

The Silmarillion

This is the second part of the article by Jim Allan on his interpretation and extrapolation of one possible form of The Silmarillion, based on the material available in Professor Tolkien's other works.

At any rate, the story now turns to those of the Three Kindreds of the Eldar who did journey to the Undying Lands "and lived for ages, and grew fairer and wiser and more learned, and invented their magic and their cunning craft in the making of beautiful and marvellous things." (II:178/164) Most of the Eldar dwelt on the long shorelands of Valinor "Angel-land", east of the mountains, or upon Bressëa "the lonely isle" that lay not far from the shores. This region was therefore named Eldamar "Elvenhome". Their country was illuminated by the light of the Blessed Realm which originated from the Two Trees, Telperion and Laurelin. The light streamed through Calaciryra "light-cleft", the great ravine in the mountains of Valinor, and so came to Eldamar. Calaciryand(e) was "the region of Eldamar near the entrance to the ravine, where the Light was brighter and the land more beautiful." (R:62)

Minion, "great watch-tower" was the name of their city. (R:65) It stood in a sheer valley beneath the Hill of Ilmarin, its lamplit towers mirrored in the Shadowmere. (I:247/309) Beside its walls there grew a golden tree which shone (I:389/402), perhaps a sprout of Laurelin.

The Eldar developed a writing system, with characters called tengwar. They "had been developed by the Noldor, the kindred of the Eldar most skilled in such matters." (III:395/493) It is not certain whether these Noldor are one of the original Three Kindreds, probably the Deep-elves, or whether they are a later grouping. "The oldest Eldarin letters" were "the Tengwar of Runic" and "were not used in Middle-earth. The later letters, the Tengwar of Fëanor, were largely a new invention, though they owed something to the letters of Runic." They were "devised for writing with brush or pen." (III:395/493) The first tongue to be recorded in writing was Quenya or High-elven, one of the languages of Eldamar. (III:405/508)

"Fëanor was the greatest of the Eldar in arts and lore." (III:313/388) Gandalf dreams of using the palantír to "perceive the unimaginable hand and mind of Fëanor at work." (II:204/260) Among other wonders Fëanor devised a crystal substance which he alone could make, and to which he gave the name Silima. (R:65) Of it he made the Three Jewels, the Silmarilli "Silima-flames" and filled them with the radiance of the Two Trees. "The jewels were coveted by Morgoth the Enemy, who stole them and, after destroying the Trees, took them to Middle-earth, and guarded them in his great fortress of Thangorodrin. (III:313f/388) The element odrin in this name means "mountain people" and probably refers to the Orcs.

Now Fëanor was also the "proudest and most selfwilled" of the Eldar. (III:313/388) "Against the will of the Valar Fëanor forsook the Blessed Realm and went in exile to Middle-earth, leading with him a great part of his people; for in his pride he proposed to recover the Jewels from Morgoth by force." (III:314/388) In order to prevent the revolting Eldar from returning "Varda lifted up her hands, in obedience to the decree of Manwë, and summoned up the dark shadows which engulfed the shores and the mountains and last of all the fana (figure) of Varda, with her hands turned eastwards in rejection, standing white upon Ciolasse." (R:60) Why the Valar did not act openly against Morgoth, and why they tried to prevent Fëanor and the Noldor from so doing is another subject for speculation.

Upon their return to Middle-earth the Exiles found others of their kin: the Sindar or Grey-elves. These were "those Eldar who, coming to the shores of Middle-earth, had not passed over the Sea but had lingered on the coasts in the country of Beleriand. There Thingol Greycloak of Doriath was their king." Doriath appears to mean simply "The Lands". "In the long twilight their tongue had changed with the changefulness of mortal lands and had become far estranged from the Speech of the Eldar from beyond the Sea." (III:406/506) They had invented an angular form of writing called cirth "long used only for inscribing names and brief memorials upon wood and stone. To that origin they owe their angular shapes, very similar to the runes of our own time." (III:395/493) Unlike the Tengwar of the Noldor there was no systematic relation between the shapes of the characters and their values. (III:401/501)

