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Genesis of *The Lord of the Rings*: A Study of Saga Development

**Additional Keywords**
Bonnie GoodKnight
GENESIS of The Lord of the Rings
A Study of Saga Development
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Probably no single work of pre-cataclysmic literature has aroused such attention and controversy as The Lord of the Rings. Ever since its discovery in the Ooldea pefra-tape over a century ago, it has been the occupation of a generation of scholars to elucidate this unprecedented piece of Death Age prose. Was it, as Tolkien the writer claims, an adaptation of an extinct work to present it in a convenient and attractive form for the audience of his day? Or is it, as Blint claimed, "made up and composed from his own head, with the claim of a source in the Red Book a fraud and deception executed for purpose or purposes we can but guess at."?

In the century since Blint, scholars have unearthed evidence unanimously supporting the view that Tolkien indeed was drawing on traditional sources, though ones but little-known to the general public. Khlafter first brought forth independent evidence of the existence of the Red Book, and proved conclusively that the tale was of Celtic origin. Then Varfilinyon, followed by Baqhat and Nyerk, produced documentation of a Frodo cult involving pilgrimages to the places of the saga. Finally, excavations at Alma-Ata produced a pefra-tape containing a discussion of a variant version of the legend associated with the name Wagner. Now, of those prominent in Tolkien study, only Cdurhebbleg still holds to Blint's position, basing his arguments on internal evidence and the inability of scholars to agree on the locale in which the story is supposed to be taking place.

Cdurhebbleg's second argument loses most of its strength when one considers that the difficulty is not in finding a location for Middle-earth, but rather in deciding which of the numerous suggested regions is the correct one. 

The text lacks not only the rest of Tolkien's discussion on his translation, but the one or more additional maps(s) and the index promised in the Foreword, as well as possible further appendices. Without doubt the complete text would have definitely shown us the correct locale of the story, and have provided more information on its origins; but the damaged condition of the outer windings of the tape place this text forever beyond our reach.

Cdurhebbleg's arguments from internal evidence I have already dealt with in my recent book, A Critical Flaw in Saga Research with Special Reference to The Iliad and "Vulgate" Tarzan, and to its pages I direct those wishing further discussion on this point. For the purpose of this paper, I will accept Tolkien's work as a sufficiently accurate representation of a pre-existing cycle of legends, and on that basis analyze the different strands which have been combined to form the work as we have it. It will be found that such a method produces surprisingly effective explanations for certain inconsistencies, puzzles, and awkward explanations which do not work. These are inexplicable if we accept the arguments of Poelashtar and Cdurhebbleg that the work is the labor of one man alone.

The basic, "core" plot of The Lord of the Rings is the journey of Frodo and Sam to Mordor, their disposal of the ring, and their return to the Shire and final departure over the Sea. This was probably originally a timeless folk tale of simple structure, but its popularity combined with geographical speculation, similarities to other tales, and rationalizing tendencies resulted in numerous additions, changes, and probably deletions. Since the plot was of the quest variety, and episodic in development, such modifications could be made with no great difficulty.

To determine what incidents belong to the original version of the story would be extremely difficult, if it were not for the fact that the story as we now have it is obviously a slightly rationalized account of the harrowing of Hell. Therefore, a comparison with other treatments of his same theme can aid us in determining what features are traditional.

In surviving literature of the pre-cataclysmic epochs the closest resemblances can be found in the Accadian epic, The Story of Gilgamesh. In this story, Gilgamesh, the King of Erech, seeks the immortality of the gods. Accepting the ancient tradition that Ut-napishtim and his wife, the survivors of a world deluge, had been given immortality and still dwelt alive and in health in a paradisal region at the end of the world, Gilgamesh decided to seek them out. His first adventure occurs when, in the middle of the night, he suddenly comes upon some young lions. He slays them with his bare hands. Then he comes to the great subterranean tunnel through which the sun himself passes each morning. It is guarded by a monstrous scorpion-man and his wife, but impressed by Gilgamesh's lofty lineage--his mother and paternal grandfather were both deities--they allow him to pass. Proceeding through the complete and perfect darkness of the tunnel, Gilgamesh finally emerges in a magic garden of mystical jewel-bearing trees presided over by a goddess known as Siduri the ale-wife. She advises him that Ut-napishtim dwells on the other side of a nearby water whose touch brings on death. She tells him that the only way across is by the boat by which Urshanabi, Ut-napishtim's servant daily crosses the water. And so, Gilgamesh lies in wait for Urshanabi, and forces him to ferry him across to his desired goal.

