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Overview.

Ever since the Lord of the Rings was first published, the relationships between the nine members of the Fellowship of the Ring have been a source of great deal of study. The focus has mainly been on the relationships and roles of Sam and Frodo, Aragorn and Gandalf, Legolas and Gimli, and Boromir's relationship with various other members of the Fellowship. Much less attention seems to have been awarded the remaining two members, the hobbits Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took. So much so, that they are often dismissed by the casual reader as mere sidekicks. And with the awakening of new readership brought by the publishing of Peter Jackson's movie adaptations, the movies' childish and comical portrayal of Merry and Pippin, clearly aimed at the younger audiences; (ULR, Shippey, p. 237) seems to have only increased the view that they are disposable, to the point that they have been accused of being "annoying and almost ruined the movie".¹

While it is true that Frodo and Sam are the true protagonists of the tale, the ones on which the final culminating action of the story lies, the roles of Merry and Pippin are quite, if not equally, important. When put into perspective, without their presence in the Fellowship of the Ring, chances are that the One Ring would not have found its way to Mount Doom, Frodo and Sam could have found themselves at the mercy of Saruman the White, or worse, the Dark Lord Sauron himself, and the tale would have ended in the middle of Book 3 with the victory of the forces of Mordor.

Therefore the question which this essay will try to answer is, are Merry and Pippin essential parts of the quest, and integral to its success, or are they merely comic relief, put there only to distract and infuriate the other members of the Fellowship, and the readers?

1 This was said to me personally, in 2003, by a girl of about 10 to 12 years old, when shopping for movie related merchandise, at a store where I worked, and I had mentioned Merry and Pippin being my favorite characters.

Introduction.

There is a great deal of critical literature available on the Lord of the Rings, from the critique of Tolkien's friend and peer C.S. Lewis, to W.H. Auden, Rose A. Zimbardo, Marion Zimmer Bradley and Tom Shippey. And the analysis is as varied as the scholars, from speculation about the spiritual and religious, the idea of hero worship, and Tolkien as the penultimate Hobbit, to the place of the Lord of the Rings as the epic mythology of England, and recently, the place of Peter Jackson's movie trilogy as a new representation of the novel. But most of this analysis and critique is focused on either Tolkien as an author and world creator, or on the roles of Frodo and Sam. Some look at the struggle of power between the strong male characters, Aragorn, and Boromir, or to a lesser extent Théoden and Denethor. Others focus on the more existential aspect of the novel, the symbolism, the theoretical undercurrents of the quest, the battles and the war. However, very few critics seem to give much attention to the other two hobbits, Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took.

In looking for references to use for this essay I was only able to find one critic who gave any serious attention to Merry and Pippin. Marion Zimmer Bradley, in her essay 'Men, Halflings and Hero Worship' likens Merry and Pippin to the overlooked obedient child and the disobedient youngest child respectively. (ULR, Zimmer Bradley, 80, 78) Her essay therefore became the largest support that I could find for my own study of their roles. This lack of sources and research on the two youngest hobbits made it quite difficult to form a solid argument to support my own thesis. It also made it that much clearer that further research on their roles is a vital addition to the study of Tolkien's work, this essay being a modest venture into adding to this discourse.

The question which I intend to answer with this essay was born not only from the exasperated snide remark, mentioned above, from a 12 year old girl whose only knowledge of the story was probably limited to the popular Christmas season movies that were being published at the time, but also from a small moment in said movies. Since the narrative of the Entmoot is long and laborious in the book, and the actual attack on Isengard is recounted in retrospect four chapters after the fact, it does not lend itself well to the cinematographic telling of the story. Jackson chose to use it for an action scene, far more entertaining visually than it would have been had he stayed true to the original text, but it also seems that he used it to try and make Merry and Pippin

seem more relevant to the plot. In the scene, Merry and Pippin are present at the Entmoot and then in complete contradiction to the source material, the Ents decide not to go to war. It is in this moment, much in spirit with Jackson's vision of the two, that Pippin tells Merry that at least now they can return home and put all of these worries and wars of the Big Folks behind them, these things that do not concern them. Merry then delivers a single line of dialogue with such deep, sorrowful passion that it sits with the viewer for a long time afterwards, "There won't be a Shire, Pippin." (The Two Towers, Jackson, 01:10:02 – 01:10:08) This single line and Pippin's reaction to it gives the distinct impression that not once, up until this very moment, has Pippin wondered about his place in the mission, nor had any kind of personal growth. In that single moment, it seems to dawn on him that yes, he is neck deep in this war, and if the enemy forces are not checked at the borders of the lands of Men, the war will eventually reach the secret little Shire and destroy it, and here he is, the youngest hobbit of the Fellowship, faced with a defining moment of that war. One can assume that this moment is what then informs his trickery of Treebeard to make the Ent see for himself what Saruman has done to his beloved forest. This scene is one of the clearest and most obvious breaks from Merry and Pippin as they appear in the book, and yet it felt utterly and completely wrong, when I finally finished reading the books, a couple of months before the last installation of the movie trilogy was premiered. This one line and Pippin's reaction to it completely negates all of the growth that Pippin in the book has gone through. From the moment he leaves Rivendell as a member of the Fellowship, until the moment Pippin races to war with the Ents, Pippin goes through a great deal of growth. It may be quiet and internal for a large part of the journey, but when he and Merry are taken by the Uruk-hai he shows his growth. Seeing that growth reduced to nothing by that single moment in the movies, as compelling and emotional as it was, made me feel that Pippin was being cheated, that both of them were being cheapened to nothing more than sidekicks.

It is obvious that Merry and Pippin do fulfill the roles of the 'common' man, as set by the rules of Comedy, since they do not present aspects of the grand heroes, the mighty warrior or the loyal friend and companion. They are the simple, homely 'common' men, thrust into an adventure far beyond and above their wildest imaginings, and far away from home, almost further than they could comprehend the world could

reach. This can also be examined in the sense that the Epic genre must include all aspects of the human experience, from hero to villain, from willing follower to the loyal friend, to the fallen redeemed through heroic self sacrifice, as well as the slightly laughable sidekick, which role Merry and Pippin do fit into, since they are the vessel which Tolkien used to introduce experiences unthinkable to the heroes. It would have been inconceivable for the great hero Aragorn, or the impeccable Legolas to drop a pebble down a well, and awake the Balrog of Mordor, and thus bring about the apparent demise of the great leader of the Fellowship. Gimli the Dwarf would never have been able to arouse the Ents in the same way, nor would Sam have been able to, despite being a gardener. And had anyone else than Pippin stolen the Palantír out of the sleeping Gandalf's arms, it would have been viewed as a great betrayal and treason, but since it was Pippin it is dismissed as a childish escapade. In the final act, neither Aragorn, Gimli nor Legolas would ever have considered striking the Witch King of Angmar from behind to allow Éowyn to strike the final, killing blow. Their status as a hero of the story would have them push the young woman aside, to try and face the foe alone, or at least first. Merry has no such ideas of grandeur about himself, so all he does is what he feels is right in the moment. He sacrifices himself to Éowyn's aide, that she shall not die alone in this one last desperate act of defiance. Merry does not expect recognition or adulation for his act, he only hopes that Éowyn will at least strike a decisive blow, regardless of whether they shall both survive.

Another important aspect is, as pointed out by Elwin Fairburn, that Tolkien emphasized the Shire's connection with England. The Shire represented Tolkien's own England, the rural, pastoral, agrarian areas where Tolkien himself grew up and lived his adult life. (Fairburn, 74 – 75) Hobbits are the epitome of the rural, agrarian Englishman, with their love of home and hearth, "for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt." (I, Tolkien, 1) Even though the hobbits of Hobbiton have a slightly suspicious view of the Brandybucks of Buckland for living too close to the Old Forest and messing about with such unnatural things as boats on the Brandywine River, Merry and Pippin are the very essence of Englishness, and are far more connected to the earth and growing things than any of the other members of the Fellowship. (I, Tolkien, 29) It therefore makes the most

sense that they are the ones to meet Treebeard in Fangorn Forest, and are the catalyst that finally sends the Ents marching off to war.

