An investigation of the role of affiliations to 'authors' in audience responses to *The Hobbit* films

Martin Barker,
Aberystwyth University, UK

Abstract:
What light can the rich body of materials in the *World Hobbit Project* database throw on the long tradition of debates about film 'authorship'? This essay explores 'authorship' from the perspective of audiences, asking: what difference is made to people's involvement with the films by their affiliation with the figures of 'JRR Tolkien', or 'Peter Jackson', or both? The essay builds a comparison of the ways in which participants evaluate the films (working with a separation of Enthusiasts, and Critics), offer accounts of broader issues raised by the films, and relate their responses to 'interpretive communities'. Some intriguing patterns emerge, which throw light on the ways 'images of authors' play a role within audience responses.

Introduction

Interest in issues around 'authorship' has a long history within (among other fields) film studies. Aside from the multifarious biographies and critical studies of individual film-makers (or indeed of studios, which have been as sustaining distinctive styles of film-making), there is of course a substantial tradition of theories of authorship. They began with the emergence of auteur theory – that French-originated approach which hunts for stylistic continuities across an 'auteur's' body of work, and assigns value according to their presence or absence. There followed the very contrasting approaches of Roland Barthes whose essay 'Death of the author' sought to upgrade the contributory role of the 'reader' who selects, sequences, embroiders and chains the elements of a text into a meaningful whole; and Michel Foucault, whose concept of the 'author-function' directed attention to the role that myths of a 'creative personality' behind a text played. The debates around these have been substantial. Partly in critical response to these primarily theory-driven accounts, a series or more empirical, testing investigations (see eg , Lovell & Sergi, 2005; and

Boozer, 2008) have sought to trace the shifting and competing contributions of a range of makers (producers, directors, scriptwriters, editors, sound- and costume-designers, etc) to the shape of finished films.[1] Such debates are far from finished.

But for some reason, aside from some very particular debates within fan studies (which I return to shortly), there has yet to be any substantial work on the ways in which interest in 'authors' might play a role within audiences' responses (engagement, interpretation, evaluation) to films. In this essay I attempt to unpack the issues in here, through a case study of responses to the films of *The Hobbit*. Specifically, using materials from the *World Hobbit Project* database I try to answer these broad questions:

1. How do enthusiasts and critics of the *Hobbit* films appeal to their 'authors' in support of their praise or complaints?
2. What different conceptions of those authors, and of themselves as audiences, emerge from their accounts?

What motivates these questions is, I would argue, a new concept: 'vernacular attributions of authorship'. By this I mean the ways in which different audience groups call upon conceptions of the makers of a film (or other cultural product) to inform and make sense of their responses. These can be built on actual knowledge of what particular people or organisations did. They can also be built on rumours, guesses, attributions, wishes and hopes. It seems particularly apposite to tackle questions of these kinds in relation to the *Hobbit* films, given the obvious availability of two different 'authors': J R R Tolkien, and Peter Jackson. Of course, as we will see in a moment, there are other candidates for at least partial authorship of the films.

This concept of 'vernacular authorship' does not seem to have been much examined, as far as I can tell. There is interesting work in the field of experimental cognitive psychology which explores how different factors – exposure, artists' statements, artists' names, reputation and stylistic consistency – may play within aesthetic judgements. Most recently, Cleemans et al. (2016) reported an experiment in which 20 art history and 20 psychology students were presented with artworks with or without names. They found that, even when (in particular the psychology) students did not recognise the name, having this 'information' increased their ratings of the works. As they say, 'the effect would be especially pronounced for people unfamiliar with the art world' (p. 2). But what is perhaps most revealing about this essay comes in two sentences, which particularly reveal the consequences of this method of abstracted research. They write that they are 'assuming that the participants have little or no knowledge about the painting' (p.2), hence that emphasis on unfamiliarity. This is effectively a requirement of this mode of experimental research – that they can remove 'interfering variables' such as elements of existing knowledge or interest, conceptions or misconceptions, and the like. And this severely limits what can be learnt from such research.[2] In real-world situations, people encounter cultural items of any kind – be they paintings, poems, myths, or films – with complex layers of

existing knowledge, which come into play in even more complex ways, as part of making sense and responding. The great advantage of our research is that we can glean at least some evidence of the lived interplay of prior ideas and resultant responses. In that interplay, ideas of 'the author' may be one significant component.

Introducing this concept, though, is not simply a case of *adding to* the ways in which we might think about authorship. Rather, and as is often the case (I would argue), approaching from an audience studies perspective in subtle ways challenges existing approaches and reveals their working assumptions and conceptual limitations. I want to introduce this idea by quick examination of three of the most famous arguments over 'the author': from Roland Barthes, *Cahiers du Cinema*, and Michel Foucault.

First, Roland Barthes' famous essay, 'Death of the author' ([1977] 2008): Barthes opens with a one-sentence quotation from a short story by Balzac, 'Sarrasine': "This was woman herself, with sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility". He asks of this: who is speaking? Is it Balzac, as philosopher, or as individual author, or is it something else, the embodiment of some general position? He argues that no 'author' can sensibly be deduced – and that the obsession with locating 'authors' is a troubled part of a modernist, critical sensibility. Give up on it, he argues wittily and polemically – instead, we should usher in a new figure, the 'Reader': 'the reader is the space in which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost, a text's unity lies not in its origins but in its destination' (p.100). This is of course a short, provocative essay, not attempting to do everything. Even so, I believe the perils in this way of arguing become clear if we dare to think about *actual* readers. First, his claim that nothing can be 'lost' to the Reader – why not? Is it not conceivable that by *editing, highlighting, sequencing and focusing*, *actual* readers (or viewers, listeners, or etc) might successfully mount a *series* of 'unities' – that is, differing coherent ways of making sense out of the 'text' of such a story? Second, what if *actual* readers bring with them knowledge of, interest in, attention to *senses of authorship* – looking as they read for signs of the 'writer' (director, poet, whatever) behind, motivating, binding together the elements of the 'text'? In other words, *real* readers may carry into their engagement a commitment to finding evidence of an 'author', even if they are not supposed to.

For all the value of his challenge, Barthes' 'reader' is mainly a textual construct – visible only to some kind of expert analyst. *Actual* readers (viewers, or whatever) are thereby silenced and hidden. Audience research, in seeking to reinstate the people who actually read (or listen, or watch), are forced to consider how different kinds of people may bring with them, and make use of, working ideas and interests concerning the authorship of books, poems, paintings, films, or whatever. These may drive the seeking and constructing (or of course the failure to achieve these) 'unities' from their textual encounters.

Consider next the much-cited essay from the Editorial Collective of *Cahiers du Cinema*. Their analysis of John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) – announcing and introducing their new Althusser-influenced structural auteurism – has been widely

debated.[3] Mostly, the discussions have focused on the theoretical and historical claims that the Editors made about the film. But the implied model of the audience has remained much less considered. Yet it is there, in the repeated uses of the word 'spectator' – a figure which gets more and more complex and tangled as their argument unfolds. Their essay offers a 'reading' of Ford's film which sees it as an ideological expression of the Republican Party's angry opposition to Roosevelt's liberal New Deal. The essay has a long positional introduction, setting out the bones of a right way to do such a structural/ideological analysis.   This argues for an 'active reading' which will bring into view (perhaps with a little forcing) a series of 'structuring absences' which constitute the film's ideological work. There follows a detailed historical placement of Hollywood, 20th Century Fox, and Darryl Zanuck (embodying 'Big Business') and their relations with the Republicans. To this is appended a sketch of the film-making process (which emphasises how much was *not* in John Ford's gift). Finally comes the close analysis of the film itself. Out of this emerges an account in which Lincoln is perceived as embodying 'The Law' – an absolute, universal set of principles – by dint of his family, domesticity and personality. So, his slaving, his involvement with banks, and other real activities, while perhaps *mentioned*, are pressed into silence and absence.

