

Journal of Tolkien Research

Volume 6 | Issue 2

Article 1

2018

The Fall of Gondolin (2018) by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Christopher Tolkien

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Recommended Citation

Kane, Douglas Charles (2018) "The Fall of Gondolin (2018) by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Christopher Tolkien," *Journal of Tolkien Research*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/journaloftolkienresearch/vol6/iss2/1>

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The Fall of Gondolin by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Christopher Tolkien. Illustrated by Alan Lee. London: HarperCollins, 2018. 302 pp. £20.00 (hardcover) ISBN 9780008302757. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018. 302 pp. \$30.00 (hardcover) ISBN 9781328613042. [Also available in ebook formats.]

In 1937, George Allen & Unwin published a children’s book by an obscure Oxford professor, J.R.R. Tolkien. This book, *The Hobbit, Or There and Back Again*, contained a number of vague references to a greater work that had been percolating out of Tolkien’s vast imagination for the previous two decades, which he would later describe as an attempt “to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths” (*Letters* 144). Among the most prominent of those references were several allusions to the land of Gondolin where the “High Elves of the West” had forged the swords Orcrist, Glamdring, and Sting (*Hobbit* 49, 60–61, 66, 69; see also Rateliff 115, 132, 153 and 155, showing these references existed from the earliest drafts).

Fourteen years later, when the first volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, the long-awaited sequel to *The Hobbit*, was released, a highlight was Bilbo’s long song in Rivendell about the voyages of Eärendil (*FR* II, i, 246–249).¹ It is Eärendil whose light is captured in the star-glass that Galadriel gives to Frodo in Lothlorien and which he and Sam later use in the darkness of Shelob’s lair (*FR* II, viii, 393; see also *TT* IV, viii, 321 and ix, 329) We learn from Elrond that Eärendil was his father, and that Eärendil “was born in Gondolin before its fall” (*FR* II, ii, 256). Galadriel also refers to the fall of Gondolin in talking about her own history (see *FR* iI, vii, 372).²

Tolkien was never able to publish his “body of more or less connected legend,” during his lifetime. However, in 1977, four years after Tolkien’s death, his son Christopher edited and published *The Silmarillion*. For the first time the

¹ The ubiquitous Tolkien fan Steven Colbert recently noted in a Rolling Stone video posted on YouTube that a Hip Hop song called “My Favorite Song” by Chance the Rapper and Childish Gambino borrows its unusual rhythmic scheme from Bilbo’s song of Eärendil. Colbert also correctly notes that before he ever began creating his own mythology the young Tolkien was struck by the inherent beauty of the Old English word *ēarendel* and therefore wrote a poem about a character named Earendel launching his ship like a bright spark from the havens of the Sun, and that according to Tolkien biographer Humphrey Carpenter this represented the beginning of that mythology (Colbert Rolling Stone video interview; Carpenter 72, 79; *Letters* 385; Hammond and Skull 179; *BoLT2* 267–269).

² Other references in *The Lord of the Rings* include Aragorn discussing Eärendil being his forefather (*FR* I, xi, 206) and a very brief elaboration of Eärendil’s history in Appendix A as part of the background to of the Kings of Númenor (*RK* App A, I(ii) 314).

public learned details about that fall of Gondolin that Elrond and Galadriel had glancingly referred to in *The Lord of the Rings*, of the role that Tuor, father of Eärendil played, and of how Eärendil became what Galadriel had referred to in *The Lord of the Rings* as “the Evening Star, most beloved of the Elves” (*FR II*, vii, 380).

