

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The History of Middle-Earth*, HarperCollins, London, 12 volumes

Reviewed by Franco Manni

Christopher Tolkien didn't stop after the *Silmarillion* ! After *Unfinished Tales*, other volumes written by the father and deciphered, arranged and annotated with great precision by the son have been published. At present they number twelve and are collectively entitled *The History of Middle-Earth*.

The first is *The Book of Lost Tales – Part One*. Most of the work consists of expanded and modified versions of events narrated in the *Silmarillion*; for example, it deals with the music of the Ainur, the construction of Valinor, the chaining of Melko, the Noldor's flight from Valinor, and so on. A tale entitled *The Cottage of Lost Play*, though, is original; it dates to the winter of 1916-17 and the author, orphan and separated from his young wife, the friends who had provided companionship during his youth dead in the trenches, was himself serving in a front line battalion in which all were either killed or taken prisoner.

The story describes an Elf dwelling where human children who have reached it by means of the "Path of Dreams" live. After the blockage of the path, some of the children decide to remain and are allowed to return to the Land of Men in the guise of angels.

What do these child-angels do ? With "evident contradiction" (as the editor justly notes), in the space of several lines JRRT writes *first* that "all those we allow to leave do not return", but remain in the Land of Men because "there are delightful places and lovable kingdoms full of attractions" and *then* that "the majority (of the children) return here, and tell us many stories and melancholy tales of their travels".

This piece contains the idea, which echoes the Never-Never Land in Barrie's *Peter Pan*, that children can make contact with a higher reality, the Elf world, but then return to the Land of Men – they grow up – and the reason for growing up is altruistic love (to console those who cry). They return no more to the world of the Elves, since growth is irreversible, and the reason for this irreversibility is the desire for experience (the delightful places full of attractions). And yet, there is also the notion (in contradiction with the previous idea) that the return to the Land of Men – growing up – is disappointing and so the children go back to the Elf world; in other words, growing up is only a change in external appearance and the heart – the most genuine aspect of the personality – remains a child which lives in some other world whilst the superficial parts of the personality seem to conduct an adult life amongst other adults.

Is adulthood a positive or negative condition, then ? Does growing up mean to come into contact with reality or the opposite ? To this choice between alternatives in which "tertium non datur", JRRT is only able to offer a contradiction by way of reply. But as has been clear from the time of Aristotle, a contradiction – to affirm and deny at the same time – is the same as saying nothing. In fact, as Tom Shippey has observed, JRRT "immediately let drop this Peter Pan dilemma, and subsequently had no time for it". Shell-shock kept him in hospital for a long period and saved him from the massacre

of his battalion. He was able to return to his wife and later John, his first son, was born; the possibility of a university career in the field he loved became concrete. The “Land of Men” thus appeared attractive enough to JRRT.

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The second volume is *The Book of Lost Tales – Part Two*. Here, too, most of the chapters are expanded versions of parts of the *Silmarillion*: the tales of Lúthien Tinúviel, Túrin Turambar and Eärendel, and the story of the necklace forged by the Dwarves to restrain one of the Silmarils, Nauglafring, who caused the spillage of blood between Elves and Dwarves.

One of these expansions is noteworthy, both quantitatively (in the *Silmarillion* the same event takes up a few lines; here, 58 pages) and qualitatively: it represents one of the peaks of a particular style of Tolkien, the “epic-sublime”. It is called “*The Fall of Gondolin*”; first the Secret Kingdom of the Elf king Turgon is described in all its fabulous beauty, then when it is discovered (due to a betrayal) by Melkor, Gondolin is laid siege by the Dragons, the Balrogs and the legions of the Orcs. The resistance of the various Elf companies – each described with its heraldic colours, its duke and its distinctive fighting style – against the opponents’ overwhelming strength, is inspiring and moving and reaches final tragedy with the death of Turgon and Gondolin in flames. The epilogue is weighed down with grief, but touched by hope due to the flight (through an underground passageway) of Tuor, Idril and their infant Eärendel, he who was to appeal to the Gods for help for the exhausted Middle-earth.

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The third volume is *The Lays of Beleriand*, which contains two long poems (in various versions): *The Lay of the Children of Húrin* which recounts the story of Túrin and *The Lay of Leithian*, the tale of Beren and Lúthien. For those who like the archaic and high-flown style of Tolkien’s poetry (and are able to appreciate it in English!), these works are a sort of Pantagruelian banquet.

In addition there is a commentary by Tolkien’s great friend C.S. Lewis. Lewis pretends to have found an ancient manuscript, makes reference to numerous (supposed) textual variants and quotes imaginary eighteenth philologists with absurd names. Despite the humorous presentation, the evaluation of the content is entirely serious and was taken as such by Tolkien.

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The fourth work, *The Shaping of Middle-Earth*, contains *Ambarkanta*, a detailed account of the physical structure of Arda: Valinor, the Western Sea, Middle-earth, the Eastern Sea, the Eastern Lands and everything surrounding the Encircling Ocean, Vaiya. Above, Vista (the air of weather) and Ilmen (the air of light). All enclosed by Ilurambar, the Wall of the World, made of ice, glass and steel. Beyond, the Empty Timeless Night.

