





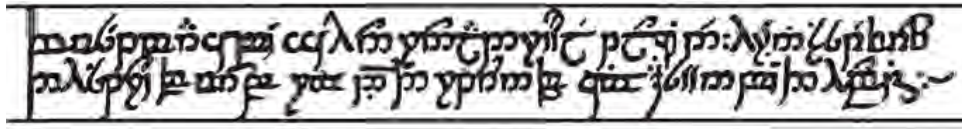
# The Lord of the Rings

BY

J.R.R. Tolkien



HarperCollins e-books



*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.  
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,  
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them  
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is often erroneously called a trilogy, when it is in fact a single novel, consisting of six books plus appendices, sometimes published in three volumes.

The first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was published in Great Britain by the London firm George Allen & Unwin on 29 July 1954; an American edition followed on 21 October of the same year, published by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston. In the production of this first volume, Tolkien experienced what became for him a continual problem: printer's errors and compositor's mistakes, including well-intentioned 'corrections' of his sometimes idiosyncratic usage. These 'corrections' include the altering of *dwarves* to *dwarfs*, *elvish* to *elfish*, *further* to *farther*, *nasturtians* to *nasturtiums*, *try and say* to *try to say* and ('worst of all' to Tolkien) *elven* to *elfin*. In a work such as *The Lord of the Rings*, containing invented languages and delicately constructed nomenclatures, errors and inconsistencies impede both the understanding and the appreciation of serious readers – and Tolkien had many such readers from very early on. Even before the publication of the third volume, which contained much hitherto unrevealed information on the invented languages and writing systems, Tolkien received many letters from readers written in these systems, in addition to numerous enquiries on the finer points of their usage.

The second volume, *The Two Towers*, was published in England on 11 November 1954 and in the United States on 21 April 1955. Meanwhile Tolkien worked to keep a promise he had made in the foreword to volume one: that 'an index of names and strange words' would appear in the third volume. As originally planned, this index would contain much etymological information on the languages, particularly on the elven tongues, with a large vocabulary. It proved the chief cause of the delay in publishing volume three, which in the end contained no index at all, only an apology from the publisher for its absence. For Tolkien had abandoned work on it after indexing volumes one and two, believing its size and therefore its cost to be ruinous.

Volume three, *The Return of the King*, finally appeared in England on 20 October 1955 and in the United States on 5 January 1956. With the appearance of the third volume, *The Lord of the Rings* was published in its entirety, and its first edition text remained virtually

unchanged for a decade. Tolkien had made a few small corrections, but further errors entered *The Fellowship of the Ring* in its December 1954 second impression when the printer, having distributed the type after the first printing, reset the book without informing the author or publisher. These include misrepresentations of the original printed text – that is, words and phrases that read acceptably in context, but which depart from Tolkien’s wording as originally written and published.

In 1965, stemming from what then appeared to be copyright problems in the United States, an American paperback firm published an unauthorized and non-royalty-paying edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. For this new edition by Ace Books the text of the narrative was reset, thus introducing new typographical errors; the appendices, however, were reproduced photographically from the hardcover edition, and remain consistent with it.

Tolkien set to work on his first revision of the text so that a newly revised and authorized edition could successfully compete on the American market. This first revision of the text was published in America in paperback by Ballantine Books, under licence from Houghton Mifflin, in October 1965. In addition to revisions within the text itself, Tolkien replaced his original foreword with a new one. He was pleased to remove the original foreword; in his check copy, he wrote of it: ‘confusing (as it does) real personal matters with the “machinery” of the Tale, is a serious mistake’. Tolkien also added an extension to the prologue and an index – not the detailed index of names promised in the first edition, but, rather, a bald index with only names and page references. Additionally, at this time the appendices were greatly revised.