One can imagine the joy with which the Sindar received the High Elves of the West as allies against their enemies, "for those who have dwelt in the Blessed Realm live at once in both worlds, and against both the Seen and Unseen they have great power." (I:235/294)

In Beleriand the High Elves found King Thingol dwelling in a "hidden Kingdom" in the forest of Meldoreth. (I:206/260) Other Sindar dwelt in "the hidden city of Gondolin" ruled by King Turgon. (III:314/388) Gondolin appears to mean "stone hills" and Turgon "lord-(of)-stone" which suggests that this city may have been dug into the living rock.

To the east of Beleriand were the Dwarf "cities of Morrod and Telegost in the Blue Mountains." (III:352/438)

Another Elvish city was Margothon, whose king was "Finrod Felagund, Friend-of-Men". (III:363/453) His sister was "Galadriel, greatest of Elven women" ... "and one of the princes and queens who had led the revolting Noldor to exile in Middle-earth." (R:60) At least, Galadriel was the Sindarin form of her Quenya name, Altariel. (R:58) "For the Exiles, dwelling among the more numerous Grey-elves, had adopted the Sindarin for daily use;" and hence their names mostly appear in Sindarin form. Finrod and Galadriel were "of the royal house of Finarphir"; (III:406)

and Galadriel's golden hair shows her to have been of the House of Finrod. It is not clear whether the two are synonymous. Nor is it clear whether Finrod was one of the Exiles, or a Sindarin prince who had remained in Middle-earth when his sister had departed over the sea, and was still there when she returned. If the former is true, it would appear that Margothon was a fortress built, or at least occupied, mainly by the High Elves after their return. Finrod may have succeeded Eñanor as lord over the Exiles, since the former disappears from the story, probably slain in one of the early conflicts with the forces of Morgoth.

Galadriel took as husband "Celeborn, kinsman of Thingol, one of the Sindar." (III:363/452; R:60) She is said to have passed over the mountains "ere the fall of Margothon or Gondolin." (I:372/462), but which mountains are referred to is not clear.

The conflict with Morgoth was not the sole concern to the Elves, who seem to have had some periods of breathing space. It was probably in one of these that "the Cirth, partly under the influence of the Tengwar of the Noldor, were rearranged and further developed. Their richest and most ordered form was known as the Alphabet of Daeron, since in Elvish tradition it was said to have been devised by Daeron, the minstrel and lore-master to King Thingol of Doriath." (III:397/493)

In a letter dated January 30, 1930, Tolkien's friend C. S. Lewis wrote that Tolkien was "the author of the voluminous unpublished metrical romances and of the maps, companions to them, showing the mountains of Dread and Margothon the city of Orcs." (*12) If Lewis is not in error here, it would appear that Margothon was captured, or at least occupied after its fall, by Orcs. To its fall Tolkien refers twice. (I:330/412; 372/462) This may have been the first calamity in what became the general pattern of "the hopeless war of the Eldar and the Edain against Thangorodrim, in which they were at last utterly defeated." Those whom the Eldar called Atani or Edain, "Fathers of Men", were essentially three peoples of Men who, coming first to the West of Middle-earth into Elerland and to the shores of the Great Sea, became the allies of the Eldar against the Enemy." (I:206/260; III:314/388; 406/506) They were known as the Three Houses of the Elf-friends, and those noted had names of Sindarin form. (III:406/507)

First there is Húrin of whom we know nothing save his name. (I:284/355) Hador the Goldenhaired, the Elf-friend, was the founder of the Third House of the Edain. (II:287/364; III:314/389) Túrin was later remembered in "the Númenorean tale of Túrin and Mim the Dwarf" of which the poem "The Hoard" "seems to contain echoes." (T.B.:8; 53ff)

