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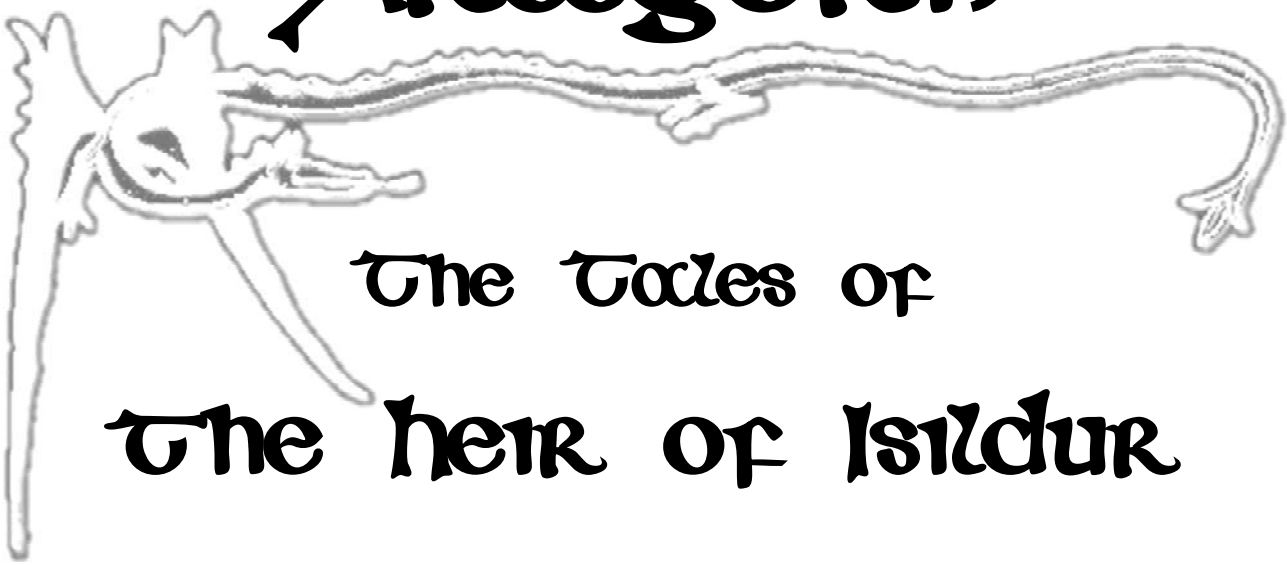

The Tales of

The Heir of Isildur

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Content

Introduction	1
Trotter's Tale	3
Strider's Tale	25
Aragorn's Tale	51
Tales of Elessar	63
Bibliography	65

Introduction

Commentators and critics have neglected Aragorn ever since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. Many studies are concerned with Frodo, Gandalf, and Gollum, but few are chiefly concerned with the Heir of Isildur. Some interest has been shown in mythological comparisons, e.g. comparisons between Aragorn and King Arthur or Sigurd Fafnirsbane. In the opening paragraph in Kocher's chapter on Aragorn he states that "Aragorn is unquestionably the leading man in *The Lord of the Rings*, ... yet he is probably the least written about, least valued, and most misunderstood of all its major characters" (Kocher, 130). As noted by Kocher, Aragorn may appear to stay somewhat of a mystery to the reader. The reasons for his actions are usually not divulged until much later, and for all those who do not bother with the appendices he may very well remain a complete mystery. This mystery is largely responsible for the critics neglect, dismissal and general dislike of this 'too good to be true' character. However, Kocher's analysis of Aragorn is crippled by the fact that in 1972 *The Silmarilion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* had yet to be published. Kocher's chapter on Aragorn provides no more than can be revealed by an attentive and unprejudiced reading of *The Lord of the Rings* and its appendices.

Today, more than twenty years after the publication of *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* and with the completion of Christopher Tolkien's monumental *History of Middle-earth*, the situation has not changed. Aragorn's appearance on the silver screen in the guise of Viggo Mortensen has attracted more attention to this character, but it has also cast another veil over our eyes. If at all obtainable, the true nature of Aragorn can only be reached by reading everything that Tolkien has ever written about Middle-earth. In order to understand Aragorn, we need to understand Middle-earth. A comprehensive study that examines Aragorn thoroughly has yet to be undertaken. Most critics seem to deem the Heir of Isildur dispensable, wherefore the hypothesis to be tested is: The Heir of Isildur is an indispensable character in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

Aragorn's importance may vary depending on how one reads the novel, but can anyone imagine J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* without Strider/Aragorn? Which are the effects of Aragorn's development into the Heir of Isildur in the manuscripts, and how does Tolkien integrate Aragorn into Middle-earth? What is Aragorn's significance in Middle-earth, and how does he contribute to

the overall effect of the work? How great is Aragorn's importance to Tolkien's writings, to the reader of these writings, and to Tolkien himself?

The hypothesis that the Heir of Isildur is an indispensable character in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* may be tested in various ways. In hypothesizing that Aragorn is indispensible, I am faced with the task of showing that Aragorn has little or no importance for the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, Middle-earth, and Tolkien's creative process. In order to do this, I will first study the process of Tolkien's writing of *The Lord of the Rings* by going through Tolkien's manuscripts (in the form they are presented by Christopher Tolkien in *The History of The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth referred to as *hLotR*). The manuscripts make it possible to evaluate the importance of Aragorn in the creation of the novel. I will try to determine to what degree the character of Aragorn influences the development of the narrative through successive drafts. Thereafter, I will attempt to piece together the 'final' version of Aragorns life and ancestral history. In doing so, I will be able to assess whether this character is important to Middle-earth. The process of questioning the character's integration into Tolkien's World strikes at the very core of the problem. The main source for tracing Aragorn's ancestry is the *Silmarillion*, while other parts are to be found in *Unfinished Tales* and, of course, in *The Lord of the Rings* (respectively referred to as *S*, *UT*, and *LotR*)

Distilling the information from the data mined from these texts is a colossal task, and the information that will have to be presented in order for a discussion to be meaningful for all readers is enormous. I have therefore chosen to present the information in the first two chapters of this thesis, followed by a chapter discussing material presented in the first two chapters, as well as material from other sources. Readers familiar with LotR and the Silmarillion may skip the second chapter, or treat it as an appendix. That being said, all but the most attentive and enthusiastic readers of Tolkien's works will find that they do not know the complete story of Aragorn's life and ancestry before perusing the second chapter.

In the discussion, I will question the significance of the character of Aragorn in relation to the major themes of the novel, and determine whether this character helps to shape and sustain these themes mythologically, philosophically, ideologically, and technically; i.e. through representation of archetypes and images in the myths that inspired Tolkien; by being connected to questions about existentialism and essentialism; via representing a moral ideal; and by being important as a narrative device.

Trotter's Tale

Reading *The History of the Lord of the Rings*, one cannot help being amazed by the brilliance of J.R.R. Tolkien, but one must also marvel at the dedication of Christopher Tolkien, Taum Santoski, and others that have assisted in assembling and untangling the creation history of *The Lord of the Rings*. It provides a truly unique opportunity to see a great author at work. In addition to presenting the manuscripts, there is extensive commentary throughout, helping the reader to understand the drafts in relation to *LotR* and Tolkien's life. Christopher Tolkien has also taken pains to describe the development of the geography of Middle-earth and the difficulties his father had with chronology (often a consequence of having multiple storylines). Much of the commentary is concerned with Tolkien's niggling: the quest for artistic and aesthetic perfection.

In tracking the movements and development of the Heir of Isildur, the main sources are the manuscripts presented in *hLotR*, supplemented by Christopher Tolkien's comments, and a paper by Gloriana St. Clair. In dealing with the Heir of Isildur, it is necessary to involve some other characters, e.g. Boromir, Éowyn, and Gandalf. As the development of characters is closely related to the construction of plot, almost every aspect of *LotR* will be touched upon by my deliberations. Two central plot tools are of particular interest: The Rings of Power, especially the One Ring and the Rings of the Elves, and the Palantíri, the seeing stones of Gondor and Arnor.

In *hLotR*, the Heir of Isildur goes by many names. When he first appears he is named Trotter. Later he receives the names Aragorn, Elfstone, Ingold, and finally Strider. Mostly he is referred to as Trotter or Elfstone. I will throughout use the name Tolkien set down in the original draft that I am discussing. I will use the name Aragorn when speaking of the character in a general sense, and Strider when speaking of the character in *LotR*. Other characters will be referred to in a similar way. It may get very confusing, especially when it comes to the hobbits. Names of characters are circumstantial, and most of the time, it does not matter whether one can identify a character in *hLotR* with a character in *LotR*. Dialogue, for instance, is often not just different from the one in *LotR*, but who is speaking and whom is addressed is repeatedly changed. It is almost as if Tolkien has overheard the dialogue, and afterwards have had to figure out who said what to whom.

As I am primarily concerned with Aragorn and the development of the story in connection with him, the following will not relate the drafts to Tolkien's life, or indeed even be concerned with any events in the real world. Still, the drafts and ideas are mostly presented in chronological order,

although some shifting around of the material in *hLotR* is necessary. The ideas themselves are more important than placing them on a strict time line. It is, however, possible to get a better idea of the chronology by looking at the page references, as *hLotR* presents Tolkien's drafts for the most part in the order of conception.

When comparing with *LotR*, I will often choose not to give a page reference. It is assumed that the reader of this thesis is familiar with *LotR*, and will only have to be reminded of its contents, and will not be in need of directions to find particular passages. In addition, the chapter following this one, i.e. Strider's Tale, presents much of the relevant content in *LotR*, *S*, and *UT*. References to pages in *hLotR* are given in the form (vol., page), e.g. (I, 137f).

Trotter the hobbit

As this thesis is primarily concerned with Aragorn, I will indulge a little and present his first appearance in full:

> 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.
>
> 'Who is that over there?' said Bingo, when he got a chance to whisper to Mr Butterbur. 'I don't think you introduced him.'
>
> 'Him?' said Barnabas, cocking an eye without turning his head. 'O! that is one of the wild folk – rangers we call 'em. He has been coming in now and again (in autumn and winter mostly) the last few years; but he seldom talks. Not but what he can tell some rare tales when he has a mind, you take my word. What his right name is I never heard, but he's known round here as Trotter. You can hear him coming along the road in those shoes: clitter-clap – when he walks on a path, which isn't often. Why does he wear 'em? Well, that I can't say. But there ain't no accounting for East or West, as we say here, meaning the Rangers and the Shire-folk, begging your pardon.' Mr Butterbur was called away at that moment, or he might have whispered on in that fashion indefinitely.
>
> Bingo found Trotter looking at him, as if he had heard or guessed all that was said. Presently the Ranger, with a click and a jerk of his hand, invited Bingo to come over to him; and as Bingo sat down beside him he threw back his hood, showing a long shaggy head of hair, some of which hung over his forehead. But it did not hide a pair of keen dark eyes. 'I'm Trotter,' he said in a low voice. 'I am very pleased to meet you, Mr – Hill, if old Barnabas had your name right?' 'He had,' said Bingo, rather stiffly: he was feeling far from comfortable under the stare of those dark eyes.

> 'Well, Mr Hill,' said Trotter, 'if I were you, I should stop your young friends from talking too much. Drink, fire, and chance meetings are well enough, but – well, this is not the Shire. There are queer folk about – though I say it as shouldn't,' he added with a grin, seeing Bingo's look. 'And there have been queer travellers through Bree not long back,' he went on, peering at Bingo's face.
>
> (I, 137f)

This passage differs little from its final form in *LotR*. It is more comical, and Trotter is less intimidating than Strider because of his smallness and wooden shoes, but the chain of events and the dialogue is similar to *LotR*. Trotter has knowledge of the ring, knows Bingo's real name, and asks for a quiet word. Trotter follows the hobbits to their room (without them noticing), and asks them to take him with them in exchange for information. He reveals that he knows of them from overhearing Gandalf talking to dwarves and elves on the Road, and he advises them that more people might have figured out Bingo's real identity (I, 140ff). So far, it is all rather mock-heroic in style. However, in addition, he tells them of the Black Riders and warns them of Bill Ferny (I, 153).

> You must do what you like about my 'reward'. But as for my coming with you, I will say just this: I know all the lands between the Shire and the Mountains, for I've wandered over most of them in the course of my life; and I'm older now than I look. I might prove useful. For I fancy you'll have to leave the open Road after tonight's accident. I don't think somehow that you will be wanting to meet any of these Black-riders, if you can help it. They give me the creeps.' He shuddered, and they saw with surprise that he had drawn his hood over his face which was buried in his hands.
>
> (I, 153)

The theme darkens, but the language is still that of a sequel to *The Hobbit*. Bingo cannot decide whether to let Trotter join them or not. He seems friendly, but his looks are against him, and at the same time, there is something strangely familiar about him. This familiarity caused Tolkien a lot of trouble in subsequent drafts. Frodo (another of the hobbits) remarks that Trotter could follow them even if they refuse to take him (I, 154). Trotter presents a letter from Gandalf that ends like this:

> *I am giving this to a ranger (wild hobbit) known as Trotter: he is dark, long-haired, has wooden shoes! You can trust him. He is an old friend of mine and knows a great deal. He will guide you to Weathertop and further if necessary. Push along! Yours*
>
> *Gandalf*
>
> (I, 154)

Gandalf's letter corroborates Butterbur's description of Trotter as a wild hobbit. Trotter reprimands Bingo for not being suspicious enough, and says that he had to make sure they were who he thought they were before giving them Gandalf's letter. Making them suspicious of everything, he assures them that Barnabas Butterbur can be trusted. He also tells them of an encounter with black riders. He was offered silver and gold for information about a party of hobbits, and was told to look out for a certain Bolger-Baggins (I, 155ff).

Tolkien formulated the idea that Trotter would lead the party to a wild hobbit hole to get the help of a friend (I, 162). With lots of ranger hobbits running about, Middle-earth would surely have been a very different place. On leaving Bree, Trotter flicks an apple that hits Bill Ferny square on the nose (I, 165). Apparently, Tolkien thought this a hobbitish act, and in *LotR*, Sam throws the apple.

On the way to Weathertop, Trotter warns them that not all rangers can be trusted (I, 167), and it is made clear that he knows some of the history of Middle-earth. He speaks of Gilgalad and Valandil (I, 169); later renamed Elendil, King of Western Men (I, 192). Elendil was invented before Tolkien even had thought of Aragorn as the Heir of Isildur. At Weathertop, they find a message from Gandalf on a piece of paper. He is sending them help from Rivendell (I, 170). In the earliest version, Gandalf does not know that the Riders are hunting for Bingo, and only later learns about it from Trotter (I, 211f). Trotter tells the tale of Tinúviel (I, 179), which is interesting, as the romance with Arwen had not yet materialized.

Trotter reveals the source of much of his knowledge to be Rivendell. He is often in Rivendell, but for some reason he is destined to be a wanderer. Trotter knows the names of the trolls from *The Hobbit* (I, 193), which makes it likely that he knows Bilbo. They are met by Glorfindel, who calls Trotter 'Padathir', are beset by Black Riders, and Bingo is saved by Trotter and the others rushing the Riders with flaming brands, pushing the Riders into the river, where they are carried away by Gandalf's magic flood (I, 193ff). In *LotR*, Elrond is the master of the river, and he causes the flood.

Gandalf calls Trotter 'Rimbedir' (I, 207), which is what he is called in Rivendell. Bingo tells Gandalf of his feeling that he has seen Trotter somewhere before, and Gandalf answers that it is probably due to the extraordinary similarity in appearance of all hobbits; a statement that Bingo dismisses as nonsense (I, 208). Tolkien was at this point forced to seriously think about establishing Trotter's identity. A connected problem was that he had created too many hobbits, and that they were much too similar (I, 221).

The people of Bree are changed to primarily Men. It is decided that the Rangers are Men, but if Trotter is a hobbit, he had better be someone well known. Tolkien thought of making him Bilbo, or

Bilbo's first cousin, Fosco Took, who vanishes in his youth because of Gandalf (I, 223). That Gandalf causes the disappearances of young hobbits is an idea from *The Hobbit* (*The Hobbit*, 14).

In the next draft, Tolkien attempted to explain why Trotter is a Hobbit, despite the fact that the Rangers are Men. In the wild lands east of Bree, a few unsettled folk (Men and Hobbits) roam the country. The people of Bree-land call them Rangers. The Rangers are said to be the last remnant of the kingly people from beyond the Seas. Butterbur says Trotter is one of the Rangers, but not really a Ranger, though he behaves like one. He seems to be a hobbit of some kind (I, 331f). The connection between the Rangers and the Númenóreans has been thought of, but it has yet to be firmly established.

The story is refashioned from the very beginning. The reason Gandalf is delayed (why he is not with the hobbits) is that he has been caught in Fangorn forest by the Giant Treebeard (I, 363). In *LotR*, Fangorn has a bad reputation, but in this draft it is actually evil. When Gandalf reaches the Shire, Bingo has already left. Gandalf tries to draw away attention from the Ringbearer by taking a hobbit (Odo) with him from the Shire (I, 337). Trotter suspects that the riders have divided their number to go hunting for both parties (I, 341f). The attack on Weathertop is explained by Trotter to be an indication that Odo has been captured by the Riders (I, 359). They are no longer hunting Gandalf, as they now know who has the One Ring. Odo is later saved and taken to Rivendell (I, 365). Odo eventually turns into Fredegar Bolger, the hobbit that in *LotR* stays in Frodo's new house in Crickhollow, which is attacked by Black Riders at the same time as the Inn at Bree is raided.

In an attempt to establish an identity for Trotter, Tolkien started another major rewrite. In this new version, Bilbo has two favourite 'nephews', Peregrin Boffin and Folco Baggins. Peregrin disappears first, and Folco vanishes at the birthday party. Trotter turns out to be Peregrin, who has been to Mordor. Peregrin is the grandson of the sister of Bilbo's mother. He is only five years old when Bilbo comes back from his journey. As a lad, he is frequently visiting Bilbo, until his father becomes alarmed by Peregrin's talk about mountains, forests, dwarves, and wolves. Peregrin is then forbidden to visit Bilbo. He runs away from home, but is found wandering on the moors, and on the day after he comes of age he disappears for good (I, 371ff). After creating Peregrin Boffin, Tolkien contemplated making Trotter a descendant of Western Men, but Trotter remains a hobbit in draft form until Moria. To peregrinate means to travel or wander, and the peregrine is a pilgrim falcon. It is a name that is much more appropriate for Aragorn (in any form), than for the silly Pippin in *LotR*.

In Rivendell, Gandalf contemplates going back to consult Tom Bombadil. He speculates that they will need his aid, and that Tom will have to start taking interest in things outside his own

country, as the hobbits have had to (I, 213f). Unfortunately, Tolkien decided to give the mysterious Tom a more passive role. It would have been interesting to know who Tolkien meant Tom to be.

Elrond tells of the exiled Númenóreans and their king Elendil, the Elf-friend, and the alliance with Gilgalad. He tells how they died destroying Sauron (I, 215f). Gilgalad takes Sauron's Ring, but an Elf carrying it is slain by goblins, and the One Ring is lost (I, 78, 226).

Tolkien discussed the nature of the rings. Maybe the Dwarves need rings to found colonies (I, 210). Either the Dwarves want Bilbo's ring to start a colony, or they are concerned because Sauron suspects them of having the ring as foundation of one of their hoards. The reason Sauron desires the One Ring is that if he had it he would be the master of all the Rings of Power (I, 226). In the earliest writings, the Rings of Power are fashioned in Valinor by Fëanor with Morgoth's help. Morgoth then steals the Rings; just as he steals the Silmarils (II, 256). Sauron replaces Morgoth, and the creation of the Rings of Power is moved to Middle-earth. The One Ring is still forged by the Elves, but Tolkien decided that The One was Sauron's not only by right, but also by his own making (II, 259).

The reason for Trotter's absence at the feast in Rivendell is that he is needed in the kitchens (I, 392). In *LotR*, Strider's reason for not being at the feast is that Elladan and Elrohir have news for him. Boromir is introduced as a man from far away in the South, and he proposes that the Great Ring shall be used to fight Sauron. Elrond says that the rings of the Elves are kept safe, but they cannot be used for war, and they will loose their power if the One Ring is destroyed (I, 395ff).