There follow two versions of the *Silmarillion* which differ from that previously published. The presence of the Second Prophecy of Mandos in these is interesting: when the world becomes old and

the Powers weakened, Morgoth will come back from the External Vacuum through the Door of the Night. He will destroy the Sun and the Moon, but Eärendel will be on to him straight away, like a white-hot flame, and bring him to the ground. Then the Great Battle (Dagor Dagorath) will take place on the fields of Valinor. Tulkas will face Melko, with Finwë on his right and Túrin Turambar to his left. The black sword of Túrin will finally kill Melko, and thus the sons of Húrin and all the Men will be avenged. Then the Silmarils will be pulled from the air, the water and the earth; Fëanor will seize them and take them as an offering to Yavanna Palurien. She will break them and with their fire regenerate the Two Trees and immediately a great Light will shine out. And the mountains of Valinor will be levelled so that the Light reaches every region of the world. In this Light the Gods will become young once more and all the dead Elves will be resurrected and the plan of the watching Ilúvatar will reach fulfilment. But the prophecy makes no mention of the Men, apart from Túrin, who is included among the Gods.

The book ends with a coloured map of Middle-earth in the First Age, drawn by Tolkien.

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The fifth volume is entitled *The Lost Road and Other Writings*. This lengthy work contains many pieces: various versions of The Fall of Númenor, Ainulindalë, The Annals of Valinor, The Annals of Beleriand and Quenta Silmarillion. There in addition two “scientific” tracts on the Elvish languages which will amaze enthusiasts of these by their completeness and by the quantity of new material they contain (*The Lhammas* and *The Etymologies*).

The most important part is *The Lost Road*, an unfinished novel based on a conversation between JRRT and his friend C.S.Lewis. Since neither could find stories they liked, they decided to write their own; Lewis produced a tale of space travel (*Out of the Silent Planet*) and JRRT an account of travel through time. JRRT starts from the present and goes backwards, following the adventures of pairs of fathers and sons (which includes autobiographical material, testified to by Christopher Tolkien, the curator); the mothers are dead. The first such couple is composed of the contemporary English Albain and adolescent Audoin who are on holiday alone in a cottage on the Cornish coast, preoccupied by strange visions of the “Eagles of the Lord of the West Flying Over Númenor” whilst they try to construct an abstract “time machine”, until Elendil himself appears to Albain and offers a pact which would enable them to return forwards in time.

The chapters regarding the father-and-son pairs from the Anglo-Saxon 10th century, the Lombard 6th century and glacial prehistory were only sketched out. Two chapters from the final part of the voyage through time were written in full, the story of Elendil the father and his son Herendil in Númenor whilst Sauron is steadily gaining power on the island and persecuting the Faithful and spurring on the king to act against the Valar. The description of Elendil’s villa by the sea is enchanting: JRRT wishes to recreate a distant world, perhaps a piece of the Roman Empire where pagan decadence and the first thrilled, untamed Christians meet and struggle grimly. The son does not understand his father’s ideas and wavers between his affection for him and the corrupt seductiveness of Sauron.

The work was written in 1937 and the horrifying totalitarian state of Númenor under Ar-Pharazon which is about to bring war to Tol Eressea (and the rest) drew on contemporary events: the Third Reich and the imminent war in Europe.

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In volume six, *The Return of the Shadow*, Christopher Tolkien has arranged and annotated with customary precision his father's unpublished papers. Here we find a first collection of *Lord of the Rings* variants, from the opening words up to Moria. The complexity of JRRT's work of composition and rewriting in these first chapters of *LOTR* is enormous. Having sat down to write a sequel to *The Hobbit* for the publisher Unwin, JRRT found himself possessed by fresh inspiration.

Certain scenes never change, such as when Bilbo disappears with a flash and a bang or Sam overhears Gandalf's tale from the garden. The general impression, as Tom Shippey has observed, is that the inspiration for some key scenes was primordial, whereas the invention of the plot came afterwards and was the result of many uncertainties and many changes of mind. It is all excellent material for the study of *LOTR* and for a deepened understanding of many points.

Eight versions of "A Long-expected Party" were produced before it reached its final form. In one, Bilbo holds the party to announce his wedding, leaves Hobbiton, gets married, has numerous children and the next story will be about one of these; Bilbo is worse thought of (with respect to *LOTR*) because of his strangeness and when he announces his departure the Hobbits make many malicious comments, wondering (for example) whether he will really marry afterwards. In another, Bilbo is married and disappears from Hobbiton together with his wife; Frodo (here known as Bingo) is his son and does not go into mourning because he believes his parents to be still alive, he lives alone but is rarely at home and knows only several Tooks (related of his paternal grandmother) and a few Brandibucks (his mother's relatives). Frodo gives the party before leaving. In yet another version Bilbo and Frodo's uncle disappear mysteriously from Hobbiton, Frodo does not mourn and it is he that throws the party. In some versions Gandalf does not attend the party, or argues with Bilbo on the hill outside the house but does not have a row with him because of the ring that Bilbo has left in a casket for Frodo. The ring (a present from Bilbo to his son) does not appear until the third version and only in the fourth is comes to be considered as the motive for the departure of the party-holder (Bilbo or Frodo); there are other reasons: the search for a wife, tiredness of life amongst the Hobbits, a desire for adventure or a need of money.