Of Beren there is much more information. In one of the battles against Morgoth, perhaps indeed during the fall of Margothon, Barahir of the First House of the Edain was slain; but Beren his son escaped through great peril, fighting an

evil thing in spider-form, a child of Ungoliant, in the Mountains of Terror in Doriath. (II:322/422; III:314/388) It may have been at this time that "Finrod Felagund, Friend-of-Men, once king of Nargothrond ... gave his life to save Beren." (III:363/453)

Once over the Mountains, Beren came into Thingol's hidden kingdom in the forest of Meldoreth. Lost, he wandered among the leaves walking alone and in sorrow by the enchanted river Esgalduin. Then, in a glade beside the river, lit only by the moonlight, Beren beheld the form of a beautiful maiden singing and dancing upon the greensward, amid the hemlocks to the music of an unseen pipe. It is said that this maiden "was the fairest ... that has ever been among all the children of this world. As the stars above the mists of the Northern lands was her loveliness, and her face was a shining light." His weary feet healed by enchantment, Beren hastened forth. But the maiden fled away lightly leaving him to roam ever listening throughout the now silent forest.

Often as he continued his search, did he think to hear the sound of feet, or of music welling underground, yet never did he find her. Fall passed, and then winter, and still he continued searching. Once he saw her dancing on a hill-top far away, her mantle glinting in the moon and a mist of silver at her feet.

But then winter passed she came again and her song released the sudden spring. Beren saw her, the elven flowers springing about her feet, and was a second time healed of his weariness and sought to join her in her dance. Again she fled but he followed swiftly. "Tinúviel, Tinúviel!" he called, for that is the Elvish for "nightingale". She halted and stood listening for a moment, as and she did so his voice laid a spell on her. Beren came to her and her doom fell upon her. That immortal maiden of elvish wisdom wrapped her hair and her arms about him and Beren saw the trembling starlight of the skies mirrored in her eyes. (I:203-6/258-61; II:332/422)

Now Beren was only a mortal man, but Tinúviel was Lúthien the daughter of King Thingol himself and "her mother was Melian of the people of the Valar." (it is not clear from this whether Melian was actually one of the Valar herself, or whether the "people of the Valar" refers to the Exiles, to some group among them, or to yet another race.) One can imagine the shock and horror with which Thingol and his kin learned of this love which had come into being. Thingol did agree to give his daughter to Beren, but only in exchange for the recovery of one of the Silmarils, an apparently impossible task since not all the power of the High Elves and Sindar combined had come near to accomplishing it.

Many sorrows befell Beren and Lúthien, and they were parted long. Yet, in the end, fantastically, Tinúviel rescued Beren from the dungeons of Sauron, a servant of Morgoth, and together they passed through great dangers, and cast down even the Great Enemy from his throne, and took from his iron crown one of the three Silmarils

to be the bride-price. And Beren also, either then or at another time, recovered at great peril the ring which Felagund of Morthond gave to Barahir Beren's father. (I:206/261; III:314/389; 322/400; 363/453)

For the present one can but speculate on how Beren could have achieved such a deed, or in what manner he lost a hand, or at least the use of it, and was from that known as "Beren One-hand". (III:229/281)

So Beren won his bride and was for a time happy. "Yet at the last Beren was slain by the Wolf that came from the gates of Angband, and died in the arms of Tinúviel. But she chose mortality, and to die from the world, so that she might follow him. ... So it is that Lúthien Tinúviel alone of the Elf-kindred [of the First Age] died and left the world, and they ... lost her whom they most loved. ... and it is sung that they met again beyond the Sundering Seas, and after a brief time walking alive once more in the green woods, together they passed, long ago, beyond the confines of this world." (I:206/261)

I confess to finding this last rather obscure. That Lúthien would have to die a mortal death to partake of the future life of resurrected mortals appears to be part of it, but these last lines also suggest some immediate resurrection.

"Of Beren and Lúthien was born Dior Thingol's heir." Dior's title suggests that Thingol himself soon fell victim to the continuing war and was succeeded by his grandson.