Trotter describes his search for Gollum, and tells of his perilous adventures in Mordor. Tracking Gollum, Trotter was caught and imprisoned by Sauron: "'Ever since I have worn shoes,' said Trotter with a shudder, and though he said no more Frodo knew that he had been tortured and his feet hurt in some way. But he had been rescued by Gandalf and saved from death" (I, 401). Tolkien even formulated the idea that Trotter's feet were of wood (I, 413). He seems to have been reluctant to let go of the idea of the wooden shoes.

Tolkien had great difficulties in deciding who should make up the Fellowship of the Ring. In the first draft for the Council of Elrond (I, 397), the Company were to consist of Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Folco, Odo, Glorfindel, and Burin son of Balin. Next, the Company becomes: Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Faramond, and Glorfindel (I, 406). The first composition to journey southward is Gandalf, Trotter, Frodo, Sam, Merry, Faramond, and Boromir (I, 410).

The reason for not crossing the mountains further south (into the land of Rohan) is that the Horse-kings have long been in the service of Sauron. Trotter suggests that they could go through Moria, but Gandalf would rather try the high pass (I, 422). Trotter has been to Moria before "and

the memory is evil" (I, 430), but he still favours that way. They are caught in a snowstorm, and when the snow ceases to fall the situation is quite different from *LotR*, as Trotter in this scene is just as helpless as the other hobbits. Boromir has to clear the way all on his own (I, 423ff), and says that a dragon would have been more useful than a wizard (I, 426). In *LotR*, Legolas banters with Gandalf, and Gandalf is more humorous about it.

Planning ahead, Tolkien proposes that Ond (Gondor) is to be besieged and that Trotter and three or four others are to be held captive there. The tree-giants will assail the besiegers, rescue Trotter and the others, and raise the siege. Frodo and Sam are in this scenario with the tree-giants, and Treebeard is no longer an evil creature (I, 410). Trotter is doomed to be just one of the hobbits. I believe that Tolkien's writing of scenes like the snowstorm and his budding ideas for later parts of the novel led to the demise of Trotter the Hobbit.

Tolkien put forth the idea that Trotter could be a friend of Bilbo's, who pretends to be a ranger, but is really an Elf scout out of Rivendell. He goes on to write that Trotter is a man of Elrond's race, the descendant of the ancient Men of the North, and one of Elrond's household. He is a hunter and wanderer, and he knows Bilbo and Gandalf. He captures Gollum, and hangs around Bree on Gandalf's request. His real name is Aragorn son of Aramir. Alternatively, Trotter is Peregrin Boffin. The cache of food at Weathertop is Trotter's. He goes to Weathertop because it is a good lookout, or because he is to meet Gandalf there (II, 6f). As Tolkien wrote down idea after idea, discarding some and building on others, the character of Aragorn was formed through a combination of ideas preserved from his different possible identities.

Finally, Tolkien decided that Trotter would be a real ranger, a descendant of Elendil. The Elves call him Tarkil, which means high follower and mortal man (II, 8). Trotter has previously been to Mordor, where he was caught and tortured. According to Christopher Tolkien (I, 431), Trotter had potentially been Aragorn for a long time, and after the transformation, a great deal of Trotter's initial qualities remained and determined Aragorn's nature. The Hobbit Trotter lives on in Aragorn, but part of him makes up some of the personality of Peregrin Took, a character with a complex background, being a blend of the original Frodo, Odo, and Trotter (II, 32). The description of Trotter in Bree is not changed much, which shows that race has less to do with looks than ranger status (II, 42).

Trotter the Dúnedain

As observed by St. Clair, a "general darkening of the work occurs through the addition of key descriptions and actions":

> Thus, in the course of the chapter "Strider," Tolkien moves the reader from the amusing antics of Frodo's rendition of "The Cat and the Fiddle" in the Prancing Pony chapter to Merry's frightening account of seeing the Black Riders just outside the Inn. Changes in Strider's nature, in plot incidents, in speech, and in description all darken.
>
> (St. Clair, 1995, 146)

Gandalf leaves Hobbiton in June, and goes south-east towards Rohan. Gandalf knows that the Black Riders are too powerful for him to face alone, and therefore he goes to seek the help of Saramund. Saramund betrays him by telling Gandalf false news of the Black Riders, and having them pursue Gandalf to the top of a mountain, where he is kept prisoner by an army of wolves and orcs. Alternatively, Tolkien thought that Saramund could hand Gandalf over to the evil giant Treebeard (II, 70).

As in *LotR*, Trotter does not eavesdrop on Gandalf, but hears the hobbits talking with Bombadil (II, 42). With Trotter as a Man, Frodo seems to be less inclined to trust him, and he no longer finds him strangely familiar (II, 46). Gandalf's letter (via Butterbur) is changed, and here is some of it:

> *Try and find Trotter the ranger. He will be looking out for you: a lean, dark, weatherbeaten fellow, but one of my greatest friends. He knows our business. He will see you through, if any one can. Make for Rivendell as fast as possible. There I hope we may meet again. If not, Elrond will advise you. Yours Gandalf*
>
> *PS. You can trust Barnabas Butterbur and Trotter. But make sure it is really Trotter. The real Trotter will have a sealed letter from me with these words in it*
>
> *All that is gold does not glitter, all that is long does not last,*
>
> *All that is old does not wither, not all that is over is past.*
>
> *PPS. It would be worse than useless to try and go beyond Bree on your own. If Trotter does not turn up, you must try and get Butterbur to hide you somewhere, and hope that I shall come.*
>
> (II, 49)

The letter is read out aloud, whereafter Trotter is asked to show his letter, but as Trotter remarks, the letter should not have been read aloud if they did not trust him already. Sam is annoyed, and Trotter threatens the hobbits with his hidden sword, but does not mention the ring. Trotter's letter

recites the verses and states that "This is to certify that the bearer is Aragorn son of Celegorn, of the line of Isildur Elendil's son, known in Bree as Trotter, enemy of the Nine, and friend of Gandalf" (II, 50). Frodo understands who Trotter is, and is ready to give him the ring, but Trotter says that it does not belong to either of them, but that it is ordained that Frodo should keep it for a while. Trotter's words are later given to Gandalf, and then again to Trotter at Elrond's Council (II, 50ff).

A later version of Gandalf's letter introduces the idea that Trotter knows the rhyme, but retains the idea of a second letter. There is no mention of Elendil or Isildur in Trotter's letter. The rhyme goes through several revisions (presented here in order of conception):

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those that wander are lost;
All that is old does not wither, and fire may burn bright in the frost;
Not all that have fallen are vanquished, not only the crowned is a king;
Let blade that was broken be brandished, and Fire be the Doom of the Ring!

(II, 77)

All that is gold does not glitter; not all those that wander are lost.
All that grows old does not wither; not every leaf falls in the frost.
Not all that have fallen are vanquished; a king may yet be without crown,
A blade that was broken be brandished;And towers that were strong may fall down.

(II, 80)

All that is gold does not glitter, not all those that wander are lost;
All that is old does not wither, and bright may be fire in the frost.
The fire that was low may be woken; and sharp in the sheath is the sting;
Forged may be blade that was broken; the crownless again may be king.

(II, 78)

All that is gold does not glitter, Not all those who wander are lost,
The old that is strong does not wither; Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken, A light from the shadows shall spring,
Renewed shall be blade that was broken: The crownless again shall be king.

(*LotR*, 186, 265)

The first line is identical in all four versions. The second line shifts the emphasis from the old to the strong, and the vegetation theme wins over the elemental theme; deep roots instead of fire. The third line changes dramatically from talking about the fallen and crownless to be about fire and hope. The fourth line changes from being about war to being about renewed stability.

The Black Riders fear Trotter, and have Bill Ferney and the Southerner burgle the Inn for them. The King is not sure whether his captive Ham or Mr. Green is the real Baggins. Taking Ham with him, he sets out after Mr. Green. Gandalf attacks the two black riders who are carrying Ham, and rescues him (II, 71f). At Weathertop, Trotter finds boot tracks and hobbit-tracks. Gandalf and Ham have been there (II, 57f).

In Rivendell, Frodo learns who Trotter really is from Gandalf and/or Bilbo, who explains why Trotter is called Tarkil (II, 82ff). At the Council, Elrond states that the Three Rings have been taken over the Sea, and says that the party should be limited to seven. Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Trotter, Boromir, Galdor, and Gimli are the seven chosen. Meriadoc and Peregrin must return to the Shire (II, 112ff). Trotter is upset by Gollum's escape, and exclaims: "I judge that to be ill news, and you may mark my words: we shall regret this" (II, 118). In *LotR*, Strider is even more confident that Gollum's escape will bring evil.

Elrond's tale of Elendil and his sons states that Osgiliath is founded by Elendil, and there is no mention of the Northern Kingdom. Minas Ithil and Minas Anor are ruled by Isildur and Anárion. There is also an idea of a third son, Ilmandur, as the ruler of Osgiliath. Elendil's sons did not return from the war against Sauron, and only one of the smaller cities survived, ruled by the son of Isildur or Anárion. The servants of Sauron take Minas Anor, and it becomes a place of dread, and thereafter called Minas Morgol. Trotter is presented by Elrond as Aragorn, son of Celegorn, descendant of Isildur, and the rightful ruler of Minas Ithil (II, 119f).

Tolkien suggested several different reasons for the exile of the line of Isildur. Trotter's ancestors were driven out by a rebellion, instigated by Sauron, and/or they were expelled by the Wizard King (II, 116). Aragorn speaks thus to Boromir:

> 'And the Men of Minas Tirith drove out my fathers,' said Aragorn. 'Is not that remembered, Boromir? The men of that town have never ceased to wage war on Sauron, but they have listened not seldom to counsels that came from him. In the days of Valandur they murmured against the Men of the West, and rose against them, and when they came back from battle with Sauron they refused them entry into the city." Then Valandur broke his sword before the city gates and went away north; and for long the heirs of Elendil dwelt at Osforod the Northburg in slowly waning glory and darkening days. But all the Northland has now long been waste; and all that are left of Elendil's folk few.
>
> 'What do the men of Minas Tirith want with me – to return to aid [them] in the war and then reject me at the gates again?'
>
> (II, 120f)

Aragorn is rather harsh here, showing himself as unforgiving, and as someone who should be obeyed. Boromir will not ask for help, but states only that he fears that Minas Tirith will fall if they are not relieved. Aragorn says he will come to aid them. Valandil becomes the son of Isildur, and is kept safe in Imladris, and later dwells in Annúminas, re-establishing the idea of the Northern Kingdom, as founded by Elendil, rather than merely being a refuge for the heirs of Isildur. The sword that is broken becomes Elendil's (II, 121f). A later version, however, states that Valandil is the brother of Elendil, and that Valandil is the founder of the Southern Kingdom (II, 123). Isildur takes the Ring, but is slain, and the ring is lost. Osgiliath falls into ruin, Minas Ithil becomes Minas-Morgol, and Minas Anor is renamed Minas Tirith (II, 127). Boromir's verse is composed:

Seek for the Sword that was broken:
in Imlad-rist it dwells,
and there shall words be spoken
stronger than Morgol-spells.
And this shall be your token:
when the half-high leave their land,
then many bonds shall be broken,
and Days of Fire at hand.

(II, 128)

Seek for the Sword that was broken:
In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
And the Halfling forth shall stand.

(*LotR*, 263)

These lines did not change much from the initial draft to the final version. The main difference in the final version is the mention of Isildur's Bane. In addition, the meaning of the words is less obscure.

Aragorn tells Boromir that he has been in Minas Tirith, Osgiliath, and even Minas Morgol, and beyond. Further, he tells of Valandil son of Isildur, who goes to dwell in Osforod, the North-burg. Again, it is uncertain who founded the Northern Kingdom (II, 128f). Elrond's tale finally reaches the form where Elendil establishes the North Kingdom, and his sons establish the Southern Kingdom. Elendil's capital is first named Tarkilmar/Westermanton, but later becomes Annúminas (II, 144f).

It is a bit unclear what happens to Minas Ithil, and even in *LotR,* it is not quite clear. Some versions have Minas Ithil captured by Sauron before the War of the Last Alliance, prompting Isildur to seek his father's help, while other versions have the city captured later. In either case, Isildur does not return to Minas Ithil after Sauron's fall. The real mystery is what happens to the city after the fall of Sauron. There is one mention of its recapture, but only in draft form. There is no account

of the city's history for the more than 1600 years that pass between the fall of Sauron and the Great Plague. Evil men repossess Minas Ithil, and some hundred years later the city is renamed Minas Morgul (II, 145f; *LotR*, 1078; *S*, 296).

In a new draft, Aragorn tells of his hunt for Gollum, and when he hears of Gollum's escape he is very angry: "Then all my pains are brought to nothing! I judge that to be evil news indeed. You may mark my words: we shall all rue this bitterly" (II, 148). This time Aragorn is more forceful than he is in *LotR*. This may be a function of him growing into the rightful ruler of a major kingdom. In Moria, when Frodo stabs the cave-troll and Trotter compliments him, Sam looks at Aragorn with approval for the first time (II, 193). Aragorn's importance is increasing for now, but will lessen gradually later on.

In early drafts, the party is lead by Gandalf and Trotter jointly. In *LotR*, Gandalf has been given some lines that originally are Trotter's, establishing Gandalf as the leader. Boromir also benefits from Trotter's reduced authority (II, 194ff). The transferring of lines, without changing the phrases much, or at all, could be thought of as strange, as it blends different characters' ways of expressing themselves, and makes it difficult to tell them apart. In early drafts, Tolkien concentrates on the story, i.e. he is mostly concerned with the action and the plot. While revising, Tolkien is more concerned with what the characters say, and how they say it. Rather than rewriting a line, he gives it to someone who would be more likely to deliver the line in question, and so making the characters more consistent and more clearly separable for the reader.

From Moria to Minas Tirith

Gandalf wrestles with the Balrog on the Bridge, and Trotter hurries back to assist him, but a troll that leaps onto the bridge makes it crack and break. Gandalf is lost, and Trotter takes command (II, 198). The earliest outlines have Gandalf fight a Black Rider on the Bridge (I, 462), and later Tolkien contemplates making him fight Saruman (II, 236).

Trotter does not know of the Elves in Lothlórien. Legolas says that some Elves may dwell deep in the woods (II, 222). Keleborn calls Aragorn Ingold son of Ingrim, and says that he is known to him, although they have never met. Trotter does not know Galadriel either, and has no prior knowledge of her existence, which means that Gandalf is more secretive than in *LotR* (II, 252ff).

Keleborn says that he thinks the Balrog must have been sent to Moria by Sauron (II, 247). In the next version, he says he knew that a Balrog slept under Caradras, and feared that it had been awakened by the Dwarves (II, 257). In yet another version, Galadriel asserts that no Balrog has lain

hidden in the Misty Mountains since the fall of Thangorodrim, and therefore it must have been sent there by Sauron (II, 262).

Gimli asks Galadriel for nothing but the memory of their meeting. Galadriel gives Gimli an emerald brooch she is wearing, and Gimli names it/himself Elfstone (II, 275). The manuscript breaks off, Tolkien realizes that Elfstone is Aragorn's 'true' name, and when he begins again Galadriel is addressing Trotter: ""Hail, Elfstone," she said. "It is a fair name that merits a gift to match"" (II, 276).

Aragorn had previously been called Elfstone, but at the time of the writing of the scene above Aragorn's name was Ingold (II, 277). The names of Aragorn went through many changes, and many alternatives popped up along the way, but roughly, the changes can be described as:

Aragorn (or Trotter) > Elfstone > Ingold > Elfstone (> Trotter) > Aragorn
(II, 278)

While the name Trotter is later to be replaced by Strider, Elfstone (Elessar) remains Aragorn's true name. Ingold disappears completely, except for making up part of the name given to Narsil reforged, i.e. Branding; a name that actually emerges with the sheath that Galadriel originally gives to Ingold (II, 274, 290). In *LotR*, the reforged sword is called Andúril, Flame of the West, and the sheath is given no name. Ingold becomes the name of the leader of the guards outside the northern gates of Minas Tirith.

Passing the Pillars of the Kings, Aragorn says that he is Eldamar son of Eldakar son of Valandil, which makes him the great-grandson of Isildur. Another generation is added later, but it is still far from the long history of Aragorn's ancestry that has yet to be created, and that has been hinted at by Gandalf and Elrond in earlier drafts (II, 105ff, 361f). This history will be presented in the following chapter.

The idea of Boromir's secret plan to use the ring is formulated, and his confrontation with Frodo is devised. Frodo's disappearance is not discovered until he is far away from the company, which is caused by Boromir's secrecy regarding Frodo's whereabouts and their quarrel. Aragorn notices a change in Boromir. Sam tries to track Frodo, but finds Gollum instead, and Gollum leads him to Frodo. Frodo is attacked by Gollum, and is saved by Sam. Frodo uses the ring to get power over Gollum, but this use of the ring is perhaps more harmful than using it for invisibility, and so the idea that Frodo cannot willingly part with the ring at the Cracks of Doom appears (II, 207f).

One of the reasons for going to Amon Hen is to make use of the lookout at the top of the hill. In *LotR*, Aragorn does not go up to the lookout, but there is a version where he does. Aragorn, without the aid of the One Ring, has a vision of orcs, an eagle, and Gandalf, although he does not recognize him. (II, 379f)

Merry and Pippin get lost and wander into Fangorn forest. Legolas and Gimli go north together, where they are first to be captured by Saruman, but later to meet Gandalf. Boromir and Aragorn travel to Minas Tirith, which is besieged by Sauron and Saruman. The Lord of Minas Tirith is slain, and the people of Minas Tirith choose Aragorn to be their new Lord. Boromir is jealous of Aragorn, and sneaks off to join Saruman. The siege is broken by Gandalf, Legolas, Gimli, and Treebeard (and his kin). Tolkien considered a contest between Gandalf and Saruman, whereafter Saruman would shut himself up in Isengard. Boromir was to be slain by Aragorn (II, 210ff).

When it is decided that Boromir dies on Amon Hen, Trotter puts his plans to go to Minas Tirith on hold, and goes hunting for Merry and Pippin with Gimli and Legolas. At this point, Trotter reverts to a ranger, and perhaps to a more sympathetic character than he is in the continuation of earlier versions. The evil that grew in Boromir may be said to have infected earlier versions, and perhaps Trotter as well (II, 378). He becomes less kingly, but more heroic. An effect of being a plainer man is that Trotter tells Legolas and Gimli that Boromir tried to take the ring from Frodo (II, 385). In *LotR*, he does not divulge this information. Aragorn's verse about Ondor changed little from its initial conception. It is, however, the first mention of the Tree of Minas Tirith.

Ondor! Ondor! Between the Mountains and the Sea
Wind blows, moon rides, and the light upon the Silver Tree
Falls like rain there in gardens of the King of old.
O white walls, towers fair, and many-footed throne of gold!
O Ondor, Ondor! Shall Men behold the Silver Tree
Or West Wind blow again between the Mountain[s] and the Sea?

(II, 395)

Gondor! Gondor, between the Mountains and the Sea!
West Wind blew there; the light upon the Silver Tree
Fell like bright rain in gardens of the Kings of old.
O proud walls! White towers! O wingéd crown and throne of gold!
O Gondor, Gondor! Shall Men behold the Silver Tree,
Or West Wind blow again between the Mountains and the Sea?

(*LotR*, 443)

The eagle that Trotter saw on Amon Hen is now seen by Legolas, and Tolkien had several theories about the eagle's significance. One idea he had was to have the eagle bear Gandalf from Tol Brandir, where he had resisted the Eye and saved Frodo on Amon Hen (II, 396).

An alternative to Gandalf's comeback was to have him enter Minas Tirith anonymously, and reveal himself when the outer wall falls. Another idea was to let Gandalf find Sam, and have them go to Minas Tirith together. The most radically different idea was perhaps to have Trotter send Boromir, Gimli, and Legolas to Minas Tirith, forsake his ambition, search for the hobbits alone, and then meet Gandalf. Another extraordinary idea at this time was to have the Elves responsible for the creation of the Ents in order to understand trees (II, 411f).

