María José Esteve Ramos, José Ramón Prado-Pérez. eds. 2018. *Textual Reception and Cultural Debate in Medieval English Studies*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. Pp. vi + 190. 978-1-5275-0652-7.

Reviewed by ANDREW BREEZE, University of Navarra

Eight papers here advance our knowledge of Old and Middle English. All are serious in intent; some of them are outstanding pieces of research. They are also international in scope (with authors in Spain, England, Sweden, and the USA) and have comprehensive and up-to-date bibliographies. F. J. Alvarez López starts us off with Old English in bilingual copies of the Rule of St Benedict. J. L. Bueno Alonso (editor of this journal) then discusses beasts of battle in the Old English *Battle of Brunanburh*. After that are two pieces on Middle English scientific texts. Isabel de la Cruz Cabanillas investigates the dialect of Glasgow, University Library, MS Ferguson 147 (a collection of medical recipes) and locates it in Herefordshire. After this is her co-authored study (with Irene Diego Rodríguez) of the neglected *Booke of Ypocras*, a translation (surviving in many manuscripts) of *Astrologia Ypocratis* (which is not by Hippocrates). Astrology was a basic aspect of medieval medicine, as we recall from Chaucer's pilgrim Physician. But modern scholars rarely have much enthusiasm for it. Hence the neglect of this text. So we have an important act of rehabilitation.

There is more variety in what follows. Richard Dance of Cambridge surveys the contribution of Old Norse to Middle English. His bibliography is super-abundant, with one page (105) consisting entirely of footnotes, and others nearly so. Miguel Gomes, now teaching in Sunderland, explores landscapes of evil in *Beowulf*. Nils-Lennart Johannesson of Stockholm, who knows more about the work of Orm than anyone else on this planet, investigates its relation to the medieval Greek *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Haruko Momma, at Notre Dame University, ends the volume with the graveyard subject of worms, a topos dear to homilists and other medieval writers, but not much loved in modern times.

In Spain, Medieval English Studies came of age many years ago. *Textual Reception and Cultural Debate* is compelling proof of the expertise to be found here. To indicate that what it says can be taken further, we make these closing remarks. Nicole Discenza is quoted (p. 12) on how Alfredian translations "carry little trace" of the foreign languages spoken at Alfred's court. This is

nonsense. The Old English *Orosius* was surely translated by a Briton, dictating to an English scribe. We gather this from its bizarre treatment of name-forms, as Janet Bately showed in her edition of 1980. Malcolm Godden thereafter published evidence from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS lat. 3363, for Cornish influence in Alfred's circle; see this reviewer's 'The Old Cornish Gloss on Boethius', *Notes and Queries* 252 (2007), 267–268. The Old English *Orosius* is the work of a Cornishman, who pronounced names in British fashion, which were then copied down by an uncomprehending West Saxon scribe.

Elsewhere, *The Battle of Brunanburh* is rightly termed "heroic epic poetry" (p. 32). Ekwall's entries for *Browney* and *Lanchester* in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* now let us place the conflict at a Roman fort near Durham, in northern England. As for the poet, he will have been a cleric familiar with both heroic verse and the Bible, for his (emended) *on dingles mere* "on the sea of the abyss" at line 54b alludes to the "great deep" of Psalm 35:7 (36:6). Richard Dance, again with reason, calls *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* "the high water-mark of Norse influence on English" (p. 107); an unexpected instance here is the obscure form *rasse* (pp. 123–125). It will mean "water-course, channel" and be a borrowing from Old Norse *rás* "race, strong current of water" via Welsh *r(h)as* (which explains the short vowel). The author of the poem (a Cheshire magnate who died in 1414) knew Wales well. No surprise, then, if he used a form still found on maps of Wales at (for instance) Pant-y-rhas or Rhasau'r Glo.

Including material on medical texts, Norse influence on English, and sources known to Orm, *Textual Reception and Cultural Debate in Medieval English Studies* deserves a place on the shelves of all university libraries. It should be widely noticed, because some of its contents will be of value for a very long time indeed.

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Gomes-Gargamala, Miguel A. ed & trans. 2019. *Elegías Anglosajonas*. Madrid: Oficina de Arte y Ediciones. Pp. 125. Hardback. ISBN 978-84-949714-4-0.