Tolkien received his copies of the Ballantine edition in late January 1966, and in early February he recorded in his diary that he had ‘worked for some hours on the Appendices in Ballantine version & found more errors than I at first expected’. Soon after this he sent a small number of further revisions to Ballantine for the appendices, including the now well-known addition of ‘Estella Bolger’ as wife of Meriadoc in the family trees in Appendix C. Most of these revisions, which entered variously in the third and fourth impressions (June and August 1966) of volume three, and which were not always inserted correctly (thereby causing further confusion in the text), somehow never made it into the main sequence of revision in the three-volume British hardcover edition, and for long remained anomalies. Tolkien once wrote, concerning the revising of *The Lord of the Rings*, that perhaps he had failed to keep his notes in order; this errant branch of revision seems likely to be an example of that disorder – either in his notes or in the ability of his publishers to follow them with utmost accuracy.

The revised text first appeared in Great Britain in a three-volume hardcover 'Second Edition' from Allen & Unwin on 27 October 1966. But again there were problems. Although the revisions Tolkien sent to America of the text itself were available to be utilized in the new British edition, his extensive revisions to the appendices were lost after being entered into the Ballantine edition. Allen & Unwin were forced to reset the appendices using the copy as published in the first Ballantine edition. This did not include Tolkien's second, small set of revisions sent to Ballantine; but, more significantly, it did include a great number of errors and omissions, many of which were not discovered until long afterwards. Thus, in the appendices, a close scrutiny of the first edition text and of the much later corrected impressions of the second edition is necessary to discern whether any particular change in this edition is authorial or erroneous.

In America, the revised text appeared in hardcover in the three-volume edition published by Houghton Mifflin on 27 February 1967. This text was evidently photo-offset from the 1966 Allen & Unwin three-volume hardcover, and is thus consistent with it. Aside from the first printing of this second Houghton Mifflin edition, which has a 1967 date on the title page, none of the many reprintings is dated. After the initial printings of this edition, which bore a 1966 copyright notice, the date of copyright was changed in 1965 to match the statement in the Ballantine edition. This change has caused a great deal of confusion for librarians and other researchers who have tried to sort out the sequence of publication of these editions.

Meanwhile, Tolkien spent much of the summer of 1966 further revising the text. In June he learned that any more revisions were too late for inclusion in the 1966 Allen & Unwin second edition, and he recorded in his diary: 'But I am attempting to complete my work [on the revisions] – I cannot leave it while it is all in my mind. So much time has been wasted in all my work by this constant breaking of threads.' This was the last major set of revisions Tolkien himself made to the text during his lifetime. They were added to the second impression (1967) of the three-volume hardcover Allen & Unwin second edition. The revisions themselves mostly include corrections of nomenclature and attempts at consistency of usage throughout the three volumes. Some small alterations were made by Tolkien in the 1969 one-volume India paper edition.

J.R.R. Tolkien died in 1973. His third son and literary executor, Christopher Tolkien, sent a large number of further corrections of misprints, mainly in the appendices and index, to Allen & Unwin for use in their editions in 1974. Most of these corrections were typographical, and in line with his father's expressed intent in his own check copies.

Since 1974, Christopher Tolkien has sent additional corrections, as errors have been discovered, to the British publishers of *The Lord of the Rings* (Allen & Unwin, later Unwin Hyman, and now HarperCollins), who have tried to be conscientious in the impossible task of maintaining a textual integrity in whichever editions of *The Lord of the Rings* they have published. However, every time the text has been reset for publication in a new format (e.g. the various paperback editions published in England in the 1970s and 1980s), huge numbers of new misprints have crept in, though at times some of these errors have been observed and corrected in later printings. Still, throughout these years the three-volume British hardcover edition has retained the highest textual integrity.

In the United States, the text of the Ballantine paperback has remained unchanged for more than three decades after Tolkien added his few revisions in 1966. The text in all of the Houghton Mifflin editions remained unchanged from 1967 until 1987, when Houghton Mifflin photo-offset the then current three-volume British hardcover edition in order to update the text used in their editions. In those new reprintings a number of further corrections (overseen by Christopher Tolkien) were added, and the errant Ballantine branch of revision (including the 'Estella Bolger' addition) was integrated into the main branch of textual descent. This method of correction involved a cut-and-paste process with printed versions of the text. Beginning with the 1987 Houghton Mifflin edition, an earlier version of this 'Note on the Text' (dated October 1986) was added to *The Lord of the Rings*. This 'Note' has been reworked three times since then – the version dated April 1993 first appeared in 1994, and the version dated April 2002 came out later that year. The present 'Note' replaces and supersedes all previous versions.