Before the meeting with the Riders of Rohan, Tolkien thought that Trotter should know Éomer, and this may be the germ of Aragorn's earlier service in Rohan. First, however, Trotter presents himself as Aragorn Elessar son of Arathorn (first mention of Arathorn), but this is immediately replaced with the covert 'Trotter out of the North'. There is no indication that Trotter knows Éomer, who is on his way to aid Eowin hunt down the Orc-host. Trotter, Gimli, and Legolas ride on with the Rohiroth (II, 390ff). The message that Gandalf bears from Galadriel to Aragorn is very different from *LotR*:

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.
(II, 431)

Where now are the Dúnedain, Elessar, Elessar?
Why do thy kinsfolk wander afar?
Near is the hour when the Lost should come forth,
And the Grey Company ride from the North.
But dark is the path appointed for thee:
The Dead watch the road that leads to the Sea.
(*LotR*, 524)

The green stone in the south was to be borne on Théoden's brow, and Éowyn would stand in the shadow of his dark throne. Aragorn was to wed Éowyn, and possibly be the successor of Théoden (II, 448). In *LotR*, the message is completely changed, and becomes one of the portents for Aragorn's choice to take the Path of the Dead.

In Théoden's hall, a messenger from Gondor tells that Minas Tirith is sorely pressed and in need of assistance. Théoden's people are under attack, and cannot spare any men. Gandalf insists on attacking Isengard, and so they ride out. Before they reach Isengard, the Ents have already defeated its defences, and there is little more to do. They return to Eodoras. A messenger from Minas Tirith comes again to request help, and Théoden says that he owes fealty to no one but the heirs of

Elendil, but he will aid Minas Tirith now that Saruman is defeated. At this stage, Eorl the Young was thought of as taking part in the great battle where Sauron is overthrown. This means that Théoden's allegiance is with Aragorn, rather than with the Lord of Minas Tirith. They ride to Minas Tirith, and Éowyn rides with them without disguise (434ff).

Before riding to Minas Tirith, Aragorn says to Éowyn: "If I live, I will come, Lady Éowyn, and then maybe we will ride together" (II, 447). Tolkien, however, decided that Aragorn was too old, lordly, and grim for Éowyn, and thought maybe that she should die defending Théoden. Aragorn was still to love Éowyn, and after her death not to wed another (II, 448). It is curious that Tolkien deemed Aragorn too old for Éowyn, when Arwen is almost 3,000 years older than Aragorn.

In the earliest drafts, the battle between the forces of Saruman and the Rohirrim at Helm's Deep is not yet conceived, and its conception is a long and difficult one. It is Aragorn's advice that they drive the enemy before them and head for the Nerwet Gate, where they can set up a first defence. He warns them of retreating to the caves, for Saruman may have set traps for them there, and at any rate probably knows them well. The King arrives late, and is brought to safety by Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli. While tending to the wounds of Snowmane (Théoden's horse), Aragorn wonders about Frodo, and he wishes that Frodo were where he could have an eye on him. Later, Aragorn leads an attack against a company of wild men, who are trying to break the Gate with a tree trunk. Running back from this attack Aragorn is overtaken by orcs, who nearly finish him off. Éomer regrets that he is not by Aragorn's side when 'Branding' goes to war. Éomer's regret turned out to be Tolkien's as well, and Tolkien changed the story so that, in *LotR*, they draw blades together, and Éomer is nearly killed (III, 10ff).

Gamling the Westmarcher translates the cries of the human enemies to Aragorn, and surmises that Saruman has inflamed their hatred of the Rohirrim on the grounds of what happened 500 years ago, when Gondor gave the Mark to Eorl the Young as a reward for his service to Elendil and Isildur. The Parley between Aragorn and the enemy is in its earliest form an actual parley. The Dunlendings are here called Westfolders, and a Westfold captain demands that their land be given back to them, and says that if Théoden is surrendered to them, all may depart in peace. Aragorn scolds him for aiding Saruman and the Orcs, and makes it clear that Saruman would hold no such promise. An Orc captain cries: "We are the Uruk-hai, we slay!" (III, 22). An Orc shoots an arrow at Aragorn, and is promptly hewed down by the Westfold captain (III, 21f). In *LotR*, the Orcs are more numerous, and the Dunlendings would hardly dare kill an Orc for shooting an arrow at Aragorn. In fact, Aragorn is subjected to a shower of arrows in *LotR*.

At Isengard, when tobacco is discussed, Aragorn says that the Rangers brought the plant (and the art of smoking) to the North from regions in the South, where it grows wild. Tolkien quickly changed the origin of smoking to be an invention of the Hobbits (III, 38). This could be seen as the last glimpse of Trotter the Hobbit.

As Saruman leaves the balcony, a large ball of dark shining crystal comes hurtling down from above, narrowly missing Gandalf, and splinters on the rock beside the stair. In a letter to W.H Auden, which is mentioned by Christopher Tolkien (III, 65), Tolkien writes that this crystal ball must be one of the seven stones in a rhyme of lore that he had been thinking about for a while: "seven stars and seven stones and one white tree" (III, 65).

> *Tall ships and tall kings Three times three,*
> *What brought they from the foundered land Over the flowing sea?*
> *Seven stars and seven stones And one white tree.*
>
> (*LotR*, 620)

It was clear at this point that Saruman had some way of communicating with Sauron. The Orthanc stone is here destroyed, but later survives as one of the Palantíri. The Palantír is looked in by Gandalf. He sees stars, small batlike shapes, a river, and the moon. The Palantír is gazing towards Osgiliath (III, 64ff).

They ride to Dunharrow, and then on to Eodoras. Aragorn rides with Éowyn. At Eodoras, Gandalf looks in the Palantír again. He turns its gaze in many directions and sees many things. He has not fully understood that Saruman used the Palantír not only to survey the lands, but also to communicate with Sauron. Gandalf, however, speaks with Sauron, telling of Saruman's defeat, and taunting him. Later, Gandalf is not able to change the direction of the Palantír's gaze, and does not try to communicate with Sauron. When it is Pippin who first looks in the stone, it does not prompt Gandalf to ride in haste to Minas Tirith. After Pippin has looked in the Palantír, Aragorn is entrusted to keep it and guard it, but not to use it. Aragorn is not claiming it, as he does in *LotR*. Aragorn says: "I know the danger. I will not uncover it, or handle it" (III, 75). The history of the Palantíri is developed, and the idea that Sauron has the Osgiliath stone is formed. The stones may have been forged by Fëanor, and are part of the heirlooms of the Heirs of Elendil. News comes to Eodoras of the siege of Minas Tirith by the Haradwaith, and the Rohirrim ride to their aid. Aragorn drives away the enemy and enters Minas Tirith as the King returning. They take back Elostirion (Osgiliath), and Gandalf defeats the Nazgûl (III, 70ff, 229).

The feast at Eodoras now takes place at Dunharrow. Gandalf is mustering an army there. In addition to the Rohirrim, Rangers out of the North, the defeated Dunlanders, Woodmen of Mirkwood, and many others have come (III, 242). At the King's return to Dunharrow, Éowyn says:

> Now I will admit, Théoden, brother of my mother, that it is beyond any hope I had when you rode away. This is a glad hour. Hail, Lord of the Mark, may I never again be taken from your side while you live still and rule the Eorlingas. Father you are to me since Éothain my father fell at Osgiliath far away. Come now – all is prepared for you. And though Dunharrow is a dark place, full of sad shadow, tonight it shall be filled with lights.
>
> (III, 247)

These words of Éowyn's did not make it into the final draft of *LotR*, but they clarify Éowyn's relation to Théoden, and explain her actions in *LotR*. The returning king is Théoden, and not Aragorn. It is possible that the title of the third part of the trilogy derives from Théoden's return. If this is the case, Tolkien's decision to keep that title is a deliberate attempt to throw the reader off the right track, as the return of the king already happens in the beginning of that part of the trilogy. If Aragorn also is the returning king, then the proper title should be 'The Return(s) of the Kings'. On the other hand, Tolkien did not wish to have *LotR* published as a trilogy. *LotR* consists of six books, meant to be published separately, or in one volume. However, his publishers had other ideas.

A messenger from Minas Tirith arrives at the feast. He asks for ten thousand spears. The Swertings have come, and the forces of Sauron have crossed the Nargul Pass. The Men of Harad constitute part of Sauron's forces, and a fleet from Umbar has reached Anárion. The defences at Osgiliath have failed. A company of Rohirrim, led by Éomer, set out for Minas Tirith, crossing the mountains. This is the germ to the "The Passing of the Grey Company" (III, 242ff).

New drafting has Gandalf and the Palantír go to Minas Tirith, where he looks into the stone, sees Frodo captured, and is revealed to Sauron. He subsequently hurls the Palantír from the battlements, and rides forth. Éowyn rides (openly) to Minas Tirith with Éomer and Théoden. News comes from the South that a great king has descended out of the mountains where he had been entombed. The rumoured entombed king is the first step towards the narrative that evolved into "The Passing of the Grey Company". Aragorn arrives (having crossed the mountains with his rangers, and defeated the Southrons), and enters Minas Tirith, where he meets Denethor and Faramir (III, 260ff).

Tolkien went back to the idea that Aragorn has the Palantír. Aragorn looks into it before Dunharrow, and sees the Black Fleet coming up the Anduin. He speaks to Legolas and Gimli:

> 'What did I tell him?' said Aragorn sternly, and his eyes glinted. 'That I had a rascal of a rebel dwarf here that I would exchange for a couple of good orcs, thank you! I thought I had the strength, and the strength I had. I said naught to him and wrenched the Stone from him to my own purpose. But he saw me, yes and he saw me in other guise maybe than you see me. If I have done ill I have done ill. But I do not think so. To know that I lived and walked the earth was something of a blow to his heart, and certainly he will now hasten all his strokes – but they will be the less ripe. And then I learned much. For one thing, that there are yet other Stones. One is at Erech and that is where we are going. [Struck out: At the Stone of Erech Men shall ... be seen.] Halbarad bears this message:
>
> *Out of the mountain shall they come their tryst keeping; at the Stone of Erech their horn shall blow,*
> *when hope is dead and the kings are sleeping and darkness lies on the world below:*
> *Three lords shall come from the three kindreds from the North at need by the paths of the dead*
> *elflord, dwarflord, and lord forwandréd, and one shall wear a crown on head.*
>
> And that is an old rhyme of Gondor which none have understood; but I think I perceive somewhat of its sense now. To the Stone of Erech by the paths of the Dead!' he said rising. 'Who will come with me?'
>
> (III, 300)

Elrond's message is first only: "Bid Aragorn remember the Paths of the Dead." (III, 305), but later is added:

> For thus spoke Malbeth the Seer:
> *When the land is dark where the kings sleep And long the Shadow in the East is grown,*
> *The oathbreakers their tryst shall keep, At the Stone of Erech shall a horn be blown:*
> *The forgotten people shall their oath fulfill. Who shall summon them, whose be the horn?*
> *For none may come there against their will. The heir of him to whom the oath was sworn;*
> *Out of the North shall he come, dark ways shall he tread; He shall come to Erech by the Paths of the Dead.*
>
> (III, 307)

> 'Thus spoke Malbeth the Seer, in the days of Arvedui, last king at Fornost,' said Aragorn:
> *Over the land there lies a long shadow, westward reaching wings of darkness.*
> *The Tower trembles; to the tombs of kings doom approaches. The Dead awaken;*
> *for the hour is come for the oathbreakers: at the Stone of Erech they shall stand again*
> *and hear there a horn in the hills ringing. Whose shall the horn be? Who shall call them*
> *from the grey twilight, the forgotten people? The heir of him to whom the oath they swore.*
> *From the North shall he come, need shall drive him: he shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead.*"
>
> (*LotR*, 812)

The draft versions of Malbeth's prophecy have simple rhyme schemes, while the final version is almost prose. The final version is more complex, and the interpretation of it is more difficult. The content is, however, very similar, except for the mention of the three lords in the first version.

Éowyn is upset by Aragorn's departure, and Théoden tries to comfort her by saying that his heart tells him that Aragorn is a kingly man of high destiny. On Aragorn's request, Meriadoc is geared up to go with the Rohirrim to Minas Tirith. Éowyn dies trying to save Théoden. When Aragorn arrives at the battle on Pelennor Fields, he wears a helmet and a crown. In *LotR*, this heirloom is last worn by Eärnur, and is therefore not in Aragorn's possession at this time. In *LotR*, Aragorn wears the Star of Elendil, the mark of the High King of Arnor and Gondor. Denethor greets the victors, but will not yield to Aragorn until the war is over. Denethor says that his only living son is dying, and that Gondor may take what lord it likes after him, since he is then without an heir. Aragorn replies that he will not be taken, but he will take. Aragorn subsequently heals Faramir. Denethor's use of a Palantír explains his attitude towards Aragorn, and later his despair and suicide. Sauron's might is overwhelming, and Gandalf is planning to replace him with some upstart from the North. At first, Denethor had only used the stone after the wounding of Faramir, but Denethor's despair led Tolkien to conclude that Denethor must have looked in the stone long before then. In *LotR*, Denethor's suspicions of Aragorn are solely based on his conversation with Pippin (III, 316f, 360ff).

With the death of Denethor, Aragorn humbles himself, and enters Minas Tirith as a plain man. Éowyn and Faramir are brought back to life, and Aragorn labours all through the night, healing many sick and wounded (III, 385). It is here that Aragorn's moral character finds its final form. Many readers find the character of Strider/Aragorn rigid, but this is far from the truth. The development from Ranger to King may be subtle, but it is none the less profound. The smooth transition is due to Tolkien's pains to portray Aragorn as a well-balanced man, who thinks before he acts, and who slowly grows into the role of the rightful ruler of Gondor and Arnor. He does not act out of character, because Tolkien weeded out the storylines and scenes when this happened. However, Aragorn may still surprise the reader, e.g. his decision to look in the Palantír, his choice to take the Paths of the Dead, and his arrival at the battle on Pelennor Fields in the ships of the enemy. In addition, there is one scene where he does act slightly out of character (see p. 50 & 54).

Aragorn says that as King, he will be Elessar, Elfstone, the renewer, and his house will be named Tarkil, which here is supposed to mean Trotter. Earlier, Tarkil meant high follower and mortal man, a symbolic meaning close to what Dúnedain means in *LotR*. The name Tarkil goes through many changes, and eventually becomes Telcontar. In this name, Trotter may be said to survive into *LotR* (III, 390).

In a new draft, Tolkien rewrites the story from Dunharrow, where Éowyn weeps at Aragorn's going. She embraces him, imploring him not to take the Paths of the Dead, and when Aragorn does not yield, she humbles herself to kneel in the dust. Aragorn is deeply grieved and embarks on the Paths of the Dead as a man who has lost everything and fears nothing. In *LotR*, Éowyn is perhaps more proud and stern, while Aragorn is softer, but unyielding all the same (III, 406).

Aragorn names the dead warrior at the door:

> Here lies Baldor son of Brego, […] first heir of that Golden Hall to which he never returned. He should be lying now under the flowers of Evermind in the Third Mound of the Mark; but now there are nine mounds and seven green with grass, and through all the long years he has lain here at the door he could not open. But whither that door led, and why he wished to pass, none now shall ever know.
>
> (III, 407)

In *LotR*, it is clear that Aragorn knows who the dead warrior is, but he remains unnamed. In the draft, Aragorn's naming of the dead warrior shows that he knows the history of the Eorlingas well. It also means that, at this time, Eorl the Young was still meant to have been present at the defeat of Sauron. To get to know Aragorn it is imperative that one studies his ancestral history, and this will be done in the next chapter.

The Stone of Erech is first envisioned as a black stone, marking the meeting place of Isildur and Anárion with the last king of the dark Men of the Mountains. There they swear allegiance to the sons of Elendil, vowing to aid them and their kin forever, "even though Death should take us" (III, 397). Isildur subsequently curses them to "rest never till your oath is fulfilled" (III, 410). Aragorn reaches Erech at midnight, where he blows horns and unfurls his banner. He finds another Palantír buried in a vault. The Great Host of the Dead gather round Aragorn's company, and Aragorn speaks

to them (III, 411): “The hour is come at last, and the oath shall be fulfilled. I go to Pelargir, and ye shall come behind me. And when all this land is clean, return, and be at peace! For I am Elessar, Isildur’s heir of Gondor” (III, 397ff).

In *LotR*, the rumour that runs through the land is that the King of the Dead has come. In the earliest drafts, they say that Isildur has come back from the dead, and that The Lord of the Ring(s) has arisen (III, 412). On the same page, Tolkien has Gimli and Merry discuss why Aragorn would be called ‘The Ring Lord’:

> ‘Indeed all the folk of Lebennin call Aragorn that.’
>
> ‘I wonder why?’ said Merry. ‘I suppose it is some device to draw the eyes of Mordor that way, to Aragorn, and keep them from Frodo’; and he looked east and shuddered. ‘Do you think all his great labour and deeds will be in vain and too late in the end?’ he said.
>
> ‘I know not,’ said Gimli. ‘But one thing I know, and that is, not for any device of policy would Aragorn set abroad a false tale. Then either it is true and he has a ring, or it is a false tale invented by someone else. But Elrohir and Elladan have called him by that name. So it must be true. But what it means we do not know.’
>
> (III, 425)

Elsewhere, Tolkien has written that Galadriel must give her ring to Aragorn, maybe as a wedding gift. This would explain his might, but Tolkien thought it better not to endow Aragorn with an Elven Ring of Power. It would leave Lórien defenceless, and although he had envisioned the destruction of Lothlórien already (III, 256), he was not ready to strip it of its defences (III, 425). Would Nenya have made Aragorn too mighty? It would increase his power, but decrease his legendary stature. The strength and appeal of Aragorn is that he is just a man, albeit with a glorious ancestral history, who struggles against the monsters and the darkness. If he has any magical powers, they lie in the healing of the sick. Giving him a Ring of Power would more strongly associate him with the Elves, and perhaps also with the Ringwraiths. He would be too Elf-like, and at the same time too susceptible to corruption. Another concern might be the lingering of Rings of Power in Middle-earth. The new Age belongs to Man, and the Elves and their magics are passing out of memory. If Aragorn is given Nenya, he would either have to give it back before Galadriel leaves Middle-earth, or leave Middle-earth himself. This would change the fate of Arwen as well, but *LotR* is not a fairytale, and there is no happy ending.