The parallels between the Gilgamesh story and the Frodo story are indeed striking. The night attack by wolves corresponds to the sudden appearance of the lions in the Gilgamesh quest, and is a story of northern locale and development. The trek through the mines of Moria is the Frodo quest version of the journey through the tunnel of the Sun. Then obviously the scorpion-man and his wife have their counterparts in the tentacled creature, or creatures, in the water outside the east gate. Frodo, unlike Gilgamesh, can claim no divine parentage, and barely escapes with his life instead of being freely allowed in. Equally obvious is the correspondence of jewelled forest to Lothlorien, and of Siduri to Galadriel, though the latter does not merely advise Frodo about how to proceed, but actually provides the boats herself.

"But is there not one major difference between the two accounts?" the reader may ask. "Gilgamesh comes upon a paradise where dwell immortal figures of legend. Frodo on the contrary enters the bleak desolate hills and morasses of...
was destroyed they slowly began to die away. The rationalizing tendency of the development of the story can be seen in the explanation that the mellyrn are not actually trees of the friendly land of Lothlorien, the real wood of Lothlorien was identified with the death water. Therefore Sauron, the name of its rulers, or perhaps like Pharaoh, Minos, and Caesar a dynastic title, was given in place of the original death god. This necessitated geographical locations for the other places in the quest. The tunnel was identified with the Mines of Moria, apparently a natural cave formation in the Misty Mountains, said in some legends to have been anciently inhabited by the Dwarves, and feared as being the abode of evil spirits. An otherwise unknown west gate to the caves was invented to correspond to the western gate of the tunnel, and immediately destroyed after the tunnel passed through, in order to explain that the mellyrn did not still exist. The detailed description of the locale of the gate points to a local tradition developed from the story. The mystic wood of the ale-wife was easily identified with the real wood of Lothlorien, the latter probably already the subject of legends concerning the mysterious Galadrim and their king Celeborn. That the golden trees of the legend were not actually found in the real Lothlorien is explained by the assumption that their continued growth depended on the power of the ring, and when the ring was destroyed they slowly began to die away. The rationalizing tendency of the development of the story can be seen in the explanation that the mellyrn are not actually trees of silver with flowers and leaves of gold, but rather trees with silvery-grey bark and blossoms of a golden color, and ordinary green leaves that are only unusual in that they turn a very vivid golden color in the fall, and do not drop off until spring.

Following the Gilgamesh quest, the Anduin which flowed by Lothlorien was identified with the death water. Therefore the land immediately across the river should be the beginning of the other world, the land of the dead. And so it seems to have been in one version of the story. From a high flet, Frodo looks out over the land and sees the glorious light that lies over Lothlorien up to the Great River, and the gloomy shadow beyond. This is apparently a doublet of the later incident when Frodo looks over Minas Tirith and Mordor from the top of Amon Hen. In reference to the land across the river, the elf Haldir says, "There lies the fastness of Southern Mirkwood. In the midst upon a stony height stands Dol Guldur, where long the hidden Enemy had his dwelling. We fear now it is inhabited again, and with power sevenfold. A black cloud lies often over it of late. In this high place you may see the two powers that are opposed one to another; and ever they strive now in thought, but whereas the light perceives the very heart of the darkness, its own secret has not yet been discovered. Not yet." It would seem that two traditions developed, one identifying the land of the dead with the tangled forest of Southern Mirkwood, another by placing it in Mordor. Later tellers recognized the two by explaining that Sauron of Mordor had conciled the two by explaining that Sauron of Mordor had conciled the two by explaining that Sauron of Mordor had conciled the two by explaining that Sauron of Mordor had conciled the two. The Dol Guldur version of the story apparently called the Dark Lord not Sauron, but rather the Necromancer.