Through analysis of the text and with support from the works of other scholars, such as Zimmer Bradley and Auden, it is evident that Merry and Pippin go through an emotional growth that other members of the Fellowship do not. They represent the Everyman of the story, the ones that the average reader can find themselves in, the non-heroes who commit their heroism quietly in the background, not expecting any reward or acknowledgement for their deeds. They are not heroes bred to fight and commit acts of great bravery, but rather exemplify the simple hero who picks up arms only when there is no other option but to fight. They do these deeds because it is what seems right in the moment, not because it is expected of them. This contrasts with the other members of the Fellowship. Frodo takes the Ring to Mordor because he must, Sam goes with Frodo because his place is to be beside Frodo, Aragorn casts aside his Strider-disguise to take the throne that was always meant to be his eventually. Legolas and Gimli follow Aragorn both out of their loyalty to their own people, and the age old mistrust between their races, only to mend that mistrust at least between themselves, to open a possible dialogue between races that have been enemies for far too long. Boromir does not grow as such, but rather becomes the sacrificial casuistry necessary to show how easily the hearts of man can be corrupted by the desire for absolute power.

Merry and Pippin are the only members of the Fellowship who show an emotional growth from start to finish, and they are changed, matured, grown into men far beyond their years by the end. It is this growth through the story that gives them humanity, and it is that humanity that the average reader can connect to. It is a gateway for the reader's conscience to grow alongside them, and become more invested in the story. And without them the story never would have concluded the way it does. Therefore this essay will endeavour to show that Merry and Pippin are as essential to the story as all of the other members of the Fellowship.

At the start of the story.

At the very beginning of the story, the reader is told almost condescendingly that upon his adoption by Bilbo Baggins, Frodo is “still in his *tweens*, as the hobbits called the irresponsible twenties between childhood and coming of age at thirty-three.” (I,

Tolkien, 28) Thus it is established early on that hobbits are among the longer lived races of Middle Earth, not immortal like the elves, but more akin to the Númenorean men, and the dwarves, rather than the race of Men. They usually live past the age of 100 years, but they do not come of age until they are 33 and they are not considered properly adult until at least 53, and while childhood ends at 20, there are still 13 more years of tweens to go through. And this is important when considering the roles of Merry and Pippin.

They are introduced in the first two chapters of the story, and said to be Frodo's cousins, and to be among his closest and dearest friends. It is apparent from the text that Merry and Pippin are also good friends as well as cousins, but they are closer to Frodo than they are to each other. Among Frodo's list of friends are also Fredegar 'Fatty' Bolger, Folco Boffin, and Frodo's gardener Samwise 'Sam' Gamgee, all of them younger than Frodo by a number of years. (I, Tolkien, 56) Samwise is of course Frodo's trusty companion on the perilous quest, but throughout the entire novel, Sam only once drops the honorific address of Mister Frodo, and that is only when he believes that his dear, beloved friend has perished. (II, Tolkien, 423) Merry and Pippin on the other hand do not appear to feel they owe Frodo any such respect. They are his cousins, and his friends, and therefore they address him by name only, and tease him and banter with him as an equal. It is quite apparent that they do view Sam as their equal, and he seems to view himself as at least closer to being their peer, since he does not address them as Mister or Sir throughout the story. Merry and Pippin do still view Sam as a servant though, since they repeatedly expect him, or leave him, to have breakfast ready on their journey. Pippin even demands Sam have breakfast and bathwater ready before Pippin will get up, on the first morning after leaving Hobbiton. (I, Tolkien, 96) There is also far less banter and joking between Sam and the two younger hobbits, than there is between them and Frodo.

Meriadoc 'Merry' Brandybuck.

Merry makes his first appearance in the first chapter of the novel, when Frodo hands out the gifts left behind by his uncle Bilbo after his 111th birthday party. Although Merry's age is not specifically stated, the family trees in the Appendices at the end of the Return of the King, give his year of birth as 1382 of the Shire Reckoning (III,

Tolkien, 475), making him 14 years younger than Frodo, and two years younger than Sam. Therefore he is only 19 at the date of Bilbo's great birthday party, not even into his irresponsible tweens, and yet he is trusted with the task of helping Frodo with handing out the gifts, and even to do so alone when Frodo gets tired and takes a rest. This immediately places Merry in a role of trust and reliability. He is established as the level headed one, who can be trusted with things with which one would not normally trust a child or a tween. He is also shown to be quick witted, and perhaps even a little bit of a smart-mouth, when Lobelia Sackville-Baggins accuses Frodo of being a Brandybuck, and Merry answers the remark blithely. (I, Tolkien, 50 – 51) When it is time for Frodo to leave the Shire, to begin his trek to Rivendell, Merry has passed his coming of age, and Frodo trusts him with finding a house for Frodo to buy down in Crickhollow, as well as moving all of Frodo's things from Bag End to Crickhollow when the time comes. Fatty Bolger is asked to accompany Merry, but it is Merry who is in charge. (I, Tolkien, 88 – 90)

It is then later revealed that Merry has known about Bilbo's magic ring for quite a few years, and has been aware of Frodo's actual plans almost from the beginning, and he is the one who led the merry band of conspirators, recruiting Sam to spy on Frodo. It is here that the three younger hobbits show the depth of their devotion to Frodo when they reveal that they have been preparing to leave the Shire with Frodo ever since Frodo began his secret planning. Frodo acts wounded and betrayed at finding out that his friends have been spying on him and plotting behind his back, and even accuses them of breaking his trust. But in another display of his maturity Merry tells Frodo, "You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin – to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours – closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word." (I, Tolkien, 139) When it is time to leave Crickhollow, it is Merry who secures them horses and leads the way, knowing about and having a key to the secret gate which leads to the Old Forest, and having planned their escape. (I, Tolkien, 136 – 145)

Merry and Pippin's encounter with Old Man Willow is a clear foreshadowing of their meeting with the Ents in Fangorn. After the four hobbits are saved from the Barrow Wight by Tom Bombadil, he gives them daggers found in the barrow.

'Old knives are long enough as swords for hobbit-people,' he said. 'Sharp blades are good to have, if Shire-folk go walking, east, south, or far away into dark and danger.' Then he told them that these blades were forged many long years ago by Men of Westernessee: they were foes of the Dark Lord, but they were overcome by the evil king of Carn Dûm in the Land of Angmar.

'Few now remember them,' Tom murmured, 'yet still some go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in the loneliness, guarding from evil things folks that are heedless.' (I, Tolkien, 192)

These words, easily forgettable in all of the action that follows, are a clear foreshadowing of Merry's final act of heroism, when he stabs the Witch King of Angmar. Tom Bombadil clearly tells the hobbits that these daggers were made to kill the evil king of Angmar. When later Frodo's dagger disintegrates when he stabs one of the Ringwraiths on Weathertop, the connection becomes even more apparent. (I, Tolkien, 258) Yet these daggers are not mentioned much again after this, save for when Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli search the piles of orc corpses at Parth Galen to prepare Boromir's funeral boat, and Aragorn finds the daggers, naming them "bane of Mordor". (II, Tolkien, 8) Then they are mentioned again when Merry swears his fealty to Théoden of Rohan, although this King of Men does not recognize the blade for what it is, (III, Tolkien, 46) and Pippin swears himself into the service of Denethor the Steward of Gondor. Denethor does recognize the craftsmanship of the blade, and asks where such a small being as Pippin acquired it, and it seems to change Denethor's mind about declining Pippin's service. (III, Tolkien, 17) Neither the elves of Rivendell nor those of Lothlórien question how the hobbits came to possess these blades, and the daggers follow their owners all the way to the battle of Pelennor Fields, and the Black Gates of Mordor. (III, Tolkien, 130, 196)

At Bree where the four hobbits meet the Ranger called Strider, Merry shows that he is perhaps quieter than the other three, for he chooses to remain behind in their private sitting room and enjoy the quiet, while Frodo, Sam and Pippin join the men in

the common room of the Prancing Pony. It proves to be their salvation though, because Merry decides to go for a walk and is overcome by fear of a Black Rider, and faints in the street. He returns after being found by the hobbit Nob who works at the tavern, and thus alerts Strider and the other hobbits of the presence of the Black Riders, saving them all from being stolen, or murdered in their sleep. (I, Tolkien, 228 – 234) Here is the first truly clear example of what Tolkien named *eucatastrophe*, “the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous ‘turn’”. (TMatC, On Fairy-Stories, Tolkien, 153) Small as it may be, Merry’s decision to go for a walk, alone at night in Bree, leads him to discover the presence of the Black Riders within the town gates, and although he passes out from the fear, he is not discovered by the Black Riders or their spies. He is awoken again by a friend, in time to warn his fellow travelers. Although Merry has a hand in a couple of more lucky turns such as this again, it is Pippin who turns out to be the true *eucatastrophe* of the story, as will be explored later.

