

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING



J·R·R· TOLKIEN

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
PART ONE

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

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

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

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

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

publisher for its absence. For Tolkien had abandoned work on it after indexing volumes one and two, believing its size and therefore its cost to be ruinous.

Volume three, *The Return of the King*, finally appeared in England on 20 October 1955 and in the United States on 5 January 1956. With the appearance of the third volume, *The Lord of the Rings* was published in its entirety, and its first edition text remained virtually unchanged for a decade. Tolkien had made a few small corrections, but further errors entered *The Fellowship of the Ring* in its December 1954 second impression when the printer, having distributed the type after the first printing, reset the book without informing the author or publisher. These include misrepresentations of the original printed text – that is, words and phrases that read acceptably in context, but which depart from Tolkien’s wording as originally written and published.

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

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

Tolkien received his copies of the Ballantine edition in late January 1966, and in early February he recorded in his diary that he had ‘worked for some hours on the Appendices in Ballantine version & found more errors than I at first expected’. Soon after this he sent a small number of further

revisions to Ballantine for the appendices, including the now well-known addition of 'Estella Bolger' as wife of Meriadoc in the family trees in Appendix C. Most of these revisions, which entered variously in the third and fourth impressions (June and August 1966) of volume three, and which were not always inserted correctly (thereby causing further confusion in the text), somehow never made it into the main sequence of revision in the three-volume British hardcover edition, and for long remained anomalies. Tolkien once wrote, concerning the revising of *The Lord of the Rings*, that perhaps he had failed to keep his notes in order; this errant branch of revision seems likely to be an example of that disorder – either in his notes or in the ability of his publishers to follow them with utmost accuracy.

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

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

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

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

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

In the United States, the text of the Ballantine paperback has remained unchanged for more than three decades after Tolkien added his few revisions in 1966. The text in all of the Houghton Mifflin editions remained unchanged from 1967 until 1987, when Houghton Mifflin photo-offset the then current three-volume British hardcover edition in order to update the text used in their editions. In those new reprintings a number of further corrections (overseen by Christopher Tolkien) were added, and the errant Ballantine branch of revision (including the ‘Estella Bolger’ addition) was