Three years later, Christopher edited and published another book of his father’s writings, *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*. The first of these “unfinished tales” was bore the title “Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin,” though Christopher renamed it “Of Tuor and his Coming to Gondolin” because it broke off at the point that Tuor arrived at Gondolin, never reaching the events that led to its Fall. This unfinished story contains some of the most vivid and profound prose that Tolkien ever wrote. Christopher states in his introduction to the book that his father more than once noted that *The Fall of Gondolin* was the first Tale of the legendarium to be composed, and that, remarkably, the original Tale was the only fully completed account of the fall of Gondolin his father ever completed. Christopher observed, however, that this original version was not suitable for inclusion in *Unfinished Tales*, as “it belongs with the rest of the earliest phase of the mythology, “ ‘the Book of Lost Tales’: itself a very substantial work, of the utmost interest to one concerned with the origins of Middle-earth, but requiring to be presented in a lengthy and complex study if at all” (*UT 6*).

Several years later, in 1984, Christopher successfully took on that “lengthy and complex study” and published *The Book of Lost Tales* in two volumes, including that original “Fall of Gondolin,” which was actually entitled on the manuscript “Tuor and the Exiles of Gondolin (which bringeth in the great tale of Eärendel)” but which Christopher noted was always referred by his father as “The Fall of Gondolin” (*Bolt2* 146; see also *FoG* 23). The two parts of *The Book of Lost Tales* became the first two volumes of what eventually became the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth*, in which Christopher traces the evolution of the legends over the years of their composition, including, of course, the story of Gondolin.³

³ In a 2009 interview with *The Guardian*, Christopher Tolkien stated “After its publication in 1977 I began on what at first was a purely private study, a *History of The Silmarillion*, an exhaustive investigation and analysis of every page and passage in all my father’s writings, leaving no stone unturned; and as this evolved over the years it became, greatly enlarged in scope, *The History of Middle-Earth* in 12 books, finally completed in 1996. In this the relationship is revealed between the published *Silmarillion* and the vast mass of writing from which it was derived—but not of course all the reasons and justifications for the way in which the work was carried out.” (Christopher Tolkien interview.) In a private correspondence shared with permission by “Aelfwine” (Carl Hostetter) at The Hall of Fire messageboard, he further clarified, “In my Foreword to *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, pp.ix-x, I referred to the forerunner of the *History* as ‘an entirely “private” study, without thought or purpose of publication: an exhaustive investigation

Of those “more or less connected legends,” Tolkien considered the stories of Túrin Turambar, Beren and Lúthien, and the fall of Gondolin his “Great Tales” (Eärendil’s story was to be a fourth “Great Tale,” but was never drafted beyond the short summaries included in early versions of “The Silmarillion”). Tolkien had on several occasions expressed a desire to publish full-length versions of the three Great Tales (see *Letters* 150; *MR* 373; *Peoples* 357, n. 7; *CoH* 10; *Noad* 67; and *Kane* 249–250) but of course never was able to do so.

In 2007, Christopher took a step towards that goal when he published *The Children of Húrin*, a stand-alone book of the Great Tale of Túrin Turambar, edited from the same material from which he had included in *Unfinished Tales* as *Narn I Hîn Húrin—The Tale of the Children of Húrin*, as well as chapter 22 of *The Silmarillion*, “Of Túrin Turambar.” At the time, it was widely assumed that this was the only one of the three Great Tales that was suitable to such a treatment. However, in 2017, Christopher published a stand-alone book of a second of the Great Tales, *Beren and Lúthien*. Unlike *The Children of Húrin*, in *Beren and Lúthien* Christopher made no effort to edit the material written by his father into one continuous stand-alone story. Instead, various versions of the story of Beren and Lúthien are presented in the same form that they were previously published (either in full, or in many cases excerpts extracted from the original published version intact), in order to show the evolution of that Great Tale.