There are other interesting variations of events in the story: in the countryside of the Shire, the Hobbits hide in bushes at the sound of hooves and a horse comes to a halt nearby; the rider, covered by a cloak and hood, sniffs the air. Who is it ? Gandalf ! (not the Black Rider !). At Tumulilande, when Frodo becomes separated from his companions and calls them, they have not been taken by the spectre and it all turns out just to have been a fearful imagining on the part of Frodo. The old Maggot is much more aggressive, remembering that Frodo Baggins had killed one of his dogs and still hating him profoundly for it; Frodo annoys him by using the ring to become invisible and frightens him by tripping him up. At Bree, the Hobbits meet Strider (here called Trotter), but who is he ? A Hobbit – Peregrine Took – a childhood friend of Bilbo whose parents had forbidden to continue seeing him who then left the County and travelled as far as Mordor where he was tortured and now must walk with wooden clogs (!) because of the sores. Tolkien decided to make Strider a Man only after Bilbo asked his help at Rivendell to compose a song about ancient times. Gandalf is a old and short and the reasons for his lateness in reaching the fleeing Hobbits are narrated in detail. Glorfindel reveals that he is the reincarnation of the Glorfindel who died in the First Age fighting the Balrogs after the fall of Gondolin.

After having developed considerably the story with Bingo/Frodo as protagonist, in August 1939 (during the last few days before Second World War broke out, a period which depressed him greatly, as he confessed in a letter), Tolkien suffered a crisis of pessimism and reverted to the original idea of

writing a sequel to the Hobbit. He wrote: “New plot. Bilbo is the hero all through. Merry and Frodo his companions. This helps with Gollum (though Gollum probably gets new ring in Mordor)”.

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The seventh and eighth books are entitled *The Treason of Isengard* and *The War of the Ring*. The composition of the later chapters of *LOTR*, recounted in these two further volumes edited by Christopher Tolkien, was much less complex. The first work, after a rewriting of the chapters from Hobbiton to Rivendell, takes us from the Council of Elrond to the debate with Theoden at Meduseld and contains a concise appendix dealing with the Elvish and runic alphabets. The second book goes from Helm’s Deep to the Last Debate of the Captains of Gondor before the desperate march of their army towards the Gates of Mordor. Both volumes contain maps and drawings by the hand of JRRT.

There follow several examples of the numerous variants. Gandalf and the Balrogs at Moria:

The Balrog rushed to the Bridge-foot. Legolas raised his bow and an arrow pierced his shoulder. The bow fell useless. Gandalf stood in the midst of the bridge. In his hand Glamdring gleamed. In his left he held up his staff. The Balrog advanced and stood gazing at him.

Suddenly with a spout of flame it sprang on the Bridge, but Gandalf stood firm. ‘You cannot pass’, he said, ‘Go back into the fiery depths. It is forbidden for any Balrog to come beneath the sky since Fionwë son of Manwë overthrew Thangorodrim. I am the master of the White Fire. The red flame cannot come this way’. The creature made no reply, but standing up tall so that it loomed above the wizard it strode forward and smote him. A sheet of white flame sprang before him like a shield, and the Balrog fell backward, its sword shivered into molten pieces and flew, but Gandalf’s staff snapped and fell from his hand. With a gasping hiss the Balrog sprang up; it seemed to be half blind but it came on and grasped at the wizard. Glamdring shore off its empty right hand, but in that instant as he delivered the stroke the Balrog struck with its whip. The thongs lashed round the wizard’s knees and he staggered.

Seizing Legolas’ bow Gimli shot, but the arrow fell. Trotter [Strider] sprang back along the bridge with his sword. But at that moment a great troll came up from the other side and leaped on the bridge. There was a terrible crack and the bridge broke. All the western end fell. With a terrible cry the troll fell after it, and the Balrog tumbled sideways with a yell and fell into the chasm. Before Trotter could reach the wizard the bridge broke before his feet, and with a great cry Gandalf fell into the darkness.

At Minas Tirith, the child Bergil is much more aggressive, cannot be calmed by Pippin and is about to start fighting him when stopped by the arrival of a Man from Gondor.

Gandalf reveals to Denethor that the Wizard King, leader of the Nazguls, is a disowned ex-member of Gandalf’s order, the Istari, who comes from Númenor.

Denethor is more gentle with Faramir, and when the latter tells of his meeting with Frodo in Ithilien, replies that although he wished that Boromir could have been there instead, adding – with a slap on the shoulder to his son – *but only if Boromir had had a stouter heart and more trustworthy character*; if, that is, he had brought him the ring without using it. Tolkien changed his mind because, as he wrote, only if Denethor were harder on Faramir could we see why he went crazy when his son returned on the point of death. It should be added that Denethor uses the Palantír for the first and last time only when he thinks his son is about to die; he scrutinizes the stone to see if help might come, but Sauron only lets him the strength of Mordor and Denethor, despairing, goes mad.

