 'home of Middle-earth' by Rings-inspired signage, whilst Wellington went one step further in greeting passengers with a giant Gollum, crouching over the terminal buildings. All of these efforts to push the New Zealand association with *The Lord of the Rings* and the landscapes of Middle-earth were founded upon the basic principle that international visitors would be attracted to New Zealand having seen the film, and that given the estimated media coverage

[8] Sir Ian McKellen also supplied an audio-welcome and commentary onboard these long-haul services, and passengers received a souvenir postcard, as well as being able to view trailers, footage and nowadays of course, the three movies on the in-seat entertainment system. On domestic routes, Air New Zealand pilots pointed out main locations to passengers on key '*Lord of the Rings* routes'. Only 5 of the 470 domestic routes do not fly over or near to locations (Scoop, 2002: np).

[9] See Jutel for further discussion of Air New Zealand's commercials and their impact on/ construction of New Zealand/ Pākehā cultural identity (2004: 58).

of *the Lord of the Rings* trilogy was 200 million households worldwide, that this could represent a significant new tourism market (Scoop, 2002: np).

Image 2- Gollum welcomes visitors arriving at Wellington airport (TheOneRing.net, 2008)

Image 3- The 'airline to Middle-earth' also sponsored the Te Papa's successful *Lord of the Rings* movie exhibition. From a range of promotional leaflets (author's own collection)

The proposition appeared to work from the outset. New Zealand was already experiencing a steady influx of film-inspired tourism by the time *The Return of the King* reached cinemas in December 2003. Although figures specific to *Lord of the Rings* and tourism were sketchy, it was certain that during that period, whilst most of the world's key destinations had suffered dramatic decreases in arrivals due to the aftermath of the events of September 11th, New Zealand had witnessed a healthy increase- with a 31.5% increase in US arrivals from 2001 to 2002 (Scoop,

2003: np)[10], and a 50% growth in UK visitors from 2000 to 2005 (Grihault, 2007: np). Although the impact on New Zealand tourism was felt from the release date of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, many fans specifically timed their visit to New Zealand to coincide with the world premiere of *The Return of the King* at the Embassy Theatre, Wellington. Over 120,000 people lined the streets of the capital to see Peter Jackson and the 'Fellowship'[11] take their pass of honour along the streets of Wellington and up the red carpet, as one of the emblazoned Air New Zealand jumbos flew low over the assembled crowds[12].

Image 4- The Embassy Theatre, Wellington. Return of the King world premiere, December 2002 (Souvenir postcard bought from cinema- author's own)

Thus the relationship between New Zealand, *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, and the landscapes used to portray Middle-earth was firmly established. This relationship, not only strategically encouraged by the collaborating New Zealand film and tourism authorities, was also highlighted implicitly in the often-quoted comments of cast and crew, which would become sedimented in the inclusion of hours of documentary coverage, released with the DVD's, covering absolutely every aspect of the making of the trilogy. For example, we are told that the key actors

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[10] Spending by tourists in New Zealand also grew by 75% to more than £2.3bn in 2003- "figures suggest that tourism could outstrip the dairy industry to become the nation's biggest foreign money earner" (Fletcher, 2003: np)

[11] Elijah Wood (Frodo), Sean Astin (Sam), Dominic Maughan (Merry), Billy Boyd (Pippin), Orlando Bloom (Legolas), Viggo Mortensen (Aragorn), Sean Bean (Boromir), John Rhys-Davies (Gimli) and Ian McKellen (Gandalf).

[12] Full details of the event available on the Absolutely Positively Wellington website: http://www.wellington.govt.nz/services/events/lordoftherings/returnking.html. [Accessed 31st May 09]

of the fellowship would spend upwards of two years not only working but also living in and experiencing all that New Zealand had to offer. The four young hobbits, who apparently became as inseparable off set as on, made as big an impact on the locals as their out of work exploits made on the New Zealand adventure industry. What more of a fantastic advert for the adrenaline-filled side of New Zealand than footage of the four hobbits, plus one elf, enjoying a bungee jump at the 134-metre Nevis Highwire, Queenstown? That these young actors had the times of their lives in New Zealand is evident from not only the documentary DVD extras, but years later, the celebrated relationships they enjoy with the country, and with director Peter Jackson, which continue to be charted by Wellington's local media, who are always proud to announce the return of cast members to the capital or of these actors' alleged intentions to return to New Zealand as permanent residents.

However, if Wellington had become the spiritual home of *The Lord of the Rings* movies, a rural community two hours south of Auckland seemed to be vying for the title of 'Middle-earth on earth'. Matamata, a small farming town in the Waikato region, had made big news when a local sheep farmer's land was chosen for the location of the Hobbiton set. A significant site requiring significant resources (construction of the set began a whole year before filming), many local residents were involved in building, servicing and even acting in the Hobbiton scenes. Excitement struck the village- at one point, the local paper even suggested that the Mayor was seeking to officially rename Matamata to 'Hobbiton'[13].

Image 5- Welcome to Hobbiton- Matamata, New Zealand…..[14]

[13] Wellington was also renamed for the week preceding the premier of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. "This re-naming expressed a joy, pride and confidence that many Wellingtonians and New Zealanders felt for the local film industry" (Jones and Smith, 2005: 924)

[14] All images, unless otherwise stated, are fieldwork photographs taken by the author between October 2006 and April 2006.

Image 6- ...where enthusiasm for *The Lord of the Rings* runs deep

And although the official place re-naming of Matamata never happened, signs of the village's connections to Hobbiton are still evident. When torrential rain delayed the dismantling of the set until the following spring, the insightful Alexander family, spurred on by an influx of requests to view the set by both locals and visitors, sought the approval of New Line Cinema to retain what was left of the decaying hobbit holes. Mainly by chance as opposed to design, a physical locus for '*Lord of the Rings* tourism' was born in a landscape in which all the other film sets and other traces of filming had been hastily removed, due to New Line's contractual obligations[15].

For the most part, though, the former film locations did not give much access to the cinematic actualities of Middle-earth. Would the tourists recognise what they had come to see, now everything had been taken away? Would the 'natural landscapes' be adequately memorable, or would tourists leave confused and disappointed, unable to trace the often digitally-altered landscapes they had seen on screen in the 'real' landscapes? If, as Riley et al suggest, the film-induced tourist seeks sights/sites seen on the 'silver screen' (1998), then tracing these locations across the entire cinematic *country* of New Zealand could prove quite a quest. Indeed, the hopeful *Lord of the Rings*-inspired tourist has their work cut out for them: rarely signed or interpreted, often visually ambiguous, this is simply not a world where the 'tourist gaze' can smoothly navigate and capture the sights that they have previously seen on the screen (c.f. Urry, 1990, Rojek, 1997).

[15] These were both commercially and ecologically driven- carpet was laid on the Tongariro landscapes (Mt Doom and Mordor) to protect the native flora, but constant wrangles with the Tolkien estate and the problematic association of the English novel in Aotearoan soil were also behind the rapid dismantling of sets.

On the contrary, the landscapes can be disorientating and confusing, due to the way digital graphics were composited with traditional film to create the desired effect- as well as being remote and physically challenging sites in some cases. With this in mind, it is with some ardour that this mythical relationship between people and place is *created*, let alone sustained.

Nonetheless, help has been at hand for *the Lord of the Rings*-inspired tourist, as existing and new tour operators sprang into action to develop their own *Lord of the Rings* themed offerings, for both the expected influx of 'pilgrim' tourists, as well as those who were just plain curious to see where the films were made. Mainly offering half-day or full-day 'scenic' tours of local areas that hosted a number of film set locations, this has been an emergent tourism trade that relies on a sort of 'insider knowledge'. Business operators who had played a part in the production – for example as transport suppliers – had a distinct advantage, and many who worked as extras on the films found subsequent employment as tour guides. Indeed, their anecdotal insight and behind-the-scenes knowledge of the films' production can be something of a commodity- the tour guide who unravels the locations from his perspective of a 'dead Orc' is a memorable highlight for many, and has even become somewhat of a legend in itself[16]. Tours are not limited to coach excursions, and *Lord of the Rings* theming is undertaken by many tourism businesses- from Dart Stables, whose horses were used to film battle scenes, to thrilling aerial tours offered by the helicopter operators hired during filming to access and film the most remote and out of the way locations. Thus, as well as the insight of the tour guide, the mode of mobility can also be a highlight of a *Lord of the Rings*-inspired film tour.

[16] Most recently, conversation turned to the 'the dead Orc' legend when discussing New Zealand with another delegate at a conference in Durham, early 2008. The delegate had been on a Nomad tour whilst backpacking in New Zealand and whilst hazy on the exact memories of the tour company and what they had seen from the film, remembered enthusiastically that the guide narrated the places from his unique perspective- he played a 'dead Orc'.

Image 7- CAT leaflet advertising their adventure tours on an original Three Foot Six owned unimog (author's collection)

Asides this local knowledge of the *Lord of the Rings* sites, any further knowledge of the now-disappeared geography of 'Middle-earth on Earth' is contained within the DVD documentary extras, and the work of Ian Brodie[17], author of the hugely successful *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* (2003, 2004). Inspired to write the guide as a 'then and now' cinematic visual archive of the landscapes he lives in and loves, as opposed to a commercial tourism publication *per se*, his book has nonetheless been a New Zealand bestseller, well known to both tourists and New Zealanders[18]. The handbook makes a common companion to general travel guides like *Lonely*

[17] Apart from being Air New Zealand's 'ambassador to Middle-earth', Ian is the curator of the New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum, Wanaka. His passion for military aircraft is shared by Peter Jackson.

[18] The book has sold more copies in New Zealand than the bible. It continues to dip in and out of the Top 10 bestseller list in New Zealand, and has been reprinted twice and produced as a 'coffee table' extended

Planet or *Rough Guide*, and is employed extensively on many *Lord of the Rings* themed tours, who couple Brodie's own mixture of factual information and anecdote with their own. Thus the nature and quality of organised tour information varies wildly- the geography of Middle-earth is far from an exact science, its dissemination often resembling something more akin to a game of 'Chinese whispers'.

Thus it is through a variety of messages and means – not only the one of the official tourism bodies – that New Zealand, 'home to Middle-earth' has been born and is constantly (re)created. Arguably, it is not the first time that the country has been written about, celebrated or marketed on its mythical, primeval qualities, or on its filmic adaptability and hospitality- Jutel argues that *The Lord of the Rings* is merely the latest development in the marketing of New Zealand as a "transposable geography" to foreign filmmakers[19], where the landscape can be used to represent "a variety of locations and historical time periods from fantasy land, to tropical forest or oriental kingdom"[20] (Jutel, 2004: 60).

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version with more photographs (Brodie, personal communication March, 2006). DeLyser also notes how Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona novel generated popular location hunting practices, as well as the writing of books on the topic (2003: 886).

[19] He adds that despite the numerous and varied Hollywood/ Western productions that have made use of this 'flexible landscape', it is Bollywood that has "most readily responded to this call" (2004: 61).

[20] "Over the past fifteen years, film-makers have employed New Zealand as a mythic landscape. George Lucas's movie *Willow* (1988) was one of the first to do so, recasting the tussock hillscapes and mountains around Queenstown as a pre-industrial fantasy world. The treatment (if not the film) took off, as the combination of a relatively weak New Zealand dollar, coupled with sublime backdrops for outdoor sets, attracted many different production companies" (Phillipson 2003: 30). *Xena Warrior Princess* and *Hercules* are also New Zealand made series of no less 'mythical' themes than New Zealand; yet despite being used to promote New Zealand as a film destination, these fantastic examples have not been used to advertise New Zealand itself to tourist markets. See Ateljevic and Doorne (2002); Bell and Matthewman (2004) for more tourism-centered discussion of ideological representations of New Zealand.

Image 8- Tour guide holding up a copy of Brodie's guidebook for clients (Edoras)

Nonetheless, *The Lord of the Rings* and Middle-earth is certainly an association that has become a powerful international imaginary of the Antipodean islands and has thus far retained a strong appeal- not only on the aesthetic appeal of the landscape locations, but the narrative appeal of *the Lord of the Rings* as a quest, or journey of discovery, that metaphorically lends well to the tourist world. This is supported by the strong 'package' of factors which make it stand out as an *example par excellence* of the film-tourism phenomenon- the global success of the films themselves and the existing popularity of New Zealand as a tourist destination; the coordinated (as well as more organic) ways that Middle-earth and New Zealand have been linked together, and the evident desire of tourists, for whatever reason, to visit former film locations. This, coupled with an on-the-ground enthusiasm for local tourism operators to cater to this touristic desire and plentiful sources like the *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* and web resources[21], has ultimately resulted in a significant, if under-defined, *Lord of the Rings* themed tourism phenomenon in New Zealand.

[21] Official and commercial sources of information on Rings-themed New Zealand are greatly proliferated by the presence of an ever-growing library of travelogues and touristic 'memoirs' of completed voyages to 'Middle-earth on Earth'.

Image 9- A mountain tarn on Deer Park Heights (Rohan fleeing to Helms Deep) foregrounds surely the even more incongruous- a Disney film set left over from the 1986 filming of *The Rescue*

At this point, it might be all to easy to suggest that this is primarily an exemplar of the commodification of landscapes for visual consumption, a 'mythical' social construction of New Zealand as a primeval yet pastoral idyll, ripe for critique. But it is this *mythical* aspect that makes the case of *the Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand so interesting- we are dealing with 'myths' in more than one sense here. Tolkien's fictional world is extensive and complete- rich in history and cartographic detail. Written as an antidote to what linguist Tolkien saw as the 'neglected province' of English mythology, the three novels and their associated works, such as the dense *Silmarillion*, posses a mythical grandeur more coherent than many of the actual epic tales they were inspired by (Fimi, 2003)[22]. As a fantastic or mythical space, the fictional space of Middle-earth also has somewhat of an intriguing legacy- truly a 'cultural phenomenon' (Rosebury, 2002), Tolkien's works appear to have profoundly touched a huge global audience over the past fifty years, and the meanings and values given to the narrative have been diverse and continue to shift and grow (Shippey, 2003: 183). Moreover, this 'cultural imagination' has become etched into the physical landscape in innumerable ways[23]. It is important to remember that New Zealand is *not* the first

[22] Shippey also notes that Tolkien's 'leapfrogging' narrative style is also very mythical in style (2003: 183).

[23] *Lord of the Rings*-themed street names were not unpopular, for example, for many 1960's and 70's estates both here in the UK and in the USA; and Rayner Unwin (publisher) recounts how "you began to go to New York city and see 'Frodo lives' written on the walls of the subway…..you began to realise that *something* was happening" (New Line Productions, 2001- "J.R.R. Tolkien- creator of Middle-earth").

place to have been linked to the novels- and moreover, this film adaptation is not the first time that *The Lord of the Rings* has been linked to New Zealand. Now, the epic tale of how Peter Jackson and his team created Middle-earth on Aotearoan soil has come to be a renowned narrative of almost 'mythical' proportions itself, thanks to the DVD commentaries and the discursive circulation of these production narratives. And finally, these mythical senses are enacted by tours of the former film locations, and performed by film tourists in their anticipations, experiences and memories of a journey to 'Middle-earth on earth'. So, 'myth', in this sense, as Edensor notes, is a "flexible form (discursive and otherwise), enabling wide scope for interpretation and being ideologically 'chameleon'" (Edensor, 1997: 185). This chameleon form demands a profounder and more nuanced sense than that of myth as a either a 'pure' narrative object, or as a purely socially constructed (visual) reality pushed by tourism providers and consumed eagerly by naïve tourists (DeLyser, 2005: xii). Rather, we must see this myth as something *permeated by social practices* (de Certeau, 1984: 152). In other words, for the case of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand, we need to be concerned with what the 'mythical' is, and to question the ways we understand the relationship between the virtual and actual as we actively engage with these spaces.

There are two fascinating routes of exploration that this sense of the mythical suggests, which inform the rest of this research. Firstly, we have the issue of 'mythical', fictional, or fantastic space, which tends to be viewed as discrete, opposed to, and usually inferior to, the actual or real. The fictional and fantastic both tend to carry dubious connotations in spatial theory that at best has them as 'layerings or veils' of supplementary meaning, at worst- 'spurious' or 'fakes' intended only to mystify or amuse. The second issue for exploration is to do with the consumption of mythical or imaginary spaces. It follows that once the nature of the virtual is already accepted as some sort of veil over reality, or departure from the ontic, our interest in the experience of the virtual would be to determine whether, and in what sense, it signifies a search for the (hidden) 'actuality'. Thus the major legacy of tourism studies has been a quest for authenticity in which the tourist tragically seeks out the vanishing 'real' in a world of fakes and copies[24]. As Torchin argues, this "depressive position receives a counterargument, in the re-worked figure of the postmodern tourist who "revels in the reign of the unanchored sign. *Jouissance* supplants apocalyptic anxiety and depression. Here meaning is irrelevant and the simulation becomes the destination…fantasy and verisimilitude become the primary anchors" (Torchin, 2002: 250).

However, neither of these polarised positions seems to explain the 'serious lightness' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003: 37) of the *Lord of the Rings* film tourist engaging with the spaces of 'Middle-

[24] The views of structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss *Tristes Tropiques* are a typical example of how such critiques go : "Travel books and travellers (contemporary tourists) serve only to preserve the illusion of something that no longer exists; genuine travel has been replaced by movement through a monoculture in a fruitless search for a vanished reality" (in Goss 1999: 184).

earth on earth'. Pilgrimage *and* play are just two of the many metaphors that work for these encounters. In everyday experience we seem to imaginatively engage space more effortlessly than is done so theoretically- or as Crowther puts is, "between our most fundamental reciprocity with the world *qua* embodied subjects, and our attempts to express it explicitly in philosophical or other kinds of theoretical concepts, there is an abyss" (1993: 3). Thus we find that whilst "mention of the mythical is unavoidable in discussions of travel and tourism" (Rojek, 1997: 52), and the role of imagination is often highlighted as a key aspect of travel experience[25] (e.g. Löfgren, 1999: 270), it nonetheless receives very little attention in its own right. More often, if figures as a sort of extraneous category of tourist experience, simply caricatured as an 'imaginative departure'[26], or rather unreflexively alluded to as "a willing suspension of disbelief"[27]. Such experiences tend to be had by *other* tourists, who for better or for worse, don't fit the more rational categories of a typical experiential tourism typology. Thus escapism, imagination, and daydreaming are routinely sidelined as 'hedonistic' elements of the tourism experience, in favour of a "desperately earnest" tourism studies, one that "lacks a language that can speak to the enjoyment and pleasure of tourism" and consequently "engages in the social reproduction of seriousness" (Franklin and Crang, 2001: 15).

Thus, as Franklin and Crang go on to campaign, "we need to be able to say that tourism matters *because* it is enjoyable not in spite of it" (ibid, emphasis added). This work therefore follows a growing body of tourism scholars who argue for the need to supplement current work within tourism, leisure consumption and cultural geography more broadly with a more nuanced phenomenology of tourists in (imagined) spaces (cf. DeLyser, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005; Edensor, 1998, 2001). This is not to avoid the important implications of postcolonial and poststructuralist theoretical critiques[28], but to avoid reducing 'imagined geographies' to stories of manipulation and disenfranchisement. As DeLyser notes, "the significance of a landscape in social memory leads far beyond what is immediately or flatly 'false' or 'true'" (2005: xiv/xv).

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[25] "Perhaps the most important tourist experiments concern daydreaming and mind-travelling, skills of transcendence, which vacationers explore and practice. Here, you learn to move simultaneously though landscapes and mindscapes, in time travel and flight of the mind, as fantasy turns into social practice in constant interaction with the very concrete materiality of technologies and flows of media" (Löfgren, 1999: 270).

[26] For example, literature "does provide wellsprings of information, points of imaginative departure, and inspiration for tourists" (Andersen and Robinson, 2002: 4).

[27] Samuel Taylor Coleridge's formula which has come to be used generally in the 20th century to suggest the reader must provisionally suspend their judgement in exchange for the promise of entertainment. Andersen and Robinson for example use the term in relation to literary tourism practices (2002).

[28] For insightful postcolonial approaches to literary and imagined landscapes, see for example Dunn (2006); Della Dora (2006).

So, we can say that *The Lord of the Rings* is a myth most certainly inscribed on the landscape by more than one party, for many purposes and needs- not limited to the creation of a "fantasy" heritage of the sort often scorned by (post)modern scholarship[29]. And as such, this work attempts an exploration of how meaning is made in these 'more-than-rational' fictional landscapes, where the etymology of 'fiction'- to be created, is taken seriously (and yet on its own terms)[30]. This opens a more fruitful avenue of enquiry than a reiterated dismissal of the whole phenomena as *unreal,* resulting only in critical accusations against those to be held responsible for producing and consuming these spurious representations. Thus, as well as questioning why these place-myths are created, and for whom, (as well as to the detriment of whom), it's also fascinating to wonder just *how*? As Leed rather alluringly notes, "travel creates relations, socialities, and communities…born in the communion of motion….we have not models for those communities generated out of the 'rapture-of-the-freeway' or the seductions of motion, for we have no real understanding of the passage of experience of the way in which motion alters the psychic state, the perceptions, the world of the traveller" (Leed, 1991: 16).

Thus the key tenet of this research is to explore this imaginative genesis of mythical landscape- to explore what de Certeau would call its "operational logics" (de Certeau, 1984: 30). To this end, the study offers an (auto)ethnographic account of the 'fantasy film tourist' in the fictional/ mythical spaces of 'Middle-earth on earth'. Whilst an interest in imaginative geographies[31] drives the direction of this research, each empirical chapter tells an interconnected story. Each of them draws upon a central tension or discomfort between commonly accepted theory and practice in that field. *Scorned pleasures* turns to the problematic figures of the fan/ enthusiast and the tourist, to discuss their shared legacies in terms of being the object of critical scorn, in order to explore how our own senses of identity and allegiance shape our embodied practices of tourism and popular culture consumption. Chapter Four- *Space, movement, narrative*, uses three different styles of encounters with the former film locations in New Zealand as a basis to tentatively posit alternative understandings that better address the complex spatial reality of this fictional, imagined topography. Then, Chapter Five turns towards the visual culture of film tourism. Despite a move away from a (hegemonic) visuality in tourist studies, this chapter argues that more attention must be given to exactly *how* the visual cultures of film and tourism are indeed said to converge. Taking the simple cliché of 'seen the movie, now visit the set', the chapter explores how tourism encounters in cinematic space actually take place. The final

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[29] E.g. Wright (1985); Hewison (1989).

[30] "All geographies are imaginative geographies", argue Duncan and Gregory; "fabrications in the literal sense of 'something made'" (1999: 5).

[31] Imaginative geographies, according to the Dictionary of Human Geography, drawing upon the original term as proposed by Edward Saïd (1978), refer to "representations of other places- of peoples and landscapes, cultures and 'natures'- and the ways in which these images reflect the desire, fantasies and preconceptions of their authors and the grids of power between them and their subjects" (Johnston et al, 2000: 372).

chapter leads on from this to consider one of the defining features of film tourism to the former *Lord of the Rings* film sets in New Zealand- its absent, virtual nature. Highlighting the limitations of authenticity to explain such forms of tourism, we must again attend to tourist practices within these barely-there landscapes. In a landscape where the imagination works to animate and enchant spatial encounters, alternative understandings of materiality are needed.

In summary, this body of research addresses 3 interconnected aims:

- To expand on the notion of the so-called 'film tourist', with an emphasis on the actual observable practices of film tourists at former film set locations, and with a sensitivity towards how these visitors define and understand their own behaviour.

- To provide a conceptualisation of these spaces of film tourism, that is attendant to both the idiosyncratic characteristics of former film sets/tourist locations, and to the roles of tourist producers *and* consumers in constructing certain 'place-myths'.

- To positively contribute to the existing tourist studies literature, through the adoption of the 'mythical' as a central, productive metaphor, and also through an attentiveness to new directions in tourism research which have been inflected by the cultural and spatial turns in the social sciences and equally by recent analyses of the body, of performance and of objects (e.g. Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 140).

Ultimately, this piece of research aims to provide empirical insight into a leisure phenomenon about which very little is understood- as Sather-Wagstaff comments, the actual experiences and perspectives of tourists at tourist sites have too often been conspicuously absent from tourist studies (2008: 78). However, it also aims – through informed and critical theoretical engagement – to add to the nascent conceptual vocabulary of tourist scholars wishing "to stimulate alternative approaches to the study of tourism which provide an alternative to the existing, positivist, managerially oriented material which predominates in the current literature on tourism" (Franklin and Crang, 2001: 19-20).We will come back to consider such alternative approaches in tourism studies and how they might help conceptually refine the idea of cinematically-motivated tourism later on in this chapter. Firstly however, let us review in more detail what is known about such mediated forms of tourism, through a review of existing literature and an analysis of several well-known examples of 'movie-induced tourism'.

Traversing the world of mediated tourism

Exactly what, then, is 'film tourism'? In the simplest sense, it's exactly what the cliché suggests: the desire to visit the landscapes and places seen on screen- or as Tooke and Baker put it, "being exposed repeatedly to [media representations of places] increases the desire to see and experience them" (1996: 88). From an economic viewpoint, we could say that film tourism is some sort of synergy or convergence between the film and tourism industries, by which economic tourism growth is seen as the potential outcome of the 'product placement' of destinations in popular media, due to a visual connection between what is seen on film, and the desire to travel to the actuality of the screen image. As well as these economic linkages, film tourism is of interest to cultural theorists and sociologists, and film and tourism are often seen to share parallel characteristics. As Jones and Smith note, there is a certain "porosity" in the borders between tourism and film- not only in terms of industry, but also the nature of their image economies (2005: 929), which are often seen as part of the same 'sign industry' (Tzanelli, 2005: 24). Jansson suggests that media and tourism are "two contexts of spatial appropriation…which follow a shared logic inherent to people's lifestyles" (2002: 429). Thus, whilst discussions of tourism have been largely omitted from cultural and film theory and vice versa (Mazierska and Walton, 2006: 8) they share historical (ibid: 7) and linguistic trajectories- film language after all speaks literally of travel space; or as Bruno puts it "travel culture is written on the techniques of filmic observation" (Bruno, 2002: 62, 172). However, it is images (over words) that have been seen as the more powerful factor in the decision-making process of tourists- traditionally disseminated through purposeful, 'induced' print advertising such as the brochure (e.g. Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). Whilst there is, as we will see, a hazy division between "what can be described as explicitly or overtly touristic media texts and non-explicitly tourist media texts" (Mazierska and Walton, 2006: 9) what distinguishes the film, in this discussion, from say, a TV holiday programme, is the *perception* that films are believed to offer a more 'organic' and therefore trustworthy route of information for tourists (Gunn, 1972; Gartner, 1993). Yet, despite the fact that films (and of course other visual and literary mediums) have always inspired forms of tourism (e.g. Leed, 1991), contemporary instances of film-tourism often feature a strategic partnership between film production companies and tourism authorities, who, encouraged by the promised economic returns of film-led place promotion, create destination marketing strategies based around these 'organic' image forms (cf. Tooke and Baker, 1996; Riley, Baker and van Doren, 1998; Kim and Richardson, 2003). This is furthermore cemented through audience exposure to film images over a sustained period of time, through the growth of home DVD ownership and televised viewing which can expose the film to a "mind-boggling one billion-plus consumers" worldwide, with each anniversary special edition or awards ceremony nomination creating a "small surge of interest through repetition" (Grihault, 2007: np). In addition to the feature film itself, the increasingly familiar inclusion of DVD 'extras' or special featurettes add a

further level of communication between the film and its audiences[32] suggesting that as well as location and story line, the 'backstage' of production, or the lure of celebrity, are also an endorsement or appealing aspect of cinematically motivated travel for some.

Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that not all instances of film-tourism are such strategically planned collaborations. As would be expected, if 'organic images' are such a powerful motivating force, even the most unexpected and unusual film landscapes can become 'iconic' tourist attractions. As Riley et al conclude, such icons[33] are "as diverse as the range of movies and the people who view them" (Riley et al, 1998: 930, 932). So whilst places with already iconic status can have 'new layers of meaning' added to them to become 'mega-projections' (Bunnell, 2004)- such as Angkor Wat (*Tomb Raider*, 2001), or Petra (*Indiana Jones*, 1989); this is not always the case, and the synergy between filmic place and tourist place can be far more obscure[34] - as Rowe notes, "some travel agents swear that it is Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (1979) that gave the initial boost to Tunisia's nascent tourism industry- Monastir is home to the square where Michael Palin's Pilate was urged to 'welease Woger' (2004: np).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the eclectic and far-reaching nature of 'film tourism', attempts to define (let alone conceptualise) it have been fuddled. There is no single definition of the phenomenon, which for ease of reference is mainly referred to in this work as 'film tourism'. 'Film-induced' or 'movie-induced' tourism are also terms that have gained currency since their conception by Beeton (2005) and Riley et al (1998) respectively. In industry and media narrations, the term 'set-jetting' seems to be in vogue (e.g. Grihault, 2007). Clearly, in shared attributes and terminologies, we can also conceptually link film tourism to other 'mediatised gazes', such as TV tourism, and the literary tour, of course with some caveats[35]. What is perhaps less clear is what definition, if any, tourists partaking in 'film-tourism' understand. On the one hand, film tourism is something that has been understood to have an obvious appeal to fans and

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[32] For *The Lord of the Rings*, this type of marketing activity involved collaborations between Air New Zealand ('airline to Middle-earth') and cinemas (advertising campaigns backed with holiday prize draws); Royal Mail (commemorative stamps and products linked with airline sold through website); UK newspapers (competitions and CD-Rom featurettes); and bookshops (competitions). Similar strategies were in place for all major markets- the USA & Canada, Europe and Asia (Scoop, 2002: np).

[33] Riley et al use the term icons very broadly to include both tangible and immaterial aspects of appeal to the tourist- as well as dramatic or beautiful landscapes, "storyline themes, exciting sequences, and human relationships may also cause the public to visit locations" (1998: 920).

[34] Further examples include the aesthetically unexpected yet cult appeal of urban icons like the Gateshead car park, used in '*Get Carter'* (1970) (Sydney-Smith 2006)

[35] Caution needs to be exercised in direct comparisons between say, literary tourism and TV tourism, which could perform quite differently (the literary, for example, although similar in practice, is conceptually different due to its textual, as opposed to visual, nature). Of course, many popular tourist places span several media- places associated with Jane Austen's literature and subsequent televised and film adaptations (e.g. Crang, 2003). For a good overview of literary tourism, see Herbert (2001). For TV tourism, see Couldry (2005).

enthusiasts of particular (often cult) films- thus introducing 'pilgrimage' connotations to the film tourism experience. On the other hand, instances that involve a film with a wide public appeal, and are associated with places that are already prime tourist attractions, suggest a rather different, potentially more serendipitous market for film tourism, involving a much broader audience who do not necessarily relate themselves to the specific 'set-jetting' phenomenon. Definitions aside, cinematic landscapes are of major import to contemporary tourism practices, if the figures are to be believed: according to research undertaken by UK tour operator giant Thomson in 2007, as many as 80% of Britons plan their holidays after seeing a location on film and 20% have made a film pilgrimage to the location of their favourite movie. A 2004 survey of holidaymakers in France likewise found that 80% of inbound visitors were influenced to visit the country by films such as *Amélie* (2001), *Taxi* (1998) and *Astérix* (2002) (Grihault, 2007: np).

FILM FANS ARE SET-JETTERS

RURAL: Lacock is in Potter film

THE set of the new Harry Potter movie will boost British tourism as people go set-jetting.

The Half-Blood Prince will be filmed next year in Cape Wrath and Loch Arkaig in Scotland, Lacock in Wiltshire and on London's Millennium Bridge.

Nearly half of visitors to the UK are likely to visit a place featured in a film or on TV, according to VisitBritain.

Chief executive Tom Wright said: "Set-jetting is a great way of marketing a destination. A film acts as free advertising for a destination, location or attraction, shown to millions of people around the world."

The Young Victoria will see Lincoln Cathedral double as Westminster Abbey and a remake of Brideshead Revisited will be filmed at Castle Howard as well as in London, Lincoln, Oxford and Yorkshire.

Actress Keira Knightley appears in The Duchess, filmed throughout Britain including Bristol's Old Vic Theatre and Bath, and Bond 22 will also have UK locations. For movie locations visit www.visitbritain.com

Linda McCartney sold more veggie meals than Paul sold records++

Image 10- Visit Britain PR in the News of the World (2007) seems to naturalise 'set-jetting' terminology within a mainstream audience (author's collection)

Yet, the film tourism industry receives relatively little scholarly attention, despite these rather grandiose economic claims. Theoretically, film tourism tends to be sidelined within various disciplinary literatures as a 'niche' or specialist concern. Within what literature does exist, evidence to support the popular concept of movie-induced tourism has mainly been "gathered from singular instances, hearsay, or anecdotal accounts" (Riley, Baker et al, 1998: 920; also Tooke and Baker, 1996). Industry driven accounts have tended to focus on the perceived economic advantage of film-tourism (cf. Tooke and Baker, 1996; Riley, Baker, and Van Doren, 1998); with some work on the economic and socio-cultural impacts of mediated tourism (Ritchie, 1984; Kim and Richardson, 2003). Then there is also the motivational question of *'why?'* that continues to perplex industry experts and scholars alike[36]- somewhat of a 'holy grail' for both

[36] Although Visit Britain data suggests as many as 1 in 3 UK inbound tourists visit due to a filmic or literary association; comments from FILM UK's David Steele, who also conducted research into film-tourism, suggest that the simple question 'why' remains a mystery.

officials keen to justify and predict the nebulous film-tourism phenomenon, and to researchers eager to deduce the function and meaning of such new forms of leisure consumption (e.g. Singh and Best, 2004; Macionis, 2004; Carl et al, 2005).

Other accounts of mediated tourism have started to question the oft-overlooked relationship between film images and tourism landscapes (Crouch et al, 2005)[37]. Crouch questions both the "rather romantic 'pull' of film" that is a limitation in familiar thinking, as well as demanding that closer attention is paid to the consumer-tourist, who "acts, ignores, rejects or negotiates the mediated" (2007: np). Indeed, as scholarly work on the phenomenon grows, this somewhat awkward relationship between media and tourism is only complicated. As MacDonald argues, "there is not yet an established discourse for talking about genres of tourism"[38] (2006: 127), in contrast with film studies in which genres are thoroughly conventionalized. Crouch's introduction thus suggests a dramaturgical connection as one of the many that could be pursued to challenge a hegemonic sense of visuality in discussing the relationship between media and tourism (2005: 10)[39]. Ultimately, what we are seeing emerge is uncertainty and multiplicity as to how, and why, the film-tourism phenomena is 'visual', what film and tourism 'share', and how indeed they actually 'converge'[40].

This epistemological uncertainty, coupled with the myriad instances that can be called upon to demonstrate the phenomena, mean that this is a fertile ground for exploration in all areas. Before progressing with our own case study, *The Lord of the Rings*, it is interesting to contextualise it with several examples of film tourism, which highlight its protean nature, sundry appeal and arresting paradoxes. The following three films have been chosen for their interesting parallels to

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[37] Interestingly, only one paper in Crouch, Jackson and Thompson's edited collection actually addresses the 'convergence' of media and tourism in terms of shared visual cultures. Jackson argues, drawing upon film and tourism theorists Metz and Urry, that "both tourists and film spectators gaze…upon a material reality influenced by mediated, virtual, metaphoric reality…and at mediated, virtual, metaphoric reality, based upon contemporary understandings of material reality" (2005: 194)

[38] Although compare with Adler who argues that travel practices can be grouped according to style or convention (1989: 7).

[39] Crouch et al's bridging synthesis lies in the 'tourist imagination', which shares a "vitality which lies as much in the sense of global mobility engendered by the media in our daily consumption of films, books television…as it does in the actual activities of travelling, enjoying and exploring". The tourist imagination then is a heuristic concept which can engage with both the parallels and differences of tourism and media. For instance, the tourist imagination recognises the superior role of mobility in 'actual' tourism, the 'actual' as opposed to potential acting out of roles in tourism, the unboundedness of mediated tourism imagination and the multi-directional 'feeding' of imagination: "[travel] may be used to appropriate fictions in support of the physical mobility of travel but, equally, travel may be the inspiration of fictions" (2005: 2-3)

[40] Indeed, Adler reminds us that tourism was not originally a form of sightseeing (1989). Likewise, Bruno explains that travel was not always "a visual matter", but rather came to be visualized historically as it evolved from earlier literary and linguistic models" (2002: 191).

Lord of the Rings film tourism in New Zealand, as well as the ways in which they highlight the breadth and heterogeneity of the film tourism phenomenon.

Braveheart (1995)

"Where the highlands met the Lowlands, step into the echoes of Rob Roy, Robert the Bruce and William Wallace- Braveheart Country[41]" (Edensor, 2001: 68)

The film *Braveheart* (1995) is a striking example of the spatial paradoxes that 'film-tourism' often creates. A true Hollywood production directed and starred in by an Australian-American, about Scottish history[42]- yet filmed mainly on location in Ireland. Supporting the idea that it can be both landscapes and narrative themes that can attract audiences to want to visit landscapes 'associated' with a film (e.g. Riley et al, 1998), in the case of Braveheart, it was the Wallace monument, Stirling, and Bannockburn Heritage Centre, that attracted a dramatic increase in visitor numbers with the films release, as opposed to the actual filmed landscapes of Ireland. Edensor explains how the Loch Lomond, Trossachs and Stirling Tourist Board "designed an advert that was included in the international transmission of Braveheart, in which scenes from the film were edited with aerial views of the Wallace monument and local scenery, ending with the exhortation 'experience the very heart of Scotland: Stirling is Braveheart Country'" (1997: 189).

In 1997, VisitScotland found a fifth of American visitors to Scotland based their decisions on films seen. In 1996, however, the year after the release of *Braveheart*, the Wallace monument alone saw a 300% increase in visitors (Argyll et al, in Beeton, 2005: 59). That year also saw the addition of a second monument- one which bears an "uncanny resemblance" to the actor Mel Gibson and "is by far the most popular photographic site at the Wallace Monument" (Beeton, 2005: 59) It seems that *Braveheart* had had an enormous appeal- energizing the story of Wallace for both international and local audiences. This, in turn, attracted visitors to the site- not the filmic location of Ireland, but the historical location of Wallace's Bannockburn victory. Of course, these links had been heavily marketed in the cinematic release, and subsequently, "new guided tours visited key sites of the conflict, and theatrical presentations and exhibitions were promoted to consolidate interest in the story" (Edensor, 2001: 68).

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[41] A Loch Lomond, Trossachs and Stirling Tourist Board advertisement

[42] Historically the town of Stirling was an economic and politically strategic site, and many celebrated victories against the English occurred there. One such success was the Battle of Stirling Bridge won by William Wallace in 1297. After decades of heated public debate, the National Wallace Monument was completed in 1869- a 220-foot high stone tower perched on the top of the Abbey Craig. Despite its importance, the monument was not economically viable as a tourist attraction and in the early 1990's management was taken over by the local council. With the release of the film, however, the monument suddenly took on true iconic tourism status (Beeton, 2005: 58).

Morgan describes how the site, and Scotland more broadly with Wallace as 'national hero', became of intense diasporic relevance to an American audience. The film, which she argues builds a 'white pioneer' identity for Wallace, assured its popularity with Americans of a Scottish or Scotch-Irish genealogy, leading her to critique the film as a distorted piece of 'imperialist nostalgia'[43] (Morgan, 1999: 377, 388). However, as Kim and Richardson argue, in line with Edensor's own perception of the site in the period following the cinematic release of Braveheart, "it is not the objective reality of the place but instead the meaning it represents that transforms places depicted in motion pictures to symbolically meaningful tourist attractions" (2003: 234).

Recognising this potential heterogeneity, Edensor's account explores the diverse appeal the site holds for different audiences, and how this multiplicity has in fact *intensified* the symbolic possession and interpretation of the site (1997: 176). On the annual anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn (June 24th 1314), the site is alive with the activity of ritual remembrance[44]. All of the parties involved in the remembrance focus on the symbolic and material artefacts that designate the site, which we can understand as a "crystallization of repeated events of inclusion and exclusion, the performance of those methods that groups use to define members and nonmembers, defining themselves in the process" (Leed, 1991: 19)[45]. Thus, a Hollywood driven renaissance of the Wallace myth, "did not act to empty out all meaning" from the story. On the contrary, the film and the ensuing expansion of tourism "led to a more intense, contested and reflexive search for the contemporary political and cultural significance of Wallace" (Edensor, 2001: 68).

Edensor's research also undermines the visual hegemony often attributed to the film-tourism phenomena. Although he states that "visual communication by photography, audiovisual displays and film and television productions" are increasingly present as modes of transmission, they join a wide range of other practices, such as "the narration of mythical stories, the erecting of memorials, the bodily organisation of groups during ceremonies of remembrance, and political oration" (1997: 176). Thus, important issues of performance and identity of individuals and groups in a dynamic landscape are introduced to the consideration of film tourism.

In summary, *Braveheart* has become a celebrated example of film-tourism, for both its economic and socio-cultural impacts. Despite criticism that the film is a classic 'Hollywood myth' which

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[43] A term originally coined by Renato Rosaldo (1993)

[44] This includes the invented tradition of the Knights Templar annual ceremony, "with its white robes, swords, and officiating priest…a silent slow march towards the rotunda in double column; the breaking into left and right formations; the arrangement of a circle with each participant's position predetermined; the wreath-laying; the prayers; the baring and bowing of heads during the minute's silence" (Edensor, 1997: 184). And also, the more carnivalesque (although still sombre in remembrance) SNP rally.

[45] For further discussion of monuments, the politics of identity, continuity and change, see Harvey, (2003).

distorts actual history[46], and the fact that it was not filmed in Scotland at all, it has intensified many individuals and groups relationships to the Wallace narrative and landscapes. The roots of the Wallace legend, as explored in the film, are new 'routes' that local, national and international (diasporic) audiences have been able to explore. Braveheart also exemplifies the problems of reducing film tourism to a purely visual phenomenon, characterized by the passive consumption of visual signs (Urry, 1990; Rojek, 1997; MacCannell, 1999). As Edensor concludes, the "diverse appropriation by a multitude of groups seems to rebuke suggestions that the commodification of myths reduces them to vapid icons" of visual consumption. (Edensor, 1997: 190).

Field of Dreams (1989)

"If you film it, they will come" (Reeves, 2003: 1)

Although Braveheart was filmed on location in Ireland, and can be criticized for its romantic take on 14th century history, it is nonetheless based on actual events- and visitors who are attracted to Stirling because of Braveheart, visit the actual landscapes in which these events took place. The Iowa cornfield, picked as the location to shoot the *Field of Dreams* (1989), in which a down on his luck farmer (Costner) is compelled to build a baseball diamond in his backyard which ends up attracting ghostly players and resulting in a reconciliation with the spirit of his (deceased) estranged father, has no such association, save the novel it was based on. Moreover, although the film's location hunters were attracted to the site initially because of its traditional charm and typical Iowan looks, the landscape itself – very much off the beaten track – has no outstanding aesthetic appeal.

Nonetheless, the movie's famous line, "If you build it, they will come" turned out to be prophetic (Mandel, 2002). Just like at the end of the film, where Kinsella (Costner) looks up to see a line of cars, stretching to the horizon, full of people coming to see the ghostly baseball players for themselves[47], nowadays, even two decades after its cinematic release,

[46] For example "the name of Hollywood evokes one whole swathe of possible restrictions upon the tourist imagination although this does not necessarily mean passive acceptance" (Crouch, 2005: 7)

[47] Rather romantically, this scene was accomplished with the help of 1500 local Dyersville residents, who "responding to a newspaper advertisement, got into their cars and lined the road from the *Field of Dreams* out to the highway to portray the first visitors arriving at the field". This was aided by a local voluntary blackout, a Universal studios helicopter giving directions to the convoy over a local radio frequency, and the magical final touch of the cars turning off their highbeams to create the "twinkling lights that shimmer to the horizon as the film closes" (Mandel, 2002: 23)

"Visitors arrive in a steady stream throughout the day, as families packed into cars, as groups filling tour buses, and as campers riding in motor homes [48]*. Some stay for just a short look, posing as ghosts emerging from the corn or standing beside the picket fence in front of the house they recall from the film. Others take a place in the outfield to shag balls for hours, losing track of time in a place where the ticking of a clock doesn't seem to matter…the pensive stroll along the edge of the cornfield...the aged walk slowly around the bases…some pose for silly pictures, re-creating a scene from the film or a baseball fantasy. Some sit quietly on the bleachers watching the proceedings. Some hug each other or hold hands. Some, experiencing more intense emotions, kneel and pray- or cry quietly" (Mandel, 2002: 17)*

The enduring appeal of the film has turned the location's farming landowners into tourism professionals, yet basic visitor management facilities and a gift shop have do not appear to have detracted from the site's charm. Neither does the considerable influx of tourists seem to have signalled an 'emptying out' of the cultural life of the hosts - indeed, Lansing, one of the farmers who owns the location, met his future wife when she visited the set as a tourist (Mandel, 2002: 30-31). The site has of course been popular with the domestic US audience- due to both themes of baseball and filial bonding and kinship. It has also attracted visitors from all over the world, including a significant Japanese audience, where baseball is also a national sport.

The *Field of Dreams* site has become an enormously significant tourism landscape; even though the Iowan tourist board never expected or planned anything like this would happen. The first requests to come and see the site were received by Lansing just days after the film's cinematic release, when he decided that the site, which had already become something of a local icon, would not be ploughed up for as long as 'people came' (Mandel, 2002). And indeed, the *Field of Dreams* ably demonstrates that 'they will come', whether or not anyone expects them to, or promotes the destination as a film location. Over the past two decades, those that journey to Dubuque, Iowa, out of either curiosity or a sense of something more, have created a new social memory for the area. This identity is not one necessarily in conflict with local identities- one gets the sense that the film and the site are equally as meaningful, and even somehow magical, to the residents of the Dyersville region (Mandel, 2002). In many ways it seems to be a contemporary filmic example of the Ramona phenomenon, described by DeLyser- the 19th century novel which had a similarly extraordinary effect on Southern Californian landscapes and identities (2005). And DeLyser argues forcefully too, that it would be unfair to dismiss the whole phenomenon as 'economic boosterism', because "fictional and/or mythic landmarks are no less important in conjuring and creating social memories simply because they are fictional…. landscape is one of social memory's most powerful conveyors" (2005: xiv/xv).

[48] Actual visitor figures according to Mandel in 2002 were still around 50 to 70,000 per year.

Harry Potter (2001-)

So, whilst *Braveheart*, a historical film about a historical Scot was filmed by Hollywood in Ireland, but nonetheless encouraged and renewed a variety of tourism practices at the Stirling memorial; and the *Field of Dreams*, which made a previously insignificant Iowan cornfield into a site of pilgrimage having played the location of a fictional baseball diamond; the *Harry Potter* films – which have been credited with bringing British tourism back from the brink following the foot and mouth crisis (Mintel, 2003) – represent a further 'imaginative departure' in terms of cinematic landscapes and film tourism. There is no doubt that 'Pottermania' has swept audiences worldwide. As a *Nouvel Observateur* special issue on fantasy fiction ponders, *"pourquoi nous croyons aux contes de fées?* And, what is behind this current *"adhésion forte à la fiction…la plus abracadabrante"*[49]. Author J.K. Rowling has become a global household name for her children's books, which have also been adapted for film by Warner Brothers. Filmed on location all over Britain with an all-star cast, many of the locations used in the films have made reference, albeit obliquely, to some major UK visitor attractions. Yet, the association between places in the film and their actual locations is not always clear- with more than one location used to situate Hogwarts (Durham and Gloucester Cathedral, Alnwick Castle), and the filmmakers use of CGI effects complicating what does and does not exist in the actual landscape.

Nonetheless capitalising on the films' touristic potential, the *"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone: Discovering the Magic of Britain"* movie map, the first of its kind, was produced by the British Tourist Authority. It drew 44,000 online hits in the first month, and attracted as much as a 300% increase in walk-in enquiries at US offices of VisitBritain (Mintel, 2003: np) - setting a precedent for many more movie maps here in the UK and abroad[50]. The production of these movie maps certainly seemed to pay off- despite a tricky relationship with Warner Brothers in regards to the initial use of the Harry Potter logo and other legalities (Evans 2004), Harry Potter inspired tourism in the UK has brought huge visitor increases to a number of its key locations, and won tourism 'Oscar's' for the benchmarking role it has played in signalling the way for planned collaboration between national tourism and film organisations[51], through capitalising on a nostalgic yet potent imagery of Britain as simultaneously home to old-fashioned boarding school social mores and classic sword and sorcery mystery.

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[49] "Why do we believe in fairy tales? Asks the *Nouvel Observateur* special issue on the current "popularity of fiction…of the most incredible type" (2007: 4)

[50] Such as a Pride and Prejudice, Potter's Lake District and a James Bond itinerary.

[51] Uk Harry Potter-inspired tourism is said to have inspired and shaped New Zealand's *Lord of the Rings* tourism promotion policy.

Yet perhaps what Harry Potter is (or can be) associated with spreads out even further than these symbolic associations[52]- the movie map certainly seems to suggest so. Indeed, it draws fairly liberally on a number of themes (more or less supernatural) present in the films – such as ghosts, animals and trains – to suggest potentially interesting visitor attractions that can be thematically linked to the movies[53]. These 'auxiliary' locations supplement the far fewer 'actual' filming locations that can be visited. However, as *Harry Potter* is based (at least partially) in actual contemporary England, some of its fictive geographies are also 'actual'. There is a plaque to mark Platform 9¾ at Kings Cross, from where many organised Harry Potter tours set out on train. Of course, in this respect Harry Potter becomes yet another literary/ cinematic imagining of London, just one of a kaleidoscopic range of personalities, places and genres that make up the cinematic city of London: from *Sherlock Holmes* to *Austen Powers*, from *28 Days Later* to *The Da Vinci Code* (e.g. McArthur, 1997: 35)[54].

Yet, this multiplicity or layering of place happens in more unusual ways, and sometimes with a more acute and material impact on the local population. In the village of Goethland, North Yorkshire, where the train used to ferry the school children to Hogsmeade station is located, local residents have found themselves further strained with a new filmic association and attraction on top of the existing tourism industry built around the popular 1990's television series *Heartbeat*- which sees the village of 450 residents visited by over 1.2 million tourists a year (Mordue, 2001)[55].

But at any rate, with the consistency and repeated exposure of key Harry Potter locations over the course of the seven books and films, associations such as these are solidified, and from a tourism marketer's point of view, "the repetition factor at each release window drives and sustains interest" (Grihault, 2007: np). Thus, even if the association between Alnwick and Hogwart's School of Magic was a tenuous one in 2001, when it was first endorsed by Warner Brothers and

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[52] We can also consider here the potency of the mystical associations commonly used in tourism imagery for Scotland- where the promotion of tourism to Midlothian, and Rosslyn Chapel (*The Da Vinci Code*, 2006) fits neatly with a broader conjuring of 'Scott-land' as the legend-laden, haunted place it has often been, since the Romantic epic of Ossian, and the writings of Sir Walter Scott (Inglis and Holmes, 2003; Ousby, 1999)

[53] Attractions are organised under the headings 'forests and castles', 'trains', 'ghosts and magic', 'giants and dragons', 'owls and reptiles' and finally, 'film locations'.

[54] "It is never a question of a discursive view of geographical space giving way to a more 'realistic' view. There is only the possibility of other discourses arising to compete with existing ones. Put another way, realism is itself a discourse, a convention of representation which might perhaps be better described as 'the realist effect'. Thus there have been several 'London discourses'". Such discourses are not only cinematic, but from all sources of media such as travellers narratives and advertising; thus creating a crazy collage that may or may not conflict" (McArthur, 1997: 35).

[55] Likewise the Yorkshire Moors have also featured in numerous media of the day, including the poetry of Wordsworth, books by James Herriott, movies like Calendar Girls…(Beeton, 2005: 76).

appeared on the Harry Potter movie map, it certainly is less so in 2008. Indeed Alnwick Castle have been delighted at the association with Harry Potter- with visitor numbers having increased way above the average minimum 50% rise seen at Harry Potter locations, by a staggering 120% from 2001 (225,000) with a noted increase in Japanese visitors (Grihault, 2007: np).

The films have provided a focus from which the castle can appeal to a whole new generation- opening up a huge new audience for the castle's other attractions, such as its newly developed gardens[56]. Beyond this, some 16% of visitors said they were drawn to Northumberland by Harry Potter and the films are estimated to have brought in an extra £9 million in tourist revenue to the county. Alnwick was awarded £60,000 under the Market Towns Initiative (Grihault, 2007: np), and generally became a much more high profile community- for example being voted in one magazine poll the 'most desirable town to live in' in the UK. Market intelligence gathered on the topic of film tourism in 2007 by Mintel also suggests that the National Trust have estimated that up to 20% of their younger visitors are visiting Trust properties due to the Harry Potter connection- after all, as Grihault argues, a visit to a Harry Potter location "must be very high on the wish list of many overseas children" (Grihault, 2007: np).

Thus historical buildings open to the public, such as Alnwick Castle, can argue that the Harry Potter association points to the democratisation of the heritage industry, due to the fact that the films attract a new and traditionally difficult audience, and provide an 'entry point' for building upon their interest. However, this is also exactly the type of phenomena so vitriolically decried by critics of postmodern popular culture[57] – of which 'Pottermania' can be argued to herald – who see rather the popularity of Rowling's series as an infantilization of the reading masses, and the popularity of the films' locations in tourism in equally as apoplectic terms. Either way, what is fascinating about the Harry Potter example in particular, is the question that the *Nouvel Observateur* poses above – that is, why, and how, we are apparently fascinated in the early 21st century with genre fantasy in literature, film and television- or as DJ Taylor puts it, an obsession with that "bygone murk", popularly romanticised as a "compound of iron-shod feet pounding the stone steps, fog-wreathed battlements and cloaked figures scurrying under the torch-light" (2002: 1)[58].

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[56] Additionally, the Castle have put on special exhibitions that will appeal to the family audience such as 'Knights' in spring 2005; and 'Dragons', in summer 2006 (Grihault, 2007)

[57] For example, Hewison (1989) and Wright (1985) with regards to the heritage industry in particular, and Jameson (1997, 1998) more generally for a critique of postmodern culture.

[58] In this review of *Baudolino*, Umberto Eco's follow-up to the hugely successful *The Name of the Rose*, Taylor comments that the yearning for the medieval is rife within both academic and popular circles, having been attracted himself to undergraduate medieval studies by "Viking visions and the lure of a special subject- 'the early church in East Anglia'- all of whose known facts could be fitted onto a single piece of A4 paper…. the core of this medieval world comes crammed with items that the modern onlooker, whether he happens to be a semiotics professor or a buyer of Death Metal CDs finds deeply alluring" (2003).

Situating 'The Lord of the Rings' and film tourism in New Zealand

These three examples have therefore briefly outlined some of the key characteristics and issues of movie tourism in the case of films which share some major factors with *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand. Like *Braveheart*, *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed elsewhere to where it is actually (fictively) located. But like *Field of Dreams*, *The Lord of the Rings* is fictional- its choice of location in a sense is arbitrary. Yet, the former locations of the trilogy have proved to be similarly enigmatic and affectively charged for visitors. The film adaptations of the *Harry Potter* novels mirrors the particularly English identity (yet global appeal) of *The Lord of the Rings* narrative, and is similarly full of medieval, magical and fantastic symbolism. *The Lord of the Rings* also shares a difficult topology with *Harry Potter*- CGI effects feature heavily in both series, with the result that there are relatively few 'actual' locations that appear as they do in the films.

It is on this common point of fantastic themes and spaces that we return to our case study in question, *The Lord of the Rings,* and film-inspired tourism in New Zealand. Indeed, DJ Taylor's comments make an excellent departure point for this analysis. Whilst we can situate tourism to the former *Lord of the Rings* films sets within a broader discussion of mediated tourism, Taylor's literary observations with regards a public predilection for the medieval and mystical also suggest a particular cultural zeitgeist, or perhaps turn of the century nostalgia, for the historical or fantastic epic. As one UK tour operator commented,

"Ninety percent of people booking tours around Britain are doing so because, at some time in their lives, they have seen a film about a princess, a knight and a castle. The tourist board should market 'film-heritage' above heritage"
('Luxury Vacations'. Quoted in Mintel, 2003[59]*)*

It is, of course, highly debatable how much we can argue for the dominance of any literary or cinematic genre over others (e.g. Prince, 2004). Yet media commentary does seem to suggest that the vastly popular nostalgic period dramas of the 1980's and 1990's[60] have given way to less

[59] See also Edensor, who argues that "tourism marketing campaigns are increasingly organised around the 'heritage film' and mythic fantasies. Thus familiar landscapes, people, and romantic tales mesh with the selling of place and history" (Edensor, 1997: 189).

[60] See for example Peter Wollen's discussion of the popularity of 'nostalgic screen fictions' in the 1980's (1991). Such popular cinema came in for strong criticism from many quarters- Frederic Jameson notably argued that we are "unable to focus on our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience. But if that is so, then it is a terrible indictment of

realist material. Wood, for example, picks up on a "pre-millennial fairy revival" apparent in film and consumer merchandise in the 1990's (2006: 280). Perhaps at the very least we can say that *The Lord of the Rings* came to cinemas at a time during which audiences were witnessing an intensification in films employing newly emerging digital technologies, particularly in post-production, to create hitherto unimaginable historic, mythic or fantastic cinematic worlds- such as the acclaimed, peopled amphitheatre of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000)[61]. Middle-earth- a vast fictional world previously considered unsuitable for dramatic adaptation primarily by Tolkien himself[62], and never previously attempted as a live action movie, was to become a pioneer and benchmark in many of these advanced processes of filmmaking. Indeed, the special effects work of WETA digital are seen as having been especially crucial to the success of *The Lord of the Rings*, securing them an impressive workload since the trilogy, and making their name synonymous with cutting edge techniques in animation (Jones and Smith, 2005: 929).

Likewise, New Zealand, 'home of Middle-earth', has come to stand as an *example par excellence* of the film tourism phenomena, demonstrating to a global tourism industry exactly what can be achieved through the branding of place through collaborative film and tourism initiatives- having both drawn from previous examples of good practice and now in turn encouraging similar marketing strategies elsewhere. The three films, shot entirely on location in New Zealand, have become inextricably linked to the islands' landscapes; which have also been promoted as uniquely suited to being Middle-earth- some argue problematically (e.g. Bell & Matthewman, 2004; Jutel, 2004). Qualities such as 'virgin' or 'primeval', whilst potentially feeding into a imperialist construction of New Zealand, are of course not only invoked in relation to *The Lord of the Rings*- as Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) discuss, there is a rich genealogy of the employment of the landscapes of New Zealand in ideological constructions of the country as a (post)-colonial virgin territory[63]. Contemporary imaginings of the country, however, are as likely to humour Antipodean rurality as to romanticize it: as the joke goes, before *The Lord of the Rings* reached New Zealand, the country was perhaps best known for its ovine population – or at least, we could

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consumer capitalism itself- or, at the very least, an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history…we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach" (1997: 25).

[61] Notable in the case of Gladiator is the fact that Oliver Reed "continued to perform…after his death courtesy of some digital cutting and pasting that enabled the late actor to complete the necessary scene" (Prince, 2004). Prince also highlights the emergence of the comic book movie as representative of a more 'gaudy' rise of digital moviemaking and special effects. Yet, ultimately he believes that it is not in the special effects (despite the media attention that they grab) but in the more profound perceptual differences posed by the compositional modalities of digital filmmaking that is transforming the medium most radically (ibid).

[62] Comments he made in response to the 1955 BBC radio adaptation.

[63] See also Rojek, who lists New Zealand tourism promotion material amongst a global range (Australia, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany) as presenting that country as an "enchanted fortress in a disenchanted world" (1993: 181).

argue more seriously, as a tourist destination most renowned for its range of adventure tourism activities (e.g. Bell, 2002; Cloke 2002). Thus, we need to be aware of multiple and often contested constructions of (touristic) New Zealand[64].

Image 11- 'Sheep jam'- a quintessential tourist image of rural New Zealand?

In terms of films that have raised the international profile of New Zealand, *The Lord of the Rings* was by no means the first. The 1993 film *The Piano* made an icon of Karekare beach (Auckland); more recently the East Cape and its communities profited from the very successful New Zealand export, *Whale Rider* (2002). In both of these cases, the latter in particular, the narratives were directly associated with the landscapes they were filmed in. But unlike films like *Whale Rider* or *The Piano*, *The Lord of the Rings* literally has *nothing* to do with these places, as much as Tolkien had *nothing* to do with New Zealand- save a putative aesthetic similarity between the textual and material landscapes, and the creative imaginaries of a writer and a film director fifty years on[65]. Nonetheless, when the production of *The Lord of the Rings* took place (with a fair amount of pomp and circumstance) in New Zealand, all of a sudden, a global audience – many of whom already possessed a passionate attachment to the imaginary world of Middle-earth – was to discover the potency with which Tolkien's fiction would be materialized. Profound excitement

[64] A point that will be returned to later on in this chapter, and Chapter Four.

[65] As Jones and Smith note, it is particularly "interesting that a film project based on an explicitly English text, and financed by Hollywood, was seen as exemplary of the emerging New Zealand national imaginary" (2005: 928).

and a sense of common ownership marked the film production process from the outset, which was openly discussed in the public/ online domain, such as on fan website TheOneRing.net.

Tzanelli argues that "*Lord of the Rings* tourism development in and around New Zealand was based *on an anticipation of the viewers' cinematic reception of the films*" (2004: 26 original emphasis). Within this context, it seemed natural to assume that the audience for the landscapes of *The Lord of the Rings* would be motivated by a sense of (literary) pilgrimage- that the potential tourist market would comprise fans and enthusiasts of the novels and film adaptations. At the same time, the New Zealand tourism authorities assumed that the images of the landscapes viewed through the three films would inspire a broader range of international visitors to want to discover the awe-inspiring landscapes of New Zealand/Middle-earth for themselves. However, these basic assumptions about audiences and their motivations remained unjustified in subsequent statistical tourist research. In particular, the pilgrim-like tourist[66], those visitors who had chosen to come to New Zealand *purely* on the basis of the film trilogy, would only make up 3% of the official total visitor figures (Croy, 2004).

In fact, although the figures were encouraging in terms of the impact of the films on tourists' awareness of the relationship between *The Lord of the Rings* and New Zealand (65%), the rolling annual International Visitor Survey (administered non-randomly airside at Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch airports) failed to garner anywhere near as much *Lord of the Rings* 'motivation' as had been expected. All in all, a depiction of that elusive movie inspired tourist failed to materialize in the way hoped, and official research interest in New Zealand's *Lord of the Rings*-boosted film tourism economy teetered off. By 2005, questions dedicated to *The Lord of the Rings* and tourism in the visitor survey were replaced by other items of 'special interest', such as the impact of the Lion's Rugby World Cup on tourism arrivals and trends[67]. However, given the sustained 'on the ground' evidence of *Lord of the Rings* tourism, Croy suggests that perhaps the surveys were ill-designed for truly getting to grips with the nature of the film-motivated tourist, and the relationship between film and landscape. As he notes, "there were not many questions focused on *The Lord of the Rings* in the long survey and they were largely summative….in that they summarized or assumed precursors in the question…..hence the films' role in building this image [of New Zealand as] is still under-defined" (2004: 17).

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[66] "Pilgrimage- a travel story and a spatial practice- induces travel to specific places, establishing 'stations' and a narrative linkage through the various sites. This itinerary creates (and is often created by) hagiographic tales, and thus the path itself is narrativised: the pilgrim's itinerary joins up with the tourist's, making stories out of spatial trajectories and itineraries out of stories" (Bruno, 2002: 62)

[67] Personal communication, Dean Rutherford, New Zealand Ministry of Tourism, January 2006.

Finding our fan tourist

Our first issue then, is to attempt to unravel the figure of the film tourist to the former *Lord of the Rings* film sets in New Zealand. This is certainly the big question that drove the New Zealand tourism ministry's early research attempts to measure the effects of *The Lord of the Rings* on the tourism economy. The IVS in fact posed just 7 questions regarding *The Lord of the Rings*- understandably few given the survey's remit to account for a broad range of tourism issues (see Table 1 below).

Yet an early encounter with a British male traveller[68] on a *Lord of the Rings* themed tour highlights the potential difficulties in conceptualizing the film tourism experience/ film tourist, even when *in situ* (as opposed to after the event at the airport) using any sort of standard questionnaire format with questions based on the notion of visual motivation:

"So, you want to know if I came because of Lord of the Rings. Well, I didn't…well, hmmm, well… no, that's not strictly true. I suppose I was motivated by it. Maybe seeing it like that after planning on coming here for so many years was like a final straw…..now I think about it, I really don't know" (Pete, Nomad Safari)

Having rapidly pre-empted what he *assumed* I would ask him (at this point I had only just been introduced to the whole group by the tour guide); this traveller then struggled to conceptualise his motivations and expectations around a framework that presupposes the 'seen the movie, now visit the set' association. However, his hasty disavowal of film tourism (suggesting he does not want to be seen as a fan of the film trilogy) is followed by a reflection that *does* suggest there is at least *some* sort of visual relationship between having seen the films and wanting to visit some of the film sites. In terms of the IVS survey, his response only goes to show how 'motivations' are in fact unclear to visitors themselves: his comments accord to four out of five of the multiple choice responses for the IVS survey question: "Specifically, what was it about the Lord of the Rings that encouraged you to visit New Zealand?" Ultimately, the only thing he *couldn't* be classed as is a fan of the films- or at least, *fandom* was not a reason he was willing to give for his motivation to visit. The fact that even a 'quick-fire' and apparently unconsidered answer 'ticks all the boxes' of a traditional questionnaire, whilst raising many more questions, suggests we need to see past surveys as a primary research technique in this instance.

[68] To expand a little, Pete, an ordnance survey worker from London, was travelling for an extended period of time in New Zealand. His work allows him to save up holiday over several years and take longer trips- typically 11-12 weeks. He is currently on an organised four-week tour, and then will take a further 8 weeks exploring places he has identified as interesting on his own in a campervan.

Section Five: Lord of the Rings

The next set of questions asks about the Lord of the Rings Movies, that is, the Fellowship of the Ring and The Two Towers.

Q32c Before you arrived in New Zealand, were you aware of
1. The Fellowship of the Ring movie?
2. The Two Towers movie?

Q.32d And have you seen……?
1. The Fellowship of the Ring movie?
2. The Two Towers movie?

Q.32e Before you arrived in the country, were you aware these films were made in New Zealand?
1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't Know

Q.32f Which of these best applies to you?
1. The Lord of the Rings was my only reason for deciding to travel to New Zealand
2. The Lord of the Rings was my main reason for deciding to travel to New Zealand
3. The Lord of the Rings was one reason for deciding to travel to New Zealand, but was not the main reason
4. The Lord of the Rings was not a reason for my decision to travel to New Zealand

Q.32g Specifically, what was it about the Lord of the Rings that encouraged you to visit New Zealand?
1. The scenery (unspecified)
2. Wanted to see if the scenery was like it was in the film
3. I'm a fan / love The Lord of the Rings
4. Wanted to see where the film was made
5. It just raised my awareness of New Zealand/ made me think of New Zealand as a place to visit
6. Other (please specify)

Q.32h Did you take in a Lord of the Rings experience while in New Zealand1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't Know

Q.32I What specifically did you do?
1. Group tour specifically organised for Lord of the Rings fans
2. Organised local sightseeing tour which included Lord of the Rings Film site(s)
3. Visited Lord of the Rings film site(s) independently
4. Other (please specify)

Table 1- International Visitor Survey Questions and multiple choice answers

So our current understanding of tourism to the former *Lord of the Rings* locations falls short in both in two respects: firstly, both the range and relevance of assumed touristic motivations; and secondly, the subsequent research techniques used to test these hypotheses. Any questions that presume a causal motivation between seeing the film and visiting New Zealand thus risk clouding other important factors in the film-tourism relationship, and possibly even missing the 'point' entirely. For example, if film tourism isn't (solely) visual, then questions about the visual relationship are problematic. Are we misinterpreting the visual nature of the image, and what it

does? Even on reflection, the role that seeing the movies had had on this British tourist's motivations to visit was unclear, and this seemed to be the case for many tourists I spoke to. The 'seen the movie, now visit the set' adage is situated within a much more complex decision-making process that seems to be difficult for many to verbalize within the context of visual 'motivation'. That is, if 'organic images' are, as Gunn's typology suggests (in Kim and Richardson, 2003: 218), a potent form of touristic imagery, how they are absorbed and acted upon is not only conceptually unclear, but difficult for tourist-viewers themselves to grasp or explain.