Now for another mortal hero, Tuor. "Tuor was the son of Huor of the House of Hador, the Third House of the Edain, and the most renowned in the wars with Morgoth. Like Beren he married an Elven wife, "Idril Celebrindal ... the daughter of Turgon, king of the hidden city of Gondolin." But apparently, unlike Lúthien, she did not take upon her mortality. "Eärendil the Mariner was their son." (III:314/389)

"Eärendil ... was born in Gondolin before its fall," (I:256/319) Swords were made in Gondolin for the wars with the Orcs, and two in particular were remembered. "The first is Orcrist, 'the Goblin-cleaver' in the ancient tongue of Gondolin; it was a famous blade" which killed hundreds of Orcs "in its time when the fair elves of Gondolin hunted them in the hills or did battle before their walls." The Orcs "called it simply Biter." The other sword was Glamdring, "Foe-hammer", that the king of Gondolin wore. The Orcs "called it Beater, and hated it worse than Biter if possible." But despite these weapons and the valiant defence made by its inhabitants, in the end "dragons and [Orcs] destroyed that city." (H:62/61f; 75/72)

But Eärendil at least survived its fall. He was "wedded to Elwing the White the daughter of Dior who had in her keeping the silmaril. (I:206/261; III:314/388f) Eärendil means "Sea-friend" or "Sea-lover" and Eärendil sought to sail to the Blessed Realm and obtain help there from the Valar against Morgoth.

In a place called Arvernien he built a swan-prowed boat of timber felled in Nimbethil; a boat with silver sails and silver lanterns. Fully armed in the

richest gear and wearing an emerald upon his breast, Eärendil set out on his quest. From the ice channels of the North to the hot wastes of the South he journeyed bewildered and confused, in search of the correct route. At last, over starless waters, he came to Night of Naught, the barrier of shadow laid down by Varda. But there angry winds lashed him, and drove him blindly back east to the shores from which he had first departed.

Then there came to him his wife Elwing, bearing with her the Silmaril, shining more bright than a diamond. She bound it upon him, crowning him with living light. Then, dauntless, with the Silmaril on his brow, he turned about and again set sail. Night fell, and there arose a wind from Tarmenel which bore him before its blast back again to the Shadows. But now, with the power of the Silmaril, he passed through Ethernight and out of the mists of the world.

And so he heard the roaring of surf rolling pebbles of gold and bright jewels on a pearl beach; and he saw with his own eyes the Mountain rise before him, and below it the land of Eldamar, from whence came the Exiles so long before. There he beached his ship in the white havens and entered at last the city of Tirion. Great was the welcome they gave him there, and much did he learn from Elvish sages. They clothed him in white and sent seven lights before him through the Calaciryand, the light-cleft, which led into the yet hidden interior. Eärendil followed and so came in the end to the timeless halls of Ilmarin where Manwe ruled. There, speaking as ambassador for both Elves and Men he obtained the help by which Morgoth was overthrown.

Eärendil was not permitted to return to mortal lands. Instead, they built a new ship for him of mithril and of elven-glass without oar or sail. But upon its silver mast was set the Silmaril by Varda herself. For him she made immortal wings and laid on him the destiny of sailing the shoreless skies as the Morning and Evening Star, most beloved of Elves, the Flammarifer of Westermesse. From the lofty hills of Evereven his wings bore him and his ship up from beyond the Mountain Wall before the Sun. Over Middle-earth he passed as a sign of hope to the dwellers there oppressed by the Great Enemy or his servants. This was his fate, till moon should fade, to be ever more a herald of hope. (I:246-9/308-11; 380/472; 314/389)

And thus, at Eärendil's request, the Valar came in their power to Middle-earth. Among them was Oromë the Great. (III:113/138) Then, "the First Age ended with the Great Battle in which the Host of Valinor broke Thangorodrim and over-threw Morgoth. (III:363/452) In this battle "Beleriand was for the most part drowned and broken;" (III:406/507) "and the ancient [Dwarf] cities of Nogrod and Belegost in the Blue Mountains were ruined." (III:352/439) "The Elves deemed that evil was ended for ever, and it was not so." (I:256/319)