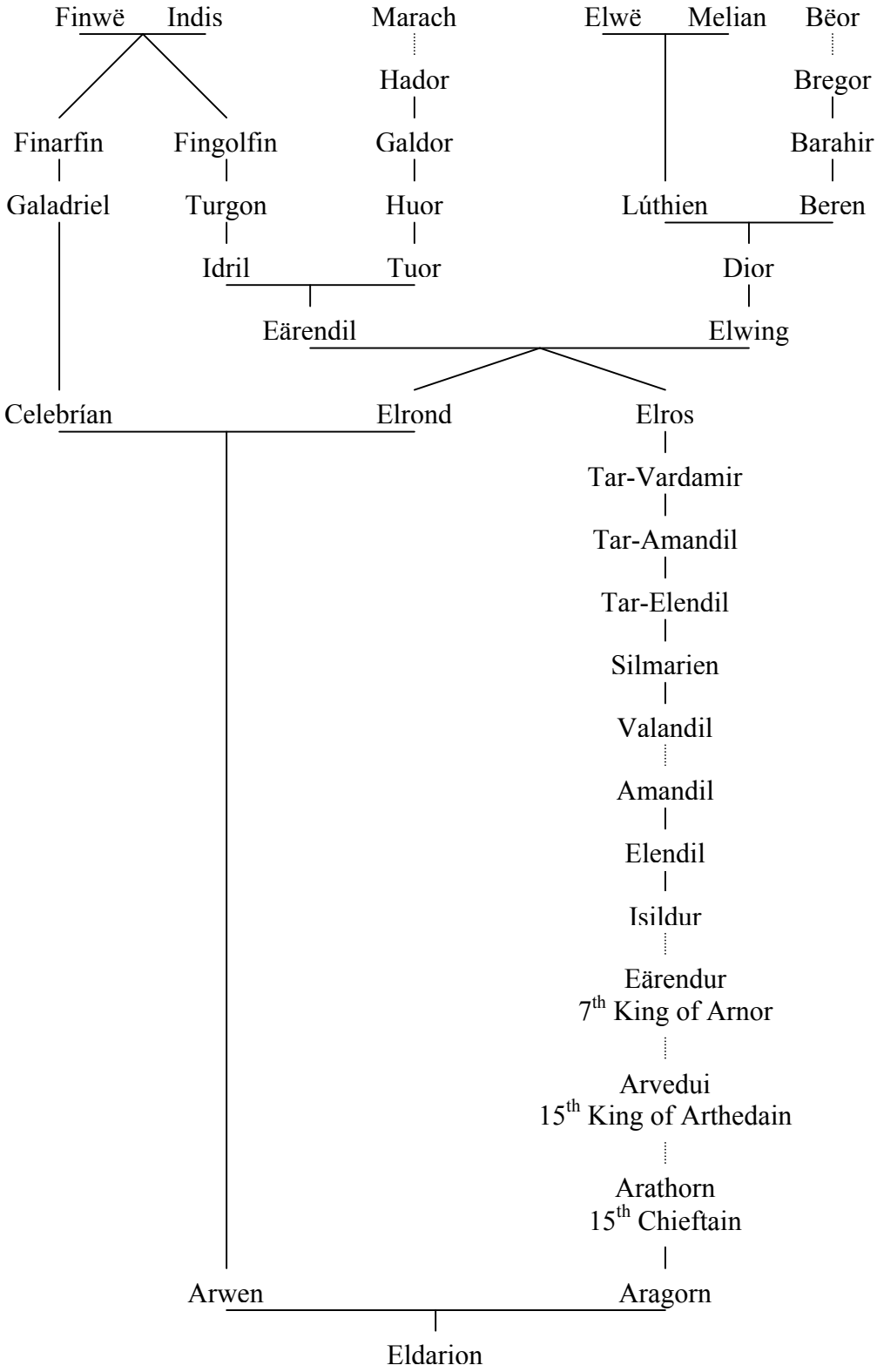
Strider's Tale

A closer look at Tolkien's works reveals a rich history going back to the very creation of the World. The later ages, called the Ages of the Sun, bear witness to the awakening of Men. Tolkien started creating his mythology in 1917 (Day, 1992, 11). Trotter first appeared in 1938, but did not become Aragorn until roughly a year later (I, 173; II, 8). To begin with, *LotR* was supposed to be a sequel to *The Hobbit*, and not to be much concerned with the greater themes found in *The Silmarillion*. The 'discovery' of the true nature of Bilbo's magic ring and the development of Trotter the Hobbit into Aragorn the Heir of Isildur connected *LotR* to his existing mythology, and led to the further development of this mythology. Tolkien's Legendarium includes all of Tolkien's writings about Middle-earth, but most importantly *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*. In presenting Aragorn's ancestry, I have chosen to use *S*, *UT*, and *LotR*. The drafts for *S*, *UT*, and the appendices in *LotR*, which are published in *The History of Middle-earth*, would certainly add to the understanding of the creation of Aragorn's ancestral history, but these draft versions are out of the scope of this thesis (an assumption partly based on David Bratman's excellent overview of Tolkien's Legendarium (Bratman, 2000)), as I am interested in the final version, or, as Tolkien never truly finished his niggling with his Legendarium, the last coherent version.

The development of Trotter the Hobbit into Strider the Man, and Aragorn, the Heir of Isildur, offers one explanation for the existence of this character. In addition, Tolkien composed an ancestral history for Aragorn, which in itself contains enough material for a whole series of novels. Aragorn's ancestry is traced back to the very first humans who travel into Beleriand, and the Elves who dwell there in the First Age of the Sun, more than 6,600 years before Aragorn's birth. One may even go further back, into the Ages of Stars, and the Elf Elwë, the Maia Melian, and their daughter, Lúthien. This adds another uncertain number of thousands of years.

I will now penetrate the labyrinth that is the history of Middle-earth, trace Aragorn's ancestry, and summarize the major events in the lives of his more prominent ancestors. This is how Tolkien offers a justification for the existence of Aragorn, and provides us with a better understanding of the novel *LotR*. My presentation of Aragorn's ancestry between Elros and Arathorn consists mainly of a summary of the important historical events leading up to what unfolds in *LotR*. In addition, *LotR* itself is presented (with focus on Aragorn). It is the purpose of this chapter to show how it all fits together, and has been created by Tolkien in response to Aragorn's enormous importance in *LotR*.

Aragorn's ancestry



The Age of Stars

Elwë, Lord of the Teleri, passes through the wood of Nan Elmoth on his way to visit Finwë, Lord of the Noldor. He hears the song of nightingales, and is enchanted by the voice of the Maia Melian. As King Thingol, he founds Doriath, where he rules the Sindar, a group of Teleri who do not leave Middle-earth with Elwë's brother Olwë. Melian gives birth to the fairest of all the Children of Ilúvatar, Lúthien (*S*, 55f). This union between Elf and Maia explains the magical aptitude of their daughter, and perhaps the power of Isildur's curse on the Oathbreakers.

Finwë's first wife, Míriel, gives him Fëanor, who forges the Silmarils. Míriel's spirit leaves her body, and she does not wish to be reborn. Finwë asks permission of the Valar to remarry, and this is granted. His second wife, Indis, gives birth to Fingolfin and Finarfin. Finwë is killed by Melkor, who steals the Silmarils (*S*, 60ff, 79). The wars and strife in connection with the Silmarils is similar to what later happens because of the Rings of Power, and except for the creation of them, the ancestors of Aragorn are instrumental in all that happens to the Silmarils.

The First Age of the Sun

When Men awake in the eastern regions of Middle-earth they turn towards the West, where the Sun sets. The mortals are as tall and as strong as the Elves, but the Elves have greater wisdom, skill, and beauty. Morgoth, who have been unsuccessful in winning over the Elves, finds Men more susceptible to his charms. Some Men do not fall under his spell, and some of these run from the Dark into the West. The people who choose not to follow Morgoth are called the Edain (*S*, 103f).

Finrod Felagund, son of Finarfin and lord of Nargothrond, journeys east of his lands when he meets Balan and the people in his following. Balan swears loyalty to Felagund, and is later renamed Bëor, which means vassal. Marach leads another people of the Edain into the West, and settles in lands adjacent to the dwellings of Bëor's people. The Edain move ever west, but King Thingol will not allow Men to enter Doriath. Melian prophesy that a man of Bëor's house shall come anyway, for his doom will be greater than her power. The spies and emissaries of Morgoth walk around in Beleriand, planting seeds of discontentment among the Edain. Many of the Edain move south and east, away from the Elves (*S*, 140ff). Bëor and Marach are the human ancestors of Aragorn. Since Bëor meets Finrod about three hundred years after the awakening of Men and Bëor achieves the age of ninety-three, there can only have been a few generations before Bëor.

Six generations after Bëor and Marach, Morgoth sends forth great rivers of flame that run down from Thangorodrim, and pour over the plain, and the Mountains of Iron belch deadly poisonous gases. Then comes Glaurung, father of Dragons, and in his train are Balrogs, and behind them vast armies of Orcs. They assault the fortresses of the Noldor, and slay all they encounter. King Finrod Felagund is cut off from his people and would have been slain or taken, but Barahir of Bëor's house comes up with the bravest of his men and rescues Felagund, who swears an oath of abiding friendship, promising to aid Barahir and all his kin, and in token of his vow he gives to Barahir his ring (*S*, 150ff). This ring becomes an heirloom and Aragorn inherits from his father. It may be constructed as a reason for the passing idea to give Aragorn the epithet 'Lord of the Ring(s)', but it is more likely that the reason is Isildur's scroll: "The Great Ring shall go now to be an heirloom of the North Kingdom; but records of it shall be left in Gondor, where also dwell the heirs of Elendil, lest a time come when the memory of these great matters shall grow dim" (LotR, 270).

When all seems lost, Fingolfin, the High King of the Noldor, rides alone to Angband's Gate, and challenges Morgoth to come forth to do single combat. Fingolfin wounds the Dark Lord many times before he is finally defeated. Barahir continues fighting Morgoth until few of his people remain. Barahir's wife gathers all the women and children that are left and they flee. Barahir stays and fights until only twelve men remain. Beren, his son, is one of them. They become outlaws, hunted like wild beasts, and they retreat to the barren highlands (*S*, 153ff). The Outlaws may be compared with the Rangers; only more hated (and even feared) by the Dark Lord.

Huor of Marach's house is only thirteen years old when, fighting Orcs, his company is separated from the rest of the army, and he and his brother are rescued by the Eagles, who take them to the hidden city of Gondolin. Huor and his brother, Húrin, desire to return to their own people and the Eagles carry them back, but they will not tell were they have been, since they promised Turgon, the son of Fingolfin, never to reveal what they had seen. Turgon sends ships to ask for the aid of the Valar, but the ones who return, report that Valinor cannot be found (*S*, 158f). This is, by Aragorn's ancestors, the first of many attempts to seek the help of the Valar.

Rumours of these things reach Morgoth, and he desires to learn more of Felagund and Turgon, for he fears what they might yet accomplish against him. Of Nargothrond, he knows the name, but neither its place nor its strength, and of Gondolin he knows nothing. Morgoth commands Sauron to find and destroy Barahir. Sauron is at this time already a mighty Sorcerer and the Commander of Morgoth's forces. With great cunning and wizardry, he captures one of Barahir's companions, and makes him reveal the location of Barahir's camp. The camp is attacked and everyone there is killed. Beren is away on an errand, and in a dream, he is warned, whereupon he hurries back. Beren buries

his father and swears an oath of vengeance. He pursues the Orcs, and comes upon their camp, where he slays their captain and takes back his father's ring. Beren then wanders the forsaken lands of his people, becomes the friend of birds and beasts, and kills all the servants of Morgoth that he encounters. He becomes so troublesome that an army of werewolves is sent against him under the command of Sauron (*S*, 160ff). Already at this stage, Beren is clearly a very similar hero to Aragorn, and the parallels between their lives are many.

Beren flees towards Doriath. Through untold dangers he finally passes over the borders of Thingol's kingdom, finds his way through Melian's magic defences, and comes upon Lúthien, as she dances through the forest. Lúthien has a similar effect on Beren as Melian had on Elwë at their first meeting. Lúthien, however, vanishes from Beren's sight, and he strays in the woods looking for her. He is struck dumb by the enchantment, and in autumn and winter, he sees her often in the distance, but when spring comes the spell of silence is broken, and he calls to her, crying 'Tinúviel', which means nightingale. She halts in wonder, and when Beren comes to her doom falls upon her, and she loves him. Lúthien comes to him often, and they go in secret through the woods together from spring to summer (*S*, 164ff). The love story of Beren and Lúthien foreshadows that of Aragorn and Arwen. The former is told in more detail, is more moving, because it has more tragedy, and, strangely enough, actually has a happy conclusion.

When Thingol hears of Beren and Lúthien he is filled with anger. Lúthien makes Thingol swear an oath to her that he will neither slay nor imprison Beren. Lúthien brings Beren before the throne of Thingol, and Beren claims the hand of Lúthien. Only the oath to his daughter restrains Thingol's wrath. The ring of Felagund, and the advice of Melian helps Beren win a little respect from Thingol. However, Thingol will not give Lúthien away unless Beren can deliver to him a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown. Thingol thinks to hold his oath, and still send Beren to his death. Beren is undaunted, and sets out to do as he is bid. Thingol swears that even if Beren succeeds he will not have Lúthien (*S*, 166ff). Some may think that Elrond is hard on Aragorn, but compared to Thingol, Elrond is no harder on Aragorn than any father is on any man that wishes to marry their daughter.

Beren journeys to Nargothrond. King Finrod Felagund informs Beren that he fears that Thingol's request will be the doom of the Noldor, but is bound by his oath, and will help Beren any way he can. Just as Felagund had feared, Celegorm and Curufin, sons of Fëanor, declare that they will oppose Beren, if he attempts to capture the Silmaril for himself or for any other than the sons of Fëanor. It is with Beren that Aragorn's ancestors gain the hate of Fëanor's sons. Felagund leaves his kingdom in the hands of his brother, and embarks on a quest together with Beren and twelve loyal kinsmen. With Felagund's magic, they disguise themselves as Orcs, but Sauron captures them

anyway. As none will tell who they are, or what their purpose is, Sauron throws them all in a dark pit, and lets a werewolf devour them one by one (*S*, 168ff).

Lúthien learns of Beren's plight and resolves to attempt to rescue him. She is betrayed and imprisoned. Using magic and a rope made from her own hair, she manages to escape. Leaving Doriath, she is caught by Huan, a great wolfhound given to Celegorm by Oromë. Celegorm and Curufin take Lúthien to Nargothrond. Believing that Beren and Felagund are prisoners beyond hope of aid, they purpose to keep Lúthien and force Thingol to give her to Celegorm, but Huan shrinks from his master, and for the love of Lúthien he leads her by secret ways out of Nargothrond, and they flee north together, Lúthien riding on Huan's back (*S*, 172ff). Lúthien is a lot more active than Arwen, and there is more of Lúthien than of Arwen in the movie version of Arwen, but this is perhaps justified, as the character of Arwen is supposed to be very much like Lúthien.

In the pits of Sauron, Beren and Felagund are now the only ones still alive, and when the werewolf comes for Beren, Felagund breaks his bonds and slays it with his hands and teeth. Felagund is mortally wounded, but in that hour Lúthien stands on the bridge that lead to Sauron's isle, singing a song that is heard by Beren, and he answers her. Lúthien then sings a song that makes the isle tremble. All that are sent to capture Lúthien are slain by Huan. Sauron takes the shape of a mighty werewolf and goes forth to do battle with Huan. Huan bests Sauron, who yields, but escapes in the form of a vampire. Lúthien rescues Beren (*S*, 174f). If Lúthien had not come to save Beren, the line of Bëor would have died with Beren.

Celegorm and Curufin are expelled from Nargothrond, and riding they come upon Beren and Lúthien. Celegorm attacks Beren, and Curufin swoops up Lúthien. Beren avoids Celegorm's attack and springs on Curufin. Both Curufin and Lúthien are cast to the ground, and Beren throttles Curufin. Celegorm tries to come to his brother's assistance, but is hindered by Huan. Lúthien forbids the slaying of Curufin. Beren lets him live, but strips him of his arms and takes his horse. Curufin takes Celegorm's bow and shoots an arrow at Lúthien. Huan catches the arrow between his teeth, and a second arrow is stopped by Beren's chest. Huan attacks the brothers, and they flee in fear. Beren has not yet retrieved a Silmaril, but the sons of Fëanor attack them anyway. This is the extent of their wickedness (*S*, 176ff).

Beren leaves Lúthien asleep, and sets out on his quest again. In his anguish, he sings a song that she hears, and she sets after him. Huan disguises himself as a werewolf and Lúthien takes the shape of a bat. They catch up with Beren, who once more tries to dissuade Lúthien from coming with him. Huan speaks to them, and convinces Beren that it will make no difference. Beren takes the guise of the werewolf and Lúthien again disguises herself as a bat. Huan does not go with them as they

journey to the Gate of Angband. Huan makes war upon the forces of darkness, trying to draw away attention from the questers. In this, Huan foreshadows the actions of Aragorn, Gandalf, and the armies that march up to the Black Gate. Morgoth fills a werewolf with his power, and sets him to guard the Gate of Angband against Huan. Carcharoth, the werewolf, denies Beren and Lúthien access to Angband. Lúthien casts of her disguise and puts a spell of sleep on Carcharoth. Lúthien then goes before Morgoth, and sings a song that blinds him, puts his court to sleep, and finally makes him pass out. Beren is awakened, and he cuts a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown. When they reach the Gate, they find Carcharoth awake and waiting. Beren tries to intimidate the werewolf with the Silmaril, but Carcharoth bites off his hand and swallows the gem. The Silmaril lights a fire in his belly, which drives him mad, but also makes him even more powerful. He runs away from Angband, and all life flees before him. Carcharoth is one of the most powerful evil beings in the history of Middle-earth, and he is created to destroy Beren. Augmented by the joint power of Morgoth and a Silmaril he is virtually unstoppable (*S*, 178ff).

The host of Morgoth awaken, and Beren and Lúthien are saved by the Eagles, who take them to the borders of Doriath. Fate drives Carcharoth towards Doriath, and Melian's magic cannot stop his assault. Beren and Lúthien come before the throne of Thingol, and Beren claims her hand. Thingol finally relents and gives them his blessing. Beren, Thingol, Huan, and the two great Elven heroes Mablung and Beleg set forth to hunt down Carcharoth. The werewolf attacks Thingol, but Beren gets in its way, and he is grievously wounded. Huan attacks and kills Carcharoth, but is mortally wounded. The Silmaril is retrieved and the quest is complete. Beren dies from his wounds, and the spirit of Lúthien flees her body. Lúthien enters the halls of Mandos, and she sings the most sorrowful song ever heard in the universe. Mandos is so moved that he summons Beren, and they meet again. Furthermore, Mandos seeks the counsel of Manwë, who allows Lúthien to return to Middle-earth as a mortal woman, and to take Beren with her (*S*, 182ff).

It is worth noting that the Valar did this only because of Lúthien's pain, and not for services rendered, as Beren and Lúthien virtually had no detrimental effect on Morgoth's plans, other than killing some of his servants. The theft of the Silmaril leads to much evil that can only really serve Morgoth. However, the Silmaril may be instrumental in Eärendil's successful journey to Valinor.

In the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, Dwarves, Elves, and Men fight side by side against Morgoth's might. The battle is won by Morgoth, partly a result of the betrayal of recently arrived Men out of the East, referred to as Easterlings. Huor is killed and Húrin is captured (*S*, 188ff).

This is the first time Morgoth succeeds in turning Men against the Elves. Húrin may be compared with Gollum. They are both captured and tortured, but cannot be controlled, and yet the

Dark Power perceives that it may gain something from their release. Húrin's actions lead to many evils, including the death of Thingol and the war between Dwarves and Elves, and later to the discovery of the hidden kingdom of Gondolin.

Dwarves in the service of Thingol desire the Silmaril. They slay him for it, but are hunted down and killed, and the Silmaril is retaken. Two of them escape, and to avenge their brethren a great host is sent forth against Doriath. Melian bids Mablung send word to Beren and Lúthien, and then she vanishes from Middle-earth. With the magical defences of Doriath gone, the Naugrim invade and are victorious. Many Elves and Dwarves are slain, and the sack of Doriath results in a deep mistrust between these races for Ages to come. The Silmaril is taken. Beren and Lúthien have a son, Dior, who, in spite of his parents' mortal status, is born an Elf. He is married to Nimloth, and they have two sons and a daughter, Elwing. Beren, Dior, and an army of Laiquendi, another people descending from the Teleri, waylay the Naugrim on their way home. Beren slays the Lord of the Naugrim, and takes the Silmaril. Dior goes to Doriath and starts rebuilding his kingdom. After the 'natural' deaths of Beren and Lúthien, Dior receives the Silmaril (*S*, 233ff).

The question of which race a child from a 'mixed' marriage should belong to is far from an easy one. It seems it is up to the Valar to decide, or alternatively the child may choose kindred. The reason it is complicated is simply because one race is mortal and the other one is immortal, and there really is no in-between.

Hearing of the renewal of Doriath and of the Silmaril, the seven sons of Fëanor gather again and claim the Silmaril, but when Dior returns no answer Celegorm stirs up his brothers to prepare an assault upon Doriath. Dior kills Celegorm and two more of Fëanor's sons, but Dior, his wife, and his sons are all put to death. Doriath is no more, but the Silmaril is nowhere to be found. Elwing escapes with the Silmaril to the mouths of the River Sirion by the sea (*S*, 236f). So far, although they mean well, the descendants of Bëor and Marach have only brought evil. Elwing should perhaps have left the Silmaril to the sons of Fëanor, but then she could not have given it to Eärendil.

In the winter of the year of the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, Rían, Huor's wife, gives birth to Tuor. When he is sixteen he is captured and enslaved by the Easterlings. He escapes after three years, and lives like an outlaw for four years. Tuor is another ancestor with many similarities to Aragorn. He journeys to the coastlands and comes to the deserted halls of Vinyamar beneath Mount Taras. He enters and finds the shield, hauberk, sword, and helm that Turgon left there by the command of Ulmo, the Lord of Waters, long before. A great storm comes out of the West, and Ulmo speaks to Tuor. He bids Tuor to seek out the hidden kingdom of Gondolin, and he gives Tuor a great cloak, to mantle him in shadow from the eyes of his enemies. Tuor finds an Elf, the sole

survivor of the crew of the last ship Turgon sent to seek for Valinor. Together, they journey to Gondolin. Before long, Tuor stands before Turgon son of Fingolfin, High King of the Noldor, and he speaks the words of Ulmo, warning Turgon that the doom of the Noldor is close, and bidding them to abandon Gondolin and leave Middle-earth. Turgon will not leave Gondolin, and becomes ever more anxious to keep his kingdom secure. He forbids all travel beyond Gondolin's borders and leaves the other Elven realms to fend for themselves (*S*, 238ff).