Our story as given by Tolkien seems to follow the Dol Guldur version up to Frodo's arrival at the Great River. Then, after an interpolated journey down the river, the geographical scheme of the Mordor version is used. This results in some duplication. Besides the two versions of Frodo looking out over the lands, the passage of Cirith Ungol by Shelob, in both he is wrongly believed to be dead. In both the chief danger is from a horde of Orcs. And, as will be discussed later, I suspect that originally in the Moria trek it was Gollum, not F bombadil's carelessness that aroused the Orcs, which later became changed to a Shelob-in-the-Cirth Ungol passage. The differences between the two can be explained partly by natural variances arising as the two traditions developed independently, partly by the necessity of further distinguishing them when both were incorporated as separate parts of the same version of the story.

The original tale of Frodo's experiences in the land of the dead has probably been altered almost out of recognition. The appearance of the phantom bodies in the Dead Marshes is likely to be the remnant of an earlier account of Frodo encountering the Shades of the Dead. Presumably the encounter took place within the land of the dead, but the actual existence of marshes to the north of Mordor, and the tradition that will-o'-the-wisps marked the graves of long dead warriors, resulted in its relocation. The common taboo against eating or drinking in the land of the dead appears in vestigial form in Faramir's advice not to drink "of any stream that flows from Imlad Morgul, the Valley of the Living Death," in Frodo's remark on the drink of Orcs, that "such drink is not for us," and in the fact that Frodo and Sam depend for food on their Lembas rather than on what they can find in Mordor. However the supernatural nature of this taboo was forgotten after the real land of Mordor was substituted for the mythical Hades. Frodo does eat and drink in the Tower of Cirith Ungol, and twice Sam fills their bottles from water flowing within Mordor.

Having discussed the effects that rationalization and geographical identification has had on the Frodo tale, it is now the place to attempt a reconstruction of the original story, it can be fairly confidently said that this original contained, like its Gilgamesh parallel, an attack by wolves, an underground journey during which an attack by a many-legged monster occurred, and a period of rest in an enchanted forest, probably called Laurelindorenan originally. The final trek through the Land of the Dead, the casting of the ring into the fire, and the rescue by the eagles ought also to be considered original. The necessary characters in this story are Frodo, Sam, Gollum, Galadriel, the Enemy, and a Shelob-like monster.

Another seemingly primitive feature is the trio of wounds which lead Frodo to seek for rest over the Sea. As he says, "I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden." This would add the attack on Weathertop to our reconstruction, and the Black Riders as characters. The short stay at Rivendell may also be in the original. I strongly expect, however, that the early incidents in the Shire, the adventures in the Old Forest, the encounter with the Barrow-wight, and the night at Bree are all later additions. They have, except in one case, negligible influence on the later parts of the tale as we now have it, and probably arise originally from the attempt to link Frodo's quest with known localities. Tom Bombadil and Goldberry appear to have been fertility deities worshipped in Buckland and the Marish, and it was probably some devotee of these gods who composed the material behind Book One, Chapters VI-VIII. This will be dealt with more fully when I consider the parts played by Meriadoc and Peregrin.

Some version of the scouring of the Shire fits in my reconstruction. Very often in legends of the harrowing of Hell, the hero, on his return, must face an usurper who has taken over, or is attempting to take over, the place of the hero in his society. The hero either defeats the usurper, or finds himself unable to do so, but in either case soon goes into exile. Thus, in the story of Odysseus, the hero kills the...
usurping suitors, but then undergoes a ten-year exile to Illyria. 26 Heracles slays the usurping King Lycos who has slain his father-in-law Creon, but himself is driven mad, slays his own children, and goes into exile. 27 Theseus returns from Hades to find that Caster and Polydeuces have recovered their sister Helen whom he had kidnapped as a wife, and have placed one Menestheus on the Athenian throne. Theseus, unable to regain his kingdom, goes into exile. 28 The correspondence between the tales of these heroes and that of Frodo who returns to find his home usurped by Sharkey, and soon after leaves the Shire, is close enough to suggest that if not an original part of the tale, it was added early. Unfortunately the tradition has been confused at this point by an originally independent strand of legend concerning the Battle of Bywater, as will be shown below.

