

# The Lord of the Rings: Genesis

Mainly going to be based on

- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Return of the Shadow: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part One*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988. Vol. 6 of *The History of Middle-earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien.
- . *The Treason of Isengard: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part Two*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Vol. 7 of *The History of Middle-earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien.
- . *The War of the Ring: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part Three*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990. Vol. 8 of *The History of Middle-earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien.
- . *Sauron Defeated: The History of the Lord of the Rings, Part Four*. London: HarperCollins, 1992. Vol. 9 of *The History of Middle-earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien.

When *The Hobbit* appeared in 1937, and it became clear that it was a runaway commercial success, Stanley Unwin, Tolkien's publisher, began to hint that the public might be keen for more of the same. In a letter to Tolkien, he wrote: 'A large public will be clamouring next year to hear more from you about Hobbits!' Well, they had to wait a few years. At the time, Tolkien could not really oblige. All he had in hand was a bundle of manuscripts relating to the matter of the *Silmarillion*, some short stories for children ("Mr Bliss", "Roverandom", "Farmer Giles of Ham"), and an unfinished novel (never going to be finished either), *The Lost Road*. None of these were felt to be entirely suitable for publication, and Unwin sent a polite rejection:

*The Silmarillion* contains plenty of wonderful material; in fact it is a mine to be explored in writing further books like *The Hobbit* rather than a book in itself. I think this was partly your own view, was it not? What we badly need is another book with which to follow up our success with *The Hobbit* and alas! neither of these manuscripts quite fits the bill. I still hope that you will be inspired to write another book about the Hobbit.

If Tolkien was not too pleased about the rejection of *The Silmarillion* (a different version from the one we have now), he still saw that a *Hobbit* sequel would be a better commercial proposition: the only trouble was, it would still have to be written. So he wrote back to Unwin on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937: (Letters 19)

I think it is plain ... that a sequel or successor to *The Hobbit* is called for. I promise to give this thought and attention. But I am sure you will sympathize when I say that the construction of elaborate and consistent mythology (and two languages) rather occupies the mind, and the *Silmarils* are in my heart. So that goodness knows what will happen. Mr Baggins began as a comic tale among conventional and inconsistent Grimm's fairy-tale dwarves, and got drawn into the edge of it – so that even Sauron the terrible peeped over the edge. And what more can hobbits do? They can be comic, but their comedy is suburban unless it is set against things more elemental. But the real fun about orcs and dragons (to my mind) was before their time. Perhaps a new (if similar) line? Do you think Tom Bombadil, the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside, could be made into the hero of a story? Or is he, as I suspect, fully enshrined in the enclosed verses? Still I could enlarge the portrait.

Tom Bombadil is here, obviously, seen as the hero of his own story, but Tolkien did not quite see as doing much beyond those things already expressed in the poem: snared by the Willow and the Barrow-wight and mastering them, and marrying Goldberry.

One of the problems of course was that the original hero of *The Hobbit* was not really available for further adventures, either, because he too had been taken care of:

He took to writing poetry and visiting the elves; and though many shook their heads and touched their foreheads and said 'Poor old Baggins!' and though few believed any of his tales, he remained very happy to the end of his days, and those were extraordinarily long.

Tolkien also felt that the *Hobbit* theme had been played out for all it was worth (see letter to Unwin), and anyway he had no immediate inspiration. Still, he was willing to try, although he had no idea where the story was going to go. On the other hand, when he started *The Hobbit*, he did not really know either, so that would not be an obstacle. Unlike *The Hobbit*, however, writing out the sequel would turn out to be a long drawn-out process. After it was finished, in 1955, Tolkien wrote a letter to W. H. Auden, the famous poet, who was one of his admirers:

I met a lot of things on the way that astonished me. Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree. Strider sitting in the corner at the inn was a shock, and I had no more idea who he was than had Frodo. The Mines of Moria had been a mere name; and of Lothlórien no word had reached my mortal ears till I came there. Far away I knew there were the Horse-lords on the confines of an ancient kingdom of Men, but Fangorn Forest was an unforeseen adventure. I had never heard of the House of Eorl nor of the Stewards of Gondor. Most disquieting of all, Saruman had never been revealed to me, and I was as mystified as Frodo at Gandalf's failure to appear on September 22.

Three days after writing to Unwin promising the matter thought and attention, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937 Tolkien wrote to one of the editors at Allen & Unwin's:

I have written the first chapter of a new story about Hobbits – 'A long expected party'.

This first chapter was going to be re-written three times before the story was continued. Altogether, Christopher Tolkien distinguishes three phases of writing until the company get into the Mines of Moria; the beginnings of a phase (apart from the first) being defined by Tolkien starting again at the beginning and rewriting things. In the first phase, after the fourth version of the first chapter had been finished, Tolkien gets his hobbits as far as Rivendell.

### Phase 1

In the very first version of Ch1, Bilbo has spent all his money and is slightly fed-up with stuffy hobbits back home, so he disappears in search of adventure and dragon-gold. There is no Gandalf and no fireworks; he takes the ring with him, although this only happens because the ring can make him invisible and that is useful for adventures. We also learn that he plans to get married, and that the real story is going to be about one of his descendants:

That's that. It [This chapter] merely serves to explain that Bilbo Baggins got married and had many children, because I am going to tell you a story about one of his descendants, and if you had only read his memoirs up to the date of

Balin's visit – ten years at least before this birthday party – you might have been puzzled.

In later developments of the story, however, Bilbo is sometimes brought back as the main (or a main) character.

The joke about the correct plural of the family name of *Proudfoot* is already in place:

‘My dear Bagginses,’ he went on, standing now on his chair, so that the light of the lanterns that illuminated the enormous pavilion flashed upon the gold buttons of his embroidered waistcoat for all to see. ‘And my dear Tooks, and Grubbs, and Chubbs, and Burrowses, and Boffinses, and Proudfoots.’  
‘Proudfeet!’ shouted an elderly hobbit from the back.

Equally, the seeds of the logical puzzle in Bilbo's speech are already there:

I don't know half of you half as well as I should like, and less than half of you half as well as you deserve.

This was improved, of course, in the published version to

I don't know half of you half as well as I should like, and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve.

Don't worry, the Hobbits didn't understand Bilbo either.

The second version of the first chapter brings in Gandalf's presence and the fireworks, but is otherwise not much different.

The third version, however, brings in an important change. The party is not given by Bilbo, but by Bilbo's son Bingo who is celebrating his birthday. Bilbo himself had vanished, unspectacularly, together with wife, shortly before his 111<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is Bingo who vanishes at the party, leaving everything to the Sackville-Bagginses.

In the fourth version, Bingo is no longer Bilbo's son, but his nephew, a Bolger-Baggins; Bilbo is not married, and the party and the disappearance are his. The ring is still seen as a tool for adventures rather than as a central element. The hints found in the first version that the traveller is not going to be on his own but accompanied by other hobbits, are now made explicit.

The first chapter of phase one seems to have been finished by February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1938, 6 weeks after it started. In a letter to an editor at Allen & Unwin's he writes:

Would you ask Mr Unwin whether his son, a very reliable critic, would care to read the first chapter of the sequel to *The Hobbit*? I have typed it. I have no confidence in it, but if he thought it a promising beginning, could add to it the tale that is brewing.

It seems as if by now Tolkien had at least some vague notions of what directions his story (“the tale that is brewing”) was going to take, but admittedly they are exceedingly vague. From some scribbled notes he seems to have considered a dragon coming to Hobbiton and a heroic rescue by hobbits, but he rejected that. He also felt that there might have been a curse on the dragon gold that would make its owner restless, so Bilbo would have to go to Rivendell to ask Elrond's advice about that; on the way to Rivendell, Bilbo or Bingo and his

companions would have some adventures like the troll episode in *The Hobbit* (a witch-house or something) and Elrond might advise him to go to a far away island where the Elves still reign.

At the same time, though, the ring pushes itself into Tolkien's consciousness: it is, after all, one thing still left unexplained from *The Hobbit*, which could be used to provide a link. At first, Tolkien seems to think it is harmless if handled correctly. One note dating back to that time says:

*The Ring*: whence its origin? Necromancer? Not very dangerous, when used for good purpose. But it exacts its penalty. You must either lose it, or *yourself*. Bilbo could not bring himself to lose it. He starts on a holiday handing over ring to Bingo. But he vanishes. Bingo worried. Resists desire to go and find him – though he does travel round a lot looking for news. Won't lose ring as he feels it will ultimately bring him to his father.

At last he meets Gandalf. Gandalf's advice. You must stage a *disappearance*, and the ring may then be cheated into letting you follow a similar path. But you have got to *really disappear* and give up the past. Hence the 'party'.