Theoden narrates the meeting between his ancestor Baldor and a talking stone statue at the entrance to the Pathway of the Dead. And when Aragorn sees the skeleton in armour and recognises it as Baldor, he has a tomb built in such a way that no one may reach the mysterious closed door. At Pelargir the army of the Dead hesitates to attack the fleet of Umbar and Aragorn is compelled to harangue the Dead until they find the courage at last to make war on Sauron.

Aragorn is acclaimed by the people of Lebennin as “Lord of the Rings” and Tolkien wonders if this happens in order that Sauron should believe himself in possession of the Only and stop worrying about Frodo, or because Galadriel had handed Nyenya over to him.

Here is a variant from the chapter *The Last Debate*:

‘But if we should find the Ring and wield it, how would it give us victory ?’, asked Imrahil.

‘It would not do so all in a day’, answered Gandalf. ‘But were it to come to the hand of some one of power or royalty, as say the Lord Aragorn, or the Steward of this City, or Elrond of Imladrist, or even to me, then he being the Ringlord would wax ever in power and the desire of power; and all minds he would cow or dominate so that they would blindly do his will. And he could not be slain. More: the deepest secrets of the mind and heart of Sauron would become plain to him, so that the Dark Lord could do nothing unforeseen. The Ringlord would suck the very power and thought from him, so that all would forsake his allegiance and follow the Ringlord, and they would serve him and worship him as a God. And so Sauron would be overthrown utterly and fade into oblivion; but behold, there would be Sauron still....but upon the other side, a tyrant brooking no freedom, shrinking from no deed of evil to hold his sway and to widen it.

‘And worse’, said Aragorn. ‘For all that is left of the ancient power and wisdom of the West he would also have broken and corrupted’.

‘Then what is the use of this Ring ?’, said Imrahil.

‘Victory’, said Hurin Warden of the Keys. ‘At least we should have won the war, and not this foul lord of Mordor.’

‘So might many a brave knight of the Mark or the Realm speak’, said Imrahil. ‘But surely more wisdom is required of lords in council. Victory in itself is worthless. Unless Gondor stand for some good, then lei it not stand at all; and if Mordor doth not stand for some evil that we will not brook in Mordor or out of it, then let it triumph’.

What follows is equally fascinating.

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The ninth volume is called *Sauron Defeated*. The first section of this sizeable tome contains variants of the final part of *The Lord of the Rings*, from Sam and Frodo at Mordor to The Grey Havens. I have selected some interesting points. Frodo does not want to throw the Ring into the Abyss of Fate because he hears a deep, slow, but persuasive voice which offers him life, peace, honour, a rich reward, a lordship and finally a share of the Great Power, if only he will wait and return to Baradur with a Slave of the Ring. This terrorizes Frodo and he remains immobilized by the choice between resistance and surrender, in torment, for a period that seems to him incredibly long and unmarked by the passage of time. Then he is disturbed by a fresh thought, not from outside, but a thought from within his being: he should keep the ring *himself* and gain control of everything. Frodo, King of Kings. The Hobbits (naturally, he would not have forgotten his friends) would be in command and he would command the Hobbits. He would write great poems and compose great songs and all the earth would bloom and everyone would be invited to his parties. And so *Frodo takes the Ring !*

Variants of the final catastrophe are that Sam pushes Gollum and the Ring into the abyss, or Gollum, overcome by remorse and the terror of being forever deprived of the Ring by the advancing Nazguls, commits suicide.

At Edoras during the banquet which follows Theoden's funeral, Gandalf, during a toast, refers to Frodo and Sam by Elvish names which translate, respectively, as Resistance-Beyond-Hope and Inextinguishable-Hope.

When they return to the County, Ted Sandy makes this prophecy:

'You are out of date, Mr. Samwise, with your elves and your dragons. If I were you I'd go and catch one of their ships that are always sailing, according to your tale. Go back to Babyland and rock your cradle, and do not bother us. We are going to make a big town here with twenty mills. A hundred new houses next year. Big stuff coming up from the South. Chaps who can work metals. And make big holes in the ground. There'll be forges ahumming and steamwhistles and wheels going round. Elves can't do things like that.'

A small difference is that Sharkey is not a Saruman, but a Man-Orc. More noteworthy, that Frodo eliminates various enemies in the County and is a energetic and determined leader, strong in war and resolute in his decisions, who comes to be honoured by all the Hobbits with such devotion that "not even Sam could complain". Fortunately Tolkien changed his mind in the definitive version and gave us in Frodo a great icon of humanity and not the hero of a TV series !

A comment by Tolkien refers to The Grey Havens as an "Arthurian" finale for Bilbo and Frodo, in which of course he does not explain whether he intends an allegory of death or a means of healing and restoration as prelude to a return.

There follow two versions of the *Epilogue* which does not appear in *LOTR*. Sam is surrounded by numerous children of both sexes to whom he recounts stories of long ago. He speaks to eldest, Elanor, of the Elfin beauty which is disappearing, but has not yet gone and which she may therefore see too. Lastly, he announces that King Elessar will be passing near the border of the County and would like to see his old friends. Here are the last lines of the Epilogue: after having sent the children to bed,

Master Samwise stood at the door and looked away eastward. He drew Mistress Rose to him, and set his arm about her.