Christopher wrote in his Preface to *Beren and Lúthien* “in my ninety-third year this is (presumptively) my last book in the long series of editions of my father’s writings” (*B&L* 16). Yet one last Great Tale remained, the first one written, and the one that connects Tolkien’s imaginary world most directly with the real world (with Eärendil coming to represent the brightest star in our sky). And though *Beren and Lúthien* was perhaps the Tale closest to his heart, and *The Children of Húrin* the one most developed, the Fall of Gondolin is arguably the one in which the world of Middle-earth is most vividly presented and in which Tolkien’s

and analysis of all the materials concerned with what came to be called the Elder Days, from the earliest beginnings, omitting no detail of name-form or textual variation.’ This work, which I called *The History of the Silmarillion*, and which I began after the publication of my ‘constructed’ text, runs to more than 2600 very closely typed pages, and it does not even touch on the Second and Third Ages. When the possibility arose of publishing at least part of this work, in some form, it was obvious that it would have to be heavily reduced and curtailed, and the part of *The History of Middle-earth* dealing with the Elder Days is indeed a new presentation of *The History of the Silmarillion*, and a severe contraction of it, especially in respect of the sheer quantity of variant manuscript material reproduced in full” (*The Hall of Fire*, May 07 2009; see also Scull and Hammond 1181). Christopher further elaborated on this *History of the Silmarillion* in the Preface to *Beren and Lúthien*, referring to a 1981 letter he wrote to Rayner Unwin in which he stated that it was “in no conceivable way publishable.” (*B&L* 9–10). Although he probably was correct about that, it would be of tremendous interest to scholars of Tolkien’s work.

philosophical themes are most profoundly expressed. Having set the precedent of a book tracing the evolution of one Great Tale Christopher apparently concluded that he would be able to apply the same approach to that last (and first) of the Great Tales, *The Fall of Gondolin*.

In his Preface to *The Fall of Gondolin*, Christopher admitted that even when he made the above-quoted statement about *Beren and Lúthien* “presumptively” being his last book, he thought “hazily” of applying the same treatment to *The Fall of Gondolin*. He then states conclusively that this book “indubitably” will be his last (FoG 9). I think this time we can take him to his word.⁴ However, even in his ninety-fourth year, Christopher retains the clarity of thought and attention to detail that has allowed him to bring so much of the nature of his father’s work to light. As Christopher states in the Preface, “Looking back over my work, now concluded after some forty years, I believe that my underlying purpose was at least in part to try to give more prominence to the nature of ‘The Silmarillion’ and its vital existence in relation to *The Lord of the Rings*” (FoG 11). Even though this book, like *Beren and Lúthien* (and to a very great extent *The Children of Húrin*) presents little or no material that has not been published before, it still succeeds in rounding out that task.

Christopher makes a good choice in including in the Prologue in this book excerpts from the “earliest Silmarillion” which Tolkien called the “Sketch of the Mythology” (See FoG 24–33) to give a sense of the state of the “world of Gods and Elves” (FoG 23) during the early periods of the creation of the legendarium that led to the rise and fall of Gondolin, rather than using the same brief summary of the Elder Days that he used in both *The Children of Húrin* (CoH 13–27) and *Beren and Lúthien* (B&L 18–25). More puzzling is the inclusion after these excerpts of a portion of the unfinished poem “The Flight of the Noldoli from Valinor,” which was also printed in the third volume of *The History of Middle-earth, The Lays of Beleriand* (see FoG 33–36 and LoB 131–135). The inclusion of these verses does not really add anything substantive to the summary given by the excerpts from the “Sketch.” It seems to be included for no reason other than to include some of Tolkien’s verse even though it is not directly related to the subject matter. This is particularly strange since Christopher fails to include any of the fragment of the poem his father had started about the fall of Gondolin, “The Lay of The Fall of Gondolin.” In *The Lays of Beleriand* Christopher only quotes several lines of that unfinished poem and observes that “it does not, so far as the main narrative is concerned add anything to the Tale; and my father found, as I

⁴ The first announcements about the new book were made around April 1, 2018, leading to some (including this reviewer) to speculate that it might be an April Fools joke. Thankfully, that turned out to be nothing more than a coincidence of timing.

think, the metrical form unsuitable to the purpose.” (*LoB* 145.) Nonetheless, had Christopher wished to include some verse in the new book it might have been a better choice to have included a portion of this otherwise-unpublished poem that directly related to the subject matter, instead of the already-published excerpt from “The Flight of the Noldoli from Valinor.” Christopher does not even mention the existence of the fragment of “The Lay of The Fall of Gondolin” (which he says in *The Lays of Beleriand* advanced some 130 lines) in the new book. Even if it did not do much towards showing the substantive development of the narrative it would have been of value to see something more of what Christopher had described as “the first versification of matter from the *Lost Tales* undertaken” (*LoB* 145) and to round out the progression of Tolkien’s writings on the fall of Gondolin.