Yet we should also be interested in the eagerness with which this visitor rapidly disengaged himself from being identified as a *Lord of the Rings* fan or enthusiast- something in which he was not alone. Why should this be the case? Delving into the realm of popular discourse and media consumption provides some clues. As much as it is loved, *The Lord of the Rings* is also frequently lampooned- and so, it seems, is tourism to the former film sets. As one newspaper lamented about *The Lord of the Rings*, and special effects blockbusters in general, "CGI just don't believe it"- that is, only a fool would think that these epic landscapes could be found in 'real life' (Goddard, 2004)[69]. This 'foolish' figure is also found in academic discourse about the tourist- as Shepherd duly reminds us, "tourism has been simultaneously internationalised, homogenized and demonised" (2002: 183)[70]. This demonisation usually takes place from the (superior) perspective of *travel*, with its promises of authentic encounters and individualism (Mazierska, 2002: 226). Tourism, on the other hand "with its metaphors of circularity and the 'already known' experience, threatens an encounter with the sign rather than the difference- a dangerous safety without suffering, effect or affect"[71] (Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994: 214). Olsen also notes that even among tourists travelling in a group there seems to be a clear antipathy towards being

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[69] Tzanelli's review of IMDB and Amazon.com Lord of the Rings viewers/ reviewers also found a divide between those that thought the GCI 'brought the landscapes of Middle-earth to life' and a smaller group who criticised the 'cgi induced hypnosis', preferring attention to be paid to plot and the overall idea of a 'well-told story' (2004: 28)

[70] Buzard also argues that "the perceived low status of tourism in a hierarchy of human pleasures results from it being undertaken on the 'beaten track', which succinctly designates the space of the touristic as a region in which all experience is predictable and repetitive, all cultures and objects mere 'touristy' self-parodies" (in Mazierska, 2002: 225).

[71] "The substitution of the 'moral stakes' of reality for the privileged distance of the onlooker or spectator is crucial for the tourist. The necessary distance is guaranteed by maintaining a primarily visual relationship to reality. Vision requires distance, as Christian Metz has pointed out, and provides a comfortable compromise for the conflicting needs of the intimacy of physical rapport and the narcissistic safety of solitude……with seeing, reality remains external and in its place, leaving the spectator equally free from transformation by the encounter" (Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994: 209)

regarded and treated as typical 'tourists'. Even if their behaviour fits with the image they have of a typical tourist, most of them do not consider themselves to be this disdained figure (2002). Yet the actuality of this tourist, despite both the academic and popular discourses of cultural distinction that actively construct him/her, is harder to locate- it is, as Torchin notes, something of a myth. For her, the 'mythical tourist' on a TV tour in Manhattan is:

"Desperately naïve….has allowed fantasy to overtake fact…and travels only in the utopia, oblivious to the chimerical quality of the terrain. The mythical tourist accepts the ascendance of the virtual without thought, and traverses a landscape without depth. This mythical tourist, for better or worse, prefers the world of sign and image, making it the 'reality' before his or her eyes" (2002: 262-3).

Yet her stereotypical tourist is also 'mythical' in the sense that they do not *exist*- her Manhattan TV tourists "recognize the landscape as porous and contested and revel in the friction of incommensurate spaces coming up against one another" (2002: 263). Put simply, Torchin joins a growing body of tourism scholars who argue for a sense of personal agency and reflexivity in contemporary tourism practice; who argue that the tourist is empirically more nuanced and complicated than the moral discourse of the traveller (or academic) typically allows. Yet that is not to suggest that fierce hierarchies and heterogeneities do not demarcate the field of touristic consumption- the very 'fact' that 'not all tourism is equal' makes itself felt particularly acutely in the case of film tourism, which attracts, more often than not, a high degree of criticism. Urry's definition of mediated tourism makes an excellent case in point:

"The 'mediatised gaze' is a collective[72] *gaze where particular sites famous for their 'mediated' nature are viewed. Those gazing upon the scene relive elements or aspects of the media event. Examples where such mediated gazes are found would include…the village of Avoca in County Wicklow* ***now overrun*** *by Ballykissangel tourists and the Taj Mahal which is a setting for various 'masala' movies where particular scenes can be relived" (2002, 151, emphasis added)*

Somewhat problematically, Urry's "mediatised" gaze seems to be cast in an altogether more dubious light than his other 'gazes'. It not only assumes a straightforward and causal relationship between the passive viewing of a film and the passive (and implicitly moronic) visual consumption of the location, but also *criticizes* this 'inferior' visual sensibility, thus obliquely but powerfully adding a moralizing discourse to the discussion of mediated tourism.

We likewise find that *The Lord of the Rings* and film tourism in New Zealand is subjected to pervasive hierarchies of 'mass' and high cultural consumption, in which tourists "frequently define

[72] For Urry, a Romantic gaze is posited as the predecessor and superior to the collective, the Romantic (traveller) leads the pack whilst the collective (tourist) imitates (1990: 150)

themselves *against* other tourists" (Fawcett and Cormack, 2001: 688), using definitions of difference and opposition, which, according to Rojek, are typical of bourgeois culture and demonstrate "the influence of that culture in present-day consciousness and practice" (Rojek, 1993: 182). However, tourists do not do this defining alone- they are aided and abetted by the travel guide industry: consider the *Rough Guide* or *Lonely Planet* series, which somehow maintain the prestige of being both alternative or 'off the beaten track', and a 'best-selling' series of travel companions at the same time. In the entire 2004 *Rough Guide to New Zealand*, 'Doing a rings thing' is begrudgingly given four entries separated in boxes from the main text (and omitted from the index); and readers are told repeatedly to be "prepared from some disappointment", for example at the Hobbiton set, where only "diehard fans" of the *Lord of the Rings* will want to go and see "shabby plywood facades…with nothing inside them" (Harper et al, 2004: 331). Yet, as the guide notes, you can't deny that the demand is there- it is just implied that this is not the touring readership that the *Rough Guide*, with its privileging allusions to 'independent travel', encourages[73]. Through the guidebook's style of "hip detachment" and "invidious moralism" (MacCannell, 2001: 27), any more nuanced understanding of the *Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand- its socio-economic role in shaping New Zealand cultural imaginaries, is bypassed in favour of writing it off as "bandwagon" profiteering by tour operator outfits, and consumed by naïve and unimaginative tourists (e.g. Harper et al, 2004: 826). So, despite the fact that the ever-popular *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* (Brodie, 2003) outsells the *Rough Guide* in New Zealand, and is a common accompaniment to the *Rough Guide* or *Lonely Planet* for many travellers, *Lord of the Rings* tourism is nonetheless positioned as something to be rather *embarrassed* about. The fact of the matter seems to be that whilst tourists generally "have the dubious distinction of serving as a target of derision for almost everyone" (Shepherd, 2002: 183), our film tourists in particular come in for an even rougher ride. Is there any wonder, then, that the stereotyped *Lord of the Rings* tourist, and their embodied touristic practices, remain elusive?

The following two chapters will consider this déclassé tourist in more detail. As Adler argues, "the traveller's body, as the literal vehicle of the travel art, has been subject to historical construction and stylistic constraint" (1989: 8). Moralizing discourses of 'cultivation' and discipline have a particularly powerful role in the experience of film tourism. Indeed, the crux of Chapter 2, the methodological chapter, is that this pathologised sensibility actually extends from the tourist to the popular culture fan, and ultimately, to the scholar of popular culture consumption. It thus focuses on the positionality and reflexivity of undertaking research in an area that attracts such fierce loyalties but also scorn at a most visceral level. Then, Chapter 3 continues on this theme to consider the 'scorned' figure of the fan in further detail. Rather than merely being aware of

[73] As Edensor argues, even "forms of tourism which purport to disavow 'conventional', 'unindividualistic' tourists are imbued with their own conventions, their own unreflexive assumptions about what distinguishes them from the 'others'" (2001: 62). For further discussion of Bourdieu, cultural distinction and 'middle class' travel, see Munt (1994).

ostracizing discourses, this chapter argues how embarrassment and other emotions choreograph identity- that is, the actual practice of being a *Lord of the Rings* tourist is actively shaped and constituted through these negotiated 'hierarchies of taste'.

Mapping the cinematic terrain

However, questions of embodied identity cannot wholly account for the apparent 'invisibility' of the *Lord of the Rings* film tourist in New Zealand/ Middle-earth. The *spatialities* of these landscapes also demand further attention. To return to Urry's definition and example of film tourism, we get a deceptively simple sense of what a film tourism location is like (ibid: 151): icons, villages, monuments – in other words specific and bound spaces – marked by the *presence* of something to see. But, a warning from Franklin and Crang, that seems particularly pertinent in the case of fantasy film tourism in New Zealand, reminds us that "too often tourism has been seen as composed of presences- whereas instead we might look at the virtualities, the absences that permeate tourist events" (2001: 16). Virtualities and absences dominate the site-seeing[74] landscape of New Zealand as Middle-earth: all sets removed, everything returned to natural, little signage, nothing to navigate space save scant signage and interpretation and the oral anecdotes of tour guides, often who 'were there' at the time of filming. This is in stark contrast to the 'hermeneutic image cycle' suggested by the 'seen the movie, visit the set' cliché. Rojek suggests that "a reserve of sights in the mind of the tourist precedes the physical exploration of the sight" (1997: 54); a smooth succession of 'stills' that the camera-toting tourist can easily capture for themselves. But this is simply not the case in New Zealand/ Middle-earth. As Carl notes, "within the films, the scenes are a mix of the 'real' landscapes, film sets and post-production digital modifications…..the locations where filming took place frequently provide little access to these elements of film experience" (Carl et al 2005: 50).

So what do these virtualities and absences actually afford? The former film locations are hard to interact with for several different reasons. Firstly, many of the locations are simply inaccessible to the average tourist. Mt Olympus (South of Rivendell- the 'Crebain of Dunharrow' scene) and Mt Owen (Dimrill Dale) are accessible only by helicopter (the way that the cast and crew were transported there), or an eight-day hike for the experienced tramper only[75]. Mt Sunday (Edoras), one of the more iconic and scenic former film locations, is deep in the southern heartlands- an hour and a half drive from Christchurch precedes a further 40km drive on unsealed road, followed by a stream-fording and gorse-dodging trek across private land to reach the base of the hill. The prize for these physical travails often comes in the form of beautiful scenery, 'just as it was' in the

[74] Bruno's notion of site-seeing as opposed to sightseeing insinuates a "shift away from the long-standing focus of film theory on sight towards the construction of a moving theory of site" (2002:15).

[75] For location and plot/ synopsis information, please refer to Appendix C and Figure 1 (map showing fieldwork itinerary) in Chapter 2.

film – although not necessarily, and not exclusively – some of the less remote sites can be just as evocative, and indeed the journey itself may provide the motivation.

So, for example, at Kaitoke (Rivendell), a couple of signs erected by the park ranger provide a refreshing change to the common total absence of any marker to designate a site as a former film location (and indeed, this sign only offers a rather tantalizing wiggly line in the vague direction of the even more obscure place of filming). Thus Kaitoke, like most other locations, thoroughly challenges the accepted convention of tourism, in which the contemporary tourist will encounter a "proliferation of markers declaring or constituting the significance of this site" (Urry, in Crang, 1996: 438).

In actual fact, even with the help of these (three) signs and interpretation boards, many visitors struggle to gain a sense of how the site was transformed into Rivendell. Mentioned as one of the more disappointing sites by several respondents, both the managed horticulture of the park and a very real difficulty in conceptualizing how the set was actually built up from the riverbed seems to be an issue.

Image 12- A solitary and alluring sign – a much more common encounter in these filmic landscapes than a 'proliferation' of signs creating tourist 'spectacles'.

Image 13- Indeed, although a walk through this DOC park might be an evocative encounter, most visitors struggle to conceptualise how the actual Rivendell set was built up from the riverbed.

But, whilst Kaitoke might be difficult for visitors to either 'understand' as a film location, or to imaginatively evoke *as* Rivendell, other landscapes which were not even used in the films can posses an affective energy that provokes tourists to liken them to Middle-earth *anyway*. Many 'other' places in New Zealand may posses something of the narrative's spirit- sometimes only temporarily, as the weather and seasons make them possible to compare with certain times and places in the *Lord of the Rings* narrative. Thus many forest locations that were not used as filming locations might nonetheless be magically imbued with an 'Elvish air' when subtle autumnal light filters through the canopy; the Remarkables (which were used in the film to depict Emyn Muil but are situated right behind the bustling resort of Queenstown) nonetheless 'work' because they often do possess a rather black, menacing, look. In other words, even if we were to agree with Rojek's indexicality, then we still need to recognise that there is much room for creative manoeuvres in the ways that tourists themselves imaginatively *conjure* these ambiguous spaces.

Image 14- Golden canopies. Not every forest with an Elvish air could be included in the trilogy- but this does not stop the imaginative tourist from making connections anyway.

On another level, the films' use of miniatures and digital enhancements and the fact that the locations are geographically dispersed across the islands complicates a 'normal' spatial interpretation or tourist itinerary. Locations on the one hand may be left with little remarkable to identify them with- the suburban Harcourt Park (Isengard) is certainly attractive and popular with locals, but for daily visitors who come to see the site of Orthanc little remains to attest to the event of filming.

Image 15- Pleasant but formerly off the beaten tourist track- Harcourt Park, Upper Hutt (Isengard). The view of the camera traces where the path leading to the doors of Orthanc (superimposed where the trees are) was laid.

On the other hand, many locations that appear to be in the near vicinity of another place cinematically can actually be geographically distant. The Remarkables are composited in front of Tongariro volcano Mt Ngauruhoe (Mt Doom) for the trilogy's ashen-skied depiction of Mordor. The trilogy's location hunters were able to 'pick and mix' from the diverse landscapes of New Zealand to find the perfect location for each scene- thus the filmic / fellowship's quest does not simply *map onto* the actual spaces of New Zealand.

Image 16- The Remarkables (Emyn Muil) brooding, somewhat incongrously, behind the resort of Queenstown

Image 17- The iconic Mount Doom (Mt Ngaurahoe)

Hobbiton, of course, does remain as a visitor friendly, themed attraction- easily attracting the qualifier “hyper-real” (Eco, 1986; see Carl et al, 2005: 52). It appears to be a lasting, material

trace of a cinematic event "dragged on to the physical landscape and the physical landscape ... re-interpreted in terms of the cinematic event" (Rojek, 1997: 54). Thus, some have argued that *Lord of the Rings* "film tourism is based on a form of escape via simulation, spectacle and sensations created by the interplay of film representations and 'real' landscapes" (Carl et al, 2005: 51). This, then, becomes a question of virtuality *opposed* to actuality, a fundamental distinction between the real and the fictional that means that the film-tourist is not consuming "*specific* objects, but clusters of signs" (Tzanelli, 2005: 24 emphasis original). And once this disjunction between the real and the virtual is broadly accepted, it tends to equate to a narrowing down of the tourist's register of experience to disappointment or anti-climax, when tourists are faced with the inevitably more banal actuality of *real* place. As Jones writes about tourism to the former Lord of the Rings film sets:

"For the fan as traveller, the physical location is not authentic. It has failed as an experience of 'real virtuality' because it fails the fan approaching it with George Seeslen's exactitude of a chronicler. It does not correspond to his present memory of the film or to its imagery he recalled on the spot from a DVD. The search for exact correspondences fails because it seeks the authenticity of the fantasy in the actual, which cannot match the way the trilogy's layered images invite repeat viewings" (2006: 298).

Thus, as Carl concludes in warning to the nascent New Zealand *Lord of the Rings* film tourism industry, "the disjunction between the hyper-real and the real has implications for levels of tourist satisfaction and the long-term sustainability of LOTR tourism within New Zealand" (Carl et al, 2005: 50).

However, as soon as tourist's actual feelings and experiences are attended to, the limitations of this view become apparent. It leaves simply no room for the multitude of tourists who describe their experiences of visiting the former film sets as 'once in a lifetime', or better than they could have ever expected. Importantly, these are not tourists who are ignorant to the ways in which mediated space is organised and presented, but who fluently negotiate these multiple terrains (e.g. Torchin, 2002).

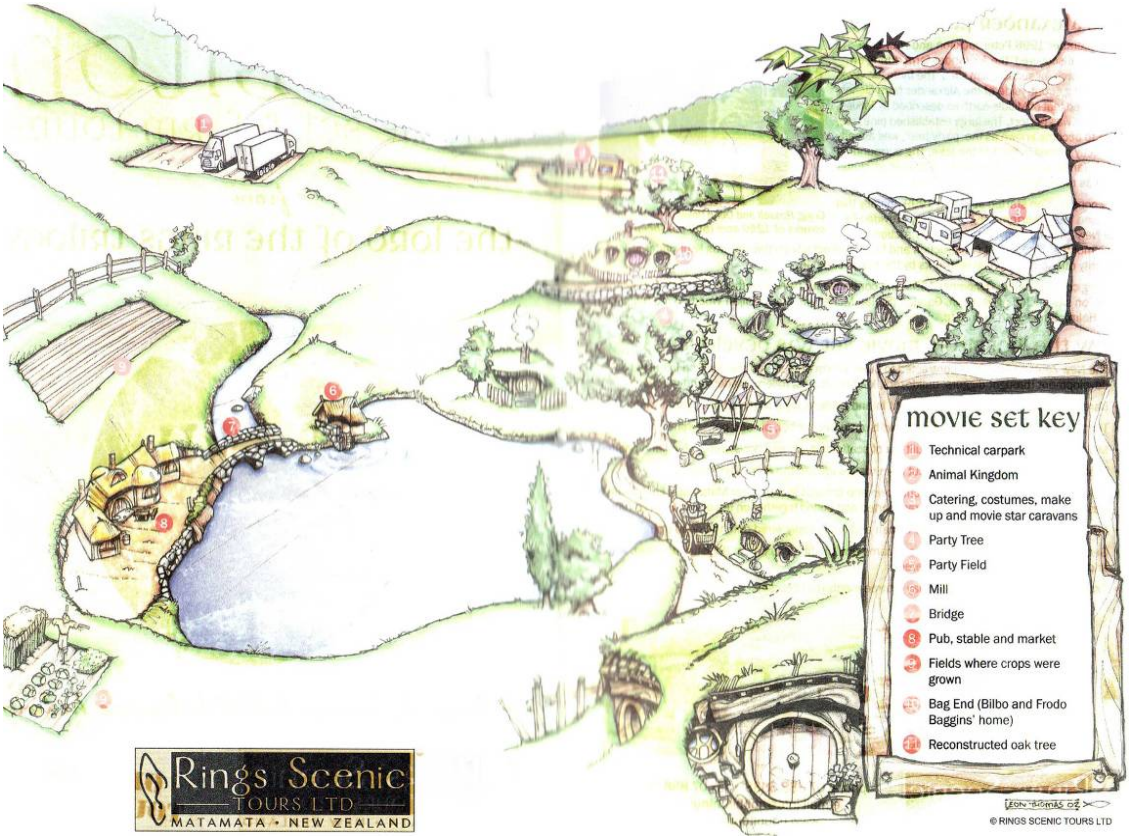

Image 18- A visitor map of Hobbiton shows that this space negotiates narrative and 'backstage' space fluently (author's collection)

A Hobbiton visitor map underscores this sense of parallel space- it represents the movie set and *not* Hobbiton itself (note the lorries parked in the technical car park). But this is not a front space/ back space opposition that can be understood as a scopophilic desire for the more authentic and hidden 'reality' behind the staged performance- the sense usually employed in a tourism context. Rather, as Torchin's exploration of TV tourists on a tour of buildings most often used as 'establishing shots' in Manhattan shows, tourists not only understand that the sets are usually based down in Los Angeles, but *delight* in this multiplicity and incongruity. Tourist perception of the environment is therefore considerably more nuanced than traditional accounts have allowed, being marked, for example, by the potential for dynamic "gestalt shifts" in our understanding of place (Dorrance Kelly, 2005: 77).

Thus, the *Rough Guide's* revelation that there is nothing but earth and emptiness behind the "shabby plywood facades" of the hobbit holes (Harper et al, 2004: 331) misses the point entirely: no visitor would presume that they would see Bilbo's home here on the Hobbiton set in the first place. They understand that the interior of Baggin's home was a set (or in fact 2 sets made to different scales) that was created in the studio in Wellington. Indeed, it is this spatial frisson that tends to generate interest and intrigue- as Lingis describes on looking at the façades of Petra, "so laboriously carved to such perfection…façades behind which there are no buildings, only the immense darkness of inert rock….our vision is held on a surface behind which there is the *unthinkable*" (Lingis, 2002: 55 emphasis added).

Ultimately, these heterogeneous landscapes are far from the neat, bordered, regional space of tourism so often presumed by classical tourism theory (Jóhannesson, 2005). The spatialities of these toured former cinematic spaces tend towards non-permanence and permeability- signs and boundaries are lacking in both a prosaic and symbolic sense; these landscapes lack 'semiotic transcription'. Notably, these locations do not cater to a passive tourist body, as visiting a former film site typically involves an active mental and physical engagement, as many of the locations are hard to find and difficult to traverse. Unlike Urry's examples, they are not necessarily hospitable sites, nor are they visually accommodating. In all of their individual idiosyncrasies of absence, paradox and complexity, they create an *excess*- this is no isolated site or location, nor even a 'cinematic city', but a whole *filmic country*- it was New Zealand, after all, which was hailed as 'the real star of the show'.

It is this truly excessive terrain that Chapter Four addresses in more detail. In considering the cinematic topology of Middle-earth in New Zealand, alongside the textual, visual and material legacies and tourist practices of mapping and navigating space, the chapter will draw out some of the limitations in the way in which cultural geographies have tended to conceptualise the imagined, fictional or fantastic landscape. Often viewed as textual associations, or overlays to the 'actual' landscape, an exploration of *The Lord of the Rings* demonstrates a more materially complex spatial formation, characterized by paradoxes, absences which challenges the typically static and bounded definitions of the 'real/ reel' common to geographies of film and literature. Thus, it is suggested that we need to move towards "new (and forgotten) cartographies for orientating our appreciation of the world in which we find ourselves" (Dewsbury, 2003: 1911) that allow for messy, complex space- and importantly, the role of imagination in creating landscape.

Narrating the encounter

Our third research question, is linked to this- what is it that people actually *do* in these sites, and how are they experienced? To employ Urry's previous quote once more as a starting point, the explanation that "those gazing upon the scene relive elements or aspects of the media event" begs more questions than it answers (ibid: 151). Indeed, there seems to be some tension between Urry's claim that the mediatised gaze is collective by nature, passive and spectatorial and this 'reliving' he then posits. What is clear from the previous section is that these locations make the film tourist *work*. There is a degree of physical and intellectual travail required to achieve *either* that 'romantic' gaze from atop Edoras, looking down upon the valley 'just as Éowyn did' from the terrace of the Golden Hall of Meduseld, *or* the perfectly choreographed posing for photos 'in character' to take home as a family souvenir. In fact, if we employ Riley et al's notion of 'icons' (1998), the 'place-orientated' landscape attraction, the 'unadulterated backdrop scenery' of New Zealand *as* Middle-earth is but one of several icons that can act as visitor motivations.

Image 19- Japanese visitors getting to grips (literally) with rock faces used to film the prologue scenes (Tongariro)

Image 20- Whilst other sites might require some intellectual hard work to figure out

Thus, as well as being 'place-orientated', we can add the thematic interest of *The Lord of the Rings.* Themes of discovery, quest, fellowship, or heroism are common to both the language of fiction and tourism. We only have to refer to the ubiquitous poetics of the literary tour where one 'follows in the footsteps of', to see the cultural significance of treading the path of a favourite author or character (e.g. Anderson and Robinson, 2002; Herbert, 2001). Thus, 'joining one's own fellowship' or retracing Frodo's journey (however problematic this might be in reality) are expected and commonly cited modes of encounter with the former film locations.

A third theme of film tourism in New Zealand appears in the guise of celebrity-driven tourism (Grihault, 2007). Brodie's *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* points out places of interest on the basis of the cast and crews' association with them- Viggo Mortensen's favourite steak restaurant in Wellington, Molly Malone's Irish Bar where Sean Bean regularly enjoyed a pint, or Scorching Bay, the Seatoun beach where 'the hobbits learnt to surf' (2003, 2004). And related to this theme, comes a fourth and major strand of interest- the story of production, or, the 'making of' *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand. A discourse largely generated and sustained through the trilogy's DVD-extras, but also appropriated by tour guides and locations keen to shape ambiguous film sites with any anecdotal or factual information possible, mean that the majority of tourists encountering a *Lord of the Rings* site are encountering a 'New Zealand story' (Jones and Smith, 2005) even if the story of Middle-earth itself, it is not.

These four examples of *Lord of the Rings*-driven film-tourism 'icons' in New Zealand could lead the critic to a swift dismissal of the phenomenon as 'place imageering' on the basis of fantasy

theming (place), colonial encounters (theme) or empty postmodern encounters (celebrity/ production). But it is the *interrelationship* of these themes, and the seamlessness with which the *Lord of the Rings* themed film tourism encounter in New Zealand works, that demands closer attention to the nature of fantasy film tourist's experience. Specifically, the very *multiplicity* of 'themes' through which the tourist can engage with the imagined landscapes of Middle-earth, challenges a reliance on any one particular tourist theory or representational account. That is, neither pilgrimage nor play, the authentic or the hyperreal seem to fully account for the variety of practices and encounters happening in these touristic spaces.

That of course is not to say that a particular visitor engages in all of these 'orientations' towards place- but that the employment of one particular 'representational' account of tourist practice does tend to reduce and over-determine the richly heterogeneous ways in which *Lord of the Rings* themed film tourism happens. As the small amount of existing empirical work with tourists to the former film sets of the *Lord of the Rings* demonstrates, this actuality is far more complex, and we encounter no single tourist figure, but rather typography-dodging and mindset-juggling tourists (Löfgren, 1999). Even in the apparently straightforward themed, narrativised[76] space of Hobbiton, Carl found that whilst some respondents' expectations were not met due to the *lack* of physical evidence of the film, others were equally *disappointed* to *see* such remains preferring a "solely natural landscape experience". Yet for others, the site of Hobbiton exceeded expectations, either *because of* or *despit*e its built heritage (2005: 58)[77].

This complexity calls for a close empiricism unbound to representational modes of thinking the tourist and tourism. As Couldry notes, "seeing what the set 'is actually like' is an active process of finding out, qualitatively different [for example] from watching television" (Couldry, 2005: 70). His analysis of visitor practices at the Coronation Street set at Granada Studios, Manchester, includes observation of a variety of practices: visitors simply "walking down it", taking photographs and being photographed at points of interest, testing the boundaries of the sets illusion, comparing the details of the set with their previous image of the Street, taking pleasure in pretending for a moment that they live on the street- indeed, as he concludes "the visit is an elaborate form of performance and exploration…the connection of different times, places, and activities [through tourism practices] is neither neutral or trivial" (2005: 61, 70).

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[76] See also Philips, who discusses the narrativised space of the (Disney) theme park, the bounded yet boundless 'heterotopias' which bring together a variety of standard fairy tale storylines into themed areas and rides. She argues that "if these stories are commodified in the theme park, however, their telling cannot be entirely contained by it. The tales that are told cannot be entirely subsumed, for that is not the only place in which they are told. The stories that recur in these sites, have what Bakhtin has called 'prior speakings', they are tales that have already been told, and will continue to be told in different versions" (1999: 246)

[77] Diary respondent Sherry, for example, commented that "even in a weathered state the Hobbiton set was beautiful & evocative".

Chapter five therefore provides a detailed account of how tourism actually takes place in the complex, virtual spaces of Middle-earth/New Zealand. Without totally departing from cliché that we 'see the movie, then visit the set', detailed observation of tourist practices *in situ* enables us to rewrite the conditions of the cinematic tourist gaze- that is, to situate exactly how and why we can say that film and tourism are visual practices, and furthermore how "a visual, touristic relationship with landscape need not be seen as an object of suspicion" (Evans and Spaul, 2003: 207). What we rather find is a range of *pleasurable* practices that are suggestive of the imaginative, (re)-creative performances of tourists.

Myths and mythmaking in New Zealand

It is this concern with the fictional – the fabricated – and also, with what is 'real' or not, and how such distinctions are produced and sustained, that is foundational to the whole of this project. Indeed, what defines the *Lord of the Rings* film tourism encounter is precisely its *fictional*, *fantastic*, and *mythical* aesthetic sensibilities. It is the multiple senses of 'myth' at play in the *Lord of the Rings* film tourism encounter, which makes it such a fascinating case of contemporary cultural consumption. That is, as noted previously in the introduction, there is more than one way in which this phenomenon can be said to be 'mythical'. From Tolkien's intention that the *Lord of the Rings* novels act as a sort of pseudo-myth to address the 'neglected province' of English mythology (Fimi, 2006: 159)[78], to Peter Jackson's cinematic vision of bringing this narrative to screen-life in his (postcolonial) home country: or from the mythical grandeur of a virgin territory[79], to a contemporary cultural landscape that demanded a truly heroic feat of cinematic production – all of these examples make sense of *The Lord of the Rings* as a *mythical* or *mythmaking* narrative event.

Following from the discussion in this chapter, we can now also suggest that our 'fan tourist' is a mythical figure, indeed the idea of 'The Tourist' *tout court* presents a *mythical unity*. Additionally, the *Lord of the Rings* tourism experience involves a search for mythical spaces or encounters- mythical in that they are marked by virtualities and absences, and although they are landscapes that were cinematically produced and disassembled less than a decade ago, often work in ephemeral and emotive ways not unlike landscapes associated 'actual' myths and legends (as

[78] Tolkien's early plan to create a national mythology for England fits in with 19th century 'reconstructions' of Northern European mythologies such as Elias Lönnrot's Finnish national epic, the Kalevala (Shippey, 2001: x-xvi).

[79] As Peter Jackson stated; "New Zealand is ideally situated to bringing *The Lord of the Rings* to the screen because Tolkien wrote the book as a mystic prehistory. It was supposed to take place in a Europe that existed in a dark age that we've long since forgotten. (New Line Productions, in Jones and Smith, 2005: 937)

opposed to fictional/ filmic ones). Finally, our third broad research question, addressing the narration of Middle-earth, demonstrates a further two ways in which we can talk about the mythical. Firstly, there is a strong oral 'tradition' in the dissemination of the Lord of the Rings/Middle-earth. Although bonus DVD featurettes provide a major source of background or 'behind the scenes' information to the films and former locations, our 'direct' experience of the landscapes often feels like something akin to a game of 'Chinese whispers', as information about the sites, often in anecdotal form, is shared amongst and between guides and tourists. Secondly, there is also a shared mythical poetics of literary and touristic experience, manifest in the vocabularies of 'quest', 'discovery', 'in the footsteps of' and so on- a language that seems to possess a more performative energy than its injunction as mere cliché would suggest.

At all times, then, this project considers *The Lord of the Rings* and film tourism in New Zealand as a type of mythology. For Chris Rojek, "myth and fantasy play an unusually large role in the social construction of *all* travel and tourist sights" (1997: 53, emphasis added). Selwyn likewise suggests two contexts in which the theme of myths can be useful to the study of tourism (1996: 29). The first falls into line with Saïd's work on Orientalism. In this context, the mythological constructions that tourists, coming from the world's political and economic centres construct about people on its peripheries, is part of a "wider ideological frame of political domination and marginalization" (ibid). In other words, the remoteness or distance of tourist destinations from 'home' invites speculation and fantasy about the nature of what one might experience there, both materially and symbolically (Rojek, 1997: 53). The second context in which tourist myths are constructed "takes its cue from the cultural milieu in which tourism operates" (Selwyn, 1996: 29). That is, "to what extent are tourists driven by instincts of undiluted consumerism and the pursuit of commodities?" (ibid). In this sense, tourism spaces are a dangerous series of "seductions….phantasmagoric forms of escape …[which]…may prove to be irresistible" (Rojek, 1997: 72).

Whilst Selwyn and Rojek's employment of myth are valuable, for instance, in organizing a critique against the "strategic function of producing geopolitical myths about destinations" (Hautesierre, in Shandley et al 2006: 152), their Barthesian reading of 'mythology' is problematic[80]. While it is indeed interesting that a film project based on an explicitly English text, and financed by Hollywood, was seen as exemplary of the merging New Zealand national imaginary (Jones and Smith, 2005: 928), we do need to ensure postcolonial critiques include a more nuanced sense of cultural production and authenticity, as do Jones and Smith. As their work demonstrates, to understand fully how place-myths are created, by and for whom, is *not* simply a one-way

[80] "For Barthes, the myth is very close to classical Marxism's understanding of ideology in that, like ideology, myth is a body of ideas and practices which seek to defend the prevailing structures of power by actively promoting the values and interests of the dominant groups in society. Myth is successful to the extent that it is able to naturalise and universalise the interests of dominant groups as if they were the interests of all members of society" (Storey, 1999: 28).

'dialogue' between producer (host) and consumer (guest)[81], but a much more complex set of imagined identities, aspirations and conflicts. For example, geopolitical delineations between 'home' and 'away' (in tourism studies) or tensions between Hollywood and indigenous cinema (from a film economy perspective) are easily challenged: Matamata residents who were involved in the filming of Hobbiton at the Alexander's farm are known to refer to themselves as "the chosen few"[82]; and pride, rather than hostility, mark New Zealand's attitude towards *The Lord of the Rings*[83] (Beeton, 2005; but compare with Thornley, 2006).

Moreover, as Harrison reminds us, "it is important to remember that the tourist's reasons for travel do not lie in an intention to exploit the place or people they chose to visit. They…do not travel maliciously" (2003: 24). An exploitation of Maori indigenous culture is not on the agenda of tourists putatively seeking a lost (mythical/ fictional) European idyll on Aotearoan soil, and this notion would of course be anathema if suggested to them. Rather, most tourists would understand their visit within multiple framings- of which the cinematic New Zealand, in all its complexity, is but one. The idea that one 'genre' of tourism displaces another genre (or understanding/ appreciation of place) is empirically questionable[84], all the more so seeing as it only seems to be of particular concern in certain circumstances, when particular forms of tourism (for example the mass, the mediated, the 'postmodern') are feared to be encroaching on forms perceived as more traditional, 'cultural' or 'authentic'. Yet the 'set-jetting' phenomena is often just another day on the itinerary; another 'must-do' activity alongside adventure, gastronomy, indigenous culture. We need to seek to understand the ways in which one 'framing' of place – such as 'through' the lens of film tourism – fits with other touristic activities. Moreover, the fact that film tourism is often dystopically viewed as such a 'threat' to the fabric of non-cinematic space is in itself worthy of attention.

Thus, there is a need to thoroughly interrogate the epistemological understanding of virtual (fictional, fabricated, mythical, fantastic) space as *consensually* a departure from, and "always a *negative* of reality[85]" (Burgin, 1996: 29 emphasis in original). Such a belief, which remains largely

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[81] Shandley et al argue that this is the situation in Romania, where 'indigenous' history conflicts with the "powerful Dracula myths imposed by European and American filmic and literary influences". Certainly we can see how *The Lord of the Rings* films, like Dracula's film history, have "become heritage films of a sort…despite their having little to do with local history, experience, or practice" (Shandley et al, 2006: 148). However, they argue that Dracula's Transylvania is *only* a projection of "a bad other [against] which the elite European attempts to legitimate himself" (2006: 141).

[82] Personal communication, Hobbiton tour guide March 2006

[83] And with The Hobbit now in production, this is likely to continue if not rise again.

[84] "We live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault, 1986: 23).

[85] Following Derrida's argument that such either/or binaries are organized as oppositions. The one is privileged at the other concept's expense.

unexamined in tourism studies draws for example upon the anthropological legacy of Claude Levi-Strauss (1992). Despite having come under sustained critique for its prelapsarian insistence[86], his notion of an 'original' authentic pre-existent community nonetheless continues to hold sway within both academic and popular discourses- indeed Bruner argues that this essentialist vocabulary of origins and reproductions is central to Western thought (Bruner, 1994: 398). Tellingly, it still haunts postmodern interpretations of tourism culture that have supposedly left the 'original' behind. Whilst Rojek never actually makes explicit what actually constitutes the 'original' or even 'the before', it is clearly nonetheless highly desirable (Rojek, 1997)[87]. And as Tzanelli notes in reference to the 'highly attractive packaging' of *Lord of the Rings* themed New Zealand; not every potential tourist-viewer is pre-disposed to accept this cinematic landscape, and there is much to be said for those that choose not to- she barely disguises her preference for those tourists who she presumes might prefer to "discover" a pre-*Lord of the Rings* culture (2004). Like Rojek then, Tzanelli appears to long for an (unattainable) "falsehood-proof culture" (Rojek, 1997: 53).

Such a falsehood-proof tourism, according to Scarles, would not be prey to "the power of photography in brochures to present mediated fantasies from material landscapes" (2004: 45). Her discussion, which focuses on Scotland- a destination that frequently capitalizes on it's legendary and supernatural heritage[88] (Inglis and Holmes, 2003), also posits the existence of an 'original' Scotland that has somehow become degraded through the manipulative power of tourism photography. In that photography "enhances how tourists 'see' touristic spaces", it creates a "series of gazes, as images *weave a veil of fantasy* through imagination that ignites tourists' senses and they feel, touch, taste, smell and see what is shown" (ibid: 46, emphasis added). Thus the tourist image is *mythical* in the sense that it is *unreal*, and *misleading*. Led by consumerism and commodification, this is a myth that feeds off the post-modern tourist, "just another consumer junkie, infantilised, schizoid and rendered cognitively and intellectually unable

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[86] "The story is familiar to us all: once there was a pristine and natural place outside the West; then tourism arrived; now what was once pure and authentic has become spoiled and commodified"… Levi-Strauss' plot line has thus far "transcended ideological and disciplinary boundaries" (Shepherd, 2002: 183).

[87] This longing or seduction is also present in Baudrillard's original work. Kaplan notes in *America*, superficially a celebration of the simulacra, the co-presence of an underlying "mystical metaphysics of presence- something out there, lost, irreplaceable, overwhelming, generating an intense melancholia. The revenge of the object seems to be a truly crushing depression, a fatal melancholy". (Kaplan, 1994: 81).

[88] The legacy of Walter Scott's fiction and 19th century tourism to Scotland is a primary example (e.g. Inglis and Holmes, 2003; Cannizzo, 2000); but other recent examples include Rosslyn Chapel, Midlothian, where visitor numbers went from 30,000 to 175, 000 in 2006, following the cinematic release of the *Da Vinci Code*. VisitScotland felt that the religious mystical themes of Dan Brown's novels suited existing motivational marketing themes, and thus promoting Rosslyn was integrated fluidly into existing campaigns. For example, a half-hour documentary, The Rosslyn Enigma, was produced by VisitScotland and Scottish Screen and screened at Tartan Week in New York in April 2006 (Grihault, 2007).

to distinguish between different types of knowledge- a mere sucker for the surfaces of tourist brochures" (Selwyn, 1996: 29). Thus we have a very specific problem with the mythical when employed in a visual sense. As Coleman and Crang summarize, "the visual metaphor often suggests tourism is producing inauthentic images that cloak and mask 'real' world processes. Tourists are bedazzled and allured by promotional images and fobbed off with manufactured and superficial images" (Coleman and Crang, 2002: 8).

The mythical, then, when used in relation to tourism spatialities and practices, tends to serve as an *accusation*. When for example Rojek (correctly in one sense) claims that "there is ample evidence in this history of travel to suggest that sights have produced a discursive level of densely embroidered false impressions, exaggerated claims and tall stories" (1997: 52), what he is also claiming is that this fact presents a *menace*. For Tzanelli, who is specifically talking about the geographies of New Zealand as Middle-earth, "there is a danger that tourist consumption of simulatory landscape and cultures will *overwrite* specific histories of actual places and cultures" (2004: 38 emphasis added). Thus, rather than a 'mutual ecology', these imagined geographies or fictional landscapes are seen as an environment that *must be kept separate*- in which myth and fantasy are dangerous, liminal strategies or states of mind that need to be 'kept apart' from reality[89] (Selwyn, 1996: 28). This culminates, in Selwyn's account of mythical tourism, in a dystopic concern bordering on moral panic that:

"Unless there is the ability to distinguish between the myths and fantasies of tourists (authentic in some senses as these may be) on the one hand, and politic-economic and social cultural processes, on the other, there may be in the end, as Baudrillard (1988) has warned, be no way out of an eventual wholesale Disneyfication[90] *of one part of the world built on the wasteland of the other" (Selwyn, 1996: 30).*

Yet is this *actually* the case? Does myth (in this sense) actually have this "imperative, buttonholing character" (Barthes, 1973: 134)[91]? Do fictional representations of place actually effect these dystopic transformations? Do they purify or obscure, do they produce truths that go without saying? I argue that it is rather the very *nature* of the virtual/ actual dualism that produces an unreflexive truth in many geographies of tourism and cinema. Charlesworth finds his experience of the former Plaszow (Krakow) concentration camp uneasy due to Spielberg's use of the location in Schindler's List- he feels misled and enthralled by his knowledge of the film and its

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[89] Matless also argues a similar point from a cultural geography perspective: "The mystical, the magical and the spectral can be traced as warning signs, boundary markers, temptations, for the academic discipline of geography, and for popular and policy geographical discourse" (Matless, 2008: 336)

[90] See Ritzer and Liska (1997) for a fuller development of the idea of 'McDisneyization' and 'post-tourism' as homogenising forces in contemporary culture

[91] Barthes argues that myth destroys the complexity of human acts and organises a world which is without contradictions and depth (1973: 156)

impact on the space, and concludes that the film *erroneously* leads to a sense of having "gained at least some geographical knowledge" whilst there (2004: 310). Rodaway likewise firmly delineates between 'direct' sensuous encounters with landscape, and the indirect and inferior experience of mediated landscapes (1994: 161). But little empirical evidence exists to suggest that this ontological distinction can be sustained in everyday practice- indeed it seems a particularly harmful dialectic. As DeLyser explains in reference to Southern California, "to assume that a mythic west has existed as an entity separate from some 'real' West is to create a false dichotomy and to collapse a complexly intertwined history" (2001: 24).

This is not to say that the important socio-political implications of such critiques can be dismissed- how geopolitical myths are produced and sustained about places, by and for whom, is not an issue to be ignored or romanticized. Yet, neither is it one to be simplified or reduced to binary caricatures of producer and tourist, real and virtual and so on. At the cost of producing albeit productive critiques of the politics of representation at touristic sites, we are "left with little understanding of the individual and collective social significance of [tourism encounters] from the perspectives of tourists themselves" (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008: 78). Put more bluntly, such critiques leave us, the tourist, "with nowhere to go" (Torchin, 2002)[92].

So, it is perhaps the organization of mythical tourism representations[93] that "lets us down" (Dewsbury 2003: 1910). It is not *wrong*; rather it is "the belief that it offers complete understanding- and that *only* it offers any sensible understanding at all- that is critically flawed" (ibid: 1911). For our tourists in Middle-earth, tall stories and exaggerated claims mark the *genesis* of the touristic encounter with this fictional time-space. That is, myth and mythmaking mark the *beginning* rather than the culmination of enquiry; they give the tourist 'somewhere to go', beyond either dupes stuck in a 'thicket of unreality' (Boorstin, 1987) or engaged in apocalyptic depression or revelry" (Torchin, 2002: 250).

Thus, theory has failed the tourist. It has failed to speak of the lived and embodied experience of doing tourism, and of experiencing place in all its rich heterogeneity. Ironically, the everyday language of tourism is not so stilted. As Löfgren notes, "the picturesque, the sublime, and the panoramic framed the [19th century touristic] landscape and offered different modes for taking it in. they all contributed their own elements of fixing, delineating, and organizing an eventful situation, a moment of vision. They produced specific forms and conceptual frameworks for communicating feelings and experiences. Many of the adjectives we still use to describe tourist

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[92] Thus our film-tourists in Middle-earth are left with 'nowhere to go'- not in the sense that Chris Rojek insinuates- a dystopian world of empty signs and encounters (1997: 72); but in Torchin's meaning- that theory has failed them.

[93] Or "metaphors", as Chaney calls them (2002).

events and sights belong to a vocabulary developed in these traditions…..roads still tend to be winding, forests lush, brooks babbling….(1999: 75)[94].

TRAVELMETRO

Monday, September 8, 2003 METRO

THE REAL LORD OF THE RINGS JAMES ELLIS BRAVELY VENTURES TO JRR TOLKIEN'S CRACK OF DOOM AND LIVES TO TELL THE TALE

Mordor, he wrote

I'm walking through the land of Mordor to stand at the foot of Mount Doom and don't know whether I'll return.

When New Zealander Peter Jackson was filming the Lord Of The Rings trilogy he knew his home country was the perfect setting for Middle Earth, but it still took scouts months to find the right locations. That was until it came to filming the path to Sauron's dark lands when there was only one choice – the alien volcanic landscape of the Tongariro National Park.

The park spans the plateau of the Ruapehu, Tongariro and Ngauruhoe volcanoes, and the Tongariro Crossing between the peaks is said to be the best hike in the country.

Ngauruhoe's near-perfect conical shape was the inspiration for Mount Doom, but couldn't be filmed by the crew due to Maori folklore.

Our guide is Scotty Barry – a rugged Scotsman (funny that), he leaves you in no doubt as to what is to follow: 'It will take seven hours if you're super fit and if the weather turns on the way up, we're coming straight back. It's far too dangerous.'

A short drive later and we're at the beginning of the trail in Mangatepopo. Scotty points up to the shoulder that lies between Tongariro and Ngauruhoe, which is what we're attempting to navigate.

'We're at an altitude of 800m and we'll reach around 1900m on the shoulder. The good news is that we'll do 40 per cent of the effort within the first four miles.'

And he isn't lying. We cross the first part of the trail relatively easily. It takes little more than an hour to go over an inclined plateau with babbling brooks and vegetation with weird and wonderful names.

One of them is called veggie lamb according to Scotty (a good hiker he may be, his Latin is awful). It's a type of moss that looks like a fleece and takes centuries to grow. It's so delicate it had to be protected with carpet off-cuts during filming.

Shortly after, we come to the beast: the Devil's Staircase, a field of black basalt with a 40degree incline that takes us near the summit. It leaves us climbing hand over hand and severely out of breath.

THE GRAND CHATEAU

The Mount Ruapehu Grand Chateau is one of New Zealand's most luxurious hotels. Built in 1929, its splendid interior, akin to an old hunting lodge, could be mistaken for the hotel where Jack Nicholson went mad in The Shining. Indeed, in the war it was turned into a psychiatric hospital for shell-shocked soldiers. There are six restaurants and bars, and you're five minutes from the Whakapapa ski fields. It also has it's own Mount Doom golf course made on volcanic ground. www.chateau.co.nz

Like a different planet: Crossing the alien, volcanic landscape is said to be the best hike in the country

At the top you can carry on, or take a two-hour side trek to the summits of Tongariro or Ngauruhoe. Tempting as it was to head up the latter and throw in the replica One Ring To Rule Them All I'd bought the day before, we were running out of time. So we carry on over the south crater of the Tongariro and then on to the final incline leading to the shoulder which affords us amazing views.

From here the descent starts. We pass the Ketetahi Hut (where wimps can rest overnight) and take the 1,700 steps down to the valley below. Spurred on by jibes about my fitness thanks to my 30-a-day habit, I decide to set the pace and set off relentlessly.

My feet pound, my knees jar and my feet rub – but I'm determined to make it in under seven hours.

As we get closer to the bottom, the terrain changes. We're engulfed by rainforest and the air – despite the drop in altitude – seems cooler.

By now we're all feeling the pain, and the path is cruel to us, making us climb again to come down, but eventually we reach Ketetahi. A look at our watches shows that we've beaten that average time: we come in at six hours and 58minutes.

I take my trainers off and I have blisters as big as the volcanoes. But there's no pain: we walked through Mordor, stood at the foot of Mount Doom and survived.

James flew to Auckland with Air New Zealand (Tel: 0800 028 4149, www.airnewzealand.com) and stayed at The Grand Chateau (see box). For more information on New Zealand, visit www.purenz.com

BARE ESSENTIALS

The Tongariro Crossing through the Tongariro National Park on New Zealand's North Island spans 12miles from Mangatepopo to Ketetahi.

Currency: £1 = NZ$2.76

Language: English

CHECK OUT METRO'S TRAVEL OFFERS ON PAGE 22

HIDDEN CORNER

Tingaki, Kos

Kos, the third largest Greek island, is a most beautiful place. Its white sandy beaches stretch for miles. Some are large, bustling places which offer watersports. Others are small, exclusive coves. From here you can see Kalymnos, home to the famous sponge divers, the uninhabited island of Pserimos and over into Turkey.

The gentle breeze is cool enough to let you stay all day before sauntering back into town. Try out the Maskot bar – where two of Kos's national treasures are kept, barmen Christo and Theo. *Paula Toms, Poole, Dorset*

Paula wins a break in Venice

Hidden Corner is taking a well-deserved rest and will return later in the year

Travelocity.co.uk we search 700 airlines worldwide 0870 111 7056

Image 21- The lively world of tourism language: The catchy title of one of the six-part LotR/ New Zealand travel special run in the Metro (2003)[95] (author's collection)

And whilst we must be aware that this lay vocabulary does not claim to present a critical project on the subject of space, surely we must still ask why, and how, the language of critical geography *nonetheless fails* to speak to these everyday experiences of (imagined) space- as Gordon notes, "we do not usually experience things, nor are affects produced, in the rational and objective ways our terms tend to portray them" (1997: 22). So, although lay geographies may not possess a more accurate or conceptually clear vocabulary for how the 'difference' between the real and the unreal is encountered (in terms of texts, images, landscapes); it is at least *broader*.

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[94] "The commonality and familiarity of travel may also be seen in the fact that travel is the most common of metaphors used to explicate transformations and transitions of all sorts…travel is as familiar as the experience of the body, the wind, the earth, and this is why at all times and in all places it is a source of reference, a ground of symbols and metaphors, a resource of signification" (Leed, 1991: 3-4). See also Dann (1999).

[95] Ellis, (2003, September 8) *Mordor, he wrote*. Metro. Can be electronically accessed at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/holidaytypeshub/article-591097/Mordor-wrote.html

Image 22- "Middle-earth? No, Northern Ireland. County Antrim to be precise…" [96]

Thus, to use this image of the Giant's Causeway as an example, whilst it would be hard to disagree with Kneafsey's argument that "modern tourism representations of Ireland continue to draw on 'the melancholy vision' of the northern romantic tradition of landscape painting through the use of visual codes such as the subdued light of dawn, mist-shrouded ancient ruins and the gnarled tree on a bare hillside" (Kneafsey 2001: 128), it is also clear that this aesthetic encounter *nonetheless happens*[97] outside of critical discourse- and as the image above shows, that fictional spaces are *imaginatively conjured* from within our lived environments (by many different people, and for very different reasons). The interest of this work is on the imaginative processes of *how*. How do we visually evoke one place out of another? How do places play on each other's

[96] This picture (by Derek Croucher) and caption featured in a Guardian Travel photo gallery called "Where in the world but Britain"- a showcase of photographs highlighting the diversity of Britain's landscapes. Interestingly, Middle-earth was the only non-actual landscape used to suggest other identities for the ten included images of the UK which were aesthetically linked to geographical locations as distant as Mexico, Australia, Egypt, Thailand, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Namibia, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Serengeti, and Kruger Park. [http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/gallery/2007/feb/28/uk.beach?picture=329730327] accessed 14th June 2009.

[97] Crouch for example argues that as 'encountering subjects' tourists "make lay knowledge through a complexity of awareness that is immediate, diffuse and interactive and far more complex than a detached vision and sign-reading", thus "building upon and advancing other interpretations of touring as privileged by vision and culturally mediated semiotics" (Crouch et al 2001: 254, 256).

identities? In a final retour to Urry, drawing upon another key quote from *The Tourist Gaze*, he argues that:

> *"Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation,* ***especially through daydreaming and fantasy****, or intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving a different sense from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze" (Urry, 1990: 3 emphasis added).*

Yet little has been said of *daydreaming*[98] or *fantasy*, or of *intense pleasures*. For one reason, they have remained difficult notions to operationalise in research. As Bærenholdt suggests, "whereas it has been common to conceive of tourism as *fuelled* by desires for escape attempts, the *embodied practices* of these 'ways of escape' have not really been an issue" (2004, emphasis added)[99]. Yet, this thesis will argue that such an understanding is tantamount: For example, what is the nature of the virtual/ actual dialectic? Is it one characterized by disjuncture or connectedness, stability or restlessness? What are the ingredients in its 'mélange'? How do we 'straddle', 'frame' or 'overlay' these apparently divided spaces? And do we feel joyful or perhaps fraught, when faced with this multiplicity? Does there have to be a winner and a loser- as Torchin notes, is this simply a matter of battle and conquest? Or rather, should we be seeking to "complicate the terrain of the itinerant viewer, the one compelled to negotiate these spaces" (Torchin, 2002: 254).

Shouldn't we then be turning to *emotions*, rather than motives? Doesn't the fact that notwithstanding the visitor increase figures and statistics, Tourism New Zealand (alongside Visit Britain and Film UK) still cannot offer reasons for (film) tourism motivation? As Crang notes of his ethnography of a living history visitor attraction, if "we were to speak of truly Quixotic quests it would be an academic one to find some underlying 'motive' that drives re-enactors as a mass, that organizes the whole experience, some essence of the manor" (2000). Yet too often, emotions have perhaps been seen as something that needs seeing past in order to organizes the *real* reason people choose to visit places- instead, perhaps we need to see emotions as defining the contours of these multiple worlds that are inhabited by different subjects (Ahmed, 2004: 25). After all, as Callon and Law note,

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[98] We can trace a legacy for daydreaming and intense pleasures, according to Colin Campbell, to the Romantic ethic. The rise of individualism and self-consciousness, alongside the cultivation of imagination and experience as pleasure, led to a new form of hedonism which tended to focus on the future, anticipated desire as opposed to that already known or experienced. *En masse*, Campbell argues, this leads to the ubiquity of daydreaming in the nascent commodity world, an "endemic practice of modern societies" (in Storey, 1999: 16).

[99] Even Rojek argues that "the emerging sociology of tourism and travel has not really got to grips with the role of the unconscious in colouring sights" (1997: 53).

"Passion, emotion, to be affected, all have to do with travel, with circulation. The language gives it away. To be moved, to be transported, the trip, these are metaphors for displacement. As, too, is addiction, a word that comes from the Latin ad-ducere, to lead away". (Callon and Law, 2004: 11).

Thus we are only in the infancy of thinking about ways to conceptualise this sensual dreamworld of tourism, and the role of the emotions and imagination in shaping the tourist encounter, despite recent moves in this direction incorporating a closer attention to, for example, the corporeal, performative and multi-sensual dimensions of travel. Many areas remain unexplored, and with this in mind, this thesis argues that it is high time scholarly attention is paid to the film-tourism phenomena within a broader cultural history, focusing in particular upon *how* people negotiate their own practical constructions of fantasy and realism within the realms of tourism practices, as opposed to reducing myth and fantasy to sociological function or incomprehensible fairyland. However, this is not to say that that the aim of the thesis is to fix the causes and meaning of such imaginative geographies- to result in a reading of these experiences "as symptomatic of a politics of identity or as response to processes of secularisation and the rise of scientific discourse" (Holloway, 2006: 185).

Rather, it aims to be a non-reductionist exploration of what imaginative geographies are *like,* denying neither the 'reality' of the fantasies and sensations of tourists, nor the 'reality' of how such sensations inform space. Following Holloway (2006: 182), and Thrift (2004: 57) it takes these spaces as being infused with a certain affective energy, limited in (cultural-political) accounts which "leave little room for an exploration of the sensuousness, the sheer vitality, and the affect" of these events and spaces. After all, it is through these embodied relations, performances, and affectual sensations, that these spatial formations are "formed and reformed" in individual and group identities, societal discourses, or institutions (Holloway, 2006: 183).

Thus, the final chapter – *Enchanted encounters in Middle-earth* – employs recent work within cultural geography on materiality, the spectral and enchantment to think afresh the ways we might conceptualise filmic landscapes and practices of film tourism. Focusing on the ways in which the former film sets appear as 'ruined' spaces, full of ethereal relics and traces of filming/ Middle-earth, the celebrity-haunted spaces of WETA's Wellington, and the glittering revenance of the film's artefacts within the space of the museum (*The Lord of the Rings* movie exhibition, Te Papa museum) this chapter attempts to recover an oft-omitted sense of the imaginative in practices of tourism and popular culture consumption more broadly.

And just as this chapter in particular highlights how tourists summon, or conjure up landscapes, effecting connections between actual and virtual spatio-temporalities, I want to conclude that this project also takes a parallel approach. Indeed Avery Gordon argues that the primary role of the social sciences *is* to conjure up social life:

"Conjuring is a particular form of calling up and calling out the forces that make things what they are in order to fix and transform a troubling situation. As a mode of apprehension and reformation, conjuring merges the analytical, the procedural, the imaginative, and the effervescent" (Gordon, 1997: 22).

What I am attempting to conjure, is what happens *beyond* escape- that is, what happens when 'escapism', (as an example of a 'representation' or metaphor commonly attributed to the practice of tourism), is understood as a starting point or trajectory for experience as opposed to a finality, a symptom of some other sociological need. Such an approach, Lorimer ironically argues, "offers *us* an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently wait our discovery, interpretation, judgement and ultimate representation" (2005: 84). Or, as Goss puts is:

"The critic's task is not to rudely wake up the consumer [tourist] to the reality outside consumption, but to ourselves awaken to the potential of the dream inside of which we shop [tour] and so to reveal the traces of ideals of collectively meaningful life that are so vulnerable to forgetting" (Goss, 1999: 75).

Indeed, as DeLyser notes if we only find fault in the fact that these landscapes and these versions of the past were woven, in part, from fiction, then we lose some of life's complexity- our goal should then be not to seek 'the real' beneath the 'plague of fantasies', nor to accept simulation as all there is and fatally to surrender to hyperreality' (Žižek, 1997), but rather to be able to take pleasure [jouissance] in the play of reality and fantasy, while critically examining how things actually seem, and how we actually believe in this distinction (DeLyser, 1999: 632).

Researching The Lord of the Rings film-tourism in New Zealand- theoretical approaches

To conclude the conceptual chapter, this section outlines the key theoretical approaches that are productive in engaging with the aforementioned research aims and objectives of this thesis: that is, to explore 'film-tourists' and their practices at the former *Lord of the Rings* film sets in New Zealand and to think about how we might usefully conceptualise these 'cinematic spaces'. In both cases, this research takes the 'mythical' as a central and *productive* metaphor. In doing so, it aims to positively contribute to the existing tourism studies literature. A number of new directions in tourism research, which have been inflected by the cultural and spatial turns in the social sciences, and equally by recent analyses of the body, of performance and of objects (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 140) contribute valuably to the aims of this research, and they are outlined here.

Non-representational theory and cultural geographies of tourism

"There is so much going on here that cannot be squeezed into knowable or representational form" (Bissell, forthcoming)

Because of the imagined and imaginative aspect of many of the situations and encounters that this thesis aims to explore, and because most representational accounts of tourism seem to have failed to faithfully evoke the lived experience of being a tourist, I suggest that we turn to non-representational theory as an organising conceptual framework for considering the fantasy film-tourism phenomenon. Non-representational theory has gained much currency in recent cultural geography[100], and signals, according to McCormack, "an ontological and epistemological commitment. Ontologically, it draws attention to the ways in which the world is emergent from a range of spatial processes whose power is not dependent on their crossing a threshold of contemplative cognition. At the same time, non-representational theory challenges the epistemological priority of representations as the grounds of sense-making or as the means by which to recover information from the world" (2003: 488). This is neither 'a world' that is an extant thing, nor something projected, but rather, "a context or background against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming).

[100] For a detailed analysis of the emergence of Non-Representational Theories across human geography, see Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming.

It should be noted that non-representational theories are not unique to human geography (see for example Bennett, 2001), and equally seem to share "affinities of method and sensibility with a whole series of 'minor' traditions in social geography[101]" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming). What is also of some import is that despite its prefix, non-representational theory is in actual fact in no way *opposed* to the work of representations, and indeed, some have suggested that an alternative name, such as 'more-than-representational', might be more suitable (Lorimer, 2005). Whether or not this is the case, what is important is that non-representational theories are not 'anti'- representation; but rather open up a space in which representations, and what they might effect, are taken seriously.

What gels together a diverse body of non-representational theory accounts, according to Anderson and Harrison, is "a concern for the sensate and (post-)phenomenological dimensions of existence" (forthcoming). They argue that the prioritisation of *becoming* over *being* and *process* over *fixity* "has enabled geographers to consider how the strata of signification, discourse and meaning emerge first and foremost through practice and performance" (ibid, emphasis added). To be more specific about what non-representational theories are and do, Anderson and Harrison suggest three main areas of synergy that bring together much diverse work in this area: *practices*, *life and the social*, and *events and futurity*. Practices, they argue, are absolutely central to the notion of non-representational theory- which has at its heart a "*practical* and *processual* basis for its accounts of the social, the subject and the world…non-representational theory locates the making of meaning and signification in the 'manifold of actions and interactions' rather than in a supplementary dimension such as that of discourse, ideology of symbolic order" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming original emphasis).

Performativity, affect and embodiment

The 'performative turn' has also been witnessed in tourism studies, and "can in some way be seen as an attempt to by-pass the polarization of the field around tourists and hosts or consumers and producers", as it seeks to grasp the fluidity and multidimensionality of tourism without signing up to the reduction of tourism to visual consumption of signs and images or of places to territorial containers (Jóhannesson, 2005: 136). This is important, because, as Bærenholdt et al point out, tourist places are not bound to specific environments or place images- rather it is the corporeal and social *performances* of tourists that make places 'touristic'" (2004: 2). The theatrical metaphor clearly lends well to thinking through the 'staged' aspect of attractions

[101] For example: time-geography, feminist work on performance and performativity, Goffmanesque dramaturgical accounts of social action, and ethnomethodological investigations (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming).

produced specifically for a tourist audience (Edensor, 2001). Other explorations of tourist performances have followed a richly phenomenological vein in focusing in on the embodiedness of *being a tourist (*e.g. Cant, 2003; Obrador Pons, 2003; Urry 2000). The body is key in these accounts of situations and events, and are marked by a sense of proximity and intimacy (Pile, 2010: 11). Such accounts have often provided a valuable antidote to the visual hegemony of tourism theory- in that they have 'added the senses back in' to tourism studies. Jokinen and Veijola, for example, make the observation that "there is no scenery without the aspect of embodiment. It is only through the body of the observer that the scenery gets its attributes. The border zone between culture and nature in the landscape *happens*, is practiced through and within embodied subjects who inhabit the landscape, move and feel (in) it, yield to its forms and curves, or fight them" (2003: 272). Through frequently (auto)ethnographic narratives, such emotional geographies emphasize (and value) "emotionally poignant and powerful" accounts- "It privileges people's expressed emotional experiences, and treats their accounts as open, honest and genuine" (Pile, 2010: 8).

Yet, alternative work from affectual geography has been critical of emotional geographies, arguing that they assume the nature of emotions; objectify emotions by naming them, present superficial accounts due to it being mesmerized by expressed accounts of emotional life; and failing to provide a political antidote to the manipulation of non-cognitive and/or pre-cognitive emotional life (Pile, 2010: 8)[102]. Such accounts are criticized by affect theory because they posit the emotions as something known and knowable, something that can be reflected upon. Theories of affect, on the other hand, suggest that we do not actively know how we feel, a lot of the time- that is, it adds a crucial non-cognitive or pre-cognitive dimension to the sensate registers of non-representational theories, and through this has the effect of emphasizing "the excessive dimension of existence; the excesses and surpluses" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming). Affect, according to Clough, can be defined as "a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness" (2007: 3). As Bissell puts it:

> *"Thinking through the event through the lens of affect allows us to think about the affective relations that comprise both human and non-human worlds and to consider the complex distributed agency that emerges from the blurring of subject-object distinctions. The affects emergent in this situation, in contrast to the emotional response, are characterised by an autonomy that does not reside in some 'internal' world of the body, but flow between the bus, seats, hospital and bodies……and it is these affects that make space" (Bissell, forthcoming).*

Thus, although emotional and affectual theories are both couched in non-representational theory, and do share several key assumptions – a specific ontology of relation, mainly involving a

[102] See Anderson and Harrison for a discussion of opposing viewpoints on certain branches of non-representational theories as representing a 'normative humanism' (forthcoming).

concern with fluidity; a valuation of proximity and intimacy; and a methodological emphasis on ethnography (Pile, 2010: 5) – theories of affect nonetheless mark a distinct conceptual break from emotional geographies.

However, as well as differentiating itself from emotional geographies, approaches to affect are far from homogenous- or harmonious. Thrift identified at least 3 potentially conflicting approaches to affect (2004), and more recently Pile has criticized the 'hypocrisy' of some affective geographies, as, he argues, "affect cannot be presented, [as] to attempt to do so textually is to re-present and represent affect (Pile, 2010: 17). However, as Bissell cautions, there are "complex reciprocal relations between the affective and discursive" (forthcoming)[103], and a sensitivity to emotions *and/or* affects contrasts sharply with much earlier tourism theory, and greatly complements the more common discourse-centric explorations of experience and meaning. For, non-representational theories and affect are well-placed for picking upon the 'intensities' of touristic experience, upon that which is both pre-cognitive but also amenable to cognition. They give us access to a different stratum of reality, one which is semi-autonomous, and in excess of signification- but that nonetheless interacts with it.

In effect, what this does is to say that 'readings' of certain tourist places are not wrong – take for Baudrilllard's pessimistic readings of America[104] (1988) – but that there is potentially *more* to the story; a sense of a lived experience beyond the unveiling of signifying social constructs through authoritative readings (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006: 277). The power of this 'more' may lie in its *affirmative* force- in tourism studies in particular, this fresh register has given a makeover to a field of scholarship marred by detached cynicism and 'seriousness' (Franklin and Crang, 2001). Thus, whilst "emotional geographers want to talk directly to people about their personal feelings and affectual geographers don't, each prefers forms of knowledge that deliver a sense of the intimate, especially where this is normally hidden" (Pile, 2010: 10). Both approaches, couched in non-representational theory, assert that "in any given situation more is needed than critique if (certain) events are to be tended to and cultivated" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming).

An attentiveness to performativity, embodiment, and affect/emotion thus underscores the rest of this work. Of course, a Goffmanesque performative metaphor seems entirely apt for forms of

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[103] "Affect is first and foremost pre-personal phenomena. It *precedes* signification and the formation of meaning. Yet if we consider meaning to be the gluey viscosity that stabilizes and sediments identities, biographies and other symbolic systems that, from time to time, give impressions of coherence, this is not to say that meaning is absent from experiences of pain….If we take physical pain to *mean* danger, damage and destruction; the affective charge might be intensified. Conversely, we change the meaning of pain, perhaps to stand for empowerment, warmth and love; negative affects such as anxiety or fear *might* just be quiesced" (Bissell, forthcoming).

[104] See Kaplan for an interesting discussion of Baudrilllard's writings (1996).

'mediated tourism' where tourists, at least on the surface of things, appear to be 'acting' in quite a literal sense (e.g. Edensor, 2001). However, an attentiveness to bodies, and what they are actually *doing*, also takes us other places. What bodies do or do not betray of what people are *saying* about what they are doing, has implications in Chapter 3, where we see that tourists performances are choreographed by their perceived identities as *Lord of the Rings* fan-tourists. What this chapter discovers is that asking people to communicate their feelings will only solicit a kind of affective false consciousness", reflecting indeed that in this case, "affects matter- but they cannot be grasped, made known or represented" (Pile, 2010: 9).

Materiality

Another strand of non-representational theory has moved from a focus on *human* practices to consider the human "as but one active actor in much larger trans- and non-human systems and complexes"- such accounts thus highlight the contingency of the human in the fold of the social (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming). These theories work with a *relational-material or 'associative' account of the social* (ibid, original emphasis). Non-representational theory is therefore thoroughly materialist, and "does not limit a-priori what kinds of beings make up the social. Rather everything takes-part and in taking-part, takes place: everything happens, everything acts" (ibid). Yet, like much of other work influenced by the cultural turn in the social sciences, tourism has typically failed to understand the significance of material objects, the 'sensuous immediacy' of material culture to tourists (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006: 276). First and foremost, tourism performances are made *possible* and *pleasurable* by objects, machines and technologies. "Discourses, sensuous bodies, machines, objects, animals and places are choreographed together and build heterogeneous cultural orders that have the capacity to act, that have effects and affects" (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006: 278).

Central, then, to a materialist view of tourism, is the need to understand tourist places as "hybrids bridging the realms of humans and nonhumans. This bridging is brought about by diverse mobilities and proximities, flows of anticipations, performances and memory as well as extensive social-material networks stabilizing the sedimented practices that make tourist places" (Bærenholdt, 2004: 2). The relational materialities of the tourist world are perfectly captured by their metaphor of the sandcastle- because all tourist places are, like sandcastles, "tangible yet fragile constructions, hybrids of mind and matter, imagination and presence. The castle only comes into existence by drawing together particular objects, mobilities and proximities….the 'place', the sandcastle, only appears as artefact as it organizes a multiplicity of intersecting mobilities" (2004: 2). What the sandcastle shows, perhaps above all else, is that as a touristic 'ordering' it is an open, provisional achievement- just as the family that built it will leave the beach at the end of the day, so too the sea will wash it away.

Thus the sandcastle- that is, a relational-material understanding of tourist place, also highlights that the social is formed of "entities *both* present and absent" (Anderson and Harrison,

forthcoming). Again, other work on tourism has reflected a new sensitivity towards 'almost-not-quite' entities across taking place across human geography. Indeed, the fact that a significant branch of tourism is predicated on absences and the emotions such absences provoke – heritage sites, ghost tours and sites of atrocity to name just three quite different examples – we clearly need to attend to more than the symbolic registers of these experiences. Here, the work of Jane Bennett on the notion of 'enchantment' has been instructional (2001). As Adey and Maddern describe, whilst it is evident that many tourist attractions are designed precisely to produce such 'haunting' effects, there is equally an unplanned aspect to it, something with has escaped design, something incalcitrant that we may or may not want to encounter (2008). The following empirical chapters take these theoretical underpinnings as a departure point for their analyses, in that they attend to the practices and processual element of tourist performances, reflect on the emotional and affective registers of such experiences, contextualise tourists and their activities within a broader 'network' of human and non-human relations, and, perhaps most crucially for gaining a sense of these imaginative/ fictional geographies, think through the 'almost-not-quite' excessiveness of these spaces.