Reviewed by Jorge L. Bueno Alonso, University of Vigo[1]

Since the dawn of time literature always had the power to make us recall and remember, to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes in appropriate empathy, to discover unknown parts of ourselves or feelings shared with other voices that managed to express them in a more satisfactory way. "This has also happened to me, that is the way I feel", we say while reading; and in such reading experience we are undoubtedly renewed. From all the literature written in Old English the commonly called 'Anglo-Saxon Elegies' could be signalled out as the texts that express such aforementioned evocative power with greater force, as so aptly stated Lois Bragg (1991: 17–18) in her classic study:

> How is it possible that a thousand-year-poem, a sequence of words in a dead language miraculously preserved and then ruthlessly edited, causes me to recollect what I know of the human experience, the things I know but have forgotten because I've filed them away in order to grade freshman essays or walk my children to their music lessons?

Society has evolved but we still have a great deal in common with those lyric voices from more than a thousand years ago in the sense that we are still human beings faced with our human emotions: grief, solitude, love, (be)longing, cold, absence, fear, hope [...] these are the fragments that shape our emotional cartography. More than ever in history, literature keeps on providing us with a compass to navigate the territories of the mind and the emotion.

When it comes to ancient literatures our capacity to read such compass always depend on the previous work done by other people versed in understanding their symbology and signification to render them later in our

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[1] This review is based on the Spanish prologue I wrote to this volume ("Prólogo: Una voz necesaria", 9–13). I thank the editors at Oficina de Arte for granting me permission to use parts of it to structure this review.

own language. Translations keep on being the only way to make such texts accessible to the non-especialized reader. This is extremely important in the case of poetical texts written in Old English, as the evolution and change suffered by the English language through its history turn Old English into a sort of foreign language for its native contemporary speakers. The relationship between the medieval varieties of other languages and their contemporary speakers is described in tighter terms than in English. The language of medieval Galicia, France, Italy, Spain or Iceland is understandable, with some minor glosses, for any contemporary speaker of Galician, French, Italian, Spanish or Icelandic. In the case of English, such comprehension and understanding only comes after a long training process; that is why the literature of the Anglo-Saxons always needs to come to the average reader through translations. When discussing the Old English Elegies to say 'translation' is to say 'text', and uttering 'text' is talking Poetry; we cannot forget the poetic nature and character of these pieces. Miguel A. Gomes, as the expert he is, never forgets about it.

When we translate to other languages a poem composed in Old English it is necessary to keep a certain degree of musicality in the final text. When you revise some prose translations of medieval and ancient literatures the reader faces more often than not a certain feeling of absence, as if something vital has been forgotten in the process of translation. As a translator of Anglo-Saxon myself I have never ceased to believe both in the outmost importance of having a poetic style and of following the formal aspects of poetic composition when translating, especially in dealing with such rich and structured texts as the Old English elegies. Doing otherwise would be to swindle the reader. It is a joy to see how Miguel A. Gomes has followed the path first travelled by translators such as Marijane Osborn, Edwin Morgan, Seamus Heaney, or my own case when it comes to Spanish and Galician. He offers in his *Elegías Anglosajonas* a set of texts that are excellent poetic translations but, first and foremost, constitute compositions with a voice of his own. Not so long ago Seamus Heaney (O'Driscoll 2009) stated, when discussing the translator's craft, that the translated version of a poem had to offer a musicality, a personal voice that not only followed the original text but also served equally as a ratification of the translator's personal expression.

That personal voice is contained in the seven Anglo-Saxon elegies presented by Miguel A. Gomes, a voice that comes directly from his wide knowledge of the original Old English text and from his very own decisions as a translator, which confirm his personal convictions when translating poetry:

in some lines he goes wonderfully archaic ("mientras en proa vime entre riscos envuelto", *Seaf* 8; "al albor vínome a ver la angustia", *Wife* 7), in some others he opts for classy wild modernity ("en días de ardua faena", *Seaf* 2; "Mas cuesta calmar las cicatrices del corazón", *Wan* 49) but everytime his verses are direct and sincere, like the very texts he is rendering, and his versions highlight the complexity of simple things. Just an example will suffice: *Wulf and Eadwacer*'s "willað hy hine aþecgan, gif he on þreat cymeð", which is rendered as "matarlo querrán si su mesnada ronda". No other translator in a romance language, as far as I know, has been able to render so beautifully the finesse of this Old English line; certainly not Bravo's "¿Podrán socorrerle si el se sintiera en peligro?", Lerate's "Recibirlo querrían si en aprieto llegara?", or Rico's "tal han de recibirlo, si llega en son de guerra", just to mention three of the most quoted translations of *Wulf* in Spanish.