Bingo confides in his friends. Odo, Frodo, and Vigo (?) insist on coming too.

Gandalf rather dubious. You will share the same fate as Bingo, he said, if you dare the ring. Look what happened to Primula.

This looks like a story about the necessity to be able to let go, let go of the ring and the past, that is, of one's possessions, of old identity. Arguably, this is still one of the motifs of *LOTR* in its final form: those who do not detach themselves will diminish, be they Elves who do not go West, or ring-owners who cannot let go and turn into wraiths. At the end of the ring-quest, Frodo cannot let go and is physically and psychologically wounded; and he has to go leave Middle-earth to find a cure. But this necessity to be able to let go is arguably not the main theme.

For a while Tolkien wavers between curse on dragon-gold, or even Bilbo's desire to see a dragon again, and the ring as driving motifs for the sequel to *The Hobbit*, and when his characters set out from Hobbiton, there is still no clear driving force:

Bilbo goes to Elrond to cure dragon-longing, and settles down in Rivendell.

Hence Bingo's frequent absences from home. The dragon-longing comes on

Bingo. Also ring-lure.

At roughly the same time, he decides to bring in adventures in Old Forest, with Old Man Willow, Barrow-wights, and Tom Bombadil, who had already existed in a poem published in 1934. He also begins to see Gandalf as motivating the disappearance from Bag End.

Unwin responded that his son had found the first chapter delightful and asked for more, but Tolkien characteristically hesitated, replying to his editor on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938:

They say it is the first step that costs the effort. I do not find it so. I am sure I could write unlimited 'first chapters'. I have indeed written many. The *Hobbit* sequel is still where it was, and I have only the vaguest notion of how to proceed. Not ever intending any sequel, I fear I have squandered all my favourite 'motifs' and characters on the original 'Hobbit'.

Three weeks later, however, in a letter to Unwin, dated 4<sup>th</sup> March, he writes:

The sequel to *The Hobbit* has now progressed as far as the end of the third

chapter. But stories tend to get out of hand, and this has taken an unpremeditated turn.

What had happened? Tolkien had sent Bingo out with three companions, Odo, Frodo and Drogo, quickly dropped Drogo, mainly to find Bilbo, but also to satisfy adventure longings, and they were walking along, when

Frodo said: 'I can hear a horse coming along the road behind!'

They looked back, but the windings of the road hid the traveller.

'I think we had better get out of sight,' said Bingo; 'or you fellows at any rate.

Of course it doesn't matter very much, but I would rather not be met by anyone we know.'

[Odo and Frodo] ran quickly to the left down into a little hollow beside the road, and lay flat. Bingo slipped on his ring and sat down a few yards from the track. The sound of hoofs drew nearer. Round a turn came a white horse, and on it sat a bundle – or that is what it looked like: a small man wrapped entirely in a great cloak and hood so that only his eyes peered out, and his boots in the stirrups below.

The horse stopped when it came level with Bingo. The figure uncovered its nose and sniffed; and then sat silent as if listening. Suddenly a laugh came from inside the hood.

'Bingo my boy!' said Gandalf, throwing aside his wrappings.

This approach, however, was abandoned very quickly, and there are already pencilled-in corrections in the MS, making the horse and the cloak and hood black. We do find a reminiscence of Gandalf's appearance at this point in LOTR, though:

They looked back, but the turn of the road prevented them from seeing far. 'I wonder if that is Gandalf coming after us,' said Frodo; but even as he said it, he had a feeling that it was not so, and a sudden desire to hide from the view of the rider came over him.

The appearance of a rider following the hobbits, and his sniffing, obviously was there before the notion of the Black Riders developed; Tolkien also saw, however, that Gandalf did not really fit the bill; he might have led the hobbits into another hobbit-type adventure, but this book required a different approach. So the menace of the Black Riders developed, and with them the Ring began to take on a much more prominent role.

In an unnumbered chapter Tolkien creates a kind of history for the ring; originally it seems he intended it as an introduction but probably soon shifted it into its present position, Bk1 Ch2, "The Shadow of the Past". It is one of many rings of power that were made by the Dark Lord, and while it conveys invisibility, it also thins the wearer out, turns him into a wraith. All the other rings have already either been destroyed or returned to the Dark Lord. This one used to be worn by an elf, lost when it slipped from the elf's finger when he was trying to escape from pursuing orcs (will turn into death of Isildur later). It is then found by Gollum and is now sought again by the Dark Lord (not for any clear motivation yet, it seems mainly because without it his collection would not be complete, and we all know what lengths collectors will go to). If the Dark Lord's attention is drawn to the shire, it will also be drawn to the hobbits, and since they are more or less the one race unaffected by the Dark Lord's activities, he will

turn on them and try to enslave them, to turn them in wraiths. To prevent this, the ring will have to be taken away from the shire.

We now find the hobbit company meeting either two black riders or one twice; the second time the rider is driven off by an approaching group of elves, all elements to be retained into the final version. The ring develops more and more, it becomes “the last and most potent” of the rings, although we still do not know what its potency is. At the same time, the necromancer is first called the “Lord of the Rings”.

The hobbits proceed further, meet Farmer Maggot, Bingo has some reservations about his relationship with the Farmer, so he puts on the ring, Maggot invites the others to a meal, Bingo, invisibly, grabs a beer-mug, lifts it up and drinks it: Maggot is greatly frightened by this, the others just consider it a silly joke. They have a bath in a little house in Buckland belonging to Meredith Brandybuck, and a night’s rest “for the last time for many a long day.” Obviously, at the time the meeting with Tom Bombadil had not been foreseen yet.

This is where the story remained for quite some time. The people to whom Tolkien had shown it so far (Rayner Unwin and CS Lewis) quite liked it, but found that there was too much hobbit-talk there: inconsequential chatter and not enough action. On June 4, he wrote to Unwin:

I meant long ago to have thanked Rayner for bothering to read the tentative chapters, and for his excellent criticism. It agrees strikingly with Mr Lewis’, which is therefore confirmed. I must plainly bow to my two chief (and most well-disposed) critics. The trouble is that ‘hobbit talk’ amuses me privately (and to a certain degree also my boy Christopher) more than adventures; but I must curb this severely.

Some weeks later, it even looks as if Tolkien had given up on the project. On July 24, he writes to his editor:

The sequel to *the Hobbit* has remained where it stopped. It has lost my favour, and I have no idea what to do with it.

Tolkien resumed work on this project some five months later, towards the end of August. He introduced Old Man Willow, Tom Bombadil, and the Barrow-wight, whom he had originally seen as forming part of a separate work. At first, the hobbits were only to hear his song during the willow-adventure and there were to be invited to his house after the barrow-wight adventure, with several wights in hot pursuit. During the night, Bingo also hears galloping horses around Tom Bombadil’s house. This feature was maintained into the finished version, but there they are heard in Frodo’s dream: in this first version, Bingo is wide awake. Events are quickly re-arranged: Old Man Willow, Bombadil’s house, Barrow-wight; then Tolkien assumed not much more would happen on the journey to Rivendell, except for the stopping of the Black Riders at the Ford of Bruinen. In Rivendell they would meet Gandalf, and the idea of delivering the ring to Mount Doom would arise.

When the hobbits get to Bree, though, a purely hobbit place, in the inn they meet somebody new:

Suddenly Bingo noticed that a queer-looking, brown-faced hobbit, sitting in

the shadows behind the others, was also listening intently. He had an enormous mug (more like a jug) in front of him, and was smoking a broken-stemmed pipe right under his rather long nose. He was dressed in dark rough brown cloth, and had a hood on, in spite of the warmth, – and, very remarkably, he had wooden shoes! Bingo could see them sticking out under the table in front of him.

His name is Trotter, and he is a ranger who offers to act as their guide. Either he or the inn-keeper (there are two parallel versions) had come across four Black Riders, and Gandalf had given either him or the inn-keeper a letter of recommendation. So far, nobody, including Tolkien, knows who Trotter is, although he seems vaguely familiar to Bingo (as a hobbit, he is obviously not the heir of Isildur, the rightful king of Arnor and Gondor, etc.) He seems to be acquainted with the Black Riders and to have a special horror of them. We get the night-attack by the Black Riders, a continuation mainly on foot, a night-attack on Weather-Top, the wounding of Bingo, the flight to the ford, the meeting with Glorfindel (NO! NOT Arwen!!!), the temporary stopping of the Black Riders and the arrival at Rivendell; all these are now in place. It is remarkable, though, that most of the Black Rider sequence was worked out before it became clear what the ring was, and before any of the kingdoms of the east (Gondor, Rohan etc.) were worked out. Saruman still did not exist, either, and Lothlórien and Fangorn had not been created.