Bilbo Baggins may have been an original character in the story, or equally possible is the suggestion that only later in the development of the Frodo legend was it connected with the Bilbo legend. 28 We will now consider the members of the Fellowship of the Ring and their parts in the tale as an aid in determining what part they played in early versions of the tale, or in other originally independent legends. That Frodo was accompanied by others as well as Sam, and later Gollum, is probably a feature of the original story, but I suspect that their numbers and names varied in different versions. The number in the Tolkien version is nine, and they are named in order as Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, Legolas the Elf, Gimli the Dwarf, Aragorn the Ranger of the North, Boromir the eldest son of the Steward of Gondor, and two further Hobbits named Meriadoc (Merry) and Peregrin (Pippin). 29 Considering them in order, Frodo and Sam have already been shown to be in the earliest forms of the legend. Gandalf quite probably was also. However his place is confused by his identification with the originally independent Mithrandir of the Aragorn cycle, 30 Legolas and Gimli have minimal roles to play in the plot, and it is impossible to say whether or not they were in early versions or are relatively recent additions.

With Aragorn we come upon a character of which we can speak with more confidence. He was the hero of an independent tale, part of which appears in Appendix A I (v) of Tolkien's work, and further information on his early career appears in III:336 and III:371. Now the Appendices in their present state are without doubt later than the latest version of The Lord of the Rings, and must in many cases contain pure invention intended to fill in gaps in the main story, relate it to The Silmarillion, the Akallabeheth, and other legends and legend cycles. Most of their information is therefore pure invention. However, when genuine surviving traditions were available, they would have been used, and therefore the Appendices are not to be disregarded altogether.

The Aragorn information, particularly that on III:335 is extremely valuable. It informs us that Aragorn first appeared in the north as a young mercenary among the Rohirrim, the people of Rohan. He was known as Thorongil, the Eagle of the Star, from the silver star he wore upon his cloak. Most famous exploit was a night raid on the fleet of the Corsairs of Umbar. Upon his return from this raid he refused to enter Minas Tirith, but crossed over the Anduin, said farewell to his companions, and was last seen heading towards to the Mountains of Shadow. Denethor, son of the Steward, was hostile to Aragorn, suspecting his lineage, and that Mithrandir and he planned to supplant him.

In The Lord of the Rings itself the following occurs. Aragorn, on his arrival in the south, first fights alongside the Rohirrim in the battle of Helm's Deep. He then proceeds to Gondor where, though the dominant force by Mordor, he captures the fleet of the Corsairs of Umbar. 31 Upon his arrival at Minas Tirith he refuses to enter the city, 32 but remains encamped before its gate. He wears on his breast "a great stone of a clear green, set in a silver brooch that was wrought in the likeness of an eagle with outspread wings," and from it Aragorn takes the name Elessar, the Elfstone. Then, with only about seven thousand men, Aragorn sets out to face the hosts of Mordor. 33 Denethor, the Steward, had been hostile to Mithrandir, claiming to know that his real purpose was to have him supplanted by Aragorn. 34 Without a doubt, here we again have two versions of the same story. The former stretches Aragorn's career in the south over many years, the latter places everything within the space of two months. An attempt is made to reconcile the version in the Appendices with that in the main story by claiming that they represent two separate periods in Aragorn's life, the first during the reign of King Thengel of Rohan and the stewardship of Ecthelion of Gondor, the second during the reign of King Theoden of Rohan and the stewardship of Denethor of Gondor. This attempt to reconcile the two versions does not really succeed. In The Lord of the Rings there is no mention of any earlier visit of Aragorn to Gondor. Some late redactor, perhaps Tolkien himself, has inserted references to the supposed earlier visit to Rohan. He tells Legolas and Gimli that he has been among the Rohirrim a long time before, 35 and in answer to Eomer's challenge he replies, "Nor indeed am I a stranger; for I have been in this land before, more than once, and ridden with the host of the Rohirrim, though under other name and in other guise. You I have not seen before, for you are young, but I have spoken with Eomund your father, and with the son of Thengel. Never in former days would any high lord of this land have constrained a guest as mine." 36 However this claim is later forgotten, Aragorn making no further references to his previous adventures in Rohan, and Theoden not recognizing Aragorn as his former companion in the days of his father. The references to an earlier career in Rohan were probably inserted to explain Aragorn's knowledge of the Rohirrim tongue. They are of course unnecessary, since we are told time and again how the Rohirrim originally came from the north, and doubtless their tongue would be almost identical to tongues still spoken in their ancient homelands.