To any film analyst, this was intoxicating stuff. But their claims about its ideological meaning and significance turn on a figure of 'the spectator' who is, on inspection, frankly weird. S/he is simultaneously utterly *knowing*, and completely *blinded*. Or as they say it: 'The retroactive action of the spectator's knowledge of the myth on the chronicle of events, and the naturalist rewriting of the myth in the divisions of this chronicle thus impose a reading in the future perfect'. (Grant, ed., p.219)   To put this in more comprehensible language, 'spectators' need to be people who have *recognised* the mythology of Lincoln's role in the founding of the USA, but are now forced by the film to reorient their knowledge of a supposed past into an emergent, future-oriented project. 'History' becomes activated, these spectators are 'interpellated'[4], into a vision of America's future and how it is to be reached.

What particularly interests me is the task given to this 'bad-ideal spectator'. In fact it is an incredibly circumscribed group – they have to carry the right amount of knowledge, and be in the right place and time, to 'fit'. Yet at the same time *all* viewers (other than the Editorial Board, who by virtue of their 'science' are rendered immune to these ideological influences) are rendered dubious, prone to incorporation into these mythic structures. The only measure is how near or far one is from this 'bad-ideal' position. This *does* matter – and not just because it stops us asking other, more answerable questions.   It makes it nigh on impossible to reconceive the role of *historic* films. Think the case of *It's A Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946) which now, in the UK at least, fulfils the role of being a 'perfect Xmas film': sentimental, idealised, with a snowscaped, family-centred Happy Ending. I want to argue that such *ritualised* pleasures are significant things in themselves, but with the bonus that *IAWL* offers the equivalent morality tale to Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Deducing ideological positions which are mounted within texts, and then deducing 'spectator-positions' from textual characteristics alone, is a one-dimensional game.

Michel Foucault's essay 'What is an author?' ([1969] 1977) looks on the face of it a more promising resource, since it does see the idea of an 'author' as an important component within a wider discourse – and therefore is asking about the *purposes* of such references. But on closer inspection, the essay poses a real barrier to the kinds of empirical investigation which I am attempting here. Foucault begins from a self-critique, for the way in which he himself used authors' names in his discussion (in *The Order of Things*) of the 'functional conditions of discourse units' (p.114) such as 'natural history' and 'political economy'. He now proposes in effect to turn 'the author' into another such discursive unit, whose 'rules' of operation can be determined independent of any individuals' intentions. The most provocative part of the essay, to me, is that part where he draws on John Searle's ideas on the 'performative' work of language to argue that appeals to 'authorship' work differently from mere references to names. To say that Bacon might have written Shakespeare's work is to alter the *import* of the name 'Shakespeare' in the way that to say that he did or did not have any children does not. Foucault's target is clearly that tradition of literary theorising which sought encyclopaedic knowledge of authors' lives in order to map how their biographies fed into their work – how this work reflected, therefore, an authorial personality through whose 'true self' their work was filtered – and which in turn *legitimated* their decisions, made their work worthwhile and 'authentic'. Foucault is scathing, pointedly asking if such things as notes about meals, or train tickets, constituted part of the 'work' which biographers had to assemble and make meaningful.[5]

The problem with this is that Foucault himself assumes that there is only one direction that claims about 'authorship' can take: this literary-critical direction. Hence his closing dismissal of the questions which he sees authorship studies as posing, his replacement with his own discursive ones – which are summed up in a dismissive 'who cares' (what he calls a 'murmur of indifference'): 'What matters who's speaking?' (p. 138) Consider for a moment other possible motives for ascribing authorship to a film. What if it operates for some as a *counter* to an *impersonalisation* of culture? Or, where 'fantasy' has for so long been dismissed as silly nonsense, might not the promotion of the heavyweight name of 'Professor Tolkien' counterbalance? When critics of our films damned them as 'pure Hollywood' (itself a kind of 'authorship' attribution), a counter-attachment to 'Peter Jackson' might put meaning and purpose back into the arena. And for those who love and appreciate the films, having names to connect to them allows them to express *gratitude* and to *permit them to take them more seriously*.

Foucault, I would argue, has on this occasion prejudged what attributions of authorship mean. For sure, they can be components in discourses – but the nature, meaning and direction of those discourses cannot be presumed to be singular. And they need to be open to empirical investigation, to disclose their operations.

Concepts and Questions

The concept of 'vernacular attributions of authorship' (or, for short, 'vernacular authorships') is intended to focus attention on the ways that very ordinary and quotidian

beliefs about who *creates* or *is responsible for* cultural products, can play a role in the ways people engage with, respond to, and evaluate those products. These beliefs may result from a combination of any of the following: education, knowledge and research; general circulating talk (publicity, news, interviews, reviews, debates, controversies, etc); stored prior experiences; membership of associated groups; or simple attributional guesswork. It doesn't matter what kinds of products they are – poems, films, concerts museum exhibits, or whatever. To the degree that people encountering these bring to bear ideas and feelings about *who* or *what* created them, out of what motives and with what purposes, their subsequent experience may be shaped by those beliefs. Vernacular attributions of authorship can be part of preparing one's frame of mind for the experience. Or, it could be the case that *from* an experience, a person *retroactively* makes sense of it by developing or revising their 'sense of the author'.

Using this concept, then, I try here to ask:

1. In what ways, and to what extent, does interest in a particular conceived 'author' shape people's encounter with the *Hobbit* films?
2. How far do different authorial interests *differentiate* responses to that encounter?
3. How do concepts of the 'author' relate to audiences' self-images, and their accounts of the typicality or otherwise of their experiences?
4. How are such (positive or negative) authorial conceptions constructed? What 'story' is given or implied of the various 'authors'?

A possible fifth question cannot really be answered here, because of the particular design of our research:

5. How are authorial conceptions deployed in debates over the qualities and achievements of the films?

What follows are the results of some very exploratory research, taking an opportunity afforded by our richly structured database – although that opportunity was certainly not something planned when we planned and designed the project.

Methods

This essay is based on an exploration of the relations between answers to one question in our survey, and the remainder of the answers. Question 3 of *The Hobbit* world survey asked participants to choose, from a list of 12 options, up to three options as to why they had wanted to see the *Hobbit* films.[6] Among these were options for both Tolkien ("I love Tolkien's work as a whole") and Jackson ("I love Peter Jackson's films"). Each of these was strongly stated, so choosing them should indicate some significant degree of affiliation with one or the other, or both. Even so it is clear that some participants might choose either of

these for quite casual reasons. I was also aware that there was at least one other which pointed to partial 'authorship' ("An actor I particularly like was in them").[7] Despite this, and in order to keep the investigation manageable, I elected to explore the implications of people choosing or not choosing just the two options. Combined, they generated four categories of choices: ***Tolkien without Jackson*** (**T & not J**); ***Jackson without Tolkien*** (**J & not T**); ***neither Tolkien nor Jackson*** (**Not T & not J**); and ***both Tolkien and Jackson*** (**Both T & J**). But because I was interested in the role of these choices in *evaluations* of the films, I elected to separate 'Enthusiasts' (those who judged the films 'Excellent' in response to our first question) and 'Critics' (those who judged the films either 'Reasonable', 'Poor' or 'Awful').[8] Because our survey attracted substantially more enthusiastic than critical responses, I needed to combine the latter groups in order to be sure of working with similarly large numbers, for meaningful analysis. The resulting eight categories held these populations.