Once Tolkien has his hobbits in Rivendell, he begins to rethink the role of the Ring: the elf had it from Gil-galad, and Gil-galad had it from the Dark Lord, so it originally belonged to him, and the idea emerges that it would give Sauron knowledge of the plans and movements of the other ring-bearers. Still not entirely Ruling Ring.

Also, Tolkien is beginning to have doubts about the advisability of having Trotter as a hobbit; if he was to be a hobbit, he would have to be a well-known hobbit, and the only well-known hobbit around, i.e. Bilbo, would not do: he would be immediately recognised by Bingo (Tolkien also begins to toy with the idea of calling him Frodo at this time), and also Bilbo was to have led a happy life.

Tolkien also feels that there are too many hobbits around: Bingo, Frodo, Odo, Merry. Actually, this feeling is a temporary aberration, and he scribbles down the note of Sam Gamgee at this time.

This is as far as the first phase of the story goes. We have now reached the end of summer 1938, and Tolkien went right back to the beginning of the story and did some heavy revision. This is now

## **The Second Phase**

Gandalf is now present at Bilbo's party, not just as a provider of fireworks, but also instrumental in ridding Bilbo of ring: Bilbo more than half willing to give it up. Further information about the Baggins family history comes from Gaffer Gamgee, and when Bilbo disappears with a bang and a flash; Bingo is charged by Gandalf to sit tight and wait:

‘Do what [Bilbo] wished and hoped you would.’

‘What is that?’

‘Live on here; keep up Bag-end; guard the Ring – and wait.’

We also get Gandalf’s return to Bag-end after a lot of wandering, with Gandalf showing Bingo the inscription on the ring:

Nine for the Elven-kings under moon and star,  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,  
Three for Mortal Men that wander far,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mor-dor where the shadows are.  
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 Mor-dor where the shadows are.

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 Mor-dor 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 Mor-dor where the shadows lie.

Note the numbers of the rings. It is at this stage that Tolkien arrives at the definite distribution of the 20 rings. Gandalf does not know who has the elven rings (unless he is lying); he thinks that the main problem with the ring is that it will eventually turn Bingo into a ring-wraith; he also tells Bingo about the Nazgul but thinks that since Sauron lost the ring they were no longer a danger. (Tolkien already knows better, Gandalf is mistaken here). Gandalf tells Bingo the story of the ring, already involving Isildur and Gollum, more or less the same as the finished version except that Gollum is Deagol who found the ring and not Smeagol who killed him for it. Bilbo’s pity for him saved Bilbo from turning into a ring-wraith at once. Gandalf had found Gollum, and it is Gandalf who now advises Bingo to leave Bag End and take some companions if he can find them. Sam Gamgee is discovered listening and is told to accompany Bingo: Enters the real hero of *LOTR*. Gandalf has to leave, but will return in time to go with them.

When he does not come at the appointed time, the company leave anyway: Bingo, Odo, Frodo, and Sam. The Black Riders are constantly on their trail. Farmer Maggot here has a real hatred of the Baggins family (Bingo once killed one of his dogs who was going to attack him) and would set his dogs on any of them, so Bingo still uses the ring: last ‘light-hearted’ use of ring. When they enter the Old Forest, Odo stays behind to inform Gandalf of the latest developments. The Old Forest episodes (Willow, Bombadil, Barrow-wight) are essentially unchanged, but there is one significant change: During the night in Tom Bombadil’s house, the house in Crickhallow is attacked by the Black Riders, but Gandalf is there, warns the inhabitants by raising the alarm, and disperses the riders with his magic staff. They disappear, Gandalf chases them, with Odo riding behind him. In the finished version, Fredegar (Fatty) Bolger has stayed behind pretending to be Frodo, and when the Riders attack, he manages to escape and have the alarm raised. Tolkien was obviously thinking of introducing a second strand of adventures here.

This is the end of the second phase. We have reached the end of 1938, and around Christmas, Tolkien started revising the text again from the beginning,

### The Third Phase

For the first time, a Foreword is added, which became the Prologue of *Fellowship of the Ring*, “Concerning Hobbits”. While the subject matter is more or less the same as the finished version, the tone is rather different: it is still marked by the tone of the omniscient and

intrusive narrator we find in *The Hobbit*, and we do not yet find the pseudo-scholarly fiction of *The Red Book of Westmarch*, nor the history of the hobbits.

Bingo is renamed Frodo, the old Frodo's place is taken up by Pippin. In the conversation between Frodo and Gandalf we now find the temptation scene:

'But I am not strong enough!' said Frodo. 'You are wise and powerful. Will you not take the Ring?' 'No!' said Gandalf springing to his feet. 'With that Ring I should have power too great and terrible. And over me it would gain a power still greater and more deadly.' His eyes flashed and his face was lit as by a fire within. 'Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself. Yet the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me!'

Some emphasis is added in the final version, but in essence, this scene is now in place.

Not much is changed in the Old Forest Chapters, except now Frodo is no longer awake when he hears the Black Riders; instead, he sees them in a dream.

Gandalf and Odo precede the hobbits to Bree; that night, the Black Riders arrive but when they hear that Gandalf is there, they disappear, although they tell the gatekeeper to keep a lookout for four hobbits. Trotter is still a hobbit, although Tolkien is beginning to play with the idea that the rangers might be descendants of Numenorean kings.

On Weathertop they find a message from Gandalf, saying he had been there but Odo had disappeared during the night, so he had to ride to Rivendell as quickly as possible; from there on through the attack at Weathertop things proceed more or less like in the finished version; the flight to the ford does not offer any surprises except that they learn from Glorfindel that Gandalf has reached Rivendell with Odo, and that Glorfindel had never heard that they Odo had been lost. If Tolkien ever wrote anything about the Odo episode, it has not surfaced; we don't know what if anything he intended to happen. The only remnant of the episode can be found in a slightly inexplicable phrasing when Frodo says to Gandalf Bk2 Ch1 "Many Meetings":

'But now we are safe!' Gandalf looked quickly at Frodo, but he had shut his eyes.

This looks like something fishy was going on. Originally this read:

'... But now we are all safe! And Odo, too. At least, Glorfindel said so. How did you find him again?' Gandalf looked quickly at Frodo, but he had shut his eyes. 'Yes, Odo is safe,' the wizard said.

Definitely something odd is presupposed here.

During the feast, Trotter cannot be seen; it turns out he spent the time in the kitchen; and there is no Arwen yet.

When Gandalf is asked to explain why he had not kept his appointment with Frodo, he replies that he had been taken captive by the evil giant Treebeard in Fangorn Forest. So: still no Saruman.

We have now reached August 1939, and Tolkien seems to have lost momentum again. For a while he even considered rejecting everything he had done and making Bilbo the hero again.

From that period we also get the first notes outlining the events at Mount Doom, with Frodo failing and Gollum inadvertently saving the world, and with things not well in the Shire when the hobbits return. A city of stone and stone-men (Gondor) to be besieged by the forces of evil also begins to crop up in notes, and it becomes clear who Trotter is: he was one of Bilbo's young cousins who were lured out into the world by his tales, caught and tortured in Mordor, and the wooden shoes he wears (hobbits normally walk barefooted), are not really shoes but artificial limbs.

When they leave for the South, there is no elf and dwarf representation, we only get Gandalf, Boromir, who is the lord of the land of Ond, Trotter, and Frodo with his three friends (seven in all). In Moria, the narrative stops at Balin's tomb, although there are a few more notes. According to those, they are attacked by a Black Rider (corrected to Balrog), and lose Gandalf. Tolkien's notes read:

Gandalf turns back and holds off enemy, they cross the bridge but the Black Rider leaps forward and wrestles with Gandalf. The bridge cracks under them and the last they see is Gandalf falling into the pit with the Black Rider. There is a flash of fire and blue light up from abyss.

Their grief. Trotter now guides party.

(Of course Gandalf must reappear later – probably fall is not as deep as it seemed. Gandalf thrusts Balrog under him and so ... .. and eventually following the subterranean stream in the gulf he found a way out – but he does not turn up until they have had many adventures: not indeed until they are on borders of Mordor and the King of Ond is being beaten in battle.)

Obviously Tolkien intended fairly early that Gandalf should return, although compared with the way this is described later, as going through death and coming out at the other side, the method envisaged here sounds a bit mechanistic.

Again, Tolkien came to a stop here, towards the end of 1939, and would only continue again in August 1940. In the meantime, he was beginning to revise the first chapters again, reaching what by now is the seventh version of Ch1. Gradually, the text is beginning to receive its final form at least as far as plot is concerned. Trotter has now become a man; a descendant of Numenorean kings; the need for his wooden shoes has disappeared. The Odo episode is still there: Hamilcar Bolger is kidnapped by the Black Riders, who think he is Frodo, but rescued by Gandalf, who rides down the kidnapper. Hamilcar thus gets a free ride to Rivendell. Soon Tolkien realises, though, that the riders would probably have killed Frodo/Hamilcar, and he drops the whole episode.