Conclusion

In summary, this research takes a broadly non-representational approach- it approaches tourism as "a productive system that fuses discourse, materiality and practice" (Franklin and Crang 2001: 17), and attempts to "move beyond representation towards seeing tourism as a system of presencing and performance" (ibid). For this reason, I have argued that non-representational theories are well-placed to consider the 'in-between' of mind and matter, the imaginative practices that enact the 'world' of *Lord of the Rings* tourism in New Zealand. The following empirical work is therefore most interested in the "meanings and values [that] emerge *from* practices and events in the world", and aims to narrate a sense of "the ontogenesis of sense…a sense of how real the really made-up can be" (Anderson and Harrison, forthcoming original emphasis). It offers a different way of framing and responding to this problem that values *thought-in-action* (ibid), and refuses to search for an extrinsic source of causality or determination. So, for example, rather than 'escape' functioning as a 'symptom of' (tourists desire to escape their everyday lives, for example), or being regarded simply as a literary allegorical themes, such terms of representation become a starting point- *a trajectory*: for, as Russell notes, "beyond the limits of representation exist other realities of experience, desire, memory, and fantasy" (Russell, 1999: 25).

Chapter Two: Methodology- auto-ethnography, reflexivity, fandom

"There is no reason to suppose that we are different from those whom we study…ethnography is a product, an interactive outcome, and nothing to do with observation by neutral or disembodied intellects" (Law, 1994: 16-17)

A quest of my own

It was probably only a couple of months before the cinematic release of the *Fellowship of the Ring* that I first really became aware of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Bizarrely, and despite being a voracious reader as a child, I had never encountered any of J.R.R. Tolkien's work. The invitation to go and watch the Fellowship was therefore greeted with some suspicion, mainly because at that point I was still confusing *The Lord of the Rings* with the *Lord of the Flies* (1963), which I had always disliked. Despite being told of my error on several occasions, I was still unconvinced, as the lights dimmed, that this wasn't going to be a film about castaway boys. Fortunately it wasn't- and the long prologue introducing this world of elves and men, and a Dark Lord, where 'history turned to legend, legend turned to myth, and some things were forgotten that should not have been….' abruptly ended the *tabula rasa* of my involvement in the world of Tolkien.

As odd now as is it to recollect my ignorance of one of the 20th century's best known novels, it is also quite something to have managed to miss out on the years of excited anticipation and conjecture that accompanied the long wait for the *Fellowship* to reach cinemas. As I was soon to learn, the world wide web had been far from silent on the issue, and from the very day that the films were announced, millions of Tolkien enthusiasts, old and new, were checking out websites such as TORN[105], which was developed as a forum to discuss every fine detail of the production process. But I was ignorant of all of this, of how the script differed from the text, or of many of the other hot issues that avid Tolkien readers were waiting to see. I suppose if I had read the book before seeing the movie, as bookshops at the time were urging me to do, then I wouldn't have been sat in the theatre three hours later wondering when on earth this film was going to end. It wasn't that I hadn't enjoyed it, but after three whole hours I was starting to wonder if and when they were ever going to get to Mordor.

Of course, after being informed it was going to be a trilogy, everything seemed a little clearer and all agreed it had been a good film, and a great way to spend a day with friends before the

[105] http://theonering.net

Christmas break. We should do it again next year, and the year after, we joked- and in fact that's what we did. It became something of an event. Everyone got a day off, we had lunch, went to a matinee, maybe some outdoor ice-skating afterwards and then the pub. That is the story of my first encounter with the *Lord of the Rings*, and stunningly far from a sort of epiphanal moment one might expect, that memorable first encounter that many Tolkien enthusiasts can recount. I had enjoyed it- indeed, I generally quite like heroic fantasy films, and I did find that I was going over it in my head for quite some days afterwards. Yet, it was only between the two subsequent installments, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, that I actually read the books. By now, I was studying for a Masters, and starting to prepare a proposal for a PhD. My interests by now had gone towards mediated forms of tourism, and how people experienced heritage tourism. All of a sudden, a fantasy film and an annual Christmas affair started morphing into something quite different.

New Zealand's tourism had been boosted by the trilogy, the trilogy had done all it had said it was going to, and was globally a huge, successful phenomenon that would last- it made a great case study. Indeed, in its scope, it seemed to be an exemplar of the 'film-tourism' phenomena I was eager to study. All of a sudden the world of Tolkien was set to become a significant part of my life. Yet it was only one of two case studies I originally proposed and set out to study. It was the legendary associations of King Arthur in the southwest of Britain that I felt more affinity to, and more interest in researching. It's a testament to the intensity of my relationship with *The Lord of the Rings* that it (finally) displaced the Arthurian content from this work[106]. There are of course practical reasons: as comparative studies they were not as comparable as I thought; I would spend longer in New Zealand, simply do more fieldwork there. Even with a Disney version of the Arthurian epic released in cinemas in 2005, Arthur seemed to lack a specific *zeitgeist* that seems to hold *The Lord of the Rings* very much at the heart of popular literary culture at the turn of the 20th century, and indeed well into it.

However, it was also the experience of researching *The Lord of the Rings* former film set locations, with enthusiast audiences, which was such an overpowering event. Of course, a six-month period of overseas fieldwork should be a challenge- but it was more than that. Firstly, my encounters with the landscapes used to portray these films were far from a reflection of the neutral place I thought Middle-earth held in my imagination: Like Brett Mandel, who set out to explore the site of the *Field of Dreams* baseball diamond in Iowa, there is no forgetting the way I felt, to "find myself standing [there], laughing at myself for the silly grin I sported, feeling as if I had stepped through the looking glass and into something uniquely charmed" (2002: xvi).

106 "Call it grounded theory: in one field another emerged to literally capture my attention and become the field work" (Gordon, 1997: 8). My initial ESRC proposal suggested a three month period of fieldwork in Cornwall- this was undertaken, however, post-fieldwork the Rings material took precedence and the hard decision was finally made to omit the Arthurian content.

Secondly, each and every encounter with the tourists who had come to visit was also profoundly transformational. If I couldn't have answered why *The Lord of the Rings* was important to me, or what motivated me to visit the locations, or how I felt about them, then it was clearly foolhardy to pose the same questions to other visitors. For Rings enthusiasts, the visit to New Zealand to see the 'home of Middle-earth' is certainly a huge event; yet also marked by rich diversity in the ways different people experience it.

Many struggle to verbally rationalise the way they feel about these encounters- as Laurier and Philo suggest, it could be that such "encounters at the heart of fieldwork are ultimately unspeakable- impasses, silences and aporias" (2006: 353). And such encounters seem to demarcate the world of film-tourism, and fandom. Whilst of course there are many individuals who are more than happy to share their enthusiasms and passions with those of similar predispositions, it would be wrong to assume that this is an *intrinsic* feature of such 'communities'. For all my enthusiastic admissions, here, in the pages of a doctoral thesis where they certainly do not need to be, I can also claim that I've never joined anything, never felt the need to share my enthusiasm on websites, blogs or so on. In fact my private relationship with *The Lord of the Rings* would have remained very solitary, and my research also, was it not for the intersecting worlds of my 'research' with my 'fandom'. In fact, to take either aspect out of the equation, I am unsure what would be left. Both would be entirely different experiences. I am still not a person that would post on a fan website (although I am a fan without a doubt), and I found it excruciatingly revealing to put my journal online, which I had nonetheless committed to do out of a sense of reciprocal duty to my respondents. But everyone I met is *also* very different; they love *The Lord of the Rings* but have it in their lives in different ways, different intensities, and different trajectories.

So, from the beginning there were difficulties with setting parameters, of attempting to order, or critique. Certainly the ubiquitous worry on arriving home from New Zealand that I hadn't got enough 'data', was misplaced in the realization that *The Lord of the Rings* had somewhat taken over my life. It has been the locus of my everyday activities for over four years. It is therefore incredibly difficult to even start to unpack my vexed feelings towards Frodo and friends, to evaluate my relationship towards the object of my research. After the lukewarm beginnings, I recall being moved to tears at the end of *The Return of the King* as the end of that epic quest mirrored the end of something that had become somewhat of an annual institution, and something that wasn't ready to leave *my* life yet. It was a desire to experience the narrative again, as well as recreating that feeling of event, which would have me (and no doubt many others) eagerly awaiting the release of the extended DVD's the following Christmas, in order to embark on a back-to-back, Queen's Christmas Day speech-defying, *Lord of the Rings*

marathon[107]. Indeed, I've watched the films countless times now, usually with some research purpose, but always with a great deal of pleasure. I've read the book rather rapidly three times, and look forward to some future-perfect age when I feel I have time to read all the poems and appendices I usually gloss over. Yet, I don't really call myself a fan[108]- and would hesitate to claim the title 'enthusiast'- for which I am sure I know too little of Tolkien.

But, these are the sorts of tensions and paradoxes, little anecdotes and everyday narratives, which are common to everyone who consumes 'popular culture'. And it is in these tentative 'shared enthusiasms' that my ethical intent towards this project lies. It is a project based on the desire to reciprocate the generosity with which the people who participated in it shared their stories. There is simply no reason why I can think that I would want to 'hurt' these people with my research- and akin to Crang (2000) I have felt uncomfortable at the flippant or derogatory comments made against my research, and its bodies- comments that I have come to consider a part of an ostracizing discourse of fantasy, escape or pleasure at work in the academe, in specific disciplines in particular, and in lay geographies of both tourism and popular literature. This discomfort I felt could have been eased, if I had chosen to taken the path of criticism, and it would have in many ways been an easier job to simply read the activities of my research population as symptomatic of, and consistent with, a cynical view of the postmodern condition. By *not* doing this, my discomfort has gradually increased in parallel to my affinity for the very group(s) under criticism. All of a sudden, *I* am also the dupe, the manipulated, or perhaps the superficial, ironic or playful, and *my* voice is given a new vested interest: for as Law comments, "we *all* go native; we *all* interact with what we study. The question is: which tribe or tribes do we choose to join?" (1994: 39)

This is the story of the tribe I chose to join.

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[107] Or perhaps Boxing Day- as one respondent noted, "On December 26th, I took a day "off" and watched the whole trilogy (extended version) again. Nothing has changed, those movies are still the most fantastic fantasy-movies I've ever seen" (Dana, Questionnaire response)

[108] Fan, fanatic, *fanaticus*: as Henry Jenkins notes, the abbreviation of a word drawn from Latin that meant simply "of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee" has subsequently developed both religious and political associations with zealotry, false beliefs, orgiastic excesses, possession and madness, even if the original evocation of the 'fan' by 19th century sports writers was done sympathetically in a somewhat playful fashion (Jenkins, 1992: 12). Following my own autobiographically recounted uncertainty of how I relate my own practices of consumption to the term, I used it quite loosely and interchangeably with the term 'enthusiast' to denote tourists to the former film locations who professed at least some enthusiasm for the books and or films.

Ethnography, film-induced tourism and enthusiast audiences

John Law's 'tribalisms'[109] seem particularly pertinent to a discussion of both popular culture and fandom, and of tourism. Here are fields of consumption in which the academe has striven to distance itself from the object of its study. Here are fields in which potent hierarchies of taste and distinction demarcate the professional and everyday spheres of cultural production and consumption. We find, for example, that the relative 'seriousness' of tourism as a legitimate subject of inquiry remains an issue for many researchers, and tourism research is often framed as a by-product of more scholarly work, with a focus that mainly serves to highlight and condemn its 'bastardization' features (Shepherd, 2002: 184). On the other hand, Harris notes that whilst 'being a fan' is an accepted colloquialism in our culture, fans and fandom are profoundly untheorized in the social sciences. They are, for example, appropriated, co-opted and nurtured as a ready market for the products of the media industry. The press, in the meantime, "seems well-invested in the idea of fandom as highly stigmatised, marked by danger, abnormality, and silliness". In other words, she argues, "much of the discussion around fandom has essentially pathologised it without leading us much closer to understanding this important phenomenon" (Harris, 1998: 3-5)[110].

What does this mean for our potential Lord of the Rings enthusiast/ film tourist visiting the former film locations in New Zealand? There are, of course, tourists who will simply be doing a Rings-themed activity and have no particular connection to the books or films- but there is also a potentially expansive 'community' of tourist-consumers with deep attachments to *The Lord of the Rings*, whether this is a long-term enthusiasm born out of the books, or, as with my own narrative, something stemming primarily from the film adaptations. In either case, and as the preceding autobiography hopes to have highlighted, the culture of *Lord of the Rings*-inspired tourism to New Zealand is couched in its global context as a popular/ sub-cultural high-fantasy text, and, whether or not we consider ourselves to be 'fan-tourists', this is a context which this ethnographic methodology aims to reflect.

Janice Radway's classic ethnography of women romance readers was an early work to take an interest in the ways meaning is made through popular culture texts. In what was a novel approach for literary theory at that time, Radway endeavored – through conducting an ethnography of a small group of romance reading women in the mid-western community of 'Smithton'' – to shift the analytic focus "from the text itself, taken in isolation, to the complex social event of reading" (1987: 8). Whilst being critiqued by some, for reasons such as seeing her women as a "pre-existent interpretative community" and "overlooking the constructivist aspect of

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[109] See also Maffesoli (1996) for development of the idea of 'neo-tribalism'.

[110] See the following chapter for expansion of this point.

her own enterprise" (Ang, 1988: 182), her broad and insightful analysis of the Smithton readers has remained exemplary within trans-disciplinary studies of popular culture that have often remained reticent towards employing ethnographic approaches to audience research[111]- something perhaps reflected in the fact that *Reading the Romance* has maintained a "healthy longevity in academic curricula and sales, continuing to sell almost as many copies now as it did in its first year of publication" (Wood, 2004: 147).

Interestingly however, the audience that Radway so luminously described was not the 'tribe' that she would ultimately join. In fact, Radway's distance from her women romance readers is always maintained, no matter how close an encounter her writing brings us to them, and their experiences of romance reading. Radway cannot reconcile her concerns as a feminist literary theorist with the practices of her readers; and despite charting their complex reading strategies which she sees as undermining patriarchal ideological interpretations; for her, they are nonetheless always engaged in 'compensatory' reading practices – that is, that "these women believe romance reading enables them to relieve tensions, to diffuse resentment, and to indulge in a fantasy that provides them with good feelings that seem to endure after they return to their roles as wives and mothers. As Ang notes, what is so striking is:

> *"The absence of pleasure as pleasure made apparent by Radway's frequent, downplaying qualifications of the enjoyment that the Smithton women have claimed to derive from their favourite genre: that it is a form of vicarious pleasure, that it is only temporarily satisfying, because it is compensatory literature…revealed in such qualifications is a sense that the pleasure of romance reading is somehow not real, as though there were other forms of pleasure that could be considered 'more real', because they are 'more authentic', more enduring, more veritable, or whatever" (Ang, 1988: 185).*

This tension only grows throughout the book as Radway distances herself further and further from the readers of Smithton, towards her status as a (militant) feminist theorist- her "feminist desire is expressed in its most dramatic form: its aim is directed at raising the consciousness of romance reading women, its mode is that of persuasion, conversion even. 'Real' social change can only be brought about….if romance readers would stop reading romances and become feminist activists instead" (Ang, 1988: 184).

Thus despite Radway's honorable intentions of exploring the meanings that readers themselves brought to popular literature texts, her work ultimately risks "drawing dangerously near a form of

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[111] Reticent, or downright opposed- indeed, pop culture scholar Tania Modleski argued that "ethnographic" studies of sub-cultural groups may lead to a "dangerous collusion between mass culture critic and consumer society" (in Ang, 1988: 181).

political moralism, propelled by a desire to make 'them' more like 'us'" (Ang, 1998: 185). Many, like Ang, are left disappointed for the women, who despite attempting to rescue from critical scorn, "she winds up condescending" (Modleski, cited in Wood, 2004: 151). But this is also one reason why the work is so very alluring- as Wood notes, the "chaos" born from Radway's struggle can also be read as something positive (2004: 150). From a methodological perspective, where do these tensions of affiliation lie? How do they intersect with strategies and aesthetics of popular culture consumption? *Reading the Romance* is ultimately marked "by a deep sense of the contradictions and ambivalences posed by mass culture, and by a recognition of the profoundly unresolved nature of critical theory's dealings with it" (Ang, 1988: 181). Thus there is more than one way of writing these 'struggles'; and 'how' to think this audience ethnographically is certainly as important as the reasons to choose an ethnographic approach in the first place[112].

This is clear if we use an alternative example, one in which the scholar aligns himself very differently to the audiences in question- but yet, one that nonetheless maintains a profound sense of separation between academia and popular culture enthusiasm. Henry Jenkins (1992, 2006) firmly associates himself with the popular consumption practices he writes about, he talks about the struggle for acceptance in studying what is popular- for him, 'cultures of seriousness' prevail against the studying of what seems trivial, the trivial must be 'talked up' into something socially worthwhile to be of research value. His work deals very much with fan groups, and he positions himself as marginalized, a fan. In fact, as Pullen argues, he "expresses a certain romantic attachment for fan activity, uncritically assuming that fans who rework meaning are somehow better than the average viewer" (2006: 174). For example, Jenkins argues that one can only really understand fandom 'from the inside', meaning that an ethnography such as Radway's is fundamentally flawed:

"Many scholars and theorists who have written about fans vehemently argue that it is impossible to understand fandom from the 'outside'; one must be a fan and enter into its ethos fully in order to develop models that reflect the social realities of fans themselves" (Jenkins, in Harris, 1998: 6).

However, Jenkins ethically driven 'defence' of fannish consumption – which he suggests is often derided unfairly by 'outsiders' who cannot possibly understand the phenomenon in question – risks rather too neatly delineating the 'fan' from the 'non-fan' as if they were pre-existent ontological categories as opposed to social constructions in the making. His fans have an advantage- a "critical cachet" in their very marginality (Pullen, 2006: 174). But, as Storey argues, such an elitist view of fandom "does little to illuminate the complex relations that exist between forms of popular culture and their audiences…we are unlikely to understand the difference

[112] As Pink comments, "ethnography is an aspect of research and representation. Ethnography is rarely the sole means or end of a research project; different disciplinary uses of it are likely to situate ethnography differently within their processes of research and representation" (2001, 6).

[between the fan and the consumer] if we simply celebrate the former category and dismiss the latter one" (1999: 60). Cultural consumption theory, then, risks oscillating ambivalently between two broadly opposing positions: on the one hand, accounts which cannot escape from an implication that cultural studies' role is to unmask the ideological operations of the culture industry, that its focus should be on domination and manipulation (no matter how hard it attempts to err from this). The alternative position, which aims to challenge the dominance of political economy approaches to cultural theory through showing people "resisting ideological manipulation" is debunked as a form of "romantic celebration" (Storey, 1999: 22).

This brief exposition of Radway and Jenkins is primarily presented here to suggest two very different researcher positionalities towards their respective 'audiences'. And although Radway and Jenkin's audiences are different types of consumers of different types of texts, both are nonetheless significant to a consideration of *The Lord of the Rings.* That is*,* In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a broad 'mass market appeal', even though as a 'high fantasy' novel, it also has sub-cultural associations[113]. Using the example of Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* specifically, Hills criticizes the dominant view of cult fandom being based on a notion of *distinctiveness* from the 'mainstream' (2006). He argues that such a view fails to consider how popular and sub-cultural media forms intersect. Indeed, "the textual focal points for cult fandom may not be inaccessible, exclusive or 'rare' underground texts – instead they might be found playing at the local multiplex"- (ibid: 161). Thus, fans may consume the same texts as the mass/ mainstream audience, but maintain their "cult audience distinction…because they continue to interpret/read these films distinctively" (ibid: 162, see also Pullen, 2006).

Moreover, as he argues in relation to *The Lord of the Rings,* cult audiences are not homogenous. The film trilogy is a "special type of blockbuster enterprise", since it is an adaptation of texts which already possess a cult following. Thus, rather than cult status emerging primarily around a blockbuster film, cult status here is seemingly carried from one text to another, "being transferred from Tolkien's novels to the films via a sort of intertextual affective contagion" (Hills, 2006: 165). Nonetheless, that is not to say that the current *Lord of the Rings* 'cult' is purely synonymous with a literary 'Tolkien cult'- there are other cult audiences such as those that read the *Lord of the Rings* films as moments within the unfolding careers and auteurism of 'cult director' Peter Jackson", and others such as followers of (one-time cultish) New Line Cinema, or fans of special effects who do not associate with Tolkien *or* Jackson (2006: 165, 168). That is, cult blockbusters (and cult films more generally) "may not always represent 'singularly' cultish texts, but may instead become differently cultish for different audience fractions" (ibid).

[113] For further definitions and discussions of subcultures, see Harris (1998)

A similar point was picked up on in ESRC-funded cross-cultural research project that sought to compare how the *Lord of the Rings* films were anticipated and received in 20 different countries, primarily from the results of 25,000 online-completed questionnaires (Barker & Mathijs, 2007). This research, which set out to explore national differences in the reception of *The Lord of the Rings*, actually found little differentiation between the ways in which different nationalities had filled out the questionnaires (Mathijs, 2004). Rather, the corpus of data was marked by surprising homogeneity, organised rather by constant themes across country and socio-demographic groups. One such theme identified was a 'cluster' of mainly younger female viewers for whom the films are about 'friendship' –their responses to questions about 'favourite character' (Sam), and 'reasons for seeing the film' (as a social event) highlight not only the social aspect of movie-going within which valued aspects of the text are placed in particular context, but also suggests the potentially multiple ways in which viewers might attribute meaning to the film's texts (Mathijs, 2004: 28).

The relevance of this to the current methodology is that we might expect some diversity in the ways that tourists to the former film sets (who are of course usually also readers and viewers) anticipate and negotiate the sites- multiple factors, beyond a textual or thematic interest in the narrative, could provide a focus for tourism activities at film locations, and moreover, these orientations may well be tangential and shifting- we might be a *Lord of the Rings* fan tourist one moment and not the next, and for different reasons. Thus, as I reflected upon in my own biography of having become an enthusiast, it might not always be clear whether you feel part of a distinctive community. That is, this is a story about the 'tribe' I chose to join, yet with some difficulty would I choose to place myself 'inside' or 'outside'. And I am not sure an ethos of belonging (or not) is clear-cut for many who participate in some way in the same cultural events of consumption[114]. Can one just be a fan, choosing when, and how, and why to do it? And does this process really follow a logic of either/or, a/not a? (Massey in Coleman and Crang 2002: 5). As hooks notes, "each actor exists in a variety of social spaces simultaneously- at the "centre" of one category and at the "margins" of another (in Hanna and Del Casino, 2003: xxii)[115]. Thus, given this simple fact of positional multiplicity, the clear-cut relationship between researcher and audience may be somewhat more blurred than Radway's or Jenkin's commentaries suggest. As a result, the outcome of such a research relationship can go elsewhere. On the one hand, Radway's intention of 'bridging the gap' between the academic and the popular through a pedagogical agenda does not *have* to be the automatically desired outcome of the research

[114] For example, is it really straightforward to say that "the ordinary reader reads in a context of shifting interests; the fan reads from within the realms of the 'lived experience' of fandom" (Storey, 1999). As one example, can 'normal' consumers not act excessively? Hills also argues that it is impossible that all fans are also 'producers' of fan fiction (2002).

[115] Hills makes a similar point, arguing that the relationship between the academe and fan culture is marked by "mutual marginalisation" as opposed to a one way exclusion of fan studies from academia (2002: 2)

process (Ang, 1984: 184), but neither must an alternative 'defence' of popular culture rest in the appropriation of fandom or enthusiasm as an inherently superior mode of consumption.

Indeed, as Ang contends, both of these positions are ultimately constructed within the same discourse- 'the ideology of mass culture', in which academics (and likewise consumers of mass culture in general as her 1985 text *Watching Dallas* explores) are framed by a rationalized dislike of 'bad' cultural forms, against which there is no clear cut ideological alternative- "at least no alternative that offsets the ideology of mass culture in power of conviction and coherence" (Ang, in Storey, 1999: 86).

Thus, for example, across both tourism and cultural theory (the pleasure of) popular culture consumption can only come to *matter* if it can be demonstrated to be more complex than its critics can see, if it can be shown to promote valuable social and cultural meanings, if it wasn't as trivial as expected. Writing as a literary theorist, for example, Lucie Armitt bemoans the fact that the choice to theorise the fantasy genre is matched by "a need to justify our interest in it" (1996: 1)[116]. And this has an intense resonance with consuming/ studying *The Lord of the Rings*-inspired tourist events- as the following chapter will explore in more detail, many tourists were either quick to disassociate themselves from 'fannish' or excessive behaviour, or to use irony or self-awareness as a "weapon" to justify their pleasure in these tourist practices (Ang, 1985: 101)[117]. But the problem is, when fans (whether academic or otherwise) "find it necessary to locate their pleasure in relation to the ideology of mass culture" through internalizing it, negotiating with it, or defending it "against its withering dismissal" (Storey, 1999: 85), it becomes hard to find a language that speaks about *really* loving something (that is deemed 'low' culture, inauthentic etc) or taking pleasure in its practice. As Ang found in her audience of *Dallas* viewers, true fans of the series struggled to describe why they liked it, with many finally admitting they just didn't know (1985: 86). Faced with the "powerful combination of emotional expression and rational explanation of dislike" offered by those who dislike the series, (Ang, 1985: 89), it seems impossible to escape the very categories of this 'ideology of mass culture'- all positions merely negotiate the same discursive space (ibid: 106).

The auto-ethnographic style of this work is an attempt to narrate the lived experience of these often 'strained' negotiations within the discourse offered by the ideology of mass culture. It is an

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[116] These points are further developed in the following chapter.

[117] For viewers who ironically engage with Dallas, "the ideology of mass culture has become common sense: if is self-evident that Dallas is 'bad culture'. But they very weapon of irony makes it unnecessary to suppress the pleasure that watching Dallas can nonetheless arouse; irony enables them to enjoy it without suffering pangs of conscience. The dismissive norms of the ideology of mass culture are smoothly integrated in the ironic viewing attitude" (Ang, 1985: 101).

attempt to *not* assume that individuals consuming *The Lord of the Rings* (including myself) as a tourism practice "are already stitched into a particular kind of relation" with these mediated spaces (Radway, 1988: 361). It is an attempt to present myself and 'my subjects' as active participants, as producers of culture, from a shared point of view. It is an attempt to at least recognise the broader and more complex culture of which we are part (ibid: 363)- to avoid 'cordoning off' and defining my research participants as particular kinds of subjects, into a particular genre, and practicing a particular form of tourism. To do this, it takes as its object of study (as far as possible), "the range of practices engaged in by individuals within a single heterogeneous community as they elaborate their own form of popular culture through the realms of leisure" (Radway, 1988: 368).

As Radway maintains, ethnography does remain a valuable way to "investigate the multitude of concrete connections which ever-changing, fluid subjects forge between ideological fragments, discourses and practices" (Radway, 1988: 365). But, as a researcher, we need to be particularly aware of our positionality- of how we do ethnography, and who for. To reiterate Law's opinion at the beginning of this chapter, ethnography has absolutely nothing to do with "observation by neutral or disembodied intellects" (Law, 1994: 16-17). In an area of popular cultural consumption so demarcated by polarised viewpoints and potent moralising discourses, his point would seem particularly salient.

Research methods and practice: an ethnography of Lord of the Rings film-tourists

Locating the audience, defining the field

Having highlighted the key tensions of positionality within ethnographic research with media audiences, we are still left with a number of other more practical concerns when working with tourist consumers. Firstly, who are our 'audience', and what constitutes our ethnographic 'field'? The materiality of our (enthusiast) tourism audience is that it is an "amorphous, complex, dispersed and highly mobile population" (Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 5). Or, as Radway echoes,

> *"No wonder we find it so difficult to theorize the dispersed, anonymous, unpredictable nature of the use of mass-produced, mass-mediated cultural forms. If the receivers of such forms are never assembled fixedly on a site or even in an easily identifiable space, if they are frequently not uniformly or even attentively disposed to systems of cultural production or to the messages they issue, how can we theorize, not to mention examine, the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of cultural circulation and consumption?" (Radway, 1988: 361).*

As previously suggested, *Lord of the Rings* tourists in New Zealand may be there out of some strong sense of (literary) pilgrimage- but equally they might just be 'doing a Rings thing' out of

curiosity, simply because it is a 'must-do' on many suggested tourist itineraries. Indeed, for some visitors, the 'set-jetting' terminology used to delineate them may be quite meaningless. A tourist simply taking a *Lord of the Rings* themed day tour in New Zealand often will not see themselves as a 'film-induced tourist', because it may not be the case that they are *motivated* to visit the locations *by* the film.

So then, how to start thinking about this 'tribe', an audience whom Mathijs argues has often been empirically ignored "with an almost determined disinclination" (2004: 16). Indeed, given the novelty of 'film tourism' in a scholarly context, and the fact that what (*Lord of the Rings*) film tourists actually *do* remains somewhat of a mystery, some form of participant observation would appear to be essential. As Olsen notes, there is a need "to describe actual observable social processes rather than submerging these into a presupposed model of the tourist role where the actual behaviour often becomes marginal" (in Crang, 1999: 243)[118]. Indeed, recent moves in tourism studies have reflected this need[119]. Participant observation not only affords the opportunity to observe such touristic practices as they happen, but surpasses more traditional, external qualitative techniques in the fact that the researcher tries to get involved, to do and/ or be a part of the things they are observing. Thrift similarly encourages researchers to be creative with their employment of qualitative techniques, suggesting that although experiencing something of a renaissance, are often still "characterized by a narrow range of skills, wedded to the notion of bringing back the data and representing it nicely packaged up with illustrative quotations, an approach which is surprising for the narrow range of sensate life they register" (in Crang, 2005: 225).

So in choosing ethnographic approaches and participant observation we face numerous challenges. Firstly, there are several ideological strains that could position ethnography as a privileged discipline, a colonising discourse leftover from a dominant era of objectivity and positivist science (e.g. Russell, 1999; Alneng 2002). Practically, there are access issues particular to a media/ tourism audience that lack any 'habitus of collectivity' (Amit, in Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 5). This, again, is in more than one sense. *The Lord of the Rings* books and films hold a diverse global audience[120]; and as a well-established tourism destination attracting a wide

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[118] For example, DeLyser highlights the need for more research to be done with tourists' themselves- in a manner that acknowledges their own experiences and conceptualisations (2003: 887).

[119] See for example the special issue of Tourist Studies (2008) on the use of ethnographic methods in tourism.

[120] It is important here to note that 'global' is not a privileging overstatement of 'Western'. *The Lord of the Rings* texts have been translated into nearly forty languages including Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Arabic. (Wikipedia, 2009b)

range of nationalities, the film-tourism market is potentially as broad[121]. On the other hand, it is difficult to 'map' a terrain for *the Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand; difficult to define a locus of *Lord of the Rings* influenced tourist activity. Whilst certain of the former film sets or locations associated with the *Lord of the Rings* may hold a certain 'spiritual connection' to the films (Matamata- Hobbiton, or perhaps WETA and Wellington), the majority of these sites are thoroughly and somewhat obscurely scattered throughout the North and South Islands (see Figure 1 below). There are some locations visited by a number of tour operators, others that remain virtually unvisited. Some are practically impossible to access. Even those that are frequented by a daily tour may receive very little tourism apart from that. On the other hand, although less frequently, some locations may receive visitors for reasons apart from their role as former film locations. Thus by definition, the 'field' for my research, as with most anthropological field sites, "is far from something simply lying in wait for my analytical gaze to be cast upon it" (Harrison, 2008: 47).

The problems stemming from this dispersed, sometimes complicated geography were realized early on, during fieldwork in Wellington. Mount Victoria town belt is a popular walking a cycling route for locals, as well as having featured a number of scenes for the film. One such scene is the fairly well known 'Get out of the Road!' and subsequent scenes where the Hobbits hide from the Black Rider under a tree, and run for the Buckleberry Ferry **(Appendix C).** With approximately one to three organized tours visiting each day, and presumably a trickle of other 'self-guided' tourists visiting here with the aid of *The Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* (Brodie, 2003; 2004), this seemed to be a good spot for research. However, on reaching the site, I had my doubts about sitting alone in the middle of the woods waiting for either a tour to come and go while I conspicuously looked on from behind a bush, as well as a number of other discomforts and anxieties such an endeavour would involve. Indeed, the 'wild' reality of Peter Jackson's claims- that New Zealand was so uniquely suited to being Middle-earth thanks to its rurality and low population- was acutely felt in many of my fieldwork experiences. Thus, whilst many of the locations certainly lent themselves to hearty physical endeavour, very few made easy that key ethnographic task of 'hanging out'- no entrances or exits, cafes or seats where tourists coagulate, no crowds of photographing tourists to be camouflaged by[122].

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[121] Just under 70% of annual arrivals are made up from five key markets- Australia, the UK, USA, China and Japan [http://www.tourism.govt.nz/Tourism-Quick-Facts/Tourism-Industry-Key-Statistics/] retrieved 1 June 2009

[122] See Sather-Wagstaff (2008) for an ethical discussion of 'photographing photographing tourists', as well as Edensor, (1998) and Larsen (2005) for an example of (visual) ethnographies of tourists in a more 'typical' tourist space (the Taj Mahal, Hammershus Castle, Denmark).

Image 23- Pick a tree- any tree. The realities of locating the 'get out of the road' spot proved harder than expected

Participant observation- organised tours

To counteract the challenges of working with independent film tourists across dispersed spaces, I increased the focus of the research to include tourists participating in *Lord of the Rings* themed, organised tours. A number of tours specializing in *Lord of the Rings* themed itineraries run in both the North and South Islands- these range from half a day to a full twelve day tour of the country. These are taken generally by mini-bus, coach, four-wheel drive, or other all-terrain vehicle. There are also firms that offer air-based explorations of Middle-earth, some of which are the same companies who were employed during filming to carry cast and crew to remote locations. All of the land-based operators were contacted via e-mail and subsequently five operators (as well as one ‘attraction’- Hobbiton) offered to take me on tours or allow me access to their clients (see Figure 1 below).

Image 24- The Adventure Safari coach

My approach on each tour very much depended on the role that the tour guide set for me. For example, whether they gave me a grandiose introduction to the tour group prior to setting off, set the tone for that outing. When they did, my role tended to be more formal, I was often interrogated about my research, or people might be a little uneasy in my presence. When they chose not to introduce me, my research agenda would 'come out' as the tour progressed, often still ending up in a fair amount of discussion about the project, but perhaps with less of a pressurised feeling- by that point, it was clear that I wasn't wishing to brandish long questionnaires or repetitive surveys at them. This was not the only way in which the tour guide's role, and our interrelationship, affected the day's research. As much as I was observing everything I possibly could, and hoping for the guide's hospitality and sympathy towards my purpose, they were also drawing on me as a resource. For example, on some tours the guide would employ me as an 'expert' with whom they could corroborate the stories they were narrating (cf. Earl, 2008)[123]. As a researcher I was also frequently 'tested' by enthusiast tour clients, to see what degree of knowledge I myself had, although equally I could be turned to as a "trustworthy medium" (Oakes, 2006: 233); and would, for example, be solicited for practical advice on 'location hunting'. I was offered advice of other people's travels, and recruited into discussions

[123] Tour guides also would draw on enthusiast clients for information and insight at the locations; the ones that were more open to this tended to be the more successful.

that were far from my personal research interests, but were perceived to be of concern to me[124]. As a long-term visitor to New Zealand, my six-month stay usually was often responded to with some envy, and accounts of my travel experiences were welcomed, alongside suggestions that I could offer of what campsites I could recommend, whether a certain town should be omitted from an itinerary, and so on.

[124] One couple, for example, were keen to talk about the shortcomings they had found with *The Lord of the Rings Location guidebook* (Brodie, 2003) with a view to my being able to influence the editing of any further editions.

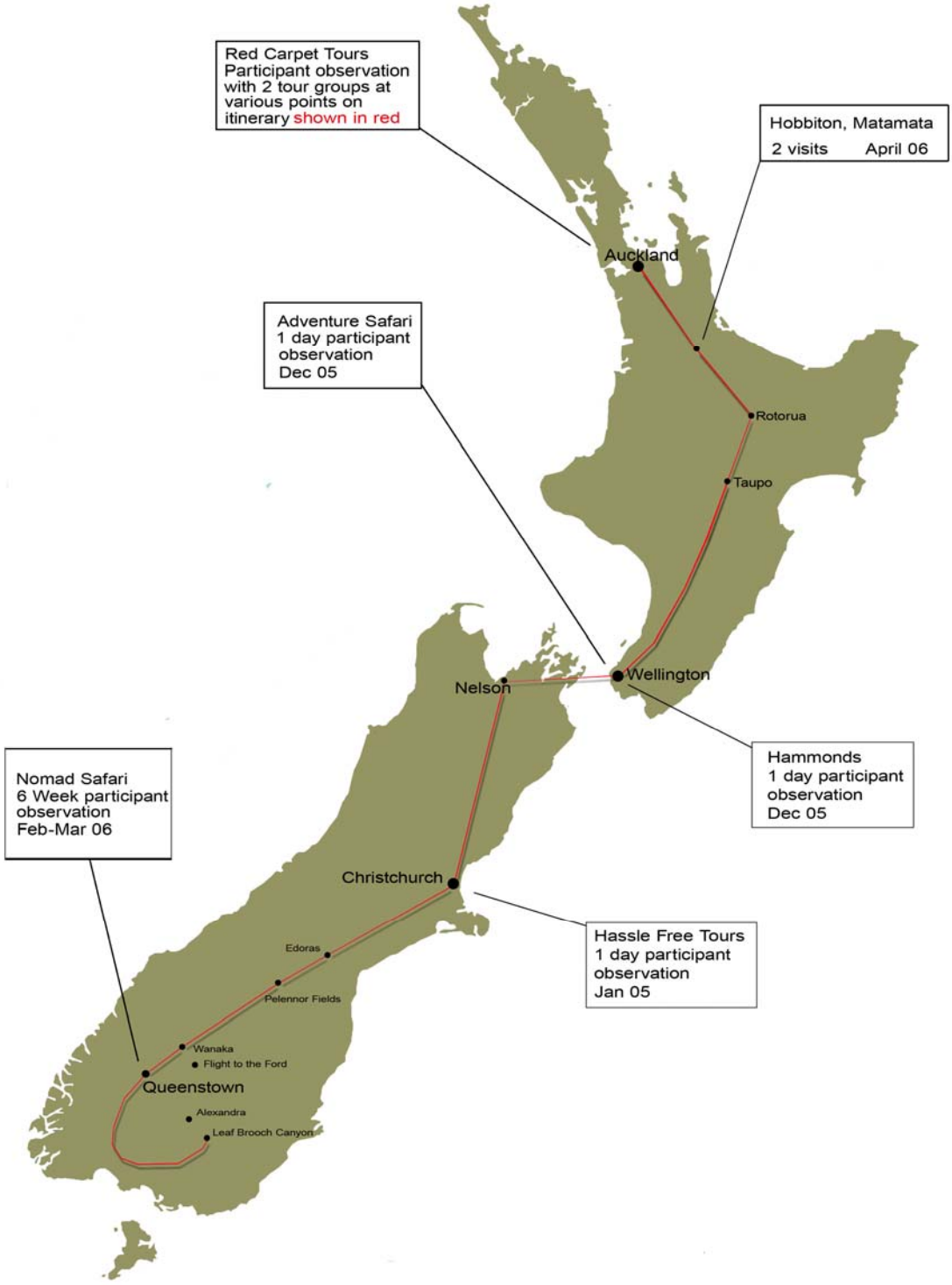

Figure 1- Key locations and itineraries across New Zealand

The tours in their variety then offered something of the sense of space so crucial to a classic understanding of ethnography: discrete audiences, and bound spaces. Indeed, the practicality of having to limit a sample in this way is problematic (Radway, 1988), yet ironically also essential in limiting the field down to one in which the ethnographer can "become an *expected* participant in group life, and not an *ethnographic tourist*, appearing when convenient" (Fine, 2003: 53; see also

Pelias, 2003). Paradoxically then, to be a called a tourist, when performing the role of an ethnographer, signifies an outsider relationship to the object of study, a merely superficial understanding of their host community. To be a tourist-ethnographer is thus doubly-wedded to a number of problems to do with 'depth' and 'attention', presumed missing from the modern tourism experience, yet believed critical within the practice of ethnography[125]. However, even if we were to agree with this problematic notion of depth, and argue that tour groups do offer a momentary stability and emplacement within which to engage tourists, the fact still remains that these visitors are *on holiday*- which could mean that partaking in research may be very far down on their agenda (Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 6, but compare with Harrison, 2003 which deals with travel enthusiasts).

However, Harrison (2008: 52) argues, immersion can take many forms. We can talk about an ethnography which 'follows the people' (Marcus, 1995: 95), across material and virtual spaces, across pathways, flows, or 'scapes', (Appadurai 1991). Rather than 'depth', ethnographic encounters become characterized by a "spatial and temporal ephemerality" (Muir, 2004: 207). On the other hand, Harrison warns us to not overstate this transience of people and things across global spaces, neither to celebrate nor bemoan a putative postmodern global nomadism (2008)[126]. Franklin accords, reminding us that certain spaces are 'sticky': they are not "just minimal places that tourists simply pass through, they leave a trace on the self, they leave a trace of belonging and identity and…research has shown that people do a lot of repeat visits to favourite places" (2001: 125)[127]. However, for many visitors to New Zealand, time and financial constraints do mean that they 'pass through' the islands quite rapidly, going north to south or vice versa (it is common to fly into Auckland and out of Christchurch), visiting the 'top tourist attractions' and being very selective about what they choose to see and do in their two or three-week stay. After all, for many travellers from the northern hemisphere, a trip to New Zealand is still a significant and probably 'special' one to make. Thus, although in some measure transient, these are tourism experiences that are "rarely fleeting or trivial" (Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 11).

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[125] A paradox illuminated perfectly in the work of Keil (2005). His account of concentration camps suggests that it is morally objectionable the way that tourists visit for a day and then go back to their hotels for dinner and sleep. Strangely as a researcher he seems not to share these fundamental physiological needs, thus partly suggesting that it is some type of asceticism that enables an appropriate focus of attention and depth of immersion at sites of atrocity.

[126] Typified by Appadurai's cosmopolitan arguments (1991).

[127] See also Löfgren (1999: 148-50) and Bærenholdt et al (2004) for considerations of tourism practices that talk about second homes, and tourist places and practices that are returned to again and again, characterised by a sense of 'slowing down', the everyday, and rootedness.

Employing enthusiasts: online research methods

The fact that most tourists are on a tight itinerary, keen to pack in as much as they can, was keenly felt in the difficulty to get even the most enthusiastic *Lord of the Rings* film tourists to spend any time after the tour talking about their experiences. Thus whilst participant observation of tour groups provided direct access to tourists for at least a few hours, it became evident that face-to-face observation and discussion alone failed to fully reverberate the range of experience of film tourists visiting *Lord of the Rings* locations. Faced with similar ethnographic challenges, Sather-Wagstaff advocates tuning into ethnographic practices that "bridge both on- and off-site realms of cultural practices" (2008: 79). Indeed, this would seem particularly appropriate given that "tourist places are not bound to specific environments or place images… [but are rather defined by]…the corporeal and social performances of tourists" (Baerenholdt et al, 2004: 2)[128]. Fortunately, as tourists we are keen to recount – or perhaps more accurately (re)- create – our holiday experiences in multi-mediated ways, and the Internet has been one such pivotal development in creating networks and communities of travellers, as well as ways of communicating travel experiences.

The proliferation of both online travel sources such as weblogs, coupled with the communal web sites and sources dedicated to Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*[129], suggest that Tolkien-enthusiast film-tourists would indeed be fluent in such forms of communication. Indeed, as Shefrin notes, Jackson and New Line cinema are as equally remarkable for their sophisticated abilities in "mapping out new congruencies between the Internet and media entertainment culture" as they are for (2004: 261). Unoffiicial yet endorsed websites such as www.theonering.net thus attract "combining technology and mythology in the creation of authentic, self-contained alternate universes", Jackson and Lucas are involved in which increasingly involve "a growing number of 'active' or participatory' fans who "exhibit a sense of ownership that includes an investment in the creative development of these universes" and provide "venues for fans to maintain *heightened connections* to the media produces and their evolving franchises through social gossip, artistic production, and political activism." (Shefrin, 2004: 261).

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[128] Baerenhold et al ultimately posit a new paradigm of tourist mobility which "seeks to move beyond these particular metaphysical positions…it sees places as contingently stabilised sources of deeply held meanings and attachments but where these stem from networks that enable particular embodied and material performances to occur. So places are not fixed and authentic, not do nomads overwhelm them, nor do places of movement evade practices of place stabilisation and significance" (2004, 139-140).

[129] TheOneRing.net attracts 1 million unique users per month.

However, whilst media technologies themselves "may indicate the potential, and even the inevitability, of modern community formation, they cannot of themselves explain the nature of such communities" (Athique, 2008: 27). Approaching the issue from a geographical/ methodological standpoint, Crang also notes that "currently there are only the beginnings of a commentary in geography about non-copresent qualitative research through electronically mediated communication" (2003b: 500)[130]. Nonetheless for this audience (tourists and *Lord of the Rings* fans in a broad sense), it was evidently a very common and everyday network, where experiences and understandings are communicated, that far exceeds some of the more simplistic critiques of online community, or 'life on screen' (Turkle, 1996). As Mooney notes, the fact that contemporary Tolkien enthusiasts luxuriate in rather than shun contemporary communication technologies, is in itself a contradiction to the superficial yet well-rehearsed argument that the escapism of Tolkien "appeals to victims of 'the machine', who find support in his narrative "shot through with nostalgia for a simpler, pre-industrial way of life" (2002: np).

As well as being a fascinating 'audience' for such conceptual tensions, choosing online ethnographic work with Tolkien/ *Lord of the Rings* fans and film tourists offers practical benefits. Firstly it attempts to broaden access to this global ethnographic field, to diversify the research population as much as possible. Secondly, it is possible that for some potential research respondents, non co-present means of communication open up a more forgiving space for talking about their tourist experiences. Indeed, where respondents were geographically proximate (i.e. back at home in the UK), reticence was sometimes shown towards arranging a face-to-face meeting or interview[131].

With these issues in mind, adverts requesting participants were posted on the Tolkien Society[132] and TORN[133]. Two very different websites and organisations- the former, a long-standing society dedicated to the life and works of J.R.R. Tolkien, the latter a recent website initiated to provide a forum for discussing the film adaptation as it was in production, and a site primarily dedicated to the filmic *Lord of the Rings*- with a keen ongoing interest in the lives of the films cast and crew, and a forum for news relating to upcoming *Lord of the Rings* events such as conventions (it now also keeps up to date with production news and rumours for *the Hobbit*). A third advert was placed on the New Zealand Backpacker Board[134]- a lively forum for backpacker travellers to New Zealand.

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[130] But see for example Sather-Wagstaff (2008).

[131] It would be fair to say that this reticence was also felt by the researcher, for whom it was also easier to communicate with ease using electronic media.

[132] http://tolkiensociety.org

[133] http://www.theonering.net

[134] http://www.backpackerboard.co.nz

These postings appealed for enthusiasts who had made, or were planning on making, a *Lord of the Rings* motivated visit to New Zealand. A brief call for participants and outline of the project directed interested parties to also visit a project website[135]. The website not only created a web presence for myself and my work, but also provided a more generous context of who I was and what my interest was (rather than simply asking them to write to an e-mail address if they fitted certain criteria for participation). The initial interest was high, with over fifty e-mails received in the first week, from individuals who had either made the trip to New Zealand for *Lord of the Rings*-inspired reasons, or were planning on doing so. In the longer term, the site proved even more invaluable, as the adverts disappeared from home pages and forums, but were stumbled across by individuals simply surfing the net. Given the initial concentration of interest, and to gather some baseline information on the respondents and gaining foci for subsequent and more in-depth questionnaires or interviews, I sent a fairly open-ended questionnaire to all respondents who had already visited **(Appendix A)** with a modified version to accommodate the couple of respondents who had made more than one visit to New Zealand. Thirty-six were returned and analysed using Nvivo 7 to draw up common themes (see Table 2 below)[136]. That being said, much of what appeared to be meaningful "came initially from the memories of my emplaced experience, and from revisiting the materials stemming from the experience, rather than from a systematic and thematic review of the materials" (Pink, 2008: 191).

In terms of basic demographics, it appeared that TORN had attracted by far the most participants, with Tolkien Society attracting three or four, and New Zealand Backpacker board just one. Some had had extended stays in NZ, others had a 'traditional holiday'. Most were women. Some were sisters that had visited together; some had gone as a family or with a best friend. Others alone. There were young and old, those that were long-time enthusiasts of *The Lord of the Rings*, others who had become fans since the films, some even only becoming fans after seeing the former film locations and returning home to read the book or watch the movies in a new context. Many of the respondents visited with the specialist operator *Red Carpet Tours*, others had devised their own *Lord of the Rings*-inspired itinerary independently. Participants from all sources however, were keen to send supplementary information along with the questionnaire- photos and links to weblogs, itineraries that had been produced prior to the visit, or a copy of a written diary, even spare copies of holiday snaps arrived in the post[137]

[135] http://www.durham.ac.uk/danielle.firnigl.

[136] Please note that Table 2 also includes data of participants garnered after the initial recruitment process.

[137] See also Sather-Wagstaff (2008) whose visual ethnography of tourists at the WTC site also provokes numerous friendly follow-on forms of communication- such as the sharing of images etc.

Gender	Age	Country of origin	Source of recruitment	Purpose of visit	Length of stay	Type of tour	Visited with
F	18-29	UK	Backpackerboard	Backpacking or working holiday	> 5 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Alone
F	-	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Friends
F	18-29	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Mother &/or father
F	30-39	UK	Onering.net	Honeymoon	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Spouse or partner
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Friends
F	18-29	USA	Onering.net	Backpacking or working holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Friends
F	18-29	Australia / NZ	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Friends
F	40-49	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Alone
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Spouse or partner
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Sibling
F	50-59	UK	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Alone
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	Multiple trips	Red Carpet Tours	Alone
F	30-39	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Friends
F	50-59	Australia / NZ	Onering.net	-	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Spouse or partner
F	50-59	Canada	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Alone
F	<18	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	> 5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Mother &/or father

M	<18	UK	Onering.net	Holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Mother &/or father
F	30-39	UK	Onering.net	Visit friends & family	Multiple trips	Self-drive with day tours	Alone
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	Multiple trips	Red Carpet Tours	Alone
F	<18	USA	Onering.net	Study visit	> 5 wks	Other	Friends
F	18-29	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Sibling
F	50-59	Australia / NZ	Onering.net	Holiday	Multiple trips	Self-drive using location guidebook	Son or daughter
F	40-49	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Friends
F	50-59	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Friends
F	18-29	USA	Onering.net	Study visit	> 5 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Alone
F	40-49	USA	Onering.net	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Son or daughter
F	40-49	UK	Onering.net	Holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Spouse & children
M	60-69	USA	Project website	Holiday	3-5 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Spouse or partner
F	18-29	Europe	Project website	Backpacking or working holiday	> 5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Alone
F	50-59	Canada	Project website	Holiday	1-3 wks	Other coach tour	Alone
F	30-39	USA	Project website	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	-
M	50-59	UK	Project website	Holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive with day tours	Spouse & children
M	30-39	UK	Project website	Honeymoon	1-3 wks	Other	Spouse or partner
F	60-69	USA	Project website	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
F	-	USA	Project website	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
F	50-59	USA	Recommended by friend	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Spouse or partner
F	18-29	UK	Recommended by friend	Study visit	> 5 wks	Other	Alone
F	40-49	USA	Tolkien Society	Other	1-3 wks	Other	Alone
F	50-59	UK	Tolkien Society	Holiday	3-5 wks	Self-drive using location guidebook	Spouse or partner
F	50-59	Australia / NZ	Tolkien Society	Holiday	1-3 wks	Red Carpet Tours	Alone

Table 2 – Characteristics of research participants recruited through online methods

Whilst the majority of respondents had already travelled to New Zealand, and ways to discuss their memories were pursued via on-line means, the three respondents who were visiting New Zealand in the near future agreed to undertake a solicited journal (Meth, 2003)[138]. However, these were openly negotiated, and whilst a sheet of guidelines were drawn up **(Appendix B)** one diarist already had in mind what they would do, another asked if it would be alright to combine this diary with another online journal she would be doing during her eight-week stay for friends and family, and the third was thankful for the guidelines and followed them, although doubting that she had managed to fulfill the descriptive approach I had encouraged in the guidelines[139]. However, I found her diary to be emotionally rich, but this did point to how I had written (somewhat directly) about the more affective aspects I hoped would be included by diarists, and suggests Katz is correct in arguing that the question of 'how' tends to work better than 'why'? (2001, 2002)[140].

Nevertheless, the result of these post-visit encounters was illuminating- open, informal conversation via e-mail quickly became as major a source of information as the questionnaires, and far from simple notes to accompany the attachment of the completed questionnaire, many of the respondents wrote lengthy e-mails, to say that the questionnaire had been interesting or an enjoyable experience, allowing them to think about a pleasurable holiday experience over again[141]. It was clear that the responses received in the first week, and the ensuing trickle of interest over the following year, had certainly appealed to those individuals with particularly strong attachments to Tolkien, and to New Zealand- if participant observation of tour groups in New Zealand was a way to engage with tourists who were making a connection with *The Lord of the Rings through* their trip to New Zealand, this route was to become the way I would engage with *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasts who became tourists to New Zealand *through* the lens of the film trilogy. In other words, although at that stage the research design had not been conceptualized around different forms of *Lord of the Rings* tourism, and an attempt was made to

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[138] Meth uses the term 'solicited diary' to characterise diaries "negotiated between researcher and researched, where it is likely that the text reflects an awareness of what the researcher wants to read. In this regard the writing process embodies subjectivities informed by the researcher-researched relationship" (2003: 196)

[139] "I mostly just entered details so that I could remember names and places, and did not really write about emotional feelings. I was in heaven the whole time anyway" (Barbara, reflecting on her diary-writing).

[140] "The explanatory issue takes an interesting turn in these studies. The debunking question, one that commonly leads to a reductionist answer, would be, why are these beliefs sustained? Instead, by closely describing how members enact their beliefs in hidden forces, the ethnographers treat spiritual practices not as effects but as causes: the explanatory question becomes, *what do these practices create*?" (Katz, 2002: 67 emphasis added)

[141] Lorimer also argues that "creativity and texture are most compelling and expressive as they emerge in practice, (or at least during people's descriptions of practice)….a 'practical ontology'" (2005: 85)

gain a reasonably broad audience, unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents were Tolkien/ *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasts, and as a group, constituted themselves as an enthusiast audience, eager to share their passion for their New Zealand experiences.

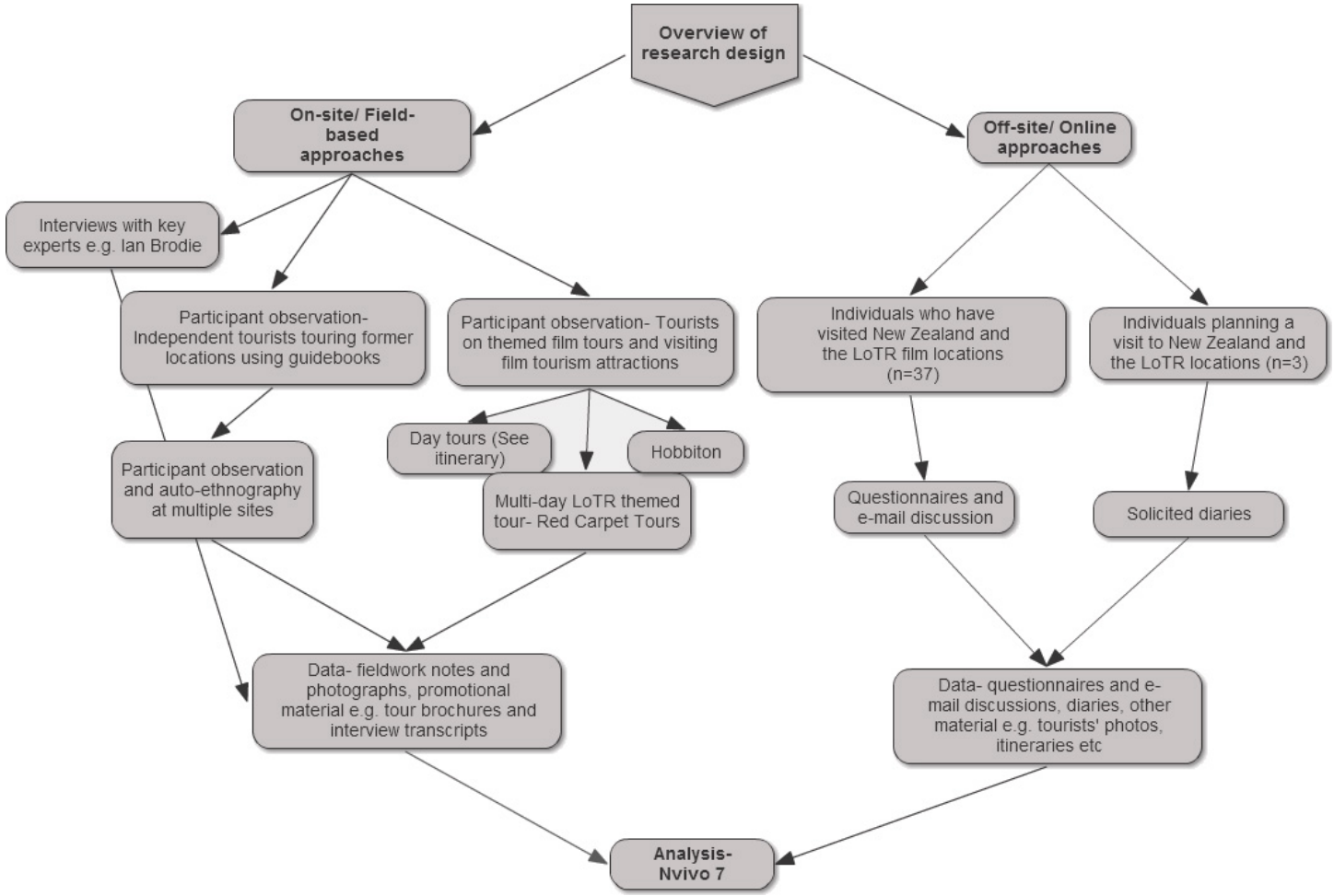

Figure 2- Overview of research process

Thus, whilst the initial decision to turn to the Internet was made as a way of potentially overcoming the challenges working with such a dispersed 'audience', it also reflects something of the interconnected worlds of the tourist and ethnographer- a world "saturated by multimedia technology" in which ethnographers can draw upon an increasing range of 'cross-spatio-temporal' communicative resources (Dicks et al, 2006: 77). Taking stock of this environment, Geismar and Horst welcome a "salience of materiality", arguing that the material world (objects, artefacts and things), "is not only an end point or 'object' itself of social scientific description, but may also be used as a crucial interpretive tool to understand the nature of society, as an active agent within the social relations we were studying" (2004: 5). Harrison, for example, works through rich and multiple layers of the tourist experience by drawing upon secondary materials such as souvenirs and photographs – garnered easily from the world of tourism paraphernalia – and re-animated through evocative interviews with travel enthusiasts in their homes (2003). Such travel artefacts both generate a focal point for post-visit discussion of experiences and places that have taken place across a spatio-temporally dispersed world, and provide an opportunity to complement travel images with a more situated narrative explanation (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008). For her, tourist photographs do more than just act as props for neutral reflection on a tourist event, but rather "play a key role in the ongoing social construction of sites visited" (Sather-Wagstaff, 2008: 79).

Latham's 'diary-interview' methodology also supports this creative role- in his case, the written diaries his respondents compile of their everyday routines (2002). The aim of the diaries, which are then discussed in an interview, is to provide a detailed time-space account of their writers' daily time in public. However, as Latham discovers, the diary material appears to spark a mnemonic, 'summoning' capacity for some of the diarists when interviewed, in which certain modes of speaking - in this case 'confessional' - are invoked[142]. In other words, the diary and the interview can appear to be wholly disparate, the personalities of the diarists equally at odds- but as Latham notes, what is important is that it is *not* the role of the researcher to corroborate reflection with source, as if the diary, or image, were an unproblematic mirror onto reality, but to "create a framework in which my research subjects could indeed meditate on - or at least be more actively aware of - the routine and ordinary events of their day" (2002: 2002). Thus, the 'combinations' of data that each respondent provided (for example a questionnaire, follow-on e-mail conversations, links to their online-published travelogues or holiday images) created a framework for discussing their past experience of visiting the former film sets.

[142] Although the diary is often associated with 'confessional' narrative style, this is only but one style that diarists will take- Latham finds an extraordinary diversity in approaches to his solicited diaries (2002).

Doing visual ethnography

It is on this point that a discussion of visual methods is also pertinent. Chapter 5 is specifically concerned with the visual culture of film tourism and explores visual theories with regards to practices of film tourism in more detail. There is, however, a need to be clear about the centrality of visual culture to research methods and practice- and, indeed, the ways in which tourism photographic practices and ethnographic visual research methods intersect. In Chapter 5, I highlight the complexity of tourism photography practices, and suggest there is more to tourist photography than it's often clichéd representation (in both lay and academic sources)[143]. Indeed, there are connections to be made between the tourist photographer and the ethnographer. For example, just as film tourists might take photographs for different reasons or audiences, and in different styles (e.g. Larsen, 2005), the totality of fieldwork imagery from this research project is also simultaneously ethnographic, anthropological and personal (Pink, 2001: 28)[144]. Furthermore, this is not a feature specific to ethnographic research on tourism, but rather, as Pink notes, a feature of ethnography whenever it coincides with, and is thus structured by, other people's leisure time (ibid). But, as she continues, this fact has traditionally been seen as highly problematic- fixed categories of visual images have implied that if "an ethnographer's photography or video is classified as 'tourist' or 'leisure' images, then they are not 'ethnographic'"[145] (Pink, 2001: 29). Just as Fine warns us against merely being an 'ethnographic tourist' (see above), the visual culture of ethnography is apparently also framed by a notion of 'penetration', of being able to show that you have 'really been there' (Geertz, 1988: 5). Correspondingly, the world of tourism photography is also usually regarded as something superficial- characterized for example by a 'point-and-click' mentality (e.g. Sontag 1977). Yet, as Chapter 5 shows, the serial capturing of images for touristic and/or ethnographic purposes might be otherwise understood- and notably the same anxieties that plague tourists in capturing the sorts of images they desire, also plague the novice researcher with pre-formed notions of what a visual ethnographer *should* do.

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[143] The overzealous photographing tourist perhaps stands as a popular cliché of 'what not to do' on holiday. Based on certain notions of what the practice of photography is and means, however, it can be more politically contested. Sather-Wagstaff reports that photography at the WTC site is viewed in particularly derogatory ways by locals and her peers, no matter how or why tourists understand these photographing practices (2008).

[144] "Photography and photographs represent an explicit meeting point (or continuity) between personal and professional identities; as material objects they pass through, and are invested with new meanings in, situations where individuals may wish to express different aspects of their identities" (Pink, 2001: 26)

[145] "Early visual ethnographers in the 1980's and 1990's, constantly faced with the accusation that their fieldwork images lacked objectivity and scientific rigour, were forced admit that their images were indeed "only vacation pictures" differentiated from the impressionistic art of the tourist only by virtue of a certain "disciplined computing" (Becker, in Pink 2001: 7).

Thus, it would seem particularly salient to focus on the interconnectedness of visual practices within ethnography and tourism. Sather-Wagstaff argues that the visual culture of tourism is "central to the processual, performative construction of place meanings" (2008: 79), and Pink makes much the same argument- suggesting that, rather than the visual being the 'data' that is subjected to a verbal 'analysis', the potential of the visual as sociological knowledge and critical text should be explored (Pink, 2001: 11). This leads to a potential shift in the way that we think about images and their work: rather than 'translation' from image back to text, we can think about relationalities through which images are just one of a variety of "non-representational participants" (Latham and McCormack, 2009: 254).

Of course, argue Latham and McCormack, the critical analysis of images has been one of the central themes within human geography over the past two decades, with scholars engaging in diverse ways with both the role of images in shaping and contesting the meaning of place, and equally upon the role images play within knowledge practices of the discipline itself (2009: 252). Their interest specifically, though, is in thinking about how geographers in the field might use images in ways that are "non-representational in style and substance", for, they argue, "participation in human geographical fieldwork is agitated, inflected and animated by the emergence of non-representational styles of thinking" (2009: 252). It is an encouragement to think of images as other than just representations, to *make more of images* (ibid, original emphasis)[146].

My archive of around 500 images, together with field notes, form the body of data collection from the participant observation aspect of this research. The photographs were taken with the understanding that they would be a primary mode of understanding this landscape, and they were as generative of the resulting analysis as the field notes- they do not simply support them. In other words, photography facilitated my thinking through the visual culture of film-tourism. But they also cannot be reduced to an attempt at demystifying these touristic practices and landscapes. They are an attempt to 'home in' rather than 'delve behind', (Sheringham, in Latham and McCormack, 2009: 255), and they certainly do not claim to represent the whole 'culture' in a complete or fixed way (Pink, 2001: 58).

That being said there are similarities between the types of photos that I took and those of other tourists, and this also receives further attention in Chapter 5. But it is interesting to wonder whose aesthetic took the lead- the tourist or the ethnographer? As Pink explains, "collaborative photography usually involves ethnographers engaging in some way with the photographic culture of their informants. In some cases this could involve an attempt to reproduce the kinds of images

[146] Pink also argues that images have too often been ascribed an insular, inward-looking role by sociological method texts on ethnography (Pink, 2001: 6).

that are popular in informants' photographic cultures" (Pink, 2001: 58). But it is hard to say whether or not I was consciously engaging with tourist styles and practices of photography; and on the other hand, the aesthetic motivations of some tourists – such as those who have an explicit desire to photograph as many scenes as possible exactly as they were seen in the film – suggests a particular photographic aesthetic that seems closer to the 'objective science' of the ethnographer than the tourist (see Chapter 5). However, what matters most, as Latham and McCormack suggest, is that we see the aesthetic as "a *category of sense-making*- and not some representational veneer laid over the real materiality of…life…but part of the generative, distributed expressiveness of the [landscape]" (Latham and McCormack, 2009: 260 emphasis added).

Thus, through being more "aware of the theories that inform [our] own photographic practice, and of the theories that inform [our] subjects' approaches to photography" (Pink, 2001: 25, 54), this research takes a 'reflexive' (as opposed to a scientific-realist) approach to visual ethnography- it seeks to generate ethnographic knowledge *through* images and the cultures in which they are created, rather than simply corroborate or 'illustrate' the written word through translating or 'decoding' pictures into verbal knowledge (Pink, 2001: 96). That is not to say that these images cannot play a supportive role to the text, and neither does this suggest that we should conversely champion the visual over the textual. Rather, following Pink, this work attempts to articulate something of the "interwoveness of objects, texts, images and technologies in people's everyday lives and identities" (Pink, 2001: 6) through a sensitivity to the experiences and contexts from which this field-work was produced and a recognition of the interconnectedness of ethnographic methods. In practice, visual methods cannot be used independently of other methods; "neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist" (Pink, 2001: 17). This means that it is the *relation* of images (as research method or topic) to other sensory, material and discursive elements of the research that creates the image's expressive possibility- the manner in which it will *become* of interest" (Pink, 2001: 5 original emphasis).

The context in which images are presented in this thesis is thus as part of a "construction of ethnographic descriptions as an imaginative act, that should bring us into touch with the lives of strangers" (Thomas, in Pink 2001: 12). What I have attempted to produce is "a certain affective resonance" between the visual and the textual, "without necessarily reducing these to the terms of an interpretive narrative" (Latham and McCormack, 2009: 260). Thus, to some extent the images contained within the thesis act in parallel to the text- they neither direct the text nor are they merely illustrative. The fact that they are used alongside research participant's own photos (with no different in 'status' given to either) is an attempt to produce a sense of "auto-ethnographic reverberation" (Harrison, 2008: 53).

(Un)comfortable narratives: being a tourist-ethnographer

Harrison uses the term auto-reverberation to describe her awareness, when listening to the sensorial accounts of other travellers, of how they connected with her own experiences of global travel- she "understood travel as an embodied experience…such awareness provided a backdrop to much of [the] analysis and reflection" (ibid). Being a fellow tourist in New Zealand in some senses effected a similar reverberation- but so too did the constant strain of expressing interest or enthusiasm for the object of the study against the expectation of being *critical*. This is a crucial point in my ethnography- which was not set up as a study of fan-tourists *per se*, but was now turning into that story. Yet, as Gustavson and Cytrynbaum argue, that should not prove problematic. They argue that as ethnographers we should pay more attention to "the evolving relational spaces" of research, such as "those moments when the originally intended purposes of the planned data collection activities get pushed to the periphery and the relational dynamics of the research take centre stage" (2003: 253). Nonetheless, this sort of self-selection can be problematic- as Harrison found in her ethnography of Canadian 'cottagers', such an approach to sampling can lead to a "unrealistically harmonious" research population (2008: 52)[147]. However, my audiences' responses suggested a fair diversity, and when combined with other participant observation techniques, such self-identification has outweighing benefits in terms of the rich contribution of enthusiastic respondents[148].