Table 1: Overall numbers in each of the eight 'vernacular authorship' categories:

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts	2561	5998	1291	3274
Critics	2440	5982	527	1050

I was aware that some of our participants might have answered questions casually, or hurriedly, so I did not expect any absolute separations of responses between the categories. Instead, by drawing out the contrasts, I hoped to bring into view enough of a separation to allow provisional conceptualisation, and to open avenues for further research on what is, I sense, a pretty new topic. In presenting the results of my analyses, I've therefore pointed *both* to those characteristics that are generally shared across all Enthusiasts, and across all Critics; but then *also* tentatively (with some indicators for just *how* tentative I am) catalogued the distinctive qualities of each of the 8 categories. To make these concrete, I have included in each case *indicative examples* of discursive tendencies either not found in other categories, or not found to the same extent.

But even with all these caveats, when I reflect on what has emerged, I do believe that (a) there is enough patterning to warrant the general validity of the investigation, and (b) there are sufficiently strong differentiations between the categories to conclude that vernacular authorships do indeed play a role in the shaping and explaining of people's responses to the films. The main evidence comes from answers to three of our Questions. I am honestly unsure whether the fact that this differentiation is not found in relation to *all* the qualitative responses is a sign of weakness (suggesting inconsistency, and insufficient evidence) or strength (suggesting specificity, and localisation).

Quantitative indicators
It is worth noticing, at the outset, that members of the different categories had different amounts to say, in response to our open-ended questions, as **Table 2** shows.

Table 2: Overall amounts of 'talk' by Ratings and Authorship category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J	TOTALS
Enthusiasts	9855	11767	13989	10532	46143
Critics	9557	13956	13931	15616	53060
TOTALS	19412	25723	27920	26148	

Table 2 shows that while Critics, overall, had the most to say, this tendency is clearly strongest among those affiliating with 'Tolkien'. The significance of this will become apparent gradually. But **Table 2** also shows that having *any* affiliation substantially increases people's willingness to talk about their responses. Beyond this crude measure, what can we learn from quantitative patterns?

'Tolkien'-affiliation

Some results are perhaps unsurprising – indeed, I might worry if they had not shown up. For instance, in responses to our 'Kinds of Films' question, 'Enthusiasts' in both **T & not J** and **Both T & J** categories show a markedly stronger willingness to describe the films as 'Part of Tolkien's world of legends' than the other groups. Strikingly, among the 'Critics' the results retain the same proportions but fall drastically:

Table 3: Choices of 'Part of Tolkien's Legend-world' by percentage per category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts				
Tolkien's legend world	50.5	86.3	57.2	86.5
Critics				
Tolkien's legend world	27.4	39.1	28.5	47.1

Other results, looking initially unsurprising, turn out on closer inspection to reveal a startling complexity – notably, in relation to reading of *The Hobbit*. Naming 'Tolkien' associates with much higher levels of Reading More Than Once, overall. This holds true for both Enthusiasts and Critics – but with a fascinating inversion, the Critics reporting *higher* levels of repeat-reading than the Enthusiasts. The figures are striking – albeit some of the difference is made up by people in the Planning To Read category. Enthusiasts in **T & not J** report 49.0%, in **Both T & J** report 50.5%; Critics in T & J report 67.7%, while in **Both T & J** report 57.9% – a strong indication that devotion to the book must be playing a significant role in Critics' objections to the film.

Table 4: Levels of reading of *The Hobbit* by percentage per category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts				
Had it read to me	1.9	1.6	2.2	1.4
Read once	21.0	27.8	26.8	24.9

Read more than once	17.8	49.0	21.0	50.5
Still reading	5.6	4.8	5.7	5.3
Not read at all	28.3	6.5	21.6	6.0
Planning to read	25.4	10.2	22.6	12.0
Critics				
Had it read to me	3.2	1.1	2.7	1.4
Read once	32.0	24.2	39.8	28.4
Read more than once	24.9	67.7	20.7	57.9
Still reading	1.5	0.8	2.7	1.9
Not read at all	31.8	3.7	26.2	6.1
Planning to read	6.5	2.5	8.0	4.3

Table 4 shows clearly that affiliating with 'Tolkien' more than doubles the likelihood of having read the book More Than Once, with a significantly higher 'bonus' of Planning to Read – for both Enthusiasts and Critics. But there is a substantial twist. While, here, Critics report much higher levels of repeat-reading than Enthusiasts – which might prepare us for thinking that criticism of the films is associated with some sort of 'defence' of the book – in fact when we look at the *ratings* of the book, we *don't* find higher ratings of the book among the Critics. On the contrary, while over 60% of Enthusiast Tolkien-namers rate the book 'Excellent' (with under 27% of non-namers doing the same), only between 39-47% of Critic Tolkien-namers do the same (with under 17% of non-namers, this time):

Table 5: 'Excellent' ratings of *The Hobbit* book by percentage per category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts				
Excellent	26.6	61.6	25.9	60.0
Critics				
Excellent	16.9	47.2	13.7	38.9

Does this suggest that it is more an *idea* of Tolkien which is being defended by Critics, rather than actual devotion to the works? Understanding what precisely is going on here is clearly going to depend on looking at qualitative materials.

These results do seem to confirm that naming 'Tolkien' as a motivating reason for seeing the films does associate meaningfully with the ways people perceived and assessed the films – which is encouraging for all the further analysis.

There are some other indications that affiliating with 'Tolkien' has wider implications which take the films for Enthusiasts, but also sometimes also for Critics, beyond the significance that the other groups award them. Notably, in answering our Orientations to Fantasy question, for both Enthusiasts and Critics, there are increases in the proportion citing 'Hopes and Dreams' (43-46%) among Tolkien-mentioners, when compared with the others (37%). For the Critics, a similar if lower ratio obtains, with Tolkien-mentioners generating 30-32%, while the other groups generate only 19-22%.

Table 6: Choices of Wider Role of 'Fantasy' by percentage per category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts				
Enrich imagination	68.5	71.9	69.6	72.3
Explore emotions	31.6	33.5	33.9	38.1
Hopes and dreams	37.0	43.4	37.5	47.6
Ways of escaping	49.9	51.8	50.9	54.1
Shared entertainment	22.9	18.6	24.9	22.9
Different attitudes	27.1	28.9	29.3	31.1
Alternative worlds	42.1	43.8	46.1	48.2
No particular role	16.0	0.9	1.5	0.8
Critics				
Enrich imagination	55.9	64.0	63.0	66.3
Explore emotions	22.7	27.2	26.0	32.9
Hopes and dreams	19.5	30.2	22.4	32.8
Ways of escaping	53.1	54.8	60.2	60.5
Shared entertainment	35.0	25.4	34.5	32.6
Different attitudes	26.5	31.7	32.1	29.9
Alternative worlds	43.1	48.0	51.6	47.7
No particular role	7.7	2.7	2.7	3.0

While the variations are in the main not massive (although note the striking difference under Enthusiasts' choices of 'No particular role'), there are nonetheless clear opposite tendencies: 'Tolkien'-affiliation associates with rises in emphasis on Imagination and Hopes and Dreams, while 'Jackson'-affiliation associates with increased emphasis on Entertainment, among both Enthusiasts and Critics.