The loss of their horses after the Black Riders and their spies attack the Prancing Pony forces the hobbits to leave Bree on foot, but Strider can lead them through the wilderness, and they head to Weathertop, where they are attacked by the Black Riders and Frodo is stabbed by the Ringwraith. Both Merry and Pippin are overcome with fear and lie cowering in the grass while Aragorn fights off the Wraiths. It is also here, in this attack that Frodo’s Westronese dagger is lost, broken when he stabbed the Wraith’s foot. (I, Tolkien, 257 – 258)

Marion Zimmer-Bradley claims that it is after the attack that “it is consistently and logically Merry on whom Aragorn calls for help to bring them, quietly and without credit, through dangers – Frodo is wounded and too burdened, Sam too hostile and absorbed in Frodo, Pippin too irresponsible.” (ULR, Zimmer-Bradley, 79- 80) This is a sign that Merry is more reliable in many regards than Pippin is, but Merry is eight years older, so it is not surprising, even if Strider has only known the hobbits for a few days. He was there to witness their escapades at the Prancing Pony, and Sam’s devotion to Frodo is not easily missed even before the attack.

At Rivendell the hobbits rest and regain their strength, and although only Frodo is invited to the Council of Elrond, Sam slips in unnoticed and insists on joining Frodo on his quest to Mount Doom. (I, Tolkien, 356) The two younger hobbits, though, are told that Elrond feels they should return to the Shire, which neither of them are happy

about, and it is Merry who explains that it would feel like a punishment to be left behind now, knowing that Frodo and Sam must journey on into danger. (I, Tolkien, 357) When it comes time for the Fellowship to leave, Elrond is still against their going, but surprisingly Gandalf supports Merry and Pippin, his logic being that it would be wiser to trust in the bonds of friendship than the strength and wisdom of high elf lords. (I, Tolkien, 362 – 363)

Although Gandalf claims to not be able to see the end of their journey, he does in a sense see a possible outcome with the presence of the four hobbits in the company. For Gandalf can imagine what he would do with the Ring were he himself evil and thus understands the need to destroy it. But as W.H. Auden points out in his analysis of the Lord of the Rings, “The Quest Hero”, “while Good can imagine what it would be like to be Evil, Evil cannot imagine what it would be like to be Good.” (ULR, Auden, 47) According to Auden, if Sauron had been capable of this, he could have just waited and watched his own lands until the One Ring had come home to him, and the war would have been won. Therefore Gandalf supports the youngest two hobbits joining the Fellowship, and Elrond reluctantly gives up in the face of Pippin’s stubbornness. Thus Gandalf also, in a sense, sets up the two youngest hobbits as the bait for another *eucatastrophe*, which will turn out to be very big in scale. Gandalf seems to have at least a suspicion that the four hobbits might be more successful than any of the other members of the Fellowship in their quest, as confirmed by Elrond’s words, “... such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.” (I, Tolkien, 353) Even the great elf lord Elrond sees that where a host of elf lords or mighty warriors of men might fail, two or four small, quiet and insignificant hobbits might be more successful.

Again, as the Fellowship heads out on their quest, Merry takes a role of the responsible, quiet and dependable hobbit, all but overlooked in the background as the ‘big folk’ lead the way. Merry’s intelligence is marked again when the Fellowship finds themselves stumped at the Doors of Durin, the gate to the Mines of Moria, since it is he who sets Gandalf on the right track to find the answer to the riddle which will unlock the doors. (I, Tolkien, 400 – 404) Although Merry and Pippin are eager to find shelter within the mines, they do still listen to the advice of Aragorn and Gandalf, Merry more so than Pippin perhaps. Merry does not speak much from the flight over the Bridge of

Khazad-dûm until the Fellowship reaches the lawn of Parth Galen, since most of the action focuses on Frodo, and his interactions with the elves in Lothlórien. Even their gifts from the Lady Galadriel, small silver belts, seem almost insignificant when compared to the gifts received by Sam and Frodo. Yet, their gifts reflect the gift of a gold belt given to Boromir, the great warrior of the company. The two young hobbits still have their Westernesse daggers, and therefore need no weapon, and neither are they tall enough, nor capable of using an elven bow. Thus the gift of an elven belt seems to be an appropriate gift for a warrior, perhaps foreshadowing their roles in the upcoming battles.

It is then upon the lawns of Parth Galen that Boromir is overcome by his desire for the Ring of Power, and attacks Frodo. When he returns to their camp and admits his wrongdoing it is Merry and Pippin who are first to run off, shouting and yelling for Frodo. The other members of the company scatter as well, and only Sam realizes what Frodo might be up to, and returns just in time to go with Frodo on his perilous journey. And there we come to another point which makes the presence of Merry and Pippin essential to the story. The Uruk-hai and the orcs sent from Isengard to capture the Ringbearer have simple orders, to capture and bring back two hobbits, alive, as captured, unsearched, unplundered, and unspoiled. (II, Tolkien, 48) They do not know how many hobbits are in the company, and therefore when they have killed Boromir they grab the two hobbits that they see, and head back towards Isengard, instead of looking for more hobbits. Boromir dies a hero's death defending Merry and Pippin, and thus redeems himself from his sin. Merry is hurt during the battle, and is weakened during the Uruk-hai's run across the plains of Rohan. He is therefore unable to retain his role as the leader of the two, which leaves Pippin in desperate need to think for himself.

Peregrin 'Pippin' Took.

Pippin is first introduced in the second chapter of the first book, along with Frodo's other dear friends. Pippin is unique in that he is the only hobbit, aside from Frodo, whose age is given special attention. He is only twenty-nine when Frodo chooses him as his and Sam's companion on the trek down to Crickhollow, and this is important since he is still in his tweens. It is therefore expected that he is irresponsible, childish and scatterbrained. He is quite witty, and likes to banter, and being Frodo's cousin as

well as his friend, Pippin has no qualms about openly making fun of Frodo. Even though he knows about Frodo's plans when they leave Bag End, he carries on as if he knows nothing, and is quite carefree and happy on their journey, starting the first morning out by demanding Sam have his breakfast and bath ready by nine thirty. (I, Tolkien, 96) He sets off with great gusto, but is usually the first to demand a break, or begins to lag behind and grow sleepy.

When the three of them meet Gildor and his elves the reader is given the first real hint that Pippin is viewed by most as a child. As they walk with the elves, Pippin begins to grow sleepy and is supported by the elves around him, and later falls asleep, "pillowed on a green hillock." (I, Tolkien, 108) He sees the elves almost as dream beings while he shares their meal, but remembers little of the food nor drink. Then he falls asleep again, and there is another image of a child as he is "lifted up and borne away to a bower under the trees; there he was laid upon a soft bed and slept the rest of the night away." (I, Tolkien, 109) The next morning finds him cheerful, full of banter and childish glee, and all fear of Black Riders has left him, as he asks cheerfully what the elves had told Frodo about them.