For the 1994 British edition published by HarperCollins, the text of *The Lord of the Rings* was entered into word-processing files. This next stage of textual evolution came about to allow for a greater uniformity of the text in all future editions, but with it, inevitably, came new wrinkles. Some new misreadings entered into the text, while at the same time others were fixed. In the worst instance, one line of the ring inscription in the chapter 'The Shadow of the Past' of *The Fellowship of the Ring* was simply dropped. Unforeseeable glitches arose in other editions when the base computerized text was transferred into page-making or typesetting programs – e.g., in one edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the closing two sentences of 'The Council of Elrond' simply and inexplicably disappeared. Such glitches have been very much the exception, not the rule, and the text has otherwise maintained a consistency and integrity throughout its computerized evolution.

The 1994 edition also contained a number of new corrections (again supervised by Christopher Tolkien), as well as a reconfigured index of names and page references. The 1994 text was first used in American editions published by Houghton Mifflin in 1999. A small number of further corrections were added into the 2002 three-volume edition illustrated by Alan Lee, published by HarperCollins in Great Britain and Houghton Mifflin in the United States.

The textual history of *The Lord of the Rings*, merely in its published form, is a vast and complex web. In this brief note I have given only a glimpse of the overall sequence and structure. Further details on the revisions and corrections made over the years to the published text of *The Lord of the Rings*, and a fuller account of its publishing history, may be found in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*, by Wayne G. Hammond, with the assistance of Douglas A. Anderson (1993).

For those interested in observing the gradual evolving of *The Lord of the Rings* from its earliest drafts to its published form, I highly recommend Christopher Tolkien's account, which appears within five volumes of his twelve-volume series *The History of Middle-earth*. Volumes six through nine contain the major part of his study pertaining to *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the Shadow* (1988); *The Treason of Isengard* (1989); *The War of the Ring* (1990); and *Sauron Defeated* (1992). Also, the final book of the series, *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (1996), covers the evolution of the prologue and appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*. These volumes contain an engrossing over-the-shoulder account of the growth and writing of Tolkien's masterpiece.

The process of studying Tolkien's manuscripts of *The Lord of the Rings* involved the deciphering of versions where Tolkien wrote first in pencil and then in ink atop the pencilled draft. Christopher Tolkien has described his father's method of composition in *The Return of the Shadow*: 'In the handwriting that he used for rapid drafts and sketches, not intended to endure long before he turned to them again and gave them a more workable form, letters are so loosely formed that a word which cannot be deduced or guessed at from the context or from later versions can prove perfectly opaque after long examination; and if, as he often did, he used a soft pencil much has now become blurred and faint.' The true difficulty of reading such double-drafts can be observed in the frontispiece to *The War of the Ring*, which reproduces in colour Tolkien's illustration of 'Shelob's Lair' from a page of Tolkien's manuscript. Looking very closely at the hasty ink draft alongside the illustration, one can see underneath it the earlier, hastier, pencilled draft. Also in *The War of the Ring*,

Christopher Tolkien reproduces a page from the first manuscript of the chapter 'The Taming of Sméagol', and the printed text corresponding to this text is on the facing page (see pp. 90–91). One is astonished at anyone's ability to decipher such texts.

That difficulty aside, just what do these books signify to ordinary readers and to Tolkien scholars? And what is 'the history of the writing' of a book? Simply, these volumes show in great detail the development of the story of *The Lord of the Rings* from its very earliest drafts and hasty projections through its completion. We see in the earliest materials what is very much a children's book, a sequel to *The Hobbit*, and as the story grows through various 'phases', there is an increase in seriousness and depth. We see alternate branches of development, the gradual blending and merging of certain characters, and the slow emergence of the nature of the rings and of the motivations of other characters. Some of these various ideas are abandoned altogether, while others are reworked into some variant form that may or may not survive into the final version.