'Jackson'-affiliation

In the reverse direction, there are signs that affiliation with Jackson alone (in the **J & not T** category) carries implications with it. Alongside the lower connections with the *Hobbit* book signalled above compared with the **T & not J** group (43.1% of Jackson-affiliating Enthusiasts not having read the book), there are other – admittedly smaller – indications of what I might tentatively call a more 'cinematic orientation'. Thus, in Kinds of Films, Enthusiastic 'Jackson'-affiliators score more highly on 'Action-adventure' (28.5% vs 20.3% for **T & not J**s), 'Digital novelty film' (10.4% vs 5.9% for **T & not J**s), and 'Stunning locations' (44.4% vs 34.8% for **T & not J**s). This is continued to a degree among the Critics ('Prequel/sequel': 39.8% vs 24.1%; and 'Action-adventure': 33.6% vs 25.2%). However it must be said that the discriminators are not so powerful in the case of 'Jackson' as in the case of 'Tolkien'.

Lack of author-affiliation

Table 2 revealed that non-affiliators simply had less to say about their responses to the films than the other groups. Other results flesh out what this might mean. Along a series of dimensions those in the **Neither T nor J** category give responses which suggest that the films are seen to be relatively self-contained experiences, without wider consequences or implications. So, for instance, 16% of Enthusiasts in the **Neither T nor J** group report 'No Particular Role' in response to our Orientations to Fantasy question – as against *under 1%* for the other three groups of Enthusiasts. (The variation is much smaller [over 7% vs under 3%] for the Critics.) In responding about Other Activities, again both Enthusiasts and Critics in the **Neither T nor J** category generate higher responses for None of These than all the other groups (Enthusiasts: 34.4% vs under 20%; Critics: 55.8% vs c.30%). The **Neither T nor J** group also stand apart in showing less interest in seeing the films on DVD/BluRay (Enthusiasts: 30.4% vs over 40%; Critics: 18.9% vs over 27%). This raises the possibility that this marks a lower level of interest in repeat-viewing, and in things such as DVD Extras, Director's Cuts or Extended Editions.

Another sign of this can be seen in responses to our Question about Other Activities. For *all* participants, the most popular choice was 'Seriously debating the films'. However, for both the Enthusiasts and Critics (albeit by quite a short margin with the former), **Neither T nor J** make the lowest choices in this category.

Table 7: Choices of 'Seriously debating the films' by percentage per category

	Not T & not J	T & not J	J & not T	Both T & J
Enthusiasts				
Serious debating	40.0	47.2	42.6	52.6
Critics				
Serious debating	32.5	49.4	45.2	52.7

Both Enthusiasts and Critics in the **Neither T nor J** category also give the lowest levels of praise for the *Lord of the Rings* films – for Enthusiasts, top ratings of 76.8% to 90+% for the other three categories; and for the Critics, just 38.4% vs a range of 62%-86% for the other three. And **Neither T nor J** participants also report the lowest levels of reading and rating of the book of *The Hobbit*. Over 50% of Enthusiasts report not having read it: figures for 'Excellent' ratings for the book also sharply differentiate, with just over 25% for those not mentioning 'Tolkien' rising to over 60% for those mentioning him. For Critics, the pattern repeats, with non-readers constituting nearly 40% of both non-Tolkien groups (as against between just 6-10% of Tolkien-affiliators); while Excellent is awarded by at most 16% (vs 38-47% of Tolkien-mentioners).

Taken together, I would argue, these figures give confidence that there are indeed clearly separating categories of response associated with affiliation (or otherwise) to figures of

'Tolkien' or 'Jackson'. The next task is to pursue these differences into discursive patterns revealed by qualitative responses.

Talking about the films

My second phase of analysis turned on an examination of participants' answers to all questions other than the multiple-choice ones. This involved close reading of the samples of 50 per category, selected in the manner I described earlier. However, it soon became clear that some questions were not going to provide relevant materials. So, the very brief answers given to our closing questions about three Common Cultural Activities, and three Favourite Experiences generated nothing of relevance to this topic. Answers to our invitation to tell us anything personal that might help us understand their responses overall generated just that: highly personalised responses. For that reason, they are fascinating to read when and as we construct individual portraits, but they did not lend themselves to category-analysis. In more complex ways, answers to our question asking participants to explain their positive and negative Kinds of Films choices produced answers which only make sense by relating back to those choices (very common wordings are 'I made those choices because ...').

Interestingly, three other questions generated answers which, while they take forms which lend themselves to this kind of analysis, do not appear to show patterned separations by author-affiliation. These are our questions about Favourite Characters, about Most Impressive Moment/Aspect, and about Most Disappointing Moment/Aspect. This left three questions where analysis does reveal meaningful signs of categorical differences between differently-affiliated audiences. I take each in turn.

Explanations for Ratings awarded

Question 1 had asked participants to give an overall Rating to the Hobbit films, on a 5-point scale from 'Awful' to 'Excellent'. Question 2 then gave an opportunity to explain this Rating, asking: 'Can you sum up your response to the films in your own words?' **Tables 8 & 9** summarise the results of close analysis of these, and offers illustrative quotations of complete answers:

Table 8: Patterning of Enthusiasts' answers to ''Can you sum up your response to the films in your own words?':

Enthusiasts
Common elements: The films were 'exciting' and 'spectacular'; a 'great follow-on to *Lord of the Rings*' (with occasional reservations); with 'wonderful acting' and 'great characters'. Audiences were 'grateful'. The films had 'excellent special effects' ('CGI' is used as a positive term).

✗ ✗	✓ ✗	✗ ✓	✓ ✓
A mix of seeing the films as 'great entertainment', and discovering the book through the films. Either, a 'great journey' made up of good parts: a 'relevant interpretation', or, a real 'discovery', a new process begun.	Many 'emotional' answers (including *lists* of impacts). The book (and occasionally Tolkien) is a repeated point of reference (sometimes as something surpassed by the films, sometimes as sources of regret).	A series of detailed references to cinematic qualities (filming, editing, sound, locations, acting). *The books are only occasionally referenced.* The *Lord of the Rings* films as a measure of achievement.	Like the previous in emphasising cinematic qualities, but with the addition of a strong interest in *narrative* (what the films have added to the book). Sense of joint authorship. A *few* emotional answers, emphasising pleasures of immersion.
Indicative answers: "Extremely entertaining, and for those who haven't read the books sets an interesting understanding for the *LotR* trilogy. The first one was a bit slower than the rest, but the CGI effects were amazing none the less." [#28616] "I thoroughly enjoyed each film. Lots of action and exciting scenes." [#30167] "I watched the first two movies on DVD when the third one came out. I was so enthusiastic I went to see the third movie in a theater, which I seldom do, twice, from the front row. I only wish I could turn back the clock and watch them all this way. I have become addicted to the trilogy." [#30477]	*Indicative answers:* "I cried so much that I thought I couldn't breathe when it was over." [#20568] "Epic, classic, heart wrenching." [#7051] "It was an exhilarating adventure for the audience, I grew fond of the characters and was able to feel compassion and love towards them. Felt blessed to see Tolkien's work come to life but shattered to see it end. It gave strength and hope for everyday battles." [#15908] "I was totally absorbed in every film and would have sat through another showing immediately if one had been available. They prompted me to revisit all the books.." [#30863]	*Indicative answers:* "I just loved *Lord of the Rings*, which I saw before reading the books, and which opened up Middle Earth to my delighted imagination. So *The Hobbit* was a natural long-awaited extension. I knew Peter Jackson's vision already, so he could do no wrong." [34758] "They were so awesome! I loved the different storylines, especially Dol Guldur! I can't wait to buy a Special BluRay Box Set with all the 6 movies!" [#20913] "Great actors, great directing, great CGI. Peter concentrated on the characters' emotions, which is good for the story and thus makes it more captivating for the audience." [#20664]	*Indicative answers:* "Left me with the overwhelming wish to live in Middle Earth, including weeks of research and reading about Tolkien's work, just like after watching *Lord of the Rings* back in the days. I enjoy to dive into the world created, I feel deeply touched by it." [#21175] "The films filled in the gaps that had always bothered me about the book, and, frankly, made me fall in love with the story all over again. It was like I was reliving my childhood but with greater understanding and detail. Additionally, everyone has at least one character in the movies that they can relate to on a very personal basis. That added greater life and passion to the films." [#15870]