Such knowledge and craftsmanship is shown by Miguel A. Gomes from his introduction to the seven poems he translates ("Estudio Introductorio: Encadenados por el pesar", 15–45), as this introductory text is well versed, easy to follow and understand by the non-especialized reader, and quite precise in content. The number of elegiac texts selected was not a random decision, as it could be considered as such between two and fourteen texts, in addition to some other sections extracted from longer works; practically all of them were excluded from the elegiac corpus or relabelled in a neverending number of subtypes: planctus, religious lyric, encomium urbis, Frauenlied, love lyric, confiteor, etc. If we focus only on the texts coming from the *Exeter Book*, combinations do vary: two, five, seven or nine texts. That is why the selection of seven made by Miguel A. Gomes is fully justified and makes it a representative sample of this Old English elegiac poetic discourse —to me (Bueno 2001)—, elegiac genre, mode or way of composition —to many others (Klinck 2001 & 2004, Muir 2006, Alexander 2013)—.

Miguel A. Gomes' translation is not only formally phenomenal. It is also thematically brilliant. At least in the way I have always considered them (Bueno 2004), the elegies are built around three conceptual parameters. First, the main core of this conceptual triangle is by no means the psychological parameter; the whole elegiac discourse is directed to transmit the expression of the psychological awareness, of the suffering, the disturbance, the innermost feelings, of all its poetic narrators as something that is an essential part of human experience. Second, the spatial/temporal parameter is always present as an element that frames the psychological expression: the present and the absent, the real and the mental journey, the passing-of-time obsession, the use

of imagination, the distance between human beings, these are always features that provoke or modulate the expression of psychological items. Third, the ecology parameter, which appears as a contextual reflection of an adequate natural environment. It is always present as the modifying background for the psychological expression of the poetic narrators. Once more, due to the richness of Anglo-Saxon elegiac poetry, every poet makes his own adaptation of this parameter, using different thematic figures —the sea, the Germanic wintry seascape, the hostile and inhuman natural environment, islands, forests, animals, etc.— always connected with the psychological parameter and, on certain occasions —e.g. *The Wife's Lament*—, with the space-time feature.

The interaction between these three conceptual parameters is more than evident and when you read the renderings by Miguel A. Gomes all this thematic complexity arises crystal clear through his verses. The readers of Spanish are lucky enough, finally, to have access to *The Seafarer* ('El marinero', 49–64), *The Wanderer* ('El exiliado errante', 65–80), *The Wife's Lament* ('El lamento de la esposa', 83–90), *Wulf and Eadwacer* ('Wulf y Eadwacer', 91–96), *The Husband's Message* ('El mensaje del amado', 97–104), *The Ruin* ('La ruina', 107–114) and *Deor* (115–122), in a translation that fully reflects the richness and thematic complexity of the original Old English; a text free at last from the structural impostures and prosaic phrasing that have in many cases hindered a great majority of previous Spanish translations. Every translation is presented with the Old English original, nicely edited[2] and supplemented with notes that offer snippets of information about the most relevant aspects and queries posed by the text. A nicely selected and commented bibliography follows as the adequate closure to the volume (pp. 123–125).

It is frequently said that what we are nowadays is connected to what we were in past times. These seven Anglo-Saxon elegies speak to us more powerfully than ever before, and they do so in this volume through the personal, unique and necessary voice of Miguel A. Gomes, to whom I give my most enthusiastically and heartfelt welcome to the highly reduced group of poetic translators of Old English.

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[2] It is not mentioned in the volume but I assume the Old English text has been edited using the manuscript as it appears on Muir (2006).

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J. R. R. Tolkien. 2017. *Beren and Lúthien*. London: HarperCollins Publishers. Ed. by Christopher Tolkien. Pp. 288. ISBN 978-0-00-821419-7.

J. R. R. Tolkien. 2018. *The Fall of Gondolin*. London: HarperCollins Publishers. Ed. by Christopher Tolkien. Pp. 302. 978-0-00-830275-7.