Pippin continues on much in this vein through the whole trek, admitting that he does not want to cut across country because he wants to stop at an inn for beer, and then cheekily tells Frodo '*told you so*' when their progress is halted almost immediately. Turning back though becomes immediately impossible when the three of them see a Black Rider up on the bank they had just come down from, so forwards is the only way on offer. Thus they push on and it is Pippin's knowledge of the land that saves them from getting lost. They begin to relax as they get back on track and finding their packs filled with food from the elves heartens them. Enough so that Sam and Pippin begin to sing a cheerful song. The cheer does not last long though as their singing seems to draw the attention of the Black Riders, and Frodo, Sam and Pippin hurry on their way again. It is then that they reach Farmer Maggot's lands, and Pippin begins to joke, feeling brave and unafraid now that he is on familiar grounds again.

After being fed by Farmer Maggot and his wife, the three hobbits learn that a Black Rider had come asking for Frodo at Maggot's farm, and that the Rider knew Frodo had left Bag End already. Maggot had chased the Rider off, but this news still brings fear to their hearts, and Maggot offers to take them by waggon to the Ferry to

take them over to Crickhollow. Yet again Pippin begins to doze off during the waggon ride, and does not react at all when Merry appears out of the fog, even though Farmer Maggot and Sam and Frodo worry that he is a Black Rider coming out of the fog. (I, Tolkien, 113 – 128)

As they reach Crickhollow Pippin is again shown in the role of the carefree child as he fawns over Merry's ingenuity of having prepared three baths, and then he sings a happy bath song accompanied by a great deal of water splashing for emphasis. All fear and worry about Black Riders is gone again, and he gets lost in the joy of being home safe, followed by the glee of revealing the conspiracy to Frodo. (I, Tolkien, 133 – 139)

When the four hobbits set off on their journey, Pippin is afraid of the Old Forest, half believing the stories that are told about it, and he seems to be the first and most affected by the queer feeling in the forest, as he cries out that he only wishes to pass through. (I, Tolkien, 147) This is a childish fear, but at the same time it, along with the Old Man Willow who later tries to eat Merry and Pippin whole, is a foreshadowing of Merry and Pippin's meeting with Fangorn, and more specifically the Huorns. The Old Forest itself seems to have an agenda of its own, willfully steering the hobbits towards the river and Old Man Willow, where they are saved by Tom Bombadil.

The meeting with Bombadil does seem to be mostly for Frodo's benefit, for he learns a great deal about the Ring, and its power, and in Bombadil's case, lack of power, and for the hobbits to learn about the Barrow Wights and get their Westerneſse daggers. Bombadil never appears again in the story, save for a brief mention at the Council of Elrond. (I, Tolkien 348)

In Bree Pippin is the chief cause for Frodo's mishap with the ring, for he grows chatty as he drinks and emboldened by their company he forgets all about their danger, nearly revealing the grand finish to Bilbo's speech at his 111th birthday party. The Black Riders already have spies in Bree, and when Frodo slips and accidentally dons the ring it is witnessed by them, and the information brought to the Riders. When they return to their sitting room to find Strider there already, Pippin does listen and witnesses the letter from Gandalf, but then he claims to be too tired and that he needs sleep. Upon Merry's return he is again alarmed, but not too alarmed to sleep, and the two of them sleep through the night. (I, Tolkien, 215 – 234)

There is not much to tell of Pippin during the trek to Weathertop, and like Merry he cowers on the ground during the attack of the Black Riders, not even able to draw his dagger before he throws himself down in terror. As they flee from Weathertop, Pippin more or less just follows the others, helping Sam tend to Frodo, or doing as Strider tells him to. Yet he is the one who finds the path to the troll cave, and when they follow the path and find the cave, it is Merry and Pippin who forge on ahead and find the trolls. They only glimpse the trolls through the foliage and run back in fear, but Strider quickly realizes that what they have found are the three trolls who decades earlier had been turned to stone while arguing about how to cook thirteen dwarves and a hobbit. Strider plays a joke on the four hobbits by jumping out and hitting the petrified trolls with a stick, and when the shock has worn off the hobbits sit down for a rest and ask for a song. (I, Tolkien, 269 – 271)

When the company finally arrives in Rivendell Pippin is again reduced to the role of the child, and he is repeatedly scolded by Gandalf, for his hasty and raucous words. It is here that Pippin's role as the rebel against Gandalf begins to show. (ULR, Zimmer Bradley, 78) Pippin informs a recovered Frodo that Gandalf "thinks I need keeping in order". (I, Tolkien, 296) Then after the Council of Elrond Pippin claims that Sam is being rewarded for his cheek, by being allowed to join Frodo on his quest. This is an impetuous and childish way of saying what he means, and it is the more mature and level headed Merry who explains their meaning to Frodo, an explanation that Pippin agrees with, and then claims, "We hobbits ought to stick together, and we will. I shall go, unless they chain me up. There must be someone with intelligence in the party." Gandalf overhears this and injecting himself into the conversation through a window, answers, "Then you certainly will not be chosen, Peregrin Took!" (I, Tolkien, 357) Here is a second instance within the space of a day or so, where Gandalf scolds Pippin as if he were a child. Yet when it comes to the final decision, and Elrond decides that Merry is mature enough to go, Gandalf is unexpectedly on Pippin's side and points out that a small hobbit might succeed where a mighty elf lord might fail. Elrond still refuses, but then he caves when Pippin threatens to follow the Fellowship regardless, unless Elrond were to throw him in prison or send him back to the Shire in a sack. (I, Tolkien, 362 – 363)

These scenes in Rivendell and the following trek through the wilderness as the company tries to pass over the Misty Mountains firmly sets Pippin's role as the constant rebel against Gandalf's kind but fatherly authority. (ULR, Zimmer Bradley, 78 – 79) Gandalf repeatedly rebukes Pippin, and Pippin reacts with rather childish resentment to being treated as a child. At the Gates of Moria, Merry innocently asks what the elven script on the door means, and thus sets Gandalf on the right track to find the answer to the riddle. Pippin on the other hand childishly asks what Gandalf will do, seemingly not aware that Gandalf has grown irritated by Boromir's doubt, only to be answered, "Knock on the doors with your head, Peregrin Took," said Gandalf. "But if that does not shatter them, and I am allowed a little peace from foolish questions, I will seek for the opening words." (I, Tolkien, 401 – 403) Although these words are spoken in anger, it is anger which is not born from Pippin's questions, but from Boromir's doubt of Gandalf's leadership abilities. This is the kind of anger that arises between two adults, and is then lashed out at the child that asks too many questions, and does not realize the tense atmosphere. These words also imply that Pippin is stupid, and therefore the least useful of the company save for as a battering ram. And then a short time later, Pippin again gets called stupid when he encounters the well in the guardroom within the Mines where the Fellowship takes a rest. With the pure curiosity of a child, drawn to the unknown and potentially dangerous, Pippin drops a single pebble down the well, alerting the orcs and other beings hiding deep within the Mines of Moria to the Fellowship's presence. When Pippin admits his foolish act, Gandalf, despite being obviously relieved that the noise was caused by one of the company, again scolds Pippin: "Fool of a Took!" he growled. "This is a serious journey, not a hobbit walking-party. Throw yourself in next time, and then you will be no further nuisance. Now be quiet!" (I, Tolkien, 411) Both instances serve to depict Pippin as nothing more than baggage for the other members to carry. Even when Gandalf relieves Pippin of his guard duty, it is done in a kindly manner, a father telling his child that he has served his punishment and is now back in the father's good graces. (I, Tolkien, 412)

It is this single pebble down the well though, that brings about one of the first and possibly most instrumental *eucatastrophe* of the entire book. The noise alerts the orcs who reside in the mines to the Fellowship's whereabouts, and the disturbance seems to awaken a much deeper, more ancient monster, the Balrog of Morgoth. The

Balrog pulls Gandalf into the chasm with him, and since the company knows no better, into death. Since there is no time to mourn or to despair, Aragorn immediately takes on the role of the leader of the Fellowship, and brings them out of Moria to safety in Lothlórien. It is never mentioned again that Pippin threw a pebble into the well, nor does anyone bring up the question whether the awakening of the Balrog correlates directly with that little pebble. And no one blames Pippin for Gandalf's fall. Of course none of the Fellowship know that Gandalf will return to life, transformed into Gandalf the White, "Saruman as he should have been," (II, Tolkien, 113) and be reunited with Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli when they follow Merry and Pippin to Fangorn Forest. Given the course of events in Moria, one could argue that this rebirth of Gandalf as a stronger, purer, more powerful image of himself is a direct result of Pippin being an impetuous, curious child. Had he not dropped the pebble down the well, the Fellowship might have passed through the Mines of Moria unnoticed, and therefore Gandalf would have remained Grey, ergo chances are he would not have been powerful enough to break Saruman's staff, after the Ents have lain waste to Isengard. As such this would have to be counted as one of the largest, and longest in execution, *eucatastrophe* of the entire story.