Table 9: Patterning of Critics' answers to ''Can you sum up your response to the films in your own words?':

Critics			
Common elements: The films were too long, 'stretched', and 'bloated'. There was too much, and bad, CGI. Peter Jackson was not seriously committed, this time. They simply don't live up to the _Lord of the Rings_ films. A tendency to trace a viewer's journey across the three films.			
Repeated use of words like 'pointless', 'boring', 'nothing special' – indicating generalised discontent, but not offering clear criteria. _Sense of relatively dispersed, low-level complaints._	Highly patterned. Anger at Tolkien being insulted. Changes from the book. Too much, poor CGI. Too comedic. Journeys to dissatisfaction across the films. Lack of emotional connection.	Talk of 'fillers', 'padding', Wish for models and prosthetics instead of CGI (cine-awareness). Annoyance at financial motives. _Lord of the Rings_ films as ultimate measure. No mention of Tolkien.	Emphasis on plot-holes, bad decisions, alongside book-related complaints (eg, the romance, introduction of Azog). Tolkien is rarely named. CGI condemned as 'unreal' (compared to _LotR_) and regret at lack of prosthetics etc.
Indicative answers: "They were alright, but nothing special. I wouldn't turn them off if they were on the telly, but nor would I actively seek them out to watch again." [#28915] "Unnecessarily long, bloated. Felt like an excuse to make a franchise, not a movie, so compared to the original trilogy it felt soulless, made for money, not love." [#12390] "…too much unnecessary additions, both in terms of plot and set-pieces, neither of which added	_Indicative answers:_ "They were a perverted, distorted image of the masterpiece that is _The Hobbit_. A very poor adaptation for simple-minded audiences." [#24312] "The films were disappointing in light of the richness of the Tolkien universe, and the great success of the _Lord of the Rings_ movie trilogy." [#19043] ""The 3 films have gone from good to worst, _An Unexpected Journey_ was great, but _The Desolation of Smaug_ was not good, _The Battle of the Five_	_Indicative answers:_ "A cinematic product of our time. Everything apart from Martin Freeman's performance seems to be completely soulless. A movie made of plastic, a bored director playing with its toys while making noises with his mouth." [#25769] "Too much CGI and too stage-bound - missed the feeling of a real place that location filming gave the _LOTR_ trilogy. Also - and this is key - it should have been ONE movie. Padding this story out to three films was an absolutely fatal decision,	_Indicative answers:_ "I was disappointed because I had come to expect higher standards from Peter Jackson." [#31378] "Way too much CGI that looked like CGI. Took you out of the movie. Didn't feel like we were in Middle Earth. Some of the other changes with the dwarf/elf love affair felt unnecessary. But the unnecessary changes could have been forgiven if the CGI didn't look fake. I miss the prosthetics and non-green screen locations." [#9781] "Time I will never get

anything to the film and often detracted from my enjoyment of them. There was potential for a good series of films, but I personally do not think they achieved this." [#19248] "Too long, generally not as good as the *LOTR* films, some SFX seemed shoddy and unfinished." [#27096]	*Armies* was better than *Desolation* but it had many problems in the storyline...." [#39440] "I didn't get as excited as it was in case of the *Lord of the Rings*. The whole thing seemed to have too many computer created effects too. Less natural." [#26886]	driven by naked avarice." [#19231] "Too much filler, too much silly, and surprisingly had a distinctly different cinematic feel to the three Ring movies." [#27925]	back, but a book I loved and had to watch till the bitter end. Felt like being sat by someone playing a computer game and just watching them. Should have been just one film, felt like I was being fleeced to see all 3." [#27555]

Thinking about Broader Issues:

Question 10 asked people to say what if any broader issues or themes were for them raised by the films. It was left entirely open whether these would be intra-filmic or extra-filmic.

Tables 10 & 11 again present a summary of common and distinctive tendencies, along with illustrative quotations:

Table 10: Patterning of Enthusiasts' answers to 'Do *The Hobbit* films raise any broader issues or themes on which you would like to comment?'

Enthusiasts			
Common elements: While occasional elements of what is commonly found among Critics in general (critiques of 'Hollywood's' money-making, and the like), these never occur on their own – instead they are balanced against mentions and discussions of cultural themes: the dangers of greed, intolerance, racism, and etc; and celebrations of loyalty, friendship, and courage.			
The least distinctive, and the highest number of refusals to answer. Passing mentions of 'race' and 'gender', and the need to 'overcome fears' and 'stay loyal'. Distinctively, several decline to point to any themes, saying 'it's just entertainment'.	Strong sense of time-relevance of themes. Also, relevance to 'we'/'us'. More explicit and elaborated answers. Occasional references to Tolkien as 'source'.	More cinematically aware, and accepting/ valuing of changes from book to films. Fantasy as a value in itself. A number of validations of Tauriel's inclusion as sign of relevant updating, and anti-sexism.	Quite high numbers of refusals to answer, plus some hinting but declining to elaborate. High level of generality with mainly brief answers. Fantasy is a self-sufficient reason and theme. Occasional indications of attention to cinematic specifics.

Indicative answers:	*Indicative answers:*	*Indicative answers:*	*Indicative answers:*
"I am afraid I viewed them as entertainment only, and not as a reflection on a wider social context." [#19172] "I think the *Hobbit* films touch on many themes but the one that stands out most for me is how people should strive to be better and for dare to overcome their fears." [#75] "Discrimination... Elves are the prettiest therefore they are the best." [#28616] "Overcome your fears." [#15932] "I understand that there was a lot of content that Jackson wanted to explore... But it was childrens book. Why did it have to be SO MANY movies! Stop being so obvious about wanting to make more money." [#32264]	"I believe they cover aspects of real world conflicts (good vs evil, right vs wrong) but it also allows you to dream and provides inspiration for others to do extraordinary things. It also dealt greatly with how we cope and react to different settings and outcomes and whether we have what's necessary to continue and hold our ground." [#15908] "I think the most significant theme *The Hobbit* raised was the dragon sickness. It showed the problems with hoarding wealth and jealously guarding it against anyone who might need it, a sentiment all too familiar in today's world of corporate greed and one percenters. Thorin's dying words about valuing home and good cheer over wealth are perhaps more poignant now than they were when Tolkien originally wrote them." [#33744] "To paraphrase Professor Tolkien - Even the smallest person can make a difference." [#30627]	"Many people dislike the inclusion / creation of Tauriel, and that her part was to play a 'shallow and unlikely' romantic plot. I however appreciate the inter-racial nature of that story, and that it suggests a young isolated female elf warrior's world being rapidly broadened, in spite of the trauma caused. These suggest broader themes of inter-racial harmony, and love/compassion/achieved understanding for the larger world." [#34758] "I think of it in terms of Joseph Campbell's myths and legends, in that it speaks to human desires 'played out,' and speaks to English (speaking) culture, especially." [#18502] "Tolkien had an issue about women. There are practically no female characters in the story, and while everyone has sons and daughters, there is not a single wife in sight. For me, that begs the question if this is because of Tolkien's social background … or if he was maybe homosexual …" [#4320]	"*The Hobbit* is a fantasy. You can read whatever you want into it -- the consequences of greed, the burden of responsibility, good versus evil, etc. But it is ultimately a carefully written, richly imagined fantasy." [#10046] "More than the book, they raise questions about politics, possession, greed, and what role violence should play in our society. They also emphasize the gray area that is morality." [#15870] "Human nature and what greed, love, friendship, trauma, does to people. Tolkien and Walsh, Jackson, Boyens and Del Toro all took these to greater heights. I loved Freeman's mastery of true friendship with Bilbo & Thorin. And Armitage perfectly illuminated the sticky & devastating consequences of addiction." [#18289]