It is also worth noting that to follow this flow or 'evolving relational space' is not an easy option- it does not go hand-in-hand with a 'diary-interview' or 'questionnaire-interview', or indeed any "Malinowskian archetype of fieldwork" (Frohlick and Harrison, 2008: 7). In fact, the experience of 'following flows', or of 'being open to chance encounters', is rather daunting. It was somewhat overwhelming, for example, to be *asked* to talk to respondents via Skype or MSN- a situation that somehow felt almost like a failure, that I hadn't adequately *satiated* the needs of these *Lord of the Rings* and travel enthusiasts, who wanted to *talk more*[149]. Likewise, my own post-trip experiences (as tourist, ethnographer, doctoral candidate etc) were also to be balanced here, and juggling these aspects of the experience inevitably "emotionally spilt over into the rest of my life" (Bennett, 2004: 420).

Yet, there had no doubt been some 'shifting positionality' in the process, as I recalled in an early journal entry-

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[147] From a cultural theory perspective, Gray also criticises the frequency of which audience studies equate to fan studies, due to the accessibility of fans, their 'interesting behaviour' and so on (2003: 66).

[148] Pullen also notes in relation to the online community of the TORN website, that judging by the breadth of interest in the site, variety of responses to topics, polls and so on, that this is a "dynamic and wide-ranging community" (2006: 180).

[149] As Harrison also notes, many travel enthusiasts might "honestly admit [that] it is difficult to find anyone to share your travel stories with once you arrive home" (2008: 42).

[Journal: 25th November 2005. Wellington]

I find myself in New Zealand facing a heavily fieldwork orientated PhD with the knowledge that I truly, deeply despise fieldwork. I have thoroughly avoided it at all costs up until now. I just don't like having to talk to people that much. How has this happened? I can't believe I would have ever consciously nominated myself for this torture?

With a brutal self-honesty I present a picture of the far-from heroic geographer of previous generations, but one that attempts to openly chart the research journey that I took part in, and created. As Thrift argues, "though fieldwork is often portrayed as a classical colonial encounter in which the fieldworker lords it over her/his respondents, the fact of the matter is that it usually does not feel much like that at all. More often it is a curious mixture of humiliations and intimidations mixed with moments of insight and even enjoyment" (Thrift, in Crang 2003: 504).

Yet, many cultural geographers have found it difficult to strike this balance- as Dewsbury and Naylor note, the performance of doing fieldwork is often written out of the 'research outcomes' (2002: 257), a fact which risks perpetuating the 'stout-booted' objective geographer of the mid-nineteenth century, since critiqued heavily from feminist, post-colonialist and poststructuralist positions (DeLyser and Starrs, 2001). Nonetheless, attempts to reflect more fully on one's own positionality to the field have led to critiques against supposed "excessive navel-gazing" (Hoong Sin, 2003: 311), or damningly termed 'vanity ethnographies' (Law, 2000: 7). As Geertz laments, "excessive concern, which in practice means any concern at all, with how ethnographic texts are constructed seems like an unhealthy self-absorption – time-wasting at best, hypochondriacal at worst" (1988: 1).

Opinions then are fiercely divided, and, as Law describes, it is not an easy field to navigate:

"So it seems to me that we're balancing on a knife-edge. We want to order. In particular, we hope to tell stories about social ordering. But we don't want to do violence in our own ordering. And in particular we don't want to pretend that our ordering is complete, or conceal the work, the pain, and the blindnesses that went into it. It is an uncomfortable knife-edge. It violates most of the inclinations and dispositions that we have acquired in generations of commitment to 'the scientific method' and its social, political and personal analogues" (Law, 1994: 8).

It is here, on Law's point, that my own ethnographic intents also lie. Rather than a critical or pedagogical ambition, my own aim for the project has been to narrate the lived experiences of a particular, enthusiastic 'community' of 'popular culture consumers'- no matter how uncomfortable and difficult that was at times. In other words, and to return to the discussion of positionality at the beginning of this chapter (Radway, Jenkins etc), I do not want to simply 'iron out' any of the problems of reflexivity critiqued in Radway's work simply by giving the 'correct nods' in a section of a PhD exactly like this (Wood, 2004: 152): but, rather to attempt a sustained reflexivity in the encounters between individuals in a group which has only been stabilized as such in the process

of this research itself[150]. As Ahmed notes, "it is not just that we feel for the collective, but how we feel about others is what aligns us with a collective, which paradoxically 'take shape' only as an effect of such alignments" (2004: 27). I would myself be enfolded, unfold narratives and become entwined in other enfoldments. How else could I describe the experience of stumbling across an image of myself, a nameless tourist, in a weblog photograph of another visitor's NZ *Lord of the Rings* location visit[151]? There I was, as tourist 'other', and certainly not a figure with the authority to write back in blinded critique, some sort of *flâneur*. Indeed, this unexpected confrontation with my photographic self in a place I did not expect it, shattered forever the illusion that I could be some distanced observer and invisible narrator. For me, there was no privacy in the crowd: unlike the voyeurism Jokinen and Veijola speak of (1997: 28), my crowd *looks back*. Perhaps this was the final affirmation that "I too must be marked by my presence, by how I too performed" (Crang, 2000: 174).

And it is this presence that is often quite uncomfortable. The anxiety I felt on arriving to New Zealand, with little confidence or experience of ethnographic fieldwork, was eased at times by a brimming sense of pride felt at becoming, gradually, a 'known figure' in the field[152]. Nevertheless, this anxiety never really faded- there was a constant fretfulness about what I should actually *do*, what the perfect ethnographer would do:

Such a creature would have been more energetic, made more phone calls, been more sociable, and have had a better memory. He or she would have needed less 'time-out' … All in all, he or she would have been less prone to distractions of all kinds" (Law, 1994: 43)

Yet paradoxically, it could be this perfectionism that leads us astray, or as McCormack puts it, "the imperative that prompted participation in a practice can come to hinder it" (2003: 493). The imperative he talks about is that of 'deep' immersion, the ideal of the classic ethnographer - "the effort to understand what was happening in the playing out of an event by apparently going beyond or behind either a surface understanding of or an immersion in that event" (ibid). McCormack suggests instead that the intensity of such attention could be as important as depth of insight, and that "what one folded in to an encounter…was as important as what one found out" (ibid). For Laurier and Philo, this comes in the realisation that encounters are diverse- some arranged, some are chance. The question they ask is "how is it that any person could go about working out what kind of encounter they are having at the time they are having it?" (Laurier and Philo, 2006: 356). Thus, we need to "find ways to feel comfortable" (Law, 1994: 44), even to "stop

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[150] Bourdieu's notion of "elective affinities" are interesting here: he captures processes of becoming, belonging, and the power fields these operate in, but yet is static within framework of class (1999: 241)

[151] It was in fact an extremely uncanny feeling to have been browsing the internet with a rather scopophilic feeling for other people's holiday photos, to be confronted with a 'peep show' onto myself.

[152] Being recognised, for example, from the photograph on my project website.

trying"[153], despite the fact that the active search for knowledge is the "dominant [imperative] in habits of geographical thinking" (McCormack, 2003: 493).

For me, finding ways of being comfortable ended up drawing upon skills and experiences familiar to many of us- that is, *being a tourist* (Harrison, 2003, 2008). This is in ironic opposition to the legacy of fieldwork left by Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose ostensible hatred of the 'mere' pleasure-seeking tourist is sustained through the shared *topoi* of traveller and ethnographer, for whom the experience of the field "is one of discipline and challenge- it is a test rather than pleasure" (Leed, 1991: 10). But perhaps pleasure, rather than discipline, is what enables us to be open to the ephemeralities, the flows or 'scapes' or connections, the boundless ways in which we, as tourists, organize and understand our experiences of landscapes. So, having passed the first few tours sitting rather uncomfortably wondering what I should do next, relaxing into a natural (often respondent-led) conversation was not only a release but also illuminating. Drawing upon the group dialogue, the environmental factors (such as being on a coach) and the landscapes we were visiting, such a technique favours a reflexivity with surroundings- such as the 'interview in place' advocated by Hoong Sin (2003), the auto-ethnographic narratives of Solnit (2002), and the embodied accounts of Urry (2000) and Wylie (2002, 2005).

Thus these landscapes are still sites of work, but also places that I was experiencing as a film tourist, and also places also locations in which "sociable encounters were played out" Edensor (1998: 119). In short, as Edensor notes, being comfortable might require to some extent relinquishing the need for order or control- to be open to interruption, and to recognise that "research has to be combined with pleasure" (ibid). To be marked by my presence thus involves the recognition of the many roles I took on. On tour buses, for example, the time I spent least valuably was that at the beginning when I tried to assume the behaviour of a researcher- painfully trying to 'mingle' with other members of the group. There was a sense of protocol at any rate- I was also required to be attentive to the guide, to take part in the 'choreography' of the tour. Yet, the 'expert', 'enthusiast' and 'resident' roles that I was put in by the guides and clients ultimately meant that my attention was constantly thoroughly shattered between multiple aspects of the experience[154]: paying attention, observing movements, relationships and traits of participants, trying to overhear chatter, trying to initiate chatter, trying to hear others chatter whilst I was chattered to.

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[153] "So I stopped trying. This stopping trying was not sudden. It was incremental, almost unregistered in its unfolding…." (McCormack, 2003: 493)

[154] Magolda's (2000) self-reflexive confessional narratives reveal six distinct relational roles to the students at his ethnographic site of a residential college: a suspicious field-worker, a field-worker doing his job, a teaching field-worker, a supportive field-worker, a personally-involved field-worker, and an intrusive field-worker.

Having (ironically) achieved this balance through a sense of 'letting go', it was also very apparent that everybody else seemed also to be more relaxed- relieved of the fear that I was either poised to ask them something incredibly deep and meaningful, or coerce them into a lengthy questionnaire they would really prefer not to do. In a further 'parallel' with tourism, ethnographic encounters where my husband was also present- for instance when he was also invited to come along on a tour, tended to go even better. After all, solo travel can often be a more daunting experience, we often like to have the security of a companion, and also someone to experience places with. His presence with me throughout fieldwork, at any rate, cannot simply be written out of the research outcomes[155]. I often joked that he was 'my technical assistant' in the field, but in reality he was that *and* many other roles. He would point out things that I hadn't seen, and challenged my observations when he did not share my view. Boieje (2004) hypothesizes that the presence of two *interviewees* together can alter how each respond alone, and the same could be said when two people work together as 'interviewers'- even if that is not the formal relationship. Yet, I felt that his presence did anything but 'undermine' my role or the validity of the interview (the hypothesis tested by Boieje). Rather it was just another active constituent of the ethnography- and usually in a very positive way[156].

His roles and experiences of doing ethnographic fieldwork with me, as with my own, have in many ways been stabilized in the process of writing this methodology chapter – as Law's quote from the beginning argued, "ethnography is a product, an interactive outcome" (1994: 16-17). Akin to Law, "I didn't start out with a strong sense of what I would 'discover'. Instead, these inscriptions are a moment in - and a document about - a difficult, protracted, and painful process" (Law, 1994: 49), in which "the making of the ethnographic place happens somewhere at an intersection between the ethnographer's direct experience and its reconstitution as *ethnography*" (Pink, 2008: 191 original emphasis). Over this period, there is no doubt that my positionality towards my research participants has shifted (Harrison, 2008). "Yours, in *Lord of the Rings* friendship"- as one diarist would sign off her e-mails, something that always touched me incredibly amongst the angst of doing research with people whom I came to realize I cared very much what they thought of me, and often felt quite intimidated by. But also a phrase that so aptly sums up my role as ethnographer, as "fulcrum of fragmented collectives" (Harrison, 2008: 55). The 'reflexive turn' in qualitative research may have captured these issues- the partialities and multiplicities of participant identities on the one hand[157], the 'heroics' (or not) of undertaking

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[155] Off all the self-reflexive revelations, the fact that 'I was not alone' is somehow the hardest to admit- it most undermines the role of ethnographer as solitary, contemplative, able. Yet, I have no doubt that I could not have accomplished what I did in New Zealand on my own.

[156] For example, his engagement was valuable in the messy reality of ethnographic fieldwork- where a chance informal encounter when least expected leads to an unrecordable three-hour conversation that proves much easier to provide a synopsis of afterwards with two people recollecting what took place.

[157] For example, "It is not assumed that members of the audience pre-possess a shared *identity* which can be measured through the product itself. It does however assume that they have a shared interest, and that

research on the other. Yet many works still fail to capture these *feelings*, the true feeling of doing ethnographic research, of writing this audience's story, that are somehow captured in the 'passionate sociologies' of Game and Metcalfe when they say: "I love reading tales of passion, of love and death, joy and pain, of fate. At the same time I dread these stories and the awful bruised feeling that will inevitably overwhelm me as I read" (1996: 2).

I have felt bruised since first coming into contact with 'my audience' and my 'ethnographic field'. My final field notebook entry marks this tenderness when it talks of driving to Wellington for the last time (my own favourite place), past many of the locations, 'saying goodbye' to them with some sadness, but at the same time being glad to have finished, relieved to be going home, and pleased that Wellington would be my final, positive place- as if this upbeat departure point would be at the root of all subsequent memories. Harrison seems to experience something similar, when she recalls that her "sadness and regret on the last day of the summer when I had to leave [the cottage] were as raw as those described by the cottagers I had interviewed that summer. I had lost some of my intellectual distance from the cottage experience; but I had gained enormously some valuable affective insights" (2008: 54).

The challenge, then, is to retain this insight through the constitution of an ethnography- to show integrity towards the tourists (not to mention towards oneself) who had given this 'gift' of their stories, (Behar, 2003)[158]. Informed by the work of Pink, this is an ethnography that "aims to offer a version of [my] experience of reality that is as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced" (Pink, 2001: 18). Thus, as opposed to distance, objectification and moral concern, it is my positionality, my own feelings about *The Lord of the Rings*, the former locations in New Zealand, and the audiences for these, that construct an ethical connection based on imagined senses of collective sensibility (Maffesoli, 1996: 17). Furthermore, I hope to have captured a sense of my presence in the research through the narrative strategies employed throughout this work. Following Behar, it is an attempt to convert lived experience into memorable writing, a narrative with which the reader might hopefully find a resonance with (2003: 18). As Frank describes:

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mapping the different subjective positions from which they imagine or *identify* those cultural artefacts is most useful, not for the centralizing of the object itself, but rather for an analysis of the position-takings and agencies at play in the articulation of the social experiences that surround it" (Athique, 2008: 34/35 original emphasis).

[158] See also Grosz, who asks "what would an ethics be like that, instead of seeking a mode of equivalence, a mode of reciprocity or calculation, sought to base itself on absolute generosity, absolute gift, expenditure without return, a pure propulsion into a future that does not rebound with echoes of an exchange dictated by the past?" (Grosz, 1999: 11)

"Thinking with stories means joining with them…..the goal is empathy, not as internalizing the feelings of the other, but…[finding].. 'resonance' with the other. The other's self-story does not become my own, but I develop sufficient resonance with that story so that I can feel its nuances…." (Frank, 1995: 156).

To put it another way, the narrative of this thesis 'does some work'- seems to make sense of (and sensibly represent) some of the complexities of this cultural phenomenon and of this research process. However, that is not to say that other modes of ordering this knowledge could not have feasibly be discerned (Law, 2000: 24)[159]. But in this work, the auto-ethnographic voice is used as "an analytical and critical tool, one for interfering and making a difference" (Law, 2000: 2). Harrison calls it "auto-ethnographic participant observation"- as with her works, significant proportions of my ethnographic observation happened in isolation to other research participants- for example those who responded to the project online. Likewise, I participated in tourist activities and everyday life in New Zealand for the 6-month period of fieldwork "independent of any of my research subjects", and, as such, "the affective responses I came to understand about these experiences at an emotional, psychological and visceral level were entirely personal" (2008: 54). The narrative here thus reflects my ongoing emplacement in the places of research (Pink, 2008: 193), and my central role as *connecting* the people who I spoke to (in person or otherwise) (Harrison, 2008: 55).

[159] Law here draws on the comments of Geertz, who wonders if "we admit that ethnographies tend to look at least as much like romances as they do like lab reports" (although also not really like either), then we are faced with two questions: How is the author made manifest in the text? And, what exactly is 'the work' that the author authors? (1988: 8).

Conclusion- doing justice

Having herself undertaken a not inconsiderable study into Lord of the Rings 'cinematic tourists', Rodanthi Tzanelli calls for a "brave researcher" to explore how *Lord of the Rings* tourists encounter the landscapes of the films in practice (2004: 25). Her wariness of the potential unwieldiness of any potential ethnography of *Lord of the Rings* tourists is prudent: this is no simple 'cultural field', spanning media and tourism audiences, paradoxically affiliated to both the 'sub-cultural' and mainstream; tied to networks of global merchandise and commodification, yet individually meaningful; and ultimately, performed through endlessly proliferating practices, of which fan tourism, the focus of this study, is but a small part.

Indeed, the ideals of classic ethnography are quickly turned upon their head where the very shared practices of this apparent collectivity – the practices of tourism – are used to denote what ethnography should *not* be. But there is even more at stake than issues of undertaking research into academically 'unpopular' areas of social enquiry: as a (not particularly fannish) tourist asked me quite pointedly one day shortly after I had been introduced to a tour group:

"I expect you are going to go back and write what weirdoes we all are…"

We do not have to look far to see how very justified he was in his expectations- fandom and tourism share a genealogy of pathologisation (which the following chapter considers in further detail), and, although the tides are turning, it is still much easier to find wholesale condemnations of tourism, than it is to find accounts based on the value and meanings given to such practices and encounters by tourists themselves (DeLyser, 1999: 604). Overcoming such issues of trust and access is thus barely just to do with an objective and conscientious researcher overcoming the barriers that stand in the way to gaining access to the desired information. More than reassurance, it was a significant and pleasant surprise for some to find a researcher more sympathetic to their activities than they expected- the opening through shared enthusiasm of a two-way dynamic and dialogue between the 'critic' and 'consumer' that the latter often seems more aware of than the former- in which 'enthusiasm' becomes the *modus operandi*, rather than merely the subject, of the research field.

Thus, as well as the perspective of an early career researcher, this methodology chapter hopes to have made very clear the extremely fractured and multiple positionalities that come with the terrain of a tourist-researcher, or a scholar-fan: dual identities from different disciplinary backgrounds but with similar issues with regards to positionality. As I have attempted to show, this is not just a self-reflexivity that belongs to the 'popular-minded' academic, but rather, to the *whole* audience. If in any way to be momentarily stabilized as a 'tribe', a necessary caveat is to uphold the perpetual heterogeneity of this ordering. Thus, to be 'mainstream' certainly shouldn't suggest some sort of mediocrity or homogenization of experience. Rather we are talking about a fascinating cultural field, "a dynamic site constructed from the sum of participants understood as

a body of diverse and mobile agents engaged in *particular* and *relative* forms of social imagination" (Athique, 2008: 38 original emphasis). I also hope to have in some way captured the process of research. As Nigel Thrift has argued, "so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become" (in Lorimer, 2005: 84). This story, the ethnography of the tribe I chose to join, gave no such notice. To recognise this, is to recognise the openness of experience and the multitude of directions in which we can travel; the possibility of knowledge making that isn't characterized by "an enervating cynicism" (Bennett, 2001: 13). This is therefore an ethnography which has at it's heart a desire to address the lack of empiricism in tourism studies, to tell the story of the déclassé fan-tourist; not out of a sense of sympathy or defence or in order to raise the status of the fan and tourist in the perceived order of things; but because, contrary to the feeling one gets from theory, the colliding worlds of tourism and popular cultural consumption are worlds which are not inhabited *'on the margins'*

Chapter Three: Scorned pleasures- fantasy fandom and film-tourism

Introduction

"I'm so honoured, touched and relieved that the members of the Academy have supported us, that they've seen past the trolls, wizards and hobbits (by) recognizing fantasy this year. Fantasy is an F-word that hopefully the five-second delay won't do anything with". (Peter Jackson, 2004[160]*)*

According to Lucie Armitt, "it is traditional for the first page of an academic study of literary fantasy to gesture the reader in with an apology- whilst the 'Fantastic' may carry unequivocally positive (if imprecise) connotations in common speech", when placed in a literary context, "we have a problem. Suddenly it is something dubious, embarrassing, extra-canonical" (Armitt, 1996:1). Judging by Peter Jackson's Oscar acceptance speech, it would appear that directors of phenomenally successful fantasy film adaptations also face the same concern. Indeed, since its first publication in 1954, and ever since, *The Lord of the Rings* has attracted the fiercest loyalties but also scorn at a most visceral level. Literary critics seem to be irreconcilably divided on the trilogy's merits, with both sides offering impassioned arguments- critic Philip Toynbee stated confidently in 1961, for example, that "these books have passed into a merciful oblivion" (Errigo, 2003: 70-71). Criticisms of the trilogy come in many forms- *The Lord of the Rings* is childish, of no relevance to the real world, and valued only by sociopath 'victims' of modernity who hide, in some kind of mass sopor, between the pages of its escapist make-believe.

Yet if we turn to more positive (and often audience-generated) opinions, another picture of *The Lord of the Rings* emerges: here we have 'author of the century' (Shippey, 2001), and nation's 'most-loved book'[161]- accolades awarded to Tolkien and his high fantasy epic very much to the continued apoplexy of the critics. The trilogy has sold 150 million copies[162] in around 40

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[160] A quote from Peter Jackson's acceptance speech for 'Best Picture' at the 76th Annual Academy Awards, where *The Return of the King* made Oscar History in scooping all 11 awards for which it was nominated.

[161] Three quarter of a million votes were received for the BBC's Big Read poll in 2003, which placed *The Lord of the Rings* in first place and Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* second in a list of the nation's top 100 reads. It topped similar polls in Australia and Germany, as well as being voted 'book of the millennium' by Amazon.com readers in 1999.

[162] This figure is a 2007 estimate of copies of the full story sold, whether published as one volume, three, or some other configuration (Wikipedia, 2009a).

languages. It has enjoyed a stable and widespread popularity amongst adults and children since the 1950's, gaining particular popularity with cultural movements such as 1960's American counter culture and British Middle class romantic green protest. The audience for Tolkien's work has always been, and continues to be, surprisingly diverse and lively, and in a constant challenge to the critiques levelled against the work's literary purpose and social functionality, the novels have been 'culturally appropriated' in many and multiple ways (e.g. Errigo, 2003; Glover, 1984; Veldman, 1994)[163].

Moreover, the second half of the 20th century saw an incredible growth in fantasy literature- authors such as Le Guin and Pratchett, renowned in their own right, all draw upon the legacy of Tolkien[164]. Indeed, Tolkien is often seen as the 'founding father' of modern literary fantasy[165]. The effect of this on the critic's viewpoint has been to raise Tolkien's status enough to credit him, somewhat begrudgingly, with being at least the 'originator' of a genre that is often seen to only unimaginatively copy his lead- he is given the ambivalent honour of making fantasy *'respectable'* (Swinfen, 1984: 1). And this is the same honour that Jackson appears to have claimed for *The Lord of the Rings* in a cinematic context. But why on earth would Peter Jackson feel like he must take a moment to thank the Academy, on accepting one of the seventeen Oscars[166] that the film adaptation of the trilogy won? The box-office had already spoken, and the film trilogy, just like the books, had been a record-breaking global success. Peter Jackson could simply do no wrong- from Antipodean backyard horror director to the 'King of Hollywood', Jackson was celebrated (particularly in the southern hemisphere) as having the world at his feet over the successful production of the trilogy in his Wellington studios. It was his very wrangles with the Hollywood system that encouraged so much respect- a victory for the everyman. As Jones and Smith point out, the New Zealand buzz was; if he can do it, so can *you* (2005: 932)[167]. So why did he feel the need to apologize for certain icons of the high fantasy genre- that were so painstakingly created

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[163] Russian interest in the novels provides a particularly powerful example here. Long before the first official translation of the texts, which were heavily abridged and transformed due to the perceived ideological danger of the books, unofficial samizdat (dissident, hand published translations) copies were in circulation (Wikipedia, 2009b). Tolkien fandom increased particularly amongst university students in the early 1990's- indeed, the novels' influence stretched to inspiring and motivating its Muscovite enthusiasts in foiling an attempted Communist coup in 1991 (Errigo, 2003: 275).

[164] Something made explicit in books like *Meditations on Middle-earth* (Pratchett et al, 2001); an edited collection of contemporary Fantasy author's tributes to Tolkien.

[165] For a genealogy of the development of modern fantasy, see Matthews (2002).

[166] Four for *The Fellowship of the Ring*, two for *The Two Towers* and eleven for *The Return of the King*. Nominations crossed all categories: Art Direction, Cinematography, Costume Design, Directing, Film Editing, Makeup (twice), Best Music (Score) twice; Best Music (Original Song), Best Picture, Sound Editing, Sound Mixing, Visual Effects (three) and Writing. The trilogy has won approximately 220 awards in total from all sources.

[167] "He is not only auteur, but entrepreneur…an icon of the new creative industries" (Jones and Smith, 2005: 932)

for the film? Why did Jackson suggest that these aspects needed 'seeing past' in order to see the value or quality of the film, despite the fact that these mythical elements are precisely the attraction for many readers and viewers? What does an Orc symbolize that is *so ultimately unacceptable*?

In exploring these paradoxes, this chapter shows that these are discourses that touch the very heart of popular cultural consumption- and that they therefore directly affect the way in which consumption (and doing research on consumption) takes place through the embodied practices of *Lord of the Rings*-inspired film tourism. As we touched upon in the previous methodological chapter, approaches to the audience within literary, film and cultural theory have variously ignored consumption, incorporated audience practices into desired readings, or championed the cause of the fannish déclassé as radical or subversive. This chapter aims to explore how the contested theoretical terrain of popular culture consumption and fandom[168] plays out in everyday practice; through considering the 'figure' of the *Lord of the Rings* enthusiast and film tourist. Travelling either independently or as part of a group, such touring enthusiasts demonstrate complex patterns of affiliation to their 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991). Their emotional encounters with the landscapes of *The Lord of the Rings* and with each other are complex and demonstrate an awareness and wariness of themselves as pathologised or excessive figures. In other words, rather than a sub-cultural group characterized by their defiance towards or detachment from other more 'mainstream' tourists, friendship and *communitas* amongst *Lord of the Rings* fan tourists seems to rely on a much more nuanced and reflexive idea of identity. This is seen, for example, in the continued imagined reality of the stereotypical 'Ringer' or *Lord of the Rings* fan tourist, who serves as a figure of excess even within enthusiast tourist groups.

The chapter thus focuses on the *Lord of the Rings* fan tourist in two themed tour experiences which create quite different settings for the negotiation and performance of fandom: the casual, half or full-day 'scenic' tour of former film locations (Nomad Safari, Queenstown and Adventure Safari, Wellington); and the specialist, multi-day cross-country *Lord of the Rings* themed experience (Red Carpet Tour). The latter, of course, appeals very specifically to an enthusiast audience- yet we find 'non-fans' present: on the other hand, whilst scenic day tours cater to a more serendipitous film tourism market, we nonetheless observe latent fan affiliations and practices. Employing theories attuned to the corporeal and performative in tourism permits us to explore how the enthusiastic (or otherwise) consumption of texts and places happens; how behaviour is not only managed or even policed by tour guides, but is an active process of negotiation on behalf of tourists themselves. As a result, we cannot simply ascribe *Lord of the*

[168] I use the terms fandom and enthusiasm quite broadly, recognising the potential limitations in attempting to strictly define the fan's characteristics against, say, the 'follower' (e.g. Hill, 2002: x). However, my interest here is rather in exploring the *shared* affective domains of fandom and enthusiasm, equally as relevant to 'admirers' as 'fans' and so on. This would seem particularly salient given the very broad (as well as more cult) appeal of *The Lord of the Rings*

Rings film tourism to a touristic genre or 'theme' of pilgrimage, or alternatively that of post-tourist playfulness. Rather, we must recognise these tourists' complex senses of reflexivity; of how their behaviour is perceived- to take note of the distancing tactics, and coy and guarded emotions that demarcate the world of the so-called 'Ringer'. The chapter therefore concludes in suggesting the importance of using emotional and more-than-representational theories in understanding practices of media and tourism consumption through an empirical account that seeks to explore exactly *how*, as opposed to merely *why*, Fantasy *matters*.

A matter of taste: the pathologization of F/fantasy

"Any problems with [the Lord of the Rings film trilogy] lie outside the purview of the production. There is a large swathe of the population who will never be able to take elves seriously. The film's intricately realised of hobbits, wizards, orcs, trolls, and goblins has been so heavily quoted over the years, in everything from prog rock to 'Dungeons And Dragons', that its spectaculars are rather familiar. Then there are the difficulties with the fantasy genre itself - unlike science fiction, which has delusions of satire, sword and sorcery is all escapist power fantasy. It self-consciously inhabits a cultural vacuum, the source of its appeal to its fans, and the reason why so many instinctively revile it" (De Abaitua, 2001[169]*)*

In the previous chapter, we touched upon the work of scholars such as Ang, Radway, Jenkins and Hills- all of whom have been interested in fan audiences, of both mainstream and 'cult' texts. Here, I want to develop that argument a little further but focus instead on the text itself- that is, I want to consider exactly what is the perceived 'problem' with the fantasy genre, that has so riled the Film 4 reviewer whose comments open this discussion (De Abaitua, above). His comments very much support Ang's observations that individuals who dislike a certain media text "betray no trace of the uncertainty we encounter among lovers of the programme. Quite the contrary, they seem to take their dislike so much as a matter of course that they confidently believe in the rationality of their dislike". (1985: 88). What is more, as she notes, such condemnations are frequently marked by indignation, fury and annoyance reflected in a 'terribly worked up' narrative and considerable use of strong language- it is, indeed, a powerful combination of emotional expression and rational explanation of dislike (ibid: 89). Nevertheless, there is little doubt that *The Lord of the Rings,* example *par excellence* of the 'high fantasy' genre, does attract these vehemently voiced opinions; and bearing in mind Ang's 'ideology of mass culture', this section aims to further expand some of the social-historical features that might contribute to how Tolkien and the high-fantasy genre is received in contemporary culture.

[169] An exert from a Film 4 online review for *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Orcs, elves, goblins- so far this chapter has shown that the bestiary of Middle-earth (which is indeed somewhat generic of the Fantasy genre at large) proves problematic for some readers. In fact, "a large proportion of the population", De Abaitua claims, finds it hard to 'take elves seriously'. Of course, we could challenge his hyperbole on the basis of the box-office figures alone, or we could argue that it's a serious piece of literature or cinema- on the grounds of the effort taken to produce it (as a book or film), its length, occasionally dense prose, and the fact that to view the whole trilogy back to back requires a not insignificant twelve hours of viewing. Nonetheless, we do seem to find it harder to class the fantasy genre as 'serious' in the same way that we accord that quality to realist literature. As Tolkien's friend and peer C.S. Lewis rather wryly commented,

"No one that I know of has indeed laid down in so many words that a fiction cannot be fit for an adult and civilised reading unless it represents life as we have all found it to be, or probably shall find it to be, in experience. But some such assumption seems to lurk tacitly in the background of much criticism and literary discussion. We feel it in the widespread neglect or disparagement of the romantic, the idyllic, and the fantastic, and the readiness to stigmatise instances of these as 'escapism'. We feel it when books are praised for being 'comments on, or 'reflections' (or more deplorably 'slices') of Life. We notice also that 'truth to life' is held to have a claim on literature that overrides all other considerations" (1961: 60)[170]

Accordingly, over the past three decades, a number of sympathetic literary theorists have attempted to 'recover' Fantasy, to find it a place within the literary canon, by arguing for its very importance- by saying that it *is* serious, and that it *does* matter (e.g. Armitt, 1996; Hume, 1984; Jackson, 1981). Fantasy can matter, for example, if it attempts to 'better itself'- as a press quote from *The Guardian* exudes, "most ambitiously, this rousing adventure closes with an ending that is closer in spirit to an art house film than a popcorn holiday romp" (in De Abaitua, 2001).

But, what if *The Lord of the Rings* isn't necessarily *meant* to be serious? The crux of the matter here lay in the value judgement that literature (or equally film) *should* be serious. Seriousness, embodied in the avant-garde or elite culture of the art house cinema is posited as the antithesis of the debased sensual pleasures of popcorn and popular cinema[171]. This barely logical, yet very recognizable attitude towards popular culture has a considerable legacy. Dyer argues that it was

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[170] Hume argues that these sorts of contemporary attitudes to Fantasy can only be understood by considering the legacy of mimesis in literature. We are "curiously blind", she argues, to the presence of Fantasy in the history of Western literature, "because our traditional approaches to literature are based on mimetic assumptions" (1984: 3).

[171] It is interesting to compare and contrast this to Deleuze, for whom cinema is primarily affective, not cognitive. However, Deleuze only applies this to examples of what he considers the high end of cinematic production. See Colebrook (2002: 40-41) for further discussion.

the plays of Molière, and his assertion of populism and pleasure against the élite opinion and edifying aesthetics of 17th century Paris, that originally "severed art from entertainment…it became identified with what was *not* art, *not* serious, *not* refined…hedonistic, democratic, vulgar, easy" (2002: 6 emphasis added). Thus, entertainment is very rarely judged on it own terms, *as* entertainment[172]. As Dyer goes on to suggest, it rather tends to be an 'already-given', or utilised to "push the analysis too quickly onto other things"- an effect of art or ideology (Dyer, 2002: 1)[173]. Entertainment *as* entertainment then, tends to be negatively associated with the affective encounters it produces- a considerable issue, if, as Jenkins suggests, "most popular culture is shaped by a logic of emotional intensification- it is less interested in making us think than it is in making us feel" (Jenkins, 2006: 3).

But it does seem that much cultural theory has traditionally downplayed the social, common-sensical nature of emotional response in favour of cognitive reasoning- as Swinfen paradoxically notes, "some critics condemn the whole (fantasy) genre with a passion which seems to have its roots in emotion rather than objective critical standards" (1984: 1). Swinfen is quite correct in one sense, but also misses the point: are objective critical standards the only or correct internal logic by which popular culture can be analysed[174]? Storey makes this point even more explicit, when he argues that "there is only one appropriate focus of cultural studies, and that is on domination and manipulation- and to pursue a left pessimism is the only guarantee of political and scholarly seriousness" (1999: 22).

To focus on popular culture otherwise, as a scholar, according to Steiner, "risks the whole gamut of muddle and embarrassment" (in Game and Metcalfe, 2004: 359)[175]. And to participate as an avid consumer in this kind of sensual abandonment is to become prey to even deeper disparagement. As Goss notes, for example, the "intellectual immaturity of the masses, childish

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[172] Compare with de Certeau's related analysis of fiction, in which he argues that "despite the *quid quo pro* of its different statuses, fiction, in any of its modalities – mythic, literary, scientific, or metaphorical – is a discourse that 'informs' the 'real' without pretending either to represent it or to credit itself with the capacity for such a representation" (de Certeau and Ward, 2000: 126).

[173] To draw a similar point from an alternative disciplinary focus, see also Holloway and Kneale, (2008: 297-8) who refer to structural literary theory and its shortcomings with regards to seeing fantasy as 'an expression of' cultural values, which "stand in for something more important". Geographer Aitken, for example, writes that "there is a link between the appeal of fantastic science fiction forms and their ability to address basic problems that relate to sexual and racial identity…..in this sense, the horror of SF and the monstrous gothic city point to something with liberatory potential" (Aitken, 2002: 120). Or, equally, "film *offers a means* of exploring gender/ the crisis of masculinity" (Craine and Aitken, 2004).

[174] For example "the belief that the criterion of logical consistency in argument is universally applicable might itself be faulted as embedded in Enlightenment assumptions" (Burgin, 1996:16).

[175] Compare with Slater, who from a different but complementary context, also argues that there is a lack of support and encouragement for the discussion of feelings, faith or spiritual belief within geography, even in a disciplinary environment within which discussion about identity is burgeoning (Slater, 2004: 247).

surrender or childlike insubordination to the exhortations of the consciousness industries is [but one] persistent cliché in the critique of consumerism" (1999: 65)[176]. Of course, *The Lord of the Rings* is a text that straddles (sometimes uncomfortably) the shelves of children's literature, adult fiction and takes pride of place amongst the 'specialist' fantasy and science-fiction aisles of high street bookstores. However, some early critical reviewers were in little doubt about where the book belonged. The first review of the trilogy to appear in the Times in 1954 concluded, "this is not a work which many adults will read through more than once". In 1956 American critic Edmund Wilson similarly dismissed the entire trilogy as "juvenile trash", reinforcing the critics' belief that *The Lord of the Rings* was a children's novel (Errigo, 2003: page)[177].

Like seriousness, then, immaturity is a problem to be overcome- by age or education. Immature literature, 'juvenile trash' as Wilson proclaimed, is characterized by *The Lord of the Rings* containing all the right (supernatural) symbols of fantasy, and therefore symbolizing what the genre is composed of. This is reflected in De Abaitua's accusation that genre Fantasy is formulaic, that it has been heavily quoted over the years, and that its spectaculars are rather familiar. After all, even Hugo Dyson, a fellow Inkling, is claimed to have muttered "Oh no! Not another fucking elf!" during one of Tolkien's early readings in the Eagle and Child pub, Oxford. Structural literary theorists would certainly concur that the fantasy genre is a "self-referential sign system" (Armitt, 1996: 18), and that as readers we approach it as such. Indeed, Armitt argues that we anticipate the presence of certain signifiers – like elves, magic and a quest – and "indignation or disconcertion is aroused if these expectations are denied" (ibid)[178]. It is this association with formulaic inevitability that attracts two negative constants: pulp fiction and escapism (Armitt, 1996: 1).

Yet, to associate the fantasy genre uniquely with pulp fiction denies its much lengthier cultural history. Tolkien drew profoundly from the mythical and literary traditions of Northern Europe[179]; he wrote at a time during which fantasy was already deeply embedded in the English literary tradition. Likewise, Schwartz cautions against viewing fantasy as either a reaction against a seemingly universal and constant conception of modernity, or as merely a current publishing 'fad'

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[176] See also Crang's (2000) 'staged' interview with Fowler, which highlights the same moral concern of childishness in the heritage industries.

[177] Of course, critics at the time would have only experienced Tolkien's previous work, The Hobbit, which is certainly more of a children's book than the trilogy. However, Swinfen notes that "many other (fantasy) writers have often been obliged in the first instance to publish as children's writers" (1984: 1- 4).

[178] Armitt continues that this is not problematic in itself – genre is a founding principle of the fantasy form – but what "does remain problematic about so much fantasy criticism is its complete inability to see beyond these parameters…these redundant distinctions" (1996: 18).

[179] Epic early medieval poems such as *Beowulf, Crist, The Elder Edda and Volsunga Saga*, alongside more contemporary works such as the Finnish national epic the *Kalevala*. For more information see for example Carpenter's biography of Tolkien (2002).

– stating that "a casual glance at our literary past reveals a relative lack of interest in realism, except during the past two-hundred years or so" (1985: 27). Talking about folk and fairy tales, Zipes also questions whether this is a cultural heritage that could ever have been said to be "out", even if its mode of production and distribution is very much changed over the generations (2002: 2). Yet, the association of fantasy with formulaic inevitability tends to equate to a view of the fantastic or fantasy genre as neither something panhuman or permanent, but superlative, excessive, and faddish, a "niche market for which a kind of industrial production can be achieved and exploited by opportunist production houses" (Rosebury, 2003: 78)[180]. Thus in a contemporary environment where fantasy is currently finding immense popularity, we are asked 'can the magic last'?

For Zipes, the magic has long since disappeared- the radical potential of folk and fairy tales has been diluted under the conditions of the Culture Industry, and both reason and imagination have atrophied in contemporary society. "The process by which people and cultural forms are made into commodities through the mass media in the 20th century has all but crippled the ability of human beings to distinguish the real from the unreal, the rational from the irrational" (2002: 98). For Zipes, Fantasy represents little but the degeneration of older, purer, more authentic folk culture, and thus can be "virtually ignored because, as part of popular culture, it lacks socially subversive potential" (2002: 211). So, whilst Zipes traces a delicate history of the rise and fall of folk and fairy within cultural political history[181], he places the popular fantasy genre into some sort of ideological neverworld, free from the pressure or promise of becoming political, a cultural form which for him can never 'surprise' us with its overlooked radical potential[182].

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[180] The faddish and formulaic are of course features that are central to the Frankfurt School's conceptualisation of mass culture. They argue that work under capitalism is dull and therefore promotes the search for escape, but, because it is also dulling, it leaves little energy for real escape – the demands of 'authentic' culture. Instead refuge is sought in forms such as popular music – the consumption of which is always passive, and endlessly repetitive, confirming the world as it is" (Storey, 1999: 21).

[181] For example, he argues that resistance to folk and fairy tales came initially from bourgeois society, due to the tales' implicit and explicit critique of utilitarianism- folk tales "challenged the rationalistic purpose and regimentation of life…therefore the bourgeois establishment had to make it seem that the fairy tales were immoral, trivial, useless and harmful". But towards the end of the 19th century, when capitalism had firmly established its dominant forms, the fairy tales "did not have to be as furiously opposed…they could be instrumentalized in more subtle and refined ways as the technological power for manipulating cultural products in the bourgeois cultural sphere became stronger. Consequently the aesthetic standards and social norms became more tolerant in a repressive sense. Either fairy tales themselves were rewritten and watered down with moralistic endings, or they began to serve a compensatory cultural function" (2002: 17).

182 "Politics and the fairy tale. Power struggles and magic. One is tempted to ask what all those enchanting, lovable tales about fairies, elves, ogres, giants, kings, queens, princes, princesses, dwarves, witches, peasants, soldiers, beasts and dragons have to do with politics (Zipes, 2002: 21).

Yet it is on this same ideological axis that the 'defence' of literary fantasy has tended to rest. Structuralist literary theorist Hume (1984) for example attempted to address the fact that "most fantasy is dismissed by hostile critics as 'escapist', and most escape literature is dismissed as 'fantasy' (Hume, 1984: 59). Through categorizing the fantasy genre according to the narrative's function, she argues that Fantasy can be shown to *matter*- albeit not universally. Her four broad functions of fantastic literature in actual fact appear to construct a hierarchy of literary purpose. The escapist literature of Tolkien, alongside other examples of "the pastoral, the conquest tale, the adventure, the comic novel, the detective story, the thriller and pornography" can all be classified as a 'literature of illusion', in that they "offer an escape from the complexities of life (1984: 59)[183]. Unlike her other three categories; literatures of 'vision', 'revision' and 'disillusion', illusionary literature does not disturb the reader, does not offer a plan for a radical different reality, nor does it trouble over the ultimate unfathomable depths of experience, through its "capacity to push rational thought to its natural limits" (ibid). Rather, "these more conservative fantasies simply go along with a desire to cease 'to be', a longing to transcend or escape the human. They avoid the difficulties of confrontation, that tension between the imaginary and the symbolic, which is the crucial, problematic area dramatized in more radical fantasies" (Jackson 1981: 156). Or, as Hume summarises, it is a type of literature that offers "roses without thorns and pleasure without payment" (1984: 55).

Thus, the equation is simple. If it isn't radical[184], it isn't worthy. Specifically, 'escapism' is a tag that critics of escapist literature appear to find very problematic. Books which offer escapism, offer nothing else of value- they are guilty of being 'merely' pleasurable, at best a passive and socially unhelpful diversion from a real world that author and audience are in agreement is "boring, unromantic or even depressing" (Hume, 1984: 55), at worst an ideological or pathological danger to those that are swooned by their illusory powers. As Hume concedes, returning once

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[183] Hume is particularly critical of Tolkien, who she argues "is an outstanding representative of those who have turned their backs squarely on the world….his stance is much closer to being 'wouldn't it be nice if this were true', or, 'I would far rather find this true than what I see everyday'. This is a literature of desire…Tolkien is positively traditional in his preference for public issues and moral choices over individual emotions and private psychological quirks" (1984: 47). Yet it is possible to argue that it is rather she who has 'turned her back' on equally viable readings of Tolkien that pick up on the "powerful undertow of sorrow and regret" (Lyons, 2004: 11) or the permeating sense of death and loss possibly inspired by some of the sadder events of Tolkien's early 20th century life.

[184] Radical features of the other three categories for Hume would include "new visions of reality", such as the literature of Kafka; which "aims to disturb us by dislodging us from our settled sense of reality, and tries to engage our emotions on behalf of this new version of the real"; plans for revising reality and shaping the future (literature of revision); and literature that insists reality is unknowable, that "push us beyond the boundaries of individual consciousness and its set perspective" in order to dismantle our comforting myths- but they offer no replacements (1984: 56-57).

again to Tolkien, 'impassioned' readers "gripped by the experience" of reading Tolkien, who "almost resemble early Christians in their craving for a beautiful ordering of experience, even if it is non-rational[185]" push *The Lord of the Rings* beyond its simplistically escapist role into something "more deeply subversive" (1984: 195). After all, she reasons, whilst Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* is "a pleasant escape for most readers; assimilated passionately by the Manson clan, its values were twisted into one of the motive forces behind the Sharon Tate murders" (ibid)[186]. Paradoxically then, in a project aimed at improving literary theory's interaction with the fantasy genre, Hume must offer a sacrificial goat in the form of illusionary, 'high' or escapist fantasy, against which other types of fantasy can be made to matter *more*. Such pigeonholing only creates further hierarchies- she effectively "ghettoises" sword and sorcery (Armitt, 1996: 3)[187].

Thus we are faced with what Faflak and Wright describe as a common and historical oscillation between perceptions of fantasy literature as safe, sentimentalized and depoliticized, and dangerous, pathologised and to be resisted (Faflak and Wright, 2004). Indeed, it would appear that attitudes to extra-canonical literature today rest around the same polarized views as in the 19th century. For example, Campbell's description of public attitudes to the (presumed female) audience of the Gothic novel, with their "need for constant gratification through new works" (Campbell, 1987: 176) seems an uncanny precursor of Radway's late 20th century Romance readers. And far from an incidental relationship, as Gray notes, the female figure is central to the discussion of popular culture consumption and fandom- "behaviour perceived as fundamentally irrational, excessively emotional, foolish and passive has made the fan decisively feminine" (Gray, 2003: 67). Of course, whilst Nava points out that the actual, lived experiences of female consumers in Victorian Britain was probably radically removed from the uncritical and unreflective accounts written of them by men of the time (in Storey, 1999: 8), the legacy of these morally concerned accounts of social decline are still considerable. Increasing nervousness and

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[185] Here Hume is referring to her belief that some Tolkien addicts "would still accept a one-way ticket to Middle-earth", even when they comprehended that "their inadequate ancestry would condemn them to menial or minor status" (1984: 195).

[186] This is reminiscent of the continuing debate regarding media consumption's effect on violence and other social ills- compare with the more recent fears of Baehr and Snyder, who argue that *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* contain "occult, New Age, Gnostic" messages that could well "destroy these children as well as the communities they live in" (2003: 34).

[187] Again, this is not an isolated example. Warf performs the same process when he claims for the importance of 'alternative histories' within the SF genre: "throughout, the goal is to shed light on the politics of contingency and to open a space for a new ontology of possibility. Alternative history and counterfactual analysis, are, therefore, *far more important than idle speculation*, they lie at the core of how we explain social and spatial reality. *Seen this way*, geographies of science fiction are *deadly serious business*". But, he cautions, "improperly done, (alternative history) toboggans off into *idle fantasy*, *entertaining* perhaps but *analytically worthless*" (2002: 18, 20 emphasis added)

ambivalence towards the 'fanciful' – to coin Coleridge's term – stretched from a perceived danger to the weak minds of women and the lower classes, to a more vengeful distaste for the Romantics- who 'should have known better'[188]. Either way, analogies drawing much from Freudian psychoanalysis compared the romantic consumption ethic with drugs or illness, due to the "self-illusory hedonism" that was actively courted by its consumers, and the obsessive quest for desired experiences (Campbell, 1987). Indeed, as Todorov notes, the very same "collapse of limits between matter and mind" that is experienced when reading fantasy has been found to be characteristic of madness, infanthood, drugs and mysticism (1975)[189].

This is just a brief foray into the troubled theoretical background to fantasy literature, but through these examples, I hope to have illuminated the cultural legacy which might have led to the vitriolic comments of De Abaitua. And again, in support of Ang's theories, this appears to be a 'ready-made' discourse that is reflected and perpetuated within the academe as much as it is everyday thinking (1985: 95). Frederick Jameson, for one, has been a notable critic of popular film in the postmodern era, propagating the mainstay argument that films such as *Star Wars* (but equally period drama and other popular genres) offer nothing but a nostalgic escapism, "hypnotic in form and content [they] carry us off to a never-never land with remarkable and dazzling technical tricks and absorbing images which make us forget that we have our own unfulfilled dreams which are more important to project and fulfill than those the film imposes on our imagination" (Zipes, 2002: 125).

The result, as previously discussed, is that these sorts of arguments construct an impenetrable discourse- one which is very hard to challenge outwith its own terms. Attacks against the fan – the avid consumer of forms of popular culture that De Abaitua declares are "instinctively reviled"- are so heavily engrained in the critical discourse against mass culture, that any possibility for fans to articulate their own social and cultural position or to 'hit back' against their critics is effectively

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[188] Excessive consumption practices seemed to reach new heights with the advent of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*, the first popular fiction character, Saler argues, to displace the actuality of his creator. As more and more readers flocked to Baker Street, the location of Holmes fictional residence, concern rose that the uneducated masses were dangerously unable to determine fact from fiction (Saler, 2003: 611). Yet much worse than this, in the eyes of Doyle's critics, was the emergence of a group named the 'Baker Street Irregulars'; who *ironically* participated in the fantasy of Sherlock Holmes, and who according to their detractors, should have known better. In particular, the Irregulars delighted in the same 'romanticized reason' that the detective stories became famous for. Following in the style of Doyle's contemporaries such as Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde and William James, the series "insisted on the integration of reason and the imagination- making it possible to see modernity and enchantment as compatible rather than antagonistic", and actually *practicing* an alternative to Marxist instrumental reason (ibid: 605, 616).

[189] Holloway (2006) also notes the 'dangerous edge' of female leadership and participation in 19th century séances.

denied (Ang, in Jenkins 2006: 21)[190]. These fans can argue for their normality, that they '*have* got a life, *actually*!' or they can critically argue for a text's broad relevance to social issues and its ability to address them; but in having internalized many aspects of dominant taste in their defence, they also lack a language to speak to the *pleasure*, the *fun* of popular culture consumption (Jenkins, 1992: 22). De Abaitua's attack, far from presenting a consensual hierarchy, thus only serves to perpetuate a debilitating and self-confirming Leavisite snobbery that sustains the imagined figure of the popular culture fan as variously "a dupe, a passively blind receptor to corporate propaganda and establishment ideology, and an obsessive, strange social outcast" (Gray, 2003: 67).

But, as this chapter will go on to suggest, this figure of the fan is truly *mythical*. In his introduction to *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins draws upon a Saturday Night Live Sketch in which Will Shatner (James T Kirk) is complicit in satirizing fans of the 1960's Star Trek series. The 'Trekkies', depicted as "nerdy guys with glasses and rubber ears" bombard an enraged Shatner, who eventually turns on his increasingly confused and embarrassed crowd shouting "Get a life, people!" before storming off stage (1992: 9-10). As Jenkins points out, we do not have to look far to stumble across similar depictions of 'the fan' that claim no such comic exaggeration- indeed, Shatner himself has repeatedly expressed the same sentiments towards Star Trek Fans in a serious context (1992: 11). Ultimately though, this ubiquitously circulating image of the fan does little to accurately represent the communities it tends to lampoon. Rather, it offers up a Barthesian myth in reiterating seemingly natural 'facts' about the individual characteristics of fans, which fit into a larger mythology about fannish identity (Jenkins, 1992: 11), a mythology that De Abaitua's review squarely reiterates and perpetuates. A review, which, above all else, reminds us sharply that rather than something neutral or trivial, "aesthetic intolerance can be terribly *violent*" (Bourdieu, 1984: 47 emphasis added)[191].

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[190] "Critical discourse against mass culture, Ang concludes, had seemingly foreclosed any possibility for the Dallas fans to articulate their own social and cultural position or to 'hit back' against their critics from a position of authority and strength" (Jenkins, 2006: 21). See also Ang's fascinating exploration of Dallas viewers in full (1989).

[191] "Because one's taste is so interwoven with all other aspects of social and cultural experience, aesthetic distaste brings with it the full force of moral excommunication and social rejection….debates about aesthetic choices of interpretive practices, then, necessarily have an important social dimension and often draw upon social or psychological categories as a source of justification" (Jenkins, 1992: 16).

In search of the Ringer: the mythical fan in Middle-earth

What happens, then, if we couple together the stigmatized figures of the fan and the tourist? The audience of this research, as both enthusiasts of *The Lord of the Rings* and so-called 'film-tourists', are subject to a two-pronged 'attack'. Critically and popularly ostracized, their practices and experiences are marginalized as excessive, commonly serving as a reference of non-identification- just as the traveller disdains and distances him/herself from the tourist; the 'cultural' tourist calls into question the worth and authenticity of perceived lower forms of tourism- such as that motivated by film or other types of popular media[192].

It is this inclination towards *non-identification* that the following sections hope to explore using the experiences of two differing *Lord of the Rings* themed tour groups.
To do this we must attend to the embodied practices of (enthusiast) film tourists in the field- as Pink contends, "this means directing the focus of how the imagined future is communicated both through verbal projections and through embodied practices" (Pink, 2008: 183). The two following examples, both guided tours, "collective by nature", highlight this richly social dynamic of reception (MacDonald, 2006: 134).

On film safari: the scenic tour in Middle-earth

A review of the Nomad Safari Tour by a German newspaper, which is used on the front of the operator's leaflet, makes explicit the expected motivations of the potential Nomad client. *You are there* to see the landscapes of Middle-earth, as the leaflet continues, "the tours are based around the specific sites where filming took place. These are real places – there are no film sets – they are areas of outstanding natural beauty that need no enhancement". The relationship is somewhat unclear – whilst the association of Middle-earth with Aotearoa is apparently a natural one, the presence of its otherworldly bestiary is not so – Orc-hunters are not welcome on this tour. Yet, David and his wife, managing directors of Nomad Safari, one of the most successful Rings-themed operators in the country, put their thriving business down to their personal enthusiasm for the films. Unlike 'bandwagon profiteering' operators who quickly went bust, Nomad 'got things right'; they did not misspell character or place-names in their literature, and they generally 'knew their stuff', because they are themselves Tolkien *fans*[193].

[192] Recall, for example, the Rough Guide's take on film tourism to New Zealand from the previous chapter.

[193] Personal communication, January 2006

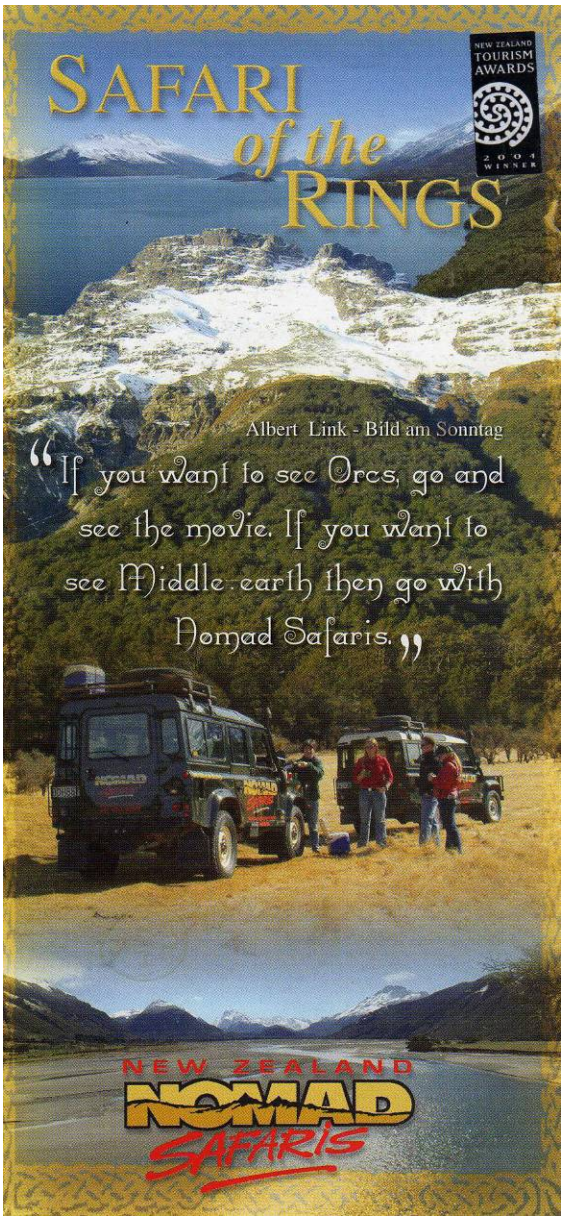

Image 25- Nomad Safari tour brochure (from author's collection)

But it is this same depth of enthusiasm that is treated with ambivalence when it comes to clients of the tour. Nomad work on the belief that only two in twelve clients have actually watched the trilogy- their broad appeal lies in the fact that adrenalin- filled Queenstown doesn't offer much to the older visitor, and regardless of the overt Rings theme, their two half-day scenic tours cater to this market for a general 'scenic' tour of the Otago region. There are potentially other reasons why the Nomad tour is attractive. Their fleet of Landrovers provide access to remote and

dangerous areas[194], local and insider knowledge, and a potential sense of film tourism *communitas* in a budget-conscious, 'do-able' half-day chunk. These factors taken together certainly appeared to have prompted some otherwise 'independent' *Lord of the Rings* travellers to pick Nomad as a 'one-off' tour experience to complement their other individual pursuits. Thus, for example, whilst one couple remarked that their (New Zealander) friends had advised them not to take a tour because they would be able to see all of the locations themselves, they nonetheless chose a Nomad tour because of the rich, informative nature of a guided outing, and the chance to sit back and take a break from 'doing the hard work yourselves'.

Yet what Nomad clients actually *get* on tour seems to vary amongst tour guides. The slight uncertainly or discomfort with offering an out-and-out fantasy scenic tour is reflected in the tour guides' various attitudes towards the former filmscapes. As one guide, Steve explained to his group- "to my mind, it's *[The Lord of the Rings]* just an added extra- just look at this!"…. *(He gestures around him to the surrounding scenery)…..*"You don't need anything else". Ron was more explicit, telling the entire group at the beginning of a tour, "to be honest, I get a bit bored of the movie thing". Despite having starred as an extra in the films, Steve's attitude to the former film landscapes is ambivalent. Perhaps explained through his love of the outdoors, his tour narration tends to focus on the 'natural' scenery and ecology of the landscapes. He thus would describe other features of the landscape- its 'actual' history, and notably the recreational activities they afforded, before finally mentioning that 'this was also a location'. Yet, his intentions here seemed to go in a different way for the tourist audience- who might see his ordered narration in terms of a theatrical tease- "Ahhh!" exclaimed an excited lady from Oregon, "Steve's leaving the best bit until last!" Rather than tempering the landscapes with a sensible rationality, his own 'preferred reading' of the Otago landscapes effects a sense of playful excitement, which grew palpably as the tourists waited to have revealed which film location they were now standing in. Thus, as MacDonald argues, we can understand Steve's attempts at 'encoding' as *negotiated* and sometimes even *contested* (MacDonald, 2006: 123 original emphasis).

Steve nevertheless enjoyed portraying his anecdotes from his film extra days, and many of the guides have personal investments in the stories. As well as working on the production, many are locals, or simply avid *Lord of the Rings* fans themselves. Thus each guide's approach to their role could reveal local pride, fannish enthusiasm, as well as being reflected through their individual interests and expertise- such as flora and fauna or cultural history. Thus, rather than the performances of tour guides and tourists becoming routinised and trivialized (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 64), there is considerable variation and independence in experiences of production and consumption. And, as most tour guides performances skillfully weave *The Lord of the Rings'* thematic narrative together with the narrative of production, as well as the narration of

[194] In the case of Skipper's canyon, a treacherous old mining route with sheer drops to the side, hire vehicles of any type are not permitted.

local cultural history and nature, most visitors of "a receptive mind come away filled with a dense mixture of mystery and … diversity" that can enrich as well as subvert traditional interpretations of landscape (Hemme, 2005: 78-79)[195].

"Lord of the *what*?!" Audiences 'playing it cool'

Nonetheless, in conversation with me, tour guides often reflected upon the ambiguities of narrating landscape for this 'unknown' audience. Presumptions that most clients had not seen the film provoked some to miss out less iconic locations from the official itinerary and swap in their own favourite locales. Yet it seemed on many occasions that the Nomad clientele was far less serendipitous than their guide had perceived- a crucial difference in the make-up of a themed tour's imagined and actual audiences. A conversation between Ted, the owner-operator of Adventure Safari, a movie tour operating out of Wellington, and a middle-age American lady who disavowed being a 'film-tourist' but admitted to having read *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy "about 30 years ago", illuminates this issue:

(We are leaving Kaitoke Park on the tour bus having visited the Rivendell site)
Anne: *"So, did they use fern forests in the film too or wasn't that seen as suiting Middle-earth?"*
Ted: *"Yes, there was a bit of that sort of thing- making do with what we have over here"*
Anne: *"Oh- I thought that it was supposed to be an English landscape".*
Ted*: "But I guess things have changed in England too"*
Anne: *Maybe. Its just that Tolkien was very specific about what grew in all of the different forests- there are differences between for example Mirkwood and Fangorn Forest, even if they are quite subtle…..(she trails off….a few moments of silence, then Anne changes the subject)*
Anne: *"You know that movie The Piano? Where is that supposed to be?"*

The point is, of course, that an understanding of the botanical differences between Mirkwood and Fangorn is not at all bad for a supposed non-fan, non film-tourist who read the book thirty years ago[196], and her query about *The Piano* locations perhaps also belies a latent interest in visiting former film sets. Thus it appears that our so-called opportunist film-tourist might be hiding something. That is not to say that *all* tourists who claim to be 'doing a Rings thing' because it's a 'must-do' on any tourists itinerary *are* hiding some fannish-pilgrimage motivation; but that it does

[195] Hemme, who is discussing the 'fairy tale route' in Lower Saxony, also makes the important point that these themed 'resonances' are only achieved with the free-given identification of local communities and desires of tourists (2005: 82).

[196] Later, at lunch, Anne tells me that she was expecting the tour to be different- more out in the bush and walking around as she related herself with loving the plants and native elements of the countryside- so for her, a managed enthusiasm for the books or films is something that she focuses through a parallel love for nature and the outdoors.

seem that at least *some* tourists on daily themed tours have a vested interest in *managing* their enthusiasm in front of the group- their apparent serendipity may be enacted.

On the other hand, imagining the enthusiast audience in one particular way, as embodying and performing certain prescribed expectations of being a fan, misses out on a much broader audience with varying levels of enthusiasm for the books or films. John and Norma, an elderly couple from Surrey, who described themselves as 'campers by tradition', had finally come to visit New Zealand. It was a once in a lifetime trip in particular for the wife, who had dreamt of visiting New Zealand since poring over pictures of it in the encyclopedia as a young girl. A recent redundancy payout was funding this 24-day trip. They both had read the trilogy in the 1970's, and had been very excited about the film adaptations, which they love- they own the extended DVD's. They enjoy the tour immensely, and buy the *Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* from the driver as a souvenir at the end of the trip. They are happy to share this information with me- John and Norma felt comfortable to tell me about their relationship with *The Lord of the Rings* when not all tourists did. Crucially though, it is *only* me that they tell. This was not because I was *entrusted* to this privileged piece of information, but rather that for John and Norma, it was simply 'no big deal'. Thus, the tour guide didn't get to know. And nor would the other clients, unless they had listened to the conversation. So, despite the fact that John and Norma are very much enthusiasts of the films, their failure to conform to some type of visible/ excessive enthusiast identity means that this part of their touristic motivation remains latent.

Of course, the tour guide's job is not primarily to attempt to uncover the hidden desires and motivations of their daily clients. But, the two examples picked out here do illuminate that fandom or enthusiasm do not necessarily equate to discernible behaviours of excessiveness- a feature that is usually considered absolutely central in characterizations of the fan. The question of serendipity – of whether *Lord of the Rings* tourism appeals to hardcore pilgrim fans or a multitude of tourists eager to ' do a Rings thing' whilst in New Zealand, and to what extent – is thus made problematic by the fact that tourists partaking in a *Lord of the Rings* themed activity may be, in a sense, *'travelling incognito'*. Whether this is by chance or design, it poses a very real challenge of measurement to operators like Nomad Safari, who are keen to discover the proportion and extent of their client base's *Lord of the Rings* knowledge and enthusiasm. Moreover, and as we will now consider, it further elevates the idea, the very *difference*, of the stereotypical *Lord of the Rings* fan film tourism- the 'Ringer'.

'The Guy from Ohio': negotiating the Ringer

So how can we describe the figure of the stereotypical 'Ringer', on a *Lord of the Rings* motivated or themed visit to New Zealand?[197] Every tour guide has a story of one. S/he is the member of the group who knows the most- indeed, often more than the guide, and they are not afraid to show it. They are also the most demanding, wanting more explanation and time at each site than the 'normal' film-tour client. They may well engage with the sites in a much more imaginative, immersive and enthusiastic way. They will be the ones who want to get precisely framed shots of how the location was filmed, or to get into costume and do some re-enacting. They will also go the mile further to seek out material memories they can take away with them from the site- what to the others, are banal objects such as leaves, stones or flowers, become to the Ringer a potentially powerful symbolic artefact of 'Middle-earth on earth'.

This picture of the stereotypical 'Ringer' became familiar to me, as each and every tour guide would provide their own humorous anecdote of 'the biggest fan they ever had on the tour'. For Alison, of Hammonds tours, this happened to be '*the guy from Ohio'*- as he became for the rest of that tour as his excessive behaviour or knowledge was returned to again and again. Whilst always raising laughter, anecdotes of the Ringer also raised the odd eyebrow- sometimes signalling a detached loftiness towards the Ringer, but also representing an affront to those who shared the Ringer's affiliation but, in not living up to the hyperbolic stereotype, were not 'marked out' as enthusiasts by the guide. In this respect it served a policing function- a strong warning of where the boundaries of acceptability lie. Ironically, as much as the tour guides might set up the patrol of the Ringer, they also enthuse their audience to get into it; as well as betraying all too often a level of personal enthusiasm for the films and their production. At Kaitoke, with Adventure Safari, Ted encouraged a Canadian family to pose for some pictures underneath the 'Legolas tree'. Up to that point, the family had been energetic and enthusiastic about the locations; but now showed some trepidation about being photographed. But Ted insists: "Go on, it doesn't mean you're a geek, *lots* of people get photos!"

Eventually, the Dad concedes. After doing a shot on his own, 'Legolas-style', he manages to cajole his teenage son and daughter to come in for a shot. They pose together, the son on the ground, with Dad wielding the axe over his neck with a gruesome expression. Ted admits as they pose, that as well as being somewhat isolated from the film itself (it was used as a promotional still of Legolas as opposed to an actual scene), an axe instead of a bow and arrow for this Legolas pose is even further removed from a true 'filmic' immersion. But, he says, recognising the lack of iconic photographic opportunities in Middle-earth "it's something at least!" At any rate,

[197] The term Ringer is the generally accepted fan name, however, there are local variations, such as 'Ring-on', used by David of Nomad Safari, suggesting a perceived similarity with sci-fi (Star Trek) fandom. For a discussion of Star Trek fan-tourism see Lancaster (1996).

the Canadian family have by now got into the spirit of things, with Dad exclaiming “Come on son! We’re getting immersed in the scene now!”

Image 26- Getting immersed in the 'scene'- posing for photographs at the Legolas tree, Kaitoke

Reflecting upon these activities a few moments later as we leave the site, the whole tour group enters into a discussion about *Lord of the Rings* fandom. Ted, as if to re-emphasize the social acceptability of having photos taken posing as a woodland elf, jokes that he once saw a wedding here at the Rivendell spot in Kaitoke- “and they looked like normal people- they didn’t have hairy hobbit feet or anything!”

But even some of the tour guides aren’t able to maintain their cool composure all the time[198]. Alison, a tour guide with Hammonds in Wellington, who offer just one Rings themed tour amongst a wide range of regional tours, tells the clients how she was employed as a driver during filming at Helm’s Deep (Dry Creek Quarry) and would ferry Orcs and Gondor soldiers backwards and forwards throughout the night. This is one aspect of her tale- as a professional, an insider. But

[198] It should be noted that although Ted liked to set up the stereotypical Ringer for some inter-group jest, he was nonetheless very enthusiastic about the films and their production- his brother works for WETA.

later on, when we are at the quarry location, she gestures back over towards the overlooking suburban area to tell us that:

"My friend lives over there, so it was such a good laugh when they were filming! We used to go round on a Sunday afternoon to watch what was going on- it was so exciting! The entry cost to her back garden was a bottle of wine and a pair of binoculars…." (Alison, Hammond Tours)

Many New Zealanders, especially those involved in the trilogy-generated tourism industry, have similar stories- of both a professional and a more everyday nature. It seems to take a bit of 'letting go' sometimes, to actually admit how much *fun* it all was. And perhaps this is the same for the tourist: a 'letting go' when cool irony disappears into a sudden burst of enthusiastic knowledge, refreshed memories of relevant scenes, conjecture and wondering- pointers to a more animated engagement with the films than the composed bodies and refrained laughter have hitherto been letting on. And the effect on the group is one of release- shrugged shoulders and care-not expressions open into smiles and laughter once the rules have been broken- it just takes the first person. As much as the stereotypical Ringer is maligned; as much as they seem to figure as a "limit case" for other film tourists (Torchin 2002: 262), they also seem to have a pivotal role in the creation of the film tourism experience. It is as if every tour group needs the Ringer's knowledge and enthusiasm, and their potential theatrics- it allows everyone 'to be geeky', or playful, without risking becoming 'the biggest geek'. It unburdens the anxious enthusiast from the paranoia that they appear *too* enthusiastic. Thus, as well as functioning as this 'limit case', "calling for TV tourist vigilance" (Torchin, 2002: 262), this truly mythical fan tourist – through a thick-skinned determination to brazenly *play* with this chimerical terrain – does nonetheless encourage such playfulness from the rest of the group. We are just left unsure as to where the line between laughing *along with*, or *at*, this figure lies.