To care only about oneself is a sure way of getting into trouble in Tolkien's World. Few can get away with it, and the ones who do not get out of their way to help others will at least have to aid their fellow beings when asked. For example, in *LotR*, Tom Bombadil and the Ents are creatures who mind their own business, but have no evil in them. They will help, but only on their own terms, and for their own reasons. In contrast, there are also creatures in Middle-earth who are evil without any direct allegiance with the Dark Power. Ungoliant and her descendants, Caradhras, Old Man Willow, and the 'creature' in the water outside the Doors of Durin are examples of such beings.

Tuor remains in Gondolin, for it is by all accounts a wonderful place to be, and he falls in love with Turgon's daughter, Idril. Turgon remembers the words Huor spoke to him at the Battle of Unnumbered Tears. Huor had prophesied that hope for Men and Elves would come from a union between his house and Turgon's. Turgon puts his trust in the words of Huor, heeds not Ulmo's warning, and gives his daughter's hand to Tuor. Idril, fearing for her newborn, Eärendil, and the fate of her people, prepares a secret escape route. Turgon's sister's son, Maeglin, defies often Turgon's bidding, going beyond the borders of Gondolin, and is eventually captured by Orcs looking for a way into Gondolin. He is taken to Angband, purchases his life by revealing the secrets of Gondolin, and is promised the lordship of Gondolin and the possession of Idril. Maeglin returns to Gondolin, and awaits the onslaught of Morgoth's forces. When Eärendil is seven years old, a host of Dragons, Balrogs, Orcs, and Wolves beset Gondolin. Maeglin tries to steal away Idril and Eärendil, but Tuor foils his plan and casts him down into flames that consume him. Tuor and Idril then lead the people they can gather down the secret way, which Idril prepared. Along the way, they are ambushed by Orcs and a Balrog. Glorfindel fights the Balrog, and they fall into an abyss. The Eagles come to their aid, and all Orcs are killed. Idril and Tuor come eventually to dwell by the mouths of Sirion, joining the people of Elwing (*S*, 241ff).

It is Húrin's fault that the Orcs are so close to finding Gondolin, but it is Maeglin who tells Morgoth how to get in. Tuor can be compared to Thorongil (Aragorn in the service of Gondor) and Maeglin may be compared to Denethor. Maeglin sees Tuor as a rival, and rightly so. Maeglin's hate is easier to explain than Denethor's jealousy, with Tuor marrying 'his' girl, making it possible for

Tuor to claim the throne of Gondolin. Both Maeglin and and Denethor are consumed by flames, and their rivals take over the leadership of their respective peoples. Through many complex narrative turns, Tolkien has now made both the descendant of Bëor and Elwë and Melian and the descendant of Marach and Finwë and Indis flee to the mouths of Sirion, which allows for the meeting of Elwing and Eärendil, and the joining of their remarkable family histories.

Ulmo speaks to Manwë, asking him to save the remaining Elves from Morgoth's wrath, but Manwë is unmoved. As Tuor is getting old, the lure of the sea grows ever stronger. He therefore builds a ship, and with Idril, he sails into the West (*S*, 244f). It is unknown what happens to them. If they are received in Valinor, Tuor is the only Man who ever is. Of course, if rumours are true, they let in the occasional hobbit, and even dwarves under certain circumstances.

Eärendil is the lord of the people by the mouths of Sirion, and he takes Elwing as his wife. She gives birth to the twins Elrond and Elros. Eärendil is a great mariner. In his sea journeys, he is contantly searching for his parents and the land of Valinor. Círdan builds Eärendil a ship called Vingilot. Still, Eärendil cannot find his parents, or Valinor. While Eärendil is at sea, the remaining sons of Fëanor claim the Silmaril, but Elwing will not give it to them. Fëanor's sons attack, and annihilate the remnants of the people of Gondolin and Doriath. Círdan and Gil-galad hasten to their assistance, but they are too late. Elwing casts herself into the sea, but Ulmo transforms her into a great white bird, and she flies over the water seeking Eärendil. Elros and Elrond are taken captive. Elwing finds Vingilot, and falls exhausted on its decks. Seeing no hope left in the lands of Middle-earth, Eärendil seeks Valinor once more. With the Silmaril upon his brow, he finds the way, and he lands on the shores of the Undying Lands. Eärendil and Elwing bid their companions to stay in the boat, lest the wrath of the Valar should strike them down. Eärendil goes to seek for the Valar, while Elwing goes to speak with the Teleri. Eärendil pleads with the Valar, asking them to aid the peoples of Middle-earth, and save them from Morgoth. His request is granted, but his own fate is the matter of debate. It is decided that Eärendil and Elwing may not return to Middle-earth, but they may live as immortals in the Undying Lands. Both Eärendil and Elwing seem to have been Elves, although it is far from certain. Elwing chooses that she and Eärendil shall live as immortals in Valinor, and the Valar give their sons the choice of which race they wish to belong to (*S*, 246ff).

The story of Elwing and Eärendil is very romantic and rivals the story of Beren and Lúthien. In a way, Elwing and Eärendil are a much more interesting couple. Elwing and Eärendil are not related to each other, but they have similar ancestry, and their union results in the Star of High Hope, the destruction of Morgoth, the end of the wars of the Silmarils, and the creation of the Land of Gift. The higher purpose of their union is greater than any before or after.

Vingilot is taken to the uttermost rim of the world, and is lifted up into the oceans of heaven. Eärendil journeys ever beyond the confines of the world, returning to Elwing in Valinor in mornings and evenings. In Middle-earth a new star appears, and the two remaining sons of Fëanor see it and believe it to be the Silmaril that Elwing wore. The Valar prepare for battle, and the hosts of all the Elves in the West gather under their banners. The Teleri cannot be urged to fight, but they will allow the use of their ships to bring the hosts to Middle-earth. In the greatest battle of all ages, the assembled forces of the Valar and the Elves defeat the hosts of Morgoth, but they are driven back by the onslaught of the first winged dragons. In a counter attack, Eärendil in Vingilot swoops down from the skies, bringing with him all the great birds of heaven. Eärendil slays the mightiest of the dragons, and the Valar prevails. Morgoth flees, but is caught and chained (*S*, 250ff).

There is little to explain how the dragons fit into the creation of Arda. In "On Fairy-Stories", Tolkien says that as a child he "desired dragons with a profound desire" (Tolkien, 1931, 41). Tolkien just had to have dragons in his World. They do not seem to be Maiar, but they are very large, intelligent, and independent, which is strange if they are creations of Morgoth's, especially since he is not supposed to be able to create something with free will without Eru's consent. Eru must have approved of the Dragons. For some reason Tolkien never questioned the existence and nature of dragons, as he did with for example the Orcs.

The two remaining Silmarils are claimed by Fëanor's sons, but it has been decided that they shall pass into the West. Maedhros and Maglor will not accept this, and so they try to steal the jewels. They slay the guards and take the Silmarils, but they are detected, and yet allowed to escape. They both end unhappily, and the Silmarils are lost forever. Many Elves now pass into the West, but Círdan, Celeborn, Galadriel, Gil-galad, and the sons of Eärendil remain. Elrond chooses to be numbered among the Elves, while Elros chooses the fate of Men. The First Age of the Sun ends with Morgoth's capture and removal from the Circles of the World. The First Age is rather short, and lasts only about 600 years (*S*, 252ff).

The choices of the twins result in the splitting of the line into one Human line and one Elven line. It takes over 6,000 years before the lines meet again, with over forty generations in Elros line (the low figure is due to his descendants' unusual longevity), but only one generation in Elrond's line, since Arwen is Elrond's daughter.

The Second Age of The Sun

For the Edain that fought Morgoth, a new land is created between Valinor and Middle-earth. The Edain set sail, and following the Star of Eärendil they find an island, on which they establish a kingdom called Númenor. The people of this island is called the Dúnedain, or after the name of the kingdom, the Númenóreans. The Dúnedain are blessed with longer years than the other Edain, they know no sickness before old age, and they can choose to die before their bodies wither away. Elros becomes the first King of Númenor, and rules the island for over four hundred years. It becomes the custom of the Númenórean Kings to hand on the Sceptre before they die. The Dúnedain are not permitted to sail into the west, but they are allowed to sail to Middle-earth, and the Elves come out of the West to visit Númenor (*S*, 260ff).

Around the year 1200, Sauron takes the name of Annatar, Lord of Gifts, and goes among the Elves. Only Elrond and Gil-galad do no not admit him to their lands. In the 16th century, with the help of Sauron, the Noldor make Rings of Power. About 1590, Celebrimbor creates Vilya, Narya, and Nenya. Sauron secretely forges the One Ring to rule all the Rings of Power, and their power is bound up with it, to be subject wholly to it, and to last only as long as it too shall last. When Sauron wears the One Ring he perceives all things that are done by means of the lesser rings, and he may see and govern the very thoughts of those who wear them. With Barad-dûr completed, Sauron sets the One Ring upon his finger. From that moment the Elves are aware of him. They understand who he is and the power he has over them through the rings. The Elves take off their rings and hide them, and in 1693 Sauron declares war, demanding that the rings shall be delivered to him. Celebrimbor's rings are the most powerful of the rings, and these do not fall into Sauron's hands. Sauron invades Eriador, and Gil-galad sends Elrond to Eregion with an army. When Sauron destroys Eregion, Elrond retreats north to found Imladris. The west-gate of Khazad-dûm is closed. Sauron overruns Eriador. In 1700, Tar-Minastir sends a fleet, and Sauron is driven out of Eriador and defeated. The Númenóreans establish permanent settlements in Middle-earth (*S*, 287f; *LotR*, 1120).

Celebrimbor's rings are to Sauron what the Silmarils are to Morgoth. He wants the rings because they are too powerful to be left in the hands of the Elves. Envy, spite, and greed are as strong in Sauron as in his master, and he may not be as mighty, but he is certainly as cunning; if not more so. Sauron is more interested in controlling than destroying. Morgoth wants chaos, but Sauron wants order. One might say that Sauron's evil is more worldly than Morgoth's evil. Morgoth's chaos is threatening Arda, while Sauron's order is threatening Middle-earth.

As time passes, the Dúnedain begin to desire the immortality of the Elves, and they start questioning why they are not permitted to visit the Undying Lands. In the days of Tar-Atanamir (2029-2221), the first King to rule til his death, Manwë sends messengers to Númenor, telling them that it is not the Undying Lands that makes its people immortal; which seems pretty obvious, seeing as the Elves in Middle-earth are immortal too. However, they also tell the Dúnedain that they would have much shorter life spans in Valinor, as they would be like moths to a flame. The second statement could be true, but only as long as the Valar decides that this is the case, and as long as Eru allows them to make that decision. Further, the messengers explain that if the Dúnedain sail to Valinor, they will not be allowed to return to Númenor or Middle-earth. Finally, they warn the Dúnedain that the will of Eru may not be opposed (*S*, 264ff; *UT*, 285).

The lives of the Dúnedain grow ever shorter, and the people of Númenor become divided by the question of immortality. The larger group are called the King's Men, and they seek ways to escape their mortality. The smaller fraction is called the Elendili, the Elf-friends, for though they remain loyal to the house of Elros, they wish to keep the friendship of the Elves. The King's Men start to build great houses for their dead, while their wise labour to discover the secret of life, hoping to prolong the days of Men. They devise ways of preserving the dead, and they fill all the land with silent tombs, in which the thought of death is enshrined in the darkness. The living turn to pleasure and revelry, desiring ever more goods and riches. The Númenóreans build large settlements upon the western shores of Middle-earth, for they desire now wealth and dominion in Middle-earth, since the West is denied. The King's Men sail mostly south, while the Elendili, the Faithful, go north, where they establish Pelargir, and help Gil-galad against Sauron. The friendship with Gil-galad goes all the way back to Elros, and his parents (*S*, 266f).

In these days, Númenor might be described as decadent Rome with Egyptian traits. In Middle-earth, the people they colonize receive them as gods, and soon the kings take names that sound like the names of Pharaohs, and start to think of themselves as gods. Tolkien's portrayal of Númenor can be seen as a criticism of imperialism.

Having captured many of the Rings of Power, Sauron distributes them among the Dwarves and Men in Middle-earth. The foundation of each of the Seven Hoards of the Dwarf-kings of old is said to be a golden ring, but the Dwarves do not to fall completely under Sauron, and so he makes war upon them. Their hoards are plundered, and the Seven Rings are destroyed or recovered by Sauron. Men are more easily swayed by Sauron, and the nine men to whom he gives Rings of Power become his most feared servants, the Ringwraiths. Gil-galad, aided by the Faithful, still maintains

his power, and Sauron dares not pass the Mountains of Ered Luin, nor to assail the Havens. Most of the rest of Middle-earth live in fear under the oppression of either Sauron or Númenor (*S*, 289).

Sauron hates the Númenóreans because of the deeds of their ancestors, their ancient alliance with the Elves, and their allegiance to the Valar. Three great Númenórean lords in Middle-earth are seduced and given Rings of Power. Sauron uses the Ringwraiths to attack the Númenórean colonies. Still, the Númenóreans estrange themselves from the Elves, and reject the Valar. In 2899, the nineteenth ruler ascends the throne in the name of Adunakhûr, Lord of the West (title of the Valar), and he forbids the use of Elven tongues. Giving himself a title that belongs to Manwë, and that may only be used for the other Valar that dwell in Valinor, he sends a clear signal to the World that he is no less than a god, and he would, if it pleased him, go to Valinor and sit in the high seat of Manwë himself. Naturally, The Faithful are terribly distressed by all this, but they hardly have time to think about what the Valar might do to them, as they are busy enough keeping clear of the King's Men, who start to persecute them. Later Kings enforce the prohibition in all of Númenor, and punish those who use Elven languages and consort with Elves. The Faithful are forced to leave their dwellings in the western parts of Númenor, and to settle on the eastern coast, around the city of Rómenna, from where many leave for Gil-galad's kingdom. The Lords of Andúnië (a western part of Númenor) secretly support the Faithful. These lords are of the line of Elros, and highly regarded as councillors of the King. The son of a daughter of a Lord of Andúnië takes the title of Tar-Palantir, and does his best to amend the ways of the Númenóreans. As he does not have a son, his daughter, Míriel becomes Queen, but the son of his brother, Pharazôn, forces her to marry him, and he seizes the Sceptre, taking the title of Ar-Pharazôn in 3255 (*S*, 267ff; *LotR*, 1120).

Sauron takes the title of King of Men, and purposes to drive the Númenóreans into the sea, and even to destroy Númenor. Ar-Pharazôn, in his pride, thinks that he will defeat Sauron, proclaim himself King of Men, and make Sauron his vassal and servant. He builds a great armada and lands at Umbar in 3261. For seven days he journeys inland without any opposition. He sends forth heralds, commanding Sauron to come before him and to swear him fealty. The might of Ar-Pharazôn is such that Sauron knows he cannot win with raw strength. Sauron therefore humbles himself, and all he says seems fair and wise. Ar-Pharazôn does not feel that he can fully trust Sauron, and therefore takes him prisoner, and transports him to Númenor. Sauron's unbending will and cunning transforms him from a prisoner to the chief councillor of the King within three years. Sauron says that the Undying lands are rich indeed, but beyond them lies the Ancient Darkness, out of which the world was made. To those who serve the Lord of Darkness, new lands will be given, and there is no end to the power of those who serve him. To the King alone, Sauron tells that Eru is

but a phantom, and the Valar are the disobedient servants of the Lord of Darkness, who he names Melkor. The king turns to worship the Dark. It may sound incredible that Ar-Pharazôn should be so easily fooled by Sauron, but in these days he could look as fair as an Elf, and his charms were many times more powerful than the voice of Saruman, who fools everyone but Gandalf; and even Gandalf is fooled for a while (*S*, 270ff; *LotR*, 1120).

At this time, Amandil of Andúnië, councillor of the king, is dismissed, and moves his people to Rómenna. Among these are his son, Elendil, and his grandsons, Isildur and Anárion. When Sauron urges the King to cut down Nimloth, the White Tree of Númenor, Ar-Pharazôn hesitates. Tar-Palantir had prophesied that when the tree dies, the line of the Kings would be broken. Isildur will not wait for the King to make up his mind. At night, he sneaks in and steals a fruit from the tree. Isildur receives many wounds escaping, but is miraculously cured when the first leaf opens on the descendant of Nimloth. Ar-Pharazôn cuts down Nimloth, builds a temple to honour Melkor, and lights the first fire in that temple with Nimloth's wood. Many things are consumed by the greedy fire of Melkor's temple. Even Men are sacrificed. Many of the Faithful perish this way (*S*, 272ff).

As Ar-Pharazôn is getting old, the fear of death comes over him, and Sauron urges him to attack Valinor, saying that in the Undying Lands the King would live forever. Amandil hears of Sauron's plans, and sails into the West to plead with the Valar. Amandil passes out of history, but his son assembles the last of the Faithful and waits for a sign from the Valar. The climate changes, the skies darken, and the seas become dangerous. Violent winds and storms with thunder and hail plague the island. Lightning strikes slay people, and they become afraid of going outside. The dome of the Temple of Darkness is struck, but Sauron is unharmed by the lightning strikes. People think him a god, and they work harder on building fleets to assail Valinor. The violent weather is the Valar's last attempt to warn against attacking Valinor, but is seen as an attack on Númenor. Since attack is the best defence, Ar-Pharazôn launches his fleets in 3319, and they have to row, as no wind will carry them into the West. The Valar let the fleets find Valinor, and Ar-Pharazôn claims the Undying Lands. Ilúvatar then opens a great chasm in the ocean between Númenor and Valinor, and into this chasm the fleets are sucked. The Númenóreans that have landed are buried by an earthquake. The Undying Lands are removed from the Circles of the World, and Númenor is swallowed by the seas. Middle-earth is re-fashioned, and the World is made round. The seas rise and refashion the coastlands and earthquakes alter the topography. The Valar in Valinor take forever a more passive role, never again taking direct action in Arda (*S*, 274ff, *LotR*, 1121).

As the fleet leave Valinor, Elendil is already on his ship, and a small fleet of Faithful are waiting off the eastern coast of Númenor at the time of the cataclysm. Borne by a great wind they

are hurled into the East, and by great waves they are cast upon the shores of Middle-earth. Sauron is not destroyed, but his body is, and he looses forever the ability to create new fair shapes. He is frightened by the wrath of Ilúvatar, and flees back to Mordor. Elendil passes up the River Lhûn, and east of Ered Luin he establishes his realm, Arnor, and his people dwell in many places in Eriador about the courses of the Lhûn and the Baranduin, but his chief city is Annúminas beside Lake Nenuial. Arnor is called the Northern Kingdom (*S*, 276ff, 290f).

Isildur and Anárion bring their ships up the Great River, pass Pelargir, and establish a kingdom in those lands. The chief city of this southern realm is Osgiliath, through the midst of which the Great River flows. They build Minas Ithil, the Tower of the Rising Moon, east of the river, and Minas Anor, the Tower of the Setting Sun, west of the river. Isildur rules Minas Ithil, and in Minas Anor, Anárion is King, Together they control the realm of Gondor. Elendil is set up as the High King of both realms. The White Tree is planted in Minas Ithil, since it is Isildur who saved it from destruction, but the Palantíri, given to Amandil by the Elves, are divided. Elendil takes three, placing one in Annúminas, one in Emyn Beraid and one in Amon Sûl. His sons take one each to their cities, and place the remaining two in Osgiliath and in Orthanc, a great indestructible tower on the northeastern border of their realm (*S*, 292, *UT*, 535f).

The Palantíri are mostly used to communicate with other stones. The stone in Osgiliath, for example, is used to keep in contact with the stone in Amon Sûl, and the Northern kingdom of Arnor. It takes great power to change the direction in which a stone gazes, and yet more strength to look at other things than a kindred stone. Perhaps the most likely explanation is simply that Tolkien had not previously thought of them at all. Tolkien needed a way for Elendil to keep in touch with his sons and to spy on Sauron, and he therefore invented the Palantíri.