At the same time, Saruman (Saramond, Saramund) makes a first appearance: he is mentioned as a wizard, living in Irongarth, whose help Gandalf goes to seek, unaware that he has gone over to Sauron. He doesn't not, however, at first keep Gandalf captive; this role is still given to Treebeard, although in the meantime Tolkien had also been toying with the notion of Treebeard being a helpful giant. Ents as such do not yet exist, the word simply means what it does in OE: "giant".

In August 1940 Tolkien got a new supply of paper (this was war time, and supplies were strictly rationed): exam papers from an American student, with plenty of paper left to write on. This seems to have been motivating, so he re-does the Council of Elrond: he settles on Saruman as Gandalf's captor responsible for his late arrival, the eagles as instruments of his rescue, introduces the history of Arnor and Ond > Ondor > Gondor, introduces Minas Tirith,

and the Sword That Was Broken. He also brings the company to its final composition, with Gandalf, Aragorn (still nicknamed Trotter), Boromir, the four hobbits, Legolas, and Gimli. On the way south, the name of Lothlorien first appears, but nothing much is said about it.

When Tolkien finally picks up his travellers from the Tomb of Balin, where they had been standing for several months, it becomes clear that they indeed are going to meet a Balrog, though it still took Tolkien several tries to decide on the Balrog's appearance:

A figure strode to the fissure, no more than man-high yet terror seemed to go before it. They could see the furnace-fire of its yellow eyes from afar; its arms were very long; it had a red tongue. Through the air it sprang over the fiery fissure. The flames leaped up to greet it and wreathed about it. Its streaming hair seemed to catch fire, and the sword that it held turned to flame. In its other hand, it held a whip of many thongs.

The Balrog and Gandalf fight, the Balrog's sword breaks on Gandalf's shieldwall of fire, but Gandalf's staff also breaks. Gandalf cuts off the Balrog's sword arm, but stumbles when the whip lashes itself around his round his knees. A troll jumps on the bridge, it breaks and takes the troll, the Balrog, and Gandalf down.

After the adventures in Moria and before the company enter Lothlorien, Tolkien plotted out the rest of the story:

The company enters Lorien, is helped by the elves (no mention of Celeborn or Galadriel), and on leaving it, debate where they should go. Most are for going to Minas Tirith, but Frodo sees this as an unnecessary detour. Boromir turns evil, wants to get ring from Frodo, Frodo puts on ring and runs off towards Mordor. Company search for him in vain. Sam tries to find him, finds Gollum instead and follows Gollum who leads him to Frodo. Frodo and Sam master Gollum and make him show them the way into Mordor. To master Gollum, Frodo has to use the ring, which is bad since it brings Frodo under the influence of the ring, and in the end he cannot give it up.

(He continues the story of Frodo, but marks this as a place where the story of the others would have to be told). In Gap of Gorgoroth, Gollum betrays Frodo by shouting to Black Riders who have now taken the form of demonic eagles (or ride vulture-like birds). Frodo has made it up to Crack of Doom, is unable to throw ring in.

The Vultures are coming. All goes dark in his eyes and he falls to his knees. At that moment Gollum comes up and wrestles with him, and takes Ring. Frodo falls flat.

Here perhaps Sam comes up, beats off a vulture and hurls himself and Gollum into the gulf?

Function for Sam? Is he to die? (He said there is something I have to do before the end.)

This version immediately cancelled by slightly different one, introducing spiders, Frodo's imprisonment in Minas Morgul, Sam's taking of ring, their escape, Sam throwing Gollum into crack. Tolkien then wrestles with the question of how to rescue Sam and Frodo from the

ensuing eruption of Mount Doom. For the time being, he has no solution.

Returns to other companions: In the search for Sam and Frodo, Merry and Pippin also get lost, come to the Entwash and to Fangorn, meet Treebeard who is a decent giant and going to carry them to Minas Tirith. Of the others, Boromir and Arathorn proceed to Minas Tirith, Legolas and Gimli have had enough and go north. Tolkien briefly toys with the idea of having them captured by Saruman, but rejects it immediately. They two then suddenly meet Gandalf.

Gandalf's story. Overcame Balrog. The gulf was not deep (only a kind of moat and was full of silent water). He followed the channel and got down into the Deeps. Clad himself in Mithril-mail and fought his way out slaying many trolls.

Gandalf and the other two hurry of to Minas Tirith.

No kidnapping of Merry and Pippin, no chase, no separate role for Saruman yet.

Minas Tirith is besieged by forces of Sauron from across the river, and those of Saruman come up from rear. Lord of Minas Tirith slain, Aragorn chosen as successor, Boromir jealous, sneaks off to Saruman.

Siege broken by Gandalf and/or Treebeard:

Treebeard walks through. They see a huge tree walking over plain.

Saruman shuts himself up in Isengard.

Sally from Minas Tirith. Gandalf drives Black Riders back and takes crossing of Anduin at Osgiliath. Horsemen ride behind him to Gorgoroth. Hear a great wind and see flames out of Fire Mountain.

Somehow or other Frodo and Sam must be found in Gorgoroth. Possibly by Merry and Pippin. (If any one of the hobbits is *slain* it must be the cowardly Pippin doing something brave. For instance –

After Fall of Mordor. They return to Minas Tirith. Feast. Aragorn comes to meet them. Aragorn looks out and sees moon rise over Minas Morgul. He remains behind – and becomes Lord of Minas *Ithil*. What about Boromir? Does he repent? No – slain by Aragorn.

...

On way home: they ride horses from Rohan. They call on Isengard. Gandalf knocks. Saruman comes out very affable. 'Ah, my dear Gandalf. What a mess the world is in. Really we must consult together – such men as we are needed. Now what about our spheres of influence?'

Gandalf looks at him. 'I am the White Wizard now,' he said – 'look at your many colours.' Saruman is clad in a filthy mud colour. 'They seem to have run.' Gandalf takes his staff and breaks it over his knee. He gives a thin shriek.

'Go, Saruman,' he said, 'and beg from the charitable for a day's digging.'

Isengard is given to the dwarves. Or to Radagast?

In final version this is two scenes: Meeting with Saruman in Orthanc, and meeting him on way home.

They ride home to Rivendell. Song of the Banished Shadow. Rivendell.

Meeting with Bilbo.

What happens to Shire?

Last scene. *Sailing away of elves*: Bilbo with them.  
Sam and Frodo go into a green land by the Sea?

So much of narrative material is now present, particularly the Frodo-Sam-Gollum part. In the other narrative strand after the breaking of the fellowship we find reappearance of Gandalf, meeting of Pippin and Merry with a benevolent Treebeard who plays a part in the war, the siege of Minas Tirith, the ride to Mordor.

What is still completely missing, though, is the Kingdom of Rohan, although some of its riders and horses appear; the ents are also still absent.

Saruman's role is conceived differently, but the seeds of him capturing Merry and Pippin are there: he briefly gets Gimli and Legolas, and in the finished version he is also spying on Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas.

Once the company reach Lothlorien, we see Tolkien developing one his most important characters: Galadriel, practically out of nothing. He first has a note about the company being led to a

Lord of Galadrim (tree-folk) and a Lady who went to White Council  
the first reference ever to Galadriel. In the same note, he then writes  
Lord and Lady clad in white, with *white hair*. Piercing eyes like a lance in starlight.

In the final version, this has been changed and expanded:

On two chairs beneath the bole of the tree and canopied by a living bough there sat, side by side, Celeborn and Galadriel. They stood up to greet their guests, after the manner of Elves, even those who were accounted mighty kings. Very tall they were, and the Lady no less tall than the Lord; and they were grave and beautiful. They were clad wholly in white; and the hair of the Lady was of deep gold, and the hair of the Lord Celeborn was of silver long and bright; but no sign of age was upon them, unless it were in the depths of their eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight, and yet profound, the wells of deep memory.

At this stage, Tolkien also had some second thoughts, although he quickly rejected them: One of them would drastically have reinterpreted Gandalf's fight with the Balrog:

Could not Balrog be Saruman? Make battle on bridge be between Gandalf and Saruman. Then Gandalf clad in white.

While this idea does not survive into the final version, Tolkien was to come back to it later, before he settled on the way in which the Saruman-Gandalf conflict was to be resolved.

A second note, scribbled against the MS remark "They bring me a letter from the Lord and Lady of the Galadrim" and again cancelled, reads:

Lord? If Galadriel is alone and is wife of Elrond.