Pippin is not paid much attention during their stay in Lothlórien save for his half-jokes about not daring to sleep in the trees for fear of rolling off the flet, and for being the most sure-footed when crossing the elves' rope bridge. He also childishly asks whether the elven cloak that he is gifted is magic, revealing that he obviously believes that elves have magic, something that the hobbits do not have. (I, Tolkien, 2)

Impetuous as they are, Merry and Pippin are the first to run off in search of Frodo at Parth Galen, after Boromir attacks Frodo. The two young hobbits put up a brave fight, but are overcome and taken by the Uruk-Hai and the orcs. Boromir's last stand in defense of the young hobbits leaves a lasting impression on Pippin which will eventually inform his emotionally driven oath to Denethor.

During the flight to Isengard Pippin shows that he has become well aware of his own role in the Fellowship. Although he views himself quite dimly as nothing more than baggage for first the Fellowship and now the orcs, this self awareness is a sign of growth. (II, Tolkien, 47) Realizing that Merry is incapacitated by his injury Pippin finally starts to think for himself and takes charge. First he takes advantage of the orcs

and Uruk-hai fighting and cuts the bonds on his hands, but instead of trying to flee he makes a calculated move, and makes it look as if he is still bound. (II, Tolkien, 51) This shows a remarkable awareness for the danger of his situation, and that he is not physically capable of outrunning the orcs or the Uruk-hai, so there is no possibility to escape. Pippin therefore decides to remain in their custody while trying to figure out a better plan of escape, as well as hope that the other members of the Fellowship might come after them. Then a little while later when the orcs and Uruk-hai make the hobbits run along with them, Pippin runs off to create a distinct trail from the orc stampede, dropping his elven brooch as a further token that he is alive. Pippin has no way of knowing that anyone has come after him and Merry, but he still takes the chance while the orcs rest, hoping that someone might see his clues. (II, Tolkien, 53 – 54)

Finally when the Uruk-hai and the orcs halt at the edge of Fangorn Forest, waiting for the band of Riders of Rohan who have been following them to attack, the orc from Mordor, Grisnák, abducts the two hobbits. Pippin is the first to realize that the orc knows about the Ring and believes that the hobbits have it. Pippin pretends that they do, and Merry quickly catches on, playing the orc as well. For a moment it looks as if their game will be the end of them, but as fortune would have it, Grisnák is killed by one of the riders, and the elven cloaks hide the hobbits from them, leaving them unnoticed outside the circle of guards and able to escape. In true hobbit fashion they still find time to sit for a moment and restore themselves on a few pieces of the elven waybread *lembas* in their pockets, before they crawl away to safety, and then they chat in a light manner as they make their way along the river into Fangorn Forest. (II, Tolkien, 60 – 67)

Entmoot and the Palantír.

In Book Three Merry and Pippin get their moment to shine, in a sense. The book begins with their capture by the orcs and Saruman's Uruk-hai, and follows them all the way into Fangorn Forest, then to the sacking of Isengard and finally to their fateful parting.

The rousing of the Ents and the Huorns of Fangorn Forest to join the wars of men is of course a mechanism to eliminate Saruman and his hordes from the final battle. Surely if he had not had the two little hobbits to rouse the Ents, Tolkien would have

come up with some other way of dealing with the troublesome wizard. However, it is an interesting juxtaposition to have some of the largest, most enigmatic creatures in the novel be roused by the arrival of two of the littlest and most insignificant creatures of the story. Shippey does view it as one of the interlacements of the story, because there are so many threads which must lay exactly right to bring the two hobbits to Fangorn right in that moment. (RME, Shippey, 186 – 187)

As the Ents represent nature and the natural world, they are the exact opposite to Saruman and the industrialization that he represents. Saruman and his Uruk-hai are nature corrupted, an abomination created through greed for wealth and power, while the Ents are nature in its purest form. Upon Merry and Pippin's meeting with Treebeard it is almost immediately obvious that Treebeard is not happy with Fangorn's neighbor in Isengard. Saruman's felling and burning of the trees around the walls of Isengard has not gone unnoticed by the Ents, and Treebeard curses him for his greed, his mechanical mind and the evil servants he has created for himself. Practically in the same breath, Treebeard jumps to action and claims that Merry and Pippin can help him. (II, Tolkien 85)

Here appears one of the greatest moments of the story. A race far, far older than even the near immortal elves is shown to have been aware of the growing evil right on their doorstep for a very long time. Yet, since it is in their very nature to take an extraordinary long time to do anything they have watched for years, and decades, and possibly centuries, as this evil has grown. The lives of men are a mere blink in the lives of Ents, and the lives of the wizards and elves might be just long enough for the Ents to notice them. Then out of the blue these two tiny figures tumble into the arms of Treebeard, and as Gandalf predicts, "their coming was like the falling of small stones that starts an avalanche in the mountains." (TT, Tolkien, 115) The two hobbits, a race so young that the Ents are not even aware of their existence, bring news from the world of men, and the rising of the evil power, and that is enough to arouse Treebeard into action. The Ent calls an Entmoot, a meeting of all the Ents of the forest, and although it takes a few days, the news brought by the little hobbits set the Ents marching to war. These creatures, older than the first Elves of Middle Earth, old enough to remember the arriving of the Great Ships over the Sea (II, Tolkien, 83), suddenly rise up in more haste than they have probably ever been, and attack Isengard. (II, Tolkien, 94 – 103) The

influences of the two hobbits are undeniable. Even if the Ents were slowly being roused from their complacency, it was not going fast enough, thus Merry and Pippin's arrival was like a fuel on the fire and the hobbits' hastiness, their vitality and eagerness to action — despite them being of one of the most complacent and least hasty of all the humanoid races — was the final push that the Ents needed to get moving, and probably hastened their awakening by a few decades at least. This very same slowness could of course have been the death of the Ents, since the wars of men would have reached Fangorn far faster than the Ents would have been roused, and if the forest had been set ablaze it would have most likely been the end of both Ents and Hurons. In that context Merry and Pippin saved not only the Ents, but also saved Rohan and Minas Tirith from an enemy who could have come up behind them and devoured them, while they faced the threat of Sauron from the East. Treebeard is well aware of this, and says as much when he makes the hasty decision of going to war. (II, Tolkien, 85)

This whole episode in the forest of Fangorn and the Entmoot brings about one more aspect of the hobbits that makes them unusual among the races of men. Time and time again throughout the book it has been shown that the hobbits have a remarkable gift for making light of any situation, and if they can not make light of the present moment, they can at least pretend to not be afraid in the moment. This ability is shown time and time again in the first book when Frodo, Sam and Pippin are chased by the Black Riders, and Pippin is afraid one moment, and then the next moment he is singing, dancing and even asking eagerly and cheerfully about the Black Riders. (I, Tolkien, 106, 113) And onwards, all the way to Merry and Pippin chatting lightheartedly as they follow the river into Fangorn Forest, just a short while after escaping from the Uruk-hai and the orcs, and the Riders of Rohan which the hobbits do not know for a friend or a foe. (II, Tolkien, 65) Although Merry is constantly presented as the more mature and quieter one of the duo, he does still share this gift with Pippin, and is almost as quick to switch over to lighthearted chatter and banter.