Then the Valar gave permission for the Exiles to return again over the Sea, if they wished, except for Galadriel, "the last survivor of the princes and queens who

had led the revolting Noldor to exile in Middle-earth. ... A ban was set upon her return. ... She replied proudly that she had no wish to do so." (R:60)

"The sons of Eärendil were Elros and Elrond, the Peredhil or Half-elven. In them alone the line of the heroic chieftains of the Edain in the First Age was preserved. ... At the end of the First Age the Valar gave to the Half-elven an irrevocable choice to which kindred they would belong. Elrond chose to be of Elven-kind, and became a master of wisdom. To him therefore was granted the same grace as to those of the High Elves that still lingered in Middle-earth; that when weary at last of the mortal lands they could take ship from the Grey Havens and pass into the Uttermost West. ... But to the children of Elrond a choice was also appointed; to pass with him from the circles of the world; or if they remained to become mortal and die in Middle-earth.

"Elros chose to be of Man-kind and remain with the Edain; but a great life-span was granted to him many times that of lesser men.

"As a reward for their sufferings in the cause against Morgoth, the Guardians of the World, granted to the Edain" (III:314f/389f), "To the Elf-friends that they also, as the Eldar, might pass west over Sea. But since the Undying Realm was forbidden to them, a great isle was set apart for them, most westerly of all mortal lands," (III:406/507) "removed from the dangers of Middle-earth." (III:315/390)

In the first year of the Second Age the Grey Havens were founded. (III:364/453) "There dwelt Círdan the Shipwright." (III:319/396) "Then most of the Noldor returned into theinto the Far West and dwelt in Eressëa within sight of Valinor; and many of the Sindar went over Sea also." Also in the first year Lindon was founded, a kingdom in the remnant of Beleriand. For "in the beginning of this age many of the High Elves still remained. Most of these dwelt in Lindon west of the Ered Luin [Blue Mountains]. ... In Lindon north of the Lune dwelt Gil-galad, last heir of the kings of the Noldor in Exile. He was acknowledged as High King of the Elves of the West. In Lindon south of the Lune dwelt for a time Celeborn, kinsman of Thingol," and his wife Galadriel. (III:363f/452f)

"most of the Elf-friends" (III:406/507) ... "set sail over the Sea, and guided by the Star of Eärendil came to the great Isle of Elessa, westernmost of all Mortal lands" (III:315/390) in the year S.A. 32 (III:364/453) "There they founded the realm of" (III:315/390) "Númenor (Westernesse). ... There they became great and powerful, mariners of renown and lords of many ships. They were fair of face and tall, and the span of their lives was thrice that of the Men of Middle-earth. These were the Númenoreans, the Kings of Men, whom the Elves called Dúnedain". (III:406/507)

* * * * *

So, there is what we know of The Silmarillion "set out fair and square with no contradictions." One can hope that more will be revealed in the near future. One can, perhaps, also speculate on why it is taking so long.

According to Dick Plotz, "One of the snags delaying publication is that the stories are written in a Quasi-biblical style. Professor Tolkien considers it his best, but his publishers disagree. Another problem is that of finding a story line to connect all the parts. At the moment (1967) Professor Tolkien is considering making use of Bilbo again. In the period between The Hobbits sic and The Lord of the Rings, Bilbo was in Rivendell among all the Elves and Elven records and perhaps The Silmarillion will appear as his research in Rivendell." (*4) You may recall that annexed to the journal in which Bilbo recorded his journey and the beginning of Frodo's adventures were "three large volumes, bound in red leather" which made up his "Translations from the Elvish" and were "almost entirely concerned with the Elder Days." (I:27f/37f)

Also, Tolkien has never been noted for speed in publication. His translations of Pearl and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight were reportedly finished years ago except for the introduction, but have yet to see print. In one of his letters C. S. Lewis calls Tolkien "that great but dilatory and unmethodical man" (*13), and in another declares, "You have no idea with what laborious midwifery we got Lord of the Rings out of him." (*14) And Tolkien himself had admitted, "I love it (revision). I am a natural niggler, fascinated by detail." (*15)

