

Abstract LotR

The perception of nature as expressed through landscape paintings, photographs and literature is a well-established area of research. Additionally, the investigation of landscape representation in film, a relatively recent and very popular medium, promises deep insights into contemporary landscape perceptions.

The landscapes shown in the film 'The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring' and described in the first part of the novel 'The Lord of the Rings' by J.R.R. Tolkien, on which the film is based, were analysed. It was investigated by which means the cinematic representations convey emotions and how they reflect universal and traditional landscape perceptions.

Due to the lack of methods for analysing landscape representations in films, a new method was developed: The starting point of the investigation is a detailed analysis of exemplary images from the film that portray a representative part of a specific landscape. Subsequently, the focus of the analysis is widened to include the shot and the whole scene to which the image belongs. Particular attention is paid to covering the various visual and auditory information the film medium offers.

Therefore, the evaluation includes such diverse parameters as image composition, sound track and genuine cinematographic qualities, e.g. camera movement, camera position and framing.

The film's landscapes are based on Tolkien's novel. To learn more about the basis of the film and the emotional aspects of the scenes the landscape as described in the novel was also analysed, applying methods of qualitative content analysis. In the discussion of the emotional effects of the landscapes the most common concepts of landscape aesthetics were taken into account.

The results show to what extent the investigated parameters complement each other with respect to the representation of landscapes. The new method made it possible to gain a better understanding of the use and effects of the portrayed landscapes. This helped to identify the perceptions of nature that influenced the creation of the cinematic representations. Harmony and safety, for example, are suggested through an idyllic, Arcadian landscape that is menaced by enemies who symbolise urbanisation and industrialisation. A fallow characterised by shrub invasion and bare karst formations are used to convey feelings of forlornness and hopelessness. Camera movement, camera angle and music strongly contribute to the sublimity of a ravine and a cathedral-like forest. At the same time, other types of forest landscapes do not have any emotional or symbolic function whatsoever and merely serve as neutral backdrops.

Harmony and safety on the one hand and sublimity on the other hand were identified as important concepts for the presentation of landscape in the analysed film. Both concepts have been known for a very long time and evidently have not lost their validity. Therefore, the film 'The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring' stands in a long tradition of such ideas of nature and perpetuates them.

Ein Abstract zum Projekt:

Schäfer et al. (2005): Fantastische Landschaften - Zur Rolle der Landschaft im Film "Der Herr der Ringe - Die Gefährten". - Culterra 42 - Freiburg: Institut für Landespflege, 114 S.