Characterisation – the Actors

Peter Jackson has stated, “What interested us was to show these two 15 year old girls - with no other agenda than to be as accurate as we possibly could - and to somehow imagine what was going on inside their minds.”

Fran Walsh: “Well, all you can do is attempt to find out as much as you can about the people involve - the type of people they were, their class background, etc. So to that degree, we spoke to people who knew the Riepers, for example, who had good knowledge of the girls.”

It will never be possible to judge how well they succeeded in this aim. More important, for the artistic success of a film, is whether they are convincing and well portrayed in the film.

Characters in literature are created by the writer’s pen and the reader’s imagination. Characterisation in film depends on the script, the casting, the actor’s interpretation, the director’s interpretation, costume and makeup, the use of light, sound, music and camera angle. Any one of these things can affect our response to the character.

# Casting: Jackson insisted that the English characters be cast from England; the NZ characters were all local. Finding Pauline was the hardest; Fran Walsh was reduced to visiting schools “looking for sullen, brooding school girls”, and finally found Melanie Lynskey in a classroom in New Plymouth.

Jackson spent two weeks before filming started working with Kate Winslet and Melanie Lynskey, helping them to find the characters they were playing.