'March the twenty-fifth!', he said. 'This day seventeen years ago, Rose wife, I didn't think I should ever see thee again. But I kept on hoping'.

'I never hoped at all, Sam', she said., 'Not until that very day; and then suddenly I did. About noon it was, and I felt so glad that I began singing. And mother said: "Quiet, lass! There is ruffians about". And I said: "Let them come! Their time will soon be over. Sam's coming back." And you came'.

'I did, ' said Sam.' To the most belovedest place in all the world. To my Rose and my garden'.

They went in, and Sam shut the door. But even as he did so, he heard suddenly, deep and unstilled, the sigh and murmur of the Sea upon the shores of Middle-earth.

The *Epilogue*, which indeed is in some passages a little sugary and simpering, was eliminated by Tolkien on the basis of the many criticisms he received: "it has been so universally condemned..." But he remained unsatisfied because he felt "the picture to be incomplete..."

The second part of the book is dedicated to the unfinished novel *The Notion Club Papers*, which is very similar to *The Lost Road* (also unfinished), telling of a group professors, friends who during their discussions at the Club find themselves - without understanding why - wandering through and space, ending up in the 10th century when the Danes were attacking the Anglo-Saxons and, still further back, in a time shortly before the Fall of Númenor. Tolkien enthusiasts will be interested three versions of the poem Imram (the death of St Brendan). We find Tolkien caught in a typical position between a Hindu-Orphic-Pythagorean and Christian point of view:

The theory is that the sight and memory goes on with descendants of Elendil and Voronwë [his companion], but *not* reincarnation; they are different people even if they still resemble one another in some ways even after a lapse of many generations

The third section contains four versions of the Fall of Númenor and finishes with a linguistic treatise on Adunaic, the tongue of the Númenoreans.

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It seems to me to that the tenth volume, *The Morgoth's Ring*, is that amongst the 12 of *HoME* which contains the most new material and which is of greater philosophical depth.

A piece entitled *Laws and Customs among the Eldar* recounts how the bodies of Elves grew more slowly than those of Men, but their minds more quickly; they learned to talk before they were one year old and at the same to walk and dance. During infancy it was difficult to distinguish between the children of Elves and those of Men. The latter, however, seemed happier because they still enjoyed the world, the fire of their own spirits had not yet consumed them and the weight of memory was still light upon them. At the end of the third year human children continued to grow whilst Elfin children did not; a Man reached his full stature at an age when an Elf was only the height of a human seven-year old. Fifty years (and for some, a hundred) were needed for an Elf to reach full size.

Elves married only once in their lives, even during the most obscure periods in the history of Arda, and the occurrence of lewd behaviour amongst them was rare. The Noldor observed the custom that the bride's mother gave the son-in-law a jewel suspended from a chain, and likewise the groom's father to his daughter-in-law. These ceremonies were not considered necessary for the marriage, but were merely courtesies by which the parents demonstrated their love and recognition that the union bonded the families as well as the couple. The essential wedding rite was carnal union, after which a typical unbreakable marriage bond came into existence. In times of peace and prosperity it was considered discourteous not to hold a public ceremony, but Elvish law always held that marriage required only the free consent of the couple without the need for witnesses and thus it often was in times of difficulty.

Conception and pregnancy took a larger amount of physical and spiritual energy from Elf women than human ones. For this reason Elves had few offspring whilst they were young, usually not long after getting married. With respect to Elfin sexuality, fertility and sexual desire could not easily be distinguished; they would undoubtedly have kept their sexual potency for a long time if their desire remained unsatisfied, but when generative power was effectively exercised, sexual desire disappeared rapidly and the mind occupied itself with other things. Sexual union certainly gave them great joy and the "child days" – as they called them – remained in the memory as the most joyful in their lives. But they had many other potentialities of the mind and body which their nature urged them to fulfil.

When Míriel died, weakened by her pregnancy with Fëanor, her husband Finwë, who was still young and wished for more children, asked Manwe to be allowed to remarry. Manwe asked Míriel, who was in the halls of Mandos, if she wanted to be reincarnated and she replied that she did not (she could no longer find in herself any desire for life, at least within the borders of Arda). Manwe thus gave permission to Finwë to marry again and he did so with Ingwe's sister, Vanyar Indis. The Valar debated much over the case of Míriel and Finwë, because it was unusual for someone to die at Valinor. Some Valar, although agreeing with the decision, thought that instead of solving the problem it would have perpetuated it. Manwe replied:

‘Neither must ye forget that in Arda Marred *Justice* is not *Healing*. Healing cometh only by suffering and patience, and maketh no demand, not even for Justice. Justice worketh only within the bonds of things as they are, accepting the marring of Arda, and therefore though Justice is itself good and desireth no farther evil, it came but perpetuate the evil that was, and doth not prevent it from the bearing of fruit in sorrow. Thus the Statute was just, but it accepted Death and the severance of Finwë and Míriel, a thing unnatural in Arda Unmarred, and therefore with reference to Arda Unmarred it was unnatural and fraught with Death. The liberty that it gave was a lower road that, if it led not still downwards, could not again ascend. But Healing must retain ever the thought of Arda Unmarred, and if it cannot ascend, must abide in patience. This is Hope which, I deem, is before all else the virtue most fair in the Children of Eru, but cannot be commanded to come when needed: patience must often long await it.’