The substantive portion of the book begins with the full original Tale (but without the connective text linking it to the rest of the *Lost Tales*). A close comparison between the version of “Tuor and the Exiles of Gondolin” that appears in *The Book of Lost Tales, Part II* with that in *The Fall of Gondolin* reveals many minor differences in punctuation and language. For instance, in the very first paragraph “Dor Lómin” becomes “Dor-lómin” and in the third paragraph, “Thereafter ’tis said ...” and “And this, ’tis said ...” becomes “Thereafter it is said ...” and “And this, it is said” These types of changes appear all through the Tale to the end, and the last line of the Tale as it originally appeared in *The Book of Lost Tales, Part II*, “And no one in all the Room of Logs spake or moved for a great while” is omitted altogether so that in *The Fall of Gondolin* the original tale ends with the penultimate sentence, “Then said Littleheart son of Bronweg: ‘Alas for Gondolin’” (See *BoLT2* 197 and *FoG* 111). Presumably this last sentence was omitted because it relates too closely to the linking passages that connect the various *Lost Tales* together, but otherwise it is unclear why Christopher would edit the same text differently in the two different books. Perhaps it is purely for the sake of clarity and readability, but without access to the original manuscripts, it does raise the question of how much fealty is being paid to Tolkien’s original writing. On the other hand, Tolkien was such an inveterate self-editor that it may simply be a question of Christopher working from one version of the manuscript back in early 1980s, and a different one now in 2018.

In any event, “Tuor and the Exiles of Gondolin” retains the raw power that captivated readers many years ago. As Christopher says in the Preface to *The Fall of Gondolin*, “Gondolin and Norgothrond were each made one, and not remade. They remained powerful sources and images—the more powerful, perhaps, because never remade, and never remade, perhaps, because so powerful” (*FoG*

18). Many of the details in the tale changed greatly over the course of the following decades that it evolved, but the basic tenets remained and unchanged, and the germ of the most important philosophical themes of loyalty, best represented by Bronweg/Voronwë,⁵ versus treachery, as shown in the figure of Meglin/Maeglin, and of the complex workings of divine power versus free will, particularly as seen in the machinations of Ulmo, are already present. Some of the elements in the early tale—such as the mechanical dragons—border on the absurd, but there is little in the writings of Tolkien (or, indeed, any other author) that rivals in inspiration the heroic self-sacrifices of Ecthelion and Glorfindel, which are only told in detail in this original Tale.

The original Tale is followed by two short texts of additional material that are of significant importance in the development of the story. First, is a paragraph Tolkien's early hurried notes which Christopher describes as "what must be the earliest trace of the story of the fall of Gondolin," touching on the earliest germ of the story of Eol and Turgon's sister Aredhel (here still called Isfin) that was originally printed in *The Book of Lost Tales Part 2* at the very end of the notes to the original Tale (*FoG* 112–113; *BoLT2* 220). The second is a text that was written after the original Tale and "was clearly the abandoned start of a new version of the *Tale*" bearing the title "Turlin and the Exiles of Gondolin" (*FoG* 114–119). The most significant advance in this aborted text is that unlike in the original Tale, Ulmo speaks to Turlin/Tuor of his conflict with the other Valar, his isolation in his fear of Melko/Melkor and his attempts to get the Noldor to send messages to convince the Valar to rise up against Melkor. This advancement will reach its fruition in the final version of the Tale (the one published in *Unfinished Tales* as "Tuor and his Coming to Gondolin"). "Turlin and the Exiles of Gondolin" originally appeared at the beginning of *The Shaping of Middle-earth* in the section entitled "Prose Fragments Following the Lost Tales" (see *SoMe* 3–5) in the identical form that appears here in *The Fall of Gondolin*, other than that in the original printing Christopher uses the name "Turgon" for Tuor's character throughout (his father had amended it from Turlin to Turgon in the text but not in the title) whereas in the new book Christopher uses "Tuor" throughout the text, rather than either Turgon or Turlin.