Sauron is outraged by the escape of Elendil, and the survival of the Dúnedain. In 3429, Sauron attacks Gondor, takes Minas Ithil, and destroys the White Tree. Isildur escapes, and taking with him a seedling of the Tree, he sails down the River and goes north to Arnor. Anárion holds Osgiliath against the Enemy, and drives him back to the mountains. Elendil seeks the aid of Gil-galad, and together with Isildur and a great host of Men and Elves he goes via Imladris into the East, gathering more troops as they march. In 3434, Sauron is defeated on the plains northeast of Mordor. Then Gil-galad and Elendil pass into Mordor and lay siege to Barad-dûr for seven years. Anárion is slain in one of many battles. Finally, Sauron himself comes forth to do combat, he slays both Elendil and Gil-galad, and armies flee before him, but just as Sauron feels sure of victory, Isildur finds the broken sword of his father and cuts the One Ring from his hand. Sauron's terrible material being is bound up with the One Ring, and without it he dissolves, and his spirit flees. Barad-dûr is ruined,

and Sauron's armies are routed. The year 3441 marks the end of the Second Age. It seems like Sauron is defeated, and he is for a while, but the One Ring is not destroyed, and Sauron slowly regains his strength, and bides his time (*S*, 291ff; *LotR*, 1121).

The Third Age of the Sun

Isildur takes the One Ring, for he cannot make himself destroy it in the fire of Orodruin, where it was forged. Elrond and Círdan urge him to destroy it, but he will not hear of it. He goes to Minas Anor, and plants there the seedling of the White Tree, and leaving Gondor in the hands of Meneldil, son of Anárion, he travels north by land to take up the Sceptre of his father and become the High King of Gondor and Arnor. The Dúnedain set a guard upon the land of Mordor. Isildur is ambushed by Orcs from the Misty Mountains, and fleeing he puts on the One Ring, which makes him invisible, but the Orcs hunt him by scent and tracks. As Isildur crosses the Anduin, the ring slips off his finger, and he is pierced by arrows. His body cannot be found, and the Elendilmir is lost. The Elendilmir is the chief symbol of the Northern Kingdom. It is a jewel that is borne on the brow instead of a crown (perhaps in remembrance of Eärendil). Only three of his people escape the Orcs. Among these is Isildur's esquire, who is sent away before the Orcs attack in order to save the shards of Narsil, Elendil's sword. Narsil is carried to Imladris, where Isildur's wife and his youngest and only surviving son dwell. Elrond foretells that Narsil shall not be reforged until Sauron returns, and the One Ring is found. Elrond becomes like a father to all the heirs of Isildur, and most especially to Aragorn, who loses his real father when he is only two years old (*S*, 294ff; *LotR*, 65f; *UT*, 352ff).

In Eriador, Imladris is the chief dwelling of the High Elves, but at the Grey Havens of Lindon a remnant of Gil-galad's people abides. The Teleri Círdan is lord of the Havens. After the fall of Sauron, the Three Rings of Elves are put to use. Elrond, Eärendil's son, has the one called Vilya, the Noldor Galadriel has Nenya, and Círdan has Narya. Galadriel creates the magical realm of Lothlórien, which she rules with her husband, Celeborn of Doriath. Their daughter, Celebrían, marries Elrond, and she bears him two sons, Elladan and Elrohir, and a daughter, Arwen Undómiel. In Greenwood, the Sindar Thranduil, father of Legolas, rules the Silvan Elves (*S*, 298f).

In Imladris, a new Elendilmir is fashioned for Valandil, Isildur's son. Valandil rules from Annúminas, but his people are too few to maintain and control the realm, and therefore it starts to fall apart. In 861, Eärendur's sons divide the realm into three parts: Arthedain, Rhudaur, and Cardolan. In Arthedain, the line of Isildur is maintained and endures, but the line soon perishes in Cardolan and Rhudaur. There is often strife between the kingdoms, which hastens the waning of the

Dúnedain. Rhudaur and Cardolan both desire to possess Amon Sûl (Weathertop), which stands on the border between those realms. The Tower of Amon Sûl contains the chief Palantír of the North, whilst the other two are in the keeping of Arthedain (*LotR*, 1076f; *UT*, 259).

A thousand years into the Third Age, a dark power rises in Dol Guldur, in the southern parts of Greenwood, and evil spreads through the forest. Greenwood is renamed Mirkwood. The Istari land at the Grey Havens, and Círdan gives Mithrandir the ring Narya. Narya has until then been little used, and Círdan finds hope in giving it to Mithrandir, the one of the Istari who cares most for the Children of Ilúvatar, i.e. Elves and Men (*S*, 299).

During the reign of Hyarmendacil, Gondor reaches the summit of its power (about 1050), but his son, Atanatar, loves ease and does nothing to maintain the power that he has inherited, and his two sons are of like temper. The watch upon Mordor is neglected. In 1248, Rómendacil defeats the Easterlings, who have long plagued Gondor. He builds the pillars of the Argonath, and strengthens the bond between Gondor and the Northmen, the people in the lands north of Gondor. Rómendacil sends his son Valacar as an ambassador to the Northmen in order to make himself acquainted with their language, customs, and policies (*LotR*, 1082f).

About 1300, the chief of the Ringwraiths establishes the realm of Angmar northeast of the Northern kingdoms. It is the hope of Sauron to destroy the Dúnedain in the north, and perhaps retrieve the One Ring. King Argeleb of Arthedain, the only living heir of Isildur, claims the lordship of Arnor. Cardolan accepts, but Rhudaur refuses, and in 1356, they slay King Argeleb. Rhudaur join forces with Angmar, and in 1409 they attack Amon Sûl. Another king of Arthedain is slain, and Amon Sûl is burnt to the ground, but the Palantír is saved and taken to Fornost. Cardolan is ravaged, but Arthedain is saved by the aid of Círdan (*LotR*, 1077).

Valacar marries the daughter of the King of Rhovanion, and this union leads to a rebellion in Gondor. It is feared that the blood of the Dúnedain has been too diluted, and the son of Valacar is not accepted as the heir of Gondor. When Eldacar succeeds his father in 1432, he is assailed by rebels, and takes refuge in Osgiliath. The rebels burn Osgiliath, and its Palantír is lost in the Anduin. Eldacar flees to Rhovanion, and Castamir, the younger brother of Rómendacil, seizes power. Castamir proves a cruel king, and he captures and kills Eldacar's son. In 1447, Eldacar having assembled a great following, attacks Minas Anor, and slays Castamir. The rebels retreat to Pelargir, gather support, and establish themselves in Umbar. Their descendants prove to be one of Gondor's most powerful adversaries all through the Third Age (*LotR*, 1083f).

In 1636, the Great Plague devastates Gondor and the Northern kingdoms. Cardolan is completely emptied of its people, and evil spirits out of Angmar and Rhudaur enter into the deserted mounds on the Barrow-downs. The Barrow-wights are evil spirits that are conjured up by the Witch-king. The King of Gondor and his children die from the plague. The forts on the borders of Mordor are deserted, and Minas Ithil is abandoned. Tarondor moves the King's house permanently to Minas Anor. Osgiliath begins to fall into ruin. Stirred up by the emissaries of Sauron, the Wainriders make a sudden assault upon Gondor, and King Narmacil II is slain in 1856 (*S*, 296; *LotR*, 1078ff).

In the reign of Araphant in the North and of Ondoher in the South, the two kingdoms resume communications. In 1940, Arvedui, Araphant's son, marries Fíriel, daughter of Ondoher. The kingdoms are not able to send help to each other, but they suspect that they are under attack by a common enemy, as the attacks seem to be synchronized. For example, Angmar renew its attacks upon Arthedain at the same time as the Wainriders reappear in great numbers. In 1944, King Ondoher and both his sons fall in battle north of the Morannon, and the enemy pours into Ithilien. Eärnil, Captain of the Southern Army, wins a great victory in South Ithilien and destroys the army of Harad. Hastening north, he gathers the retreating Northern Army and drives the Wainriders out of Ithilien, and into the Dead Marshes. Malbeth the Seer foretells that Arvedui will be the last of the Kings in Arthedain, and that he will either become the King of Gondor and Arnor, or else many lives shall pass before the kingdoms are united. On the death of Ondoher and his sons, Arvedui claims the crown of Gondor, as the direct descendant of Isildur, and as the husband of Fíriel, the only surviving child of Ondoher. The claim is rejected. The Dúnedain in Gondor wants Eärnil to be their king, and since Arvedui has neither the power nor the will to oppose the choice of the Dúnedain of Gondor, Eärnil becomes their king (*LotR*, 1086f).

In 1973, Eärnil sends his son Eärnur north with a fleet to help Arvedui against Angmar, but when Eärnur reaches the havens of Lindon, the Witch-king has already captured Fornost and conquered Arthedain. King Arvedui is driven to seek the help of the Lossoth, the Snowmen of Forochel. Círdan sends a ship to rescue Arvedui. Before embarking on the ship, Arvedui gives the Lossoth the ring of Barahir, and as Felagund, he promises help to the one that holds that ring. The ship founders and the King and two of the Palantíri are lost. The last Palantír in the North is guarded by the Elves in the Tower of Emyn Beraid. Círdan and Eärnil march north to challenge the Witch-king of Angmar. The forces of Angmar are beaten, but Eärnur is nearly killed by the Witch-king, and is saved only by the intervention of Glorfindel. The Witch-king flees, but Glorfindel advises Eärnur not to pursue him. Glorfindel utters the prophecy that no man shall kill the Chief of the Ringwraiths. This is probably not the Glorfindel who helps Tuor and Idril escape Gondolin, for

he falls into a chasm fighting a Balrog; very much like Gandalf. His body is retrieved by the Eagles, but unless the Valar sent him back this is a different Glorfindel. (*LotR*, 1078f, 1087f)

The son of Arvedui is kept safe, and does not attempt to re-establish Arthedain. His son is raised in Imladris, and so are all the sons of the line of Isildur thereafter. The Dúnedain leader is called their Chieftain, and they become a nomadic people, roaming the lands, fending off evil, and keeping the Shire and other unsuspecting lands safe. The Ranger's fate is analogous to that of Barahir and his Outlaws. The ring of Barahir is bought from the Lossoth, and it is kept safe in Imladris, along with the shards of Narsil, the Star of Elendil (the new version of the Elendilmir), and the Sceptre of Annúminas (the silver rod of the Lords of Andúnië) (*LotR*, 1080).

In the days of Eärnil, the Ringwraiths attack Gondor, and in 2002 they take Minas Ithil, and capture its Palantír. Minas Ithil is renamed Minas Morgul, the Tower of Sorcery. Osgiliath becomes a place of ruin and a city of ghosts. Minas Anor endures, and is renamed Minas Tirith, the Tower of Guard, protecting the West from war and destruction. In 2050, Eärnur, the last King of Gondor, rides alone to the gates of Minas Morgul to meet the challenge of the Witch-king, but he is betrayed by the Ringwraiths, taken alive into the city, and never seen again. As no heir can be found, the Stewards of the house of Mardil rule Minas Tirith. The Stewards rule Gondor for almost a thousand years. It is no wonder that some of them may feel that they are entitled to the throne (*S*, 297).

Mithrandir suspects the dark power in Mirkwood to be Sauron, and he goes to Dol Guldur in 2063, but Sauron flees before he gets there. In 2460, Sauron returns to Dol Guldur. The White Council, consisting chiefly of Elrond, Galadriel, Círdan, Mithrandir, and Curunir, is formed. Galadriel wants Mithrandir to lead them, but he steps down in favour of Curunir (*S*, 300).

In 2475, Orcs cross Ithilien and take Osgiliath. The Orcs are pushed back, but Osgiliath is ruined and its great stone-bridge is broken. In 2510, the Balchoth, swarm over the Anduin, and Orcs from the Misty Mountains attack from the opposite direction. Out of the North comes help beyond hope: The Rohirrim led by Eorl the Young sweep away the enemy, and pursue the Balchoth over the fields of Calenardhon. The Steward of Gondor gives the land of Calenardhon to the Rohirrim, and they swear an oath of allegiance to Gondor. In 2758, three great fleets come up from Umbar and Harad, and assail Gondor with great force. At the same time the Rohirrim are attacked from the West and the East, and their land is overrun. The severe winter helps the enemy, and the Rohirrim almost perish, but when spring breaks, aid comes from Gondor, having fought off the Corsairs and the Haradrim in the south. Gondor repels all the enemies in the north, but the Rohirrim are sorely hurt, and so Gondor welcome Saruman (Curunir), giving him the keys to Orthanc, and hoping that he may be able to help the Rohirrim defend their lands. Saruman thinks Orthanc contains a Palantír,

and it is well situated as a base from where he can search for the One Ring. For a long time, Gondor and Rohan have not had the resources to maintain Isengard, but Saruman makes good use of its defences, making it stronger, and filling it with troops (*LotR*, 1090f; *UT*, 481ff).

In 2850, Mithrandir goes again to Dol Guldur, he discovers that it is Sauron indeed, and escapes to warn the people of Middle-earth. He also finds the Dwarf-lord Thráin, from whom he learns that the last ring of the Dwarves has been captured, and he receives a map and a key. Mithrandir also learns that Sauron seeks for news of the One Ring, and of the Heirs of Isildur. The White Council is summoned and Mithrandir advises an assault on Dol Guldur, but Curunir insists on waiting. Elrond forebodes that the One Ring will be found, and that war will come. Mithrandir says that help often comes from the hands of the weak when the Wise falter. Curunir secretly intends to find the One Ring, destroy Sauron, and order the World to his liking (*S*, 300ff).

In 2852, the White Tree dies in Minas Tirith, but is left standing until the King returns. Saruman gathers a great host of spies, and many of these are birds, for Radagast lends him his aid, being told that this is but part of the watch upon the Enemy. Sauron grows stronger, and when the Council meet again (2941), Curunir assents to an attack on Dol Guldur, and Sauron retreats from Mirkwood. Bilbo finds the One Ring, and Smaug, the last of the flying fire-breathing dragons, is slain. In 2951, Sauron re-enters Mordor and rebuilds Barad-dûr. The Council meet for the last time, after which Curunir withdraws to Isengard, and those who wants his counsel must come to him (*S*, 302; *The Hobbit*, 79ff, 261f; *LotR*, 1125).

Aragorn is born in 2931. When Aragorn is two years old, his father, Arathorn, is slain by an Orc. Aragorn grows up in Rivendell (Imladris) under the name Estel, which means hope, or trust, or perhaps faith. His true name and lineage is revealed to him when he reaches the age of twenty. Elrond gives him the ring of Barahir and the shards of Narsil. Walking through the woods, singing the Lay of Lúthien, he catches sight of a fair maiden, and he calls to her, crying 'Tinúviel, Tinúviel!' The maiden turns to him and smiles. She asks who he is and why he calls her Tinúviel. He explains that for a moment he thought that she was Lúthien, and then he proudly declares whom he now knows himself to be. Arwen explains that he has not seen her before because she has been in Lothlórien with her mother's parents, Celeborn and Galadriel. When it finally dawns on Aragorn that she is an Elven maiden, he feels the importance of his person greatly diminished in comparison. Aragorn speaks to his mother, Gilraen, about the feelings that now stir inside him, but she tells him that Arwen Undómiel is too high for him, and at any rate, Elrond will not willingly have him marry Arwen. Elrond calls on Aragorn, and tells him that he shall have no wife, nor bind any woman to him in troth, until his time comes and he is found worthy. As for his daughter, he tells him that she

is indeed not for him, and makes it clear that he is opposed to such a union. Elrond knows that if Arwen does not leave Middle-earth with him, she will become a mortal, for that will be her time of choosing which kindred she wants to belong to. Elrond fears that he will have to leave soon, and if Arwen marries a mortal, she will not come with him (*LotR*, 1094ff).

Aragorn goes into the wild. In 2956, he befriends Gandalf, and learns much about Middle-earth and Sauron. Gandalf advises Aragorn on the ways he can learn more for himself, and where and how they may harm Sauron's plans. For nearly thirty years, he labours in the cause against Sauron, and he learns many things on his many journeys. Ecthelion II strengthens Gondor against the assault of Mordor, and encourages men of worth from all over to enter his service, and to those who prove trustworthy he gives rank and reward. A great captain he has in Thorongil (Aragorn), the Eagle of the Star. Thorongil is swift and keen-eyed and wears a silver star upon his cloak. He came to Ecthelion from Rohan, where he had served King Thengel. Ecthelion's son, Denethor II, is worried about the popularity Thorongil enjoys. He is envious of his feats and suspicious of his untold origin. Thorongil tells the Steward to trust rather Gandalf (Mithrandir) than Saruman. Denethor does not like Gandalf, for he believes that the Grey Pilgrim is plotting against the Stewards of Gondor, and just maybe this Thorongil has something to do with it. Thorongil gathers a small fleet, and attacks Umbar by night, burning a great many enemy warships. When they come back to Pelargir, he leaves the service of Gondor and travels into the East (*LotR*, 1092ff).

In 2980, Aragorn comes to Lothlórien, where Galadriel receives him gladly. He meets Arwen again, and she falls in love with him. On Midsummer's Eve, they are betrothed on the hilltop of Cerin Amroth. Elrond is not pleased, and when Aragorn comes to Rivendell, Elrond tells him that he shall not marry Arwen unless he becomes the King of both Gondor and Arnor. Denethor is relieved when Thorongil does not come back, and four years later (2984) his father dies, and Denethor becomes the last of the Ruling Stewards. Denethor's wife, Finduilas, dies young, but gives him two sons, Boromir and Faramir. After her death, Denethor becomes ever more grim and spends most of his time thinking about Mordor and Gondor's defences. Denethor craves for news of the Enemy, and so he looks in the Palantír of Minas Anor. It is possible that he started using the Palantír already in 2984. He sees many things, but is discovered by Sauron, who has the Palantír of Minas Ithil, and he comes under the influence of Sauron. Denethor's despair and pride grow under Sauron's influence, and he comes to believe that he alone stands between Sauron and the destruction of Middle-earth. Boromir is as proud as his father is, and takes pleasure only in combat and tales of war, while Faramir is the shrewder one, with a love of lore (*LotR*, 1092ff; *UT*, 526).

In 3001, Gandalf first suspects that Bilbo's ring is the One Ring. With the help of the Dúnedain of the North, the watch upon the Shire is doubled. Aragorn and Gandalf start the hunt for Gollum. In 3017, Gollum is caught by Aragorn in the Dead Marshes, and it takes fifty days to drag this captive to Thranduil in Mirkwood. Gandalf learns more about Sauron's ring from Isildur's scroll in Minas Tirith, and from Gollum (*S*, 303; *LotR*, 37ff, 59ff, 72, 269ff, 1127; *UT*, 444, 457).

Gandalf actually mentions Aragorn to Frodo when he tells him of Gollum. It is therefore somewhat strange that Frodo does not seem to remember this in Bree. Here are the words about Aragorn that Gandalf speaks to Frodo at Bag End:

> And my search would have been in vain, but for the help that I had from a friend: Aragorn, the greatest traveller and huntsman of this age of the world. Together we sought for Gollum down the whole length of Wilderland, without hope, and without success. But at last, when I had given up the chase and turned to other parts, Gollum was found. My friend returned out of great perils bringing the miserable creature with him.
>
> (*LotR*, 72)

In June 3018, Sauron attacks Osgiliath, and Gollum escapes. Sauron sends out the Ringwraiths to search for the One Ring. Gandalf seeks Saruman's counsel, but is imprisoned in Orthanc. In September, Gandalf escapes and goes to Edoras. The Ringwraiths learn from Saruman that Gandalf knows where the One Ring is, and they hunt for Gandalf in Rohan, but intercepting Saruman's spy in Edoras, Wormtongue, they learn of the Shire. Alternatively, Saruman tells them of the Shire, believing that the One Ring has left there, and being on its way to Rivendell. On their route towards the North, they encounter more of Saruman's spies, and one of them furnishes the Ringwraiths with a map of the Shire. They fight off the Dúnedain, and enter the Shire (*LotR*, 272ff, 1127; *UT*, 439ff).

Frodo sets off, and meets Tom Bombadil. On the 29th of September, while Gandalf looks for Frodo in the Shire, Frodo stays at the Inn in Bree, is spotted by the spy that gave the Ringwraiths the map of the Shire, and gets acquainted with Strider. Ringwraiths attack the Inn. Strider leads the hobbits to Weathertop off road. Gandalf rides the road, and comes to Weathertop before them, is attacked by Ringwraiths, and rides on to Rivendell. Three days later, the hobbits reach Weathertop, and the Ringwraiths attack them as well (*LotR*, 83ff, 134ff, 171ff, 192ff, 211f, 1128; *UT*, 450).