Reviewed by ADRIANA TABOADA GONZÁLEZ, University of Vigo

Let us say, for lack of a better powerful and well-known introduction, that it is a truth universally acknowledged that the number of critical approaches concerning things Tolkenian has increased steadily to reach an impressive amount of publications in recent times. The fiftieth anniversary of *The Lord of the Rings* in 2005 signalled an important revival on Tolkien's appreciation as a writer and gave way to the appearance of new materials that have proved to be fundamental for subsequent critical analyses: i.e. companions and guides (Hammond & Scull 2005 [2014], Scull & Hammond 2006, Lee 2014) handbooks (Chance & Siewers 2005), casebooks (Hunt 2013), encyclopaedias (Drout 2007), specific studies (Rosebury 2003, Zettersten 2011), etc.

Evidently, one of the main responsible popular figures for such a recent revival of things Tolkienian was Peter Jackson and his films —which could be considered classics since more than a decade has passed since the release of the first title of the series— on the three parts that shape Tolkien's epic narration: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. Janice M. Bogstad and Phillip E. Kaveny mentioned in the preface to their volume devoted to Jackson's Film Trilogy how "according to many represented in this collection, Jackson's efforts cannot diminish Tolkien's accomplishments, they can only deepen them" (2011: 3). So, always attentive to new business opportunities, some publishing houses took profit from that new-fangled interest to awake the never too dormant Tolkenian marketing machinery by giving to the printing press new editions of his books, film tie-ins and, in some cases, highly philological works difficult to sell in the mass-market. Only in such a context the publication of books such as *The Children of Húrin* (Tolkien 2007), *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* (Tolkien 2009), *The Fall of Arthur* (Tolkien 2013), *Beowulf* (Tolkien 2014), *The Story of Kulervo* (Tolkien 2015), or *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun together with the Corrigan Poems* (2016)

could be understood. The two books reviewed here are unquestionable heirs of such new approaches and reassessments.

Back in 2007 Christopher Tolkien edited the first of what his father considered to be the Great Tales of the Middle-earth, *The Children of Húrin*, so as to give the insatiable readers of the fantastic realm an easier-to-read version of a story that had already been published and analysed as chapters of longer volumes (*The Book of Lost Tales* 1984 [2015]: 3–48, 144–197; *The Lays of Beleriand* 1985 [2015]: 3–130) or mentioned as background reference in J. R. R. Tolkien's masterpiece. However, if in *The Children of Húrin*, Christopher Tolkien decided to present the story of Túrin Turambar as a single full-length, uninterrupted piece, with *Beren and Lúthien* he took the complete opposite path, offering the readers an amalgam of the different available versions —both verse and prose editions— of this "heroic-fairy-romance" (2017: 12) mixed with his own comments on the most remarkable changes from one text to the other, with all its consequences.

As the editor himself recognised, "this book does not offer a single page of original and unpublished work" (2017: 11) yet the need to bring this narration back does not lie in the originality of its content more than it does in the importance of the history within it. It is this term, *history*, that Christopher Tolkien chose to justify what he back then referred to as "(presumptively) [his] last book" (2017: 16). For him there are two different ways of understanding the aforementioned term: on the one hand, it refers to "a chronicle of lives and events in Middle-earth" (2017: 11), on the other hand, it is an account "of the changing literary conceptions in the passing years". Both perspectives had already been dealt with through the publication of *The History of Middle-earth*, however, since the preceding materials covered a vast collection of texts amongst which this one was everything but the main focus, being able to understand this particular story and its creative process as a "single and well-defined narrative [...] is not easy" (2017: 12). Thus, the interest of this work resides in its individuality, a well-deserved distinctiveness borrowed from *The Children of Húrin* and reused in *The Fall of Gondolin* that Christopher Tolkien justified in that "the narrative, the story of Beren and Lúthien, was itself continually evolving, and developing new associations as it became more embedded in the wider history" (2017: 16). Of course, the singularity of this story is also explained by the personal and emotional attachment of both its original author and its now editor since its love story is no other than a fantastic retelling of Tolkien's own romance with the person who would later become his wife and mother of their kids, Edith.