One could make a whole catalogue of interesting tidbits from Christopher Tolkien's study – such as the fact that Strider was called Trotter until a very late stage in the writing of the book; that Trotter was at one time a hobbit, so named because he wore wooden shoes; that Tolkien at one point considered a romance between Aragorn and Éowyn; that Tolkien wrote an epilogue to the book, tying up loose ends, but it was dropped before publication (and now appears in *Sauron Defeated*); and so on. But these developments are best appreciated when read within the context of Christopher Tolkien's commentary rather than discussed separately.

The most significant achievement of these volumes is that they show us how Tolkien wrote and thought. Nowhere else do we see the authorial process itself at work in such detail. Tolkien's hastiest comments about where the story might proceed, or why it can or can't go such and such a way – these queries to himself were written out: Tolkien is literally thinking on paper. This gives an added dimension of understanding to Tolkien's comment to Stanley Unwin in a 1963 letter that, when suffering from trouble with his shoulder and right arm, 'I found not being able to use a pen or pencil as defeating as the loss of her beak would be to a hen.' And we, as readers of these volumes, can share with Tolkien himself the wonder and bewilderment of new characters appearing as if from nowhere, or of some other sudden change or development, at the very moment of their emergence into the story.

I know of no other instance in literature where we have such a 'history of the writing' of a book, told mostly by the author himself, with all the hesitations and false paths laid out before us, sorted out,

commented upon, and served up to a reader like a feast. We are shown innumerable instances in the minutest detail of the thought-process itself at work. We see the author fully absorbed in creation for its own sake. And this is all the more exceptional because this is a history not only of the unfolding of a story and its text, but of the evolution of a world. There is an additional wealth of material beyond simple narrative text. There are maps and illustrations. There are languages and writing systems, and the histories of the peoples who spoke and wrote in these systems. All of these additional materials add multiple dimensions of complexity to our appreciation of the invented world itself.

Fifty years into the published life of *The Lord of the Rings*, it seems extraordinary to me that we have not only such a masterful work of literature but also as a companion to it an unparalleled account of its writing. Our gratitude as readers goes to both of the Tolkiens, father and son.

Douglas A. Anderson  
May 2004



## NOTE ON THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

In this edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, prepared for the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, between three and four hundred emendations have been made following an exhaustive review of past editions and printings. The present text is based on the setting of the HarperCollins three-volume hardcover edition of 2002, which in turn was a revision of the HarperCollins reset edition of 1994. As Douglas A. Anderson comments in the preceding ‘Note on the Text’, each of those editions was itself corrected, and each also introduced new errors. At the same time, other errors survived undetected, among them some five dozen which entered as long ago as 1954, in the resetting of *The Fellowship of the Ring* published as its ‘second impression’.

That the printer had quietly reset *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and that copies had been issued without proof having been read by the author, never became known to Tolkien; while his publisher, Rayner Unwin, learned of it only thirty-eight years after the fact. Tolkien found a few of the unauthorized changes introduced in the second printing when (probably while preparing the second edition in 1965) he read a copy of the twelfth impression (1962), but thought the errors newly made. These, among others, were corrected in the course of the reprinting. Then in 1992 Eric Thompson, a reader with a keen eye for typographic detail, noticed small differences between the first and second impressions of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and called them to the attention of the present editors. About one-sixth of the errors that entered in the second printing quickly came to light. Many more were revealed only recently, when Steven M. Frisby used ingenious optical aids to make a comparison of copies of *The Lord of the Rings* in greater detail than was previously accomplished. We have gladly made full use of Mr Frisby’s results, which he has generously shared and discussed.