Table 11: Patterning of Critics' answers to 'Do *The Hobbit* films raise any broader issues or themes on which you would like to comment?'

Critics
Common elements: The inverse of Enthusiasts' overall pattern – while there are still a few

references to themes such as 'value of friendship and loyalty' and 'dangers of greed', it is more commonly *greed of the makers* that is referenced. Alongside this, a spread of rejections of the films' technical qualities – calling its CGI 'videogame-like'.

Mainly short answers. A repeated attack on the films' crawling to the 'money-men'. Plus critical dismissals of their CGI, and their attitudes to female characters.	Highly elaborated answers (or promises that they could be). Tolkien, the Estate, and the book are strongly brought into play. Elaborated critiques of gender roles.	Many other cinematic comparisons brought into play, to illustrate critiques. Critique of 'franchising'. Also of film-making decisions. Detailed debates on dominance of particular kinds of effects.	Films vs book: a very strong opposition. Again, some detailed cinematic comparisons, to critique the kinds of film-making Jackson offered. It is unclear whether 'Jackson' = 'the studios', or was overwhelmed by them.
Indicative answers: "Yes, they are a form of expensive merchandising that the studio can understand in numbers rather than creativity." [#22224] "The milking of cash cows?" [#25710] "Rewriting/ reinventing classic stories to accommodate Hollywood tropes/ clichés. Overuse/abuse of CGI/ digital technology." [#31343] "The lack of not only female characters, but also story lines and plots for female characters. The over-reliance of violence and action as visual spectacle. The trend of bleeding intellectual properties dry with adaptation after	*Indicative answers:* "Raised the issue of film companies attempting to cash in on fan favourites through needlessly long and extended franchises." [#25887] "Annoyed by the fact that the one female character has to become part of some cheesy attempt at a love triangle. The broader issue with movies is that women's roles in movies almost always invoke them being part of a relationship or falling in love, why can't they even just go on an adventure or something like the male characters do?" [#26834] "Once again *The Hobbit* is a children's book, it should have been a children's movie (appropriate for eleven	*Indicative answers:* "Film makers don't seem to know when to stop - a film makes a lot of money, so they keep repeating the formula even though the plots are negligible. See *Pirates of the Caribbean*." [#6882] "Hollywood sequels and the potential to split films for purely economic reasons. Use of cgi over practical effects." [#25849] "It's another reminder (like *Avatar*) that shiny new special effects, filming techniques and the like are a poor substitute for compelling, consistent and concise story telling that puts characters we can connect to at the heart of the experience. … *The Hobbit*, like *Avatar*	*Indicative answers:* "When you adapt a book, adapt the book. Don't adapt it to the style of a different book that it's associated with. ... It was also obvious, that many of the scenes, particularly crossing the subterranean bridge escaping from orcs in the *LOTR*, and goblins in *The Hobbit*, were rehashed from the Rings films. It seemed like we'd seen a lot the sequences before. It was obvious that Jackson had run out of steam and ideas…" [#31138] "I read an article this morning about Avengers; Age of Ultron... It talked about how in the drive to build a 'brand' or a 'franchise', the Marvel movies get so big they don't have room to tell a story. This isn't quite the same, but they got so

remake after adaptation, rather than original stories. … Also, we can have dragons and magic, but no ethnic characters of any kind? No dark skinned elves or hobbits? Where is the representation?" [#20483]	and twelve year old audiences)." [#30711] "Yes, but I'm writing my masters on it and it is a bit too long to write it down in here." [#32658] "I just hope they never, never get their hands on the *Silmarillion*." [#24312]	before it, struck me as a movie that was so focused on trying out new things on the technical side of things (3D, high frame rate, more complex CGI) that it forgot how to tell a compelling and believable (or at least 'suspend disbelief-able') story." [#30429]	caught up in Showing Off that they forgot, in a lot of places, that at the heart of this 'greatest adventure' are very simple themes: a man leaving home for the first time, a family who want to reclaim their home, a frontier village who want to survive. …" [#35322]

Talking about Interpretive Communities'

Question 11 asked people to think if there were other people whom they thought might share their responses to the films. The question was deliberately left very open, equally welcoming responses such as 'my friends', or 'an online community', or 'imagined' groups. This question, we hoped, would generate materials relevant to debates around 'interpretive communities': 'who' might play a role in making responses more than purely private and individual? This was clearly not something that could be asked directly, so much thought went into finding the most open wording we could manage. **Tables 12 & 13** present the patterning of these in the same fashion as the preceding ones:

Table 12: Patterning of Enthusiasts' answers to 'Do you think there are people who would share your ideas about *The Hobbit*? What are they like?'

Enthusiasts			
Common elements: Both Enthusiasts and (below) Critics generally show strong awareness of public debates around the films – not usually by citing specific examples, but acknowledging the kinds of criticisms that were commonly made.			
Either friends and relatives; *or p*eople who are more informed and expert than me.	People with strong moral agendas, and who look for films which embrace those.	*Either p*eople who just love playing around in fantasy worlds; *or* Jackson fans, to be found online.	Not sure, but if they exist, they are nice creative people, whom I'd like to know.
Indicative answers: "Many people I have met online and offline share similar views. They all seem like sane, rational human beings who	*Indicative answers:* "They would be people who abhor the destruction of war but would defend the defenceless, be they	*Indicative answers:* "Yes. Geeks, gamers, fantasy-lovers, etc. - also those who are interested in cultural myths." [#18502]	*Indicative answers:* ""I think many people will share my beliefs" … [#18920] "I hope there are" …

spend a lot of time lurking in fandoms." [#9460] "There is an enormous Tolkien following, which having only seen the films and not read the books, I would be nowhere near informed enough to join." [#6670] "Yes, friends of mine - and I suppose they are friends because we share a number of views and likes - so it's likely that they would like what I like." [19172]	people or other species and their environment. Also environmentalists who campaign both physically and less actively to raise awareness of how we as a species are destroying our home in the pursuit of material power and wealth." [#30863]	"Sure, some of my friends share the same ideas. They are people who enjoy fantasy books and movies." [#9782] "Yes there are many people who share my views, or aspects of them, at theonering.net. I would say these people are definitely part of Tolkien fandom, rather than being the average appreciative movie-goer." [#34758]	[#251] "Not sure, I think there is" … [#29639] "I think there's people who either love the whole world created by Tolkien and Peter Jackson or just don't care. Maybe escapism prone people seem to love it? I have some friends to sincerely discuss these things with, I consider them creative, in touch with their inner child." [#21175]

Table 13: Patterning of Critics' answers to 'Do you think there are people who would share your ideas about *The Hobbit*? What are they like?'