Typically, though, some things Tolkien cancels live on: "Not all those who wander are lost!" In particular, at this moment an important idea occurred to Tolkien, although he does not

seem to have recognised its importance, and cancelled it again:

*Elf-rings* The power of the Elf-rings must *fade* if One Ring is *destroyed*.

When Tolkien gives the rulers of Lothlórien names, he first calls them Tar and Finduilas, then Aran and Rhien, later Galdaran and Galdrien; he changed this to Galathir and Galadrien, to provide a “tree” etymology for them (tree-lord and tree-lady), and only later comes to call them Celeborn and Galadriel. Equally, at first the really important role is the lord’s. He is the owner of King Galdaran’s mirror, and Galadriel is reduced to a more or less decorative role. In the writing of this chapter, though, Tolkien’s views on Galadriel drastically change. Admittedly, she and Celeborn seem to be conceived as Noldor exiled from Valinor, who did not return at the end of the First Age:

The lord and lady of Lothlórien are accounted wise beyond the measure of the Elves of Middle-earth, and of all who have not passed beyond the Seas. For we have dwelt here since the Mountains were reared and the Sun was young.

However, she has not yet got her full role as a princess of the Noldor, as one of the major powers of Middle-earth; these we get in later revisions of this chapter, as well as Tolkien’s post-*LOTR* revision of *The Silmarillion* and the *Unfinished Tales*.

Galadriel’s temptation by the Ring is there, but not yet in a very serious form: She laughs with a sudden clear laugh of pure merriment.

The thought, she admits, had occurred to her, but she does not seem to have to struggle with the temptation. In the final version,

Galadriel laughed with a sudden clear laugh.

The merriment is gone; this is genuine temptation.

An important innovation at this particular stage – only now, two and a bit years after the beginning of the project – is the history of the rings: So far, the number of rings had been more or less clear, but Tolkien had not really decided who had made them (or, in his diction, he had not yet discovered who had made them). The earliest version, given in the first draft of Bk2 Ch2, “The Council of Elrond”, still has all the Rings of Power made by Sauron; therefore, the Three cannot be used, since they are evil in origin.

Before Tolkien reaches firmer ground here, he seems to waver a bit, vacillating between a First and a Second Age origin of the rings, such as the rings having been made by Fëanor and stolen by Morgoth, like the Silmarils, or all the rings made by Sauron in the First or Second Age. Tolkien was obviously struggling with the idea that somehow the elven rings must be given a special status, somehow linked to the One Ring, and thus endangered by it, but also “unsullied” (term used by Galadriel), and this would involve them having no direct connection with Sauron. When Tolkien reached the stage at which Frodo sees Nenya, the ring of Adamant (at this stage actually the Ring of Earth), he finally made up his mind: the nine and the seven were made by the elven-smiths of Eregion under Sauron’s guidance; the three were made by Celebrimbor alone, and Sauron made the One, which was to have power over the others, secretly, although the elves finally realised what he was up to and hid the Three. This is the story that will later be found in Gandalf’s exposition to Frodo in Bk1 Ch2, “The Shadow of the Past”, and in Bk2 Ch2, “The Council of Elrond”.

For a while, Tolkien seems to be toying with the idea that by destroying the One, the Three will be set free and saved: while he had been considering that their power might wane when the One is destroyed, he had rejected this idea for the time being.

Another feature coming in now is the name of Elfstone, Elessar in Elvish. The origin of this name is fairly curious: After Galadriel asks Gimli what he would like as a parting gift, he replies that he wants nothing, the memory of her first words to him would be enough. The hair business is still absent, but she is still so struck by his words, that she unclasps a brooch from her neck, with a green stone in it, and she gives GIMLI the epithet of elfstone. It seems, though, that as soon as Tolkien wrote this, he had second thoughts, and realised that this would make a great cognomen for Aragorn, so he transferred it to him. This, however, triggered off another chain of thought, it seems, and he realised that since Aragorn was a man, an elvish name such as Aragorn was unsuitable; so, after having him Aragorn son of Kelegorn and Elfstone son of Elfhelm, he settles on Ingold son of Ingrim for a while.

When the company go down the river, it is Frodo's and Sam's adventures that are developed first, basically along the lines that Tolkien had envisaged before he got to Lothlorien: spiders weave Frodo into web, sting him, Sam manages to take ring, leaving Frodo with one he had picked up in Moria, orcs take Frodo off, not to the Tower of Cirith Ungol but to Minas Morgul; Sam gets in, finds Frodo by singing Elbereth song, and they fight and bluff their way out of Minas Morgul and into Mordor.

At one stage, though, Tolkien notes:

Make Merry and Pippin have Minas Morgul adventure if Treebeard is cut out. So, while a lot of the elements in the story are beginning to appear, the plot itself has not firmed up yet: particularly in the Western story, Tolkien has not really progressed much. As is usual when Tolkien reaches an impasse, he turns back and starts again, though this time he does not rewrite the first Chapter of Book 1; instead, he only goes back to the breaking up of the Fellowship, works on Frodo's vision on Amon Hen, including Gandalf's voice admonishing him to take off the ring; Frodo now leaves together with Sam; and Tolkien decides to kill off Boromir. Pippin and Merry are kidnapped by orcs, and Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas pursue them.

Tolkien then takes to plotting again:

Find orc trail going up river. Meeting with Rohiroth. They ride to Fangorn and hear news of battle and destruction of orcs and mysterious old man who had discomfited orcs. They hear that *no* captives were rescued. Despair. Old man appears.

They think he is Saruman. Revelation of Gandalf, and his account of how he escaped. He has become a *white* wizard. 'I forgot most of what I knew. I was badly burned or *well* burned.' They go to Minas Tirith and enter in.

Rest of war in which Gandalf on his eagle in white leads assault must be told later – partly a dream of Frodo, partly seen by him (and Sam), and partly heard from orcs. (?Frodo looks out of Tower, while prisoner.)

Minas Tirith defeats Haradwaith. They cross at Osgiliath, defeat orcs and Nazgul

First mention of that name

and drive forward to *Dagorlad* (Battle Plain). They get news that Ringbearer is captured.

Now Treebeard.

Then Frodo again.

So far, we have had very little indication of the importance the Rohirrim are going to have in

the story; they have been named once or twice in notes on plot, but not considered terribly important. Even here, the bulk of the fighting seems to belong to Minas Tirith led by Gandalf. It is only at this point that the Rohirrim actually appear, a troop under Eomer, in a first version actually still pursuing the orcs and taking the three companions with them, in a second version returning from battle.

The abducted hobbits manage to escape during the battle between the orcs and the Rohirrim, more or less as in the final version, and meet Treebeard. This also means the appearance of the ents; and while previously Treebeard's role had been conceived of, first as hostile, then as friendly but mainly in connection with raising the siege of Minas Tirith, his role now becomes clear: he is the adversary of Saruman, who then, however, can no longer be active in the siege of Minas Tirith but must be engaged in a project of his own. It is probably this which triggers off the importance of the Kingdom of Rohan who must, then, be the ones against whom Saruman's efforts are directed.

Tolkien was later, in January 1956, to recollect this period, the writing of Bk3 Ch4, "Treebeard", in a letter:

I have long ceased to *invent* ...: I wait till I seem to know what really happened. Or till it writes itself. Thus, though I knew for years that Frodo would run into a tree-adventure somewhere far down the Great River, I have no recollection of inventing Ents. I came at last to the point, and wrote the 'Treebeard' chapter without any recollection of previous thought: just as it now is. And then I saw that, of course, it had not happened to Frodo at all.

This is being slightly economical with the truth: the "Treebeard" chapter was reworked a few times, but admittedly the changes are minor.

In a way, however, this is typical of the way Tolkien's thinking works. What psychologists might see as the mind turning things over, ideas maturing, and the author finally reaching conclusions about probabilities, verisimilitude, or the like, Tolkien sees as acts of discoveries, uncovering, the work of historians trying to work out, in the words of the German historian Ranke, "wie es eigentlich gewesen", how it happened in essence. I remember a conversation with the American fantasy writer Madelaine L'Engle: I asked her – many years ago – whether she found writing on the computer useful, with the automatic search-and-replace-function, where for instance all occurrences of one name could later be replaced by another name, if plot development or new preferences required it. She found this suggestion absurd, because for her, all the plot, together with the names, was there from the beginning. This is obviously very difficult from Tolkien's approach; although they share one conviction: what they write, whether after many changes, like Tolkien, or straightaway, as Madelaine L'Engle claimed, they consider to be a kind of truth: if Madelaine L'Engle's characters could not have any other names and still be the same characters, still have the same function in their world, be "right", Tolkien also felt that he had to find out what "really" happened in the world he created.

Ondor, in a note dated February 9, 1942, is now finally renamed Gondor; but Tolkien has started thinking about the Balrog again: maybe he really was Saruman, after all.