Join your own fellowship: Red Carpet Tours

If the figure of the fan- tourist, the stereotypical 'Ringer', is somebody positioned as an (undesirable) exteriority on some one-day *Lord of the Rings* themed tours, s/he is actively courted by Red Carpet Tours, whose advertisements offer the keen *Lord of the Rings* enthusiast a sort of collective 'safety in numbers':

"Join fans from all over the world. Form a 'Fellowship' as you absorb the breathtaking landscapes from the films"

The twelve-day itinerary, costing NZ $5410 excluding flights to New Zealand, takes its monthly clients across both islands, visiting a huge range of the former filming locations, as well as artisans and specialists from the films- it is a thoroughly Rings themed way to experience New Zealand.

Image 27- Reproductions on show at Jens Hansen, the Nelson goldsmith who was employed to craft the One Ring (and its many different sized filmic siblings)

Surely here, then, if anywhere, we will find our 'Ringer'- this is certainly what 'outsiders' seem to think. The fannish figure who haunts (and occasionally makes an actual appearance) on Rings-themed scenic day tours is definitely presumed to be in their natural habitat here on the Red Carpet Tour, which often gains mention as an anecdote of excess. A variety of people, in informal conversation, would tell me as a researcher, "there is *even* that tour that just goes to all the locations…[199]". And the fact that Red Carpet Tours itinerary is so much more specialist (and often remote), means that they do not tend to mingle with other tour operators whose daily outings track the same route[200], a fact which only serves to retain this excessive mystique to other tourists and locals.

[199] As a similar point, Earl notes that during his research with 'highbrow' literary tourism groups, he would often be "pushed onto" those in the group that were perceived to know the most" (2008: 407). Being told about RCT by other locals was also offered as a perceived helpfulness.

[200] In Wellington for example, Adventure Safari and Flat Earth tours appear to spend most of the day 'chasing' each other.

And certainly the tour does offer an expert, knowledgeable and rather privileged entry into the world of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand. Derek, the silvery-haired tour leader, makes the most of his appearance by getting in costume as Gandalf- but, rather than the highlight of the tour, for Red Carpet, this is just the beginning of the story: The itinerary also includes visits and talks from actors, artisans, and other New Zealanders who were involved in the filming (such as 'Movie Horses NZ- see below). A mark of the prestige of the Red Carpet Tour is its monthly visit to WETA- for a behind the scenes visit and chat with Richard Taylor or other key members of staff.

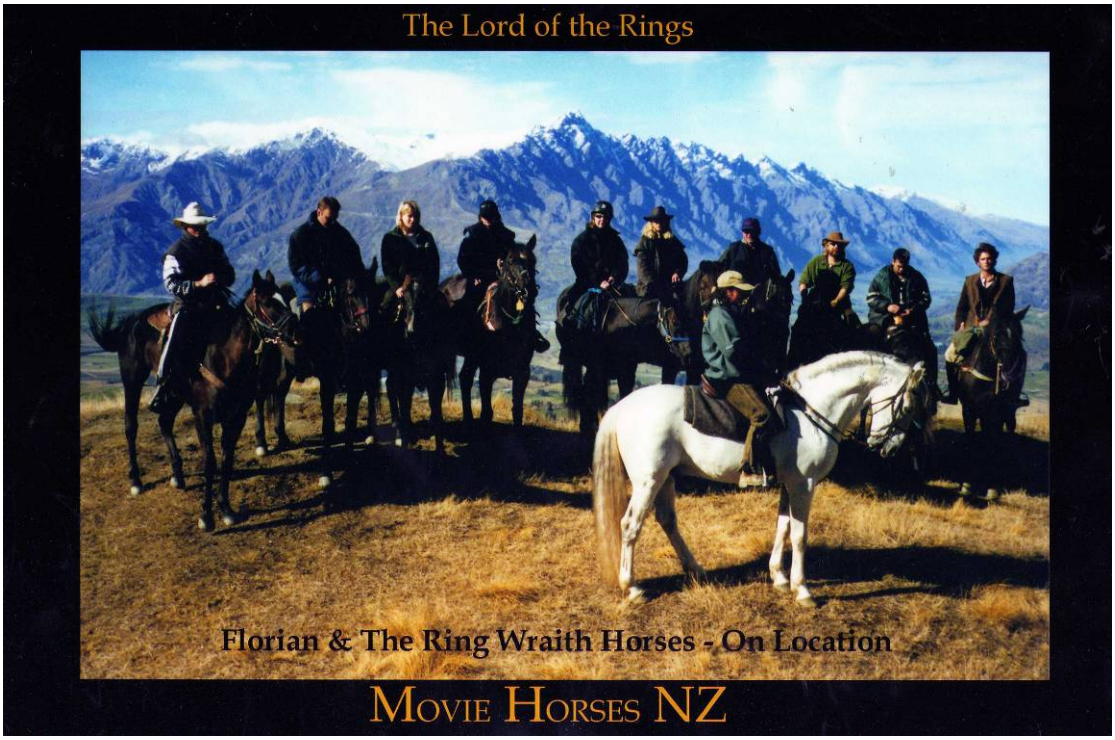

Image 28- A souvenir image of Jane Abbott (Arwen's stunt rider) and the Ringwraiths on location in Queenstown[201] (from author's collection)

Yet, what is the reality of this 'fellowship'? Even here we find that not every member of the group is a *Lord of the Rings* fan. Remembering that tourism is so often something we do together[202], it should not come as a surprise that at least a couple of members on each tour are not even slightly interested in *The Lord of the Rings*. There are husbands of enthusiast wives, and friends of fans. They are not so much 'anti-fans' but more simply 'non-fans' (Gray, 2003). They have little passion for *The Lord of the Rings*, yet an inherited knowledge of and familiarity with it. And they would happily engage with the tour, explaining that, after all, be it with a Rings theme or not, they are getting to visit New Zealand, to experience the country's highlights from their own perspective

[201] http://www.moviehorsesnz.com/index.htm [accessed 12th June 2009]

[202] Although within the individualistic discourse of 'the tourist', this is rarely recognised- but see Bærenholdt et al (2004).

or 'framing', whilst experiencing this place *together*, with loved ones. Yet this is not always the case, and some indisposed family members have stayed at home- Christine's husband refused to come, but after some persuasion, her best friend, who also doesn't like *The Lord of the Rings* at all, agreed to join her. In other cases, the *Lord of the Rings* interest is shared between members of the family, often defining them and their leisure pursuits against the rest of the family. Mary and her daughter, both avid fans from Australia, have visited New Zealand 3 times now- "my husband and other daughter think us quite mad!" she joked.

The line between 'non-fan' behaviour and 'anti-fan' behaviour is perhaps fine, but nonetheless crucial. Cindy recalled a problematic group member who had come on tour with her daughter. Having made 'such a fuss' on the North Island (the first part of the trip), amounting to what Cindy recalled as being a determined disinclination towards 'getting into' the tour, the tour guide was able to persuade this undesirable member to leave the group before it departed to the South Island. From that point on, the group had a fantastic time, in Cindy's opinion, as the remaining tour members (including the ejected woman's daughter) were able to get on with the trip, as it *should* be. In other words, the Red Carpet Tour 'as fellowship' is more than promotional cliché. Members of the group who fail to respect the preferences and etiquette of other tour members jeopardize the very fabric of this touring community, and the guide is left with little choice but to expel this non-performing 'outsider'. The group relies of the communal spirit of all – both the deeply enthusiastic, and their friends and family who have 'come along for the ride' – to make it work. Any other presence is a threat.

And that includes my own presence: Despite the fact that many Red Carpet clients had befriended me online, assured of my commitment to their stories through my website, in person I presented more of an unknown quantity. An unplanned encounter with Red Carpet at Poolburn led Sue, the location's farming owner, to request if we could join the tour bus so she didn't have to take us up to the location separately. We were enthusiastically greeted on to the bus, yet were in no doubt of a sense of anxiety, and a feeling that we were being 'tested' by the group. This location was one of the last ones that the (very close knit) tour group visited, and entering into this environment seemed to have threatened some members' comfort zones. Being able to join in with the group's *Lord of the Rings* driven quips and banter[203] seemed to ease the situation, and the morning went well. At the end of the morning, two tour members separately asked how we had enjoyed our chance meeting- one laughed that we must have thought the group quite barmy, as they re-enacted, photographed and enjoyed the locations. Another lady, however, intuits that we have in fact been quite fortunate to cross paths- she understands that the experience we got

[203] Reminding me at the time of Claire Colebrook's comments (on Deleuze), that "when we sing a team song or utter a (common phrase), we are usually not saying or meaning anything at all. We are repeating the slogans or refrains that compose us" (2002: 114)

out of coming along with the group was enriching to *us*, more so than if we had visited the sites alone.

Image 29- Wild and rugged landscapes of Rohan (Poolburn Central Otago)

Thus, whereas with most day tours, my own attitude towards *The Lord of the Rings* was less crucial – indeed, many day tourists simply presumed that I would be quite critical of their 'maverick' activities – with the Red Carpet group, not being able to enter into the enthusiast ethos of the group would not only have meant I was treated with caution, but it would have risked temporarily destroying the group dynamic of the tour. As outsiders to the group, it was therefore *us* who were keenly policed for appropriate behaviour, and it was with some pride that when we left we were wished well for our onward journey, of course with plenty of *Lord of the Rings* type metaphoric merriment, and with some sorrow that we couldn't participate in this community any longer.

Image 30- Three fellow fans, now good friends, pose as Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli (the scene in which they emerge from behind a rock to confront the expelled Éomer)

However, it is not only a fear of being on holiday with cynical, non-enthusiasts that troubles the expectations of potential Red Carpet clients. Rather, as Diane, a former client explains, it was paradoxically the figure of the 'stereotypical Ringer' that was potentially more off-putting for her. In her opinion, many *Lord of the Rings* fans and potential Red Carpet clients are wary of joining a twelve-day tour on which they might be the only 'normal' person. This anxiety seemed very real to many group members. Indeed, it became a topic of conversation one night over the tour group's dinner in Queenstown. A number of individuals confessed a little abashedly to having worried about the types of people who would choose a trip like this, only to be relieved that the tour group is made up of 'completely normal' people! People *like us*. In fact, as well as relief, there is a emergent feeling of delight- akin to what Radway felt amongst her women readers when they came together for focus groups- a feeling of 'becoming community', a happiness to find that we "agree about many things" (1984: 48). Thus, the 'mythical' Ringer that is policed on Nomad, serves the same function on a Red Carpet Tour. This mythical figure, replete with suggestions of excessive behaviour and social incompatibility, barely materializes- but operates as an imagined audience for both scenic and specialized *Lord of the Rings*-themed tours.

Nonetheless, feelings of coming together, of belonging, do not lead to a homogenization of together*ness*. For example, as the closely-knit Red Carpet Tour group approaches the end of the itinerary, it becomes clear that hierarchies of enthusiasm are still being formed and reformed. During an evening's post-tour entertainments, one man was singled out (albeit jovially) as 'the

biggest fan', on the basis that he engaged in some of the most intensive immersion within the sites, and displayed a superior knowledge of the books and films (even being able to play the musical score on his flute whilst sitting below the party tree in Hobbiton). Other members of the group equally gained their own salutations and affectations for their own behavioural traits, perhaps not dissimilar to a group situation in any organised (coach) tour, but in this case related to the intensity of an individual's *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasm. The 'naming and shaming' takes place in a light-hearted manner. To 'be the biggest fan' is much more of an accolade than a slight – but either way this performance of *ranking* is constantly taking place within the group.

Moreover, *how* one performs enthusiasm can definitely affect how that enthusiasm is welcomed by the rest of the group. During a different month's tour, the 'biggest fan' was a man with a very specific mission- armed with a portable DVD player and folder of continuous film stills, his aim was to photographically capture as many of the 'exact spots' of filming as he could. An intense engagement with the locations, but differing from the previous example in its self-driven and personal interest. It also often required that he eschewed the activities of the tour group in order to root out the location for specific scenes- something that appeared to tickle the amusement of the rest of the group, but also irritate the tour leader who would struggle to keep the tour together and on time with this slightly 'renegade' member[204]. The sense that this tourist was perhaps doing something that tested the camaraderie of the groups' shared enthusiasms (instead of being something that complemented their own experiences- like by performing flute tunes under the party tree) perhaps made him the 'biggest fan', but in not quite such a sympathetic light- especially with the tour leader.

Ultimately, however, it cannot be doubted that a Red Carpet Tour generally succeeds in creating a sense of fellowship and community that often lasts beyond the trip. Many group members keep in touch afterwards via Internet chatgroups, and in a number of cases even organise reunion tours. After the intense sociality of the twelve-day tour, it seems that it is the complementary *differences* of tour members, what they each bring to the group, which creates these fan micro-communities. Different foci of fandom – towards the books, the films, the actors, the production – lead to very different fan practices. Thus, akin to the 'partial' enthusiasms that apparently serendipitous fans might demonstrate through an interest in film techniques and special effects, or native flora and fauna, for example, Red Carpet Tours members share these same microcosm of interests within an even broader spectrum of Tolkien enthusiasm. Some are Tolkien fans first and film fans subsequently; others are more evidently enchanted with the cult of celebrity. Yet that is not to say that the whole group can't enjoy a mixed grill at the Green Parrot, Viggo Mortensen's favourite steakhouse, or brunch at the Chocolate Fish Café, the Wellington institution where WETA staff commonly go for lunch.

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[204] From the tour guides comments to each other, it appeared that this had happened regularly during the tour, upsetting a very tight schedule when the gentleman couldn't be found!

Thus we can talk of what Maffesoli calls an "empathetic sociality" (1996: 11, 13). The community of Red Carpet Tours certainly connects people, who do not know each other and are from very different backgrounds, within a shared sense of sociality expressed through enjoyment of the tour. Yet rather than homogenizing experience within the tour environment, it appear that these are communal encounters/ individual experiences that happen *in parallel to rather than with* each other" (Couldry, 2005: 64 original emphasis). That is, the tour opens up a space in which multiple forms of fan practice can happen, even if they are subject to certain 'hierarchical orderings' of importance or desirability.

One such focus of *Lord of the Rings* film fandom that has traditionally been gendered and trivialized is celebrity worship. Whilst Rose argues that the cult of celebrity is nothing new (1998: np), what is, is "the way that celebrity status is thrust powerfully and seemingly perpetually across transnational communication networks to the point where we cannot escape it" (Robinson, 2002: 64). Tolkien himself was no stranger to the limelight- the success of his works from the outset spawned various literary societies and less 'elitist' forms of authorial admiration- indeed, the Oxford don bemoaned much of his notoriety and much of his fan base[205]. The film adaptations have nonetheless engendered celebrity worship on a new level: residual fandom renewed through the excitement and anticipation of the films, specifically courted through the online medium; fresh new faces of Hollywood fanfared triumphantly into the limelight; even the production crew, faces who usually remain hidden from the "occularcentricity of celebrity" (Robinson, 2002: 64) courted huge publicity from the interest the film created from the early days of filming right through to the awards ceremonies, and retain a visibility through the many hours of featurettes and documentaries included with the film DVD's[206].

Admiration for the stars of the films, however, seems to be treated with some suspicion, even within Tolkien-friendly circles. As Ian Brodie lamented, there is a (young female) touristic audience for the *Lord of the Rings* "that are basically only here because of Orlando Bloom"[207]. But, as Bloustien's poignant account of 'grown up' fans shows, enthusiasm for popular culture texts that was once channelled through an adoration of its stars, can still fluidly incorporate this aspect within an evermore "sophisticated iconography" of adult fandom and consumption (Bloustien, 2002: 442). Thus, Sherry, a long-time fan of *The Lord of the Rings*, who travelled to

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[205] Which he referred to as a "deplorable cultus", stating that "many young Americans are involved in the stories in a way that I'm not". Yet he also admitted that "even the nose of a very modest idol [...] cannot remain entirely untickled by the sweet smell of incense!" (Wikipedia, 2009).

[206] Notably however, Fran Walsh (screenwriter, Jackson's wife) preferred to stay out of the public gaze, in order for 'one-half' of their family life to remain private, leaving Peter and other key members of the production team to present documentaries and collect awards.

[207] Personal communication, April 2006.

New Zealand to take a Red Carpet Tour with her eight-year old daughter, explained her choice of room at the Powderhorn hotel, Ohakune:

"I do love Billy Boyd, so I chose his room. But I would really have chosen Viggo Mortensen's room if he had stayed here. Apparently though, he had a fishing lodge down the road to himself" (Sherry, diarist, face-to-face conversation)

Image 31- Guest register and room numbers of cast at the Powderhorn Chateau, Ohakune

Sherry first read the *Lord of the Rings* as a geography undergraduate, and has been a regular reader of it ever since. She engages with the books and films critically and fluently, using our shared geographical perspectives as a point in common from which to focus the conversation[208]. But, Red Carpet Tours offers people like her a space in which different aspects of one's enthusiasm can be indulged, aspects that are less hospitably received in other environments- after all, "a passion for celebrity is not something one is meant to talk about. There are worlds, or rather circles, where, if you do, it is assumed that what you are really claiming for yourself is a

[208] For example, "I'm not sure if I chose to study geography because the sense of place is so important to me or if I developed that sense of place during my studies—probably the initial sense was intuitively there but then grown & nurtured starting with my studies. That sense of place—"rightness," or comfort—is really important to me in living somewhere. LOTR appeals to me so much in part because of Tolkien's acute sense of place" (Sherry, diarist, post-diary reflection).

type of intellectual slumming" (Rose, 1998: np). Thus, rather than representing an environment where group members attempt to "appropriate cultural authority in order to maintain their own distinction" (Earl[209], 2008: 401), Red Carpet Tours offers a *safe* environment where the debased *passions* of fandom are catered for.

That is not to understate the 'professionalisation' of enthusiasm that also happens on tour. Jenni, an artist from Montana, also a fan of Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* since her college days, used her professional photography as a 'great excuse' to combine business with pleasure during two visits to New Zealand, one which she incorporated with a Red Carpet Tour; as well as touring much of the North Island by herself. American high school student Lisa took advantage of an exchange programme to New Zealand, so that she could combine a study visit with going to visit the former film locations and celebrity haunts of Wellington. PR agent Jane, on honeymoon with her husband Mike, also an avid Tolkien fan, had been involved with the 2003 UK film premiere and party of *The Return of the King* in London. These instances, and infinite others, amply demonstrate the limitations of political economy approaches to culture. On the one hand, these fans' commitment to 'the cause' exceeds the therapeutic consumption model; on the other hand, their canniness in integrating their leisure consumption seamlessly into their lifestyle defies the idea that they are primarily being exploited by the culture industry.

Rather, we see an adaptive, transformational quality in 'being a fan'. These are fans that appear significantly more empowered that Radway's female readership, or, for example, the strained housewife television viewers of Mary Ellen Brown (1990). That is not to say that *The Lord of the Rings* cannot fulfill some type of therapeutic effect. As one respondent mentioned, "sometimes I just stick it on whilst I'm doing the housework", suggesting that it would be wrong to deny the possibility that *The Lord of the Rings* may for some individuals, in some contexts, serve an escapist function. But far from being some inert and socio-pathological (mis)function of modern society, this 'escape' takes us potentially many other places, on many other trajectories[210]. I've also 'worked' my enthusiasm into my professional life – that is, I've carved a research career out of it – and I am most certainly not the only person to have done that. Peter Jackson here is of course the *example par excellence*- for him, and many of the cast and crew that worked on the

[209] Earl's paper explores specialist literary tour groups to Arthurian Tintagel that involve lectures and talks from experts in the field such as Geoffrey Ashe (2008).

[210] McCormack (2003: 491), talking of the shortcomings of theorising 'therapeutic landscapes' states that whilst valuable in some contexts "remains limited as a consequence of its concentration on the representational and signifying aspects of verbal processes. It therefore need to be supplemented by an effort to apprehend those activities and practices whose sense is not always revealed through an interpretative relation with linguistic signification".

trilogy, its production was a lifelong dream come true, a 'labour of love'[211]. And the existence of *The Lord of the Rings* is surely nothing else if not the lifetime passion of its author, J.R.R Tolkien.

What is so striking, then, about *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasm and visiting New Zealand, is the endless ways in which it blows apart the popular stereotypes, as well as critical theories and accounts of the fan. This is an audience that rather than being defined as geeky, introspective, 'escapist', needs to be see rather as a worldly, active, and creative 'community'. As Mary enthused, being a *Lord of the Rings* fan meant making positive connections with all sorts of people- getting in involved in a research project like mine was just one of many examples of where her love of Tolkien had already taken her:

"One of the wonderful benefits of being a Ringer is meeting new friends all over the world, Richard Taylor calls it one big family- he thinks it is wonderful!"

Mary and her daughter had visited New Zealand three times, and been involved in a number of other activities such as volunteering at *The Lord of the Rings* Movie Exhibition when on tour in Australia. Her comments encapsulate the idea and importance of auteurism to *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasm and tourism. Certainly, the central role that Jackson *et al* have in the experience of tourism to the former film locations challenges the view that *Lord of the Rings* film tourism is only about New Zealand's natural scenery. Moreover, it challenges "Baudrillardian-type claims that in a fluid, eclectic, postmodern world of discourse and mass media, the author no longer commands the importance he or she once had" (Robinson, 2002: 62). Indeed, as Moran notes, "this figure still seems to be very much alive in non-academic culture" (2000: 58). Here, Tolkien and Jackson seem to share a dual authorial celebrity, a finely negotiated terrain which delights in the "quasi-mystical process" of the texts and movies' creation[212].

So, in summary- although the Red Carpet Tour may offer an environment in which the enthusiast (even maverick) is apparently welcomed, there are still a number of unwritten protocols and expectations within which this operates. Whilst the group encourages much more open immersion in the former film locations, and welcomes all sorts of engagements with them – be it the landscape aesthetics, the production story or the celebrity aspect – the operation of the group

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[211] Alongside McKellen many of the actors attribute their time working on *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand as a life-changing event. Elijah Wood calls it 'home' in the respect that he turned eighteen here, and Viggo Mortensen, as well as Dominic Maughan- regularly talk of the opportunity that Lord of the Rings gave them as something special. Friendships between the actors and with Peter Jackson also still run strong, according to reports- Elijah 'pops in to visit Peter' when he is in Wellington, and McKellen was rumoured to have threatened that he would have no interest in rekindling Gandalf for a production of the Hobbit, unless it was with Peter at the helm.

[212] For further analysis of the cinematic adaptation of the Lord of the Rings texts see for example Rosebury, 2003.

nonetheless comes with certain behavioural expectations, and the group itself operates with a nuanced sense of self-reflexivity. The two tours explored here- the typical half-day or day scenic tour, and the 12-day specialized theme tour, offer very different experiences- but to wholly different people? The mythical Ringer, whether on board or imagined, seems to have a central role to both. S/he does much more than attract raised eyebrows and laughter, or more vitriolic scorn, but acts as an imagined intensification of the experience of *being* a *Lord of the Rings* fan-tourist, as Ahmed describes:

> *"Emotions are crucial to the way in which bodies surface in relation to other bodies, a surfacing that produces the very effect of collectives, which we can describe as 'felt' as well as imagined and mediated. Borders materialize as an effect of intensifications of feeling" (Ahmed, 2004: 39)*

(In)conspicuous leisure: an emotional geography of Lord of the Rings tourism

"There's a lot of love in this film" (Ian McKellen, National geographic, 2003)

Thus we can suggest that there is a certain etiquette to 'being into something' that tends to go unwritten, unnoticed. What's the correct emotional distance to maintain from the object or experience of one's desire? Who do you let in on it? How? Who says what is an acceptable level of appreciation, and what is excessive? My 'research participants' are confident people, well travelled and knowledgeable, who understand this etiquette and its nuances. Some were aware of 'the stereotypical Ringer', and simply didn't give a damn if this is how they were viewed. But more frequently, others were guarded and anxious of how their enthusiasm would be received by other tourists and by New Zealanders. Yet these were not bodily affects (or non-acts of linguistic signification) that I purposefully set out to explore. Their importance emerged as a result of the ongoing sense of participating in something so absolutely *déclassé*. Although my expectations of what sorts of tourists I would discover participating in *Lord of the Rings* film tourism were generally unimagined prior to fieldwork, the expectation that my ethnographic audience would identify themselves by virtue of verbal or physical affiliation was also ill-conceived. Moreover, I was not ready for the nagging feeling of discomfort with my own topic of research. Why did I brush off speaking to people who might be illuminatory participants or contributors? What was the reason behind my own attempts to render my body invisible- to make disappear my own status as a researcher and visitor to *Lord of the Rings* sites, just as some other tourists seemed to engage in the same activity? I was embarrassed to be seen hunting out the locations, and rather than being all too happy to share my research interests with anyone who would lend an ear, I would brush it off with any quick and vague response, hoping to avoid the mirth and marvel that the idea of my work often seemed to attract. It was only when I received an e-mail from an American lady about to arrive in New Zealand with her friend to undertake a *Lord of the Rings*

themed tour that these anxieties took root as something more significant than a case of the novice researcher jitters:

"Neither of us wish to be associated with the clueless American fan-tourist looking for Hobbiton in Miramar. We're currently working on a series of code words to use in front of other people so that they won't realize we're referring to characters, things or locations (e.g. Gondor=Kingston, postcard=Elven Cloak, Hobbits=Violinists, etc). Basically, we're feeling a bit sheepish about participating in the phenomenon that you are studying" (Alisa, e-mail communication).

A *bit sheepish*- a sentiment which, upon reading Alisa's email for the first time, resonated strongly with my own nascent feelings of being a *Lord of the Rings* tourist, fan and scholar, and which of course have ultimately provided a catalyst for this chapter. On reading her e-mail, I realised that it was not only me that had sought to hide their enactments from (perceived) unfriendly eyes, and, that whether this hostility was real or imagined, these were active, constitutive ways in which fandom is performed within a culture of expectation. Yet 'we', as fans and tourists, do not necessarily stand united. As Alisa's comments also suggest, there is still a belief in an 'Other' – the stereotypical fan-tourist figure who is ridiculous, who is excessive – but who is *not like us*. Thus, as Jenkins notes, even within the fan community, categories such as the 'fan in the attic', the orgiastic fan, the comic fan or the eroticised fan, are evoked as a way of policing the ranks and justifying one's own pleasure as less 'perverse' than those of others- "there is always someone more extreme whose otherness can justify the relative normality of one's own cultural choices and practices" (Jenkins, 1992: 19).

This is therefore an *'Us'* which you could almost call quite fickle, that *feels* its way- how was it that Alisa had already felt comfortable to reveal her strategies in her first e-mail? What made her feel I would empathize, that I wouldn't identify with the fan tourist and take umbrage? Would Alison's fear of the fannish other remain, if and when she met such a person and found them not as bad, or even worse, than her expectations? It does seem to some extent then that the critical discourse of fan culture "is a clear example of a discourse on other people. Fandom is what 'other people' do; 'we' always pursue interests, exhibit tastes and preferences" (Storey, 1999: 57).

But it is also important to note what emotional work goes into this discourse. Taste, Storey argues, is a "profoundly ideological discourse" (Storey, 1999: 45). But it is also a profoundly *affective* one. As Laurier's hesitant foray into the middle-class world of yachting shows, enthusiasm is indeed emotional work (1999: 204)[213]. For Laurier, much of his emotional self during his yacht trip fieldwork is channelled through the acute experience of *embarrassment*.

[213] See also Jenkins, who notes that "most popular culture is shaped by a logic of emotional intensification. It is less interested in making us think than it is in making us feel" (2006: 3)

Feeling out of his depth, of not adequately knowing the ropes "relies on a shared knowledge of what the context [of embarrassment] is and where its boundaries lie" (Laurier, 1999: 202). For *The Lord of the Rings* enthusiasm and tourism this shared knowledge and context is provided by the dominant critical discourse on fandom and tourism- a doubly-denigrated sphere of popular consumption that leaves very little room for alternative ways of knowing. The finely negotiated affiliations, tensions of identity and belonging, or equally of non-identification, tend to all happen within a broad framework of Marxist ideology and Bourdieuan cultural distinction. Like Ang, who draws upon Merleau-Ponty to suggest a co-constructive intercorporeality of perception amongst her audience of *Dallas* fans, I have tried to capture the multi-dimensionality of this discourse – that it is not merely linguistically performed/ performative, but also materially *felt* and *enacted* [214] - that it is a "processual register of experience" (Dewsbury et al, 2002: 437)[215].

A consideration of both the discursive and enacted/ performed experiences of tourism not only highlights these tensions, but also allows us to pique the latent pleasure of being a (film) tourist that gets drowned in the discourse of matter*ing*. This is therefore an emotional ethnography, which can attest to the affective dimension of this partial, shifting and becoming 'community' who do not need either defending or romancing. Although trying in particular to admit to the often overlooked *pleasure* of such popular cultural consumption practices, the affective remit of the *Lord of the Rings* tourist encounter is broad – sometimes defensive, even aggressive – "logics of affective intervention enacted through generosity, hospitality, trust, friendship, solidarity, respect or responsibility" (Anderson and Harrison, 2006: 3).

Thus we can perhaps speak of an emotional 'map of mattering', which charts differing and changing investments, different intensities or degrees of investment, different places and relations, and different purposes which these investments can play. Mattering maps, argues Grossberg, "define differing forms, quantities and places of energy. They 'tell' people how to use and generate energy, how to navigate their way into and through various moods and passions, and how to live with emotional and ideological histories" (Grossberg, in Laurier, 1999: 200). For our story of *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasts on tour in New Zealand, such a conceptualisation recognises what fan tourists actually *do*, as well as how they act within imagined subjectivities linked to cultural systems of value and community (Hills, 2002: 8). It also can bear testament to the fact that fandom is not *either* an intensely personal and subjective experience *or* a communal and shared enthusiasm but an *interaction* of these- where neither moment over-writes or surmounts the other (Hills, 2002: xiii). Thus it recognises the partial, (spatio-temporally) shifting

[214] See also Pink, who draws upon Ingold's phenomenological metaphor of 'entangled pathways' "to gain a sense of the complexity that a 'collective imagination' might involve, inspired by the same verbal discourses, written texts, phenomenological contexts and material reality" (2008: 183).

[215] "….there are events of enunciation, invocations, iterations; empirical callings up of the concept of culture to do work; it is perhaps in these speech acts that culture exists and these may be considered in all their contestation, but never 'culture' in itself" (Dewsbury et al, 2002: 438).

Chapter Four: Space, movement, narrative- mapping the imagined geographies of ‘Middle-earth on earth’

Image 32- “The geographical imagination is wrought from a profound spatial connectivity” (Jarvis, 1998: 8): Film New Zealand's promotional 'map' of Middle-earth (from author’s collection)

Introduction

"In common sense", argue Callon and Law, "it is obvious: an object or a person is either here or there, and not in two places at the same time" (2004: 3). Yet, when we read a book or watch a film, we nonetheless, in a 'common' (if somewhat less 'rational') sense, tend to explain that experience in terms of inhabiting multiple time-spaces- when we read, we 'get lost between the pages of a good book[219]' (Schwenger, 1999: 8); when we watch films, we go 'armchair travelling' (Gibson, 2006), and in the case of holidaymaking, "the times and spaces of tourism are not limited to particular tourism regions and sites but also comprise the dreamscapes[220] of anticipation and remembrance" (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 9). Indeed, an everyday poetics of the experience of reading and viewing, which so often colludes with the language of travel and tourism, expresses a variety of modes of engagement with different places – some insinuating movement and discovery, others stasis or escape – but all suggesting that imaginatively speaking, we go other places, even whilst our bodies stay still[221]. Yet these ubiquitous encounters/ imaginings receive scant theoretical consideration, barely proceeding past an acknowledgement of their inter-causality. "Films are like imaginary journeys; the cinema is a major means of transport to different places" says Peter Wollen (1991: 25). But, as Bruno deftly questions, was it not the experience of travel in modernity that created the filmic journey in the *first* place?[222] (2002: 76)

Thus not only are the putative relationships between textual/ filmic vision and embodied sightseeing critically under-theorised, but so too is the nature of this experience: rather too simply drawing upon Coleridge's aesthetic of the poetic imagination, we often see explorations (in cultural geographies of tourism, film and literature at any rate) that do not go beyond gingerly positing that "it *does seem* that we suspend our disbelief when we read" (Andersen and

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[219] The saying 'to get lost in a good book' is no peculiarity of the English language. Similar linguistic allusions to an entrancing reading experience are found in German, Dutch and French- for example, *être pris par un livre* (Nell, in Ryan, 2001: 96).

[220] Dreamscapes "fed by the circulation of images, travel narratives, souvenirs from earlier vacations…and also the tourism marketing industry" (Bærenholdt et al 2004: 9).

[221] See Giuliana Bruno for a nuanced exploration into the mobilities of cinematic site-seeing: "speaking of the film's immobile spectator, Eisenstein reveals the perceptual interplay that exists between immobility and mobility. There is a mobile dynamics involved in the act of viewing films, even if the spectator is seemingly static" (Bruno, 2002: 56). See also chapter five for further development of these ideas.

[222] She continues: "the hybrid terrain of the travel film, with its architectonics of mixed forms (actuality and fabrication) is pivotal in the development of film narration. For here, as elsewhere, the tour of the world becomes a vehicle for the very transition to fictional cinema; crossing borders translates into the cross-over into feature films. In this travelogue, actuality is transposed into fiction via detection- itself a form of 'discovery'. Discovery marks cinema in many different ways. The motion picture, a language of 'curiosity', appears to have been fashioned out of a discourse of exploration. A travel scene is thus the primal scene of the motion picture" (2002: 76).

Robinson, 2002: 42 emphasis added)[223]. This chapter synthesizes these interrelated concerns of literary/ cinematic space, narrative immersion or 'visual poetics', and the tourism encounter. Specifically, it interrogates "that fundamental tension that landscape embraces between what is, in a simplistic sense, 'real' and what is 'fantasy'" (DeLyser, 2001: 24). This is the realm of 'imagined geography'- a realm to which the cartographic map, and the processes of mapping, are central. Maps of Middle-earth range from Tolkien's own illustrations, to the glossy promotional material of the New Zealand film and tourism ministries, to the icons, itineraries and other navigational tools produced and used to stabilize the landscapes of Middle-earth in New Zealand. This is, of course, a terrain for contestation. 20th century cartographical critique has solidly established the constructed nature of cartographic representation, the "fiction of its natural space" (Callon and Law, 2004: 3). And likewise, although "it is commonly acknowledged that analytic distinction between the 'reel' (as a projection on screen) and the 'real' (as a filmed landscape) is an example of the Enlightenment-derived binary between reality and its representation, and hence is a historically and geographically contingent ordering mechanism, as opposed to an ontological fact", Dixon and Grimes nonetheless contend that "how we should dispense of the oppositions implied in such reel/ real dualisms, remains less clear" (2004: 266). We seem to retain a 'cartographic anxiety' that is particularly acute in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*- a secondary world of the high fantasy order, with its own rich textual, visual and material legacy and social memory, and that has, in recent years, come to establish a disputable yet firmly established link to the landscapes of New Zealand.

Yet speaking of 'contested landscapes' is limited in scope when personal engagements with imaginative spaces remain so under-theorised. This chapter draws upon three distinct modes of engagement with the imaginative spaces of Middle-earth/New Zealand in order to expand the common notion of imaginative or virtual space as some sort of 'veil' or extraneous layering to a consensual reality (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Through three empirical case studies; an auto-ethnographic account of the practical difficulties of 'mapping'[224] Middle-earth; an account of the production of space on a *Lord of the Rings* themed tour; and finally of the phantasmagoric and transformational space of travel diaries, the chapter develops a conceptualisation of this

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[223] Of course I do not suggest that the imaginative aesthetic has gone untouched across all disciplines- yet it would be fair to say that "the move to hermeneutics and deconstruction left as far behind as ever the fantasmic images generated by fiction….only reader-response theory indicated a creative role for a reader who is always partly an author- though what was created was an experiential 'meaning' rather than any experience of the senses" (Schwenger, 1999).

[224] Ingold's explanation of 'mapping' is as follows: "the traveller or storyteller who knows as he goes is neither making a map nor using one. He is, quite simply, *mapping*. And the forms or patterns that arise from this mapping process, whether in the imagination or materialised as artefacts, are but stepping stones along the way, punctuating the process rather than initiating it or bringing it to a close" (Ingold, 2000: 231 emphasis added)

imaginative topography through notions of space, movement and narrative. In doing so, this chapter aims to complicate discussions of imagined geographies; to explore uncharted ways of knowing imagined/ imaginative space. As JD Dewsbury notes, whilst "there are evident gaps in the representation of our understandings, there are also many uncharted, or perhaps forgotten, cartographies for orientating our appreciation of the world in which we find ourselves" (Dewsbury, 2003: 1911). The following stories suggest three such ways of orientating ourselves in this multiply mediated, fictional terrain.

New Zealand 'as' Middle-earth: imagined/ contested geographies

"I can't remember where I was when JFK was shot, but I can remember exactly where and when I was when I first read J.R.R. Tolkien. It was New Year's Eve, 1961. I was babysitting for friends of my parents while they all went out to a party. I'd got this three-volume yacht-anchor of a book from the library that day. Boys at school had told me about it. It had maps in it, they said. This struck me as a pretty good indicator of quality" (Terry Pratchett, 2001: 78).

One can rarely get very far in discussing Tolkien before touching upon his maps. They are narratively central to the fellowship's quest across the lands of Middle-earth- indeed it is a map that sets Bilbo Baggins' adventure in motion in *The Hobbit*. On a visual level, the many cartographic illustrations that Tolkien believed were essential to the texts remain an iconic symbol of the works[225]. And, as Terry Pratchett recalls, they also contribute to the immersive detail and topographic authenticity of the fictional world of Arda- they are a measure of its quality. Maps are, then, thoroughly *appealing*. They appeal, argue Muehrcke and Muehrcke to both "our visual sense and to our need for conceptualisation" (1974: 319). Beyond this, maps appeal to our *imagination*- they are something we 'pore over', something we interact with, as we conceptualise and anticipate the "real-world referents" that the map is metaphor to (ibid: 321).

[225] For instance, rather than simply being replaced by the cinematic imagining of Middle-earth, the *Fellowship of the Ring* artfully pays homage to the maps during the prologue, and subsequently their detailed re-presentation in their author, Bilbo Baggin's, study. In fact, all three of the films frequently show characters poring over the same illustrations as are presented to the reader in the book.

Image 33- The Realm of Middle-earth, as imagined by J.R.R. Tolkien

It would certainly seem that Pratchett's schoolboy conviction in the quality of a good literary map served him well, in leading him into the world of Tolkien, a world with which he can fondly recount his first encounter, and which has surely been pivotal in his own career as a highly successful fantasy author. Tolkien's maps are also of central concern for Karen Wynn Fonstad (2002). They become a fascination within themselves- something to pore over, to develop and further conceptualise in her *Atlas of Middle-earth*. And online, we find sites such as Éowyn's Challenge, a site using the geography of Middle-earth to shape various journeys that the (female) reader can appropriate as a personal quest for freedom from their own "'cages' of weight, health or self-esteem problems"[226]. It is thus fair to say that Tolkien's own cartography has inspired and spawned many more detailed considerations of this richly mythic world, both published and informal. There is no shortage of material available to the reader keen to expand their knowledge about virtually any aspect of Middle-earth. Indeed, the detail provided by Tolkien about the geography and history of his secondary world makes it possible for many readers to gain a very realistic sense of being there in person:

"Were Thomas Cook to set up shop in Middle-earth, probably the most tempting package holiday would be a cruise down the Anduin. Running from north to south through almost 1,000 miles, the

[226] The Éowyn Challenge: [http://home.insightbb.com/~eowynchallenge/] accessed 16th June 2009.

Great River goes through, or passes near to, many of the great visual and historical sites of Middle-earth……" (Errigo, 2003: 206)

Image 34- The 'true' Anduin(s). Two of the five New Zealand rivers used to film Middle-earth- the Kawarau, Queenstown, and Rangitikei gorge, Taihape

As well as these purely solipsistic uses of Middle-earth, we can also trace its presence on 'actual' landscapes- as any arbitrary choice of Tolkien-derived place names typed into Google maps ably

demonstrates. In this instance, we seem to enter into a realm of desire; wishful 'as if' thinking that certainly shatters the idea that New Zealand is the only real-world territory vying for some association with the world of Arda:

"For decades academics have pondered over the inspiration for Middle-earth, with Scotland seldom getting a mention. Residents of Sutherland, however, feel these experts have made a major omission…a local historian states that he is convinced Tolkien came here for inspiration. Driving through the rain, beneath the windswept trees, gives you a very eerie feeling. England just doesn't have the desolate landscapes featured in Middle-earth. Sutherland's where it began[227]" (Rose, 2002: np).

And we do know that Tolkien's love of languages led him to borrow from real places for his nomenclature of Middle-earth. There are, as Lyons notes, fifteen 'Bucklands' in England (not to mention the 'Buckland road' that coincidentally joins the village of Matamata to the Hobbiton film set)- not all of which could have possibly inspired Tolkien's shire. It was, however, often the place-name rather than the place itself that absorbed Tolkien's attention (Lyons, 2004: 14). Lyon's own project- a personal tour of the British places we *know* Tolkien had some links with, and are thus more likely to have played a part in the creation of his secondary world, nonetheless attests to the imaginative power of both the author and readers' 'text-world' relationships, a kind of ultimate openess to association:

"There are many locations in England where you can look around and see largely what he would have seen, and wonder at what such landscapes actually meant to him and how they reflected his concerns back at him" (Lyons, 2004: 15)

Such metaphoric and symbolic mapping practices (between author and reader, text and world) exceed the narrow Orientalist focus of many critical theories of literary representation of place and literary tourism. Balfe, for example, argues that "genre fantasy texts often problematically draw upon pre-existing [Orientalist] cultural discourses to construct their 'incredible geographies'". From this perspective he argues that "all Fantasy texts need to be investigated to see what assumptions and discourses are at work in their narratives; the textual landscapes in Genre fantasy are never pristinely innocent, and an argument could be made that they are even less so precisely because of their self-proclaimed 'Fantastic' nature" (Balfe, 2004: 87).

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[227] Supporters of the theory point to the fact that Tolkien is said to have signed a guestbook for Lochstack Lodge, at the foot of Ben Stack, in the 1930's. This is the period in which he had started collating material for *The Lord of the Rings* (ibid). Rose wrote two Tolkien trails for the 24 Hour Museum website (now www.culture24.org.uk).

Yet, we need to question just *who* is presenting Fantasy as 'pristinely innocent- is innocence *inherent* to Genre fantasy or is it a feature that Balfe is reading in to it? And for *The Lord of the Rings*, we would be as well to analyze the representation of Celtic/ Anglo-Saxon cultural difference which we *know* to be key to Tolkien's own philological interests and the story's form and development[228] (e.g. Fimi, 2006), as opposed to a far more speculative fascination with Occidentalism and its Others. Indeed, we need to be *as* wary of scholarly interpretations of fantasy and travel literature which unproblematically transfer constellations of Orientalist discourse's "power, knowledge and spatiality" matrix onto various situations (Gregory, 2000: 311) as we do to recognise the use of "pre-existing Orientalist cultural discourses to construct such 'incredible geographies'" in the first place (Balfe, 2004: 75, 87). That is, there is no generic Orientalism- and we must avoid "*only* seeing contemporary (travel) writing as a mere continuation of the colonial (imaginary) tradition to which it can be so easily associated when one disembarks on the pages of a text with a single set of intellectual or conceptual artillery" (Tavares and Brousseau, 2006: 302).

And we do find that rather unsophisticated readings of Tolkien's races and their depiction on screen make rather basic errors: that Sauron is 'pure' and straightforward evil and men and hobbits 'pure' good (he is a fallen Elf, and Tolkien repeatedly emphasises the fallibility of men and satirizes the small-mindedness of the Shire); that 'goodness' is determined racially (the 'choice' to make a decision between good and evil is rather a recurring theme in the book- Galadriel's relationship with a ring of power renders her at best ambiguous; and it is Gollum, not Frodo, who ultimately destroys the ring). That the casting of Maori New Zealander Lawrence Makoare as Lurtz (the Uruk-hai leader) insinuates the casting crew in a process of racial coding where all New Zealand Maori become associable with the "inferior" breeds of Middle-earth (e.g. Turner and Kavka, forthcoming); and so on. In many respects, such 'postcolonial' approaches add little to previous decade's literary-allegorical interpretations (Sauron as Hitler for example), which so enraged Tolkien and are felt to have little place in literary theory. Likewise, from a spatial perspective, we find accounts that unproblematically state that "the physical details of [New Zealand's] body and place have been *scrubbed away* in order to *overlay* the history of another time and place. The result is the emplacement of Middle-Earth and the emptying of New Zealand: the physical is over-ridden by the virtual and yet remains as a palimpsest. Hence Middle-Earth comes into being *as* New Zealand" (Turner and Kavka, forthcoming).

Whilst I am not trying to suggest that the mapping of Middle-earth onto Aotearoa is in any way unproblematic, I am suggesting it is somewhat more *complex* than these interpretations allow.

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[228] Fimi discusses, for example, how Tolkien's views towards Celtic language and literature 'softened' over time and "he eventually came to regard the Celts and Saxons as of the same land about which he was so passionate" (2006: 167).

Jutel recognises the limitations in current postcolonial enquiries when he states that this complexity is "yet to be produced or simply acknowledged" (2004: 64). For him, the *Lord of the Rings* "provides a useful summary of the historical investments which have been made in the land and points to the messy and fascinating interrelation between people and landscape…dynamic exchanges between history, ideology, society and people" (2004: 55). His four-faceted analysis of postcolonial New Zealand's landscapes recognises firstly the centrality of imperialist projections upon the colonised land to continuing popular New Zealand discourse; secondly, that as a postcolonial society, Aotearoa produces multiple and often contradictory discourses about the landscape; thirdly, that the landscape of New Zealand has come to represent a transposable 'otherness'; and finally, that New Zealand, especially as it is reconstructed as Middle-earth; offers its land as a commodity which inscribes it in the forces of the global economy (ibid).

Yet, as he goes on to suggest in a Deleuzean vein, we need to approach these place mythologies differently, creatively:

*"Middle-earth is **not** knowable and the over-determined assertion about the intrinsic link between Tolkien's mythic continent and Aotearoa is not so much an erasure of colonial history but an assertion of the transformative powers of the virtualisation of the landscape….the virtual is not to be conflated with the false, the illusionary, or the imaginary. It is not opposed to the real nor is it a substitute for it: it produces. It is not to be mistaken with virtual reality, nor does it necessarily express itself through digital technology. The virtual does not deceive or conceal, nor does it unequivocally affirm" (Jutel, 2004: 63).*

Thus, Jutel argues that the virtualisation of New Zealand as Middle-earth (or equally of any other place 'as' any other place), is neither liberating nor enslaving- but requires "an engagement with how the sense of history of the country inscribes itself on different cartographies" (2004: 64).

One such cartography that links multiply-mediated time-spaces of New Zealand exists in the Canterbury high country. In 1872, Samuel Butler published his tale of utopian society *Erewhon* after having lived in New Zealand for five years[229]. The book became a best-seller, established a new myth for the area that endures to today, and created an early form of literary tourism in New Zealand with visitors trekking to both the Upper Rangitata valley, Canterbury, where Butler's utopian society was based, and to the author's homestead (Buchmann, 2006: 181). One hundred and thirty years latter, this is the very same location that attracts tourists for a different, but oddly parallel, reason- it is now known as Edoras, and has found new renown as a 'film tourism

[229] Butler was a sheep farmer. The book accurately presents the high country environment of his home as a backdrop for the fictional discovery of a Utopian state- the narrative is a satire on the attitudes, beliefs and values of Victorian society (Buchmann, 2006: 184)

destination'. In both instances, the 'mytholigization' of place is rich and revealing- in both cases, for example, "the tales of mythical worlds were interwoven with geographic characteristics of the region" (Buchmann, 2006: 181). And now, Buchmann's research suggests, both myths exist side by side: Erewhon is referred to in Brodie's guidebook, suggesting that "this place, like others, can have multiple identities" (2006: 186).

Image 35- Tour guide Rex (an retired TV executive) takes a moment to talk to some New Zealanders who have hiked up Mt Sunday. Distinctions between the literary and filmic, and host-guest identities and motivations are blurred.

So, whilst the Erewhon place-myth *is* a settler history, reflecting a discursive tradition of New Zealand as both 'land of plenty' *and* inhospitable wilderness (Phillipson, 2002: 30), we can interpret it in more than one way. In particular we do not necessarily have to see Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* as simply a recent addendum to the history of colonial exploitation of Aotearoa- a sort of continuation of the imperial way, where "the Shire was not 'found' in Matamata, but was *made* a century ago by colonists laying waste to forests and evicting Maori, searching for a Shropshire that no longer, or perhaps never existed" (Werry, 2004: 6). In line with Sharp, who warns against the hegemony of these "masculinist metaphors of penetration and possession

characteristic of the literary tradition" (Sharp, 2002: 160)[230], Phillipson points to 'other understandings': he argues that the "non-invasive use of the land" in the making of the trilogy detours from a myth of New Zealand as 'pastoral paradise' towards New Zealand *as Middle-earth*- where the very ecologically driven love for the landscape (in the books, amongst the New Zealander's who worked on the film) is reflected in touristic behaviour at the sites, and is perpetuated through the ongoing discourse of the film's transformation of the New Zealand countryside[231] (Phillipson, 2002: 33). Of course, as Phillipson also notes, it is possible to take a cynical line on this 'greening' of the Middle-earth association. Nonetheless, these 'humble' stories do help to remind us that tourists (and presumably film industry workers too) do *not travel maliciously* (Harrison, 2003: 24). Thus between the lines of a geopolitical myth produced by an organised and exploitative 'system' (the national film industry, the government, 'Hollywood', global economic processes etc) there are other stories to tell[232].

The following three stories are such stories- they try to show how the relationship between people and landscape is "messy and fascinating" (Jutel, 2004: 55); they attempt to take into account the ways in which anxiety, desire and fantasy enter into the production of imaginative geographies- something to which even Saïd was inattentive and represents "a remarkable lacuna in his account of Orientalism" (Gregory, 2000: 313). They are stories about interactions, and not about battles and conquests- they are about "complicating the terrain of the itinerant viewer, the one compelled to negotiate these spaces" (Torchin, 2002: 254). The first story centres on an account of location-hunting. Using the *Lord of the Rings location guidebook* (2003, 2004) and a road atlas of New Zealand with its useful 'movie camera icons' to designate *Lord of the Rings* locations, this story shares a day from my itinerary on the south island, to consider how the independent film tourist *navigates* these cinematic landscapes. In this instance, it is an account of being lost, or at least not really finding our way- in which the spatial complexities and ambiguities of 'Middle-earth on earth' tend to test or obscure our experience of the former film sets, rather than simply disappoint us. Then we return to the organised film tour. Movement between different

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[230] Sharp is discussing Roland Barthes *Empire of Signs* (1982) which she contrasts with Edward Saïd's geopolitical account of Orientalism. "Barthe's text can be read as raising the question of what representational structures such as 'Orientalism' actually are. His post-structural position critiques the opposition of Orient and Occident, colonial and postcolonial, here and there, just as do Saïd's work and that which follows it. However, unlike these works, Barthes challenges the structure of representation with an elliptical critique which subverts the basis of more overtly political arguments. This destabilising critique places radical politics within the *process* of writing/ reading rather than in the *content* of the resultant critique (2002: 164 original emphasis).

[231] Eco-tourism, Phillipson argues, was and is pushed in conjunction with the marketing of Middle-earth.

[232] As Rose notes, "by exploring the various intersections of identity and power, cultural geographers have provided great insight into the issue of 'why and for whom' the landscape is produced. Yet, they have neglected the more fundamental question of 'how:'" (Rose, 2002: 456). Or, as Gregory sums up: "geography is about more than the will-to-power disguised as the will-to-map" (Gregory, 2000: 303).

landscape perspectives marks the experience of the scenic film tour- the tour guide calls upon us to fluidly move between multiple spaces and stories to frame a nuanced and layered understanding of these former film sets. Thus, far from either total narrative immersion where visitors are expected to 'suspend disbelief', or a practical demystification of the filmic production of these spaces, we find simultaneity and juxtaposition- where the disjunctions between filmic and actual space, or 'bloopers' as Torchin refers to them as, are allowed to interact for the entertainment and delight of the group (2002). Finally we return to another more personal orientation towards the landscapes of New Zealand/ Middle-earth. Travel diaries are a medium of tourist communication that are both popular and historically rooted (Löfgren, 1999: 89) yet often insinuated in critiques of imperialism (Tavares and Brousseau, 2006). Here, contrasting styles of travel diaries are presented to demonstrate how we might re-conceptualise what the "cliché and ambiguity"; the range of literary devices such as alliteration, repetition, rhyme, metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia present in certain forms of travel literature such as the diary (Dann, 1996); actually *effect* in terms of a narrative transformation between page and place.

Mapping Middle-earth: navigating cinematic space

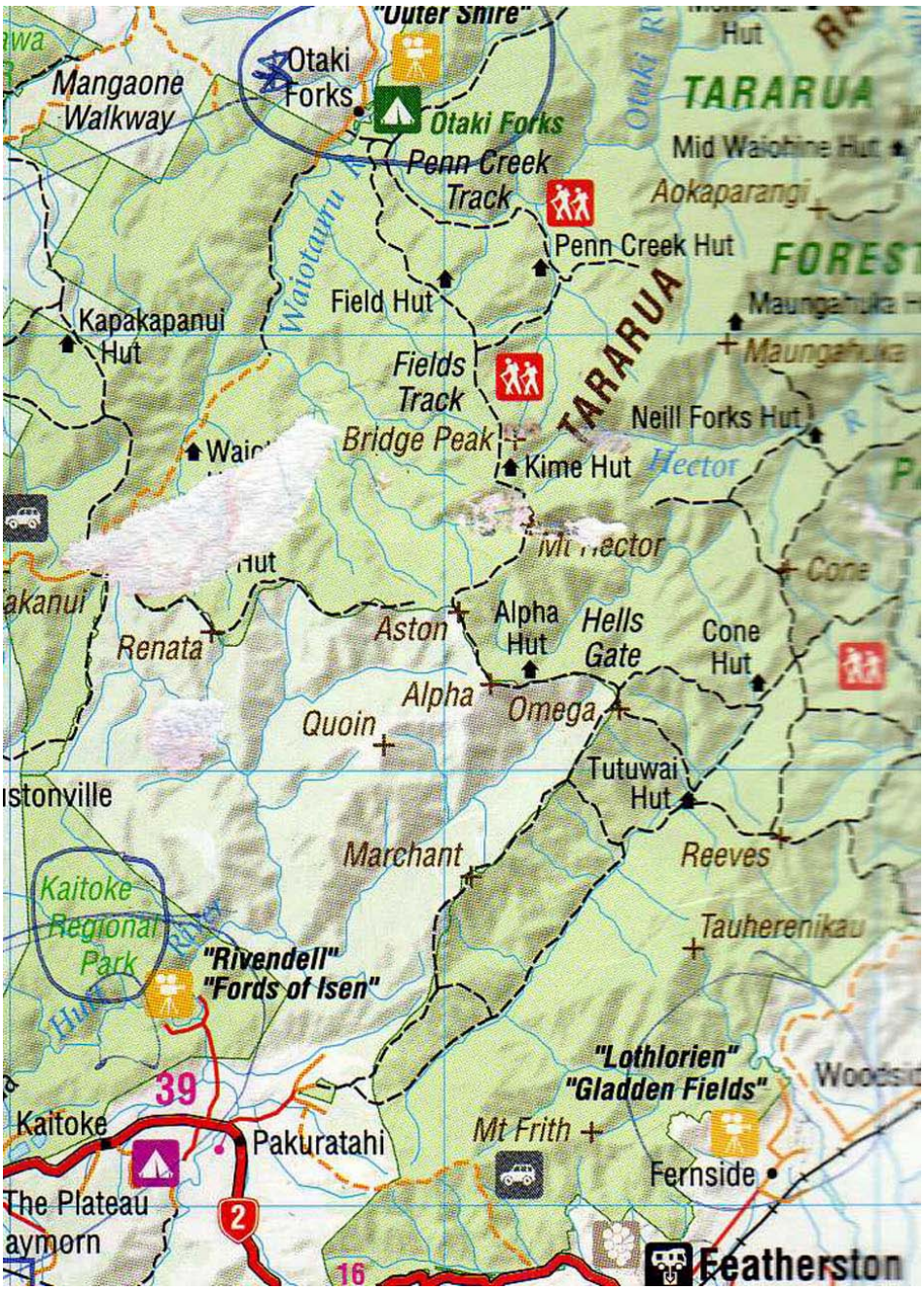

Image 36- Representation of the film locations in a (well-used) HEMA New Zealand road atlas (from author's collection)

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Lord of the Rings filming locations

north island

Central North

- Mangawhero Falls, Tongariro National Park (26 B12)
  Ithilien
- Rangitikei River, Taihape (27 F4)
  River Anduin
- Tongariro Crossing, Tongariro National Park (18 J13)
  Plains of Gorgoroth
- Mt Ngauruhoe, Tongariro National Park (18 J13)
  Mount Doom
- Waitarere Forest, Waitarere (29 F4)
  Trollshaw Forest and Osgiliath Wood
- Whakapapa Skifield, Tongariro National Park (26 A13)
  Mordor and Emyn Muil

Central Waikato

- Matamata (12 C11)
  Hobbiton and the Shire
- Port Waikato (9 F1)
  Weathertop

Wellington region

- Queen Elizabeth Park, Paraparaumu (33 B3)
  Pelennor Fields
- Fernside (33 C6)
  Lothlorien and the Gladden Fields
- Dry Creek Quarry, Haywards (33 D3)
  Helms Deep and Minas Tirith
- Harcourt Park, Upper Hutt (33 C4)
  Isengard Gardens and the Orc Tree
- Hutt River, Upper Hutt (33 C4)
  Rohan River
- Hutt River, Upper Hutt (33 D4)
  River Anduin
- Kaitoke Regional Park, Upper Hutt (33 C5)
  Rivendell and the Fords of Isen
- Lyall Bay, Wellington (33 F1)
  Dunharrow
- Mt Victoria, Wellington (33 F2)
  Dunharrow and escape from the Nazgul
- Mt Victoria town belt, Wellington (33 F2)
  Shire outskirts and Race to the Ferry
- Seatoun, Wellington (33 F2)
  Bree
- Otaki Gorge (33 A5)
  Outer Shire
- Putangirua Pinnacles Scenic Res (33 H5)
  Dimholt Road

south island

Canterbury

- Ben Ohau Station, Twizel (59 G5)
  Eastemnet Gullies, Pelennor Fields and Plains of Rohan
- Mt Sunday/Mt Potts Station, Rangitata Valley (51 J3)
  Edoras
- Tarras, Wanaka (66 F10)
  Flight to the Ford and Great East Road

Central Otago

- Poolburn Reservoir, Ida Valley (73 A5)
  Plains of Rohan and Rohirrim Village

Nelson & Marlborough

- Mt Owen, Kahurangi National Park (42 D11)
  Dimrill Dale
- Mt Olympus, Kahurangi National (37 E5)
  Eregion Hills and rugged country south of Rivendell
- Takaka Hill, Takaka (38 F8)
  Chetwood Forest

Queenstown

- Arrowtown (65 G6)
  Ford of Bruinen
- Arrowtown (65 G6)
  Gladden Fields
- Closeburn, Queenstown (64 H14)
  Amon Hen
- Deer Park Heights, Kelvin Heights (65 H5)
  Various scenes of Middle Earth
- Kawarau River (65 H6)
  Pillars of the Kings and River Anduin
- Paradise, Glenorchy (64 D12)
  Amon Hen, Isengard and Lothlorien
- Routeburn Track Rd, Routeburn (64 E11)
  Isengard
- Skippers Canyon (65 F4)
  Ford of Bruinen
- The Remarkables, Queenstown (65 H6)
  Dimrill Dale
- Twelve Mile Delta, Queenstown (64 H13)
  Ithilien
- Wanaka (65 C6)
  Rugged country south of Rivendell

Southland

- Mt Gunn, Westland National Park (49 H6)
  Lighting of the Beacons
- Kepler Mire, Te Anau (70 E11)
  Dead Marshes
- Mararoa River, Mavora Lakes (71 B4)
  Silverlode River
- Mavora Lakes Road, Mavora Lakes (71 C4)
  Fangorn Forest and Orc Mound
- North Mavora Lake (71 B4)
  Nen Hithoel
- Norwest Lakes, Fiordland National Park (70 D8)
  Flight to the Ford and Rugged country south of Rivendell
- Takaro Road, Margin Forest (70 C12)
  Fangorn Forest
- Waiau River, Te Anau (70 D11)
  River Anduin

Disclaimer - This publication is not authorised by Tolkien Enterprises or New Line Cinema.

Central Otago

Image 37- HEMA road atlas Lord of the Rings filming locations listed in preface with map references (from author's collection)

Discussing the literary map of Joyce's Dublin, Johnson argues that "the [literary tourism] map does not represent the content of the novel, it is an exercise in spatial semiotics. Episodes of the novel become symbolically represented by specific sites in the city" (Johnson, 2004: 101). The map and guidebook which were my main 'interpretative tools' for locating the former film sets share this style of spatial semiotics. Little yellow 'movie-camera' icons maps designate the former film sets on a touristic road atlas of New Zealand- with the location(s) they represent added above in italics. The entire list of locations is additionally indexed in the map's prefaces, by

region, with grid references for each one. *The Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook* (Brodie 2003, 2004), on the other hand, follows a travel guide convention in weaving practical information on how to reach the sites with images of the film scenes set there and the area 'as it is'; anecdotes from the production of the film and other points of 'local interest'. The following story (written in first draft the same day) is based around a day's 'location hunting' using these two primary tools.

Mavora Lakes *Fangorn Forest*

A visit to the Mavora Lakes is your passport to a special forested area containing two serene lakes. Their remoteness ensures you are guaranteed solitude with an opportunity to relax and recharge your holiday batteries.

The lakes are situated off the main Five Rivers — Te Anau highway, watch for the signposted road past Mossburn (there is also an access road closer to Te Anau).

From here it is a scenic 39-km, 45-minute drive on an unpaved road to *Fangorn Forest* and *Nen Hithoel*. After travelling 35 km and just prior to the turn off to Mavora Lakes, you'll see a gateway on your right and a repaired fence on your left. On your left is the edge of *Fangorn Forest* so step quietly and you may catch a glimpse of an Ent standing like a sentinel in the trees. It's hard to imagine that during filming over 160 people worked from the paddock on your right.

Climb the fence on your left and walk 250 m in a northwesterly direction. Here *Éomer* and the *Riders of Rohan* burnt the remains of the dead Orcs after their epic battle. The locality is just as you would imagine — a brown hillock with the edge of the deep forest just metres away.

Above top: Gandalf the White with Shadowfax at the edge of Fangorn Forest.

Above: Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli sift through the Orc ashes.

Fangorn Forest was one of the oldest in Middle-earth. A remnant of the Great Forests that covered most of Eriador, it was home to one of the oldest species in Middle-earth — the Ent.

Grown from saplings in the First Age, over the countless years the trees grew to great height and maturity. Some areas of the forest contained deep dells that remained dark and ominous.

ORC MOUND
S45° 19.968'—E168° 10.404'

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Image 38- The *Location guidebook's* entry for Mavora Lakes/ Fangorn forest- reproduced courtesy of Ian Brodie

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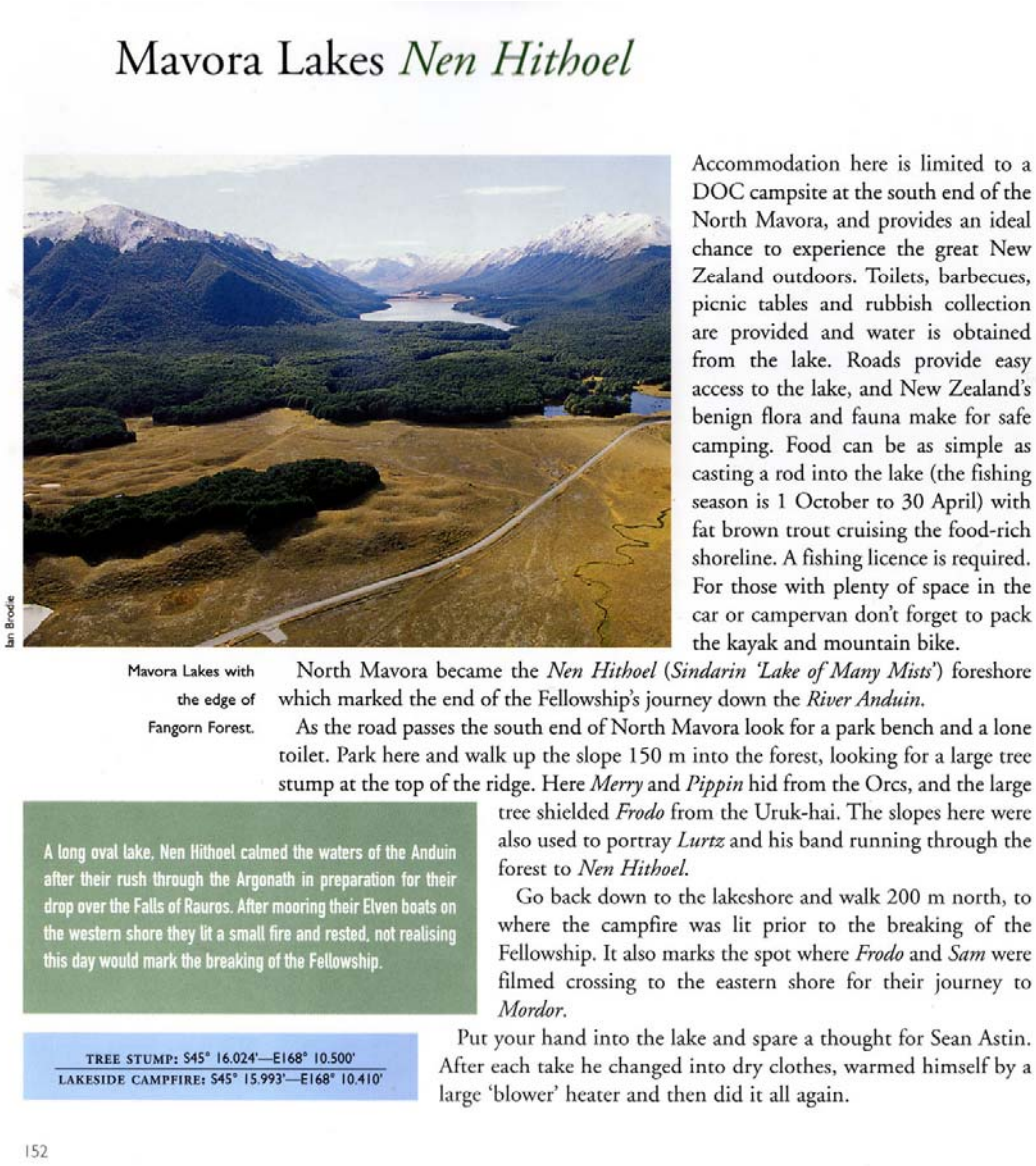
The road to Lake Mavora is a long one- not just from Queenstown (only a short distance as the crow flies across the mountains but a lot further by road) but also because the last 40km are on unforgiving unsealed road. We follow a huge rental campervan for a while- it is literally caked in dust. I wonder if they are down here for the same reason? Mavora is a pretty DOC lake and park, but it feels a bit 'off the beaten track', I just can't imagine the average three-week hire being this into *the Lord of the Rings* film-tourism thing? We drive straight to the furthermost point- we see Nen Hithoel. It is easy to see. In fact, it rather seems odd that the horizon does not have the pinnacle jutting out of it as seen on the film. Photos taken, quickly.

Image 39- Lake Mavora, looking towards Nen Hithoel and the Rauros falls on the horizon



Mavora Lakes *Nen Hithoel*

Ian Brodie

Mavora Lakes with the edge of Fangorn Forest.

Accommodation here is limited to a DOC campsite at the south end of the North Mavora, and provides an ideal chance to experience the great New Zealand outdoors. Toilets, barbecues, picnic tables and rubbish collection are provided and water is obtained from the lake. Roads provide easy access to the lake, and New Zealand's benign flora and fauna make for safe camping. Food can be as simple as casting a rod into the lake (the fishing season is 1 October to 30 April) with fat brown trout cruising the food-rich shoreline. A fishing licence is required. For those with plenty of space in the car or campervan don't forget to pack the kayak and mountain bike.

North Mavora became the *Nen Hithoel* (*Sindarin 'Lake of Many Mists'*) foreshore which marked the end of the Fellowship's journey down the *River Anduin*.