Once the reader has admired Alan Lee's front cover —whose work will be also discussed— and proceeds to consult the list of contents, they will find a surprisingly non-exhaustive account of everything that can be found throughout the volume, especially when compared to its predecessors. Apart from the generally acknowledged sections ("List of Plates", "Preface") and those that are indispensable when we talk about things Tolkenian ("Notes on the Elder Days", "List of Names", and "Glossary"), the only reference to the main part, "BEREN AND LÚTHIEN", seems to diminish its prominence in the volume —use of capitals aside—, something particularly noteworthy given the circumstance that each version of the story comes after a title and a comment from the editor. This exclusion of the different editions of the narrative from the list of contents hinders any further consultations of the text, radically contradicting the editor's initial purpose and anticipating what is to come: a series of more or less connected fragments whose meaning gets, more often than not, lost.

Avid readers of Tolkeniana are used to Christopher Tolkien's extensive notes throughout the texts he has edited so far, and *Beren and Lúthien* is not an exception, albeit the differences. Even if in the preface the editor already gives some notes on why he decided to present this work, how he is doing it and where it lies in the history of Middle-earth, once the main body of the text begins, the editor offers another thorough introduction that serves to put a historical frame —both inside and out the Middle-earth— to the tale of Beren and Lúthien, focusing on its very first version, *The Tale of Tinúviel*. As one would expect, one of the most interesting features of this second introduction is the early analysis of some of the mayor changes the text suffered, that serve for a better understanding of the story itself, such as the evolution in Beren's identity, first as an Elf and later as a man (2017: 32). What follows after this section is the tale itself told in J. R. R. Tolkien's "own words" (2017: 13); here resides the main difference to what seemed to be Christopher Tolkien's editing style since, in contrast to what he normally does, in this case he avoids filling the text with footnotes, resisting "the urge to explain, for fear of undermining the primary purpose and method of the book" (2017: 16) —a choice that, apart from giving the reading process an extra sense of fluidity, reflects the author's words and work in a rather illuminating way.

The other excerpts of the tale follow a similar structure: an explanation of both the time when it was written and the major changes that can be found precede the text itself. However, it is not always clear where the comments

belong; for instance, in the second subsection, "A Passage from the 'Sketch of the Mythology'" (2017: 90), the notes on the text can be found both at the end of the previous section, as an introduction, and at the end of the actual section, whereas in other parts of the text those introductory comments are subsections themselves and then the passages follow, as it is the case of "The *Quenta Noldorinwa*" and "A Passage Extracted from the *Quenta*" (2017: 103, 105). Taking all this into account one cannot but wonder if the chosen structure to present these texts is the most adequate, since it sometimes hardens the understanding of the story and the history behind it.

Alan Lee's work is not new for anyone, no matter how remotely familiarised with Tolkien's world they are, therefore, the wise decision of designating him as the illustrator of this volume does not come as a surprise; after all, he had already illustrated the first of the Great Tales. Lee's use of watercolour is impeccable, but even more astonishing is his ability to draw the highly detailed pencil sketches that accompany the text. Illustrations should be visual translations of what is being described with words, thus it is essential that they successfully convey the same tone of the narration. Perhaps this is why in *Beren and Lúthien*, which is without a doubt the Great Tale that is closer to be a fairy tale with its shapeshifting characters and talking animals, Lee choses to use a different approach to what he has traditionally offered. If the artist normally avoids drawing close portraits of the characters so as to bypass any possible conflicts "with the image the text is creating in the readers mind", in this case he decided to take the risk of moving the focus from the landscapes to the protagonists, leaving the readers with scenes such as the one facing page 208 that portrays the lines: "fluttering before his eyes, she wound / a mazy-wingéd dance" (Tolkien 2017: 209). In this moment of the tale Lúthien is trying to save Beren from Morgoth's fortress, Angband, by casting a sleeping spell on every creature of the fortress, including Morgoth. The amount of detail with which Lee illustrates not only the sleeping orcs and other evil creatures but also every column of the castle is simply outstanding.

The use of frames in the watercolour illustrations is also worth remarking, since it serves as the "visual equivalent of the narrator's 'once upon a time'". Bearing this in mind, Lee plays around with the content of each of the frames, giving the reader a clear idea of what the main focus of a certain part of the story is; for instance, when the scenes describe an event related to the Silmarils, the frames include jewel-shaped ornaments, whereas if the focus is given to the villain of that section, the adornments change to the eyes of that particular animal —in this tale Tolkien chose cats and/or wolves as the main

villains. There is no doubt then of the importance of Lee's contribution to what seemed to be the last work of J. R. R. Tolkien's son.