The original Aragorn story was probably based on history. We can plausibly picture Aragorn as a northern mercenary who through extreme capability, and the aid of his friends, was able to rise high in the councils of Gondor. So it was that when the Steward died, Aragorn put forth a claim to the kingdom, based on a supposed descent from Isildur, the eldest son of Gondor's legendary founder, and the head of the dynasty of kings who ruled the later destroyed northern kingdom of Arnor. The genealogy was probably not too trustworthy, to say the least, since even the chroniclers admit, "When the kingdom ended the Dunedain passed into the shadows and became a secret and wandering people, and their deeds and labours were seldom sung or recorded. Little now is remembered since Elrond departed." 37 Probably every petty northern chief claimed to be descended from the Kings of Arnor by some means. It is not easy to trust the implications of the present text, Aragorn was supported by Mithrandir, who claimed magical powers, and by Imrahil, Prince of Dol Amroth. Aragorn first claimed his right after his sudden appearance before Gondor with a fleet of captured Umbarian ships. The suicidal death of Denethor, at which Mithrandir was present, and the apparently fatal sickness of his heir Faramir, enabled Aragorn to become de facto leader of Gondor. Upon his return from Mordor he assumed full kingship. Faramir he retained in the office of Steward, but since he was also made Lord of Emyn Arnen and Prince of Ithilien, his duties as Steward could only be honorary. Aragorn kept the real power in his own hands.

The question now before us is how this story of Aragorn has been connected with the Frodo legend. Most probably it was through the defeat of Mordor. If we are to believe the text, the apparent invincible empire of Mordor was destroyed not by force of arms, but by a tremendous natural catastrophe, an earthquake. Suddenly the great enemy of
Gondor for generations, the un-conquerable kingdom and alliances of the east whose power had slowly worn down the power of Gondor, that which those of Gondor most feared, was gone. It was an incredible miracle to be remembered forever. What was the explanation? Nowadays we would answer "luck, just luck". But this is no satisfactory answer to man's eternal quest for meaning. The power inherent in Aragorn's kingship, or the magic of Mithrandir, or the wrath of God, -- all may have been used to explain it. Then some teller of tales, or writer, who came across both the Mordor version of the Frodo legend and the story of the downfall of Mordor got the idea of relating the two as one tale. Probably Frodo's original task was to return the ring of the Death Lord to its proper place to prevent its wrath from destroying the Shire. However the replacement of the Death Lord by the historical King of Mordor, and the connection with the Aragorn saga, forced a new interpretation on the matter. The Death Lord was not seeking vengeance for the profane, unauthorized use of his ring, he was in the new version seeking it for its power. And the placing of the ring in the Crack of Doom was enough to cause the utter destruction of Sauron's power in a titanic earthquake.

To connect the two stories together it was only necessary to identify the Gandalf of the Frodo tale with Aragorn's Mithrandir, and to make Aragorn himself one of Frodo's companions. A problem arose when the Dol Guldur version was also combined with the Aragorn story and the Mordor version of the Frodo story, if indeed the Mordor and Dol Guldur versions of the Frodo story were already not combined into one before it in turn was combined with the Aragorn saga. Gandalf, in the Dol Guldur story was slain by a Balrog in the Mines of Moria. But Mithrandir was needed for the story of Aragorn's adventures in Rohan and Gondor. Hence his rather clumsy resurrection. I suspect that the original combination of Frodo story and Aragorn saga was either of the following combinations:

1. Mordor Frodo story + Aragorn and Mithrandir in Rohan and Gondor + Aragorn's final conflict with Mordor.

2. Dol Guldur Frodo story + Mordor Frodo story + Aragorn's final conflict with Mordor.

"In either of these combinations the problem of resurrecting Gandalf would not occur, since Mithrandir probably played no part in the final conflict with Mordor, and may even have been dead in this part of the Aragorn saga in some versions. It was the addition of added material, whether from the events of Mithrandir's part in early adventures, or the death of Gandalf from the Dol Guldur Frodo that created the problem."