As the road passes the south end of North Mavora look for a park bench and a lone toilet. Park here and walk up the slope 150 m into the forest, looking for a large tree stump at the top of the ridge. Here *Merry* and *Pippin* hid from the Orcs, and the large tree shielded *Frodo* from the Uruk-hai. The slopes here were also used to portray *Lurtz* and his band running through the forest to *Nen Hithoel*.

A long oval lake, Nen Hithoel calmed the waters of the Anduin after their rush through the Argonath in preparation for their drop over the Falls of Rauros. After mooring their Elven boats on the western shore they lit a small fire and rested, not realising this day would mark the breaking of the Fellowship.

Go back down to the lakeshore and walk 200 m north, to where the campfire was lit prior to the breaking of the Fellowship. It also marks the spot where *Frodo* and *Sam* were filmed crossing to the eastern shore for their journey to *Mordor*.

TREE STUMP: S45° 16.024'—E168° 10.500'
LAKESIDE CAMPFIRE: S45° 15.993'—E168° 10.410'

Put your hand into the lake and spare a thought for Sean Astin. After each take he changed into dry clothes, warmed himself by a large 'blower' heater and then did it all again.

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Image 40- Ian Brodie's aerial view of our grounded discovery- reproduced courtesy of the author

I am exhausted- too much so to enjoy the beautiful site, let alone set about some formal process of analysing it. We barely got out of the van to take pictures before driving back along the road to find a picnic spot to take an afternoon kip- we've been on the road for five hours today already. Next, in the midst of the wood we hunt the 'Silverlode River', the spot where the Fellowship's first river-side encampment was filmed, and walking away from the shore up into the forest, the tree stump where Merry and Pippin hide from the Uruk-Hai as Amon Hen is attacked by Uruk-hai (Appendix C). Of the last two- there was simply no hope, despite following the 'turn right at the first tree and carry on two metres and then turn left…' directions in the guidebook. Of course, the single icon in our road atlas rather obliterates the whole area under one symbol- and on the other hand, Brodie's multiple orientations (GPS, details of filming, images of the scene during and after filming) still don't enable to pinpoint any specific spots. Maybe it's that tree stump there which has a mark on it? The possibilities of why one tree has a red plastic tag around it runs riot in my mind,

although in my heart of hearts I imagine that it has more to do with the Department of Conservation than it does the tourism industry of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Image 41- Too many trees at Amon Hen

So, we try to watch the scenes of Amon Hen on the portable DVD player- hopeless. There's too many of them (scenes and trees) and I know that most of this was filmed as Closeburn anyway. It's too dark under the canopy of branches to even see the screen decently at any rate, and the woods stretch off unsettling into the dark- my feet warn against the danger of setting out on a wild goose chase into the forest. I settle for some photos, and the knowledge that I am at least in the right area (I guess). Brodie had said that the warder knew where all the sites were, but he's nowhere to be seen. Backtracking down the slope of the woods and across the roadway, the shade opens out onto a still sunny afternoon on the shores lining the river that joins the south and north Mavora lakes. It's lovely to feel the late afternoon sunshine on our faces and enjoy the sounds of the busy river, and moreover, it's much easier to recall or evoke the image of the three boats setting out from Lothlorien, carrying the Fellowship. Of course, there is a paradox here- textually, the Silverlode river leaves Lothlorien and opens onto the Anduin, which after several days of travel reaches the Rauros falls. The actuality of film-set Middle-earth effects something of

a time-space compression: the 'middle section' of the Anduin is filmed elsewhere- so the beginning and the end of the fellowship's fluvial journey come together.

Mararoa River *Silverlode River*

Ian Brodie

The outlet of the Mararoa River by the swing-bridge at South Mavora was used to portray the junction of the *Silverlode* and *Anduin Rivers* (in the extended DVD) as the Fellowship left *Lothlórien*.

Brown and rainbow trout abound in the river and provide another ready source of food for the barbecue, provided, of course, you've remembered to organise a fishing licence. Because of the tranquillity a population of bush robins reside nearby and New Zealand falcons are often seen soaring in the thermals overhead.

For those not wishing to try a camping lifestyle there are a number of tourist operators based in Queenstown and Te Anau offering 4WD day trips into the area. Queenstown company Heliworks also offer helicopter flights over these locations. The nearby village of Mossburn offers farm-stay accommodation and can be used as a base for a day trip into the area. The town of Te Anau is only 45 minutes by car and can also be used as your local touring headquarters.

Tolkien's *Silverlode* was a fair river flowing from its source in *Nanduhirion* through *Lórien* and on into the great *Anduin River*. The pristine beauty of the Mararoa River as it leaves the South Mavora certainly brings his description vividly to mind, in a tranquil and profoundly beautiful location.

Ian Brodie

Above top: South Mavora Lake from the Mararoa River outlet.

Above: View from the campsite at Amon Hen.

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Image 42- The Silverlode river. Image reproduced courtesy of Ian Brodie

The last stop, working back out towards the main road, is a field bordering the woods- that is, the Forest of Fangorn (in one of its guises). This scene is known as "the Orc Mound"- and apparently the exact spot was easily identified for some time by the burnt grass where the bodies of the routed Uruk-hai were burnt. After picking a spot to park on the side of the road that feels as if it could be roughly the right vicinity, climbing the wire fence and up a bristly hill of tussock, we find ourselves facing a very familiar landscape but yet struggling to 'pin it down'- so familiar, yet devoid of 'evidence'. Eyes to the ground, we squint for different shades of growth or bare ground that might give it away- to no avail My hopes of being party to some kind of 'new spatial division with a new place name' is once again dashed (Urry, 2002: 120). However, watching the scene on the portable player, there is a breakthrough- thanks to some gratifyingly unchanging landscape

features across on the mountains which appear in the background of the scene as the camera pans around, we are able to match up very precisely a 'frame-for-frame', and, in one of the rare occasions that this happens, we are able to confirm that this, indeed, is the spot 'to mark X'. After the doubt of the previous few places, this feels like a victory.

Image 43- "There are regions to my front and back, to my right and left, but they are not geared to any external reference points and hence are quite useless" (Tuan, in Sobchack, 2004: 18).

It is now late afternoon and we are exhausted. And very dusty. After clambering back down to the van, stumbling in boggy tussock and trying our best to avoid the plentiful sheep poo, we have a further 80 km or so to cover- again partly on unsealed roads- to reach the final location - 'another' Fangorn Forest (on Takaro road). I realise rapidly this time that its innocent looks on the road atlas will have us driving in the dark to arrive there, and we would still have to get back to Te Anau. Plus- we're getting short of fuel, and it's a bank holiday. There's no point attempting it- there won't be enough daylight, and the last stop is abandoned. The abandonment is terminal- there will be no chance to come back to this location tomorrow either as this tour of the southernmost locations is on a tight itinerary before departing for the North Island once again.

It is with regret that we miss this spot- despite the gnawing suspicion that it may have turned out to be equally as irksome and unsatisfying as Mavora. But, there is always that chance that is an amazing location, that somehow or other you will really connect with it, feel it as it was in the film, or just have a chance to relax there. And there is also the annoying niggle- why do I feel I *have to*

make this earnest attempt at locating and charting every single location? It seems to dominate the way I think about these landscapes and is in tension with other experience of the encounter. For example, even the small rewards recorded at Mavora – a few photos mainly of me with hands on hips looking perplexed –become fond memories recounted. Thus, even by that same evening, once we have found a camping spot in the pitch black and settled down for the night, the day is judged as a success- or at least an honourable attempt at an expedition, undertaken rigorously to plan. The feeling that we followed what maps we had, and gave it our all, combats the sense that it wasn't enough- that we never reached our final destination; that we didn't *find* our *way*.

Remembering this arduous day always brings to mind a quote from Boromir, said at the Council of Elrond in *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

"One does not simply walk into Mordor. Its black gates are guarded by more than just Orcs. There is evil there that does not sleep, and the Great Eye is ever watchful. It is a barren wasteland, riddled with fire and ash and dust, the very air you breathe is a poisonous fume. Not with ten thousand men could you do this. It is folly."

My experiences of trying to locate the former film locations as part of this research project often felt an equivalent folly- the fantastic geography of Middle-earth on earth is full of spaces which "write back with empirical agency and embodied effect" (Dewsbury and Naylor, 2002: 256). For one, both the map we used and Brodie's guide, elided many of the vagaries we came across when actually faced with the task of orientating ourselves within these cinematic spaces. As one British girl described on visiting the apparently straightforward location of the Ford of Bruinen in Arrowtown village:

"We went down there with the book (Brodie's Location guidebook) and there was about fifteen people all following us, and were asking 'do you think this is it? And we were like, yeah, I ***think*** *so…"*

Thus, as much as tools such as the iconed road map or Brodie's *Location Guidebook* appear to offer a lucid representation of these landscapes (shaping for example what I *thought* I could do in terms of fieldwork before the event), we nonetheless find that we were knowing "*as* we go, not *before* we go" (Ingold, 2000: 239). In fact, knowing as you go in this particular instance largely revolved around the experience of *being lost*- and of trying to become *un-lost* (Sobchack, 2004). We were lost between the map and the image- neither GPS co-ordinates of the former film sets, nor then and now images of the landscapes, nor travel guide book, nor map icon could help us orientate ourselves. This story is thus about the *failure* of common touristic modes of environmental understanding to account for this landscape. That is not to infer that these guides

had somehow misled us[233]; but rather that they fail to speak to the sorts of spaces these landscapes are. Thus, whilst Del Casino and Hanna argue that understanding tourist maps merely as objects used by tourists to "find their way" is a deceptively "simple model" that "tells us nothing about how tourism maps and the social actors deploying these representations construct tourism spaces and identities" (2003: x), this particular map-tourist ordering does *not* result in a plentiful or abundant knowledge of the landscape- where the eclectic or palimpsest nature of a tourist map creates a 'springboard' for personal interpretation (DeLyser 2003: 88).

Still, some sort of space is brought into being through these practices, some 'place' materialises, is mapped anew, through each attempt to locate this virtual fiction at an "intersection of knowledge, skills and experience" (Kitchin and Dodge, 2007: 339). The very frustrations encountered at the maps' lack of accessibility to the space we are seeking, leads, for example, to an inspiration to "annotate" or improve existing maps with one's own experience- as my excited biro circle around a location icon situated *right next to* a camping icon in image 41 betrays (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 1974: 331). Thus, what I am left with – even some years after the event - is a strong and unfinished connection to the business of 'mapping' Middle-earth. My worn and trusted HEMA map – which we couldn't bear to leave in the van when it was sold – was shipped home in a crate with the rest of our stuff, has already returned to New Zealand once, and is frequently referred to for myriad reasons, not least the planning of the next itinerary.

So, the places I didn't find my way in do still *tease* me, and another chance to go 'location-hunting' in the future, perhaps when the Hobbit films are released, beckons temptingly. Yet this seems odd since the event was outwardly a failure, that the tourist mode of knowing landscape apparently failed. But this was not a typical sort of being lost, or of not finding one's way either. The frustrations and anxieties experienced rule out the possibility that this could be the "pleasurable and aimless meandering of the *flâneur*, whose very lack of a specific destination enables him always to get there" (Sobchack, 2004: 15). But neither was it, in all its anxiety, a being-lost that is in any way threatening or radically disorientating, despite the almost "contextless context" we often felt faced with (Sobchack, 2004: 19). And finally, you could also not describe it as a mundane sense of not knowing where you are- even when the purposive performance of orientating ourselves gave way to the relief of 'calling it a day' and returning to some sense of *terra cognita*, the mystique of trying to find 'Middle-earth on earth' returned with force the next day, the next location.

[233] One Mancunian couple were particularly eager to tell me of the Location guidebooks shortcomings (in their opinion), and where an industrious researcher like myself might want to improve upon.

Producing Middle-earth: constructing space on the guided tour

Let us return to the guided tour. As introduced in *Scorned Pleasures*, tour guides can play an important role in mediating between the former film sets and their visitors. As mentioned then, there can be a disjuncture between what is 'encoded' and 'decoded'- the tour guide's own *positioning* (for example ambivalence) is crucial (Hall, in MacDonald, 2006: 123). However, here I want to expand on this to explore some of the very real challenges tour guides face in mediating the fictional geographies of Middle-earth as New Zealand, and to consider how this mediation is effected and received by visitors. MacDonald argues that any guided tour will necessarily be shaped by the very conventions and medium of the tour, and its genre; as well as its audiences (both real and imagined) and the materialities of the tour context, including the place and space of the tour itself and the particular ways in which the environment might affect the production and reading of that space (MacDonald, 2006: 124).

Lord of the Rings day tours (which I focus upon here) tend to operate as 'scenic tours', often involving, by virtue of the locations, transport in smaller four-wheel drive vehicles. The tour stops off at a selection of former film locations where visitors get out to look around the sites. Indeed, as the leaflet for a tour to Edoras shows (Image 46 below), the tours are often quite a grand 'day out', with a picnic lunch and opportunity to see and traverse much of the local landscapes as well as the specific filming sites.

Image 44- Nomad Safari jeep on location in Skipper's canyon

As the leaflet also suggests, these tours do still make use of numerous 'props'- tour guides alone, albeit "knowledgeable", take along swords or replica weapons for photographs or re-enacting (as depicted here), a copy of *The Lord of the Rings location guidebook*, and sometimes are also equipped with an onboard or portable DVD player on which to re-play scenes from the films prior to arriving at each site. Guides themselves come from a wide background[234] but are often seasoned/ seasonal guides who have a dense local knowledge and might, for example, spend the summer months guiding and the winter months working in alpine resorts as ski-instructors. Others may have gained first hand experience of the films working as extras. However, all share in common a reliance on anecdotes of production drawn from the guidebook, local knowledge or the insight of extras working the tour, in order to narrate the landscapes to their clients (Carl, 2005).

[234] Including at least two doctoral students who have used employment as a guided tour to access their ethnographic audience.

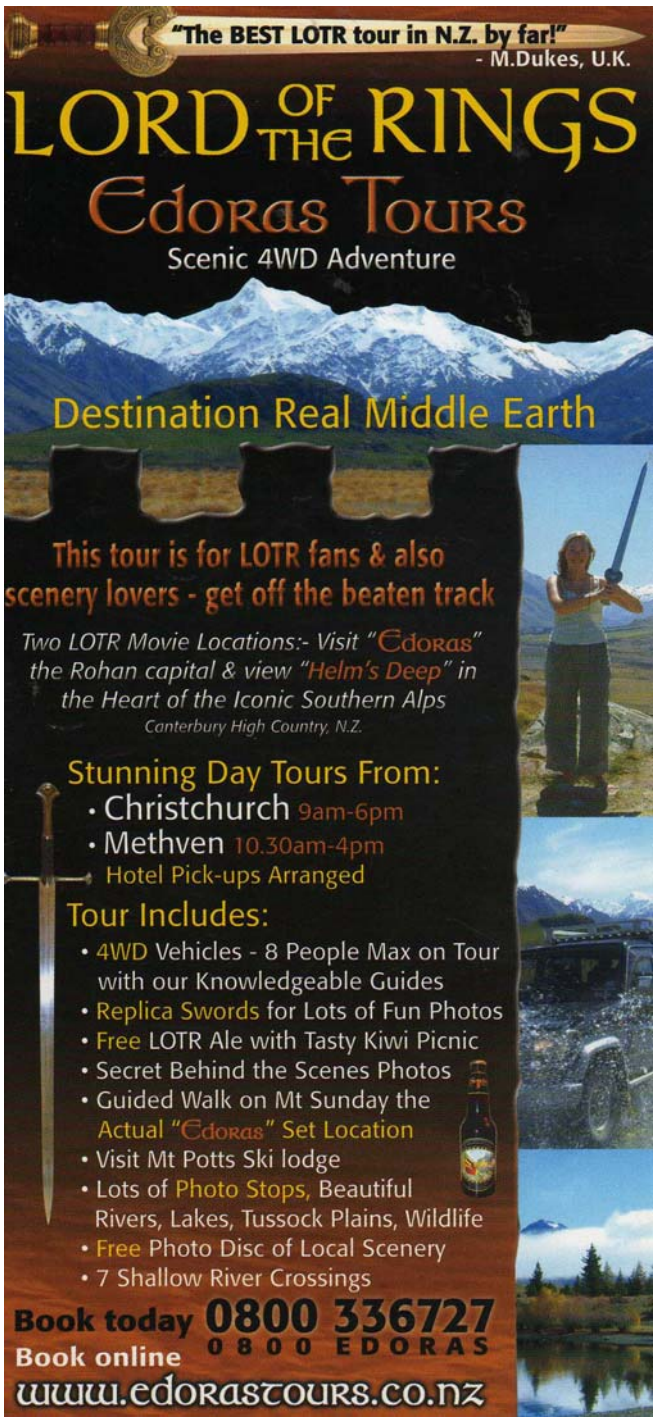

Image 45- A tour leaflet to Edoras highlights the multi-layered, multi-sensual encounter the tourist can expect (from author's collection

Image 46- A guide uses the *Location guidebook,* not to compare our location to a former film set, but to show how we are at the same scenic lookout that author Brodie used to photograph for background material in his write-up for Glenorchy.

However, *The Lord of the Rings* is certainly not the only story narrated on a Rings themed scenic tour. In actual fact, we find that tour guide's narratives weave artfully between the films' narratives; stories of its production (often with a good pinch of 'home-grown pride'- see Jones and Smith, 2005); and other facts about local culture (see Hemme, 2005)- with a resulting constant tension between the real and virtual, an oscillating effect which mystifies the landscape only to demystify it a moment later to the general delight of their audience (Torchin, 2002). For example, after stepping out of the vehicle at Dart Basin (Orthanc), Cath firstly introduces the area in terms of settler history before slipping easily into an explanation of how the film was made (superimposed) here, and how "the Ents came down from there, and that's where the dam broke, and this where we are standing is where they ripped everything up…."

Indeed, our tour guides seem to "overlay a *series* of landscapes over the physical terrain", rather than just a single cinematic one (Torchin, 2002: 248 emphasis added). They performatively 'drag'[235] a variety of meanings from different cultural representation files causing each site to

[235] "Cinematic events are dragged onto the physical landscapes and the physical landscapes is then reinterpreted in terms of cinematic events" (Rojek, 1997: 54).

"resonate with a compounded spatial complexity…each story, anchored to each location, evokes a number of spaces: the fictive site of the narrative, the production venue, and the site itself (which in turn evokes its own set of histories)" (Torchin, 2002: 248). Thus "in one gesture, historical information, memories of fiction, and the immediate experience of the actual [landscape] come together"- for the tourist, literature, cinematic technology and history become "interchangeable terms" (Torchin, 2002: 257, 260).

Image 47- The Dart Basin (Orthanc)

It is important to note, however, that the guides in no way seek to 'conceal' or mystify through this strategy- if anything most of their attempts to conceptualise the often-difficult sites for visitors rely on an earnest attempt at revealing the 'how-to' of their construction. This is not always easy – as image 50 shows – as Angela attempts to demonstrate to the tour group the relationship between two separate filming locations for the Ford of Bruinen. Represented on different pages of Brodie's guidebook (they are located approximately 10 miles apart), the tour only visits the more accessible of the two, in Arrowtown (image 49). The second one, in Skippers Canyon, is only referred to, when the tour is driven into the mouth of the canyon for a stretch of legs and photo-taking, before heading back to Queenstown. Here, standing on an outlook where we can both look back towards Arrowtown, where we have already visited, and into the depths of Skippers canyon, Angela uses the guidebook to try to explain why and how each set was used.

Image 48- Arrowtown Ford of Bruinen site

Image 49- 'Am I confusing you?' A guide flicks between pages of the *Location Guidebook* to try to explain the relationship between two distant filming locations and the Ford of Bruinen scene

Against this careful 'building up' of cinematic reality, there is frequent *jouissance* in its 'knocking down' – that is, its demystification – a sort of 'bloopers tourism' where guides and tourists alike delight in the revelation of the incongruities of set and location (Torchin, 2002[236]). Thus, at the Bruinen location we visit in Arrowtown, a number of delightful anecdotes are employed to enliven the location. This is the scene in which Arwen and Frodo cross the ford, chased by the black riders, who are then drowned in an unnatural deluge created by Elvish magic (Appendix C). Here in Arrowtown, the shallow water and relatively flat riverbed allowed the majority of action shots to be accomplished. The deep rapids at Skipper's canyon meant it was too dangerous for the horses to actually film much of the scene there- although that is where a jetboat was used to create the wave which drowns the ringwraiths.

Nonetheless, there is still plenty else to talk about here at Arrowtown, even if it is the less scenic of the two locations used- for example, the way that on one cold morning of filming, the black riders had to wear snorkels under their enormous cloaks to prevent their unwraithlike frosty breath being seen on camera. Angela also uses this location to explain to the group that Liv Tyler did not ride for any of her scenes (neither did Ian McKellen), a fact which dismays an enthusiast Chilean girl, who is wearing an Evenstar necklace. Rather, stunt rider Jane Abbott was responsible for this whole chase- whilst close-up shots of Arwen were filmed with Liv sitting astride a 'bucking bronco'. And Angela is still not finished- as the group generally feel the force of having revealed every secret of filming, she exclaims "I'm going to make it worse!" before continuing on with her next 'blooper'.

Notably, this 'demystification' work, which tourists seem to revel in, is contrasted with the equally well-received stories of authentic Kiwi production – full of 'heroics' – the long months filming, the physical injury and personal danger that beset both cast and crew of the trilogy. In other words, as well as delight in the incongruities, tourists wish to identify and empathize with these symbolic spaces and what happened there (Iles, 2006: 165). In fact, because of the sites' absences, and the guides' dramaturgical creation of effects, the guided movie tour (here in New Zealand/ Middle-earth at any rate) bears some uncanny resemblances to the WW1 battlefield coach tours that Iles explores. There too, "stories related by the tour guides are packed with tales of dramatic actions which illustrate almost superhuman feats of heroism" (2006: 171).

Nonetheless, a tour script that relies so much upon a rich and eclectic archive of material is prone to error. Whilst the discordances of film set and actual locality can delight, the tour guide's errors

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[236] "There is a restless movement for the TV tourist who in turn negotiates the path between incommensurate spaces of actuality and virtuality- a framework that exists to be complicated, but haunts my essay nonetheless. These performed discrepancies, or 'bloopers' as Ms Blau calls them, further drawing television into tourist practices, provide the TV tourist with his/her destination, they give the tourist somewhere to go" (Torchin, 2002: 250).

or omissions can cause the knowing visitor to 'bristle' (Torchin, 2002: 256). Several glances were exchanged by one tour group when the leader referred to a scene in which "Aragorn and the other baddies raced across there". Thus, just like the script of the film trilogy is said to have changed on an almost daily basis as the screenwriters and cast came together to discuss scenes and make improvements, it seems that the script for latter-day cinematic tourism is also open to alteration. When Nomad Safari employ a new tour driver, for example, their training consists of going out on tour several times with a number of the other guides, in order to learn the routes and the tour scripts. After several outings with this tour company, I started to see where (or specifically who) certain little anecdotes came from- which tends to result in a process somewhat akin to Chinese whispers, as slight deviations in stories grow ever and ever more. But, this does not represent so much of a *slippage* from an 'original' script- remember, for example, that only Ian Brodie, together with producer Barry Osborne, ever would have visited all of the film locations and been in any position to build up some sort of encyclopedic archive[237]. Rather, it is as de Certeau says, that "stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed of the world's debris… it is a sieve-order" (1984: 107).

Thus, *Lord of the Rings* scenic tours offer a challenge to Dean MacCannell's commonly posited paradigm of "sight sacralisation[238]" (1999: 42), in which tourist places are reified as a sight "through successive phases which stage the increasing imposition of distance between tourist and thing toured" (Meltzer, 2002: 167). Whilst we can identify with at least some of these *stages*, it is the linear progress of one to the other which seems to clash with the actualities of tourist space in Middle-earth/ New Zealand, where an embodied, grounded and multi-textual 'making-sense-of' characterizes the way sites are constructed. Yet there is no final product, or polished script- rather what de Certeau would call a "piling up of insufficiencies- a continual feeling 'that's not quite it', a gesture which propels the story outwards" (in Crang, 2000: 139). Nonetheless, this is far from a story of a place bereft of lyricism- the tours, and the locations they visit, "vibrate with the play of indices and the excitement of everyday life" (Torchin, 2002: 258).

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[237] Barry sent a fax to Ian with details of every single location being used for filming when New Line had approved the book. *The Location Guidebook* is but a small selection of the sites that would publicly accessible after the event- i.e. mainly national parks (Ian, personal communication March 2006).

[238] Naming of the site moves to framing and elevation, then enshrinement, mechanical reproduction, and ends with social reproduction- the 'faming' of the site.

Travel Diaries: narrative transformation, spatial drifting

"Off on a 3 hour drive to Twizel. A good road (the Scenic Inland Route) with a wonderful variety of scenery. Lots of the windbreak hedges so characteristic of the Canterbury Plains- we called them The High Hay that protects Buckland from The Old Forest. We skirted around Mt Hutt- with a clear sky we had lovely mountain views. Burkes Pass took us up and over to a gorgeous view of the Southern Alps, lakes and canals from the hydro-electric scheme fed by glaciers--clear bluish-green. Autumn colours made for wonderful contrasts. Sheep, cows. deer, goats, bees, horses, ostriches, hawks and dead possums to keep us company. Welcome to McKenzie Country!!"

"Today was the long drive north so we were up and away by 7:30. Again the road was good and the traffic light. We saw more hot air balloons and the ever-changing landscape. The High Hay windbreaks, the magnificent Rangitata Gorge, windy roads up and around mountains, some long straight stretches. . .The Lewis Pass was gorgeous with an ever-running river following the road, sparkling water gurgling down rocky river and stream beds. There were lots of pine plantations as well as elven-like trees overhanging and crowding the road, bright splashes of colour with red and gold autumn trees in full glory, mountains and pastures. The hedges became more thin and delicate as we got further north--not as massive as their hardier cousins in the south. The weather was great and it was a treat to see so many faces of New Zealand. Everywhere you look is a postcard perfect panorama that really is breathtaking.

Of course petrol is $1.70 a litre here but, I guess you can't have everything"

[Exerts from Mary's diary]

If, as Jarvis states, the "geographical imagination is wrought from a profound spatial connectivity" (1998: 8), then the travel diaries of *Lord of the Rings* tourists in New Zealand attest fluently to this fact. Whilst they follow the conventions of a well-rehearsed mode of tourist communication, it is often overlooked in accounts of travel diaries, that they open up a space for narrativising in a *particular way* (e.g. Latham, 2002) and evoke particular ways of knowing/ seeing (Birkeland, 1999: 19). Mary's diary (above), for example, effects a continuous transformation between states. In its mobile vision, it "operates as a catalytically eventful bridge between a multiplicity of movements and relations" (McCormack, 2003: 496). She seems to write with a visual sense that is missing for the reader, but will be a powerful device in allowing Mary to later summon up memories of her tour. Close references to what she saw along the ways she drove, a mixture of the factual, humorous and inspired, contribute to a sense of visual abundance that the diary writer has attempted to capture in words.

Sherry's diary, on the other hand, shares this same sense of mobility and vision, but uses metaphorical connections with Middle-earth in a more self-conscious way to create an aesthetically-charged account of her trip:

There…

"Well, I can't "calligraphy" as nicely as Bilbo & Frodo, but then again, they weren't writing on a moving bus! We're on our way to Hobbiton now. Out my window is part of Auckland's beautiful harbor. There must be thousands of masts on the sailboats. The sun is shining & the water sparkles. Here & there are hills on the horizon—extinct volcanoes. The sunlit path on the water leads out of the mouth of the harbor like a path from the Havens to Valinor. I can't believe how beautiful it is—or that I'm actually here! We're now out of Auckland & heading south. The countryside is hilly & everything is very green & lush—lots of farming. It looks both very familiar, like upstate New York, & totally different, when you really look at the trees & other flora.

At the end of the tour, on our last night in Auckland, I have the distinct sensation of time going in reverse (we were even in the same hotel room as we stayed in our first night in Auckland two weeks' prior), of returning from a time & place out of the ordinary. I feel as though I'm watching the tour recede into the distance, like Sam, Merry, & Pippin must have felt watching the ships sail from the Havens into the West, or as Frodo felt watching Lothlorien recede as the Anduin carried him away.

…and Back Again"

[Exerts from Sherry's diary]

These exerts from Sherry's diary thus captures the sense of narrative temporality to the journey- it effects a personal, "poetic creation of myth" (Birkeland, 1999: 20). Our third and final example is again different in its focus and sense of rhythm:

3/19/06 sun
Stopped at Petticoat Junction Café for second breakfast. Had lembas bread....(I told the gang about how my niece and I make lembas using pilsbury croissant dough, all croissants are now called lembas), pancakes, bacon, toast, tea, raspberry jelly, and their homemade syrup. Stopped many times to take pics during travel through Coromandel forest park. Unpacked car at Killyrudden homestay. Met Margaret & Keith the owners. Great place and fantastic views. Wonderful people.

Headed to Hahei beach. Walked in the Pacific ocean. Now listening to Two Towers music on the way. Headed to Cook's beach, then to the Purangi winery. Shared many laughs with the bar

tender as we tested many wines & liquors. Brought 2 bottles of "sauvy" blancs back to homestay. Agape's driving on the road back, is giving us backseaters a roller coaster ride.

Two Scottish folk are staying at homestay too-Maureen & Alan. The fellowship entertains the host & hostess, and Scottish folk with tales of middle earth. Dinner at Shells restaurant. We had quail & ribs.

3/20/06 mon
Day 2
Wonderful breakfast of fruit & pancakes, bacon, tea, lembas. Great farewell get together on the deck with others.
Boat tour on the Hahei explorer. We toured the islands around Hahei beach. Incredible sites. Worried @ getting wet but what fun. Many references of middle earth in seeing out croppings - trebuchets, Minas Tirith spire, Gandalf from the back. Saw Cathedral Cove, Champagne Cove, Whale Cave, Blowhole Cave. All members loved the trip.

The destruction of the ring music helps Agape to make up driving time. Need to get to Matamata by 2:00 pm. Into the West music is appropriate for our earlier boat ride.
On the road to Hobbiton, listening to David Arkenstone.

22/3/06 wed
Day 4
Listening to the FOTR movie on cd. Along the way we stopped at the Tui Cafe and had venison sammies and milkshakes.

Our accommodations for the night are at the Cardoness Lodge in Napier. We are welcomed with wonderful cakes and tea and sit and chat with our hostess. We often hear fireworks going off and of course make reference to Gandalf's. We find out that it is air guns to keep the birds away. Since we already have wine for the night, we decide to stay in and play more scrabble. We order Mordor pizza from Hell's Pizza. What luck to find this. Hostess builds great fire for us to sit by. Lots of laughing due to 3 bottles of wine. Elf exercise versus Men exercise is discussed. We read appendix b from the book to match each day of our travel. The rain continues outside. Agape lets me get behind the wheel of the car to park it.

Barbara's diary is perhaps the most 'restless' of all- and rather than the visual, it is dominated by other senses- of sound and taste. Her diary in particular underscores the unavoidable multi-sensuality of travel writing. As Harrison notes, "it is impossible to completely isolate the response of one sense to the exclusion of the others [in travel accounts]. (2003: 121) Barbara's diary effectively (re)presences a sort of mobile "sound-track" and "taste-track" of her *Lord of the Rings* journey (Miller, 2002: 74). Constantly on the move, she explained that she "tried to write while we

were driving from place to place". But far from some superficial restlessness and detachment, her focus on taste and sound bring us in *closer* to her experience of the *Lord of the Rings* filmic landscapes and the hospitality of her New Zealand hosts. Thus, as Callon and Law (after Bull) argue, "it has often been claimed that using a Walkman is like a form of autism, but this is not right. Being disconnected from physical context is the price to be paid for the links with other spatio-temporal contexts and people" (Callon and Law, 2004: 7). The trilogy soundtrack and a few choice other tunes were Barbara and her companions' "soundtrack of the journey" (Molz, 2006: 3)- far from incidental, the music that they brought with them from home and played through the car stereo created a "hybrid interface between the virtual and the material" (Molz, 2006: 1). And in a further act of synaesthesia (the calling up of one sense through the stimulation of another, Pringle, 2005: 142), it is the soundtrack that enables a particularly cinematic aesthetic of space to be achieved, where, for example, mood is stressed over visuality. The music in other words creates a space for looking (Bull, 2000: 81-2).

Taken together, these travel diaries suggest a particular way of being-in-the world which follows a temporal flow: what Ingold refers to as *wayfinding* (2000)[239]. In all three we gain a sense of these travellers' paths, "not as a sequence of point-indexical images, but as the coming-into-sight and passing-out-of-sight of variously contoured and textured surfaces" (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 7). Thus in this account of *Lord of the Rings* enthusiasts travel diaries I try to suggest different ways in which the landscapes of Middle-earth on earth are 'worlded', that is, that rather than their content offering some type of message or meaning about these individuals touring experiences, they are *transformers*, not causes our outcomes of action but actions themselves- not examples, but exemplary (Dewsbury et al, 2002: 438). In other words, travel diaries are "embodied, affective meaning of travel that cannot be reduced to a narrative structured by self-conscious intentionality" (Fullagar, 2004: 7).

[239] Or, alternatively we could call upon the notion of 'drifting' as employed by Simone Fullagar, who argues that "drifting conjures another form of movement to that of wandering…..to drift is to be open to the strangeness of the present, to be moved by the trajectories and currents of other knowledges" (Fullagar, 2004: 15). The key point for either Ingold or Fullagar's conceptualisation, is that "these narratives of travel work to refigure identity though the translation (acknowledging the complexity of this term) of becoming into language, where the issue is not one of adequate representation but an imaginative refiguring of the subject's relation to difference; an ethical subject who recognises the borders which connect and differentiate the self and nature" (Fullagar, 2000: 74)

Space, movement, narrative

The three experiences of touring Middle-earth outlined above, are about the same phenomenon: film tourism to the former film sets of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand. Yet they all effect very different spatio-temporal orderings of the 'excursion' (Crang, 1997: 365). Clearly, then, tourism is "an encounter with space and something that is made *through* space- tourism is a *practice* and is made in the *process*" (Crouch, 2002: 207 emphasis added). Thus, different tourisms create "different kinds of meaning-making processes in which places are in differing and deferring contexts unfolded and refolded" (Kymäläinen, 2003: 236). The cinematic geographies of Middle-earth are far from inscribed inertia; the former film sets far from inert containers for pre-defined tourist practices. Rather, through the processes of film tourism "we construct a kaleidoscope of events and artefacts in a subjective way, through points of reference and desire, conveyed and made meaningful by a feeling and an imagination. Materiality and metaphor collide" (Crouch, 2002: 212).

This understanding offers a radical departure from accounts of fictional/virtual/cinematic space in geography- we have seen too many renderings of space (in both postmodern and Orientalist paradigms) where the fictional is taken as some type of "cloaking device" (Jarvis, 1998: 35). Even in works where the sensuous encounter with landscape is supposed to be central, many scholars have nonetheless posited that experience of mediated space is somehow indirect, and, as a result, inferior. Rojek, for example, speaking in 1995 about the rise of 'cybertourism', is emphatic that 'escape experiences' offered by virtual realities are not equivalent to the tourist experience of *physical movement through space*. Crucially, he adds, that no matter how authentic the virtuality might be (and he personally believes that it usually is not convincing), it always takes place *in the head*. It is a fundamentally *solipsistic* activity; and as such, for Rojek at any rate, seems to lose most of its sociological import[240] (1998: 41).

I have suggested three distinct stories that challenge this putative solipsism, that perhaps point towards some of the ways in which we 'can be in two places at the same time'. Or at least- that we *try* to be in two places the same time. The first story, about mapping Middle-earth, shows quite literally that "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault, 1986: 23). That is, forms of literary and cinematic tourism that work upon a notion of 'spatial semiotics' are not always successful. The tour guides of the second story have overcome this problem through their *storying* of space- rather than rely on a straightforward 'indexicality' where one place represents another, their narratives amount to a constant movement between multiple understandings of

[240] Specifically, he concludes that engagements with virtual space only refer back on to 'real' space in that they reinforce the desire to visit 'actual' places (1998: 41).

space. Never resting too long in 'one landscape', they might touch upon the complexities that tested my experiences in the previous story, but they do not let them dominate- the tour is *not* a test, it is a pleasure. Finally, the travel diaries suggest a more laidback, drifting sense of moving through and between the hybrid spaces of 'Middle-earth on earth'. Frequently drawing upon senses other than the visual to summon the cinematic landscape or narrative sensibility of being there (such as the link between food and hospitality for Barbara) the diaries suggest a transformative role for themselves, they translate not only a holiday experience to an outside reader, but effect a mnemonic catalytic function for their writers in which to re-engage with the landscapes of cinematic New Zealand in acutely personal, meaningful ways.

Together these are stories of space that escape design: they are neither purely produced by the tourist industry nor tourists themselves (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 3). This a viewpoint that recent work in tourism and cultural geography has arrived at, through bridging phenomenological and actor network theory perspectives, as Haldrup and Larsen describe, "instead of portraying landscapes as a purely cognitive matter of inscribing already existing surfaces with beauty, narratives and myths, they [tourist researchers] are concerned with how landscapes are habitually and practically built up from within by the mutual involvement of 'humans' and 'nonhumans' (2006: 279)[241]. Furthermore, each account above (and beyond the pages of this text) are always added to the world- they do not subtract from it (Latour, in Bingham and Thrift, 2000: 291). That is, as Torchin notes, "the virtual has not overtaken this space nor is there a single official core reality; rather there are multiple mobilities amidst multiple worlds" (Torchin, 2002: 258).

Conclusion

'Fiction', as de Certeau reminds us, is a perilous word (1983: 125). Befittingly, the fantastic geographies of 'Middle-earth on earth' are excessive, ambivalent and always beyond the grasp. There is no single map of 'Middle-earth on earth', and indeed no single approach we can use for its mapp*ing*, because there is no "primary interpretive tool" (DeLyser, 2003: 79). Rather, we encounter a variety of journeys and trajectories- the "material, existential and metaphorical" mark our interaction with this complex terrain (Johnson, 2004: 98). How can we conceptualise these spaces? "Can we produce new sequences of strange and charmed? Can we form new maps of together?" (Thrift in Lorimer, 2005: 90). These are spaces that defy certainty, boundedness, totalization or reduction. Complicated and absent, difficult to get to or identify, hauntingly similar yet hard

[241] Compare with Ingold: "I do not share this view. To the contrary, I reject the division between inner and outer words – respectively of mind and matter, meaning and substance – upon which such distinction rests. The landscape, I hold, is not a picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye, nor however is it an alien and formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order". (Ingold, 2000: 191)

to recall- this is a geography of mythic proportions, which nobody really *knows*, as it was never really expected to need to be *known*. Attempts to organise these spaces- no matter what way, are never entirely successful as they defy finitude and certainty. The only order possible is a sieve-order, in which 'dreams of presence' gather momentarily before filtering through (de Certeau, 1988, Rose 2006). The vision that beckons, says Lorimer, is breathtaking: likely to leave the traditionally schooled geographer blinking and flinching. The promise is remarkable: transports of delight to a brave new world of fringe science" (Lorimer, 2005: 90)

Chapter Five: More than meets the eye- technologies of site-seeing in Middle-earth

Introduction

"What does it mean to appropriate the landscape through the Claude-glass, through the sight of the camcorder, through the car-window, or resting on a walking stick? Through intense reading of classical authors, romantic poetry, years of MTV viewing, or leafing through the package tour catalogues?" (Löfgren, 1999: 94).

What does it mean, indeed? Löfgren's quote underlines the complex and historical relationships between the 'sightseeing' tourist, and the visual technologies[242] that have enabled these modes of perception[243]. Whilst many accounts of tourism have noted the relevance of visual technologies – Sontag for example recognised the ubiquity of the camera back in the 1970's when she declared that it "seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along" (1977: 9) – relatively few scholars have interrogated the historical-technological relationship of tourism and visual culture. Yet, as Law notes, "everything we do, from epistemology to digging the garden, is a trade with its own tools" (1994: 141). And this is certainly the case for tourism, where our tools are selected from a vast range of bodily, and particularly visual, technologies that organise the viewing subject and frame the touristic landscape[244]. As well as that "irreversible and momentous double helix" of the photographing tourist (Urry, 2002: 220)[245], nowadays we find that video cameras, IPods, portable DVD players and many other technologies also play a part in constructing the touristic encounter (Molz, 2006)[246]. Furthermore, the 'visual field' of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand incorporates a number of these potentially different technological modes of seeing. The text of the novels, the screened images of the films, the behind-the-scenes background footage, tourism authority produced promotional

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[242] Mirzoeff defines a visual technology as "any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil paintings to television and the Internet" (Mirzoeff 1999: 3).

[243] For a detailed consideration of the aesthetic traditions of sightseeing, see Adler (1989) and Löfgren (1999).

[244] Bærenholdt et al suggest, for example, that tourist photography is perhaps *the* emblematic tourist practice (2004: 69).

[245] "Both modern tourism and photography emerged into history in this common period of time. Each has become pervasive throughout Western societies, and, to some extent, can be seen as constitutive of their modernity" (Garlick, 2002: 290).

[246] The technological terminology shouldn't limit us to thinking about the sophisticated- tourist 'tools' can be as mundane as a pair of walking boots (Michael, 2000).

material, the actual former film location sets- all of these suggest different contexts within which our visual encounter with 'Middle-earth on earth' is constructed.

Yet by and large, analyses of the visual culture of tourism have tended to rest with simplistic notions of the tourist observer and the nature of the viewed object. In discussions of mediated tourism in particular, we tend to only be offered one story.
This is the dominant one offered by Urry:

"Involved in much tourism is a kind of hermeneutic circle. What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photographic images…whilst the tourist is away, this then moves on to the tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images they had seen originally before they set off" (Urry, 2002: 129).

Yet recently there have been moves against this hegemonic visuality from all quarters. In tourism studies, challenges to the visual master sense have focused on recovering the other senses (e.g. Jokinen and Veijola, 1997; 2003); and have moved towards understandings and metaphors of spatial engagement other than the Gaze- notably through a dramaturgical or performative sense (e.g. Bærenholdt et al, 2004; Crouch, 2002, 2003; Edensor, 2000, 2001). Yet, as much as these moves provide essential critique, there is a risk of 'losing' the visual sense in accounts that simply replace or add in the other senses. And surely, the very *mediated* nature of the film-tourism encounter in New Zealand insists that we cannot simply ignore visuality *tout court*[247]. Rather than move away from the visual, we need to embrace the very cliché of 'seen the movie, now visit the set' (and the tourist gaze more generally) in order to unpick the *actualities* of viewing cinematic space.

We cannot rest, for example, with the concept of the single 'tourist gaze', or at most a limited range of gazes, which are often tethered to similar notions of subject and object, of distance, spectatorship and representation. It is a strikingly narrow notion of visuality to be applied to something that is so evidently and complexly *visual*. The effect of many an account that has started with the moral objectification of the photographing tourist as either exploitative or moronic has left us with 'nowhere to go' in terms of exploring how such touristic (visual) technologies might actually work- and more broadly, what we can say about such embodied tourist visual practices in the contemporary tourism environment. Yet, when this is addressed- namely in more recent, media-focused conceptualizations of tourism, we still find visuality itself – and particularly the so-called 'convergence' of media and tourist visualities – to be crucially under-theorised. Authors seem in particular to shy specifically away from engaging with visual theory, preferring instead to offer readings of media-tourism that take the visual truths of Baudrillard, Foucault or

[247] See for example Franklin in discussion with Urry (2001: 123).

Debord as a taken for granted ontology[248]. Thus, in the case of the *Lord of the Rings* and tourism to New Zealand, we really do need to undertake research that is attuned to the cross-disciplinary focus of visual theory- to look at what visual theory does. We cannot be content with the 'watch the movie, visit the set' cliché, which only assumes a straightforward causality between filmic and touristic visualities. The reality of the association of these two modes of vision – as Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion* shows us (2002) – is incredibly complex and intertwined[249].

Thus, we must fully reflect upon the 'technologies of seeing' that are particular to both *The Lord of the Rings* films, and the former film sets as tourist locations. The camera (film camera and digital camera and the expanded fields of visual communication in which they operate) suggests a technological site upon which the convergence of such a mediated form of tourism might happen- but, the question is, exactly *how*? The conceptual ambiguity of visual communication in film tourism – in both academic and popular terms – perhaps points to a problem in keeping up with "the rapid and sweeping reconfiguration [in the late 20th century] of relations between an observing subject and a modes of representation that effectively nullifies most of the culturally established meanings of the terms *observer* and *representation*" (Crary, 1992: 1 original emphasis)[250].

The purpose of this chapter is therefore threefold: to review the putative convergence of cinematic and touristic visualities; to empirically explore tourist encounters in these film-tourism landscapes; and to offer a renewed sense of vision in mediated tourism that takes into account its complexity, multiplicity, and creativity. Through re-visiting Urry's image cycle with an empirical focus, the chapter concludes that there is much more to these technologies than their implication in a simple one-way visual process as described by Sontag, in which "photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun was had" (1977: 9).

Thus, this chapter aims to explore what these tourist- technology orderings *do,* where they *take us.* As Deleuze articulates, "a society is defined by its amalgamations, not by its tools…tools only exist in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible" (1987: 90).

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[248] As an example, it seems surprising, that even in a recent collection that aims explore the 'converging' visualities of media and tourism, only one does so from a visual theory perspective, (Davin, 2005), and this is to critique tourism visuality from a postmodern (hyperreal) perspective. It somehow falls short of Crouch's promise of the richly heterogeneous ways in which the multitude of tourist practices and an extended range of media in contemporary life may impact on our ways of conceptualising vision.

[249] Bruno's work is acutely aware of the socio-technological environment in which cinematic site-seeing has developed as a mode of vision in the 20th century (2002)

[250] Also compare to broader transformation of social life through communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephones, which did not exist even at the time of writing of the Tourist Gaze (Urry, 2001)

It is in a close observation of these 'interminglings', these cinematic/ touristic practices of observation, that we can step away from this naturalised evolution of visual modalities and apparatus that make "the same essential presuppositions about an observer's relation to the world" (Crary, 1988: 29). In doing so, we are able to carefully rethink the processes of picturing and seeing, in order to understand how it may frame and organise the perception of tourist landscapes in space and time, and how this image-making process in not one which "appears over and against reality, but [forms] parts of practices through which people work to establish realities" (Crang, 1997: 362). That is- how the world of Middle-earth is *envisioned*[251].

Converging cultures? Cinematic image/ tourist gaze

Rather than starting with a critique of 'the tourist gaze', this section begins with a caveat. A departure point for many an account of the visuality of tourism, Urry's central thesis creates some confusion due to misnomer[252]. That is, the book's title belies more of a comprehensive sociology of the structure and agency of tourism relationships than an empirical consideration of touristic visual practices *per se*[253]. Indeed, in *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry at no point posits *one* gaze[254]- but rather a multiplicity, which:

"Vary by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference…the gaze therefore presupposes as system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices" (1990: 2).

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[251] "Envisioning is a way of being-towards the world. It is not a case of pictures showing 'what is out there', nor indeed what is 'in here', but rather how objects are made to appear for us. It is a way in which the world is apprehended as picturable, it is 'enworlded' by being enframed. In this sense images are not so much counterposed to reality as a route through which worlds are created" (Crang, 1997: 362).

[252] A misnomer that has nonetheless been party to the development of a tourist visuality over the past two decades which has become "petrified in standardized explanations, accepted analyses and foundational ideas" (Franklin and Crang, 2000: 6).

[253] Compare with Ingold, who argues that many critical responses to the Gaze are often "critiques of modernity dressed up as critiques of the hegemony of vision" with vision cast in vacillating roles as the saviour and downfall of modernity (Ingold, 2004: 284).

[254] As a variation of the Foucauldian gaze that is not solely tourism focused, and does focus on the actual technical operations of such a way of observing, Shields definition of the Gaze is as follows: "the gaze itself is embedded within a [visual] matrix…..that sutures an object or view to a wider experiential time-space milieu. In this process, aspects of the original context are thrown out of focus or cropped out altogether. Rather than a pinpoint spotlight, the gaze as developed in the recent sociological sensibility has a *depth of field* that unites foreground objects of interest with a wider background. This involves framing objects which backdrop the main figure or which focus and compose a ground for it" (Shields, 2003: 30).

For example, Urry argues that the 'educative gaze' of the 18th century grand tour is traceable through to contemporary 'study travel'; and that modern travel for health, pleasure and play, heritage and memory, nation and group solidarity – to name just a few – can all trace legacies from different historical visual aesthetics, and "have different discourses and imply different socialities", which ultimately imply *different ways of seeing*- spectatorial, reverential, anthropological, environmental and so on (2002: 150)[255].

Importantly, as Adler suggests, not one of these forms of touristic engagement with space can be claimed to be *purely* visual- eighteenth century forms of tourism did not operate in abstraction from each other, and a desire for the picturesque or sublime easily couples with desires that attend to the other senses- such as in the case of the thermalists who sought the mountain spa regions, travellers for whom music played a key motivation, or the popular pursuit of visiting places for the quality of their 'air' in Pre-Pasteurian times (1989: 24). In other words, as Adler notes, we must be cautious against "drawing any exclusive link between a single sense modality and an age, the same historical period easily accommodating several distinctive travel styles, each of which may deploy the senses in different ways" (ibid)[256]. Thus, for all the etymological bias of the visual in the term "sightseeing", it cannot, and never has been, in practice something abstracted from the body and its entire sensorium[257]- as Jokinen and Veijola summarise,

"There is no scenery without the aspect of embodiment. It is only through the body of the observer that the scenery gets its attributes. The border zone between culture and nature in the landscape happens, is practiced through and within embodied subjects who inhabit the landscape, move and feel (in) it, smell it, yield to its forms and curves, or fight them" (2003: 274).

And equally, as Bruno argues, "look more closely at the geography of the picturesque and note, first, that what moved from vista to vista in the landscape was not a travelling eye but a travelling body. Views were set in motion by way of combining real and imaginary movement" (Bruno, 2002: 194).

Nonetheless, like tourism, the visual culture of film has most often accorded with a "Sartrean view of the object whereby objects appear to the subject as at the end of a viewfinder. The viewfinder

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[255] Thus as Urry discusses in interview with Franklin, scholars such as Dean McCannell's claim that there are two gazes, are useful, but miss the point that Urry never claimed for only one in the first place (2001).

[256] Compare with Thrift's consideration of walking (2000: 46).

[257] Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty Crowther thus states that vision is "rather a function of all our sensory, motor, and affective capacities operating as a unified field" (Crowther, 1993: 103). Crowther interestingly argues that despite the magnitude of Merleau-Ponty's work on visuality and perception, he nonetheless largely omitted discussion of the aesthetic (ibid: 116).

of legitimate construction creates a kind of tunnel vision in which all of the surrounding field is screened out" (Bryson, 1988: 100). Drawing from its Cartesian model, the tourist gaze (or monocular eye) is "understood to be static, unblinking, and fixated, rather than dynamic…producing a visual take that was eternalised, reduced to one 'point of view' and disembodied" (ibid). Rodaway, for example, argues that "the spectator's experience of the film landscape is not participatory in the sense of everyday geographical experience, for it is directed by the camera and the intention of the producer. The spectator, or viewer, takes up a relatively passive stance for the images are presented in a continuous series as part of a drama or story" (1994: 161). He contrasts this with *actual* geographical experience, where there is "always a possibility of being seen as well as seeing, reciprocity is part of participation" (ibid). Furthermore, "in film, only the film is visible, the spectator is invisible (and the production process behind the film also). The reciprocity is broken" (ibid). This leads Rodaway to claim that film is a "peep show, not a dialogue" (ibid).

His geographical account of filmic consumption directly parallels classic and psychoanalytic film theory; namely Mulvey's classic realist cinematic pleasure (1975), where the activity of spectatorship shackles passivity and objectification of the viewed to the voyeuristic fantasies of the viewer[258], or Metz's theory of cinematic vision in which he is explicit about the bombardment of images and its suppressing, disembodying effect on the subject of the cinema. And such theories have had an impressive legacy across disciplinary boundaries: Crang argued only a decade ago that "many of the models setting out to analyse the experience of images that are popular in geography owe an implicit debt to 1970's structuralist work, by analysts such as Christian Metz, and have recycled their premises unnoted" (1997: 364)[259].

Thus the very same model for film spectatorship that was centered on mastery and fixity of gaze (Bruno, 2002: 194) is still very recognizable in tourism studies- indeed we can perhaps suggest that rather than tourism or film *themselves* being myopic visual forms, they have tended to be broadbrushed with rather myopic approaches, or at least dominated by a handful of metaphors-

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[258] It should be noted here that the work of Janice Radway, along with Ien Ang and others, considered in Chapter Two, was a response to the formalism of Mulvey's appraisal of Hollywood cinema. Yet, in seeking to find the audience that was so lacking in Mulvey's work, Rose argues that these ethnographic accounts of popular culture audiences were conversely so detached from compositional or technological modalities of the image that they are more to do with the social study of television viewing and household leisure than they are the images themselves (Rose, 2001: 200).

[259] For example: "The substitution of the 'moral stakes' of reality for the privileged distance of the onlooker or spectator is crucial for the tourist. The necessary distance is guaranteed by maintaining a primarily visual relationship to reality. Vision requires distance, as Christian Metz has pointed out, and provides a comfortable compromise for the conflicting needs of the intimacy of physical rapport and the narcissistic safety of solitude……with seeing, reality remains external and in its place, leaving the spectator equally free from transformation by the encounter" (in Curtis and Pajaczkowska, 1994: 209).

of picture frame, window or mirror Sobchack (1992: 14)[260]. Yet, as Sobchack's phenomenological account of film experience suggests, and as increasing volumes of work in tourism studies reflect, rather than a framed, passive viewing position there are possibilities both for different reception, and different ways of entering into the scene. There is also the question of the trajectory of and within the image- "we cannot simply conflate the lens, the producer, the screening, the eye, and the 'I' of the beholder" (Crang, 2002: 26).

Veni, vidi, vici? Film tourism visuality reconsidered

Whilst the above review has highlighted some reasons why we should be wary of Urry's hermeneutic image cycle, its linear narrative of discovery and possession through the tourist gaze still provides an alluring point of departure. As Jokinen and Veijola note, the "visual and embodied experience of the tourist does not always follow the linear narrative of entering, seeing and conquering. The one who moves and gazes touches the scenery in different ways, sensualities and modalities: with passion, arrogance, violence- playfulness" (Jokinen and Veijola, 2003: 274)[261]. Rather than radically depart from Urry's cycle then (which after all is also reflected in the 'watch the movie, visit the set' cliché), I suggest we rethink this *veni, vidi, vici* of tourism visuality in order to outline some of these potentially contrary understandings of landscape.

Cameras in Middle-earth: mobilities, discoveries

"Eighteen years old and reading J.R.R. Tolkien for the first time, I was sitting on a train as it left Wellington and rumbled up through the North Island. During the twelve-hour journey, I'd lift my eyes from the book and look at the familiar landscape- which all of a sudden looked like Middle Earth" (Peter Jackson, in Brodie, 2003: 6).

Sweeping over the lush, rolling agricultural heart of New Zealand in a helicopter, a team of location hunters see what they have been looking for: there is *the* lake, complete with an enormous tree on its banks- the two key ingredients they have been scouring *this* 'shire' for. A

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[260] "The first two, the frame and the window, represent the opposing poles of the former, while the third, the mirror, represents the synthetic conflation of perception and expression that characterises most contemporary film theory. All three metaphors relate directly to the screen rectangle and to film as a static *viewed object*, and only indirectly to the dynamic activity of viewing that is engaged in by both the film and the spectator, each as *viewing subjects*" (Sobchack, 1992: 14)

[261] Similarly Crang, who argues that "rather than a framed, passive viewing position there are possibilities both for different reception, and different ways of entering into the scene. There is also the question of the trajectory of and within the image…we cannot simply conflate the lens, the producer, the screening, the eye, and the "I" of the beholder" (Crang, 2002: 26).

site for Hobbiton and the Shire- places at the heart of *The Lord of the Rings* novels and now, the movies. Although this is all in the day's work of a movie location hunter, it nonetheless appears to be a task that engenders a great deal of excitement amongst those involved. Watching *Cameras in Middle Earth* - one of the documentary featurettes - this sense of excitement is palpable (New Line productions, 2001[262]). Whilst there is no doubt a degree of economic pragmatism behind the decision to film *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy entirely on location in New Zealand, it is also hard to deny the apparent *jouissance* the crew took in 'seeing one's own country first'[263]; or as Proust notes, "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in looking with new eyes" (in Thomas, 1997: 110).

Image 50- "You could sit in that landscape and see Hobbiton, almost as if you could do an overlay in front of your eyes" (Tolkien artist John Howe's comments on his first visit to sketch out a possible set at the Alexander farm set[264])

[262] New Line productions (2001) "New Zealand as Middle-earth" (documentary feature accompanying The Fellowship of the Rings extended version)

[263] 'See your own country first'- a 19th century GWR advertising slogan extolling the virtues of Cornwall and the South West to an increasingly foreign-bound domestic tourism market (Thomas, 1997).

[264] New Line Productions (2001) "Visualizing the story" (Documentary featurettes accompanying The Fellowship of the Ring extended version)

For Jackson, a particular joy was the chance to venture to the more remote corners of New Zealand, such as Poolburn and the Ida Valley (Rohan scenes). Richard Taylor's favourite location was also remote- the elaborate set of Meduseld that was built atop Mt Sunday (Brodie, 2004: 18). For many of the team, creating a cinematic Middle-earth on earth appears to be a childhood fantasy realised - in two or three senses - the adventure of geographical discovery, the huge challenge of filming *The Lord of the Rings*, and the bringing into being of a fantastic landscape.

Thus, pitted against the cynical 'geopolitical mythologizing' of place, where the film industry coolly offers up the landscapes of Aotearoa as an empty vessel, suitable for anything foreign film investors may desire, are the creative desires and experiences of New Zealanders themselves, a desire for an 'as if' that certainly isn't confined to this example. Andrew Lesnie, Director of photography, exclaims to the camera (in what appears to be footage filmed for the consideration of the rest of the production team) as they fly by helicopter over Lake Mavora, ""if you don't find a reason to get this in your mad…!" (New Line productions, 2001[265]). Yet postcolonial critiques seem to miss this unadulterated enthusiasm, this 'childish' desire to make-believe, a sense of pure creativity- as Lesnie later notes, *The Lord of the Rings* "is a magic project because it's made everyone so *passionate*" (ibid).

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And this playful location hunting is shared by some film tourists. Encouraged by the 'behind the scenes' information available from the DVD extras or sources such as Brodie's guidebook, we can also 'discover' not only Middle-earth but the locations that the production team felt were so perfect for its depiction. That is not to say that the location hunting teams' idea of what was perfect are always shared, or merely passively consumed- indeed, the film tourist enters into a type of virtual dialogue with the crew over the choice of locations. As Mary recounts, "driving back [from Twizel] we spotted an Edoras impostor on the hillside", and in my own fieldwork notes and images I similarly found myself wondering if chance landscapes we passed by had been 'shortlisted' or perhaps even accidentally missed, because in our opinion they were better than the actual locations used[266]:

[265] New Line Productions (2001) "New Zealand as Middle-earth" (documentary feature accompanying the extended DVD of *The Fellowship of the Ring*)

[266] 'Our' Weathertop boasted an actual geological formation that almost looked like a ruin- the 'actual' outcrop used to film Weathertop was in a remote farmer's field near Port Waikato and required superimposed digital images (and is not accessible to the public).

Image 51- "A would-be Weathertop! I wonder if they saw this place, and if they had, why they didn't choose it!"

Thus we tend to share in the creative processes of locating Middle-earth on earth. We see what *they saw*- an authorial intimacy in many ways enabled through the extra layerings of the DVD featurettes, but that effects something of the literary tourism experience- where tourists can share in the inspiration that authors drew from places, but in a filmic context. Thus, it is not so much that the film producers are asking that we see or suspend our disbelief to gain a sense of the fictional Middle-earth they represented, but to actively share and enthuse in the very transformational (transposable) powers of this particular hybrid of place, people, narrative and technology.

Moreover, the comments of Jackson and Lesnie belie a second aspect of filming/ creating Middle-earth, which appears to be central to prefiguring the tourist experience of this cinematic countryside. Jackson alludes to the fact that it was whilst reading on the train that he first envisioned these familiar landscapes as fictional space; Lesnie evokes parallels and possibilities whilst flying over the New Zealand countryside. In both cases, *mobility* is key to the way in which vision takes place. The sense of mobility and space remains in the films: *The Fellowship of the Ring* opens with an exposition that uses maps of Middle-earth interspersed with its history narrated by Galadriel; the opening sequence of *The Two Towers* glides gracefully over snow-topped mountains as we recount Gandalf's fall into the dark abyss of Khazad-Dûm below; later we viscerally share in the experience of Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli as they 'hunt some Orc' across the plains of Rohan **(Appendix C).**

Jenni recalls a memorable helicopter trip with Heliworks of Queenstown. Heliworks, who were contracted by Peter Jackson for aerial filming and transportation of cast and crew to some of the film locations in & around Queenstown, now offer tourists the same experience, with Alfie, the principal filming pilot. Whilst the aerial tour offers a wonderful way of seeing the region's scenery, including access to some hard to get to locations (and being able to rapidly reach Milford sound, a 5-hour drive from Queenstown), the real advantage for Jenni was in the way that Alfie was able to precisely recreate the way that certain shots were filmed- swooping low across the mountains like the panning shots in the movies. This is thus a touristic engagement with cinematic space based on *mobility* as opposed to vision- or at least the vista that is sought can only come into being through a recreation of specific mobilities. Mary likewise recounts a mobile encounter on the fields of Pelennor (Twizel):

"Next we drove back down the road FAST--as if the horses were making the charge. Lots of giggling there!" (Mary)

Both these examples make it very clear that this is not merely "mobile viewers moving over fixed space but a sense of *possible motion in film itself*" (Crang, 2002: 24 emphasis added). The film image is not static on screen, nor is it static in landscape. In this way, "the camera becomes the vehicle: that is, it becomes, in a literal sense, a spectatorial means of transportation" (Bruno, 2002: 20). But, this is not the view *of* the *spectator*- it is a 'frontal' as opposed to a passenger's perspective.

Thus, the tendency to talk about landscape in terms of settings and scenes, something to approach, enter, or look at, obscures the fact that landscapes are produced by movement, of the senses and of the body - that is, touristic mobility is a "*modus vivendi*, a vital organizing principle, and manner of grasping the world…it is embodied knowledge, not merely reception or even perception" (Crang, 1997: 365). And this moving theory of site is firmly rooted in a discussion of the technologies that create the circumstance to view. "If filmic spaces are not simply the suturing together of static instants but the creation of sections mobile within themselves, then images move from quantitative accumulation of banalities to the multiplication of qualitative singularities" (Crang, 2002: 24).

Quantitative singularities, in terms of film production, equate to "changes in the height, size, angle, and scale of the view, as well as the speed of the transport". These are "embedded in the very language of filmic shots, editing and camera movements" (Bruno, 2002: 62). Indeed, in some cases it is the shared cinematic/ touristic mobility that anchors some vague sense of place indexicality. As we drive past Dan's Paddock on a Nomad tour to Glenorchy, the tour guide mentions in passing that this is indeed a location. One female passenger tentatively thinks she can recall it- not through what *happened* in that scene, but because it leaves her with a sense of *urgency*. The paddock was in fact used fleetingly for a shot of Gandalf riding hastily towards the libraries of Gondor- the urgency we recall is both a recollection of physical haste and narrative

climax. In this example, what is thus remembered of the film is *mobility itself*. As Bataille suggests, “cinema is the inscription of movement, a writing with movement, a writing with movements- all kinds of movements” (Bataille, 1985: 169).

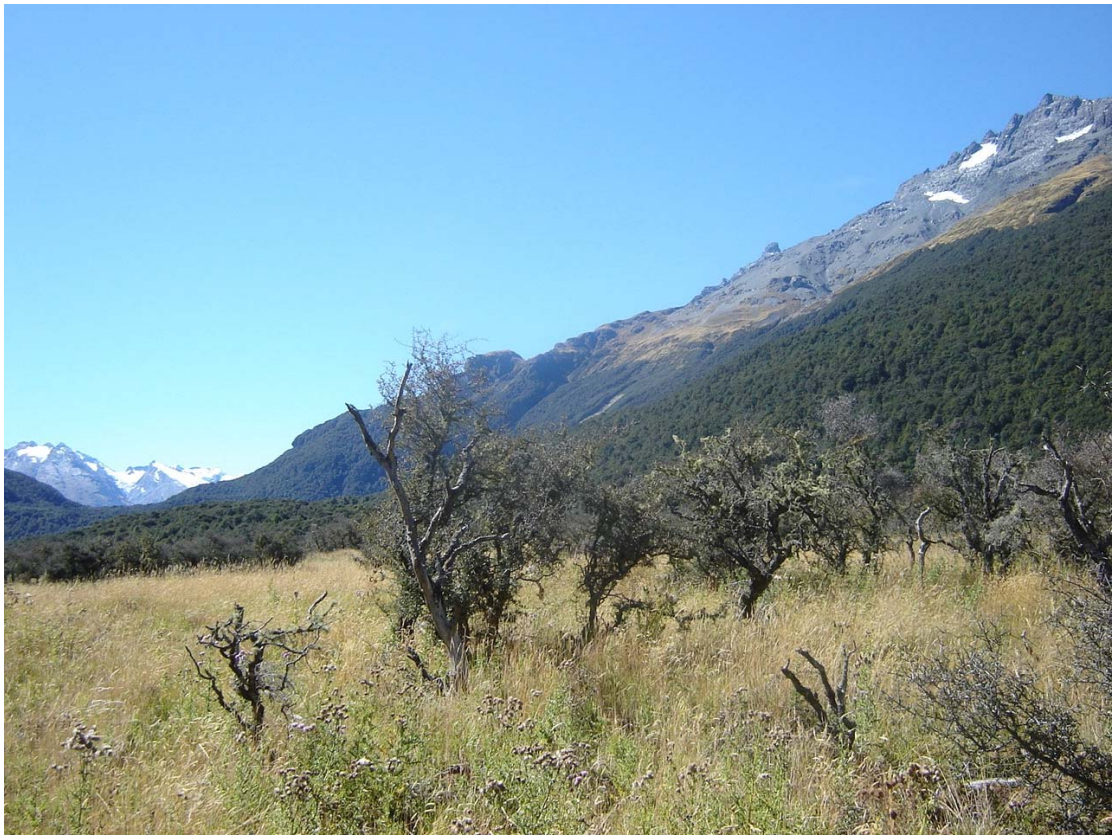

Image 52- Dan's Paddock. Nothing left, save a sense of urgency

Bearing this in mind, it is clear that there is no static gaze, no “balcony vantage point” (Urry, 2001) in the experience of film tourism. And tourists do not posses some encyclopedic image-bank in their heads that they can draw upon- there is no “reserve of sights in the mind [to] precede the physical” (Rojek, 1997: 54).

Rather we have what Schivelbusch terms a “mobility of vision”, swiftly passing panoramas, multi-dimensional sensualities, and fluid interconnections of places, people and possibilities (1977). Indeed, “the traveller sees…through apparatus which moves him through the world. The machine and the motion it creates become integrated into his visual perception, thus *he can only see things in motion*” (in Urry, 2001b: 4 emphasis added). Thus we can argue that the ‘seen the movie, now visit the set’ cliché, as well as the collective/ mediated gaze of Urry both bypass a sense of mobility- of bodies, and of vision. The mobile modalities of *Lord of the Rings* go far beyond the organised coach tour that is implied by the mediated gaze. Indeed, ways of experiencing Middle Earth are particularly broad and serve to create very different modes of encountering the landscapes. Whilst helicopter tours recreate the experience of filming Middle Earth as they swoop over the same environments used to film sweeping panoramas, the

pedestrian discovery of remote 'Middle Earth on Earth' is seen as a wonderful opportunity for the experienced New Zealander walker.