Gandalf reaches Rivendell. Glorfindel finds the hobbits, and they are again attacked by the Ringwraiths. Frodo escapes thanks to Elrond, Gandalf, and the river Bruinen. The Council of Elrond is held on the 25th of October. Aragorn's ancestry is revealed, and Boromir knows his rival.

The Fellowship of the Ring is formed, and Elendil's sword is reforged, and given the name Andúril, Flame of the West. They rest in Rivendell until December (*LotR*, 225ff, 263ff, 292ff, 1128).

They set out to cross the Misty Mountains on December 25th. The Company is defeated by Caradhras, and turns to the path through Moria. Gollum, who have been hindered by the closed Westgate, starts following them. On the 15th of January, Gandalf falls from the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, and Strider takes charge. The Company escapes Moria, and travels into Lórien. Galadriel gives Aragorn a sheath for Andúril and a green stone set in a brooch in the form of an eagle, and names him Elessar, the Elfstone of the house of Elendil. On February 16th, The Fellowship leaves Lothlórien by boat. Just a day later, Gandalf is brought to Lothlórien by Gwaihir. In Lórien, there is a scene with Aragorn on Cerin Amroth. Its importance will be revealed and discussed later (*LotR*, 296ff, 326ff, 349ff, 394ff, 1129; *UT*, 447).

> 'Here is the heart of Elvendom on earth,' he said, 'and here my heart dwells ever, unless there be a light beyond the dark roads that we still must tread, you and I. Come with me!' And taking Frodo's hand in his, he left the hill of Cerin Amroth and came there never again as living man.
>
> (*LotR*, 371)

On the 25th of February, Saruman attacks Rohan. After passing the Argonath, they rest and discuss which way to go. Below Amon Hen, Boromir tries to take the One Ring from Frodo, who flies the Company, crosses the river, and heads into the East. Boromir tries to save Peregrin and Meriadoc from an onslaught by Orcs, but is slain by many arrows. Strider, Legolas, and Gimli send Boromir's body down the river, and decide to hunt for the Orcs that have taken Peregrin and Meriadoc captive (*LotR*, 413ff, 433ff, 1129).

On February 28th, Éomer pins down the Orcs just outside Fangorn Forest. Meriadoc and Peregrin escape into Fangorn, and the Rohirrim slays all the Orcs. The hobbits meet Treebeard and the Ents are awakened. The three hunters meet Éomer, Strider reveals himself and his purpose, whereupon Éomer lends them horses. They do not find the hobbits, but they meet Gandalf, and he reassures them that Peregrin and Meriadoc are safe. With Gandalf, they travel to Edoras. Gandalf bears a message for Aragorn from Galadriel (*LotR*, 450ff, 474ff, 506ff, 527ff, 1129).

Gandalf exposes Wormtongue and King Théoden is roused. Aragorn meets Éowyn. Saruman attacks Rohan again, and Théoden retreats to Helm's Deep. While the Rohirrim defend the Hornburg, the Ents destroy Isengard. Surviving the battle, the Rohirrim advance and come to

Isengard. Gandalf speaks with Saruman, and Wormtongue throws the Palantír of Orthanc out of a window. Peregrin looks in the Palantír, and is discovered by Sauron. Gandalf understands the link between Saruman and Mordor and is filled with fear, because he now suspects that Denethor may have been corrupted as well. Aragorn claims the Palantír, and Gandalf rides with Peregrin to Minas Tirith (*LotR*, 536ff, 555ff, 580ff, 601ff, 615ff).

The Rangers arrive on March 6th. Elrohir brings a message from Elrond, bidding Aragorn to remember the words of Malbeth the Seer, and the Paths of the Dead. The Dead Men of Dunharrow are the ghosts of a people that swore allegiance to Isildur upon the Stone of Erech, and who, when summoned to fulfil their oath, refused to fight against Sauron. Isildur curses them, and says that if Sauron is defeated, they will never rest until their oath is fulfilled. Strider broods over Elrond's and Galadriel's messages and the words of Malbeth the Seer (*LotR*, 804ff).

Aragorn looks in the Palantír, reveals himself to Sauron, and discovers that a great fleet from the South is threatening Minas Tirith. Aragorn takes the Paths of the Dead. Éowyn begs to be allowed to ride with him, but Aragorn says he cannot grant the request without leave of the King and Éomer. He calls on the Dead to follow him to the Stone of Erech, and there he declares that he is the Heir of Isildur, and that this is the time to fulfil their oath. On the 10th of March, the Dawnless Day, the Rohirrim start their ride to Gondor, the Morgul host begins its march towards Minas Tirith, and the Shadow Host crosses Ringló. Faramir reports of Frodo and his two companions. Three days later, Minas Tirith is under siege, and the Shadow Host captures the fleet in Pelargir. On March 15th, the Witch-king shatters the Gates of Minas Tirith, and the Rohirrim reach the Pelennor Fields. King Théoden is slain, and Éowyn and Meriadoc dispose of the Witch-king. Denethor burns himself alive. The captured fleet arrive, and Aragorn unfurls his standard. Sauron's troops are caught between two forces, and are defeated (*LotR*, 733f, 811ff, 834ff, 853ff, 873ff, 1130).

Strider enters Minas Tirith. He heals Éowyn, Faramir, Meriadoc, and many more. Faramir is ready to deliver Gondor to its King, but Aragorn will not be crowned until the war is over, and decides that Gandalf will rule them all for now. As a last effort to draw away attention from Frodo, the Host of the West marches away to challenge Sauron. On the 25th of March, the Host of the West stands in front of the gates of Mordor, and Gandalf rejects Sauron's Messenger's offer of peace. The forces of Mordor fall on them. Just as defeat is imminent, the Eagles come, and then Gollum and the One Ring falls into the fires of Orodruin, and Sauron is utterly destroyed. His armies falter, and defeat turns to victory. Barad-dûr crumbles, and Sauron's spirit is blown away by the wind (*LotR*, 895ff, 917ff, 982ff, 1130f).

The Fourth Age of the Sun

On May 1st 3019, Aragorn is crowned in Gondor, and takes the name of Elessar Telcontar. Gandalf finds a sapling of the White Tree, and King Elessar replants it in Minas Tirith, which is then anew named Minas Anor. At Midsummer, King Elessar takes the hand of Arwen Undómiel, and they are wed in the city of the Kings. Together they re-establish the kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor. In a secret steel closet in Orthanc, the original Elendilmir is found. Saruman must have found it, while searching for the One Ring. At Annúminas, the King builds a house to dwell in when he goes to Arnor, and the Shire is made a Free Land under the Northern Sceptre. Peregrin and Samwise are made Counsellors of Arnor. Gandalf, Elrond, Galadriel, Bilbo, and Frodo leave Middle-earth in 3021, and so the Third Age ends with the passing of the Elven Rings of Power over the sea (*LotR*, 1004ff, 1067f, 1080, 1099, 1132f; *UT*, 358f).

As a Númenórean king of old, King Elessar chooses to leave this world before old age takes him. Nothing could have prepared Arwen Undómiel, and she is overcome with grief. Arwen pleads with him no to go yet. Aragorn says that maybe she can go to the Havens and sail into the West. Maybe the Powers of the Valar will allow her to find the Undying Lands, but Arwen understands that this is no longer an option for her. She will taste the bitterness of the mortality that she now must face, without knowing what lies beyond death. Aragorn tries to comfort her with hopes of life after death, but Arwen's heart is broken, and she will not be comforted. Aragorn dies on the 1st of March in the year 120 of the Fourth Age, 210 years old. Arwen leaves the kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor to her son, Eldarion, and goes to dwell in Lórien, but the Elves are gone, and she lays herself to rest upon Cerin Amroth (*LotR*, 1099f, 1134).

This is not a happy ending, but maybe this is not the end for Aragorn and Arwen. The scene with Aragorn on Cerin Amroth seems to leave the possibility that they meet there after their deaths (see quote on page 48). It is possible that they, like Beren and Lúthien, live in Middle-earth in secret for another lifetime.

> And it was night again; and Sam looked on the grey sea and saw a shadow on the waters that was lost in the West. And he stood a while hearing the sigh and murmur of the waves on the shores of Middle-earth, and the sound of it remained in his heart for ever, though he never spoke of it. And Merry and Pippin stood silent beside him.
>
> (IV, 110)

Aragorn's Tale

This chapter contains further discussion of the material already presented. Some new material will be introduced from various sources, but previous chapters may be consulted for reference throughout this chapter. I will refer to Aragorn and other characters according to the same principal as earlier (see page 3).

First, I will contemplate the manuscripts, trying to determine to what degree the character of Aragorn influences the development of the narrative through successive drafts. The published novel, *LotR*, is treated as the final version, and is therefore of paramount importance to the discussion. Second, I will question Aragorn's integration into Tolkien's World, and the fact that Tolkien adjusted the history of Middle-earth to give Aragorn's ancestors a central role.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is whether the Heir of Isildur is indispensable not only to Tolkien, his mythology, and the novel itself, but also to the reader. To answer this question one might ask people what they would think of the novel with Aragorn removed, or reduced to just one of the adventurers in the Fellowship of the Ring. The truth is that there would have to exist a copy of *LotR* without Aragorn in it to really find out what it would be like without him. All that can be said with certainty is that any attempt to just cut him out would lead to more questions than answers. The real question here is perhaps what the novel is essentially about; a question that leads us to an investigation of the major themes of the novel.

I will define the major themes of the novel, and determine whether Aragorn helps to shape and sustain these themes mythologically, philosophically, ideologically, and technically; i.e. through representation of archetypes and images in the myths that inspired Tolkien; by being connected to questions about existentialism and essentialism; via representing a moral ideal; and by being important as a narrative device.

The question one should have in mind is: What is this novel really about? Is it about the One Ring? It is definitely about the war against Sauron and the quest to destroy his ring. Reading the manuscripts it is clear that Tolkien started out with the vision of this major theme, but the character of Aragorn grew into something larger than just a Ranger out of the North. Tolkien's subsequent creation of Aragorn's ancestry, so tightly interwoven with the history of Middle-earth, puts things in a different light, and it may be justly said that the novel is really all about Aragorn, as the Heir of Isildur, and as the descendant of Elwë and Melian, Bëor, Marach, Finwë and Indis, and countless others of Sauron's enemies.

The Manuscripts

When Trotter first emerged, Tolkien did not know that this Hobbit Ranger would play a major part in his novel, develop into something quite different, and inspire him to write a serious tale of epic proportions, rather than a comical sequel to the *Hobbit*. In addition, when Trotter had grown into the Heir of Isildur, Tolkien reworked his Legendarium, his comprehensive mythology of Middle-earth, to include a long and complicated ancestral history for this once-upon-a-time hobbit.

Trotter the Hobbit lived through several revisions, got as far as Moria in draft form, and even further in outlines. While Trotter was still a hobbit, Tolkien gradually moved away from the style of the *Hobbit* towards the style in *LotR*, with its darker themes, more formal language, and more esoteric subject. On Weathertop, Trotter speaks of Gilgalad, Valandil (Elendil), and Tinúviel. The world that Aragorn fits into is in the making. Interestingly, the idea that the Rangers are exiled Númenóreans exists before Trotter becomes one of them. Elendil is established as the leader of the first generation of exiled Númenóreans. The nature of the One Ring is determined, and the plot becomes more complicated. Trotter has been captured and tortured by Sauron, which gives a horrid explanation for his comical wooden shoes/feet. As a key character, Trotter is too similar to the other hobbits to make him indispensable. Tolkien tried to establish Trotter's identity, and after many attempts to keep Trotter a hobbit, Tolkien finally decided to throw away the wooden shoes, and find some boots for the feet of Trotter the Dúnedain. His real name becomes Aragorn, and to begin with he is just one of the Rangers, but Tolkien soon decided that he is a descendant of Elendil.

So far, the writings of Tolkien have shaped Trotter, but this is a turning point. From now on, Trotter will affect the plot actively, and subsequent changes in his nature will have profound implications for the whole novel. As St. Clair says: "The effects of the change from hobbit to the Heir of Isildur is major in the creation of themes and in the opportunities for future action" (St. Clair, 1995, "Tolkien as Reviser", 146). Back at Bree, the first effect that Trotter's human shape has is to make him less trustworthy, more strange, and more menacing. Paradoxically, when his new status as the Heir of Isildur, Elendil's son, is revealed, Frodo trusts him without reservation, and even wants to give him the One Ring. Trotter will not take it. This act is the first and the most important step towards the idealistic man that Aragorn is in *LotR*. The revisions of the rhyme 'All that is gold does not glitter (see page 11) show how Aragorn's character is improved by the rejection of images of power in favour of hope.

Trotter is now someone whom the Black Riders fear. Elrond tells us of the foundation of Osgiliath, Minas Anor, and Minas Ithil. Trotter is said to be the rightful ruler of Minas Ithil (later

Minas Anor). Trotter's ancestors have been driven out by a rebellion instigated by Sauron. Trotter shows himself to be a proud and vengeful king. Tolkien quickly softens him, but an arrogant streak will reappear later. With the death of Isildur, the pressure is relieved, and the tension between Boromir and Aragorn lessens. Aragorn tells Boromir that he has been in Minas Tirith, Osgiliath, and even Minas Morgol, and beyond. Again, Tolkien builds up the tension between these two protagonists. Another change in Aragorn's temperament can be seen in his reaction when he hears of Gollum's escape. In *LotR*, Aragorn is somewhere between very angry and annoyed, while in the drafts, Tolkien experiments with a larger range of emotions.

Trotter's newfound importance leads to a questioning of Gandalf's leadership. In early drafts, the party is lead by Gandalf and Trotter jointly, while in *LotR*, Gandalf is the leader by default until he falls fighting the Balrog. Strider then reluctantly steps into his shoes. In *LotR*, Aragorn does not reclaim his status as leader until Helm's Deep.

Trotter does not know of the Elves in Lothlórien, and knows nothing of Galadriel. Arwen probably does not yet exist. Galadriel is, however, instrumental in associating Aragorn with the Elves, preparing for his Elven ancestry and the union with Arwen; but while she facilitates the romance between Aragorn and Arwen in *LotR*, she promotes the romance of Aragorn and Éowyn in the manuscripts. Her message foretells the union of Aragorn and Éowyn.

The most critical point in the development of *LotR* is when the Fellowship breaks up on Amon Hen. The main difference between the earliest version and *LotR* is that Boromir does not die in the draft, and that Legolas and Gimli leave Amon Hen for home, while Aragorn and Boromir travel to Minas Tirith. When the Lord of Minas Tirith is slain, the people elect Aragorn instead of Boromir, and this leads to Boromir's betrayal, and subsequent death at the hands of Aragorn. This chain of events is not consistent with the air of *LotR*. It is also too simple, and Tolkien disliked predictable plots. Again, he did not like this arrogant streak in Aragorn, and decided that Boromir must die on Amon Hen. On the other extreme, Tolkien had an idea that Trotter forsakes his ambition and goes searching for the hobbits alone, while Boromir, Gimli, and Legolas go to Minas Tirith. The invention of Denethor and Faramir makes a far more intricate plot, and Boromir's death makes the breaking up of the Fellowship more dramatic and realistic. Trotter remains a Ranger, and goes hunting for the hobbits with Gimli and Legolas.

In the earliest outlines, Rohan was thought to be on Sauron's side, but when it comes to the meeting of Trotter and Éomer this has changed. The main difference between the manuscripts and *LotR* concerning the Eorlingas is that Eorl the Young swears allegiance to Isildur rather than to the Steward of Gondor. This has two consequences in the drafts. Firstly, Aragorn has Rohan's loyalty,

which means that he has its army under his command, making the match of Aragorn and Éowyn a natural one. Secondly, it means that the time-span between the defeat of Sauron and the present is 2,000 years less than in *LotR*. Tolkien's decision to expand the history of Middle-earth with another 2,000 years gives legitimacy to the position of the Dúnedain in Middle-earth.

Tolkien's decision not to let Éowyn marry Aragorn, because he is too old, lordly and grim, has contributed to making him just that. In *LotR*, Aragorn marries Arwen, who is a couple of thousand years old. Some readers may feel that it is a pity that Aragorn does not marry Éowyn instead. He may be older than her, but she would not have to miss him for very long after his death. Arwen, on the other hand, could logically live on forever, if only she could endure life without her late husband. There are no facts establishing how long Arwen's supposed mortal existence is assumed to last. At any rate, a marriage with Éowyn would have avoided the unfortunate ending of the love story between Aragorn and Arwen, and Aragorn would not have had to turn out to be a daft prick*. Most readers do perhaps not read the appendices in *LotR*, and will therefore not experience this side of Aragorn.

The Palantír constitutes the next big surprise. Its function and importance becomes clear through the spawning of many new ideas. To begin with, it is not directly associated with Aragorn, but he is entrusted to take it for safekeeping. The Palantíri are explained as stones possibly forged by Fëanor, and as being part of the heirlooms of the Heirs of Elendil. Aragorn is associated with both the main artefact, the One Ring, and the Palantíri. Both the One Ring and the Palantíri are important plot devices, and they add to the indispensability of Aragorn.

The Palantír, and Aragorn's right to it, leads to the odd chain of events that ends in Aragorn's glorious return to Minas Tirith and the battle on the Pelennor Fields. Aragorn looks in the Palantír, shows himself to Sauron, and discovers the Black Fleet and the Stone at Erech. The Stone at Erech is both a Palantír and a large rock of some kind. From this developed the remarkable legend of the Oathbreakers, who broke an oath they had sworn to Isildur at the Stone of Erech. Isildur must have had some magic, because his curse still holds the Oathbreakers in thrall after more than 3,000 years. Aragorn's remarkable healing powers may be a remnant of this magical aptitude, which may be explained by their distant ancestor Melian. It is typical, however, that Aragorn would use his powers for healing, rather than for curses. Aragorn is a wiser man than his forefather Isildur, and he is probably more like Elendil, and even more comparable to Beren and Eärendil.

* The most accurate descriptive term for Aragorn's level of stupidity.

When Denethor will not yield to Aragorn until the war is over, Aragorn declares that he will not be taken, but he will take. Again, Tolkien kills off Aragorn's opponent, making it easier for him to be the humble and benevolent would-be ruler of Minas Tirith. A Palantír is used to bring about Denethor's suicide, and perhaps to help explain Boromir's lust for the One Ring. Even if Boromir himself did not use the Palantír, he is under the influence of his father, who has virtually lived under the shadow of Sauron for perhaps over thirty years.

With the death of Denethor, Tolkien finally establishes Aragorn's unwavering personality, which makes him so unrealistically idealistic and all around good. He is in this final form a romantic archetype, with traits common with both Norse quest heroes and King Arthur. Yet, he is more alive than his type. Tolkien is successful in breathing life into Aragorn, a person with nothing but excellent qualities*, and manages to make him believable. This is quite a feat.

The passing notion to call Aragorn 'The Lord of the Ring(s)' has several possible explanations. The ring of Barahir, Isildur's scroll (the One Ring), and Nenya (Galadriel's ring) are all possible explanations. Maybe one could even add Elrond's ring, Vilya, as a plausible explanation, although this is pure speculation. When questioning the indispensability of Aragorn, one cannot help but wonder if the title of the novel does not actually point to him, as well as to Sauron. It would be rather poetic. We would then have two Lords of the Rings. One who wants to use them, and one who wants to destroy them. It is a binary opposition that is as fundamental as Order and Chaos. It is ironic that Aragorn in this case stands for Chaos, while Sauron stands for Order.

* Disputable in the light of occurrence on his deathbed.

In *The Silmarillion*, Aragorn's most ancient ancestor is the Maia Melian, who seduces the Elf Elwë, and gives birth to Lúthien. Melian explains the magical aptitude of Aragorn and Isildur. Another ancient ancestor is Finwë, who through his two marriages gives rise to one line leading to Arwen, who marries Aragorn, and another that leads to Idril, who marries Tuor. Tuor is one of Aragorn's human ancestors, and his ancestry can be traced back to Marach. Bëor is Aragorn's other human forefather. Beren, of Bëor's house marries Lúthien, and their daughter, Dior, gives birth to Elwing, who marries Eärendil, the son of Idril. Eärendil and Elwing have two sons, Elrond and Elros. The Elf Elrond is the father of Arwen, and the Man Elros is the first King of Númenor. Elendil is the seventh generation in the line of Elros, but as Tar-Elendil has two daughters and a son, Silmarien's son does not become king, and consequently her great grandson, Elendil, is not the King of Númenor. The line that leads on through Isildur and the generations of the exiled Dúnedain in the North is straight from father to son for over 3,000 years, and therefore Aragorn's claim as the Heir of Isildur is very solid.