"Next after Aragorn, the list of the Nine Walkers gives Boromir. I suspect that he belongs to the Aragorn saga, or is the subject of an originally independent tale. The song of the three winds, and Faramir's poetic description of how he saw the body of Boromir float down the river in the Elvish craft, suggests that the return of dead Boromir was the subject of an earlier poem, probably in the form of a lament, relating Boromir's proud setting out despite the misgivings of kin and friends, the long wait for him, the sound of his horn, and finally the moving enchanting vision of his body floating down in peace to the sea, his horn alone returning to Gondor, cut in two. The song of the three winds may indeed be a portion of that lost poem. Probably the poem contained only the faintest allusions to who Boromir was, or when he lived, or what his mission was, and so some teller of the Aragorn saga was able to work him in as an elder brother of Faramir. I suspect that, called by a dream, he entered the wood of Lothlorien to seek aid for Gondor, and there met Aragorn. The Lady of the Wood, seeing him as an obstacle to Aragorn's ambitions, increased his natural jealousy so greatly that on the way back he quarreled with Aragorn, and fled from him and his company. Aragorn sent some of his folk to look for him, they were attacked by Orcs, and Boromir hearing the clamor came upon the melee, defended the attacked as best he could, blew his horn to summon help, and then died of his wounds shortly after Aragorn arrived. This of course is pure conjecture. Boromir may have only been introduced into the story after it was combined with the Frodo tale, in which case his story will have been identical, or almost so, with that preserved by Tolkien."

The final names in the list of the Nine Walkers are Meriadoc and Peregrin, most often called Merry and Pippin. At first sight they seem to play important parts in the story, and thus to be either original characters, or at least very early additions to the Frodo tale. Is it not they whose plight causes the death of Boromir, Aragorn's entry into Rohan, and the rise of the Ents against Saruman? This is at least the role that is claimed for them. But a closer look shows a different side. Boromir could just as well have died defending any of the hobbits, and I suspect indeed that originally it was Frodo and Sam who were the objects of Boromir's valiant protection. Note that the Synopsis at the beginning of The Two Towers and The Return of the King states, "The first part ended with... the scattering of the remainder of the Fellowship by a sudden attack of more-soldiers of the Dark Lord of Mordor, some of the traitor Saruman of Isengard." This must be a remnant of an older division of the work than that of the present text where the above events do not occur until the beginning of the second part. Obviously some textual changes were made at this point of the cycle at a very late period.

"As for Aragorn's entry into Rohan, having promised Boromir to go to Minas Tirthir, he is obliged to set out at once. And since the boats can carry him no farther because of the Falls of Rauros, he must turn his steps towards the green fields of Rohan where by obtaining a horse he could soonest reach Gondor. It is interesting to note that the conversation noted above in which Aragorn refers to his earlier adventures in Rohan is tied in closely with the kidnapping of Merry and Pippin by the Orcs. Probably in the earlier version Aragorn and his companions accompanied Eomer to Edoras without any dispute."

"The rousing of Treebeard by the two young hobbits is another unnecessary role which they play. Surely the destruction of the trees, and Treebeard's discovery that Saruman was responsible, was enough in itself to rouse the old Ent. I suspect that the Treebeard story was originally a completely separate onomastic legend to explain the name Orthanc, which meant Cunning Mind in Rohirric, and the name Watchwood for the trees which grew around Orthanc. It explained how a cunning magician once dwelt in the tower, whence its name. He learned much wisdom from the Ents, the spirits of the wood, but later in his pride broke his agreement with them and began to chop down the sacred trees. The trees came to sentient life, destroyed all his craft, and remained in position around the tower to prevent him from ever leaving. Probably it was shunned in the belief that the wizard dwelt there still. The artificiality of this legend is evident from the fact that Orthanc had in origin nothing to do with its Rohirric homonym, but was a Westron name meaning Mount Fang."

"The later repentance of Treebeard, and his decision to let Saruman go free is, I suspect, an independent variant according to which the purpose of the Watchwood was not to imprison Saruman within Orthanc, but rather to prevent his return. An ill advised attempt to combine both versions resulted in Treebeard's unconvincing change of heart. Another possibility is that the story of Saruman's exile was invented by the same redactor who indentified Saruman with Sharku, as will be discussed below."