Tolkien also finally fixes on the languages to be used in his translation of the Red Book:

Language of Shire = modern English

Language of Dale = Norse

Language of Rohan = Old English

‘Modern English’ is *lingua franca* spoken by all people (except a few secluded folk like Lórien) – but little and ill by orcs.

Gandalf now appears to the three companions, and he brings a message from Galadriel to Aragorn:

*Elfstone, Elfstone, bearer of my green stone,  
In the south under snow a green stone thou shalt see.  
Look well, Elfstone! In the shadow of the dark throne  
Then the hour is at hand that long hath awaited thee.*

Together they proceed to the royal hall of King Theoden. Here, at first, the character of Wormtongue is still absent: initially, the opposition to Gandalf comes from Theoden himself, although, in the very next stage, when Tolkien proceeds from a rough draft stage to a fair copy of this version, Wormtongue. Theoden is white-haired, wears a diadem with a green stone in it; and behind him, in the shadows of the throne, are his daughter Idris, and his niece, Éowyn. Idris is going to be lost during the next stages, but Éowyn is very much in evidence:

Very fair and slender she seemed. Her face was filled with gentle pity, and her eyes shone with unshed tears. So Aragorn saw her for the first time in the light of day, and after she was gone he stood still, looking at the dark doors and taking little heed of other things.

At the feast she goes round serving wine:

As she stood before Aragorn she paused suddenly and looked upon him, as if only now had she seen him clearly. He looked down upon her fair face, and their eyes met. For a moment they stood thus, and their hands met as he took the cup from her. “Hail Aragorn son of Arathorn!” she said.

Obviously, in Galadriel’s words, the hour was at hand that long had awaited him, his fate was sealed, he was in love.

In the final version, this becomes

As she stood before Aragorn she paused suddenly and looked upon him, and her eyes were shining. And he looked down upon her fair face and smiled; but as he took the cup, his hand met hers, and he knew that she trembled at the touch. ‘Hail Aragorn son of Arathorn!’ she said. ‘Hail Lady of Rohan!’ he answered, but his face now was troubled and he did not smile.

Of course, when Tolkien first wrote down the scene, he had “discovered” neither Arwen nor Faramir, and was envisaging a dynastic marriage between Gondor and Rohan in the persons of Aragorn and Éowyn. He quickly realised, though, that Éowyn might not be an ideal companion for Aragorn, so he wrote a note to himself:

Cut out the love-story of Aragorn and Éowyn. Aragorn is too old and lordly and grim. Make Eowyn the twin-sister of Eomund, a stern amazon woman. If so, alter the message of Galadriel.  
Probably Eowyn should die to avenge or save Theoden.

As an afterthought, Tolkien added that it was possible that Aragorn did indeed love Eowyn, and after her death would never marry.

A dark fate was also briefly foreseen for Lothlórien: After Tolkien remarks, at a end of a list of things to do:

Aragorn weds Eowyn sister of Eomer (who becomes Lord of Rohan) and becomes King of Gondor. Feast in Gondor. Home Journey. They pass by round Lórien.

He adds a short debate with himself:

No. They learn (in Rivendell?) that Nazgûl razed Lórien and Keleborn fled with a remnant to Mirkwood. Galadriel was lost or was hidden. Or shall Lórien be left slowly to fade? Yes. Galadriel parts with Keleborn who elects to stay in the world and woods. She is seen by Frodo in old age, when he and Sam see Galadriel and Bilbo (and Elrond? No - he has one age (*corrected to* life) of men still to rule in Rivendell).

The Battle at Helm's Deep goes through various versions, but are already fairly close to the final version, and so do the Ride to Isengard, and the chapter now called Flotsam and Jetsam, where Merry and Pippin again meet the other members of the company (minus Frodo and Sam, of course). In the next section, when Saruman finally makes his first speaking appearance, the first longer draft only has him confer with Gandalf; his attempt to influence Theoden and the reactions of the audience are not there yet, and neither is the scene where Saruman is summoned back by Gandalf and his staff is broken. (Originally, Tolkien had envisaged Gandalf grabbing the staff and breaking it with his hands). Wormtongue does throw an object down:

A heavy object came hurtling down from above. It glanced off the parapet, narrowly missed Gandalf, and splintered into fragments on the rock beside the stair. It seemed to have been a large ball of dark shining crystal.

The next version of this scene still had the breaking of that crystal ball:

It splintered on the rock beside the stair. It seemed *from the fragments* ...

and then the manuscript breaks off; in the continuation we hear of the stair cracking and splintering and the ball remaining unharmed.

Again this is fairly typical of Tolkien: he has a scene introducing an object we have not heard of before, and we are, since it breaks into fragments, not going to hear of again: this appears to be a waste of narrative time and effort, to constitute a blind motif, so Tolkien quickly makes it functional: the crystal ball now rolls down the steps and is 'dark but shining with a heart of fire', one of the Palantíri.

In the letter to W. H. Auden which I quoted towards the beginning of my lecture on the genesis of *LOTR*, Tolkien also wrote:

I knew nothing of the *Palantíri*, though the moment the Orthanc-stone was cast from the window, I recognized it, and knew the meaning of the 'rhyme of lore' that had been running in my mind: *seven stars and seven stones and one white tree*.

The fact that at first he made it break into fragments seems to show that there was a certain amount of poetic liberty in this recollection, although, to give him his due, he does not take

long before he realises that there was narrative potential in the stone. For a while, he seems to think that they are a sort of magic mirror in which you can see everything within a certain radius, and only later realises that it might be part of a kind of video-conferencing system, a solution which he at first rejects because its practical effects, that of having Sauron being able to see, and perhaps influence, the actions of the other owners of palantíri, would be too much like the ring again.

In the foreword to the second edition of *LOTR* Tolkien says:

[In 1942] I wrote the first drafts of the matter that now stands as Book III, and the beginnings of Chapters 1 and 3 of Book V; and there as the beacons flared in Anórien and Théoden came to Harrowdale I stopped. Foresight had failed and there was no time for thought.

In a letter to Unwin dated 7 December 1942 (*Letters* 47) he says

I have for some time intended to write and enquire whether in the present situation is was of any use, other than private and family amusement, to endeavour to complete the sequel to *The Hobbit*. I have worked on it in intervals since 1938, all such intervals in fact as treble official work, quadrupled domestic work, and ‘Civil Defense’ have left. It is now approaching completion. I hope to get a little free time this vacation, and might hope to finish it off early next year. My heart rather misgives me, all the same. I ought to warn you that it is very long, in places more alarming than ‘The Hobbit’, and in fact not really a ‘juvenile’ at all. It has reached Chapter XXXI

*this is probable the present ‘The Palantír’*

and will require at least six more to finish (these are already sketched).

Nothing actually came of these promises; and it was not until 1944 that he took up work on the *LOTR* again. In a letter to his son Christopher, dated April 3, 1944 (*Letters* 58), he wrote:

I have begun to nibble at Hobbit again. I have started to do some (painful) work on the chapter which picks up the adventures of Frodo and Sam again; and to get myself attuned have been copying and polishing the last written chapter (Orthanc-Stone).

Two days later, he wrote to Christopher again (*Letters* 59):

I have seriously embarked on an effort to finish my book, & have been sitting up rather late: a lot of re-reading and research required. And it is a painful sticky business getting into swing again. I have gone back to Sam and Frodo, and am trying to work out their adventures. A few pages for a lot of sweat: but at the moment they are just meeting Gollum on a precipice.

In the *Taming of Sméagol* chapter Frodo recalls something Gandalf had said to him earlier, back in Bag End. For this to be included now, Bk1 Ch2, “The Shadow of the Past” had to be changed: Tolkien inserts a new passage into the conversation between Gandalf and Frodo: if before Gandalf had only pointed out that Bilbo had felt pity for Gollum, and this pity had

protected him from being taken over by the Ring, and that Gollum may yet have to play a role, it is now that Gandalf speaks out against killing evildoers:

Deserves death! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give that to them? Then be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the very wise cannot see all ends. Maybe the Enemy will get him. Maybe not. Even Gollum may do some good, willy nilly, before the end.

The next chapters again do not contain too much that is surprising; the location of Minas Morgul varies: from a fortress guarding Cirith Ungol it is first moved north to become one of two fortresses at the Black Gate and is then moved back, first into Cirith Ungol again, and then into its final position on one side of the gorge.