Besides constructing a family tree for Aragorn, Tolkien created many legends featuring especially prominent ancestors, and a complete historical record concerning his numerous human ancestors. Some of them are mere footnotes, and perhaps only mentioned once or twice, but they are all part of the history of Middle-earth, and they cannot readily be separated from it. Instead of discussing every historical event, I will distil these events into themes, which I will then discuss in relation to Aragorn, the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, and Tolkien's other works.

Christine Barkley has summarized how themes may perpetuate themselves through literature:

> Themes may be stated by the author, by characters, or implied by the action and resolution of the plot. Certainly the issues which the author is interested in will become known by the situations in which he or she placed the characters. Above the level of the tale itself, additional meaning can sometimes be inferred through the use of the title or from an introduction (often by the author himself) [, and s]ometimes themes become more evident when we see them repeated over and over in other works, or we get variations on a theme in other works.
>
> (Barkley, 1995, 257)

One important theme is death and immortality. Of *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien has said: "The real theme for me is about something much more permanent and difficult: Death and Immortality: the mystery of the love of the world in the hearts of a race 'doomed' to leave and seemingly lose it

[, and] the anguish in the hearts of a race 'doomed' not to leave it, until its whole evil-aroused story is complete" (Tolkien, 1956, 246). In the union between Elf and Man, Tolkien unites two races that are more dissimilar than any two people are in real life. It is an extreme situation, and it is further complicated by the fact that one race is immortal, while the other one is not. It is quite possible that it is simply the thought of renunciating immortality because of love that is so attractive. Throughout history, Man has made continued attempts to achieve immortality, and maybe the renunciation of immortality constitutes the most pious and compassionate act that Tolkien thought possible, had immortality really been attainable. Aragorn's death in the appendices is therefore critical to the story. As St. Clair has written: "Arwen comes to realize at last why Men have feared Death as the Gift of the One to Man, for she finds it bitter to part from Aragorn even though his life has been three times normal length. He must admonish her not to fail now when they have already successfully passed the tests of the Ring and of her renunciation of immortality" (St. Clair, 2002, 341). In the years after completing *LotR*, Tolkien continued to work on his Legendarium, and wrote some essays on the nature of the different fates of Elves and Men. Several of these essays are presented in *Morgoth's Ring*, *The Later Silmarillion Part One*, which is the tenth volume of *The History of Middle-earth* (henceforth referred to as *Morgoth's Ring*).

Tolkien writes about Finwë and Míriel, the nature of the fate of the Elves, the difference between the physical and the spiritual part of their being, the debate of the Valar concerning Finwë and Míriel, and the Statute of Finwë and Míriel. Furthermore, Tolkien writes of a debate between Finrod and Andreth, which compares the fates of Elves and Men. Evil, Melkor, the One, and what the Elves call 'Estel', a kind of hope or faith, is also discussed. As usual, there are multiple draft versions, and I will discuss relevant ideas, whether they are persistent or passing.

After giving birth to Fëanor, Míriel 'dies' in the sense that her spirit leaves her body. As Elves are supposed to be immortal, the Valar consult Eru, and he tells them that rebirth and resurrection are within their command. The most extraordinary thing about all this is that she does not wish to return to 'life' and a new body. She is the first Elf to experience a weariness that goes beyond the physical plane. Finwë, however, is not tired of life, and since the marriage bond between Elves is not broken by a physical death, Finwë wants his wife back, but as she will not return he will settle for the right to remarry. The major concern for the Valar in their decision to give Finwë permission to break the marriage bond to Míriel is how this will affect the fate of Arda. As their knowledge is limited by the vision they had before they entered the World, this is open for debate (*Morgoth's Ring*, 205ff).

Not even the Valar understand that nothing in Arda happens without Eru's knowledge and blessing. Even Melkor's rebellion is no more than an aspect of Eru's master plan. Fate is a major theme in Tolkien's writings. The question of free will versus predestination is as difficult for Tolkien as it has been for countless philosophers and religious thinkers throughout history.

The Valar's decision is known as the Statute of Finwë and Míriel, and in addition to giving Finwë permission to remarry, it forbids Míriel to ever take physical form again. When Finwë dies, he pleads with the Valar to let Míriel return to life, taking upon himself her doom, and although they yield and Míriel does return for a while to the land of the living, she does not tarry there, but goes back to the Valar and Finwë (*Morgoth's Ring*, 236ff, 248ff).

In the sense that both the physical form and the spiritual form of the Elves are part of Arda (and therefore inseparable), the difference between them is small. The spiritual element contains the blueprint for the physical structure. The Elves belong to Arda, and it belongs to them. When Arda ends, the Elves die. The fate of Men is different. The souls of Men are not of Arda, and when the physical body of Men dies they are not reborn, and therefore not thought of as immortal, but their souls wait for the great cataclysm at the end of Arda, when they will be brought back to fight Chaos, and see the creation of a new world, which perhaps will be theirs.

The debate between Finrod Felagund, grandson of Finwë, and Andreth, sister of Bregor (the father of Barahir), is truly fascinating. Here we have the Elven Lord who welcomes Men into Beleriand discussing the knowledge and theories of the Elves with a wise woman of Bëor's house, who has had a love affair with an Elf. Andreth is rather bitter, and cannot understand why her lover would leave her. Finrod explains that it is the custom of his people not to marry under the shadow of war, because of the danger of separation and grief that may afflict the family through violent death. Andreth has her own death to think about, and it seems to her a luxury not to enjoy the fruits of life while they are ripe. Further, they discuss the nature of death; whether it comes from Melkor or Eru, and what happens to the different races after physical death and the end of Arda. Evil is debated, and Finrod raises the question of Hope in healing, leading to a discussion of different kinds of hope and the very fabric of the World (*Morgoth's Ring*, 303ff).

It is impossible to separate the themes of death and immortality, the love of an immortal for a mortal, the renunciation of immortality, hope and hopelessness, fate/predestination, and the decision to die of free will. Hope and hopelessness is a pervasive theme in *LotR*, and in Tolkien's Legendarium. In the debate between Finrod and Andreth we find: "have Men no hope?' said Finrod. 'They have no certainty and no knowledge, only fears, or dreams in the dark,' answered

Andreth. 'But hope? Hope, that is another matter, of which even the Wise seldom speak" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 311). Further on in the debate, Finrod asks Andreth again if she has no hope:

> 'What is hope?' she said. 'An expectation of good, which though uncertain has some foundation in what is known? Then we have none.'
>
> 'That is one thing that Men call "hope",' said Finrod. '*Amdir* we call it, "looking up". But there is another which is founded deeper. *Estel* we call it, that is "trust". It is not defeated by the ways of the world, for it does not come from experience, but from our nature and first being. If we are indeed the *Eruhin,* the Children of the One, then He will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own, not by any Enemy, not even by ourselves. This is the last foundation of *Estel,* which we keep even when we contemplate the End: of all His designs the issue must be for His Children's joy. *Amdir you* have not, you say. Does no *Estel* at all abide?"
>
> 'Maybe,' she said. 'But no! Do you not perceive that it is part of our wound that *Estel* should falter and its foundations be shaken? Are we the Children of the One? Are we not cast off finally? Or were we ever so? Is not the Nameless the Lord of the World?'
>
> (*Morgoth's Ring*, 320)

Aragorn's mother says: "I gave Hope to the Dúnedain, I have kept no hope for myself" (*LotR*, 1099). She is referring to Aragorn, whose name is Estel until he reaches manhood, and he is closely associated with these ideas. Aragorn does not have much Amdir, earthly hopes, but he has Estel, a hope of something beyond Arda. Andreth speaks of another Hope that some Men that call themselves "The Ones of the Old Hope" believe in:

> 'they say that the One will himself enter into Arda, and heal Men and all the Marring from the beginning to the end. This they say also, or they feign, is a rumour that has come down through years uncounted, even from the days of our undoing.'
>
> 'They say, they feign?' said Finrod. 'Are you then not one of them?'
>
> 'How can I be, lord? All wisdom is against them. Who is the One, whom ye call Eru? If we put aside the Men who serve the Nameless, as do many in Middle-earth, still many Men perceive the world only as a war between Light and Dark equipotent. But you will say: nay, that is Manwë and Melkor; Eru is above them. Is then Eru only the greatest of the Valar, a great god among gods, as most Men will say, even among the Atani: a king who dwells far from his kingdom and leaves lesser princes to do here much as they will? Again you say: nay, Eru is One, alone without peer, and He made Eä, and is beyond it; and the Valar are greater than we, but yet no nearer to His majesty. Is this not so?'
>
> (Morgoth's Ring, 321)

The entering of Ilúvatar into Arda, both Finrod and Andreth find highly problematic and unlikely. This, however, would constitute a real hope for the Elves. The mention of the view of the world as a battle between Light and Dark is interesting. This battle is fundamental, and really the struggle between Chaos and Order. In Tolkien's World, this struggle is subordinate to Eru, but intrinsic to the structure of Arda. Melkor definitely stands for chaos and destruction, and the other Valar for creation and order. Sauron, however, wants order, and only destroys what he cannot rule. He is more complex than his Master is, and perhaps this is why he is considered evil.

According to Tolkien, the original plan for the unfallen is that they should reach a state in which they may acquire greater knowledge and peace of mind, being healed of all hurts both of mind and body, and at last surrender themselves: dying of free will, and even of desire. He calls this state 'Estel', making the Elvish term applicable to Men alone. He says that this is what Aragorn achieves, and the Ringbearers are given through their passage over the sea (*Morgoth's Ring*, 341f). It is ironic that the Hope of the Elves (Estel) should prove as vain for them as the earthly hopes of Men (Amdir) prove for their kind, and that Estel should save Mankind, but doom the Elves.

I could give countless examples of these themes from Tolkien's Works and the material presented in previous chapters. These themes touch all the characters throughout Tolkien's Legendarium, shaping their lives and the history of Middle-earth, Valinor, and Númenor. At the very core of these themes one finds Aragorn and his ancestors.

St. Clair proposes that the importance of difference and variety is a major theme (St. Clair, 1995, Tolkien as Reviser, 145). The idea is that all free creatures have to pull together to save Middle-earth. It is quite possible that Tolkien thought of this, but I would hesitate to call it a major theme.

Compassion is an important theme, and Gandalf and Aragorn may be seen as its most devout supporters. Aragorn is the least racist character in *LotR*. He even has compassion for the Orcs. However, in renunciating her immortality, Arwen performs the most compassionate act in *LotR*. She takes upon her the doom of Men, not fully aware of what that entails, and Aragorn thanks her by dying of free will, with a hope of something beyond. Arwen must feel cheated, but at the same time, she now shares his fate, and maybe they will be together in the next World.

"Compassion is Tolkien's addition to the heroic form, and I believe that he primarily achieves it through the creation of hobbits" (St. Clair, 1995, An Overview, 66f). St. Clair supports this statement with a quotation from one of Tolkien's letters: "A moral of the whole […] is the obvious one that without the high and noble the simple and vulgar is utterly mean; and without the simple and ordinary the noble and heroic is meaningless" (Tolkien, 1951, 160). I do not fully agree with this analysis. Frodo is not born a compassionate character, but it is through the wisdom he receives

from Gandalf, Aragorn, Elrond, Galadriel, and from his personal experience with Gollum and the One Ring that he achieves the insights that enables him to feel compassion even for Saruman.

The combination of hopelessness and compassion is united and distilled into another great theme: Courage. Most characters' courage is tested one way or another in *LotR*, and in his other works. Courage is shown on both sides in the battle for Middle-earth. There is not much difference between the courage shown by the Uruk-hai and the Rohirrim, but the courage shown by Finrod, Lúthien, Eärendil, Gandalf, Arwen, Faramir, and Aragorn is tempered by compassion. St. Clair (2002, 344) claims that Tolkien thought their courage more worthy because they believe their cause is hopeless. The characters express their lack of hope repeatedly. For example, Aragorn says "Do not look for mirth in the ending." to Merry before the ride with the grey Company (*LotR*, 804). In "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" Tolkien describes the two major themes in *Beowulf*. The first theme is the eternal battle against Chaos and Unreason. Men join with the gods, and their resistance is perfect because it lacks hope (Tolkien, 1936, 21). The second theme is "that man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die" (Ibid, 23).

The addition of courage to compassion and hopelessness leads us to another theme, which is perhaps the most elusive one. This theme may be termed right and wrong, or simply ethics. Tolkien does not preach, but invites the reader to question the moral choices of the creatures in Middle-earth. Tolkien's friend and colleague C.S. Lewis said, "If we insist on asking for the moral of the story, that is its moral: a recall from facile optimism and wailing pessimism alike, to that hard, yet not quite desperate, insight into Man's unchanging predicament by which heroic ages have lived. It is here that the Norse affinity is strongest: hammer-strokes but with compassion" (Lewis, 1968, 15).

Tolkien was fully aware of the myth's capacity for presenting complex models of reality. He "understood the power of the myth, not only as a way of explaining, or re-enacting the mythological past, but also as a literary form" (Arvidsson, 2001, 47), and as Eliade writes, "Myth, in itself, is not a guarantee of 'goodness' or morality. Its function is to reveal models and, in so doing, to give a meaning to the World and to human life. This is why its role in the constitution of man is immense" (Eliade, 1963, 144f). Tolkien wanted his readers to think about ethics, and if possible make them see that there is always more than one side to any story. St. Clair ascertains that "[t]he concept of fate in Northern works, the need for courage, a conception of evil, the tragedy of mortality, the doom of the immortals, and the paradox of defeat are themes common to Northern literature and *The Lord of the Rings*" (St. Clair, 1995, An Overview, 66).

It is not possible to discuss ethics in Tolkien's World without first working out some kind of definition of Evil. A definition of evil may be found in *Morgoth's Ring*: "Those who give evil

counsel, or speak against the Rulers (or if they dare, against the One), are evil, and should be shunned whether bodied or unbodied" (*Morgoth's Ring*, 224). Besides being circular, this seems to simply criminalize the evildoers, and does not connect Evil with something more esoteric. What is seen as evil is simply an act that somehow works against the established order. Cannot this order in itself be evil? I would argue that what people think of as evil are acts, and sometimes creatures, that violate what they believe is good. There is no evil without good. Evil can be seen as an instrument for Chaos, but it is not that simple in Tolkien's World. Tolkien realized that an ordered society is no guarantee for human rights. Sauron is a dictator. His Order is evil. Following strict binary thinking, Gandalf, Aragorn, and all who oppose Sauron then stand for Good and Chaos, but this is a mistake. Melkor is the only one who truly wants chaos. In the War of the Ring, we have two ideologies fighting each other. They may both term the other evil.

The real evil is to kill without necessity, and without compassion. It may be excused in despair, when courage (not to be confused with fear), makes people do the unthinkable, and slaughter their enemies in a struggle for survival. As in any war, evil deeds will be committed by both sides. There is no good in war, and this is the only concrete moral idea in Tolkien's Works.

Aragorn is a sophisticated blend of many Northern heroes and kings. His ancestry gives him a very peculiar background, associating him with the Elves and many heroes in the past. Tolkien has created his own tradition of famous heroes and lovers: Beren and Lúthien, Tuor and Idril, Elwing and Eärendil, Éowyn and Faramir, and Aragorn and Arwen. St. Clair writes: "Another difference between Aragorn and the traditional myth-hero is that the reader observes him in a variety of roles: as a potential villain in the inn at Bree, as follower in a Gandalf-led expedition, as band leader, as lover, and only finally as warrior and king. The difference between Aragorn and typical myth heroes becomes important in an attempt to understand the overall meaning of the work" (St. Clair, 2002, 291). I will not attempt to propound this meaning. I believe any meaning is personal, and continually evolving and changing. However, it is clear that in searching for any meaning in *LotR*, one has to deal with Aragorn. In other words, Aragorn is far too important to be ignored, and he cannot be removed from the novel without terminally damaging its whole structure.

Does this mean that the novel is about Aragorn? The novel is about Mankind's struggle to survive in a hostile world. Aragorn is the King of Men, and the greatest hero since Elendil. It is by Isildur's lack of vision that the One Ring is not destroyed. When the great fall, the little people take up the burden, and Frodo's quest is certainly important. I do not wish to rate the importance. The novel is about the One Ring, as a symbol of everything that Tolkien detested, and about Aragorn, as a symbol of everything that Tolkien loved.

The hypothesis that the Heir of Isildur is an indispensable character in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has been tested in various ways. Looking at the manuscripts, the importance of Aragorn in the creation of the novel has been evaluated. It was found that the character of Aragorn to a very high degree influences the development of the narrative through successive drafts. Trotter's change from Hobbit to the Heir of Isildur is extremely important for the creation of themes, has far-going effects on the development of plot, and turns a comic sequel to *The Hobbit* into a romantic epic with many levels.

Tolkien created a world with a history that explains Aragorn, and that reflects, clarifies, and expounds much that is implicit in *LotR*. The ancestral history consists of countless pages, and any presentation thereof is by necessity rather hefty. The bulk alone says something about how important Aragorn is to Tolkien, the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, and Middle-earth.

Aragorn is essential to many of the major themes of the novel. Suggested important themes are: death and immortality, the renunciation of immortality, hope and hopelessness, fate/predestination, the decision to die of free will, compassion, courage, and ethics. Aragorn and his ancestors help shape and sustain these themes mythologically, philosophically, ideologically, and technically.

Aragorn is a romantic archetype, with traits common with both Norse quest heroes and King Arthur. Tolkien is successful in making Aragorn come to life on the page. He does this through showing many different sides to Aragorn: potential villain in the inn at Bree, ranger, scholar, follower (in a Gandalf-led expedition), leader, lover, warrior, and king. Aragorn is a person almost without any unpleasant qualities, and yet he is believable.

Many themes are of philosophical and/or theological nature. In *LotR*, there is not much room for debating such things. There are questions, but not any real answers. *Morgoth's Ring* contains some essays that discuss these themes, especially death and immortality; the theme that Tolkien may have felt strongest about. The story of Aragorn and Arwen may be the most important tale in *LotR*, and it is therefore strange that it has been placed in the appendices. To gain a better understanding of *LotR*, it is necessary to read at least *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*.

Aragorn represents Tolkien's moral ideal. He is unprejudiced, honourable, compassionate, and courageous. He also represents the ideal Man inside Arda, in that he willingly lies down and dies when he feels it is his time. This ideal has to do with 'Estel', which means hope, trust, or faith. It is

the hope that there is healing beyond Arda. It is to put one's trust in Eru, even if there is no evidence within experience to support his existence. Ultimately, it is to have faith.

The two most important plot devices are the Rings, especially the One Ring, and the Palantíri. Both the Palantíri and the One Ring are bound up with Aragorn. Using a Palantír, Aragorn shows himself to Sauron, and wrests the Palantír from him, turning it to his own purpose. Sauron thinks that Aragorn has the One Ring, and will strive with him for the Power. The fact that Aragorn reveals himself is decisive both for the outcome of the battle on Pelennor Fields and the success of the Ring Quest. Sauron hastens his strokes, and loses the battle. Since he thinks Aragorn has the One Ring, he then waits for the army that marches against him to walk into his trap. While he waits, he turns his eye away from his lands, and fails to attend to the situation with the escaped Frodo.

Searching for meaning in *LotR*, one has to deal with Aragorn. He is far too important to be ignored, and he cannot be removed from the novel without terminally damaging its whole structure. The novel is about the One Ring, as a symbol of power, oppression, and injustice, and about Aragorn, the hero who, trusting in his own destiny, defends the weak, dethrones the power, marries his loved one, restores just government, and chooses his own hour of death.

Aragorn adds to the complexity and depth of the novel, blending the legendary with the realistic, and creating the genuine feel of the work. The character of Aragorn adds mystery, romance, compassion, and realism. In addition, he raises questions about death, immortality, fate, and ethics. The hypothesis cannot be falsified by examining the manuscripts, the novel itself, or other works by J.R.R Tolkien. The Heir of Isildur is of utmost importance, and his contribution to the overall effect of the work is immeasurable. As *The Lord of the Rings* would be a completely different novel without Strider/Aragorn, the Heir of Isildur is deemed indispensable.

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