The next text given is the story as told in the "Sketch of the Mythology," often referred to by Christopher as the "earliest Silmarillion." This text is presented exactly as it appears in Volume IV of *The History of Middle-earth*, *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. The sole difference is that later changes made in pencil are noted

⁵ The deeply evocative descriptive title "Voronwë the Faithful," made its first appearance in this earliest text.

in footnotes in the earlier book, whereas they are placed in the text in brackets in *The Fall of Gondolin* (See *SoMe* 34–37 and *FoG* 120–125).

However, the situation with the next iteration of the story, the version included in the “Quenta Noldorinwa” (the only finished version of the *Silmarillion* that Tolkien completed, in around 1930), is a little more complicated. As Christopher noted in *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, and again in *The Fall of Gondolin*, his father expanded and retyped portions of this portion of the text of the “Quenta Noldorinwa” (see *SoMe* 135–136 and *FoG* 128–129). In *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, Christopher printed both versions, calling them Q I and Q II (see *SoMe* 135–148). In *The Fall of Gondolin*, however, Christopher indicates that he gives only the Q II text throughout, from the point where the tale of Gondolin begins (*FoG* 129). However, his comment “Near the end of the narrative Q I gives out and only the rewritten version (‘Q II’) continues to the end” (*ibid*) is puzzling, because in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* he says that just the opposite is true, and that it is the Q II text that gives out in the middle. The text identified as Q II in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* ends in the middle of a sentence describing Eärendil as a child (after the phrase “he had the beauty and the wisdom of Elfiness”) and then version included in *The Fall of Gondolin* picks back up with the Q I narrative beginning with “and the strength and hardihood of the Men of old” (see *FoG* 139–143 and *SoMe* 143–148, and fn. 7 on p. 146 noting that “Here the replacement text Q II ends” at the place noted above.) Again, without access to the original manuscripts, it is impossible to determine which is true. In any event, otherwise the text is again identical in the new book as was printed originally, save that the changes originally noted in footnotes are placed in the text in brackets.⁶

Christopher then skips over two decades and gives next the full text of what he calls the “last version,” the text that he had included in *Unfinished Tales*, renamed as “Tuor and his Coming to Gondolin,” which was written in around 1951 or 1952 (he does go back and reference and quote from several earlier intermediate texts later, as will be seen). Here we see a mature author (Tolkien had by then completed *The Lord of the Rings* though it was not yet published), at the top of his game. The power and clarity of the language in this text is unequalled in Tolkien’s work. Particularly compelling is the appearance of Ulmo to Tuor at the shore of the sea beneath the ruins of Vinyamar, Turgon’s ancient dwelling. In the

⁶ Other than the first six paragraphs, the bulk of Chapter 23 in the published *Silmarillion*, “Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin” is taken from these two versions of this section of the “Quenta Noldorinwa” with most of it coming from Q1, plus a few additions from other sources, including one sentence that traces its source only to the original tale of the Fall of Gondolin (Kane 219–227).

earlier texts we see Tolkien grasping toward the message that he was looking to convey but here it is presented in stunning clarity.