When Sam and Frodo meet the Gondorians, these are first led by Falborn, a ranger of Ithilien, a relative, but not brother, of Boromir, for whom no further role was envisaged beyond this meeting. Once he becomes Faramir, though, many things fall into place: The stewardship of Gondor is first introduced (although admittedly Denethor, who has been named earlier, had never been called King either, but always Lord of Gondor or Lord of Minas Tirith; so, arguably, the history may already have been established, but never mentioned). Also, Faramir appears to be far more loquacious than his predecessor. On May 6, 1944, he writes to Christopher:

A new character has come on the scene (I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but there he came walking into the woods of Ithilien): Faramir, the brother of Boromir – and he is holding up the ‘catastrophe’ with a lot of stuff about the history of Gondor and Rohan (with some very sound reflections no doubt on martial glory and true glory): but if he goes on much more a lot of him will have to be removed to the appendices – where already some fascinating material on the hobbit Tobacco industry and the Languages of the West have gone.

It seems that he did go on much more, and a lot of that has been relegated to the appendices. Still, we have now a truly positive Gondorian, a Boromir as Boromir could have been without his craving for power; a future husband for Eowyn, a new steward of Gondor.

In the approach to the Kirith Ungol, Tolkien seems to have had problems arranging his elements: Minas Morgul, a stair or stairs, a tunnel, a spider or spiders: it takes him a long time to work out that Minas Morgul is not actually part of Cirith Ungol, that the tunnel actually comes after the stairs rather than between the first and second stairs, or even at the bottom of the first stair. The notion that there is one spider rather than a lot of them comes rather late: at first her name is Ungoliant, like the spider from the *Silmarillion*; and then she becomes Shelob (she-lob: a female spider).

When Frodo is put inside the Tower of Cirith Ungol and the Gates slam shut on Sam – this time he is outside – Tolkien is again stuck for a continuation. On November 29, 1944 he writes to Christopher (letter 91):

At the end of the Fourth Book of that great romance ... you will see that, as is all too easy, I have got the hero into such a fix that not even an author will be able to extricate him without labour and difficulty.

This is actually the typescripts; the original manuscripts had been produced sometime in spring 1944. In October 1944 he briefly returns to the western adventures and writes a series of outlines; the most complete one gives the intended chapters of Book 5:

- Gandalf goes to Minas Tirith. Mustering of forces. War breaks out. Gondor driven back. No sign of Riders.
- 2. Théoden comes to Dunharrow. Beacons. Messengers arrive from Minas Tirith. Also from far afield reporting orcs across the river in Wold. Théoden rides on the evening of Feb. 8 Eowyn goes with him. Gamling is left in command in Westfold. The old seneschal of Edoras in Eastfold (Dunharrow). Aragorn and Éomer ride to beat off orcs. They come back and rejoin main body reporting that Ents and Lórien Elves have driven back the north thrust. They ride to Minas Tirith.
- 3. Charge of the Riders of Rohan breaks siege. Death of Théoden and Éowyn in killing the Nazgûl king. Gondor destroys ships of Harad and crosses into Ithilien.
- 4. Sack of Minas Morgul. Victorious Gandalf pursues on to Dagorlad. Elves of Lórien and Ents come from North. Parley with Sauron's messenger.
- 5. Frodo from high tower sees the coming of the hosts of the West and the great assembly of the secret army of Sauron. Rescue of Frodo by Sam. This army goes out as he and Sam pass into Gorgor all is still and empty and the noise of the war is far away. Gandalf is ambushed in Kirith Ungol and comes to edge of defeat.
- 6. Destruction of the Ring. Fall of Baraddur. Allies enter Mordor. Rescue of Frodo by eagle.
- 7. Return to Gondor. Crowning of Aragorn. Funeral of Théoden and Éowyn. The hobbits depart north. Fall of Sauron. Galadriel's land ruined.
- 8. Rivendell
- 9. Shire
- 10. Epilogue. Sam's book.

There is still no paths of the dead; Aragorn simply rides with Rohan. Slightly later, Aragorn at least crosses the mountains separately, with his rangers, to attack the enemies of Gondor from the south, and it is said that then came from the mountains where he had been entombed a king of old, but there the story rested for about two years.

On July 21, 1946 Tolkien wrote off to Stanley Unwin again (*Letters* 105): "I hope after this week ... actually – to write." Again, on Dec 7, 1946 he wrote that he had reached the final chapter (whatever that may have meant).

For a while, most of the elements are now beginning to look decidedly familiar. Aragorn rides on the path of the dead; and the Rohirrim ride south helped by the Wild Men (although at one stage the ents appear and go with the riders, getting rid of any intervening orcs); Merry and Éowyn have permission to go. But after their arrival, things have not been finally worked out;

Théoden is attacked by Nazgûl king and unhorsed; he is seriously wounded but for the time being saved by Éowyn (she does not exterminate the Nazgûl), but she is killed in battle; Theoden dies later. Denethor is still steward when Aragorn arrives and unwilling to hand over power. Victorious Gondorians and Rohirrim off to Osgiliath, Minas Morgul, and Gates of Mordor, where they are met by Sauron's Messenger, the Nazgûl king.

When Tolkien comes to write the Battle of Pelennor Fields (rather than just plotting or drafting it), we soon see the final version come through: Éowyn and Merry dispose of the Witch King. This also necessitates a change in the previous story: If Eowyn is to reveal herself suddenly as a woman, the reader must not know that she is there, so she cannot have received permission to come. It also makes the Witch King less useful for later duties ... Elrond's daughter makes her first appearance, although not in person: the banner Aragorn unfurls has been made by 'Finduilas, Elrond's daughter', and for a short while; Aragorn's marriage plans soon change drastically, and for a while, it is even foreseen that Aragorn receives Galadriel's ring with which he can then wed Finduilas; and it is this ring which accounts for his increase in power, as a kind of anti-Lord of the Rings.

Still, these aberrations tend to be restricted to notes; in the fully narrated versions from here to the Morannon, there are no really major differences any more from the final version, apart from the ents who are still with Aragorn's and Gandalf's forces; Pippin was only allowed to go with the host at a comparatively late stage, before he was to stay behind with Merry.

When Tolkien returns to Sam and Frodo, the versions he writes down now again come very close to the final versions. Previously, after they reach Mount Doom and Gollum falls or jumps into the Crack of Doom, Tolkien had typically foreseen another encounter with the Ringwraiths, or a Ringwraith:

Nazgûl shape at the door. Frodo is caught in the fire-chamber and cannot get out! Here we end all together, said the Ring Wraith. Frodo is too weary and lifeless to say nay. You first, said a voice, and Sam (with Sting?) stabs the Black Rider from behind. Frodo and Sam escape and flee down mountain-side. But they could not escape the running molten lava. They see Eagles driving the Nazgûl. Eagles rescue them.

Or, in another version:

Frodo turns and sees the door blocked by the Wizard King. The mountain begins to erupt and crumble. He we will perish together, said the Wizard King. But Frodo draws Sting. He no longer has any fear whatsoever. He is master of the Black Riders. He commands the Black Rider to follow the Ring his master and drives it into the fire.

Obviously, once the Witch King of Angmar is brought low by Merry and Éowyn, he is no longer available for this scene. I suppose Tolkien also realised that it did not make much dramatic sense to have the ring destroyed and its chief servants, who owe their continued existence to the ring, left over, so eventually he devised a fitting end for them:

And into the heart of the storm, with a cry that pierced all other sounds, tearing the clouds asunder, the Nazgûl came, shooting like flaming bolts, as caught in the fiery ruin of hill and sky they crackled, withered, and went out.

Subsequently, the story-line runs pretty much as in the final version, until, on the road back to

the Shire, they meet Saruman: Merry offers him tobacco, and Saruman's heart is touched:

‘Well, I thank you,’ he said. You seem an honest fellow, and maybe you did not come to crow over me. I’ll tell you something. When you come to the Shire beware of Cosimo (Sackville-Baggins), and make haste, or you may go short of leaf.’

‘Thankyou,’ said Merry, ‘and if you get tired of wandering in the wild come to the Shire.’

Obviously, Saruman's end was to be different, and the person responsible for the ruining of the shire was Sackville-Baggins. Possibly Merry's invitation was the trigger for developing the story in a way which makes Saruman become much more closely involved with the Shire.

At this place, Elrond's daughter is first called Arwen Undomiel, after Tolkien had tried out various other names, such as Amareth and Emrahil.

In the first version of the Scouring of the Shire, Gandalf is still with the hobbits, but is dropped immediately. The most active role goes to Frodo, who kills several men, all called Sharkey when they appear. It seems that Tolkien, while he was writing this chapter, was groping towards the true identity of Sharkey, from an evil gate-keeper, to an evil human boss for whom Cosimo Sackville-Baggins was only a straw-man and who is killed in single combat by Frodo, to Saruman.

Trotter is now finally called Strider.

The first version of the last chapter still does not mention the Three Rings, far alone name them: they only received their names when Tolkien was correcting the galley-proofs.