The two hobbits are not reunited with the Grey Company and Gandalf again, until Gandalf brings the Grey Company, King Théoden and Éomer and the Riders of Rohan to the conquered Isengard. Here the reader finally receives the retrospective recounting of the sacking of Isengard, along with Gimli, Legolas and Aragorn. Merry and Pippin are not at all surprised to see the reborn Gandalf, since he had come there a

few days earlier to speak with Treebeard, then left again in his search of the Riders of Rohan. In true fatherly fashion Gandalf does not return from his assumed death to greet Pippin with great love and affection, but rather barks at him with the impatience of a father in a great hurry: “Get up, you tom-fool of a Took! Where, in the name of wonder, in all this ruin is Treebeard? I want him. Quick!” (II, Tolkien, 211) Gandalf does return to the hobbits with kinder words after his meeting with Treebeard, but it is still evident that the wizard has no time to waste with the carefree hobbits. There Pippin is instantly returned to the role of the child, scolded for trying to find rest on their field of battle won, and only treated to kinder words after the father has finished his business. The hobbits then go on to recount Gríma Wormtongue arriving at Isengard and being herded to Orthanc by Treebeard and finally praise themselves for having salvaged barrels of Shire-pipeweed found in the flotsam and jetsam. (II, Tolkien, 194 – 218)

In the following chapter Pippin becomes the catalyst of another *euclastrophe* with consequences larger than any could imagine. As Gandalf and his companions ride to Orthanc to face Saruman, Merry and Pippin join them, but they find themselves sitting on the bottom steps of Orthanc, “feeling both unimportant and unsafe,” (II, Tolkien, 221) As Saruman comes to the window and tries to work his magic on the King of Rohan, and his men, trying to sway them all to his side, the two little hobbits are completely overlooked. The voice of Saruman does not try to beguile or ensnare them, but leaves them alone to watch as the mighty Riders of the Mark fall sway to the evil magic of a failing wizard. This presumed oversight is most likely because Saruman sees that he is faced with the rulers of the lands that surround his own, and he knows he cannot win against them while they are led by Gandalf. Saruman also realizes that even if these hobbits are the Ringbearers, they are with Gandalf now, and therefore out of Saruman’s reach, and essentially useless to him in the position that he now finds himself in. It is then of course possible that this little glimpse of the hobbits that he cannot reach is the catalyst behind Saruman going in search of the Shire when he escapes from Orthanc, his small, petty revenge against the wee folk that caused his defeat.

As Gandalf breaks Saruman’s staff and casts him out of the order and the Council, Gríma Wormtongue makes one last attempt at King Théoden’s, or Saruman’s, life and throws a large and heavy sphere out of a high window. (II, Tolkien, 229) The Palantír, one of the Seven Seeing Stones, had been used by Saruman to communicate

directly with Sauron, and in his own mind to spy on the Enemy to stay a step ahead of him in the hunt for the Ring and its bearer. Being the closest to where it lands, Pippin runs after the glass stone as it rolls away from the tower and saves it from disappearing into a puddle. This small touch lasting less than a minute as Pippin returns to the stairs of Orthanc carrying the heavy orb is enough to awaken his curiosity and that childish desire to explore things that are potentially dangerous. As the company rides away from Isengard Pippin rides behind Aragorn, but cannot get his mind off the Seeing Stone. No one has explained to him what it is, or how potentially dangerous it is, it is just his own irrepressible curiosity that is getting the better of him. So, Pippin steals the Palantír out of Gandalf's arms while the wizard is resting, and slipping off into a quiet corner he looks into the Palantír. (II, Tolkien, 229 – 241)

Pippin is not strong enough to break from the spell of the Seeing Stone himself, but is saved by his companions. And then as he recounts what has happened, Pippin reveals one of the most remarkable things about himself, as well as about Sauron. Pippin is strong enough to withstand being faced with and questioned by the Dark Lord himself. The littlest hobbit is faced with one of the strongest powers of Evil in all of Middle Earth, and yet he manages to reveal only the barest minimum of misleading information. Of course as Gandalf explains afterwards, Sauron's interrogation was not very intense, for he was hasty and assumed that Pippin was the Ringbearer and Saruman's captive. (II, Tolkien, 239 – 243) Even in the grips of the power of the Palantír Pippin understands the danger that he is facing well enough to refuse to answer the Dark Lord's questions. This refusal as well as Sauron's hastiness play well together, for as W.H. Auden points out in his analysis, "the latter [Sauron] had only to question him [Pippin] in order to learn who had the Ring and what he intended to do with it." (ULR, Auden, 47) If Sauron had just done that he would have found out about Frodo and Sam in an instant and could have turned his focus on finding the two tiny hobbits sneaking into his own land. But as Auden also surmised, Sauron is wholly evil, and evil can not imagine throwing away a weapon of great power to destroy it. Sauron can not imagine that anyone would be able to pass up the opportunity to wield such a mighty weapon, because to evil power is everything. (ULR, Auden, 47) Good can imagine what it is like to be evil on the other hand, and this is demonstrated in Gandalf refusing to accept the Ring from Frodo, explaining, "Yet the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity,

pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me!” (I, Tolkien, 81), and in Galadriel admitting her desire for the One Ring of Power, despite already being a bearer of one of the elven Rings.

“And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!” (I, Tolkien, 480)

Two of the most powerful beings in all of Middle Earth refuse the One Ring when it is offered to them freely, willingly, because they can both imagine themselves being tempted to use the Ring to do good, only to fall under its spell and turn evil.

Pippin, and in some ways Merry, are thus the exact opposite of Sauron. Neither hobbit ever shows even the slightest interest or desire for the Ring. During their journey with Frodo they never once ask about the Ring or wish to see it in any shape or form. They simply want to be a part of the journey because they can not imagine sending their friends off on a potentially fatal adventure alone. Merry and Pippin are so Good that they can barely imagine themselves as Evil. To their minds Evil is something that exists in dark tales and outside of their realm of existence. Evil is something that resides in the worlds of Men, not in the Shire. In a sense the closest that one comes to finding “evil” hobbits is the Sackville-Bagginses in their self justified greed for Bag End. And this gift of the purest of innocence is why Pippin is capable of withstanding Sauron’s questioning of him through the Palantír.

Separation.

As Gandalf revives Pippin after looking in the Palantír the reader is presented with a change in Merry. It is a tiny change, so small that one might miss it easily enough. As the camp gathers around to listen to Pippin’s words, Merry turns away. This

dear, close friend who has been by Pippin's side through kidnap and a small war, turns away, unable to face Pippin as he recounts what he has seen. (II, Tolkien, 242) Zimmer-Bradley earmarks this moment as Merry showing "all the earmarks of the neglected "good" child resenting the kindness shown to the naughty one who has drawn attention to himself." (ULR, Zimmer Bradley, 80) At this point a retrospective look at Merry's role so far affirms this point of view. Despite being just barely of age at the beginning of the adventure, Merry is trusted with finding Frodo a home down in Crickhollow, "The Removal" of all of Frodo's belongings to the new house, he finds them horses, leads them into the Old Forest, stays in at the inn in Bree in order to rest and as chance would have it discovers the presence of Black Riders. Strider relies on him after Frodo is stabbed at Weathertop, and at Rivendell Merry is the one who is capable of putting his and Pippin's feelings and thoughts into words that make sense to the others and do not sound like the angry fussing of a petulant child. Merry is quintessentially the oldest, obedient child who is repeatedly overlooked because the disobedient youngest child draws the attention of the "adults" with his constant flouting of rules and proper behavior. Merry is left on the sidelines as Pippin gets first scolded, then comforted for his folly, and Merry is overlooked yet again. His words to Aragorn as Gandalf rides off to Minas Tirith with Pippin reveal just how keenly Merry feels this, how well he has come to understand his role in the Company, "Some folk have all the luck. He did not want to sleep, and he wanted to ride with Gandalf – and there he goes! Instead of being turned into a stone himself to stand here for ever as a warning." (II, Tolkien, 246) Yet instead of comforting, or reassuring Merry, Aragorn takes on the father role and scolds Merry, telling him that it could have been him, that he might have done worse against the Palantir. This moment seems to define much of Merry's actions that follow.