Another reason for the delay could be hinted at in Tolkien's words, "they keep on expecting a 'Great Book' of me. 'Great Book', is what they say and expect, and it alarms me." (*15) One can see how Tolkien might indeed feel afraid that those whose expectations have been raised by LoTR might be disappointed by a work that is not at least as powerful. Also, most critics find the weakest parts of LoTR to be those in which the Hobbits do not appear, or play unimportant parts. At least in 1966 Tolkien said of The Silmarillion, "It has no hobbits." (*16)

Then of course there is the necessity of bringing the prequel into full accord with LoTR. This may not be an easy task. I have read somewhere I cannot now trace that originally no Ents appeared in The Silmarillion. Tom Bombadil may also present problems. And it could be that the original poems and stories which make up The Silmarillion are not entirely consistent with one another.

I wonder also if, in the writing of LoTR Tolkien may not have stolen from the plots and incidents in The Silmarillion, and now must revise the former to reduce the number of parallels between the two works.

Hopefully, in time, The Silmarillion will appear, and then we can all start speculating on The Akallabêth, (that is, The Downfall of Númenor). (*17) Of it Professor Clyde Kilby has said, "The middle story, that is, of the Second Age of

1. ...-earth, is at present only one long and exciting story. That is, it is not
2. ... the length of the Rings or of the Silverlilion. ... how much more any is written
3. ... " (*7) There is also a third work, A Leaf from his life, described
4. ... long narrative poem set in Valinor." (*10)

and that, for the moment, is that.

NOTES

1. Henry Resnik, "An Interview with Tolkien" Niekas 18 (June-Aug., 1967)
2. J. R. R. Tolkien, "Tolkien on Tolkien" Diplomat Vol. XVII, No. 197 (Oct. 1966), p. 11
3. Henry Resnik, op. cit., p. 41
4. Richard Plotz, "J. R. R. Tolkien" Seventeen Vol. 26, No. 1 (Nov. 1967) p. 115
5. ... referring to Tolkien's works I have used the following abbreviations:
6. ... for The Hobbit, I, II and III for the three volumes of LotR, ... for The
7. ... Adventures of Tom Bombadil and R for The Road Goes Ever On. ... references
8. ... to the most recent hardcover editions, but for R and the three volumes of
9. ... I have also given references to the Pallantine paperback editions, except
10. ... where the reference is to information not found in that version.
6. ... 58-68
7. " ... meetings with Tolkien" Niekas 19 (1968) p. 39
8. ... Foster, A Guide to Middle-earth (The Mirage Press, Baltimore, 1971) p. 107
9. Richard Plotz, (in answer to a letter) Tolkien Journal Vol. III No. 2, ... p. 8
(late 1967) p. 20
10. Snorri Strulinson, The Prose Edda, trans. Jean I. Young (University of California,
Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966) p. 41
11. The Elder Edda, A Selection, trans. Paul B. Taylor and W. H. Auden (Random House,
N.Y., 1970) p. 146
12. C. S. Kilby, "Tolkien Lewis and Williams" Mythcon I Proceedings,
ed. Glen GoodKnight (The Mythopoeic Society, Los Angeles, 1971) p. 3
13. Letters of C. S. Lewis, ed. W. H. Lewis (Geoffrey Bles, London, 1966) p. 222
14. Niekas 15 (March, 1966) p. 49
15. Daphne Castell, "The Realms of Tolkien" New Worlds Vol. 50, No. 168 (Nov. 1966)
p. 146
16. "Don's Tales Start U. S. Campus Craze" London Times (Sat. 12 Feb. 1966) p. 6
17. First edition of III:313
18. E.R. Meškys, "News of J. R. R. Tolkien" The Green Dragon 3 (Oct. 1967) p. 2
reprinted in Niekas 19 (1968) p. 32