The last chapter, though, as we have it, ending with

He drew a deep breath. ‘Well I’m back’ he said.

was not initially supposed to be the end of the novel. There was going to be an epilogue, set some fifteen years after Frodo's departure, describing the home-life of Samwise, Rosie, and their children. This takes up the theme Sam and Frodo start on the way up to Cirith Ungol; they realise they are in a story and they wonder how their adventures are going to be told to the children; and how the children will clamour to hear more about the deeds of Frodo and of Sam. Indeed, Sam has now got Bilbo's Red Book, and he is busy adding the last touches, and answering his children's questions. They receive an invitation to go and meet Aragorn at the Bridge of Baranduin, and the children get rather excited; but when the younger ones have been sent to bed, Sam has a long talk with his eldest daughter, Elanor, in which he explains that while at first the parting from Frodo had been sad, he did not feel that sadness any more, since he realised that it might not be forever. Elanor recognises this for what it is: Deep down, Sam is still split between his love for his family and the Shire on the one hand, and his desire for elvish things and for Frodo, on the other hand:

And when you're tired you will go, Sam-dad. You will go to the Havens with the Elves. Then I shall go with you. I shall not part with you, like Arwen did with Elrond.

‘Maybe, maybe,’ said Sam kissing her gently. ‘And maybe not. The choice of Lúthien and Arwen comes to many, Elanorellë, or something like it; and it

isn't wise to choose before the time.'

They also discuss the King's letter, then Sam sends her to bed.

She kissed him, and passed out of the room; and it seemed to Sam that the fire burned low at her going.

The stars were shining in a clear dark sky. It was the second day of the bright and cloudless spell that came every year to the Shire towards the end of March, and was every year welcomed and praised as something surprising for the season. All the children were now in bed. It was late, but here and there lights were still glimmering in Hobbiton, and in houses dotted about the night-folded countryside.

Master Samwise stood at the door and looked away east-ward. He drew Mistress Rose to him, and set his arm about her.

'March the twenty-fifth!' he said. 'This day seventeen years ago, Rose wife, I didn't think I should ever see thee again. But I kept on hoping.'

'I never hoped at all, Sam,' she said, 'not until that very day; and then suddenly I did. About noon it was, and I felt so glad that I began singing. And mother said: "Quiet, lass! There's ruffians about!" And I said: "Let them come! Their time will soon be over. Sam's coming back." And you came.'

'I did,' said Sam. 'To the most belovedest place in all the world. To my Rose and my garden.'

They went in, and Sam shut the door. But even as he did so, he heard suddenly, deep and unstilled, the sigh and murmur of the Sea upon the shores of Middle-earth.

That was the end; he was, however, persuaded to drop the epilogue in order not to spoil the other ending: In a letter to Naomi Mitchison, who was reviewing the *LOTR* and had asked him questions about it, he writes: (*Letters* 144)

Hobbit-children were delightful, but I am afraid that the only glimpses of them in this book are found at the beginning of vol. I. An epilogue giving a further glimpse (though of a rather exceptional family) has been so universally condemned that I shall not insert it. One must stop somewhere.

Some of the information eventually ends up in the appendices. Tolkien was not quite sure about the effect of putting in or leaving out the epilogue. In a letter to Katherine Ferrar he writes (*Letters* 173):

I still feel the picture incomplete without something on Samwise and Elanor, but I could not devise anything that would not have destroyed the ending, more than the hints (possibly sufficient) in the appendices.

So: writing the sequel to *The Hobbit* had taken Tolkien from December 1937 to 1949; when he had finished the last chapter, he went back and revised it for publication: This is when the present text took its shape, not quite final, because Tolkien changed things even when they were already at the printers', and there was to be a major revision in 1966, the Second Edition. But by and large, the typescript was ready to be sent to the publishers shortly after Christmas 1949, after twelve years.

By this time, Tolkien had, to some extent, lost his trust in his old publishers, Allen and

Unwin. He felt let down by their non-acceptance of *The Silmarillion*, he also felt they could have done better on the publicity for his *Farmer Giles of Ham*. So when he got to know (through the Catholic network) an editor working for the publishing firm of Collins, Milton Waldman, he sensed a different publishing possibility. He sent Waldman a draft of *The Silmarillion*, and Waldman provisionally accepted it, provided that Tolkien could finish it. Tolkien was delighted, and sent Waldman the *LOTR* typescript. Again, there was a positive reaction; but Waldman wanted to know whether Tolkien was under any legal or moral obligations to Unwin.

While there were no legal obligations, Tolkien felt that moral obligations existed. It was, after all, Unwin who had asked for a sequel to *The Hobbit*, so Tolkien now tried to wriggle out of this obligation by making *LOTR* appear unattractive. On February 24, 1950, he writes a somewhat disingenuous letter to Unwin (*Letters* 124):

My work has escaped from my control, and I have produced a monster: an immensely long, complex, rather bitter, and very terrifying romance, quite unfit for children (if fit for anybody); and it is not really a sequel to *The Hobbit*, but to *The Silmarillion*. ...

Ridiculous and tiresome as you may think me, I want to publish them both – *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* – in conjunction or in connexion. ‘I want to’ – it would be wiser to say ‘I should like to’, since a little packet of, say, a million words ... is not very likely to see the light, even if paper were available at will.

All the same that is what I should like. Or I will let it all be. I cannot contemplate any drastic re-writing or compression. Of course being a writer I should like to see my words printed; but there they are. For me the chief thing is that I feel that the whole matter is now ‘exorcised’, and rides me no more. I can now turn to other things.

Unwin suggested that maybe the two works could be cut up into several smaller, self-contained units; and when Tolkien turned down this suggestion, he consulted his son Rayner about how they should proceed. Rayner unfortunately suggested that an editor could perhaps integrate those bits of *The Silmarillion* that were absolutely necessary for an understanding of the *LOTR* into that book, and cut out some superfluous material. Unwin, even more unfortunately, sent a copy of Rayner’s memorandum to Tolkien, who now put an ultimatum to Unwin: Either publish both works now, uncut; or publish neither. Unwin reacted negatively and rejected both works. Tolkien was delighted: there was no moral claim now and he could safely offer them to Collins.

Collins, however, had realised what they were letting themselves in for: not a small volume of juvenile literature, like *The Hobbit*, but a monstrously long novel (paper was still rationed), which might have to be sold at a price few people could afford, and another work that was still unfinished after some thirty years, and which, with Tolkien’s well-known self-discipline as regarded finishing his work, would probably never be finished. So after almost two years of negotiations, Collins finally demanded that the *LOTR* be substantially shortened. Tolkien reacted with the same ultimatum he had delivered to Unwin, and Collins reaction also was the same as Unwin’s.

So when Rayner Unwin contacted Tolkien about a poem, Tolkien decided to eat humble pie. In a letter to Rayner Unwin, dated June 22, 1952 (*Letters* 134) he writes:

As for *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, they are where they were.

The one finished (and the end revised), and the other still unfinished (or unrevised), and both gathering dust. ... But I have rather modified my views. Better something than nothing! Although to me they all are one, and the 'L of the Rings' would be better far (and eased) as part of the whole, I would gladly consider the publication of any part of this stuff. ...  
But what about *The Lord of the Rings*? Can anything be done about that, to unlock gates I slammed myself?

Rayner Unwin, who had always liked what he read of *LOTR*, was pleased, reported the matter to his father, who was going away for a long trip to Japan and asked Rayner to look further into the matter. It was Rayner who came up with the solution of publishing the work in three instalments, and who worked out the royalty scheme with Tolkien: he was to be payed nothing until the publisher's costs had been met, and thereafter 50% of profits. Tolkien agreed; Unwin Senior was telegraphed, authorised a potential loss of up to £ 2000, a fair amount of money in those days. Tolkien managed to complete the final revision for Volume 1 by April 1953, and for Vol 2 soon afterwards. After some production problems (a new map had to be drawn and other details to be attended to), the first volume hit the bookshops on July 29, 1954, and was sold out within six weeks and had to be reprinted. The second volume followed on November 11. In the meantime, the American edition of the first volume had appeared in October, soon followed by the second volume.

But Tolkien would not have been Tolkien, if everything had been straightforward. The deadline set by Unwin for the third volume passed, but Tolkien was still working on the Appendices. He had already dropped the epilogue, and done some revision of the rest, but the index of characters promised in the first volume was still not finished. On May 20, 1955 the typescript finally reached the printers; but there were still some technical problems: the chart of runes was printed wrongly, and a few other things, and Tolkien had gone off on an Italian holiday with Priscilla.

Eventually, the third volume was published in October 1955, almost a year after the second volume, and people were waiting rather eagerly.

The rest is history. (Or rather, reception, to be talked about later).