"Having disposed of Meriadoc and Peregrin's adventures together, I will now treat their individual roles. Merry does nothing of importance until his decision to
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ride in secret with Theoden to Minas Tirith. Then, as Eowyn's companion, he aids her in slaying the Nazgul King after that dark phantom has just overthrown Theoden. Here he seems to be something of primary importance to Gondor, and in its present form he certainly is. But the Nazgul are, in origin, figures from the Frodo legend, not the Aragorn legend. They belong to the story of the ring, not to the story of the wars between the countries of Gondor and Mordor. From this alone it would be safe to conclude that the story of Eowyn and the slaying of the Nazgul is a very late addition. But there is further evidence as well.

In Appendix A II, the history of the House of Eorl, the slaying of the Nazgul is relegated to a footnote. In this footnote the name of Theoden's halfling esquire is given as Holwine. Only in a bracketed addition to the footnote is Holwine identified as Meriadoc, making it as an insertion of late. It would appear that in an earlier form of the legend the halfling who accompanied Eowyn was called Holwine, not Meriadoc, and that the substitution of the name Meriadoc was justified by the claim that Holwine was only a nickname given Meriadoc by Theoden.

Further, throughout, the Appendices, the Lord of the Nazgul is consistently and insistently identified with another dark figure of evil magic, the Witch-king of Angmar. That they are the same is well known by all according to the Appendices, since when the Nazgul lord challenged Eowyn, the last King of Gondor, he taunted Eowyn "that he had not dared to stand before him in battle in the North." Eowyn and all who heard the challenge could not help remember how years before the appearance of the Witch-king had so afflicted Eowyn's horse, that he bolted in terror carrying the young Eowyn off with him. Yet in The Lord of the Rings itself the Witch-king is mentioned by name only in one place, and referred to only twice elsewhere. The mention of the Witch-king occurs in one of Gandalf's conversations with Lord Denethor. Gandalf names the leader of the enemy army as "King of Angmar long ago, Sorceror, Ringwraith, Lord of the Nazgul." In his response Denethor states, "For myself, I have long known who is the chief captain of the hosts of the Dark Tower. Is this all that you have returned to say?" This exchange clearly implies that the identity of the Nazgul lord with the ancient Witch-king was known to very few, and that Denethor felt it necessary to state openly that he was among those few. In his reply to Denethor, Gandalf says of the Lord of the Nazgul, "And if words spoken of old be true, not by the hand of man shall the Nazgul lord fall. Possibly the M version also had some account of the Witch-king in the history of the ring told by Gandalf at the Council of Elrond.

The role of Peregrin, which parallels that of Merry so closely, may also be attributed to M. Peregrin performs only two actions that have any significance on the story development. He throws a stone into the well in Moria, thus arousing the orcs, trolls, and Balrog. He discourses Gandalf's injunction not to touch the palantir. The first of these, as has already been discussed was not necessary in earlier forms of the story where the evil beings of Mordor were informed by Galadriel. As for looking in the palantir, it is significant that Aragorn also is advised by Gandalf not to use the palantir. And he also refuses the advice.

The pre-M version, like our present version, would have had Aragorn, against the advice of Gandalf, attempt to use the palantir. The result was that Sauron was lured into attacking before he was fully ready, distracted by the sudden appearance of Isildur's heir, perhaps believing that he possessed the ring. M replaced Aragorn by Pippin, as in the Moria episode he had replaced Gollum by Pippin. The result of Pippin's use of the palantir was that Sauron thought Saruman had captured Frodo and had possession of the ring. This at once sent Ringwraiths of the Nazgul to seize the ring. The Nazgul would have returned bearing a description of the ring which had befallen Orthanc, and Saruman's attempted excuses. Believing that the halfling seen in the palantir was the ring-bearer, and that he was not in Gondor with Gandalf, Sauron was lured into attacking before he was fully ready. At least, this is my reconstruction of the M version. The present version is an attempt by a later redactor to combine these two accounts. Either he or an even later redactor concerned with plausibility added as a gloss, that the Nazgul which suddenly appeared at Orthanc after Pippin looked in the palantir was not sent for that reason since the trip of "two hundred leagues or more... would take a few hours to the foot of the Nazgul", but that Sauron had previously become distrustful of Saruman.