The debate which follows Manwe's words is most interesting (Aule, Ulmo, Yavanna and Nienna voice different opinions); it is a rare example (insofar as I am able to judge) of the embodiment of a profound theological argument in a fictional narrative. The Manwe speaks again:

‘Aulë and Niëna err, I deem; for what each said in different words meaneth this much: that Death which cometh from the Marred may be one thing, and Death as an instrument of Eru be another thing and discernible: the one being of malice, and therefore only evil and inevitably grievous; the other, being of benevolence, intending particular and immediate good, and therefore not evil, and either not grievous or easily and swiftly to be healed. For the evil and the grief of Death are in mere severance and breach of nature which is alike in both (or Death is not their name); and both occur only in Arda Marred, and accord with its processes.

Therefore I deem that Ulmo is to be followed rather, holding that Eru need not and would not desire as a special instrument of his benevolence a thing that is evil. Wherefore, indeed, should he intrude Death as a “new thing” into a world that suffereth it already? Nonetheless, Eru is Lord of all, and will use as instrument of his final purposes, which are good, whatsoever any of his creatures, great or small, do or devise, in his despite or in his service. But we must hold that it is his will that those of the Eldar who serve him should not be cast down by griefs or evils that they encounter in Arda Marred; but should ascend to a strength and wisdom that they would not otherwise have achieved: that the Children of Eru should grow to be daughters and sons.

For Arda Unmarred hath to aspects or senses. The first is the Unmarred that they discern in the Marred, if their eyes are not deemed, and yearn for, as we yearn for the Will of Eru: this is the ground upon which Hope is built. The second is the Unmarred that shall be: that is, to speak according to Time in which they have their being, the Arda Healed, which shall be greater and more fair than the first, because of the Marring: this is the Hope that sustaineth. It cometh not only from the yearning for the Will of Iluvatar the Begetters (which by itself may lead those within Time to no more than regret), but also from trust in Eru the Lord everlasting, that he is good, and that his works shall all end in good. This the Marrer hath denied, and in this denial is the root of evil, and its end is in despair.

Therefore, notwithstanding the words of Vairë, I abide by that which I said first. For though she speaketh not without knowledge, she uttereth opinion and not certainty. The Valar have not and must not presume certainty with regard to the wills of the Children. Nor, even were they certain in this one case

concerning the *fëa* [soul] of Miriel would that unmake the union of love that once was between her and her spouse, or render void the judgement that constancy to it would in Finwë be a better and fairer course, more in accord with Arda Unmarred, or with the will of Eru in permitting this thing to befall him. The Statute openeth the liberty of a lower road, and accepting Death, countenanceth Death, and cannot heal it. If that liberty is used, the evil of the death of Miriel will continue to have power, and will bear fruit in sorrow’.

Lastly, Mandos adds:

‘Let the Statute stand, for it is just.

It is our part to rule Arda, and to counsel the Children, or to command them in things committed to our authority. Therefore it is our task to deal with Arda Marred, and to declare what is just within it. We may indeed in counsel point to the Higher Road, but we cannot compel any free creature to walk upon it. That leadeth to tyranny, which disfigureth good and maketh it seem hateful.

Healing by final Hope, as Manwë hath spoken of it, is a law which one can give to oneself only; of others justice alone can be demanded. A ruler who discerning justice refuseth to it the sanction of law, demanding abnegation of rights and self-sacrifice, will not drive his subjects to these virtues, virtuous only if free, but by unnaturally making justice unlawful, will drive them rather to rebellion against all law.’

Another interesting piece of the work is *The Controversy Between Finrod and Andreth*; the Elf who was friendly with Men and the wise elderly woman engaged in a philosophical discussion because Finrod had heard of a tradition amongst Men according to which they considered death not to be a natural event, but a result of the malice of Melkor. Andreth was aware of the uncertain status of tradition, both because it had no scientific basis and because there were diverse traditions, such as that (shared by the Elves) which maintained that the death of Men *was* natural and unavoidable. Finrod maintained that Melkor did not create death, but had merely perverted it; previously it had existed and been considered a good thing. Furthermore, Elves too would one day die, albeit after many eras had passed, and they did not know what would come after. Thus, after living for thousands of years, their condition was no different to that of a young Man who does not think of death because it is still far off. Andreth replied that thinking of death leads to desperation, because the world is controlled by Melkor, and no valorous Elfin or human action can succeed. Finrod chided her for confounding Melkor with Eru: he was the real lord of Arda and Manwe his second in command.

Finrod then said that Elves and Men see Arda differently; Men are like guests who stay for a short while in a new land and all is new and strange to their eyes, whilst the Elves are like people born in that land and everything seems familiar to them, all that exists, and their own property and therefore precious. For Finrod, the death of Men, before Melkor covered it with fear and anguish, was a “returning home” of the spirit which left Arda and the body which is part of Arda and went to some place of immortality.