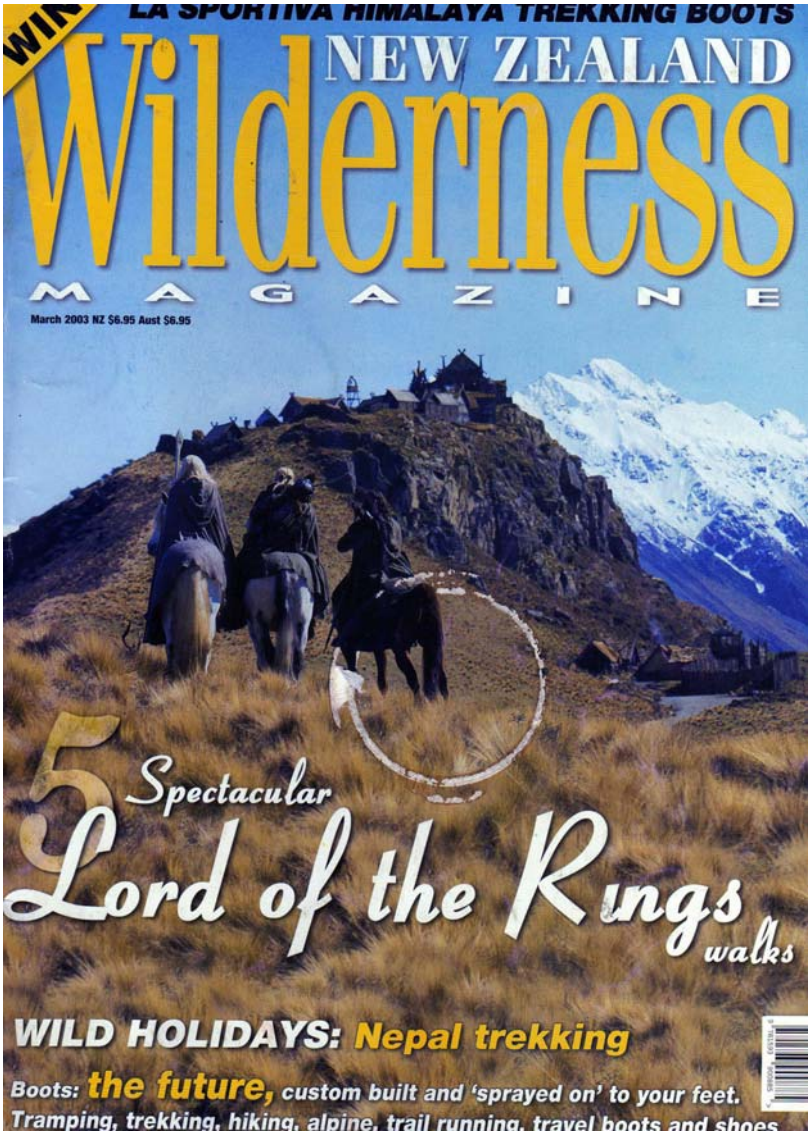

Image 53- Front cover of the New Zealand walking magazine, *Wilderness* (from author's collection)

Frontstage/ backstage: re-enacting [the making of] Middle-earth

So, what happens at film tourism sites? The previous section attempted to unravel the cinematic genesis of 'Middle-earth on earth' and the particular visual aesthetics that the films may afford. In this section, we turn to the second 'stage' of the image cycle, where our film-tourists have indeed arrived at the site they have previously seen on the silver screen. What happens next? Even Urry is vague- positing merely that such tourists will want to 'relive scenes" (2002: 151). Given the common clichés of 'following in the footsteps of', which pepper accounts of mediated tourism, it is

perhaps to be expected that many visitors to New Zealand will wish to trace something of Frodo and the fellowship's journey. Narrative[267] and travel, do, after all, share a specific metaphorical and spatio-temporal ordering- metaphor *means* transport (Serres and Latour, in Bingham and Thrift, 2000: 285). Tourism as quest or discovery is easy to reconcile with the epic fantasy adventure- which Campbell suggests is highly structured event (1968). Discussing the structure of fiction, Ryan comes from another perspective to argue that "fiction treats the [textual] visit as vacation and mobilizes all the powers of language to strengthen the bond between the visitor [reader] and the textual landscape" (Ryan, 2001: 95).

For some fans, dressing up and re-enacting scenes from the films are thus key aspects of the *Lord of the Rings* tourism experience. Replica weapons and props from the film, bought as props or souvenirs by individuals or carried on tour buses, often take centre-stage in choreographing the action.

Image 54- Re-enacting the slaying of the witchking of Angmar on Pelennor Fields (Twizel). Photograph donated by research participant.

Whilst in some cases, visitors appear to recall with some skill the performance of a particular scene (as above), in other cases the results are rather incongruous. Straddling this stone which would have been beneath the Golden Hall of Meduseld, this Singaporean tourist bears little

[267] "Narratives are among our earliest and most significant childhood experiences; before we are able to read ourselves we are told stories, and are read to…the evocation of a narrative invokes not only the story itself, but also the memory of its telling…stories are a source of pleasure not only to the children…but also to adults, for whom these stories evoke a nostalgia for their own childhood" (Philips, 1999: 246).

resemblance to Gandalf. Rather, this playing with swords appears to draw on broader references- 'heroic' play with swords and bows and arrows that seems to be as much inspired by memories of the playground as it is the memory of films watched.

Image 55- Gandalf wielding Glamdring- sort of.

Thus these spaces are spaces of fantasy- narrative fantasy, playful fantasy and the fantasy of the body-on-holiday – "extemporary playgrounds" as much as organised spaces of choreographed tourism performance (Edensor, 2005a: 26). But, as well as the props, which are both official and less so – in some cases even sticks suffice – the landscapes themselves afford somewhat of a childish renaissance. As Edensor remarks, crawling, scrambling, leaping, kicking, dancing and sprinting across industrial ruins "rekindles an awareness of the jouissance of expressive childish movement" (2005b: 838). In these examples, props such as replica weapons are 'prosthetic' devices used to re-enact certain characters or scenes, or to create a playful and theatrical connection with the former film set. Often with the conscious motivation of being photographed in pose, but also just as a way of engaging with the location, these examples demonstrate embodied ways that props are used to recreate filmic action.

Image 56- Fun with weapons.

Props can also be used in a more detached way. Bryanna and her friend took their two mass-produced figurines of Aragorn and Eomer as mascots on their *Lord of the Rings*-themed tour of New Zealand. Their online travelogue was focused around their adventures with 'the boys', and they took many photos of the figurines posing in the foreground of landscape shots such as the one below. Although not souvenirs in the fact that they are not taken from the site, but rather specifically brought all the way from the UK as mascots, they do return home with a new object-status, which cuts across commodity and souvenir. They disrupt the nature of the souvenir as memento and give it a thoroughly more active role in the process of holiday-making. As well as the slightly ironic fun behind this particular envisioning of cinematic space, with its allusions to the processes of scale that were so central to filming the *Lord of the Rings*, the use of miniatures in the tourist mode can also create quite magical visual effects that emphasize the creativity of tourist photography.

Image 57- Playing with props. 'The Boys' on tour. Photograph reproduced from research participant's weblog

Lancaster has explored such objects as these mass-produced figurines from the perspective of popular fantasy and science-fiction production. He argues that this economic sphere of value – books, movies, toys, games, theme park rides – even whole fictional worlds or landscapes, offer the reader/ viewer/ fan an interface for travel, "a kind of mediated 'panoramic perception' for the traveller" (1996: 29). He goes on to argue that by integrating media representations into their lives, fans realise, to some extent, that "the boundary between social reality and science fiction is an optical illusion" (ibid: 149).

Image 58- Pippin's brooch. A replica perhaps, but played its role well when trampled into the ground by a group of angry 'Uruk-hai'

Yet Lancaster concludes that "it is an open question whether or not art, (or, consumable mass market commodities) has a ritual, transformative function or merely offers a pleasurable aesthetic distraction" (1996: 44). It would seem from the above examples that these consumables – that are usually products produced and consumed on the mass market – do both. That is, their *commodification* is itself a non-issue[268]. Rather, they openly suggest themselves as 'tools' or transducers which provide distinctive, playful ways of engaging with these fictional spaces.

However, as a number of these images also suggest, the very sociality of a *Lord of the Rings* tour is also central in shaping encounters within these spaces. In particular, the group dynamic creates a link between the tour group and the film crew. One tourist on a Red Carpet tour had twisted her ankle viewing a monument earlier on in the trip. Now facing the rest of the trip on crutches she was determined not to be left out- although some of the locations did now prove inaccessible. She described how she sat on in an elevated position, above the group. But, rather than feeling detached from the group's fun and games, she rather experienced a perceptual

[268] See DeLyser for a similar discussion of Ramona souvenirs and attractions, which she argues are meaningful "*despite* commercialization and commodification" (2003: 899 emphasis added).

revelation, and felt as if "she was seeing what Peter and the crew would have seen when it was all happening"; an exciting opportunity to see the encounter from a different *directorial* perspective, in which her fellow 'cast' members became her 'crew'. In other words, a forced shift in her embodied relationship with the immediate environment actually opened up new ways of relating.

Image 59- The whole group wander through the gorge where Pippin drops his brooch to take photos and explore.....

Thus, as Harrison notes, a detached, distanced posture does not necessarily provoke a limited emotional response. Unlike the *flâneur*, some of her tourists described that there was something "quite magical about being invisible [in the crowds] but not in a way that was detached. You were just moving with the people, and no one found you particularly striking" (Harrison, 2003: 103, 105)[269]. Indeed a fluidity between modes of seeing – often but not exclusively aligned to cinematic modes – characterizes tourists' encounters in the spaces of Middle-earth. When respondents did talk about immersive engagements, such as "stepping into the movie" or "walking up the steps to Bag End" these tended to be dynamic and fleeting encounters that

[269] "It seems unwise to assume that the alternative to dirt under the fingernails is the Parisians' distanced, tourist gaze, or even that the presence of the dirt means the absence of the distance. Rather, we ought to be aware that behind the gazing eye is the thinking and affecting mind, and that such a mind can find engagements in the absence of the direct, practical action in the surroundings…" (Carrier, 2003: 18)

moved fluently between contemplative, engaged, detached viewpoints. In other words, what we find in the former locations are “dense corporeal and social performances- acting, posing, directing and so on” (Larsen, 2005).

Image 60- before starting on an amateur (re)production of the scene with all involved in different roles

Thus, the tourist who ‘comes, sees and photographs’, turns out to be a rich and radical departure from that passive spectator of ‘framings’ apparently dictated by filmmakers and the tourism industry. For example, rather than pre-programmed shooting we see a sense of experiment in common to both the filmmakers and tourists who follow in their (as well as the characters) footsteps; we see incredibly active and mobile bodies in motion to achieve and recreate the cinematography of Middle-earth. We see alternative ways of encountering the space to the narrative immersion we would have perhaps expected, and we see a plethora of motivations and means of involving the camera and other touristic visual technologies in the ultimate recording of these spatial experiences. In short, (and without completely dismissing the valid and valuable hermeneutic image cycle Urry talks of), we see “the constant play between experience and technologies of mediation. Tourists always experiment with new forms of mediations and technologies of movement, perception and sensing” (Löfgren 1999: 93).

Playing back at home: the magic of mnemony

Thus we arrive at the final step of Urry's image cycle. We've seen the movie, and visited the set - and now, according to a considerable vein of tourism theory – comes the primary drive, the *raison d'être* of the encounter- it's photographing. Indeed, tourist photography has been largely entrenched in a process of social distinction and cultural accumulation[270], in which the photograph itself serves simply as 'evidence' – a "serial capturing of scenes" (Edensor, 1998: 130), something which is most often critiqued as evidence of the passive, superficial, disembodied and discursively prefigured activity of 'quotation' (Haldrup and Larsen, 2006: 282).

Image 61- Indisputable proof that 'we were there'?

But of course, at least *some* of the practices recounted in the previous two sections *are* geared towards the future recollection/ perception of the images that are created as part of the tourism process. It is evident that many tours (film tourism or otherwise) are choreographed around photographic opportunity, especially when the performance of photography itself is so central to constructing the absent-virtual film-tourism space. Tour guides make sure to give tourists plenty

[270] Sontag and tourism photographic accounts which here draw upon Bourdieu's legacy.

of time to take photos, and in some cases encourage posing or suggest particular vistas to get that perfect shot- once or twice we even made quick detours to see something particularly scenic. Consider the photo above, a very typical choreographed shot where our Hobbiton tour guide offered to take photos of the entire tour group outside of Bilbo Baggin's 'iconic' home. What a fantastic souvenir – it really is exemplary evidence that *'I woz here'*- and indeed that Middle Earth *'is there'.* This is the photo out of countless hundreds, that in one image, can represent that we were film tourists in Middle-earth- it signals that fact unambiguously- and as such it is (for us and no doubt many other Hobbiton tourists) what you might call a 'must-have' shot. It becomes particularly noteworthy given the photographic difficulties of 'capturing' Middle-earth- not only the now-absent locations, but the more general difficulties of 'unphotographable' vistas, 'the ones that got away'[271]. And, although it is an image that has been proudly put on show in a number of formats (in a photo frame, as a Facebook profile photo, in a PhD thesis and so on). I also know, deep down, how incredibly cheesy, clichéd and downright boring this image is to the friends and family who have been subjected to it on numerous occasions. After all, that would probably be my reaction to other people's holiday snapshots[272]- but I would know too, that just like me, they also can live with the ubiquitous kitsch of the holiday photo, whilst nonetheless saving its *punctum* for their own private sphere of consumption[273].

In other words, it would be hard to suggest that some of the more brutalising theories of the photographing tourist can be dispensed of entirely as not offering any shard of reality. Haldrup and Larsen suggest that it isn't the fact that such representational accounts stress these structures or choreographies of tourism photography, but rather that they tend to do so in a rather reductive and deterministic fashion (2006: 283). Of course, this chapter has already taken account of the corporeality of tourism photography, which certainly undermines criticisms of it being 'preformed'[274]. In this final section, let us further discuss that end-point of the hermeneutic image cycle- the photograph.

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[271] As Larsen comments, the tourist with an everyday digital camera may "struggle to take proper possession of the vast landscapes: they know that the actual views from the viewing platforms and sightseeing boat are richer and fuller than the pictures that they are capable of making" (2005: 426)

[272] As Crang describes, the possibility of the photograph as a souvenir converts a journey into an excursion …where experience is allowed to be accumulated rather than lost, or rather the acknowledged loss of the experience is what produces aesthetic charge in the picture- perhaps explaining why other people's holiday snaps can be so tedious" (Crang, 1999: 251).

[273] The *punctum* is Roland Barthe's notion of what is beyond meaning in the image- not all photos have *puncta*, *puncta* are specific to particular viewers, and not everyone will see the same p*unctum* (Rose, 2004: 558).

[274] "As a wasteland of pre-programmed shooting where tourists are not so much framing as already framed by the tourism industry's spectacular economy of signs" (Bærenholdt et al 2001: 69).

In an account of tourism photography at a scenic and popular tourism spot – a ruined castle in Denmark – Bærenholdt *et al* observe two main styles of tourism photography (2001)[275]. The first type, the romantic, draws on 19th century visual aesthetics to create panoramic and artistic photos- vistas are sought where the magnitude of the ruins is offset by few (and comparatively tiny) people. This mode of photography, still alive and kicking, involves for many a technical and professional eye towards the composition of a good photo. These tourist photographers far surpass a 'point and click' mentality- "the three-point focus range, indicated by icons of a 'head', 'two heads and a torso', and 'mountains' Curtis and Pajaczkowska (1994: 210). Rather, to different extents, photographers want to get the best shot possible in whatever context it is being taken. Ultimately, for Andreas, this was to get better photos of the places (or pseudo-places) than the film itself could boast. Not just referential and evidentially excellent, but compositionally breath-taking. Thus, we were slightly surprised to find that one of the most enduring and enchanting images we came home with was one taken by a cheap disposable camera[276].

Image 62- Beautiful and grainy and real- our favourite photo, taken with a disposable camera at Deer Park Heights on a day that was nowhere near as blue as this

[275] But note this work stems from research undertaken by Haldrup and Larsen (2003) and Larsen (2005).

[276] This has interesting implications for the rapid expanse of digital visual technologies- "it is as if our move towards clarity, improvement or perfection in the image is accompanied by an attraction to the blurry or grainy, which is interesting given all the early hand-wringing by critics and scholars over the predicted loss of difference, mistakes, 'realness' in the photographic and filmic image that would come with the widespread use of digital image technologies" (Murray, 2008: 160). Prince also notes the import of this in the development of digital filmmaking- film looks more alive than digital video, yet it doesn't have the latter's clarity. In actuality, scrubbed of grain, the digital image looks unnaturally clean and shiny (2004: 27).

However, as Bærenholdt et al go on to argue, this "romantic legacy is undercut", in the form of the 'family gaze' or collective style of photography (2001: 71). This would also seem very much the case for *Lord of the Rings*-inspired tourism in New Zealand, where, as we have already seen, the sociality of posing for photos constitutes one major theme of the tourist encounter.

Image 63- "Get out of the Road!" A family of four make like hobbits for a photographic memento

In fact, we must note the fluidity between these photographing selves or performances- and the concomitant fluidity of the different spaces that are constantly being produced and consumed within a given tourist 'site'. Indeed, different photography performances produce different 'attractions' within the same place, with the place being both a site and a stage for the acting out of social life, where families engage in the choreographing of happy memories for future years (Larsen, 2005). As Crang notes, "events are framed for the future perfect, to have been" (1997: 365).

However, I would like to add to this discussion another figure quite specific to the film tourism encounter- one who I have called the 'chronicler'. Ian Brodie is such a figure- as mentioned previously, his motivation in writing *The Lord of the Rings Location guidebook* was not as a commercial tourist publication, and is rather different to the literary immersion and authorial engagement of Lyon's guidebook to Tolkien's England (2004). Rather, he was inspired by 'then

and now' periodicals of wartime photography[277], to create a similar archive for the cinematic/ actual landscapes of Middle-earth in New Zealand.

Such a project makes sense given the absences of concrete sets, compounded now by time and further detachment of the actual locations from their filmic roles. In other words, this is indeed a 'salvage anthropology' (Crang, 1996b: 443). Such a rescue operation is all the more urgent, when the already diminutive presence of some locations is lost through a failure to have adequately marked the location as something worth saving, as the following news article from TORN depicts:

Waitarere Forest in NZ cut?

"We went to Waitarere on the way to Wellington and the whole forest of trees had been cut down!" We were shocked! No sign of a track where the elves were leaving Lothlorien anymore, or where Arwen saw the vision of her son. Gone! Lost! Wiped out! The June tour was the last to see it! …….(TORN newsletter # 356, September 2007[278]).

A certain angst marks the experience of the chronicler (like the romantic photographer). It is not so much about the art or quality of the photographs though, as the completion of a project: "By fixing ruins on photographic paper, we…have the illusion of reclaiming them from the further effects of nature and time- that is, from death" (Roth, in Edensor 2005: 16). As a researcher, the role of the chronicler was close to my heart. Always angst-ridden in my attempts to capture field notes visually, and mostly disappointed back at home when reviewing the images (finally) on a big screen, to find that there were fewer, of less quality, and less exemplary than what I had hoped. Subconsciously, my attempts at a true and total archive probably accord to some objective geographical leftover of 'show-and tell': the irony was, that it wasn't until the latter stages of the writing up process that I 'fixed' or immobilized any of these images in particular ways (although see Bryson 1988[279]).

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[277] For an online example, see [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/05/europe_wwii_cities_then_and_now_/html/1.stm] accessed 22nd June 2009

[278] TORN newsletter September 2007. Downloaded Sat 1st September from [http://www.theonering.net/perl/newsview/1/1188174697]

[279] See Bryson on this notion "At no point does the object come under an arrest that would immobilize it as form or *eidos*"… "meaning in a sense never arrives, and in the same way…. being never arrives (beings never arrive)" (1988: 97-98).

Image 64- Waiterere Forest- "each perception and reading of a photo is implicitly, in a repressed manner, a contract with what has ceased to exist, a contract with death" (Benjamin, in Murray, 2008: 154)

Sather-Wagstaff is also particularly interested in how photographs work, once back in the home environment. Picturing experience "off-site", as she mentions, "involves the post-visit social construction and performance of memories, identities, and place meanings" (2008: 91). Thus as Crang similarly notes, photos have a mnemotechnological role in materially linking self with other spatio-temporalities (1997: 368). Thus, "mini-liminal spaces" are created each time the photographs are subsequently viewed and reinterpreted (Garlick, 2002: 302). Drawing on Morgan and Pritchard's exploration of the souvenir, then, we can suggest three distinct ways in which the photograph in the domestic sphere following the event of film-tourism exceeds that of merely an acquisition or accumulation. Whilst they do certainly signify the self (in that they are material echoes of the householder's travel history), they are also "touchstones of memory" and "objects of transition and trajectory" (2005: 37-39).

Image 65- Tools of the chronicler: portable DVD player and folder of movie stills from the trilogy

Thus, as tourists, we may be an unsung army of semioticians (Culler, in Meltzer, 2002: 161), but we are also all *social philosophers* (Law 1994). Semiotic (as well as "quasi-Foucauldian") readings of pictures tend to miss the lived quality of the image- they leave too little room for how the appeal of these photos in multiple situations changes and exceeds these discourses (Crang, 1996: 447). What then remains, as Wylie suggests, is to reanimate the gaze- to rewrite its conditions. To make it a gaze which can be scenic *and* filmic[280]. The final section now turns to some of the specific characteristics of film- tourism visuality and points towards fresh ways we can think this 'gaze'.

[280] "I thus seek to 'reconstruct' theoretically the visual gaze upon landscape by exploring the ontological processes (processes of depth, processes of folding) which afford its actualisation. Rather than identifying modes of visual subjectivity subversive or tangential to a centralised gaze, the aim is to rewrite the conditions of the gaze" (Wylie, 2006: 522).

The site-seer: Visual technologies and the film-tourism aesthetic

"Eyes are made for the remote things, the grand things, eyes are visionary" (Lingis, 2002: 49)

This chapter has sought to offer a much-needed account of *what actually happens* on the film tour, specifically engaging with the taken-for-granted visuality of these touristic practices. It does not try to argue that these selective processes of framing, selecting, and viewing do not happen- on the contrary, they are absolutely central to the process of sightseeing in Middle-earth. However, the conditions that are often implied by such a gaze need to be radically rethought (Wylie, 2006). Bruno likewise argues that "looking elsewhere for the founding myth of the cinema means looking differently: 'spacing' a different spectatorial model, opening other paths of research, and highlighting different aspects of the language of cinema" (Bruno, 2002: 138). In illuminating some of the practices and processes through which film tourism happens in the virtual spaces of Middle-earth, this chapter has tentatively offered an aesthetics of the film tourism experience. The tourist aesthetic, Harrison notes, "is situated in that which the tourist considers beautiful; that which gives sensuous, bodily pleasure and that which elicits positive emotional response; in something that the tourist sees from afar, as well as something in which she or he is immersed; in things great and small; in the concrete and the abstract" (2003: 95)[281]. Central to my proposal of an aesthetic of cinematic tourism, has been the role of visual technologies- the camera, surely, offers a technical *modality* upon which a putative 'convergence' of filmic and touristic spatial practices should focus.

At this point, we should probably list some of the words which this chapter and the preceding one suggest in terms of verbs we could use to describe what Urry noted as the film tourist's desire to "relive elements of the scene" (2002: 152). Where to start? The accepted notion of narrative immersion is but one of many ways in which tourists engage fictional space- we find cinematic 'sleuths' rooting out hard-to-find locations; the chronicler who checks and references; amateur directors creating their own rendering of the films for later family viewing; romantic individuals for whom the scenery and fantasy of Middle-earth on earth are provocative and escapist, special effects fans for whom the trilogy's narrative and the 'natural' backdrop of New Zealand is irrelevant. In other words, what we find is an incredibly diverse and creative audience for a practice that has sadly only been portrayed (so far) as something passive, spectatorial- a choreographed encounter for those who don't know better. Yet the sheer fact that the experience

[281] For Harrison, aesthetics – a complex term to define – has an experiential element that coheres with Bourdieu's (1984: 20-44) description of the enjoyment of the sensory, the visceral, vulgar delight in bodily sensation of the 'popular classes' (2003: 95). This is in clear contrast to the earlier "distantiation and disinterestedness of the Kantian tradition and its original orientation to an appreciation of art", but, as Harrison continues, both postures can emerge in the experience of travel and tourism (ibid).

of *Lord of the Rings* landscapes in New Zealand can lead to *both* delight and bewilderment stresses the limitations of a dystopic postmodern visuality- these are *not* hyperreal environments, and they do *not* lead to anti-climax. As Jutel concludes, the virtuality of 'Middle-earth on earth' does not assume that if a virtual does not constitute itself as a real then it has failed. Following Deleuze, he argues that, "the power of the virtual is in its transformative powers" (2004: 63).

The slightly different model of cinematic site-seeing I want to 'space' here, is thus one that focuses on the spatial phantasmagoria that seems in practice to afford very different relationships with the landscape than what we are used to reading about (or being told we experience). After all, how else can we account for those tourists who *are only* interested in cinematic special effects? An elderly lady who joined Nomad for a day-trip as a side excursion from her (more traditional) organised coach tour of the islands, delighted in telling the rest of the group that she couldn't stand the fantasy genre, and "much preferred a good crime thriller- but I do love the special effects in films these days!" She came on the tour to get an insight into how these were done. And Roy and his brother, from India, felt that their enthusiasm for the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* (which they had loved since reading the books as young boys) was atypical amongst their home audience- Roy believed that whilst culturally specific (often 'religious') fantasy films are popular in India, it was the special effects and blockbuster status of *The Lord of the Rings*, as opposed to its narrative themes, that appealed to that audience.

This goes beyond a discussion of cinematic technologies as something that viewers/ tourists understand and negotiate- it is, as Torchin noted, and on a more 'epic' scale, a case of *pure pleasure* and delight in a visual we are supposed to be seduced, mesmerised, enthralled by (2002)[282]. The history of the phantasmagoria, as Pile notes, has primarily been one to be extremely wary of- whilst its actual way of operating, and the manner in which it might effect contemporary modes of perception, remains under-researched (2005: 3). The range of words we loosely use to describe this sort of cinematic/ spatial experience have their own very specific etymologies or aesthetic histories: Bruno discusses 'mesmerising' visual modes (2002: 152[283]); Bennett draws attention to the 'humming' refrain of *chanter* in enchantment (2001: 6[284]); Pringle

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[282] "Because Euclidean visual space is culturally normative, the terms used to describe hyperbolic space ('distortion', 'optical illusion') connote aberrance from the norm" (Sobchack, 2004: 17).

[283] "To speak of mesmerism is to recognise a visual force that moves and touches within, an eye that affects the space of the interior. Thus understood, Mesmer's discourse touches on the very relation between visuality and the language of emotions….taking Mesmer's route- that is, positing a tactile eye and acknowledging the magnetic power of the circulation of images- shows us that there is a physicality in our 'projection' of images and our projection by way of images" (Bruno, 2002: 152).

[284] Bennett points out, the word enchant is linked to the French verb sing- *chanter*. And Deleuze and Guattari describe the refrain as having a transformative or catalytic function (2001: 6). "Music is a line of flight, a trajectory of desire that enables connections between different beings and different rhythms" (Fullagar, 2000: 60)

notes that "to fascinate originally meant to bewitch" (2005: 142). What Pringle argues is shared by any of these (visual) spatial experiences is the connotations of delight and attraction which are part of their modern usage (ibid). Yet, at the same time, the phantasmagoric and other 'spatial fascinations' are treated with great suspicion, notably by critics such as Jameson (Bruno, 2002: 152).

Ndalianis' discussion of the aesthetics of contemporary blockbusters makes a valuable contribution here. It is the zeitgeist of new levels of realism in cinematic special effects, coupled with the 'layering' of the backstage through DVD extra culture that leads Ndalianis to suggest the concept of the Neo-baroque as a befitting understanding of contemporary Hollywood blockbusters and their heavy incorporation of special effects. As she explains, the "delights of magic and cinema have ever been antithetical, but it is necessary that the technology used to achieve the effect be both distinguished and visible"- such as through the 'making of' featurettes commonly included in DVD releases of films (2004: 229). Yet, aesthetically, this revelation does not despoil the magic of cinema – being 'scientific' doesn't make them any less astounding – in fact, "contemporary technology and economies has afforded a new and even more profound articulation of the baroque- closer aligned to the 17th century than early cinema" (ibid).

Image 66- Ponds within ponds within ponds without limits? Leibnitzian film-tourism

This is a challenge to a tourism studies which has most often responded to the sensual representation of experience as something to be suspicious of. Rojek, for example, discussing the former residences of Charles Dickens in London, sites that are now only marked by the distinctive blue plaque of the heritage industry, believes that "the reality of these absent properties depends upon context. It is a *conjuring* trick of the tour guide using the props of the marker and the immediate location to *spellbind* us" (Rojek, 1993: 160, emphasis added). I rather suggest that we turn to these very particular visual acts- of conjuring and being spellbound, in order to help shape a new, more creative, concept of (film) tourism visuality, which focuses on the spatial pleasures that such technologised, mediated encounters tend to engender. As Pringle notes,

"Attention, vision and spatial perceptions have their own history. We are linked to our times not only by the ability but also ***the desire*** *to see in particular ways" (Pringle, 2005: 155 emphasis added).*

Conclusion- visualising the absent, materialising the virtual

It feels slightly risky, nowadays, to talk about the visuality of tourism. The influence of visuality- that is, Cartesian/ Renaissance classical perspectivalism on contemporary theories of visual culture, would be hard to overstate. As Martin Jay argues, our 'natural' experience of sight, as valorised by the scientific worldview, has come to visually dominate philosophies of perception in modern Western culture, and, as a result, "whether we focus on 'the mirror of nature' metaphor in philosophy with Richard Rorty or emphasize the prevalence of surveillance with Michel Foucault or bemoan the society of the spectacle with Guy Debord, we confront again and again the ubiquity of vision as the master sense of the modern era" (1988: 3-4). And although this is a hegemony which has been thoroughly challenged within tourism studies, I nonetheless argue that we still need to engage with the 'already-given' of the "seen the movie, now visit the set" cliché- the visual culture of film 'motivated' tourism is not something that can be ignored. In particular, it is a visual culture that we cannot simply presume converges on the basis of classic film theory's perspective of the passive spectator and tourism's naturalization of the hyperreal image environment.

Thus this chapter has focused on the observable practices and processes of visuality within the landscapes of 'Middle-earth' in order to explain how sight/site-seeing takes place in these absent-virtual, complex spaces. It has been argued that technologies of seeing, now, as always, play a central role in the way landscapes are framed. However this is not to say that such places are 'only experienced through the lens'- indeed it is abundantly clear from the photos here in this chapter that photography and other mediated practices are embodied, imaginative and creative. If we think all the way back to Löfgren's list of tourism 'tools' at the beginning of this chapter;

none preclude the body from the experience of vision, or relate the 'prosthesis' of vision to a purely contemporary or postmodern condition. As we have seen, unravelling some of the ways these technologies are actually employed (as opposed to simply taking them as symptomatic of the empty visual consumption of depthless signs) illuminates some interesting revelations, and perhaps moreover enables us to conceptually bridge a gap between what is seen as a difference between vision (as natural, physiological) and visuality (culturally constructed, a scopic regime- Rose, 2001: 6).

Moreover, the chapter has demonstrated that it is difficult to sustain the idea of either a hermeneutic image cycle or a detached, spectatorial scopic regime. In actual fact, what we find is a multitude of tourist tools being used in practical and creative ways to create the experience of Middle-earth in varied ways- far from only representing a narrative desire to 'follow in the footsteps' of a character or 'willingly suspend disbelief' tourists actively (re-)create the experience of Middle Earth, which is often the creative experience of *filming* Middle earth, of literally being part of the process which brought Middle-earth into existence 'on earth'. The multiple ways in which this is achieved leads us to challenge the very basis upon which 'tourist' and 'filmic/ mediated' visualities are commonly said to 'converge'. The 'extra-diegetic' space of, for example, the DVD extras promotes a creative, rather than a masking, 'backstage'.

Chapter Six: Ruin, remembrance, return: enchanted encounters in Middle-earth

"All that we ever leave behind are the footprints"[285]

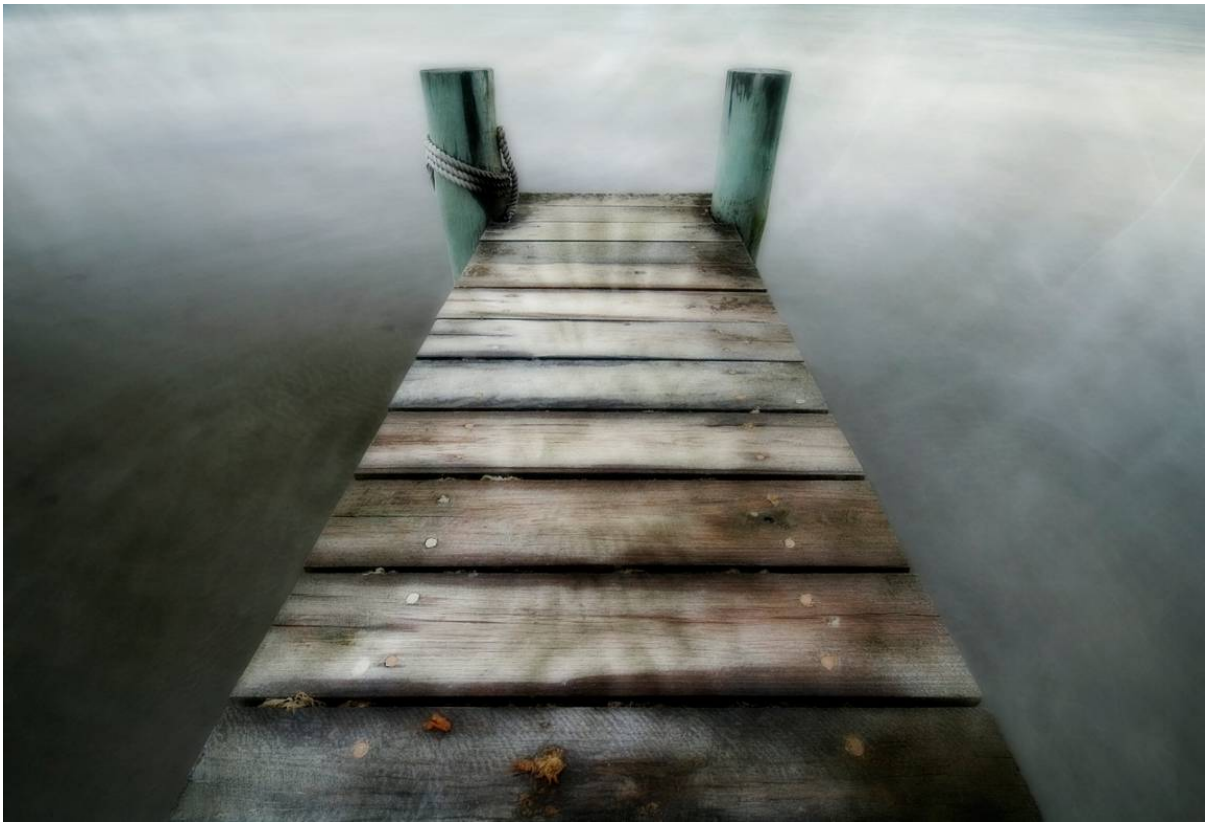

Image 67- The Dreaming Sea (also known as: "where the hobbits learnt to surf"). Image courtesy of Jenni Fraser at Endless Places Photography[286]

[285] A phrase that became a watchword during the making of the trilogy (Sibley, in Phillipson, 2002: 30)

[286] Image courtesy of Jenni Fraser [http://www.endlessplaces.com/], who I met and shared good times with in New Zealand.

Introduction

From the previous chapter we can see that 'Middle-earth on earth' is a place actively performed and created through a variety of animated technologies; it is navigated and inhabited through various aesthetic modes, which the landscapes, in all their rich diversity, afford. As Bærenholdt describes; just like any tourist place, New Zealand 'as' Middle-earth "comes into existence by drawing together particular objects, mobilities and hybrid performances" (2004: 1). Having seen the affective and imaginative energy of some of these hybrid performances, it would nonetheless seem a shame to leave the discussion there. As Bennett states, *enchantment*[287] is something that we can foster through deliberate strategies, such as this active visual creation of somewhere from what is physically absent- but it is also something that we encounter, that *hits* us (2001: 4)[288]. Despite our attempts to critique, represent or otherwise order the former film locations of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand; they remain spaces that defy certainty, boundedness, totalization or reduction. They unsettle with their complex and confusing digital cartographies, and despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that for the large part they are swiftly disappearing time-spaces, they posses a haunting allure.

Thus such absences or virtualities are far from merely consequential, as DeLyser notes of Californian ghost towns, where it is precisely the lack of modernities that is key to the visitor's immersion in what they perceive as an 'authentic' ghost town (2001: 29). Absences, but also traces- or synecdoches which stand for a greater imagined whole (de Certeau, in ibid: 27). As Della Dora comments, these are "in a sense unconscious geographical processes, which work the opposite way to mapping. If mapping implies the reduction of the complex and of the unknown to readable signs, the complex feeling of nostalgia, with all the load of images and experiences of it, tends to *spread out* from the sign" (2006: 211, emphasis added). She continues, "in landscapes of memory, imagination works better with decay and absences rather than with reconstructions, for certain remains from the past carry a potential evocative power….only through imagination" (Della Dora, 2006: 230).

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[287] For Bennett, the term enchantment "entails a state of wonder…to be enchanted is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter, it is to be transfixed, spellbound, a moment of pure presence" (2001: 5).

[288] As Foote notes, sites of memory can play an active role in their own interpretation, objects can have their own uncanny agency despite the intentions of their producers (in Maddern, 2008: 374). Bennett uses the example of the mall to point out that although "the same kind of temptation is provoked by the ease with which enchantment as wonder-at-the-world is channelled into the thrall of shopping, commodification is not in full control of the effects of the encounter between human bodies and commercial artefacts" (Bennett, 2001: 32).

Drawing on such haunted geographies, we can start to conceptualise this *imaginative spreading out*; start to figure exactly how these absences might permeate the event of tourism in 'Middle-earth on earth'. For, although the actual landscapes that we visit, characterized by their silences and aporias, appear in unnatural tension to their lasting screen luminosity, the purposeful 'removal' of Middle-earth from the landscapes of New Zealand has nonetheless failed to 'exorcise' its ghosts. Such a hauntology creates various effects: these are on the one hand spaces where wonder and contemplation abound, aesthetic appreciations of the landscape that draw much from the legacy of Romanticism and its particular appropriation of the ruin (Edensor, 2005a: 11). On the other hand these are also *industrial* ruins - the abrupt completion of filming affairs shatter the normal processes of decay that is provocative to visitors for whom this powerful absence of recent memory refuses to disappear from the landscape. Finally, the mediated nature of *the Lord of the Rings* contributes to a third logic of haunting, an "omni-present absent-presence" of the culture/ communications industry that Connor argues is so bound to contemporary ideas of spectrality (in Maddern, 2008: 371).

Thus, the spectral or enchanted can be purposefully appropriated by visitors and guides to evoke or conjure these alternative time-spaces- but importantly we can also talk about the uncanny or *unheimlich*; that is, the uninvited and sometimes unsettling experience of encountering ghosts[289]. The latter sense in particular emphasises a key point already developed in the previous two chapters: that these complex spaces are not easily 'fixed', and certainly do not "limit the interpretative and performative scope of tourists" (Crang, in Edensor 1998: 141), even in cases where enchantment, or the spectral, is utilised as a deliberate strategy of the tourism industry to entertain visitors (e.g. Maddern, 2008). Thus it with some vitalism that these spectral places *run amock*- they confuse, bewilder, surprise, enthral. And, as Derrida insists in his own explorations of spectrality, there is a radical potential in such an attunement to place. For one, it faces up to some of the inherent shortcomings of dualistic thinking- such as the inevitability that hyperreal environments will lead to a sense of disappointment for the tourist (e.g. Carl, 2005). Yet, these enchanted, spectro- or psycho-geographies do not suggest that *nobody* experiences disappointment when visiting ' on earth', nor do they claim that an openness to these more-than-rational modalities is for everyone (in every situation). But they do offer an alternative, an "alter-tale" (Bennett, 2001: 4). And they also tend to be a little more reserved in their claims- rather than offering totalising discourses, the ephemeral aesthetic of the ghost seems to translate into

[289] Sociologist Bell succinctly outlines and justifies the usage of ghosts thus: "I use the term [ghosts] here in the broader sense of a felt *presence* - an anima, *geist,* or genius – that possesses and gives a sense of social aliveness to a place…the point of this essay is to argue that ghosts - that is, *the sense of the presence of those who are not physically there* - are a ubiquitous aspect of the phenomenology of place" (1997: 815, 813 emphasis original).

theoretical encounters that speak *to* us rather than *about* us- an ironic achievement given the acutely personal subjectivity of spatial experience[290].

These are the types of narrative the next four stories try to be. They attempt to explore the more nebulous, ephemeral aspects of the tourist encounter in New Zealand/Middle-earth - through tracing the apparently lost materialities of a cinematic world that are nonetheless so wanton to reappear. The first story considers the *barely there*- the traces and relics that occasionally pock the former film set landscapes. Rarely aesthetically pleasing in themselves, they nonetheless charm and intrigue with their sense of a dual provenance (of Middle-earth, and of the film); as well as affording differing encounters with the 'ruined' spaces in which they are found. Yet, these relics are indeed rare- and our second story considers how visitors interact with *truly* absent locations, where literally all traces of the landscapes' cinematic roles have disappeared, and visual indexicality of any type fails- how then are connections created? The third story returns to the city, a commonplace site of hauntings (e.g. de Certeau, 1984, 1998; Pile, 2005) that at first glance may seem incongruous with the entirely rural imaginary of Middle-earth/New Zealand. Yet, Wellington is the 'spiritual home' of *The Lord of the Rings* movies, production central (it isn't called 'Wellywood' for nothing[291]), the site of the carnivalesque film premieres, and the fondly-recounted home of many of the foreign film cast. These factors have most certainly left a lasting trace on the city. The fourth and final story moves to a very specific space within the city, the museum, and considers the after-lives of those objects removed from the ruined landscapes of Middle-earth on earth- those that have been deemed for one reason or another to have another life, another purpose.

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[290] For example, Tim Edensor's work on both industrial ruins (for which he has held an affection since he was little) and 'mundane' hauntings (the urban spaces he passes through on his commute to work) – seem to resonate with our own experiences of place in a potent way; even if these are not the same spaces we know (Edensor, 2005; 2008).

[291] Wellington is home to 3 Foot 6, Wingnut films, Weta Workshop and Weta Digital (Brodie, 2002: 53). During filming, rushes were flown back to the studios daily from the various locations throughout the north and south islands.

Relics and ruins

Image 68- Tantalising semi-permeability: Ribbon on the party tree, Hobbiton

A weather-torn piece of ribbon hangs from the branch of a huge pine tree. “It’s not much, but it’s all we’ve got!” explains the tour guide, before ushering the group away along Bagshot Row. It seems a strange thing to say, given that we are at Hobbiton, the only remaining set from the filming of the *Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand. This is the one place that visitors can easily come to ‘feel as if’ they are in Middle-earth. This is the one place where physical reference is preserved. So what is the importance of the old ribbon which still hangs from the party tree- what does it bear witness to? The filming of Bilbo’s eleventy-first birthday under the Party tree? Perhaps- although most of this was actually filmed back at the studios in Wellington. And surely not a witness to Middle-earth itself. But it is nonetheless held in esteem by the guides, and greeted with the group’s satisfied enthusiasm.

Perhaps one thing that maintains the aura of the party ribbon is a simple fact that it remains, rather elusively, in the inaccessibly high branches of this Scotch pine. Interestingly, visitors complained when the white hobbit hole facades started to show the wear they were never

expected to bear; yet the patina of age the ribbon shows is a "suffusion of the worn" (Stewart, 1993: 139), which renders it pleasurably melancholy, a lingering relic[292] with an affective poignancy. This is a pleasure rarely acknowledged in tourism studies- Keil, for example, drawing upon the theories of Rojek and Urry, suggests that "repetitive representation, in films, texts and images, corrupts the sacralized nature of the object or location, or at least adulterates perceptions of it, producing feelings of disappointment when confronted by the original, which is smaller, or shabbier, or somehow more banal than expected" (2005: 479). On the contrary, the experience of visiting the 'ruins' of Middle-earth is for many, more wonderful than they could have expected, and the presence of certain shabby elements (although not others) are indeed important in this 'gathering of presence'. What the ribbon possesses, in Bennett's words, is a "liveliness, resilience, unpredictability or recalcitrance …a source of wonder" (2001: 64).

The ribbon forms one of a small (and ever decreasing) collection of what we could call 'relics' of Middle-earth in New Zealand. Real, tangible objects or marks on the earth that authenticate the landscape *as* Middle-earth or its place of filmic creation. It is relatively few years since the intensive two-year period of primary production took over so many areas of the New Zealand countryside. But, because everything was returned to natural with such meticulous zeal, very little remains to attest to this event. Hobbiton is the only location that partially escaped this erasure- through a combination of luck and the landowner's commercial initiative. So, it is also the only location that now exists in a state of conservation- or 'arrested decay'. It is perhaps this managed aspect of the Hobbiton site that gives the unwieldy ribbon its particular energy. That is, in a place that is already extraordinary in being the only remaining 'piece' of 'Middle-earth on earth', a place where one can 'really feel as if you were there', detritus like the ribbon are made somewhat *more* auratic due to their scarcity. Authenticating the visitor attraction as film set and potentially as Hobbiton itself, they represent something potently metonymic to an increasingly 'lost' set of referents.

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[292] "Fragments are thus seen as 'relics' in the double – historic and religious – sense of the word. In the first, historic sense, a relic is either a historic object or an object that belonged to a loved or worshipped person, and which is considered very valuable by its owner. We could also speak of reminders, mementos or souvenirs; indeed, these objects evoke memories, help us to remember a certain period, an event or a person. In the second, religious sense, the term 'relic' either refers to the mortal remains of a saint or to an object that has been in contact with Christ or a saint, in both cases worshipped by a community of believers. When a corpse is treated as a relic, it means that not only its political life, its (political) post-mortem handling is important, but it is also attributed some intrinsic qualities: the power to bring luck, healing or purification. The same can be said about certain architectural remains: when a fragment gets the character of a (secular) relic, the object in itself – owning it, touching it – has a major relevance and the belief in the relic's inherent qualities determines its further social life" (Van der Hoorn, 2003: 193).

Image 69- Flowers planted for filming now overrun the once tended plot of Samwise Gamgee's home- one of the hobbit holes which did not survive the initial deconstruction of the set

Thus we can say that these landscapes are ruinous- a sense of what has past, of Middle-earth's fading decay, can frame our encounter of them. Importantly, despite the concerted effort to expunge the association of Middle-earth from them (once it had been deemed no longer desirable), these landscapes have not been completely ridded of all traces of their former significance, even when, as in most cases, no effort has been made to preserve the site.

Image 70- A hobbit hole slipping into desuetude- for now. After some struggle, the Alexander family have been allowed to undertake repair work on the facades. This hobbit hole was awaiting renovation at the time of our visit.

The elaborate set of Edoras was built over a period of 5 months, atop the remote outcrop of Mt Sunday. The set was used for filming for a matter of weeks before being rapidly dismantled. Perhaps because the mount itself, and the basin surrounded by dramatic mountains, appear strikingly akin to the way in which we see them on screen, on seeing Mt Sunday/ Edoras for the first time, we are also smacked with a shock of what is *not* there, what has become strangely absent. Now, visitors to this untamed spot are met only with the ravages of the Alpine weather that would have meant that the Golden Hall of Meduseld, even if left, would not have survived long. Visiting the remote site, we can appreciate this, even if it does still seem a shame. Yet it is precisely the sometimes-sad recognition that Meduseld would not survive here, that adds an aura of authenticity to the 'ruined' landscape. And as the next image suggests, a visitor can easily imagine this place as a ruin- a ruin, in one case, in a specifically Romantic aesthetic[293]:

[293] By this I mean an aesthetic appreciation of ruin and decay which has been strongly associated with 19th century Romanticism and continues to inform the aesthetic practices of contemporary tourism- see for example Ousby, (1991) for a historical discussion of touring ruins; Löfgren (1999) on the legacy of the picturesque and sublime; and Larsen (2005) for an example of how the Romantic aesthetic is at play in photographic practices at a 'romantic' castle ruin.

Image 71- A wintery visit to Mt Sunday – the remote location of Edoras. Photograph donated by research participant.

"In terms of locational highlights, I would say that Mt. Sunday was certainly up there, as it was beautiful to see, and more than any other location, it honestly felt as if we were seeing the site of Meduseld, as if it had really existed in the past and had simply crumbled away"
[Yvonne,questionnaire]

But, of course, at Edoras stone and timberwork did not crumble and ceilings did not fall - rather they were dismantled as fast as they had been erected. And this history is also presenced in the landscape- etched in stone. What is left of Edoras the set, Edoras the ruin, are bolts and holes in the hill's boulders, where the wooden construction was screwed down. They depict an abrupt completion of filming affairs, a rupture to the normal processes of decay, paradoxically brought about by an oversight, a certain human inefficiency that didn't fulfil contractual obligations to the letter. Perhaps what these close-up encounters with the relics of a disappearing world afford is what Tim Edensor experiences in the industrial ruin: they may be of a virtual nature, yet they are

also the signs of very real impact on space, the fixtures that accommodated the cinematic creation of Middle-earth (2005a: 158). The overall absence of Meduseld- and the rare traces of former significance such as the boltholes, signify “the insistent claims of the too hastily buried” (Edensor, 2005b: 836); the cast and crew, and in particular the craftsmen and artisans, who worked upon the film production site. The hole-pocked rocks of Mt Sunday act as a testimony to the physicality of it’s past, or to the workers who toiled in its construction. In this sense, it has an industrial as well as a Romantic aesthetic heritage. Like the unsightly detritus that inhabit the disused industrial spaces of Edensor’s work, here, in an undeniably panoramic landscape full of wondrous and contemplative affordances, we are nonetheless haunted by its previous inhabitants, and the virtual absences of what they *should have* left.

Image 72- View towards a ‘film set-bereft' Mt Sunday (mid-field) from the road

Image 73- Embodying it's own elimination: Tiny traces of former dwelling on Mt Sunday/ the Golden Hall of Meduseld

The effort of building sets like Edoras – to all intents and purposes it was quite a feat – makes heroes of its builders, and on encountering this wild spot we gain a "sense of corporeal empathy about what it was like to dwell and work within such a space. The spirits of those previous inhabitants in a sense thus possess us, guiding and accompanying us in our journey through the ruin" (2005b: 840). Éowyn is typically the spirit that guides us around this particular set- and she commonly calls upon us to stand on the edge of the mount looking over the flats, as she did, first spying the approach of Gandalf, Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas. However, because of the DVD's, and the circulating knowledge of 'behind the scenes', it is also the ghost of the actress Miranda Otto (Éowyn) that guides us. As she explained in a featurettes interview, she *too* was taken aback when she was driven around the corner and the glorious Meduseld set came into view on her first day of filming. Her affinity for this place, the potency with which it is materialized, is thus shared with us[294].

Deep in the Otago countryside another 'epic' location landscape remains scarred by its association with *The Lord of the Rings*. Poolburn Dam became the location for a minor scene, a

[294] As is Richard Taylor's- for whom Edoras is a favourite set, representing the culmination of everything that the WETA team valued about the way Middle-earth was to be created- and he also comments that it was the credibility of the Meduseld set which invoked some of the actors' finest performances (Brodie, 2004: 18).

Rohirrim village that is burnt and pillaged at the beginning of *The Two Towers*. Existing huts surrounding the reservoir were camouflaged, and new structures joint them- only to be burnt down again for the scene. Still scattered across the site, the charred timber posts and spiky concrete blocks are now partly concealed by the tussocky undergrowth growing all around them. These can hardly be called aesthetically charming elements of landscape, yet they charm nonetheless through offering a tantalizing glimpse of their former role. In their burnt state they are imbued with a sense of loss, temporality, transcendence. These objects are surely at the very end of their life, what else could come now? But it seems there is still the potential for new use (Hetherington, 2002), as objects of much conjecture and desire - shrapnel to become souvenirs, or possibly more- as one visitor suggests, "I wonder what it would fetch on Ebay!"

Image 74- Charred wood, formally Rohirrim Village

Thus almost against all expectations, these charred timber planks, otherwise utterly expended detritus, are re-enchanted with value- economic *and* symbolic. These little relics of Middle-earth perhaps end up fragmented into pieces, distributed in homes across the world, fond memories of times away, but also a witness, in a most participatory sense, of a past time (e.g. Van der Hoorn, 2003). Again, there is ambiguity with what 'past time' we are dealing with- souvenirs such as the ones I also collected in New Zealand reflect my multivalent witnessing of having been there (at a *Lord of the Rings* former film location), as well as a desire to *have* been there (in the role of tourist, in a role that I could only partially participate in), or maybe even to be able to *really* go there (to the fictional landscapes of Middle-earth).

'Authentic' or 'as actually used on set' relics join an array of other metaphoric souvenirs of Middle-earth- leaves from Lothlorien, pumice from the slopes of Mt Doom, a cone from the Party Tree, pressed flowers from Ithilien, pebbles and stones from Rivendell. All tenderly collected, taken home and kept somewhere meaningful. My *own, my* collection of shrapnel (and I regret not having asked for a piece of the charred Rohirrim wood) are all kept together in a glass vase on my computer desk, along with shells from a Marlborough beach where we spent a few long new year summer days camping. Two co-present worlds in one jar.

Image 75- Collecting Elvish leaves at Fernside (Lothlorien)

Others talked of their '*Lord of the Rings* room' or corner, back at the house where their own sphere of affinity dwelt[295]. In witnessing *through* these objects we thus claim an ownership over them. For Van der Hoorn, who considers relic-fragments of the Berlin Wall, "the new, private context in which the fragments are brought….offers the possibility of a tactile, individual experience" (2003: 205)[296]. Certainly, as Löfgren suggests, "the most striking characteristic of a souvenir is its openness, its readiness to carry the mind in all directions. There might be millions of tiny brass Eiffel towers distributed all over the globe, but no two of them carry the same

[295] See also McCarthy (2004)

[296] It is this energy that so allures Walter Benjamin. For him, ownership offers the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects, for it is "not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them" (Benjamin, 1992: 69). Searching for the meaning of the object-collection may conceal its more primary point- a collection of books is rarely read; that is not their point. Rather, they just co-exist with their owner in a sort of "intensive harmony" (ibid: 65).

meanings" (1999: 88). Beyond a heterogeneity in what these image-objects *represent*, then, we can also argue that they effectively *presence* other landscapes when brought home into the domestic sphere as souvenirs- just as they presence other spatio-temporalities in their landscaped sites. Tolia-Kelly argues that "shards of other environments are enclosed in these visual cultures" (2004: 676), and in this way, as well as being (potentially) imbued with both symbolic and economic value, detritus like the charred wood from Poolburn/ Rohan possess the energy of "prismatic devices" (Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 676).

Thus, whether in the touristic or domestic environment, it appears that we are dealing with very powerful artefacts. The very absence of Middle-earth on earth appears to "manifest itself as a presence through the traces, shreds and silent things that remain, in the objects we half recognise or imagine" (Edensor, 2005a: 154). The party ribbon and other detritus thus defy the accepted conventions of tourist objects and souvenirs. The ribbon is in fact nothing short of a *legend-maker*, if, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests, "the same qualities that activate a particular kind of historical imagination to express itself in legend can also intensify the resonance of the slightest material trace. If the [artefact or relic] tells us anything, it is that uncertainty opens a space for protean speculation. It is speculation that produces legends and keeps them alive" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000: 127).

Summoning from absence

To this point we have considered the decaying, remnant, vanishing minutiae of Middle-earth on earth. We have mentioned that these artefacts are imbued with certain energies because of their enforced rarity; and they certainly have the ability to animate the spaces they are found in through creating connections between the tourist present, the filmic past and the fictional world. These relics make ruins of more than one time-space, with more than one aesthetic quality (Romantic and industrial), they have a 'prismatic' power, through which they enable us to summon disparate time-spaces. But what about when literally *nothing* is left of the cinematic landscapes of Middle-earth?

When we arrive in Harcourt Park (Isengard) with Alison, a tour guide for Hammonds, we spend some time pacing around on the expanse of lawn whilst she appears to look for something. This is where the 'Isengard Pathway' was - a long since indefinable stretch of grass in the parkland which was gravelled during filming for the Orthanc entrance:

"I think you can see it today. Sometimes I think I can see it quite clearly, but some days I think I am just imagining it. But today I think I can".

Image 76- Looking hard for Orthanc

I wanted to see it too, so did everyone, maybe I did see it- it's hard to say, and after some internal deliberation most of the group seemed to mutually agree it was irrelevant. The path *was* there- perhaps such a fine shade of difference in the colour of the grass to be imperceptible to human vision. But it was *definitely* there. And once it is established as there, then the landscape affords a sort of virtual co-presence with the pathway, with a moment in film-production time seven years ago, and with the fictional place of Isengard (Appendix C). Like a seeing stone, this mirage is only available to some, there, in that moment, as Mirzoeff suggests, "it is the time of the ghost, the revenant and the specter. The ghost is somewhere between the visible and the invisible, appearing clearly to some but not to others". (Mirzoeff 2002: 239; cf. Bell, 1997: 815) As I watch families playing, I realise that this opening is not happening to them, right then. They have their own 'dreams of presence' (Rose, 2006).

This is a mirage that reflects a melancholic desire on the part of some tourists and guides alike. Whilst nearly all recognise the pragmatic rationalities of why no sets of Middle-earth remain in New Zealand, it does not stop us *wishing* for such spaces to still be present. The former film locations' previous significance, be it as an earthly representation of Middle-earth, or as the industrious landscape of an epic New Zealand cultural production, are often yearned for with a sigh of pity. As tour guide Angela laments at the Kawarau River, the location for the digitally added Pillars of the Kings, "wouldn't it be great if they really were here?!" Many other locations also are celebrated for their rather close allegorical/ metaphorical and metaphysical connections

to Middle-earth. As Brodie suggests of Twelve Mile Delta, in a description that echoes Tolkien's own attention to landscape detail:

"It is the perfect representation of Ithilien with the flowers combining with dry ground and tough matagouri bushes to create the illusion of a land slowly falling into decay under the evil influence of Sauron" (2004: 132).

Thus we move into a world of 'as ifs', of evanescent promises. Here, the tiniest objects can become suggestive of otherworlds- and can become involved in a multi-sensuous aesthetic of Middle-earth.

Image 77- Tough matagouri. The 'decaying' lakeside landscapes of Lake Wakatipu (location for the Olifants' scene)

Take, for example, the experience of a trip to Tongariro to visit the location used to shoot a scene of Gollum fishing, and a setting for Sam and Frodo's journey through Ithilien. Here, the focus of our attention is on the section of stream and its banks. Our focus is turned to the minute- the rocks that Smeagol (Andy Serkis) scrambled over, the GPS coordinates where the Orc-defaced statue catches the afternoon sunshine for a moment as the Hobbits proceed to Cirith Ungol. But other minutiae catch our attention- a white flower which is everywhere flowering from the mossy soil- Kingsfoil, we joke? Rather than merely *read into* the landscape, our close attention to it seems to allow it to spring into its full evocative force- our bodies are afforded a different opening onto a world which would otherwise remain invisible (to us)

Image 78- 'Form in the small'- 'you may know it as kingsfoil'

And these encounters must not be underestimated- as diarist Sherry recounts, "my biggest *Lord of the Rings* moment from the trip, surprisingly: Seeing my version of Treebeard & Quickbeam as we left the site of Rivendell. Treebeard was a tall, gnarly evergreen; beside him, Quickbeam was a shorter, more upright deciduous. They were *exactly* what I think of when I think of those Ents". Thus as Edensor suggests, we are often accompanied with such evanescent friends, if we are so inclined. Rather than scopohilia for the backstage, it might be more helpful to see these tourist practices as generating "*wanton* speculation towards objects and places, encouraging contingent rather than causal connections to be made between remembered events, spaces, objects and people" (2005b: 845).

Yet, in many respects, that afternoon's attempts at location-hunting in the Tongariro national park were no more successful or enlightening than our trip to Mavora (Chapter 4). But, the experience of uncertainty here was more pleasurable- for reasons more or less pragmatic (we were not on such a tight itinerary, we simply felt more 'playful'). In this mood, it is pleasurable to wonder upon the unknown- to wonder, perhaps, if some sort of pre-history like Tolkien's world ever could have existed, whether Peter Jackson spotted this place, or whether the actors enjoyed filming here. Sometimes, at least for the latter wonder, affirmation arrives at a later date, giving a joyful sense of hindsight and re-imbuing that location with renewed energy. At Tawhai falls, a ten-minute walk from the road near the Château at Whakapapa where the crew stayed during filming, I wondered if the cast or crew had ever walked down this short distance to relax. It would have been the

perfect location for Gollum's fishing, or even the forbidden pool. I wonder if they hadn't realised it was here? Months later back at home in my study, I was reading through Andy Serkis' autobiography of creating Gollum, when I stumbled across a paragraph describing this very same place, on the night before his first ever day of filming:

"That night I didn't sleep. Too nervous. So I got up while it was still dark, put on my head torch, and went jogging down the track to Tawhai Falls and spent a couple of hours 'getting into character'. Then I crawled all the way back down the track (about half a kilometre) until I got close to the hotel" (Serkis, 2003: 30).

Reading this was an enchanting moment of an invisible, of a past trace that may have disappeared, being brought back to life with a brilliancy of renewed relevance and recollection. A final rupture in the fabric that would keep time, space, and purpose separate- these were landscapes that cast, crew, tourists alike have all apprehended, moved about it, sensed with an "unpredictable immanence of impression and sensation" (Edensor, 2005a: 13).

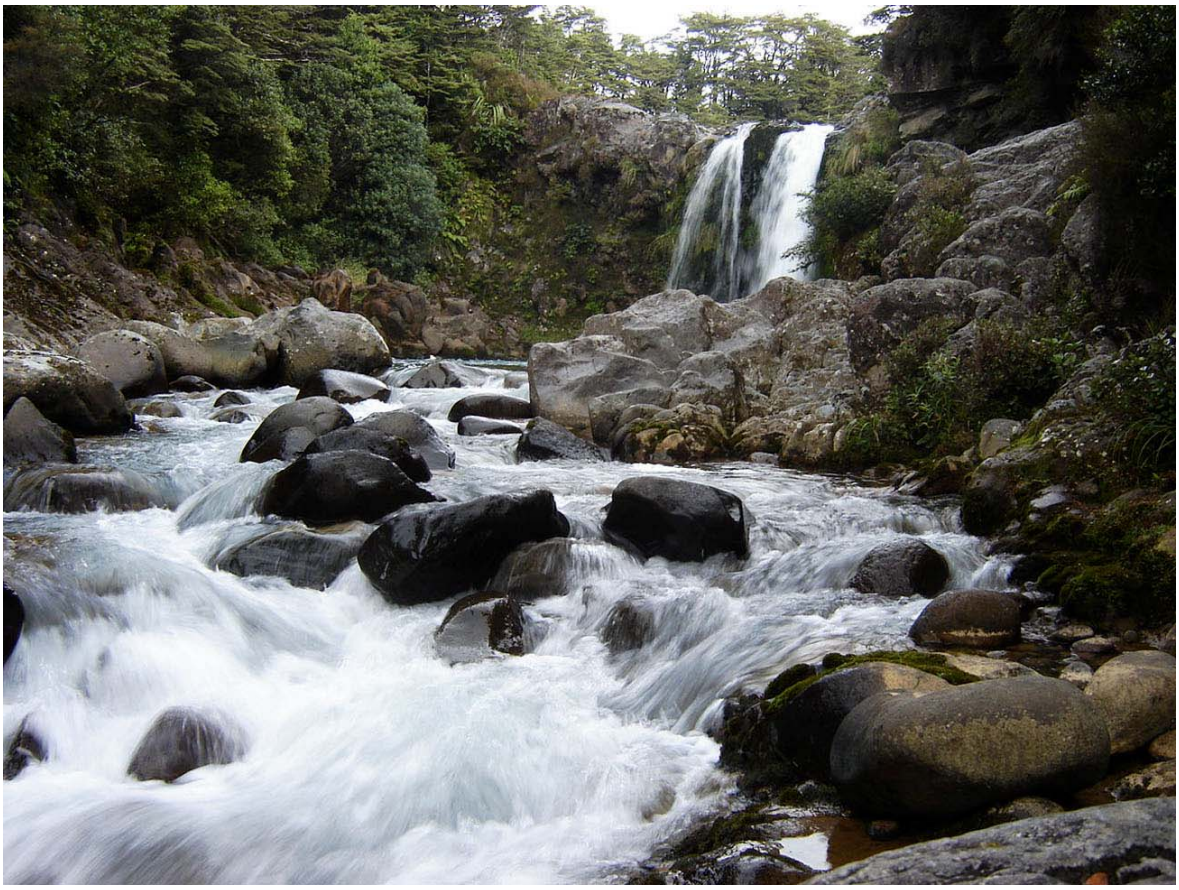

Image 79- Tawhai falls. Andy Serkis' secret place, if not Gollum's.

These 'dreams of presence' draw on every available faculty and environmental factor- the weather, as Ingold notes, makes the world look different as well as us *feel* different (2005: 97); and at places like Tongariro, the location for Mordor and Mt Doom, it is strangely the most

inhospitable weather that fosters the presence of Mordor. As Mary writes of the storm-thwarted attempt to climb the mountain:

"Our trip to Mordor!! We drove up to where the location was but it was a wild day—no way could we get to the filming location but we were laughing and crying out 'we must get off the mountain'—yes! We really felt lost in the world of Middle Earth- shrieking with laughter of course! The mountain defeated us but what fun!!" [Mary, questionnaire]

Image 80- What Samwise Gamgee might call some 'unnatural' looking weather closing in on Mordor (Tongariro national park)

As Ingold notes, it is odd that whilst so much has been written on landscape perception, so little has considered the perception of weather (2005: 97). Weather not only makes the world appear different, but makes us *feel* different too. It perhaps seems strange to talk of landscapes at their most inhospitable and unaccommodating as at their most enchanting as places to visit- it certainly cuts against the grain of much traditional thought about what the tourist seeks on holiday. But there are also less than felicitous openings, co-presences that are sensually unpleasant, like my final location visit to the Putangirua Pinnacles, location for the Dimholt and Paths of the Dead.

Image 81- The Putangirua Pinnacles- Dimholt/ Paths of the Dead: "Evanescent presences steal along the walls like beggars that appear wraithlike at the windows, to vanish again" (Benjamin, in Edensor 2005b: 836)[297]

If the gloomy autumnal weather and melancholy atmosphere, the unforgiving riverbed path and vicious stone that stubbed my toe already lent an air to the Putangirua that made me not doubt for one moment the ambivalence of it to me and my errand, then such sensations were confirmed by the cracked cliffs which seemed to murmur their pleasure at 'beating me'- as I sat tearily on a log nursing my toe. Like Derrida says, "the spectre is invisible, but it watches, it is the unseen seeing, and 'we feel ourselves observed, sometimes under surveillance by it even before any apparition" (in Wylie, 2007: 172). Unlike Aragorn, who hears the same murmurs and faces these spectres- my quest finished there and I wasn't sure how successfully either (Appendix C). I limped back to the van, bruised toe and ego and still feeling slightly creepy about this forlorn place, and headed for home.

[297] Benajmin's quote seems to fit well with this image of the location of the Paths of the Dead, where Aragorn glimpses the spectral image of (and then later comes face to face with) an army of undead soldiers who owe him their allegiance.

So we can perhaps say that the official and efficient removal of 'Middle Earth from Earth' has failed to exorcise its ghosts (de Certeau, Giard and Mayol, 1988: 134). The landscape is just over-brimming with traces of Middle-earth. Many of its lingering detritus and hauntingly empty places retain a certain "liveliness, resilience, unpredictability or recalcitrance (Bennett, 2001: 64). In short, "a source of wonder" (ibid). For we do wonder, as we tour Middle-earth, about a great many things- whether the location hunters saw this place; whether we remember this place; what it would have been like to have been here during filming, how wonderful these 'openings' are. And in wondering so, we do something quite radical- we refuse to exorcise these ghosts. Because we don't ever know, we don't find out, and we allow the spectral to continue haunting (Edensor, 2008c: 326).

Remembering the (cinematic) city

[Fieldwork diary 19th November 2005]

"Every time I open the guidebook, I feel a surge of frustrated impossibility. I can never have been here when filming was going on, to catch a glimpse of the cast out on the town in Wellington, or whatever. Nor can I ever really be in Middle-earth. So its annoyingly implausible on two counts- too late for the hype, and always a different reality"

The *hype*- yet I'd never taken myself as somebody who succumbed to the mystique of celebrity. And Wellington seemed to be a city which liked to keep its feet firmly on the ground, regularly citing Kiwi down-to-earthness as a quality visiting film stars loved, and one which kept 'Wellywood' apart from the purported celebrity worshipping excesses of the Californian film industry. Yet, "when the decision was made to premiere the final *Lord of the Rings* movie, *The Return of the* King, in New Zealand, Hollywood had little idea of how this would change the format of future world premieres. The capital…..hosted what was a special, three-day event, not just a film screening of a few hours followed by an elitist party" (Beeton, 2005: 181).

Several years on, we are reliving this party on the Adventure Safari tour bus, watching footage of the day as the coach winds its way down from Mount Victoria to its final destination on Courtenay Place, outside the Embassy theatre. I still can't fathom why, but I had a lump in my throat and had to hold back tears- I wished so hard that I could have been there, then.

Image 82-"Film is always housed. It needs more than an apparatus in order to exist as cinema" (Bruno, 2002: 44). The Embassy is an elegant testament to this fact (Burt, c. 1925[298])

It is true that I was able in some ways to recreate the event whilst I was in New Zealand: we enthusiastically attended the *King Kong* red carpet event, which seemed in some ways an *homage* to *The Return of the King*, and which was enjoyable yet *not quite it*. We watched other films at the Embassy. We even saw a couple of matinees of the trilogy there, because they are still screened at regular intervals. Because the cinema was refurbished prior to the world premiere of *The Return of the King*, the 'executive' seats in the central section have plaques bearing the names of the actors or crew members that sat there. We had fun choosing who we should 'sit on'. We even bought little individual bottles of Lindauer champagne to sup on as we watched the film- it felt like a celebration to just be there even if it was *after-the-event*.