If then, as I have demonstrated, Merry and Pippin's activities in the quest were all very late additions, what story was originally connected with those names? I think the answer can be found in an interesting comment made on the Battle of Bywater: "The very considerable rise in the fame and fortune of the Cottonts dates from this time, but at the top of the Roll in all accounts stand the names of Captains Meriadoc and Peregrin." The most plausible
reason why this defensive sounding statement was made is that Tolkien or his immediate source is defending a particular version of the Battle of Bywater. This version would be marked by its emphasis on the actions of Merry and Peregrin, as against another version giving predominance to Farmer Cotton and his sons. Thus the word "but" in the quote. The Battle of Bywater is therefore the subject of various accounts, which disagree on many points, but all of which place Meriadoc and Peregrin "at the top of the Roll". Frodo and Sam play almost no part at all in this incident. Correlating these observations leads to the conclusion that here we find the original incident involving Merry and Pippin.

I have already pointed out how other accounts of the harrowing of Hell are connected with an usurpation of the hero's place during his absence, and by the exile of the leader of the ruffians, himself under the command of the leader himself betrayed by one of his servants--a hired mercenary?--named Sharkey. Sharkey was in turn slain upon Frodo's return, but Frodo, wounded by the three wounds, was now harassed by the supporters of the Sackville-Bagins who now rallied around Lobelia. Therefore, he departed forever from the Shire. This reconstruction is not to be taken too seriously, since the incorporation of conflicting versions of the Battle of Bywater and its associated events, and the identification of Sharkey with Saruman, have hopelessly altered the original.

Despite such uncertainties, I believe I have in this paper adequately outlined the general course of evolution that produced Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. No doubt there are errors in my thesis, as is inevitable in a preliminary study. And no doubt there are other possibilities of evolution that I have missed. I will be, however, completely satisfied with this paper if, in spite of any gross errors or grave defects shown by later study, it is successful in demonstrating the only fruitful path to understanding Tolkien's work is, as he claimed, a compilation and adaptation of a previously existing cycle of tales.

Footnotes
1. 57uy-v-1681 Blint, Pre-Cataclysmic Oesolianists, p. 192
2. 795PL56-xxx Khrato collects together all extensive mentions of the Red Book of Hergest together in his "Celtic Origins of the Ring Legend", RPKJ 310, 5062, reprinted with corrections in The Tolkien Problem, ed. Conclud 196-5N626783, 5065. He demonstrates that the Red Book of Hergest was identical with Tolkien's Red Book of Westmarch, and that it contained the famous Mabinogion which was also found more accurately in the White Book of Rhuddel, the Silmarillion, the Tales of Hildwine, and other cycles of legends and works as well as The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King.
5. 7753b1-x Ckurehbieq's most complete statement of his arguments may be found in his Prolegomenon to a Study of M.C. Goodchild, 5093.
6. A summary of the controversy is to be found in my own "Where is Middle-earth", Studies in Pre-Industrial Geography Presented to Nkramshams 9J34E4-k7, ed. 770-BDG-823 Gkrod, 5092. Identifications have ranged from Ireland in the West, to North Africa in the South, to Malaysia in the East. I myself tend to support the Turkish school, but recognize the difficulty of any identification based on present evidence.
7. The suggestion by Ckurehbieq that the diagrammatic drawing of the Moria west-gate and the reproduction of Balin's tomb inscription are the "maps" referred to has been rejected by almost all scholars on linguistic grounds.
8. 5095, pp. 137-145.
10. 1:310 ff.
19. For an opposing view see Roadflar Plantk, "Threshold to the Other World", BAZR 6, 5087.
23. ibid., pp. 107-109. 27. ibid., pp. 184-186.
24. 508-LVX-32s Bacrcroff, "Riiblo Baggins and Mad Baggins", WALS 76, 5084.
25. 1:288 ff.
26. 7Rtg67402 Fldrat, "Mithrandir and Gandalf", RPKJ 348, 5080.
30. III:48, 42. II:192, 43. III:311, 312, 44. III:313, 316.
32. II:154.
34. III:54. 54. II:205, 55. III:295.
35. Note that Farmer Cotton, not Meriadoc, plays the role of leader in the first encounter with the ruffians III:289 f.
36. III:391.

Please Note: The article "The Peril of the World" that appeared in Tolkien Journal 15, did so without giving the author's name. It was written by Andrea Osbourne.