Merry goes with the remaining Company and King Théoden to the Hornburg, and along the way he rues his fate as being eternally baggage for the rest of his fellows. He feels out of place, useless and a burden, and he begs Aragorn to not leave him behind. "I have not been of much use yet; but I don't want to be laid aside, like baggage to be called for when all is over." (III, Tolkien, 40) Aragorn responds that Merry should go with the king, and at the Hornburg King Théoden repeats his offer, first made at the ruins of Isengard, for Merry to sit beside him and tell him of the Shire. It is here at the breakfast table in the Hornburg that King Théoden offers Merry the opportunity to ride

with him as his esquire, and even offers a small hill pony as a gift, just the right size for a hobbit. (III, Tolkien, 45 – 46) This generosity as well as the feeling of being met as an equal, or as close as can be with a king, leaves Merry overwhelmed with emotion. He kneels in front of the King and offers his sword in Théoden's service, asking the goodly king to receive it. Théoden responds with kindness and receives the hobbit into his service gladly. Filled with love for the King, Merry claims, "As a father you shall be to me," and Théoden agrees, "For a little while." (III, Tolkien, 46)

This oath, impetuous as it is, is given in a sudden rush of love for a gentle father figure who seems to view Merry for what he is, a brave, obedient child. It is such a dramatic contrast to Pippin's oath to Denethor in Minas Tirith. Upon arriving in Minas Tirith Gandalf immediately demands an audience with the Steward of Gondor, Denethor, father of Boromir and Faramir. Here for the first time Pippin takes obvious offense to being considered lesser than a Man. As Denethor mocks him, asking "And how did you escape, and yet he did not, so mighty a man as he was, and only orcs to withstand him?" (III, Tolkien, 16) Pippin responds truthfully and with an obvious respect for Boromir and his sacrifice, and as the scorn and suspicion of Denethor digs deep into Pippin's soul he finds his pride, and offers his service to Denethor, in payment for the blood debt he owes for Boromir's death. (III, Tolkien, 17) Although equally impetuous Pippin's oath is given for a completely different reason than Merry's oath. Pippin's oath is given in pride and a desire to prove Denethor wrong, to prove that small as he is, Pippin is still capable of being worthy of Boromir's sacrifice.

Growth.

At long last both hobbits have come to a point of growth, and over the following days mature beyond the count of their years. At the Muster of Rohan Merry demands not to be left behind as the others ride into battle, but King Théoden releases him from his service, and leaves him behind. It is at this point that Merry finally rebels and rides off to Gondor with Éowyn, who is disguised as the soldier Dernhelm. (III, Tolkien, 77 – 81) Meanwhile in Minas Tirith Pippin questions his choices while watching Denethor descend into madness and slowly realizing that his service as Guard of the Citadel is not held in high regard by his master. Pippin seems to finally understand just how dire his position is, hovering on the brink of war, unable to do anything, and not knowing where

the rest of his friends are, or if they are even alive. The experiences Pippin has, witnessing Denethor sending Faramir away, practically into open death, refusing his love, and then Denethor's final fall into his madness when Faramir returns on the brink of death, all serve to quicken Pippin's maturity. He begins to understand that it is not wise to follow in blind faith, and that sometimes disobedience can be the only course of action, much like Merry has learned this same lesson by riding with Dernhelm to a war which both of them have been denied.

Despite the distance between them and the difference in their circumstances, Merry and Pippin's growth follows a curiously similar pattern as proposed by Zimmer Bradley. (ULR, Zimmer Bradley, 80) Both are motivated by strong emotions, yet both emotions seem to correspond with their nature. The loyal and quiet Merry is motivated by love, while impetuous and irrepressible Pippin feels slighted and reacts with youthful pride and a hasty oath. Yet, these precipitous actions inform the final actions of them both. It is Merry's burning love for the King that he sees as a father, as well as his newfound love for the other overlooked obedient child of the story, the King's niece Éowyn, who disguised as a boy has carried Merry into war which they have both been told they can not fight, which brings him to the battle of Pelennor Fields. And this same love brings Merry right into the midst of things, as the Witchking of Angmar fells King Théoden, and orders his mount to devour the King and his horse. And there rises another overlooked hero of the story, a mere girl disguised as a soldier, stands up to the mightiest of the Ringwraiths and defies him, in order to save King Théoden. Moved by his love for both Éowyn and the King, Merry crawls up behind the Ringwraith as Éowyn holds its attention, and with the small blade that he was given all the way back on the Barrow Downs, "forged long ago by Men of Westemnet: they were foes of the Dark Lord," (I, Tolkien, 192) Merry strikes at the back of the Ringwraith's leg, bringing him to his knees. Thus the mightiest of the Dark Lord's servants is brought down, not by any man but by a woman and a hobbit. (III, Tolkien, 127 – 130)

At the same time, unbeknownst to Merry, Pippin is fighting his own battle within the walls of Minas Tirith, against the madness of Denethor. Upon Faramir's return from Osgiliath, poisoned by an enemy arrow, the Steward's mood and mind began their last dive into despair until finally Denethor decides to burn himself and Faramir on a pyre in the Halls of the Dead. Here Pippin's actions again reflect Merry's in a sense. As

Denethor gives in to his maddening despair he releases Pippin from his oath, but Pippin refuses to be released while Denethor still lives. (III, Tolkien, 108) Pippin's sense of duty shifts to Faramir as he realizes that Denethor's mind is wholly lost, but there is still a chance to save the last heir of the Steward of Gondor. Pippin fights through his own fears and his sense of duty to find Gandalf and bring him to the Houses of the Dead in order to save at least Faramir.

Here it is worth comparing how the rest of the Fellowship grows, with the growth of the two hobbits. Most remarkable is probably Gandalf's fall and rise. It can not exactly be called a type of growth, but rather a transformation from one state to another. The wizards of Middle Earth are of the immortal races, kin to elves rather than men, and Gandalf dies after his battle with the Balrog, only to return to life a step closer to what can almost be called divinity. There is of course no divine power in the Lord of the Rings, no theology or religion of any kind, so it can not be said that Gandalf the White is closer to god than Gandalf the Grey was. Rather that he is reborn as a stronger, purer form of good. It is not growth, since Gandalf the White is still more or less the same, save for his magic and power being stronger, giving him the power to break Saruman's staff, and to face the Lord of the Nazgûl at the gate of Minas Tirith. (III, Tolkien, 113) It is merely a transformation, a gaining of a greater power, after the defeat of a foe of greater evil.

The same can also be said of Aragorn. He has known all of his life that he is the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor, although he has been raised amongst elves and the Dunedain of the North. He is content in his role as the Ranger Strider, the guide of the Fellowship and the leader of the Three Hunters who chase after the Uruk-hai to save Merry and Pippin. When it is time for him to step forward to claim his crown, he is equally content with throwing aside his Ranger cloak and don the cloak of a King. It is a role that he has always known he would have to take at some point, and therefore, much like Gandalf, he steps out of one role and into another.

In the same vein Legolas and Gimli do not change nor grow in any noticeable fashion throughout the tale. The only change is that they set aside the ages old strife between their races, and form a bond of deep friendship, which supposedly lasts the rest of their lives.

Finally there are Sam and Frodo. Neither one of them grows in the same way as Merry and Pippin do. Frodo is from the start a dreamer, wishing to find adventure like his uncle Bilbo did, yet when the adventure is thrust upon him, he takes it on because he must, because the burden has been passed on to him and it is his duty to see it through. The quest does leave him marked, and he returns a more somber, quieter hobbit than when he left. He has seen the purest of evils and almost succumbed to it, and he saw in Gollum what the Ring would have reduced him to, and he carries that shadow with him until he leaves for the Grey Havens. Yet in essence, he is mostly the same, the dreamer at the end of his adventure. Sam also remains remarkably unchanged when they return to the Shire, save for perhaps having a touch more gumption. When the four hobbits return and have rid the Shire of the filth of Saruman, Sam takes on the role of the healer, returning trees and growth to the Shire with the gift of Lady Galadriel. (III, Tolkien, 367 – 368) But it is still the same role he was in at the start, if perhaps on a slightly grander scale; he is the gardener of the Shire.