Critics			
Common elements: As noted above, Critics generally showed awareness of public debates and controversies around the films.			
Ordinary folks, not very special, we get together and sometimes talk about it.	People with decent critical standards, like me (even if I defend Tolkien by standards that he wouldn't have recognised).	Proper, discriminating cinema fans, and especially *LotR* admirers.	People who feel let down badly by Peter Jackson, and who look back to Tolkien. They didn't ask much!
Indicative answers: "Indie film fans" … [#29234] "The peaceful folks, like hobbits" … [#28444] "People like me, not very social, a bit nerdy" … [#946]	*Indicative answers:* "Generally anyone who watches good movies and documentaries. The people who watch rubbish reality TV watch rubbish like these movies. It's all bells and whistles." [#27736] "Yes I think many people	*Indicative answers:* "Yes. They are regular cinema goers who like to get more from franchise movies." [#26046] "I think there is a general feeling of disappointment. The bar was set so high with the *Lord of the Rings*, that	*Indicative answers:* "The group of friends I saw *TBotFA* with were all disappointed. We are all big Tolkien fans, as well as fans of Jackson's original *LotR* trilogy." [#30581] "Yes, presumably most fans of the original trilogy

"They're my friends, so naturally they're losers. Oh and they find the films disappointing." [#25672] "Ha, there are LOADS, I work with a youth group (11-18) and we have LOTR games nights and discuss the films in TOO much detail!" [#17999]	are disappointed in the large variance of the movies from the book. I also know that many other women my age are dissatisfied with the portrayal of female characters and the overall lack of depth into stories about them." [#26834]	*The Hobbit* trilogy was a bit of a comedown." [#22336]	or fans of Tolkien. They are a simple folk, with an interest in peace and quiet, a love of all things that grow and enjoy a good ale or two!" [#25926]

Analytic Outcomes

What do these patterns of evidence reveal, and suggest? The first and most important thing is that there are no signs at all that enthusing over or criticising the films is a function of affiliation to 'authors'. It is just as possible for people to find ways to affiliate positively, or negatively, with 'Tolkien', or with 'Jackson'. No doubt the two terms will gather varying sets of meanings (information, images, stories, etc) according to their positivity or negativity. Instead, the other way round, the experience of loving or disapproving of the films operates as a separate process (no doubt governed by many variables). But what affiliations to 'authors' do, is to add a *colouration* – a *way of doing* enthusing or criticising – that achieves three things: it adds or reduces intensity; it pulls particular criteria to the forefront of making sense of the experience; and it points to ways in which the *significance* of the experience is to be grasped. I am certainly not trying to put these into a causal sequence: experience; evaluation; meaning-making. The opposite, in fact. The experience, its evaluation, and the attachment of wider thoughts (to whatever degree these occur) are woven tightly together, all through. But we can, to some degree, analytically tease them apart.

Next, the *absence of affiliations* tends to circumscribe the experience of the films. However *intense* the enjoyment, in some fashion lack of affiliations to 'authors' ensures that it simply *means less*. This is surely a significant finding in itself. Associating the films with nameable 'authors' is part of setting them in wider contexts, and suggests that the films are driven by *purposes* against which people can then assess them. For Enthusiasts, it means that they can attach themselves to the purposes they sense, or attribute – these can become their own, in ways that matter. For Critics, the sensed/imputed purposes are the basis for evaluations to seek to take people in other directions, to other places and experiences. For non-affiliators, the films are much more momentary, localised experiences.

These broad distinctions by Affiliation, and by Evaluation, can then be broken down into the more particular affiliations to 'Tolkien', to 'Jackson', or to both. With all the caution entailed by the overlaps, and leaks between categories, still, there do appear to be some separable tendencies. Let us take, Enthusiasts, and then Critics, in turn:

Tolkien and not Jackson:

Positive 'Tolkien'-affiliation appears to legitimise emotional engagement, to treat the film as a journey alongside small characters facing big dangers in a big world. This relationship maps closely onto what we found with those engaging with *The Lord of the Rings* as a 'spiritual journey'.[9]   Although there is not a great evidence to go on, it does appear that those affiliating in this manner somehow *forgive* Tolkien for any weaknesses and errors in the story (his intense religiosity (which seems never even to get a mention), or the treatments of women and 'race', for instance) because of the intense emotional pleasures derived from the films. Their emotional engagements *directly lead* to their willingness to find wider themes within the films.

Negative 'Tolkien'-affiliators tend to act as *spokespeople* for 'the Professor' – but once again tend to *forgive the real Tolkien* because of the determination to defend him from the misuse they see deriving from Hollywood's money-making machine. This puts them alongside Tolkien in a position of overt superiority (of knowledge, attitude, critical understanding).

Jackson and not Tolkien

is a pretty clear tendency for Enthusiasts in this position to celebrate the spectacular nature of the film – and to associate this with Jackson's 'style' as a film-maker. Although as ever the evidence is sketchy, there are hints that this is part of a broader interest in fantastical cinema, more generally – of which, then, Jackson is one exemplar.

Critics tend to brandish *The Lord of the Rings* in Jackson's face, seeing *The Hobbit* as a major come-down after that (to them) cinematic turning point. Jackson has let himself down, by giving way to the studios' penchant for simple money-making.

Both Tolkien and Jackson

Dual affiliation plus Enthusiasm links with willingness to accept the changes to the story. Here. Tolkien becomes someone who, while admired, is also mired in his time (or, if not that, that he never had the chance to rewrite *The Hobbit* to integrate it fully with *The Lord of the Rings*). The story needed updating, and bringing to life by Jackson's art and finesse.

It is quite hard to put a face to the critical dual-affiliators and what role their interest in both plays in their responses. If anything, I suspect, it is in the idea of 'simplicity': that the original story was a simple one; that everything has been over-complicated by the stretching to three films; and that pleasures in the whole thing are, or should have been, simple.

Conclusions

The World Hobbit Project survey did not ask people directly how they viewed the films' 'authors' – however they might have defined those (via the book, or the films, as individuals or collectives, companies, system, or whatever). As a result what this research reveals, a

little indirectly, are the *consequences* of certain declared interests, expressed as reasons for seeing the films. These consequences are then filtered, importantly, through people's positive or negative summed-up experiences. Put simply and illustratively, if you *loved* the films, and had seen them (among other things) because of a strong connection with 'J R R Tolkien' – whatever kind of person and creator you felt he was – then among the consequences are: greater emotionality; and a sense of 'little people' being empowered. It is as if affiliating with 'Tolkien' *gave permission* to people to let off the emotional brakes, to feel a sense of community belonging, and to sense a purpose – quite general, perhaps, but also generous – behind the story. But a matching affiliation with 'Tolkien' in the hands of someone disappointed in the films becomes a resource of confident criticism. 'He' has been shabbily treated by 'them': Hollywood, the money-men, those who destroy literature by popularising it. 'Tolkien' energises this critique, and at the same time helps to guarantee the position and status of its presenter.

By contrast, affiliation with Jackson is associated with becoming up to date. The transfer to cinema is a good thing in itself – the question then becomes whether or not Jackson has lived up to the high standards his previous career have indicated. I think it is clear that Jackson-affiliators are more comfortable with the idea that stories such as this don't just exist in their original format; they can 'travel' into other media, and that is no problem in and of itself.