In the course of its fifty-year history *The Lord of the Rings* has had many such readers who have recorded changes made between its various appearances in print, both to document what has gone before and to aid in the achievement of an authoritative text. Errors or possible errors were reported to the author himself or to his publishers, and information on the textual history of the work circulated among Tolkien enthusiasts at least as early as 1966, when Banks



Mebane published his 'Prolegomena to a Variorum Tolkien' in the fanzine *Entmoot*. Most notably in later years, Douglas A. Anderson has been in the forefront of efforts to achieve an accurate text of *The Lord of the Rings* (and of *The Hobbit*); Christina Scull has published 'A Preliminary Study of Variations in Editions of *The Lord of the Rings*' in *Beyond Bree* (April and August 1985); Wayne G. Hammond has compiled extensive lists of textual changes in *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1993); and David Bratman has published an important article, 'A Corrigenda to *The Lord of the Rings*', in the March 1994 number of *The Tolkien Collector*. The observations of Dainis Bisenieks, Yuval Kfir, Charles Noad, and other readers, sent to us directly or posted in public forums, have also been of service.

Efforts such as these follow the example of the author of *The Lord of the Rings* during his lifetime. His concern for the textual accuracy and coherence of his work is evident from the many emendations he made in later printings, and from notes he made for other emendations which for one reason or another have not previously (or have only partly) been put into effect. Even late in life, when such labours wearied him, his feelings were clear. On 30 October 1967 he wrote to Joy Hill at George Allen & Unwin, concerning a reader's query he had received about points in the Appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*: 'Personally I have ceased to bother about these minor "discrepancies"', since if the genealogies and calendars etc. lack verisimilitude it is in their general excessive accuracy: as compared with real annals or genealogies! Anyway the slips were few, have now mostly been removed, and the discovery of what remain seems an amusing pastime! *But errors in the text are another matter*' (italics ours). In fact Tolkien had not 'ceased to bother', and 'slips' were dealt with as opportunities arose. These, and the indulgence of his publisher, allowed Tolkien a luxury few authors enjoy: multiple chances not only to correct his text but to improve it, and to further develop the languages, geography, and peoples of Middle-earth.

The fiftieth anniversary of *The Lord of the Rings* seemed an ideal opportunity to consider the latest (2002) text in light of information we had gathered in the course of decades of work in Tolkien studies, with Steve Frisby's research at hand, and with an electronic copy of *The Lord of the Rings* (supplied by HarperCollins) searchable by keyword or phrase. The latter especially allowed us to develop lists of words that varied from one instance to another, and investigate variations in usage, as they stood in the copy-text and relative to earlier editions and printings. Of course Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* over so long a period of time, some eighteen years, that inconsistencies in its text were almost inevitable. Christopher Tolkien even observed to us that some apparent inconsistencies of form in his

father's work may even have been deliberate: for instance, although Tolkien carefully distinguished *house* 'dwelling' from *House* 'noble family or dynasty', in two instances he used *house* in the latter sense but in lower case, perhaps because a capital letter would have detracted from the importance of the adjective with which the word was paired ('royal house', 'golden house'). There can be no doubt, however, that Tolkien attempted to correct inconsistency, no less than outright error, whenever it came to his attention, and it was our opinion, with the advice and agreement of Christopher Tolkien, that an attempt should be made to do so in the anniversary edition, in so far as we could carefully and conservatively distinguish what to emend.

Many of the emendations in the present text are to marks of punctuation, either to correct recent typographical errors or to repair surviving alterations introduced in the second printing of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. In the latter respect and in every case, Tolkien's original punctuation is always more felicitous – subtle points, when one is comparing commas and semi-colons, but no less a part of the author's intended expression. Distinctive words such as *chill* rather than *cold*, and *glistered* rather than *glistered*, changed by typesetters long ago without authorization, likewise have been restored. A controlled amount of regularization also seemed called for, such as *naught* rather than *nought*, a change instituted by Tolkien but not carried through in all instances; *Dark Power* rather than *dark power* when the reference is obviously to Sauron (or Morgoth); *Barrow-downs* by Tolkien's preference rather than *Barrowdowns*; likewise *Bree-hill* rather than *Bree Hill*; accented and more common *Driadan* rather than *Druadan*; capitalized names of seasons when used as personification or metaphor, according to Tolkien's predominant practice and the internal logic of the text; and *Elvish* rather than *elvish* when used as a separate adjective, following a preference Tolkien marked in his copy of the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. In addition, we have added a second accent to *Númenórean(s)*, as Tolkien often wrote the name in manuscript and as it appears in *The Silmarillion* and other posthumous publications.