And Ulmo spoke to Tuor of Valinor and its darkening, and the Exile of the Noldor, and the Doom of Mandos, and the hiding of the Blessed Realm. ‘But behold!’ said he, ‘in the armour of Fate (as the Children of Earth name it) there is ever a rift, and in the walls of Doom a breach, until the full-making which ye call the End. So shall it be while I endure, a secret voice that gainseayeth, and light where darkness was decreed. (*FoG* 165–166; *UT* 29)

In this text Voronwë is now explicitly one of the messengers sent by Turgon to the try to seek the assistance of the West, as Ulmo had counseled. Voronwë’s descriptions of his journeys before meeting Turo are another standout of the text, particularly his describing his time in the willows of Nan-tathrin, which were “pale green, or silver in the wind, and the rustle of their innumerable leaves is a spell of music: day and night would flicker by uncounted, while still I stood knee-deep in grass and listened” (*FoG* 174–175; *UT* 34–35) and his profound experience amongst the vast loneliness of the Great Sea: “But very bright were the stars upon the margin of the world, when at times the clouds of the West were drawn aside” (*FoG* 177; *UT* 36).

The text printed in the new book appears to be virtually identical to that included in *Unfinished Tales*. The only difference I was able to identify in comparing to the two texts is that in the very first sentence “the Battle of Unnumbered Tears” is added in brackets after “Nirnaeth Arnoediad” in *The Fall of Gondolin* (see *FoG* 145; *UT* 17)⁷

Christopher expresses great dismay that his father did not complete this text, stating: “For me it is perhaps the most grievous of his many abandonments.” (*FoG* 203) While I share this profound sense of “what if” and have long wished that we had the completed version of “Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin” that Tolkien clearly set out to compose, there is something strangely appropriate to the text ending where it does, with Ecthelion’s words upon seeing Tuor revealed in the might livery of Nevrast that Turgon had left long before, “Now no further proof is needed, and even the name he claims as son of Huor matters less than this

⁷ The first six paragraphs included in Chapter 23 of the published *Silmarillion* appear to be a brief synopsis of the story told in this text, and do not appear to be from any other source. As I wrote in *Arda Reconstructed*: “It is ironic that the most truncated part of Tuor’s tale [in the published *Silmarillion*] is the part for which Tolkien wrote the most developed version: the story of Tuor’s coming to Gondolin” (Kane 220–221).

clear proof, that he comes from Ulmo himself” (*FoG* 201; *UT* 51). As Christopher states:

As it stands—and stops—it is the story of a journey—a journey on an extraordinary mission, conceived and ordained by one of the greatest of the Valar, and expressly imposed upon Tuor, of a great house of Men, to whom the God ultimately appears at the ocean’s edge in the midst of a vast storm. That extraordinary mission is to have a yet more extraordinary outcome, that would change the history of the imagined world.

The profound importance of the journey presses down upon Tuor and Voronwë, the Noldorin Elf who becomes his companion, at every step, and my father felt their growing deadly weariness, in the Fell Winter of that year, as if he himself had in dreams trudged from Vinyamar to Gondolin in hunger and exhaustion, and in fear of Orcs, in the last years of the Elder Days in Middle-earth. (*FoG* 208–209)

Perhaps the “rift in the armour of Fate,” and the “breach in the walls of Doom” were only meant to open enough to allow Tolkien to bring us the full story of this extraordinary journey, and no more. This work, unfinished though it may be, is as profoundly moving as anything that Tolkien has written. As Christopher says, it “is unique among the evocations of Middle-earth in the Elder Days, most especially perhaps in my father’s intense awareness of the detail, of the atmosphere, of successive scenes” (*FoG* 208).

Christopher notes in the Preface that one significant difference between the way that the content was arranged in *Beren and Lúthien* and the way it is arranged in this book is that in *The Fall of Gondolin* “the texts of the Tale appear first, in succession and with little or no commentary. An account of the evolution of the story then follows, with a discussion of my father’s profoundly saddening abandonment of the last version of the *Tale* at the moment when Tuor passed through the Last Gate of Gondolin” (*FoG* 17). Despite this statement, Christopher does make some comments about the evolution of the earliest versions of the story in brief comments between each version, particularly regarding Ulmo’s role in the Tale (see *FoG* 118–119, 125–127.) However, he saves most of his commentary for the section entitled “The Evolution of the Story” which appears after the text of the “last version.” This improves the flow of the book, and allows him to make more sweeping observations about the long-term evolution of the tale (after providing his thoughts about the reasons why his father abandoned the