Andreth asserted such an opinion to be false and the product of the Enemy’s lies, because it implied a sinful disregard for the body, whereas in every incarnate creature body and soul love one another mutually. Andreth then asked Finrod what hope was, and he distinguished two meanings: the first, more common, was “the search for improvement” and is the expectancy of good which, although uncertain, has some foundation in that which is already known (the Elvish word is *Amdir*). The second, more profound, is “faith” and since it is not derived from experience is not affected by things of this world, but is based on the belief that, since we are Children of Eru, he will not allow any enemy or us ourselves to deprive him of what is his (in Elvish, *Estel*). Andreth replied that Men’s *Estel* is shaken

and that they doubt that Melkor is lord of the world. Finrod's rejoinder was that even though *Estel* can be suffocated, there always remains at least a spark of it in our wishes and dreams.

The most interesting section of the book is, in my opinion, *Myths Transformed*; in the last years of his life JRRT modified several ideas which were central to his mythology. The *Silmarillion* was described as a human interpretation of Elf history known to the Men of Númenor and then of Middle-earth. The Men added their own primitive and absurd cosmological notions such as the Flat Earth and the Sun and the Moon as navigators in the sky, each with its own home etc., which were not shared by the High Elves, who had the same astronomical knowledge as twentieth-century men (considering Arda just a tiny speck lost amongst the endless regions of Ea). JRRT became convinced, towards the end of his life, that the Subcreator cannot present his readers with a world whose laws are in contrast with that which they are familiar. Thus, the Sun and Moon had to be born *long before* the Trees; the Trees, moreover, must have been created by the Valar for selfish motives, to decorate Valinor with which they became progressively infatuated, forgetting Middle-earth.

As for Melkor, although lord of the infinite regions of Ea, he was jealous of the kingdom of Manwe on Arda because he knew that the Sons of Eru would be born there and wanted to be their only lord and master. To this end, he had to make Men and Elves forget of the existence of Eru. But this could never happen because Eru had given the Vala Varda the power to take a Holy Light to Ea. JRRT wanted to make Melkor much more powerful than in the previous scheme of things; stronger than all the Valar put together.

The Valar managed to beat him in the War of Ira only because, through lust for power he had become the tyrant Morgoth, with enslaved Orcs, Balrogs, Dragons etc. In order to achieve this change, though, he had had to concede to these creatures the ability to procreate and multiply, thus greatly diminishing his individual creative power by giving a portion of it to beings which were partly independent and there potentially beyond his control – otherwise he would have been unable to slake his thirst for power. When Manwe saw Melkor transformed in Morgoth, he was amazed to see him so reduced in personal power; without his slaves he was now much weaker than Manwe and could not meet his stare.

In the Second Age, Sauron was imagined to be “greater” than Melkor at the end of the First Age since, although much smaller in size, he had not yet been reduced to such a weakened state. Morgoth had exhausted much of his essence by transferring it into the physical constituents of Arda, so much that creatures born there would be potentially corruptible (he did on a much larger scale the same thing that Sauron was to do with the Ring; but, although the destruction of the Ring was sufficient to destroy Sauron's power, to destroy Melkor's it was necessary to eliminate Arda, “Morgoth's Ring”). Sauron just inherited the corrupted Arda.

Sauron was moreover wiser than Melkor, because, not having initiated the rebellion, he could have stayed listening to the Music for longer. Melkor was possessed by a complete nihilism, wishing to destroy all the Elves and Men, that drove him mad, for he would have certainly have eliminated his Orcs too if he had won the war. The roots of Melkor's desperation and his final impotence were in the fact that – whilst Elves and Men continued to love Arda even though it was corrupt, because they could attempt to cure its wounds – he felt powerless towards it and, if he had had the freedom to act, he would angrily have sought to recreate the original chaos. And in this case he would have been defeated, since the world would have existed at some past time, independent from his mind.

Sauron never reached this degree of nihilism, never objected to the world's existence, as long as he could do as he wished in it. He still contained the relics of good qualities; his virtue was a love of order and coordination and he hated confusion and wasted energy (he was attracted to Melkor because

he thought – erroneously – that the former would be able to achieve his aims authoritatively and efficiently, in contrast to the wavering and wasteful behaviour of the other Valars).

Sauron was, in fact, very similar to Saruman and for this reason was able to understand his plans immediately. But, as with all minds of this sort, his love and comprehension of other intelligences was weak; although the only rational motive for all his order and planning was the good of all the inhabitants of Arda, his “plans” and “ideas” were the products of an isolated and therefore limited and simplistic mind and could only be implemented in a more complex reality by means of violence.

This distinction between Melkor and Sauron is oversimplified, because Sauron, after beginning to serve Melkor, became infected by his lust for destruction and hatred of God. But Sauron could not be a sincere atheist, because he had met Eru. He deceived himself into believing that Eru no longer cared about the destiny of Ea, or at least of Arda, because of the failure of the Valar, including Melkor. At the Fall of Númenor, he therefore interpreted as the isolation of Aman as Eru’s punishment of the Valar, who were deprived of all control over Middle-earth.