Affiliating with both is complicated, but appears to tend towards a sense of the *modernity* of the story: its relevance today, judged by contemporary criteria. 'Tolkien' can fairly be updated. None of these three is an absolute. All are tendencies only, but as such real nonetheless.

But it is also important that having such affiliations, having such a 'sense of the author', appears to raise the stakes. There is more to be said. Criteria are more enunciated. More is gained – or lost – through the experience if a cultural offering is felt to come from someone or somewhere 'nameable'. It is more likely, simply, to gain intensity of meaning. Lacking, or not using, such 'authors' means that the bars of expectation are set lower.

I began this essay by reviewing, among other things, the twin influential approaches of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. I want to end by returning for a moment to these. Both sought to take us *past* the (predominantly literary) theories of authorship: Barthes, on the path towards a general 'reader'; Foucault, towards a historically constituted discourse. Neither, I suggested, made possible an examination of the ways audiences understand authors. What I am now pointing, I *think*, is in a curious way a merger of these two apparently contradictory approaches. Audiences – 'readers' – do assemble meanings through their interaction with the many features of (things like) films. But they do this, in part at least, by bringing into play ideas and images about their 'makers': what they created, why, and how they are supposed to be used and enjoyed. Culturally patterned, but also internalised, 'discourses of the author' generate some of the mechanisms and permissions on *how to be the right kind of audience*. Remapping in this way, of course, may significantly shift the meanings of 'reader' and 'discourse' – but that perhaps is no bad thing.

Biographical note:

Martin Barker is Emeritus Professor at Aberystwyth University, and was Principal Investigator for the World Hobbit Project. In recent years he has been pursuing a series of projects around the changing role and status of 'fantasy' in culture, and is currently involved in the 2016-8 *Game of Thrones* audience project. Contact: mib@aber.ac.uk.

Bibliography:

Barker, Martin, **'**Changing Lives, Challenging Concepts: Some Findings and Lessons from the *Lord of the Rings* Project', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12:4, 2009, pp. 375-94.

Barker, Martin, Kate Egan, Tom Phillips & Sarah Ralph, *Alien Audiences: Remembering and Evaluating a Classic Movie*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2015.

Barthes, Roland, 'The death of the author' [originally published 1977], in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, pp. 97-100.

Boozer, Jack (ed.), *Authorship in Film Adaptation*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Brooker, Will, *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and "Star Wars" Fans*, London: Continuum, 2002.

Cleemans, Axel , Victor Ginsburgh, Olivier Klein & Abdul Noury, 'What's in a Name? The Effect of an Artist's Name on Aesthetic Judgments', *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 34:1, 2016, pp. 126-39.

'John Ford's Young Mr Lincoln: A collective text by the Editors of Cahiers du Cinéma*', translated* Screen *(1972) 13 (3): 5-44. Reprinted in abridged form in Barry Keith Grant (ed.),* Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.*

Foucault, Michel, 'What is an author?' [originally published 1969], translated and republished in Donald F. Bouchard & Sherry Simon (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, pp. 113-38.

Hren, Darko et al., 'Perceptions of authorship criteria: effects of student instruction and scientific experience', *British Medical Journal*, 33, 2007, pp. 428-432.

Johnson, James, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Kleinhans, Chuck, 'A student's guide to *YML* essay – an annotated bibliography', *Jump Cut*, 55, 2013 (found at: http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc55.2013/KleinhansCahiersInContext/5.html).

Levi, Eric, *Mozart and the Nazis: How the Third Reich Abused a Cultural Icon*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Lovell, Alan & Gianluca Sergi, *Making Films in Contemporary Hollywood*, London: Hodder Arnold, 2005.

Appendix:

My procedure for randomising and storing qualitative responses was as follows. I drew down into an Access Search Table the following Fields: ID (giving the unique number of each respondent); their Ratings (for overall responses to *the Hobbit* films); their Reasons for Seeing (to enable me to isolate the 8 categories of author-affiliation); and then – for each separate search, as I ran them – the other qualitative fields. I also drew down the final column, Randomise, which was included to ensure that searches did not privilege such things as early vs late completions, or alphabetical priority. By turn I entered '1' or '3 or 4 or 5' into Rating, to sort for Enthusiasts, or Critics; and into Reasons for Seeing, using the various identifying letter-combinations to generate the combinations of choosing or not

choosing 'Tolkien' and 'Jackson'. For each occasion on which Access sorted, I then also right–clicked the Randomise column, Sorting Z-A. I then manually counted and copied out the first 50 responses into Word, retaining both the ID and the acquired columns. This gave me each set the groups of 50 responses, from the same individuals, whose IDs could be checked so that I would later be able to create portraits of representative individual respondents.

Notes:

[1] In other fields, debates have also gone on, but in some different ways. Within literary studies, which like film studies underwent a period of intense high-theory-debate, a matching history could be written – there, beginning with the critique of the 'intentional fallacy' (that the task of literary criticism is to draw out authors' intentions), through to deconstructive works on the play of multiple meanings and 'authors' within any text. In less theory-prone areas such as classical music studies, valuable historical work had been done on changes in composers' images and status (see Johnson on Beethoven (1996)); or Levi on Mozart and the Nazis (2010)).

[2] I want to note in passing another curious, apparently entirely intra-mural body of research to be found with medical studies. This body is concerned with how doctors learn to evaluate the reliability of research, and how this relates to authors' names. International medical bodies have quite strict rules for attributing of authorship to research, and there have been a number of studies of the ways in which medical students learn to use their criteria. See as an example Hren et al. (2007). It is not easy to appraise how this might be connected to the concerns of my research.

[3] In 2013, Chuck Kleinhans published an annotated reading list of debates around the film, and *Cahier*'s position more generally, in *Jump Cut* (2013), along with an update on the debates.

[4] I use Althusser's term deliberately as it seems very appropriate, even though the Editors do not. For in Althusser's concept is that implication of *forced, disciplinary attention* suggested by his metaphorical explanation of our response to a policeman shouting 'Hey, you!'. As if this is the only 'voice' in which semiotic connections can be forged … no thought to 'Hello!' or 'Excuse me …' or any of the other ways in which people or institutions introduce themselves.

[5] There are philosophical issues in here which I cannot address. Foucault is here evolving his broader critique of the supposedly unified 'subject', and it could be argued that his critique of 'authorship' is simply another route to this. Although I believe that there are major problems with his critique, I only register my disagreement here – the argument over 'authorship' can to some degree proceed without.

[6] The full list of options was as follows: 'I wanted to experience their special features (eg, high frame rate, 3D)'; 'I am connected to a community that has been waiting for the films'; 'I love Tolkien's work as a whole'; 'I like to see big new films when they come out'; 'I wanted to be part of an international experience'; 'I love fantasy films generally'; 'There was such a build-up, I had to see them'; 'I was dragged along'; 'I knew the book, and had to see what the films would be like'; 'I love Peter Jackson's films'; 'No special reason'; 'An actor that I particularly like was in them'.

[7] And a case could be made that at least one other question half-*implied* an author: "I like to see big new films when they come out". We will see that for some this hinted at an author of a different kind altogether: 'Hollywood', seen as the source of big cinema event films.

[8] The exclusion of those rating the films 'Good' was deliberate. It resulted both from the general feeling that this was the *easiest* award to make – almost a 'shrug of the shoulders' response – and

from the outcomes of another recently-completed project. In a co-authored study of people's memories of watching Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), it became evident that to award the highest accolade to a film (in that case 'Masterpiece' signals a distinctive commitment with important attendant consequences. See Barker et al. (2015).

[9] See on this Barker, 2009.