The result, nonetheless, still includes many variations in capitalization, punctuation, and other points of style. Not all of these are erroneous: they include words such as *Sun*, *Moon*, *Hobbit*, and *Man* (or *sun*, *moon*, *hobbit*, *man*), which may change form according to meaning or application, in relation to adjacent adjectives, or whether Tolkien intended personification, poetry, or emphasis. His intent cannot be divined with confidence in every case. But it is possible to discern Tolkien's preferences in many instances, from statements he wrote in his check copies of *The Lord of the Rings* or from a

close analysis of its text in manuscript, typescript, proof, and print. Whenever there has been any doubt whatsoever as to the author's intentions, the text has been allowed to stand.

Most of the demonstrable errors noted by Christopher Tolkien in *The History of Middle-earth* also have been corrected, such as the distance from the Brandywine Bridge to the Ferry (*ten* miles rather than *twenty*) and the number of Merry's ponies (*five* rather than *six*), shadows of earlier drafts. But those inconsistencies of content, such as Gimli's famous (and erroneous) statement in Book III, Chapter 7, 'Till now I have hewn naught but wood since I left Moria', which would require rewriting to emend rather than simple correction, remain unchanged.

So many new emendations to *The Lord of the Rings*, and such an extensive review of its text, deserve to be fully documented. Although most readers will be content with the text alone, many will want to know more about the problems encountered in preparing this new edition, and their solutions (where solutions have been possible), especially where the text has been emended, but also where it has not. To this end, and to illuminate the work in other respects, we are preparing a volume of annotations to *The Lord of the Rings* for publication in 2005. This will allow us to discuss, at a length impossible in a prefatory note, the various textual cruces of *The Lord of the Rings*, to identify changes that have been made to the present text, and to remark on significant alterations to the published work throughout its history. We will also explain archaic or unusual words and names in *The Lord of the Rings*, explore literary and historical influences, note connections with Tolkien's other writings, and comment on differences between its drafts and published form, on questions of language, and on much else that we hope will interest readers and enhance their enjoyment of Tolkien's masterpiece.

Wayne G. Hammond & Christina Scull  
May 2004

## FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues.

When those whose advice and opinion I sought corrected *little hope* to *no hope*, I went back to the sequel, encouraged by requests from readers for more information concerning hobbits and their adventures. But the story was drawn irresistibly towards the older world, and became an account, as it were, of its end and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told. The process had begun in the writing of *The Hobbit*, in which there were already some references to the older matter: Elrond, Gondolin, the High-elves, and the orcs, as well as glimpses that had arisen unbidden of things higher or deeper or darker than its surface: Durin, Moria, Gandalf, the Necromancer, the Ring. The discovery of the significance of these glimpses and of their relation to the ancient histories revealed the Third Age and its culmination in the War of the Ring.

Those who had asked for more information about hobbits eventually got it, but they had to wait a long time; for the composition of *The Lord of the Rings* went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949, a period in which I had many duties that I did not neglect, and many other interests as a learner and teacher that often absorbed me. The delay was, of course, also increased by the outbreak of war in 1939, by the end of which year the tale had not yet reached the end of Book One. In spite of the darkness of the next five years I found that the story could not now be wholly abandoned, and I plodded on, mostly by night, till I stood by Balin's tomb in Moria. There I halted for a long while. It was almost a year later when I went on and so came to Lothlórien and the Great River late in 1941.