This encounter is perhaps surprising- after all, the association of Middle-earth with New Zealand has largely been sold to tourists on its 'natural scenery', not its cityscapes. Wellington is not, after all, even a primary destination for many tourists, who will only pass through the city as they travel between islands. But still, Wellington is the 'spiritual home' of the movies, and we do seem to find some sense of an "electro-chemistry shared between cinema and city" (Bruno, 2002: 21). Indeed, there are ways in which these connections have been consciously created- as well as the hype surrounding the world premiere of *The Return of the King*, Brodie's location guidebook features listings for 'what the stars did in town' for Wellington; the city is mentioned frequently in the DVD extras; and film tours operating in the town are slightly different from 'scenic' location tours out of town in that they can add a certain Hollywood-esque fixation with celebrity into the itinerary- such as picking out which Miramar houses the cast lived in for the two years during principal filming.

[298] Interior of the Embassy theatre, looking towards the stage. Taken by Gordon Burt circa 1925. Retrieved from [http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=4323&l=mi] 1st June 2009. Note the two domes over the front exits- which are still a feature of the cinema today. Their art nouveau aesthetic mirrors the Elven style in *Lord of the Rings* so much that I wondered whether these were in fact a feature that had been added at the cinema's renovation for the premiere of *The Return of the King*.

Wellington — cafés and entertainment

Based in Wellington for an extended period, the cast found plenty of opportunities to let off steam.

It's easy to see why one of the most popular locations for the crew was the Chocolate Fish Café, situated at Scorching Bay. Close to Seatoun where the cast lived during filming, it provides excellent food and good service with a little eccentricity — the Chocolate Fish must be one of the few restaurants in the world with a main street running through its centre. Occupying a small house, tables are available both inside and out but the best seating is on the other side of the road, right beside the sea. Wearing bright day-glo vests, staff cross the road to deliver food and coffee to their guests 'on the other side'.

If you feel the need for an ice-cream, why not visit the dairy that appears in the short film *The Long and Short Of It* directed by Sean Astin. Appearing in the extended DVD of *The Two Towers*, the dairy is opposite the Rita Angus Retirement Village on Coutts Road in the suburb of Kilbirnie.

Favourite nightspots of Liv Tyler and Elijah Wood were Brava and Studio 9. Sean Bean frequented Molly Malone's while Viggo Mortensen was content with steak and chips at the Green Parrot.

New Zealand fashion also played its part; Liv Tyler has been pictured in international fashion magazines wearing Zambesi, a leading New Zealand fashion label. She also shopped in the Wellington fashion design store Starfish.

The Hobbits found another means of relaxation at Lyall Bay, close to Wellington Airport, when first one and then another tried the art of surfing. Within hours all four could be seen riding the waves.

Above: At night, Wellington comes alive.

Below: Prime seating at the Chocolate Fish Café.

Image 83- What the stars did in Wellington. Image reproduced courtesy of Ian Brodie (2004: 73)

Indeed, the past everyday lives of the cast in Wellington appear to operate as a sort of "phantom network" (Edensor, 2005a: 148)- a particularly heady one situated in the auratic realm of celebrity. Places – their residences and favourite hang-outs – become places of interest for the visitor, as do the things that they did here. As Brodie describes, "the Hobbits found another means of relaxation at Lyall Bay, close to Wellington airport, when first one then another tried the art of surfing. Within hours all four could be seen riding the waves" (2004: 73). For visitors viewing Lyall Bay as they land or take off from the adjacent airport, there is of course nothing to attest to this history. But for some who have read Brodie's guide, the bay might provoke a melancholic link to a irrecoverable event. For Jenni it was the inspiration for the image at the beginning of this chapter, 'The Dreaming Sea'. Somehow though, in our conversations by e-mail over the months after our meeting, that image gained a second name- "where the hobbits learnt

to surf". At some level, and neither of us were able to put a finger on it, that place became etched in the indirect memory of four actors surfing- for us, the place's identity was inextricably linked to the trilogy.

There are even more uncanny ways that *The Lord of the Rings* continues to haunt the spaces of Wellington, to reverberate amongst its streets in "just perceptible ways" (Maddern and Adey, 2008: 292), despite the 'taunts' of those who would prefer it not to (e.g. Thornley, 2006). As Maddern notes, "to haunt is to remain where one does not belong" (2008: 365). That is, as much as the official line is that the town has 'moved on' from *the Lord of the Rings*, the policymakers who so enthusiastically embraced an association with Middle-earth during Wellington and New Zealand's 'finest hour' now find its abundance and persistence harder to rid themselves of. Perhaps this is because, as Holloway and Kneale argue, "places and objects might somehow hold or store emotions, memories or even consciousness" (2008: 299).

The experience of walking past a closed-down Chinese restaurant in the CBD was a strange one (see image below). After having spent some weeks in Wellington, I was now getting used to the fact that I seemed to radiate towards the Embassy theatre and Miramar, that certain affective energies that brought the world of *The Lord of the Rings* to life in Wellington could be felt in certain key places. It was more of a surprise to be hit by the stubbornness of the world premiere in the most unlikely of places- two Mastercard *Lord of the Rings* themed decals featuring Aragorn, stuck squarely to the doors of a closed-down Chinese restaurant in the city centre. What were once nothing more than another symbol of *The Lord of the Ring's* implication in global economic processes, in this instance became poignant reminders of the city's 'finest hour'- indeed the fact that this restaurant was now closed down only further magnified a melancholic sense of change and loss.

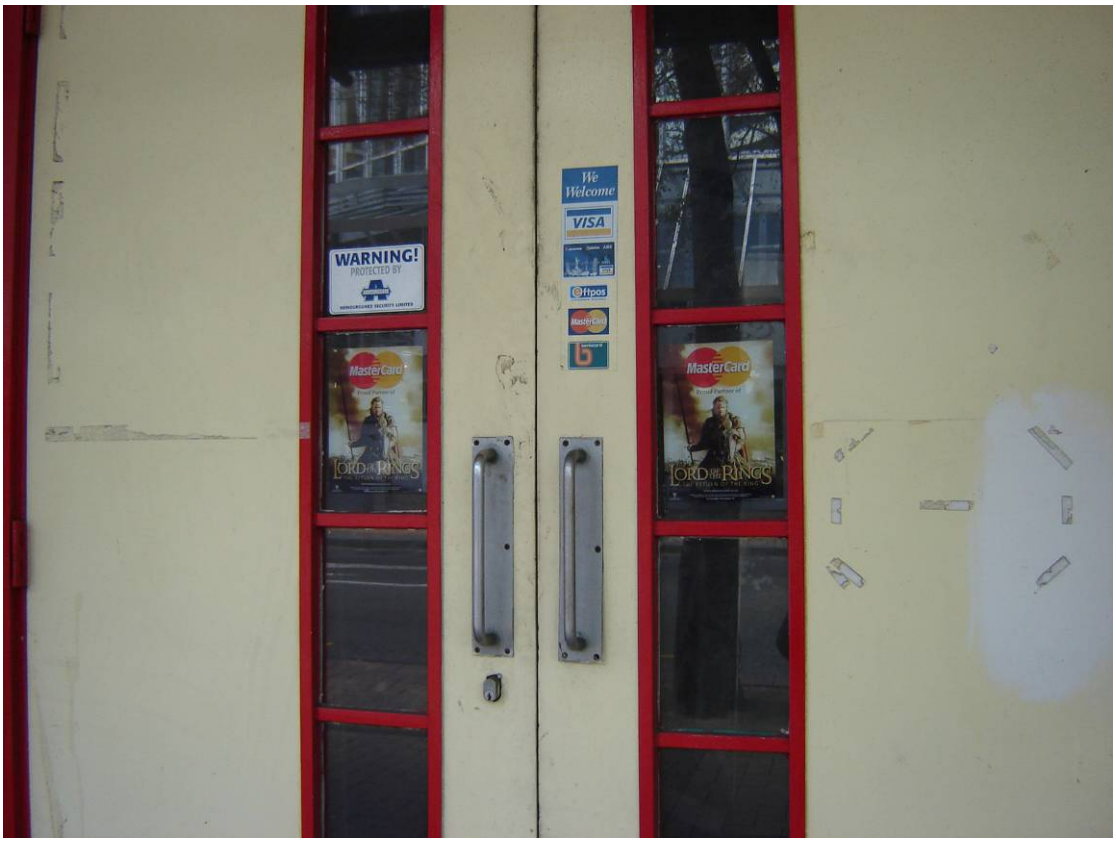

Image 84- "Disseminated through the city like traces of other worlds" (de Certeau et al, 1998: 135): A Mastercard decal forlornly recalls a better time on the doors of a closed-down Chinese restaurant.

Thus, following Maddern, I want to suggest that ghostly places can come into being as both a result of a purposeful attempt by the tourist industry to 'conjure' such spaces in order to put us in a "contemplative spirit" (2008: 364, 373); but they also have a more uncanny (*unheimlich*) effect which is beyond cognition, and beyond our ability to know or to set out in advance (Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 309). This second sense is very important in balancing critiques of the 'conjuring of the past' as an exercise of the heritage industry- something that depoliticises history; entertains consumers of heritage, and tames the ghosts themselves (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 185). Rather, as Edensor notes, "this dense urban medley….is not part of a project to encode or theme space but is better apprehended as the 'crossing, folding, piercing' of disparate elements, producing a series of disjunctures through which the past erupts into the present" (2008: 324). Indeed, as cultural geographers exploring the spectral following Derrida have shown, "these insubstantial, uncertain and indeterminate absent-presences disrupt and often lend little sense to space, yet they allow for different and contingent speculations and ways of thinking to emerge" (Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 308)[299].

[299] Thus, rather than the "reifications through which performances, narratives and experiences of memory become fixed in space by those with concerns to settle accounts with the past", such "fluid and evanescent

Revenance: the object collection

If Middle-earth was effectively and almost completely 'eliminated' from the landscapes of New Zealand, its remains were not. Both the outright absence of what is missing, and the traces which act in all sorts of manner as metaphoric, metonymic, synecdoche, prisms, mirages and so on, challenge the 'exorcism' of one place from another. But there is more to say about the afterlives of these missing materialities. Simply put, what has happened to the *stuff* of the cinematic world of *The Lord of the Rings*? Where are all the props, costumes, armour and weapons; or the cast and crew- where indeed are the monsters, and characters, and cities? Some time after the film premieres, locals spotted the huge theatrical display Gollum from *The Return of the King* film premiere in Wellington, in a farmer's field in the Waikato. Seeing the decaying statue prompts us to wonder where all the rest of the film props went- what new context they now nestle in (Edensor, 2005a: 118). After all, so much is said of how they were created, for what purpose- but nothing is mentioned of what happened next to this huge object-world- it had become mysteriously silent in its afterlife.

Image 85- Tiny ozymandias. A film set part (perhaps Osgiliath?) decays just like the kingdom of men in Middle-earth, outside of the WETA studios in September 2007 (taken during a subsequent visit to New Zealand).

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experiences of the spectral" disturb and unsettle dominant accounts that seek to exorcise the strange or illegitimate (Edensor, 2008: 330).

For some, that the film props should form a permanent exhibition to showcase (or perhaps focus) the making of *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand, seemed natural. Emma, a tourist from Wales, suggested that their *Lord of the Rings* motivated visit to New Zealand could certainly have been enhanced by "a museum to movies in New Zealand with virtual and interactive displays like the Te Papa Museum in Wellington. They could add the Narnia and Kong things as well now!" [Emma, questionnaire] Indeed, Peter Jackson seems to have always been keen on the idea of a museum, citing this as the reason why every single prop from the films making had been carefully kept in storage. The reasons why such a permanent exhibition had thus far been thwarted, however, lay with the Tolkien Estate who, always officially tepid towards the film adaptations and usage of the rights that Tolkien had sold during his own lifetime, were nothing if but steadfastly opposed to allowing anything else of the author or stories seep into the enduring cultural landscape of the Antipodes.

Image 86- Made in Wellington, for Wellington; and the rest of the world

These ownership tensions aside, the Te Papa did curate a *Motion picture trilogy* exhibition, in 2002[300]. The exhibition appears to have sidestepped Tolkien Estate's concerns through its overt

[300] As the national museum, the relationship of the *Lord of the Rings* movies with the Wellington museum is firmly rooted in the 'making of' the trilogy in that country. Whereas, for example, at the Science Museum in London, where the exhibition drew not only the most visitors to any paying exhibition in the museum's history but also some claims of populism, (Jury, 2003: np) the technological relevance of the exhibition was drawn out. Yet, as Hill argues, the science museum has always had a rather more complex relationship with

focus on 'the making of' the film trilogy, and can certainly be said to have been a worldwide success. At the Te Papa, it outsold all previous charging exhibitions at the Te Papa, and elsewhere broke records everywhere on its world tour. After four years on the move, the exhibition finally returned for a second and final run on home turf- with the addition of new exhibits from *The Return of the King*- again at the Te Papa, and again to as much acclaim and visitation. So what was there to see? Props, costumes, armour and weapons; artefacts from Middle-earth, interactive displays of the technology; models and miniatures; documentaries and descriptions.

Image 87- A Corsair ship. One of the many stunning miniatures (or bigatures as Richard Taylor liked to call them) produced for the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, on show at the second movie exhibition at the Te Papa (April 2006)

The exhibition thus focused on the making of the trilogy. It revealed the techniques of creating the fantasy of Middle-earth on screen- of miniatures and models, digital techniques and landscape, of traditional craft and innovation working together. The exhibition self-consciously mimicked the typical representational styles of both the science museum and the ethnographic collection. The stylised museal space was dark, background music low, lighting used in contrast to illuminate and cast into shadow to dramatic effect. The crowds move reverentially around the exhibits, an orgy for the visual senses but at the same time heavily somatic- like any other public institution,

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magic than a unilateral idea of modernity and progress would normally allow- science museums have always been associated with a sense of wonder and magic (2007: 74).

the museum does not just impose rules and norms and control emotions- it has become an institution specialized in promoting certain types of emotion (Sepúlveda dos Santos, 2003: 27)[301].

Image 88- Scale miniature of Orthanc[302].

[301] Although a detailed consideration of the ways people examine and experience museum objects is beyond the scope of this section, see Heath and von Lehm (2004) who argue that "the experience of exhibits in museums and galleries emerges in and through social interaction, interaction between people……people, in collaboration with others, reflexively constitute the sense and significance of objects and artefacts" (ibid: 44). This section attempts nonetheless to capture a sense of that reflexivity and shared constitutions which "infuse, flavour and create the encounter with the object, giving it a particular, occasioned, sense and significance" (ibid: 49).

[302] Many thanks to Mike and the Te Papa for allowing access to the second Movie exhibition, and allowing use of their images. Images here are official ones taken from the first presentation- cameras were not allowed in either exhibitions. Images 89-96 are reproduced with kind permission of the Te Papa.

The costumes are the first exhibits to come dramatically into view. Suddenly as opposed to fading disorder, we are once again confronted by the absolute luminosity of the artefact- smoothly illuminated behind glass, the web of multi-media display technologies ordering their spotless presentation. The outfits uphold a dual provenance of these objects; from Middle-earth, *and* from the films. An Elvish dress is able to retain its aura despite the presence of explanation of how it was made- indeed the 'how' is also in many cases breathtaking. Rather than shrouding the costumes and emptying out their meaning, their glassed display seems to act as "a form of lens, magnifying the potential power of [what is] inside" (Hill, 2007: 75). This would seem to explain the shift in the way I experienced the costumes as I first entered the exhibition compared to the first time I had actually encountered them, a few days previously, when I was shown around the backstage area, full of clothes rails and boxes and packing materials, and brightly lit. Here, with only inches separating my body from these objects, I felt a closeness to them- a coming closer to the 'ghosts' who had worn them, and whose traces were still visible on them. The desire to seal this closeness through touch became almost unbearable. Back in the exhibition, as the audience stares upwards towards these brilliantly illuminated, protected artefacts, this context has utterly changed. They are just as magical, but now in a different way[303].

Yet *The Lord of the Rings* movie exhibition has come under some criticism of populism (e.g. Jury, 2003)[304]. Such arguments hold true to the cynical view that the past three decades have witnessed museums selling out to the thin culture of the entertainment industry (for example Hewison; 1989; Walsh: 1992). Yet even if this was true, then this space would at least signal a certain sobriety and sombreness to its consumption. As objects, they are exactly what they are- not phoney, or spurious. In fact extremely authentic, real. They are presented as real things from the making of the film, but from Middle-earth *also*. Edensor argues that such spaces of the museum house "objects situated within a web of techniques…spatially regulated, selective procedures which banish epistemological and aesthetic ambiguity and disguise the innumerable ways of using objects, thereby limiting the interpretative and practical possibilities for those who encounter things" (Edensor, 2005c: 312). To an extent, the museum does shape the way it is apprehended, but Edensor also allows for 'irregular' interpretations. People decided where to look first. They went round the wrong way if they wanted. They went forwards and backwards

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[303] Hill, whose argument deals with "the resonance and haunting effects of (early 20th century) amulets" in the Science Museum of London, also finds difference in encountering amulets in conservation in the vaults of the Science Museum, as opposed to on show: "despite or perhaps due to the clinical context of presentation, I was drawn to investigate their connections to particular people's lives" (2007: 76).

[304] Arts correspondent Louise Jury, writing for The Independent, argues that the blockbuster appeal of The Lord of the Rings "raises suspicions that the London Science Museum's very integrity is being put in jeopardy…..creating an unstoppable drive towards populism". This of course chimes with the views of Hewison (1987); Walsh (1992); and Wright (1995) and the writings of the Frankfurt school more generally.

and missed things out they didn't want to look at. They spent prolonged amounts of time in front of objects they felt attached to.

However, this exhibition is founded on the principle of making visible the absences of Middle-earth, and making visible the techniques used to create Middle-earth- it is based on an epistemology of *multiplication* rather than *reduction*. And it is rather excessively multi-media and reflective. As Stewart suggests, the exhibition, rather than seeking to conceal, *makes magical* its modes of production. (Stewart, 1993: 165 emphasis added) It assumes an audience who are fully aware that technological innovation coupled with craftsmanship is what made the film so successful. So what are the processes and stories which create this appearance, or rather, what do the objects *do* to blend and sustain a dual biography? How can they be of Middle-earth, and of WETA studios, old but new, replicas yet authentic?

Image 89- Where are you from? The object-world of *The Lord of the Rings* "is erected within the archive" (Foucault, in Crimp, 1998: 54)

In the exhibition's deliberate and comprehensive attempts to make visible the processes of creation of non-human relations on screen, it seems hard to sustain the idea that the demystification of cinematic technology destroys the 'pre-technological' filmic world. People enjoy technological enchantment; the technological can be a site of wondrous crossings and experimental hybridity. Of becoming bigger and becoming smaller, and becoming somewhere else all at the same time, on the popular interactive scaling exhibit were visitors can become Gandalf and Frodo driving into Hobbiton on a pony cart. The demystification plot of the exhibition, just like that of tour guides on location, is only meant to be a partially successful demystification- the magic reveals itself but does not become *less* magical in the process.

Image 90- The 'see yourself in scale!' installation

The Smeagol exhibit was another that always attracted a large and enthralled audience. Here, a video featuring Andy Serkis documenting the making of the digitally animated character Gollum accompany concept artwork and casts of the enormous range of facial features developed for this tortured creature. It is clear that Gollum is a much-loved character. As members of the audience move forward to press the button to continue onto the next section of documentary, there is a sense of shared empathy for this character- a hybrid of the human and technological. Gollum in particular seems to have a specific draw, and a different attraction than the other character displays (where the central focus is their outfit). Is it perhaps the enchanting cross-species, human-non-human hybridity, which enthrals? Is it the magic of the metamorphoses of Andy Serkis and the creature called Gollum? The row of modelled heads, that change over time as the design team perfected Gollum's twisted look, suggests a transformation at work, the narrative of the video confirms this "exciting and exhilarating migration" (Bennett, 2001: 17). From page to drawing board, from latex to mo-cap, from flesh to image. Gollum captures the very essence of transformational potential. Gollum's movement, which signifies a bodily freedom in juxtaposition to his ensnared mind, perhaps resonates with the childlike pleasure of freedom, or bodily mobility- the same that Edensor experiences in the ruin, (2005a) and that Haraway's cyborg promotes (Bennett, 2001: 18). Yet we also empathise with his enthralment with the ring- we are drawn into the tension of his creature, between boundless childlike energy and wracked body and mind. He embodies both the delight, freedom and transcendence of consumption, and its most dangerous depths of fetishism. Perhaps that is why so often people use his phrase, 'my preciousss', to signify their own addiction to a particular object?

Truly a body without organs, an ongoing project of becoming in which new links are forged among "things, animals, tools, people, power and fragments of all these" (Bennett, 2001: 24). It is the attraction, to know the BwO and to know its *how*, that lies behind the popularity of the Gollum exhibit. That many, on the contrary, seem to shudder and pass quickly underneath the enormous and brooding costume of Sauron- (a costume which is not rendered empty by the absence of a human wearer) is perhaps also an indication that his hybridity, his transformational capacity, unlike Gollum is not one that provokes wonder or pity, but *dread*- at the "world he seems to seek, one in which all diversity is eliminated for the sake of the domination of one type" (Bennett, 2001: 31).

Image 91- Sauron

Thus the exhibition (and narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*) offers tales of disenchantment- of both lament and progress. Yet we are nonetheless enchanted: we are enchanted, for example-

utterly enchanted- by the story of the problematic Orcs. WETA developed 'Massive', an ambitious software which would generate armies of digital warriors. This artificial intelligence tells the individual Orcs when to fight, when someone is coming after them, or to run forward if there's no one in front of them. However, an unforeseen problem was that this AI made the Orcs a little *too* intelligent, a little too rational for the unbridled evil Tolkien and Sauron intended them for- in fact, these digital Orcs tended to *run out of harms way*[305]. It would be hard *not* to be enthralled by the non-human potential of such stories. Having been told, again and again, that the only way Middle-earth exists is as the transformed countryside of New Zealand (e.g. Nomad Safari tour leaflet referred to in Chapter 3), this sense of technological agency comes to challenge the rational, through its invocation of something that is seen as 'beyond' human control or prediction, something that evokes 'older' supernatural or magical discourses, which modernity, believing itself to have surpassed, figures as 'dark' 'irrational', 'superstitious' and 'primitive'. In an age of high-tech, however, this return of the magical…no longer seems to be seen as "simply monstrous or threatening" (Rutsky, 1999: 18).

Thus, just as Tolkien himself believed that the 'clearer the reason, the better then fantasy' (1966: 75), reason and fantasy seem to work in rather closer correlation than disenchantment tales would allow. But Tolkien's work has often been celebrated also for its attention to detail, to the minute details of Middle-earth, which make it so pregnable - and also for its grandiosity, its comprehensiveness. A huge fantasy world with its own history, and mythology. And such focus on both the small and the grand, an eye-for-detail and the magisterial, are also reflected in the exhibition. The exhibition is literally *remarkable* for the way in which it illuminates the heroics, the challenges, the effort, pride, love – blood, sweat and tears even – that affectively imbue the life-stories of its objects. It does that, rather than seek to conceal or exorcise. For example, Strider's outfit is well-worn- even with the smoothing effect of the illuminating lighting you can see the creases in the leather, the grubbiness of the fabric. Viggo Mortensen, we are told, took a method approach to acting Aragorn, and his vigour has left its trace on his costume[306].

[305] http://www.massivesoftware.com/

[306] As well as his body. He broke a tooth when filming a fight scene, and two toes when kicking a helmet rather too enthusiastically.

Image 92- Aragorn's corner

Equally as fitting, we find that the Elvish costumes are immaculate, and Gandalf's white boots betray just the tiniest speckle of mud. Nearly all the objects in this space are accompanied with a multimedia reference of their life-stories. Costumes have documentary segments from their makers and wearers. Other things appear in a playfully 'tricksy' way - the paraphernalia of Saruman's chambers are displayed as a traditional ethnographic display- skulls, stones, feathers surrounding the Palantir. Other things only have to be themselves to provoke surprise, wonder and awe. The wax statue of Boromir lying dead in the Elven boat lies at the end of an empty chamber to which the visitor walks up and peers down onto the model- with a shock to find the likeness of a corpse, followed by careful attention to its mouth to make sure there are no signs of life here[307].

[307] Whether consciously or not, the exhibit is reminiscent of Viking heritage presentations, such as Bygdøy near Oslo, which houses three large Viking period ships excavated in the late 19th century, within an minimalist, ecclesiastical-style building with little interpretation (Halewood and Hannam, 2001: 570).

Image 93- Figure 10- Tableaux vivant? The truly animated plastic arts of cinematic phantasmagoria

But is the detailed makeshift funerary boat of Boromir, that creates such a particular response, a chance encounter? Bruno lists several examples of the waxwork as a predecessor of the cinema- she argues that "film ultimately embodies the technology of death- as Andre Bazin claimed, a 'mummy complex'- a process of embalming a body image- lies at the origin of the plastic arts of which cinema is a representative" (Bruno, 2002: 146). Perhaps then there is more to *this* Boromir than the actor Sean Bean's inability to return to NZ to film this short scene in which his body comes to rest over the Rauros falls. Perhaps rather his wax effigy becomes an *essential* inclusion in this 'cabinet' of cinematic curiosities[308]" (Bruno, 2002: 149)

[308] "Mechanically made in the image of wax simulacra, the projected strip of celluloid is the modern wax tablet" (Bruno, 2002: 221)

Image 94- The Reverent Approach

The person behind this immaculacy of representation is Richard Taylor of WETA. His vision for the film was that it should be *real*. That, drawing upon Tolkien's rich imaginative descriptions of small features such as armoury, the films would avoid the tacky Hollywood look by crafting over 48,000 different weapons using traditional and authentic methods. In short, the modes of making the film's arsenal reflected the values that the Elvish craftsmen themselves would have held: a culture "based in *detail*, each generation building on the top of the past generations' work…."

So like the elves, the craftsmen who were employed by WETA were drawn from traditional industries, dying breeds, often the only one of their kind in New Zealand[309]. Cartwrights, foundrymen- as the *Lord of the Rings*-dedicated Air New Zealand in-flight magazine noted, "the film has rejuvenated people's interest…for traditionally-made objects…for Campbell, (A bronze caster and sculptor who created swords) what attracted him to the project was the prospect of bringing back to life such 'dying art forms'. (Air New Zealand, 2003: 17). They were "to generate a strong sense of culture….the processes of anvil, jenny, furnace are all of times past" (Richard Taylor, speaking on National Geographic, 2003). It seems to have been a successful strategy through and through- both in the ability of the actors to 'feel a part of it'- as Orlando Bloom

[309] Again, there is a strong parallel here with Viking heritage in Scandinavian countries, where Halewood and Hannam argue that "There are now many examples of products and crafts that were lost or forgotten but which have been revived because of the interest and commercial opportunities created at Viking markets" (2001: 577).

quoted: "you can't help marvel at the time, energy and the *love* put into it (weapon making)" (National Geographic, 2003).

And equally in the exhibition, as I noted after spending a lingering amount of time witnessing the incredible detail of the film's armoury:

"I wasn't looking at film costumes. I was looking at armour, real armour that had seen battles. I was looking, for example, at an Orc breastplate so authentic as to bear the white tree of Gondor- this film prop had its own history- it was a spoil of war taken from an unfortunate Gondor soldier who had never existed- on page, on film, nowhere. Yet his very real armour moved me beyond words. In that darkened and museum space Middle-earth couldn't have been more real [Fieldwork Diary April 8th 2006]".

Image 95- Armour which draws upon generations of craftmanship

If the care and love of the creation provokes wonder, then so to does a sense of excess. Excessive extents of production: huge costs, huge sets, four production units, 10 hours of make-up per day for Lawrence Makoare's character Lurtz, 5 months of filming for 20 minutes of scene, one of (what was at the time) the worlds supercomputers required to house the bestiary of Middle-earth. This excess is carried out across the whole exhibition. The 'real lords of the rings', an interpretation panel tells us, were the two men who made chain mail for suits of armour- 2.5 million links and 2 and a half years of painstaking labour that would ultimately wear away their fingerprints. Personal and collective sacrifice and endeavour are recurrent themes in the making of *The Lord of the Rings*. People listen to these accounts with disbelief, or simply laugh with incredulity. In this excessiveness, *The Lord of the Rings* achieves what Degli-Eposti calls a "neo-baroque trend within postmodernist cinema which aims at the attainment of shock, a sense of marvel, of surprise in a time when it is very difficult to be surprised…the bewilderment created by the morphing of forms determines a reaction which both places us at a distance and draws out interest by surprising and shocking us" (1996: 79-80).

This is not, then, the same sense as the 'authenticity' that is the repeated motivation behind these cinematic artefacts. Having said that, nor is this neo-baroque feeling a total departure from the notion of the auratic object. This is perhaps most clear from the story of the 'Hero Swords'- the very special swords crafted for key parts, which found themselves competing at the Te Papa in 2006 with another visiting exhibition, 'Treasures of Japan'; complete with one of the best examples of a thousand year old katana sword. Discussing this with a manager of Te Papa, we both admitted, somewhat guiltily, to the greater pleasure we felt in looking at the Hero Swords[310].

Image 96- Auratic swords

This is of course, what so alarmed critics such as Hilton Kramer[311]- the realization of the fear that "the criterion for determining the order of aesthetic objects in the museum throughout the era of modernism- the 'self-evident' quality of masterpieces- has been broken, and as a result 'anything goes'" (Crimp, 1998: 57). But of course, nothing could testify more eloquently to the fragility of the museum's claims to represent anything coherent at all (ibid). Rather, as Sepúlveda dos Santos

[310] The subjectivity of experience is here underlined by a very contrasting view from an Independent on Sunday review of the exhibition at the Science Museum in London: "Back outside I stop off alone, at the museum's own vitrine display on the use of metals- damascened real armour is far more delicate than the movie phoney although ever destined to be projected 30 foot high, and an ancient Greek gold mask is more baleful than massed phalanxes of SFX goblins" (Rule, 2003: np).

[311] Hilton Kramer, in a critical review for the New York Times, questioned whether a "Gérôme belongs with Goya and Monet"- epitomising the modernist conservative reaction which exerted "a moral and esthetic authority precluding such development" (Crimp, 1998: 50).

suggests, "to experience the aura of an object means to cherish it *without knowing exactly why we do it*" (2003: 41 emphasis added).

Nonetheless, to take these artefacts and return to the traditional rendering of the museum object, we have a problem- as Colloredo-Mansfeld states, the idea of object durability has remained "curiously immovable" in museum studies that have "elevated those materials with long-lasting biographies as the most socially charged" (2003: 246). Because of the hybridity of these things, what they seem, what they are, how they make connections with people, it seems hard to justify the process of purification that Thomas suggests in which "the excessive sensual and semiotic effects of objects can be purified to single meanings and purposes, to an arrangement which eclipses mystery and stabilises the identity of a thing" (in Edensor, 2005: 312). They are certainly presented in a particular light, yet the tension of their hybridities make them slippery to the last: "taxonomy speaks transversely" (Bruno, 2002: 135). For our appraisal of the Hero Swords (or Katana) makes sense only in the moment of the encounter- once they are gone from the space of the exhibition, packed up once again in polystyrene boxes in unnamed storage, they are once again wanton to a new story, to new speculation. Rather than losing "a vital relationship to the observer" in the process of dying (Adorno, in Crimp 1998: 49)[312], these objects in their durability and flexibility refuse finitude- they are, in Heath and von-Lehm's words, and somehow befitting to their cinematic legacy, truly "objects-in-action" (2001: 60).

[312] A necessary feature of all museum objects, in Adorno's opinion- he insists upon a museal mortality as a necessary effect of an institution caught in the contradictions of its culture and therefore extending to every object contained there" (Crimp, 1998: 50).

Conclusion: an aesthetics of disappearance

[Fieldwork Diary April 10th 2006] Leaving New Zealand:
Driving back to Wellington for the last time, very mixed emotions. Happy and sad. Sad to say good bye to locations I have visited lots of times over the fieldwork, and now was driving past for the last time Kaitoke, the Hutt River....glad, so glad, to be finishing my time here in Wellington. Sad to be driving into it for the last time. Sad to be finishing 'chasing ghosts'. But feel happy and closer to them than I would have ever expected to become.[313]

There is, Crang believes, "something stirring about hearing civil war drums echo around a valley and seeing a column of troops emerge from a wood…people feel something, just for a moment. And then it is gone" (Crang, 1996: 424). In this final chapter I hope to have captured a sense of loss or absence, a feeling that Muecke terms an "aesthetics of disappearance" in which 'being there' is somehow already 'losing there' (in Fullagar, 2000: 62). This punctum of the there/ not-there is affectively powerful- "suddenly sensed relationalities with things and spaces that are often beyond representation" (Edensor, 2008: 327). These affective energies are, furthermore, neither of humans nor place- they "do not derive from the object itself, because the pebbles and flowers don't always move us. Nor does it derive from us, for no amount of effort or ambition can induce such an experience. It emerges instead from our mysterious relation with the objects, a relation which necessarily involves us but which is necessarily beyond us too " (Metcalfe and Game, 2002: 9).

This chapter has thus attempted to offer an alter-tale, an ethical commitment to exploring the alternative to these spaces and objects only being able to offer disappointment under the rubric of authenticity or hyperreality. This alter-tale allows for the unknown, invisible and unspeakable, and offers ways of thinking imagination without falling back to literary narrative models of immersion or engagement. But this is not an alter-tale that seeks hegemony: it doesn't overwrite other modes of encountering- such as the challenge of charting and knowing (chapter four), or of creating and chronicling (chapter five). It also does not make us feel in that particular way: we are "not *obliged* by the architecture, planning or produce [of a place] to experience that place in a particular way" (Pink, 2008: 190 emphasis added). In other words, "the idea of enchanted space allows us to traverse a middle ground where reductionism or teleology is displaced, while simultaneously recognizing that these affects do have an effect" (Holloway, 2006: 186). Yet the fact that tourism may well be about 'chasing ghosts' or about being seduced by invisibilities and

[313] Harrison seems to experience something similar, when she recalls that her "sadness and regret on the last day of the summer when I had to leave [the cottage] were as raw as those described by the cottagers I had interviewed that summer. I had lost some of my intellectual distance from the cottage experience; but I had gained enormously some valuable affective insights" (2008: 54).

absences, has rarely been considered. The struggle to ontologically accept this multiplicity is perhaps only starting to be taken on board. This is precisely the awakening that Bennett's work on enchantment encourages (2001)[314]. Unpacking the very ideas that exclude enchantment from contemporary life, she argues for a different modernity, a different relationship to the past- one which does not rely on an oscillation between mourning and elation. Free from this ordering we can be open to the experience of these landscapes, of their consumption- open to be *haunted* by the absence of their material, visible presences, and *animated* by the materialities which summon those invisibilities.

[314] For Bennett, the term enchantment "entails a state of wonder…to be enchanted is to participate in a momentarily immobilizing encounter, it is to be transfixed, spellbound, a moment of pure presence" (2001: 5)

Conclusion. Tripping the Light Fantastic: landscape, imagination and narrative

"Middle Earth existed, exists- it's happening as you're watching it"
(Sir Ian McKellen, National Geographic 2003)

The return- a last location

In her diary of the Pelennor Fields tour (Twizel), Mary recounted how at one point during the tour, tour guide Vernon:

"Told us about some extra shots not used--of the Dunedain, of a night shot with a full moon as they rode with the help of Ghan-buri-Ghan".[Mary, diary]

The mountain of footage that ended up on the cutting room floor in Jackson's Wellington studios, and likewise the textual material that never even made it onto film, may well have engendered little more than frustration or hostility for the many thousands of Tolkien enthusiasts who went with anxiety to the cinema to see how Hollywood had adapted the novels they loved. Indeed, they did discover that the film had no place for loved characters such as Tom Bombadil; it seemed unconcerned with replacing Gildor with Arwen, or tarnishing Faramir's initial reputation, and many other deviations from Tolkien's narrative.

Yet there is also something magical about the rushes that didn't make it- just as there is about the locations used in the filming that were not included in Brodie's guidebook or discussed on the DVD extras, and thus have slipped into quiet retirement. We wonder what they would have looked like (or where they are), before realising how silly it might seem to wish that there was even *more* of a secondary world (Tolkien's choice of words) that is already so textually and materially excessive. Yet people certainly *do* desire for more- recent fan film, *The hunt for Gollum*[315], steps in to visualise an episode from Tolkien's appendices which was only referred to fleetingly in the trilogy. Stylistically the 50 minute film follows the trilogy closely- the website even features its own 'making-of' extras. And going back, quite literally, to the 'drawing board' of the film trilogy, we are told that Peter Jackson was not satiated looking upon the concept artwork of John Howe and Alan Lee. Rather, seeing an illustration of the entrance to Orthanc or the hallway

[315] http://www.thehuntforgollum.com/updates.htm

of Bilbo's hobbit hole, only strengthened his conviction that he must employ these artists to "so he could see what the rest was like!" (New Line, 2001[316]).

I want to bring this work to an end in simply signalling the utter creativity that marks the relationship of *The Lord of the Rings* to tourism in the former cinematic landscapes of New Zealand/ Middle-earth. What the "seen the film, now visit the set" cliché seems to belie is a playful yet serious desire to explore landscape-textualities, to make connections with other spatio-temporalities. Yet we need to see this imaginative engagement with space differently that simply as a form of 'escape', where escape is based on a principle of departure from one place (mundane reality) to another (a fantasy land). Rather it seems to be an organising principle of our very being-in-the world. As Lewis commented, in likeness to recent theorising in cultural geography and the social sciences more generally:

"We are not content to be Leibnitzian monads. We demand windows. Literature as Logos is a series of windows, even of doors. One of the things we feel after reading a great work is 'I have got out'. Or from another point of view, ' I have got in'; pierced the shell of some other monad and discovered what it is like inside" (C.S. Lewis, 1961: 138)

Ultimately, creating such imaginative orderings are *pleasurable* practice as opposed to one of necessity: "In a culture which favours bricolage, simulation, performativity and acting-as-if, we have increasingly learned to calculate and play with this radical indeterminacy between the real, the not-so-real and the imaginary" (Pels, Hetherington and Vandenberg, 2002:3).

Yet the hermeneutic image cycle would seem to suggest that once the image has been (re)captured by the tourist, the whole event is a *fait accompli*- with the visually rapacious tourist simply moving on to the next attraction. However, the feelings that many visitors to New Zealand seem to share when they return home and review the films, through a new lens, with added layers or meaning and with a new geographical perspective, suggests otherwise: titillation with 'having been there', and a deeper bond with the places (and people) of New Zealand/ Middle-earth that are eagerly shared with family, friends and anyone else who cares to listen. Far from the notion of hyperreality's necessary failure to live up to its own hyerbole, I found myself watching the Lighting of the Beacons scene with a particular sense of disbelief and privilege, in being able to recognise that these mountains really were that magnificent to see 'in real life', even if that I had not been able to see them in a way that recreated the aerial mobility of the films. Nonetheless, in something of a reversal of the *reel* being unable to live up to the *real,* my actual geographical knowledge of the cinematic landscapes only served to consolidate just how very real this screen image was.

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[316] New Line Productions (2001) "Visualizing the story" (documentary featurettes accompanying *The Fellowship of the Ring* extended version)

The fact that I am struggling, here in the final pages of a dissertation on how tourists' *feel* about certain encounters, to relate how I felt about watching *The Lord of the Rings* both before and after visiting the landscapes of New Zealand only further underscores another important point of this work. Even in the travel diaries- the space which seems most open to the poetic and descriptive narration of experience, respondents noted the difficulties of relating affect. Responding to my request to write in that way, Barb doubted the very multi-sensual mobilities of her writing had provided what I wanted. Sherry's journal, on the other hand, recounts (to both herself and to her diary's readers) just how hard it is, "to capture in words the sense of communion I felt (with the landscapes)". How then to think this "'so much more' that crosses boundaries of age, gender and location and which seems to hit such an emotional nerve" (Bloustien, 2002: 429)? Representational accounts, or "decisionist narratives" as Hills called them (2002: xii) don't do much justice to explanations of what motivates *Lord of the Rings* fans and tourists. Whilst one respondent made sense of her enthusiasm in terms of the passions of her family – "My husband has soccer, I have *The Lord of the Rings*. We all need something outside of ourselves" – another simply shrugged "its not *important*, its just *there*". The matter of *The Lord of the Rings* thus seems spread between the intensely important, the 'more-than'; and the banal, the 'just there'- although both of these explanations would seem to share the same intensity of affiliation for these two individuals.

Whilst the whole of this work has been attentive to this "fallacy of meaningfulness" (Hermes, in Storey, 1999: 122), the final chapter offers some other ways of knowing and making sense of these imaginative worlds of cinematic tourism that don't try to close things down: as Holloway advocates, "if we might never fix the causes of ghosts….perhaps we can attend to the haunting power of spirits by leaving analyses open and unfinalized" (2006: 185-6). This research project thus operates as a singularity, a presentation, the 'event of an event', the taking-place of the empirical (Dewsbury et al, 2002: 439). I hope that it finds a hospitable destination.

Appendix A: Questionnaire given to all respondents in contact via e-mail

Danielle Smith

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UK

Lord of the Rings Tourism Research Project: Participant Questionnaire

Section One: About You

Name:	
Contact: (Phone number and address would also be helpful in addition to email)	
Optional Info:	
Gender:	Nationality:
Age:	Occupation:
How did you hear about this research project?	

Section Two: Your Holiday Habits:

What other holidays have you made in the past 5 years?
And any future 'dream destinations'?
Have you ever visited any other literary or film locations as a main purpose or part of a holiday? (for example an author's house, iconic landscapes from novels or film, etc)

Section Three: About your trip to New Zealand

Had you read and/ or watched the Lord of the Rings Trilogy prior to visiting New Zealand? Can you outline when you first read the book, (before of after the film etc), how many times you have watched the films if more than the once etc…
Dates of trip:
Type of holiday: (for example organised coach tour, self-drive, etc)
Where did you visit within New Zealand: (North/ South Islands, regions)
Which Lord of the Rings film locations did you visit?
How did you visit each of these sites? (for example, on you own, on a themed day tour, with your coach tour group, using written guides such as Ian Brodie's LotR Location Guidebook etc)
Did anyone accompany you on this trip?
If you had to have one, what would you say the highlight of this trip was, and why? (not just out of the Lord of the Rings linked activities and locations)
Out of the LotR locations you visited, which was your favourite? Why?

And what, if anything, did you find disappointing or unexpected about the locations?
What records did you make of your trip? (e.g Photos, video, diary or travelogue, scrapbook, souvenir collection etc)
Finally-have you, or do you intend to watch or read the trilogy again since you got home? How has it compared to previous readings/ viewings?

Thanks for completing the questionnaire, please return by e-mail to:

d.e.smith@durham.ac.uk

Appendix B: Guidelines for participants writing travel diaries

Guidelines for 'Middle Earth' Journals

Dear ,

Thank you for agreeing to write this diary or travelogue for my research. Although people often write journals and diaries, especially about our holidays, it is an unusual research method. However, it is a more explorative medium than a traditional interview or questionnaire, as it can tell us how we feel about things over a number of weeks or months as opposed to just one day- and because of that, it's good at getting at how we feel before, during and after a holiday.

I would like you to feel free about what you write, and you can write as little or much and you like. The diary can be any mixture of visual and text, in any medium- for example, a video or photo-diary, scrapbook or 'traditional' written journal- whatever you prefer. You can write whatever you want, but what I hope is that the journal opens up room for you to think about the expectations, experiences and memories of your trip.

All accounts will be kept as anonymous as you wish- photos and visual materials will only be used in published material with your permission (for example academic journals) and names will be changed. Once you have returned from your trip, I will need a copy of your journal (if you choose to keep a written journal it might be possible to scan this and e-mail- any costs will be covered). Then, I hope to ask some further questions based on your journal- this will be by e-mail.

It would be useful to have a basic itinerary of your trip, what you do from day to day, and how- for example, whether you take tours to sites, or go on your own.

Your Lord of the Rings 'autobiography' would also be very interesting- if, how and when you first read and/ or watched the books and films (and in what order!), what about the stories you are find appealing- for example themes, favourite characters etc. Also, what other books and films you like, and if you've visited other locations associated with literature and film, such as an author's house, or other movie sets, etc

Before you go away, it would be interesting if you could note how you are feeling about you visit? Excited, anxious- or perhaps you are too busy organizing it to have time to daydream about it!? What motivated you to visit New Zealand to see Lord of the Rings locations? How did you go about planning where you visit (e.g. using a location guide like Ian Brodie's, web resources, I-site etc). If you are in a group of people travelling together, how you make decisions- does everyone agree on what to see?!

When you visit a location, it would be useful if you could think about some of these questions:

How did you find the location? How did you find access to the site- was it difficult to find? Did you look for specific camera angles or just a more general view of where filming took place? What sorts of things did you talk about or think about whilst you were visiting? Perhaps the issues of filming in the location, or the narrative action that happens at that site (perhaps you re-enacted it a bit, or posed for photos- for example hiding under the tree from the Ringwraiths!) How did you feel the location compared to the film? Anything that comes to mind – whether the location was easily recognisable, maybe 'even better in reality'? Or maybe a disappointment?

Which locations did you like the best and what do you think makes a 'good' movie location? For example, did you prefer sites where you have to 'use your imagination' or ones where you are readily 'immersed' into Middle Earth such as at Hobbiton? Did you like sites where you could

perhaps combine seeing the location with other activities such as a horse trek or river safari, or the locations that are 'just landscape?'

If you went on both organised tours and self-guided visits, how did these compare? For example, did the tour guide's anecdotes and stories make the location more interesting?

What did you notice going on at the sites whilst you were at the location? Were there other tourists there? Were they looking for Lotr locations also, or were they at the site for other reasons?

And what did you do in the site? Take photos of each other, what did you discuss if anything?

How do you feel visiting Lord of the Rings sites is similar or different to other tourist attractions and other activities you did whilst here in New Zealand?

These are all just ideas, I hope you find them useful- but if you would prefer to write about anything else please go ahead! You can probably tell that I am very interested in hearing about all 'the little details', so anything you think, see, or do- please make a note if you can.

Thank you so much for your participation with this project, and if there is anything else you would like to know, please don't hesitate to contact me at d.e.smith@durham.ac.uk

Appendix C: The Lord of the Rings Trilogy- plot synopsis

The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)[317]

The prologue, spoken by Galadriel, shows the Dark Lord Sauron forging the One Ring- a powerful magical ring which he can use to conquer the lands of Middle-earth through his enslavement of the bearers of the nine other Rings of Power. A Last Alliance of Elves and Men is formed to counter Sauron and his forces at the foot of Mount Doom, but Sauron himself kills Elendil, the High King of Arnor and Gondor, and Gil-galad, High King of the Noldor. Just afterward, Isildur grabs his father's broken sword Narsil, and slashes at Sauron's hand. The stroke cuts off Sauron's fingers, separating him from the Ring and vanquishing his army. However, because Sauron's life is bound in the Ring, he is not completely defeated until the Ring itself is destroyed. Isildur takes the Ring and succumbs to its temptation, refusing to destroy it, but he is later ambushed and killed by orcs and the Ring is lost in the river into which Isildur fell.

The Ring is found two-and-a-half millennia later, and eventually it comes to the creature Gollum, who takes it underground for five centuries, giving Gollum "unnaturally long life." The Ring leaves him however, and is found by the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, much to the grief of Gollum. Bilbo returns to his home in the Shire with the Ring, and the story jumps forward in time sixty years. At his 111th birthday, Bilbo leaves the Ring to his nephew and adopted heir Frodo Baggins. The Wizard Gandalf soon learns it is the One Ring, and sends him to Bree with Sam, with plans to meet him there after Gandalf goes to Isengard to meet the head of his order, Saruman. Saruman reveals that the Nazgûl, or Ringwraiths, have left Mordor to capture the Ring and kill whoever carries it; having already turned to Sauron's cause, he then imprisons Gandalf atop Orthanc. Frodo and Sam are soon joined by fellow hobbits Merry and Pippin. After encountering a Ringwraith on the road, they manage to reach Bree, and there they meet a Man called Strider, who agrees to lead them to Rivendell. They agree only because Gandalf isn't there to guide them. After some travelling, they spend the night on the hill of Weathertop, where they are attacked by the Nazgûl at night. Strider fights off the Ringwraiths, but Frodo is grievously wounded with a morgul blade, and they must quickly get him to Rivendell for healing. While chased by the Nazgûl, Frodo is taken by the elf Arwen to the Elvish haven of Rivendell, and healed by her father, Elrond.

In Rivendell Frodo meets Gandalf, who explains why he didn't meet them at Bree as planned. In the meantime, there are many meetings between various peoples, and Elrond calls a council to decide what should be done with the Ring. The Ring can only be destroyed by throwing it into the fires (that is, lava) of Mount Doom, where it was forged. Mount Doom is located in Mordor, near Sauron's fortress of Barad-dûr, and will be an incredibly dangerous journey. Frodo volunteers to take the Ring to Mount Doom as all the others argue about who should or shouldn't take it. He is accompanied by his hobbit friends and Gandalf, as well as Strider, who is revealed to be Aragorn, the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor. Also travelling with them are the Elf Legolas, the Dwarf Gimli and Boromir, the son of the Steward of Gondor. Together they comprise the Fellowship of the Ring. The Fellowship set out and try to pass the mountain Caradhras, but they are stopped by Saruman's wizardry. They are forced to travel under the mountain through the Mines of Moria. After journeying partway through the Mines, Pippin accidentally gives away their presence to a band of Orcs, goblins and a cave troll. The Fellowship then encounter a Balrog, an ancient demon of fire and shadow, at the Bridge of Khazad-dûm. Gandalf confronts the Balrog on the bridge, allowing the others to escape the mines, while he falls with the creature into the abyss below.

Gandalf confronts a Balrog on the Bridge of Khazad-dûm.The group flees to the Elvish realm of Lothlórien, where they are sheltered by its rulers, Galadriel and her husband Celeborn. After resting, they decide to travel on the River Anduin towards Parth Galen. Before they leave, Galadriel gives Frodo the Phial of Galadriel. After landing at Parth Galen, Boromir tries to take the Ring from Frodo, who manages to escape by putting the Ring on his finger and vanishing. Knowing that the Ring's temptation will be too strong for the Fellowship, Frodo decides to leave them and go to Mordor alone. Meanwhile, the rest of the Fellowship are attacked by Uruk-hai.

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[317] Adapted from synopsis available at IMDB at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120737/synopsis. Accessed 10 Mar 10. These and the other synopses refer to the cinematic releases of the films.

Merry and Pippin, realizing that Frodo is leaving, distract the orcs, allowing Frodo to escape. Boromir rushes to the aid of the two hobbits but is mortally wounded by the Orc commander Lurtz, and Merry and Pippin are captured. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli find Boromir, who regrets attempting to steal the Ring and dies. They decide to pursue the orcs and rescue the hobbits, leaving Frodo to his fate. Sam joins Frodo before he leaves, and together the two head to Mordor.

The Two Towers (2002)[318]

The film begins with a flashback set to the first film, with Gandalf battling the Balrog on the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, but this time continues from Gandalf's perspective, with the scene continuing to follow both as they hurtle down below, fighting while in free-fall. Frodo awakens from his dream and continues his journey with his trusted and loyal friend, Sam. They are then attacked by the ring-possessed Gollum wishing to retrieve "his precious" from the ones he thinks stole it from him. The Hobbits subdue and bind him with Sam's Elven rope given to him by the Elven elder Galadriel in Lórien. Sam distrusts Gollum and wishes to abandon him, but Frodo understands the burden of the creature and takes pity on him. Realizing they are lost in the Emyn Muil and in need of a guide, Frodo persuades Gollum to lead them to the Black Gate of Mordor.

In Rohan, the pack of Uruk-hai run across the grassy landscape with their captives Merry and Pippin. Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli are in pursuit, following three days of running, Legolas surmises the Hobbits are being taken to Isengard, where Saruman is marshalling his Uruk-hai forces to do the bidding of Sauron. In the kingdom of Rohan, home of the horse lords, King Théoden is mentally and physically weak due to the enchantments of his steward, Gríma Wormtongue, who is secretly in the service of Saruman. Orcs and Wild Men of Dunland incited by Saruman freely roam the land and kill the people including the king's only son Théodred. Théoden's nephew Éomer interrogates Gríma, angrily realizing he has lustful eyes for Éomer's sister Éowyn and that he is now an agent of Saruman. Gríma banishes Éomer for undermining his authority and Éomer sets forth to gather the remaining loyal men of the Rohirrim throughout the land.

Frodo and Sam traverse the Dead Marshes, passing the undead fallen warriors of the Second Age who haunt the marshes and evading a newly seated Ringwraith on his flying fell beast. Later they reach the Black Gate, finding it to be heavily guarded, (they observe a contingent of Easterlings from Rhûn arrive to reinforce the garrison) only to have Gollum reveal to them a less risky path: Sam remains distrustful, but Frodo gives him the benefit of the doubt. Meanwhile, Éomer and his Rohirrim ambush and kill all of the Orcs and Uruk-hai holding the two Hobbits captive at nightfall. During the battle, Merry and Pippin narrowly escape their captors by fleeing into the trees where they are aided by Treebeard, an ‘Ent’ or shepherd of the forest.

Éomer later encounters Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli and in turn tells Aragorn there were no survivors of the Orc/Uruk-hai slaughter. Upon arriving at the battle site, Aragorn uses his tracking skills to find two sets of hobbit tracks that lead into nearby Fangorn forest. The three discover a wizard who is ultimately Gandalf reborn, now known as Gandalf the White. The quartet proceed to travel to Edoras, where they exorcise Saruman's hold on King Théoden and banish Wormtongue. Théoden is confronted with his dead son and rather than risk open war, decides to flee to a large fortress called Helm's Deep which in times of trouble has saved the people of Rohan. Gandalf leaves to find Éomer and his Rohirrim, promising to return within five days, as a strong attraction draws Éowyn to Aragorn during the journey to Helm's Deep. Wormtongue flees to Orthanc and tells Saruman of Rohan breaking from their grip; Saruman then decides to destroy Rohan.

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[318] Adapted from synopsis available at IMDB at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0167261/synopsis. Accessed 10 Mar 10.

In Ithilien, Gollum battles his split personality in an attempt to befriend Frodo and Sam and ultimately banishes his "evil" half. The two hobbits are witness to an ambush of Southrons but are taken captive by soldiers of Gondor. Meanwhile, along the journey to Helm's Deep, the travellers are attacked by Saruman's Wargs and their Orc riders. During the battle, Aragorn is dragged by a Warg and falls off a cliff into a raging river as the grief-stricken survivors reluctantly move on to Helm's Deep. In Rivendell, Elrond knows that the age of Elves is ending and convinces Arwen that it is hopeless to stay and should leave for the Grey Havens. Elrond shows her a prophetic vision if she waits for Aragorn, even if he succeeds in destroying Sauron and becomes King of Gondor, he will still succumb to mortality: Arwen will suffer grievously once he is dead and she is left to wither away- she reluctantly agrees to leave. Elsewhere, Frodo and Sam are taken to Henneth Annûn and brought before Faramir, the younger brother of Boromir. Gollum eluded capture and in order to save his life, is lured into a trap unknowingly by Frodo. Faramir learns of the One Ring and, seeking to prove his worth to his father, decides the Ring shall go to Gondor. In Rohan, Aragorn washes up on the river's edge and is nudged back to consciousness by his horse, Brego. Battered but undaunted, he rides to Helm's Deep, passing Saruman's army of Uruk-hai, which numbers at least 10,000 strong. His arrival is met with relief but is short lived with the news of only 300 men in the stronghold. In the midst of despair, a battalion of Elves from Lórien, led by the Elf Haldir, arrives to assist in the ensuing battle. At Fangorn forest, Merry, Pippin, Treebeard and other Ents hold a Council to decide on the roles of the Ents in the war with Saruman.

In the pouring rain, the battle of Helm's Deep begins with a flurry of arrows from both human and Elven archers cutting down dozens of Uruk-hai. Scaling ladders are placed upon the Deeping Wall, and the Uruks swarm up to engage the defenders. The defences are slowly breached and the enemy manages to destroy the wall through its sewer drain, using a rudimentary explosive device created by Saruman. Despite Aragorn and Gimli's best efforts, the Uruk-hai manage to penetrate the main door and soon the stronghold is overrun. In the midst of battle, Haldir is slain and the few remaining Elves fall back into the Keep. In the Hornburg, however, the Uruks have also scaled the walls, and have breached the gate, forcing the defenders to retreat into the Keep. In Fangorn, Treebeard and the other Ents have decided to not have any involvement in the war. Frustrated, Pippin cleverly takes him to the section of Fangorn Forest Saruman has decimated near Isengard. Treebeard is filled with rage at Saruman's betrayal and commands all other Ents to seek vengeance. The Ents gather and embark upon 'the Last March of the Ents'.

Meanwhile, as the Keep is now under attack and realizing Gandalf's words before he departed, Aragorn and the rest make one last gallant ride on horseback to attack the Uruk-hai army, in a desperate bid to allow the Rohirrim's women and children to escape. As the riders are surrounded and all seems lost, Gandalf, Éomer, and two thousand Riders of the Rohirrim arrive to push back the Uruk-hai into the just-arrived forest of Huorns outside of Helm's Deep. Elsewhere, the Ents also attack Isengard, tossing stones and rocks while collapsing a dam to flood its surroundings.

At the ruins of Osgiliath, Faramir and the Hobbits are confronted by a Ringwraith and its fell beast. With the help of Sam, Frodo narrowly escapes the Ringwraith's efforts to capture him. Sam narrates how the story must go on and how they should keep pressing forward as Faramir decides to free them to finish their quest. Gandalf and the others now know a full war is inevitable (as Sauron will surely seek retribution for the defeat of Saruman) and hope rests with Frodo and Sam, who have resumed their journey to Mordor with Gollum. Accompanying them once again and having felt betrayed after his subsequent mistreatment by Faramir's men, Gollum's darker nature returns and decides to reclaim the ring by leading Frodo and Sam to "her".

The Return of the King (2003)[319]

In the opening scene, Sméagol and his friend Déagol are fishing near the Gladden Fields in the North of Middle Earth. Déagol is dragged into the river by a powerful catch and discovers the One Ring glinting in the river bed. He collects it and climbs out of the river. Sméagol sees him fondling it and as they both succumb to the Ring's power they begin to quarrel. Sméagol demands it saying that it's his birthday and it should be his present. The squabble turns into a fight and Sméagol strangles his friend with his bare hands to finally prise the Ring from his clenched fist. We are then shown how Sméagol was ostracised from his community and driven away. Suffering terribly from his loneliness and shame, Sméagol takes solice in his love for the Ring as it slowly tortures his mind. His hardships in the Mountains twist his shape into that of Gollum.

As the flashback ends, we are taken back to the present where, on the outskirts of Mordor, Frodo and Sam are resting in an alcove. Sam awakes and sees that his master has not slept, the days are also growing darker the closer they get to Minas Morgul and Mordor. Gollum arrives and urges them to move on. Away in the west, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Gandalf, Théoden and Éomer are riding through Fangorn to Isengard, where they meet Merry and Pippin feasting among the wreckage of Isengard. They then go and see Treebeard at the Orthanc where Saruman has been trapped. Gandalf opposes Gimli's call to kill Saruman, saying that the wizard has no power any more and will pose no further threat. As they are talking, Pippin sees the palantír amongst the flotsam and is enamoured by it, but Gandalf quickly asks it from him and hides in under his cloak.

The group then rides to Edoras, where King Théoden has prepared a feast to 'hail the victorious dead' of the Battle of the Hornburg. There Éowyn shows affection for Aragorn which Théoden notices, he tells her that he his happy for her, Aragorn being an honourable man and the architect of the victory at Helm's Deep. Gandalf also expresses to Aragorn his concerns over the quest, Aragorn tells him to trust in what his heart tells him, that Frodo is still alive.

Gollum awakes in the night as Frodo and Sam are sleeping and goes off to one side to murmur to himself. His evil half senses some doubt in Sméagol and insists that if he can murder once (referring to Déagol) he can do it again. Gollum then begins leading Sméagol through their plan, to deliver the hobbits into the clutches of Shelob in Cirith Ungol, after which the Ring can be reclaimed. Sam hears this and proceeds to beat Gollum for his treachery, Frodo intervenes, saying that as their guide Gollum is necessary for their quest. Sam obliges as Gollum flashes him an evil smile while Frodo's back is turned.

That same night back in Edoras, Pippin's curiosity gets the better of him; relieving Gandalf of the palantir, he looks into it. Pippin sees a vision of a white tree in a stone courtyard set ablaze, but in doing so he is caught by Sauron and submitted to mental torture and questioning. Aragorn tries to rescue him and thus briefly exposes himself to Sauron. Pippin recovers from his ordeal and it is discovered that he did not tell Sauron anything of the Ring's whereabouts. From Pippin's vision of the White Tree, Gandalf deduces that Sauron is now moving to attack Minas Tirith and he rides off to send warning, taking Pippin with him, lest his urge to look upon the palantir (left now in Aragorn's keeping) return again.

Leaving Rivendell on her way to the Undying Lands, Arwen has a vision of her son by Aragorn, she realises that her father lied to her about there being no chance of a future with him whom she loves. She returns to Rivendell and convinces Elrond that she, having foresaken the life of the Eldar, cannot leave Aragorn now. She tells her father that as was declared in lore, the time to reforge Narsil has come, Narsil being the sword of Elendil that cut the Ring from Sauron's finger long ago at the end of the Second Age.

Gandalf and Pippin arrive at Minas Tirith, City of Kings, that was built out of the rock of Mindolluin. There Pippin recognises the White Tree as they go to find the Steward Denethor. They approach him mourning over Boromir, his son. Pippin swears loyalty to him in recompense

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for Boromir's sacrifice. Denethor seems to be caught up in his grief and has not taken measures to fortify the city against the threat of Sauron. Meanwhile, Frodo, Sam and Gollum arrive at Minas Morgul. Wary of the enemy, they locate the Winding Stair (leading to the pass of Cirith Ungol) that lies hidden in the cliffs surrounding the accursed city. Just at that moment, the doors of the city open and the Witch-king of Angmar, leader of the Nazgûl, dispatches his immense Orc army from his lair, heralding the start of the war. This is witnessed by Gandalf and Pippin as a flash of lightning shoots up at the opening of the doors. At the urging of Gandalf, Pippin lights the first of the beacon signals to Edoras, alerting Théoden, Aragorn and the rest of the Rohirrim to ride to the weapon-take at Dunharrow and thence to Minas Tirith. As they leave Edoras, Aragorn notices that Éowyn saddles up with them and that she is girt with a sword, but she insists that she rides only to see them off and that the men have found their captain in Aragorn.

The Morgul army crosses Anduin at Osgiliath in makeshift boats and engages the Gondorian contingent (lead by Faramir) in battle. The orcs prove too strong and drive the Gondorians out of Osgiliath, Faramir and his few surviving men retreat to Minas Tirith, pursued by the Nazgûl. Gandalf, riding out to meet the retreating men, wards them off, saving Faramir. Upon his arrival, Faramir tells Gandalf of the dangerous route Gollum is taking Frodo and Sam on, convincing Gandalf of Gollum's treachery. The hobbits, lead by Gollum, are struggling to climb the extremely steep stairs, Gollum reaches out and empathises with Frodo, saying that he understands his pain, and also poisoning him against Sam, saying that he will try and take the Ring from Frodo.

In the captured Osgiliath, the Witch-king orders his captain to "send forth all legions" and annihilate the population of Minas Tirith, saying that he himself will "break" the wizard Gandalf. Denethor, ill-pleased by Faramir's defence of Osgiliath, manipulates him into taking a doomed ride to reclaim the city. Gollum continues to play the hobbits against each other, this time by blaming Sam for eating their food provisions. Frodo, in his deluded state, is suspicious of Sam and orders him back home when Sam, trying to be helpful, offers to carry the Ring, thereby fulfilling Gollum's cunning prediction. Faramir rides head-long into the arrows of the encamped orcs as Pippin sings for Denethor who unconcernedly eats his noon-meal. The attack is destroyed and Faramir is dragged back by his horse in a death-like coma. At the weapon-take of Dunharrow, a hooded figure slowly rides on a white horse along the winding road to the encampment in the hills. The figure reveals himself to Aragorn as Elrond. He presents Aragorn with his birthright - the newly forged Anduril, Flame of the West. He urges Aragorn to use this sword, forged from the shards of Narsil, to recall the Dead Men of Dunharrow and use their allegiance to the heir of Isildur (i.e. Aragorn) to stop the attack of the Corsairs ships from the south. Aragorn accepts this counsel and rides off that very night into the Dimholt, along with Legolas and Gimli. As he is preparing to go, a tearful Éowyn comes to Aragorn and begs him not to go, declaring her love for him, but Aragorn, knowing now that Arwen has refused promise of Valinor, likewise refuses Éowyn's love. The next morning, Théoden rides off to war with six thousand riders, unaware that Éowyn and Merry, who were both told to remain behind by the King, are also part of his army.

The Morgul forces, composed mostly of Orcs, begin the siege of Minas Tirith using the heads of caputured prisoners as catapult projectiles. Denethor sees his son and believes him to be dead, he also beholds the might of the forces marshalled against him and at this he loses control and hope, ordering the Gondorians to abandon their positions. Gandalf however, steps in and incapacitates Denethor, and then proceeds to assume control of the defence. A skirmish between Gondorian trebuchets and Mordor catapults ensues until the Witch-king and the other Ringwraiths on their Fell Beasts attack, destroying the catapults and sowing terror among the defenders. Away in Cirith Ungol, Gollum betrays Frodo to the spider-creature Shelob, but Sam returns to fight her off. Sam believes Frodo is dead, but when Orcs from the Tower of Cirith Ungol come and investigate, Sam overhears that Frodo has only been paralysed by Shelob's stinger. In Minas Tirith, Denethor, stricken mad over his grief at having spent both his sons, prepares a funeral pyre for himself and the unconscious Faramir, unaware that the pyre will burn him alive. Gandalf and Pippin arrive in the Hallows and manage to save Faramir, but Denethor is thrown onto the pyre and as he burns to his death, he turns and sees his son stirring awake from his injuries and exhaustion. Down in the city, the battle goes ill with the Gondorians, as Grond shatters through the gates of the city and trolls pour in. The defenders retreat to the upper levels of the city, the orcs crawl all over the streets, looting, burning and massacring the men of Gondor. But suddenly in the midst of the chaos a lone horn penetrates the air and all turn to the west and see the army of Rohan arrive at last, to the rising of the sun. The Rohirrim charge into the Orcs with great effect. However their joy is cut short by the arrival of the forces of Harad and the

immense Mûmakil. The Witch-king descends on Théoden, killing Snowmane his horse and fatally wounding the King. Seemingly in the nick of time, the Corsairs ships arrive to help the stranded Orcs, but it is Aragorn who jumps off the ship followed by the Undead Army and they completely destroy the Orcs and Mûmakil, while Éowyn and Merry kill the Witch-king. Théoden dies of his wounds and Aragorn holds the Dead Army's oath fulfilled, releasing them from their curse so that they may rest in peace.

Sam rescues Frodo from Cirith Ungol, which is mostly empty following a fight between the two factions of the Tower's Orc garrison over Frodo's mithril shirt, and they begin the long trek across Mordor to Mount Doom. Gandalf realizes that ten thousand Orcs stand between Cirith Ungol and Mount Doom, which will prevent Frodo from reaching his destination. Aragorn proposes they lead the remaining soldiers to the Black Gate to draw the Orcs away from Frodo's path, as well as distract the Eye of Sauron. Sam carries Frodo up to Mount Doom, but Gollum arrives and attacks them, just as the Battle of the Morannon begins. At the Crack of Doom, Frodo, instead of dropping the ring into the Fire, succumbs to its power and puts it on, disappearing from sight (the act alerts Sauron, and sends the Ringwraiths racing towards Mount Doom). Gollum renders Sam unconscious then attacks Frodo, seizing his ring finger and biting it off. As Gollum rejoices at finally havng reclaimed his Precious, Frodo, still under the sway of the Ring's attraction, charges at Gollum. After a brief struggle, they both fall over the edge of the precipice. Gollum falls into the Fire with the Ring, while Frodo barely hangs on with his strength failing. Sam rescues Frodo as the Ring finally sinks into the lava and is destroyed. The Tower of Barad-dûr collapses, Sauron's essence fades and then explodes, forever banishing his power. The Orcs, Ringwraiths and the remaining forces of Sauron are consumed in the ensuing shockwave as the earth collapses under their feet. Frodo and Sam are stranded as Mount Doom erupts. They voice their regrets at not being able to see the Shire again amidst the torrents of lava and the destruction of Barad-dur. With the destruction of the Nazgul, Gandalf is able to call upon the Eagles to carry the hobbits to safety, they awake in Minas Tirith, reuniting with the other members of the fellowship, all of them having survived the War of the Ring.

Aragorn is crowned King of the West, heralding the new age of peace, and is reunited with Arwen. The hobbits return to the Shire, where Sam marries Rosie Cotton. Frodo, having finished writing his entry in the Red Book of Westmarch, is still suffering from the effects of the ring, having possessed it for so long. He realises that he will never have peace in Middle-earth. So he decides to go with Gandalf, Bilbo, Elrond and Galadriel to the Grey Havens. There he passes the Red Book onto Sam to record the years of his life to come, and thence the last ship to leave Middle-earth sets off, pulling slowly away from the shore and passing along the Straight Road into the Uttermost West. Pippin and Merry take their leave and Sam is left staring into the golden sunset. In the last scene, Sam is shown walking back up the lane to Bag End, where he is greeted by Rosie his wife and his children, surrounded by his family and with the rest of his life ahead of him, Sam sighs and says "Well, I'm back", then he goes inside and shuts the door as the screen fades to black.

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