last version, which Christopher believes was rooted in his father's disappointment at his inability to publish the full saga of the Jewels and the Rings (see *FoG* 203–208). In the course of this discussion he quotes from several ancillary texts that touch on elements of the tale of the fall of Gondolin, including the late 1930s “Quenta Silmarillion,” the original Annals of Beleriand, from the same time period, and the later version of those annals, the Grey Annals, which date from the same time period as the last version of the Tale, and the later edits to the “Quenta Silmarillion,” as well as one of the other original Lost Tales, the Hiding of Valinor. However, one important element of the story that he fails to discuss at all is the development of the story of Maeglin, who plays such an important role in the fall of Gondolin. This development is addressed in *The War of the Jewels* (see *WotJ* 316–339) but is not even mentioned in the new book, which seems odd to me given its express purpose of tracing the development of the story from its earliest form to its latest.

The book concludes (save for some appendix-like material, including a List of Names, Additional Notes, a Glossary of Obsolete, Archaic and Rare Words, Family Trees of the House of Bëor and the Princes of the Noldor, and a map of Beleriand) with a discussion of the story of Eärendil after the fall of Gondolin. The promotional material advertising the book had indicated that the Tale of Eärendel, which Tolkien never wrote, would be sketched out from other sources, but in fact, all that this consists of in the book are extracts from the conclusions of the “Sketch of the Mythology” and the “Quenta Noldorinwa,” the latter of which formed the basis for the concluding chapter of the “Quenta Silmarillion” in the published *Silmarillion* (see Kane 228–239.) As with the earlier extracts from the “Sketch,” this text matches what is printed in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* but with the edits noted in the footnotes in that book incorporated into the text here (see *FoG* 242–246 and *SoMe* 37–41). As for this extract from the “Quenta,” in this case it matches the text that was printed in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* as “Q II”, with the changes again incorporated in the text in brackets. One curious change, however, is that in this section in *The Fall of Gondolin* Christopher omitted the first paragraph of this chapter, describing the growth of a new community by Sirion and the sea of the remnants of Gondolin and Doriath, and instead included it as the last paragraph of the “Quenta Noldorinwa” version of the tale of the Fall of Gondolin (see *FoG* 143 and 248 and *SoMe* 146 and 151).⁸

⁸ Even more curiously, in the published *Silmarillion* Christopher included not only this paragraph but also the following two paragraphs in Chapter 23, The Fall of Gondolin, rather than Chapter 24, Of the Voyage of Eärendil (see *Silmarillion* 244–245, *SoMe* 151–152 and Kane 223, 226–227).

This extract from the “Quenta Noldorinwa” ends with the second prophecy of Mandos, predicting the final defeat of Morgoth and the eventual recovery of the Silmarils the final purpose of Ilúvatar revealed. Christopher states: “My history of a history thus ends with a prophecy, the prophecy of Mandos” (*FoG* 264). This is an interesting observation, as his omission of the second prophecy of Mandos is one of the most controversial aspects of the constructed *Silmarillion* (see Kane 228, 235–238, 253) and it was considered by Tolkien to be of utmost importance. As Tolkien wrote in his letter to Milton Waldman in 1953 describing his mythology that was used by Christopher as the Preface to the second edition of *The Silmarillion* (the same letter that contained the quote cited earlier about his “body of more or less connected legend”), “This legendarium ends with a vision of the end of the world, its breaking and remaking, and the recovery of the Silmarilli and the ‘light before the Sun’” (See *Letters* 149 and *Silmarillion* xvi). It is thus very fitting that Christopher ends his “history of a history” with this very prophecy.

A final word must be appended regarding the illustrations of Alan Lee, which adorn this book as they did with the other Great Tales, *The Children of Húrin* and *Beren and Lúthien*. Lee’s illustrations—both the color plates and the black and white sketches that precede each chapter—once again provide a perfect complement to the final chapter of what has been a unique and remarkable collaboration.

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