When he saw the Istari, he supposed that they had been sent by the Valar in a pathetic attempt to regain control over Middle-earth in order to colonize it, an imperialistic endeavour lacking the approval of Eru. Observation of Saruman’s behaviour confirmed his hypothesis and he became convinced. He could not understand Gandalf, but by now Sauron had become stupid enough to imagine that the difference in his behaviour compared to that of Saruman was merely due to an inferior intelligence and the wish to cause trouble.

Sauron was not a genuine atheist, but preached atheism because he knew it weakened other creatures’ resistance to him. Or he proclaimed idolatry of Melkor, as in the case of Ar-Pharazon. Here, he wanted to destroy the Men of Númenor in revenge for the humiliation inflicted upon Ar-Pharazon, although in fact (in contrast to Morgoth) Sauron would have been happy that they existed in his service, and corrupted and exploited for his own ends many of them.

Other subjects are dealt with in this section, such as the origin and behaviour of the Orcs, the reason why Manwe did not fight and the cause and modality of the “disappearance” of the Elves after the Third Age.

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The eleventh volume is entitled “The War of the Jewels”, considered by Christopher Tolkien companion to *The Morgoth’s Ring*; both refer to the First Age, the previous book to the earlier part (in Aman) and this to the later (in Beleriand). Little completely new material is to be found, though, unlike in the dazzling tenth volume.

It is said of female Dwarves:

The Naugrim have beards, male and female alike; nor indeed can their womenkind be discerned by those of other race, be it in feature or in gait or in voice, nor in any wise save this: that they go not to war, and seldom save direst need issue from their deep bowers and halls. It is said, also, that their womenkind are few, and that save their kings and chieftains few Dwarves ever wed; wherefore their race multiplied slowly, and now is dwindling

A long section (60 pages) is dedicated to *The Wanderings of Húrin*, in which the adventures of Túrin's father, after his release by Morgoth, are narrated in much greater detail than in the *Silmarillion* or *Unfinished Tales*. Four pages are devoted to the story of Maeglin, the unfortunate son of Isfin and Eol and rejected suitor of Idril.

A linguistic passage covers words which refer to Elves and their variety, such as the clan names, with a rich appendix listing the names used by Elves for Men, Dwarves and Orcs. Another section is about the Valar language, which explains, for example, that in their tongue the "Gods" call the Telperion tree *Ibrîniðilpathânezal* and the Laurelin tree *Tulukhedelgorûs*.

This interesting volume concludes with a piece about the Awakening of the very first Elves and their brides and the invention of spoken language.

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The twelfth book is called *The Peoples of Middle-Earth*. This is the last volume of JRRT's previously unpublished writings edited by his son Christopher, who observes in the *Preface*:

It is a long time since I began the work of ordering and elucidating the vast collection of papers in which my father's conception of Arda, Aman, and Middle-earth was contained[...] Nearly a quarter of a century later the story, as I have been able to tell it, is at last concluded. This is not to say that I have given an account of everything that my father wrote, even leaving aside the great body of his work on the language of Elves

So it doesn't seem impossible that other books of Tolkien's unpublished writings might appear in the future. This twelfth book covers many topics. The first part contains various versions of the *Appendices* and *Prologue* to the *Lord of the Rings*. There follow several late writings of greater interest. A brief account of the relations between Dwarves and Men describes the seven Dwarf tribes and where they Awoke, with references to their language and those of Men. A passage deals with some details of the Qenya spoken by Fëanor, the maternal names and names of all the descendents of Finwë and their meanings. A short piece outlining the problem of the reincarnation of Glorfindel, one of the five Wizards (and in which the two Blue Wizards have different names to those used in the *Unfinished Tales*) is followed by another on Cirdan the Carpenter. There is a piece containing the reply of the Elf Pengoloð to a question posed by the English sailor Ælfwine on the differences between the Elves' languages, and one concerning *lembas*.

Lastly, the plots of two interesting tales. The first, *The New Shadow*, is set in Minas Tirith in the Fourth Age after Aragorn's death; it is a sort of thriller in which an old man (younger brother of Bergil, the child who knew Pippin) finds out about a secret association of youngsters devoted to the cult of the Shadow and begins to investigate together with an ambiguous friend of his son. The second, *Tal-Elmar*, is set on the west coast of Middle-earth during the Second Age, at the time when the settlements of the Númenoreans had begun to spread, and takes the point of view of the indigenous people. Tal-Elmar is a youth sent in an advance patrol who finds out that he can understand the strangers' language.

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Looking back over these twelve volumes of the *History of Middle Earth*, then, one must express gratitude that Christopher Tolkien has made available to scholars such a large and precious collection

of material. It must be admitted that for the normal Tolkien reader the going is often heavy, since the work contains many repetitions on the part of the author and much erudite commentary on behalf of the editor. It would be useful to concentrate the most interesting passages into a single volume, so as to create a work which could be enjoyed in the same fashion as – and perhaps even more than – *Unfinished Tales*.