It is therefore only Merry and Pippin who exhibit any kind of actual emotional and mental growth during their adventure. At the start they are impetuous, raucous, free spirited children, off on a grand adventure, without any regard for the dangers ahead. Through their journey they witness the death of a beloved father figure. They see a friend fall under the sway of the evil Ring and then his redemption as he sacrifices his life for the protection of theirs. They are left to fight for their own lives, and then fight their own little war with the Ents, and finally they are separated and must forge on ahead into the final battle without knowing if the other is safe. All of this marks them and brings them closer to each other. They both mature beyond their years, and their hearts are burdened by the loss of those they admired, loved and felt indebted to. Upon their return to the Shire, Merry and Pippin are hobbits grown, despite still being considered barely adults.

Heroism.

When Merry and Pippin finally find each other on the streets of Minas Tirith as the victorious carry their wounded into the city, they meet as equals, as brothers, and for the first time, Pippin supports Merry as they try to make their way to the Houses of Healing. It is Gandalf who comes to find them, and there at last he admits just how

fortunate it was that the two hobbits were allowed to join the Fellowship. “He [Merry] has well repaid my trust; for if Elrond had not yielded to me, neither of you would have set out; and then far more grievous would the evils of this day have been.” (III, Tolkien, 153)

In the final act of the war the new king of Gondor, the as yet uncrowned Aragorn, leads the armies to the Black Gates of Mordor, in a last stand off between the armies of Sauron and the free folks of Middle Earth. Merry feels shamed that he can not go because of his injuries, but Aragorn tells him that he has earned a great honor in the slaying of the Witchking, and should therefore not resent Pippin his. “Peregrin shall go and represent the Shirefolk; and do not grudge him his chance of peril, for though he has done as well as his fortune allowed him, he has yet to match your deed.” (III, Tolkien, 184) Aragorn recognizes that Merry had performed an act of heroism that many of the mighty heroes of Men could not, but he also recognizes that in saving Faramir’s life Pippin also performed a heroic act worth great honor. Merry on the other hand does not see his own heroism, for he is still grieving for Théoden, and is again feeling reduced to baggage being left behind.

Pippin goes with Aragorn and all of the other heroes of the war, chosen to represent each of the Free Folks of Middle Earth, and thus the smallest and the youngest of the four hobbits stands before the Dark Lord as the agent of his people. Pippin finally understands that it is here, in this moment, that he will either fall, or Frodo will succeed and the war will be won. Pippin is nearly killed himself when he fells the troll that kills his friend Beregon from Minas Tirith, and the last he hears is a cry of the Eagles’ arrival. (III, Tolkien, 197)

The story then draws to a close, after Frodo and Sam have succeeded in their mission, with the reunion of all of the friends, the crowning of the king and then the parting of all the new friends. The hobbits head homewards to the Shire together, accompanied by Gandalf. They rest at the village of Bree, as they did at the outset, and then head on towards the Shire, filled with dread of what awaits them, after the half hearted hints of the innkeeper at Bree. At the borders of Bree and the lands of Tom Bombadil, Gandalf tells the four hobbits that he shall not be coming with them.

*“I am not coming to the Shire. You must settle
its affairs yourselves; that is what you have been trained for.”*

Do you not yet understand? My time is over: it is no longer my task to set things to rights, nor to help folk to do so. And as for you, my dear friends, you will need no help. You are grown up now. Grown indeed very high; among the great you are, and I have no longer any fear at all for any of you.”
(III, Tolkien, 332)

Here for the first time, Merry and Pippin especially are treated as equals. They are hobbits grown now, warriors in their own right, trained on the battle fields to fight their own war. As the four hobbits return to the Shire, they find the way blocked by gates, and scores of guards denying them entry. It is Merry and Pippin who climb the gate and confront the hobbits cowering on the other side, and chase off Bill Ferny, the Ringwraiths' spy in Bree at the beginning of the story. Merry and Pippin are the ones who demand a place for them to rest, and offer up their food to share, and Pippin tears down the list of Rules on the guardsmen's wall.

The next day, although it is Frodo and Sam who scoff at the authority of the Shirriffs, Merry is the one who makes the band of Shirriffs march ahead of them, as if it was the Shirriffs under arrest and not the four returned hobbits. (III, Tolkien, 334 – 341) Here it is at the end of the road that Merry and Pippin rise up as the mighty warriors that they were trained to be. Pippin is still a Guardian of the Citadel, a knight of Gondor, friend and messenger of the King. Merry is also still an esquire of Rohan, a decorated warrior and also a friend of the King. The pair of them are also taller and stouter than most hobbits, since they were fed Entdraught in the halls of Treebeard.

The two of them take the lead in the battle for the Shire, and even though Frodo demands that no hobbit kill another hobbit, Merry knows that war does not give you the luxury of staying your hand. Sometimes, death is inevitable, and casualties will happen on both sides. (III, Tolkien, 345 – 346) Pippin also takes a strong lead in the battles, leading a group down to Tuckborough to help free his kinsmen and then brings back a force to aid in the Scouring of the Shire. (III, Tolkien, 349 – 356) Frodo and Sam do not slack off in the battles, although Frodo never raises a weapon, refusing to spill blood on Shire soil, but the leadership falls squarely on Merry and Pippin. This is a direct result of the growth of Merry and Pippin, for they have left their childish selves behind, and have become grown men, unafraid to meet foes larger and scarier than themselves. And

they do not do this for glory or for fame. They do this simply for their love of their homeland, the desire to return to their world, to the places that they know, and the life that they left behind. This is something that Frodo can not do. For him returning to the Shire feels like falling asleep again, but for Merry and Pippin it is a revival, a joyful return to their hobbit-ness. (III, Tolkien, 333) It does not mean that Merry and Pippin return unchanged. They return as heroes, mighty warriors, bonded by an experience that none of their peers will ever understand. Unlike the rest of the Fellowship they were not heroes from the very start, but they have grown into heroes.

Conclusion.

As this essay draws to a close it is evident that the roles of Merry and Pippin are highly relevant to the course of the story, and there are many incidents that would not have gone in favor of the heroes, had they not been there. It is obvious that they are the quintessential hobbits, for they never lose their “hobbit-ness”, not even after they have escaped certain death by a hair’s breadth. They are both the ‘common’ man of Comedy and the Everyman, the gateway for the average reader to find himself in the story. The way they fall back on cheerfulness and banter, light chatter and joking to push back the darkness and the fear of the unknown, and are thus able to keep their spirits up no matter how dire the circumstances is a sign of their ‘Englishness’, a characteristic that the heroes of the story can not allow themselves. Merry and Pippin have served the progress of not only the story but of the war to great ends, for without their chaotic presence so many things would have gone ill for the other characters. Without them Boromir’s fall would have gone unredeemed, Aragorn’s road would have followed another path, the Ents would not have been roused against Saruman, and Faramir might not have survived his father’s madness.

More importantly, though beyond the plot itself, Merry and Pippin bring an element to the Fellowship that none of the others do. They bring a certain humanity, a gift of cheerfulness, a reminder to the other members of the Fellowship that no matter how dark it gets, there is always a light to be found somewhere. Even when they are scolded and put down, they spring back with an irrepressible spirit, and positivity that they never lose. This is their hobbit-ness, and it is essential to the success of the Fellowship.

Thus the answer to the initial question proposed by this essay, whether Merry and Pippin were essential to the success of the hero's quest, must be a resounding yes, they are. Both because of their hobbit-ness and because they represent the small cogs in the much larger machine of the plot, the essential parts that move things along to the inevitable conclusion. For as C.S. Lewis said of Frodo and Sam, "the fate of the world depends far more on the small movements than on the great." (ULR, Lewis, 12) and Elrond tries to explain the attributes needed in their Ringbearer with the words,

"The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere." (I, Tolkien, 353)

And finally, Gandalf's own words about Merry bear repeating, for he was the one who championed for the two young hobbits to join the Fellowship, even if he could not see the end of their road. "He has well repaid my trust; for if Elrond had not yielded to me, neither of you would have set out; and then far more grievous would the evils of this day have been." (III, Tolkien, 153)

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