Luckily enough for the readers —especially for those worried about Christopher Tolkien's retirement—, right after a year since the publication of *Beren and Lúthien*, HarperCollins surprised the audience with the announcement of the "(indubitably)" (2018: 9) last book edited by him, *The Fall of Gondolin* (2018). Even if in this volume he "adopted the same curious form" (2018: 13) as in *Beren and Lúthien*, he also "arranged the content of the book in a manner distinct from [it]" (2018: 17), highly improving the result.

Whereas in *Beren and Lúthien* the list of contents already anticipated a rather confusing structure of an otherwise excellent content, in *The Fall of Gondolin* every chapter and section of the book find their own space, thus facilitating further in book searches. Setting aside those epigraphs that were already used in the first of the tales under discussion, the addition of the "List of Illustrations" is of especial interest since, for the first time in this kind of publications, Christopher Tolkien decides to give some credit to the pencil sketches that complete the text, giving them the same importance, at last, as the watercolours ("List of Plates"). Moreover, in the introduction to this tale he finally acknowledges and thanks Alan Lee for his work, certainly not without good reason for Lee "has brought to this task a deep perception of the inner nature of scene and event that he has chosen from the great range of the Elder Days" (2018: 18).

If in *Beren and Lúthien* the artist put the focus on the characters of the tale, here he moves back to what has become his signature: using breath-taking landscapes that still manage to portray the main events. A good example of this is the very first plate of the book, "Swanhaven", facing page 33. Even if at first glance it seems to be an almost bucolic scene to promote a holiday destination, the roughness of the sea and apparently chaotic flight of the swans brings out the suspicion of what might be indeed happening. Following the swans spiral, and once special attention is paid to the details of the watercolour, one can recognise that what looked like ordinary people hanging in the port is no other but a daunting amount corpses, the remains of a terrible battle that ended up with the annihilation of a whole elvish race marking the beginning of a long held curse by the gods of the Middle-earth, the Valar. The dramatic quality of this event is shown through the use of the colours and the depiction of nature, a technique Lee demonstrates to master in each of his works, and in which he finds a particular enjoyment —getting to the point of sometimes feeling that "[his] trees have more life in them than

[his] people" (Lee 2005: 105). However, he does not need to use colours in order to give Nature its required dramatism, as it can be seen in the sketch of page 119 called "The mountains and the sea". The water and the mountains are two fundamental elements in this story, since it is through the curse of the river Sirion that Tuor begins the trip that would take him to Gondolin, the city hidden by mountains. The roughness of the waves in this sketch cannot but remind the reader of the moment in which Ulmo appears from the sea to tell Tuor what his deed is: trying to save the city of Gondolin from the destruction. The movement of the water is in fact very similar to that of the watercolour that serves as a back cover of the book, the one entitled "Ulmo appears before Tuor".

As it was already mentioned, the division of the different sections of this book is a definite improvement from the previous publication. After a preface and a prologue that examine the context of the tale both inside the history of Middle-earth and out, "the texts of the Tale appear first, in succession and with little or no commentary", followed by an "account of the evolution of the story" and a "discussion of [Tolkien's] profoundly saddening abandonment of the last version of the *Tale*" (Tolkien 2018: 17). This similar yet distinctive enough organisation of the text has an undeniably positive impact in the reading process, giving a sense of flow that was not always present in *Beren and Lúthien*, making *The Fall of Gondolin* look way more like what he intended to do with the previous one. Furthermore, the inclusion of a map of Beleriand at the end of the volume is of unquestionable help for the reader due to the amount of references to other places that are scattered throughout the text. Christopher Tolkien's comments in between passages are of the same invaluable quality as in the other two tales, making it clear that he is the truthful son of his father by being able to interpret and transmit his manuscripts to the general audience in ways otherwise impossible.

The necessity of these two tales in the overall scheme of the Middle-earth is unquestionable. They close a cycle that begun with the publication of *The Children of Húrin* and gave a deeper understanding of the history behind the things Tolkenian. Christopher Tolkien's work throughout the years to bring his father's work closer to the audiences is of incalculable value, not only to the general fandom but also to the academics who decide to dedicate their professional lives to the wonders of the Middle-earth and its close connection with Medieval Literature. *Beren and Lúthien* and *The Fall of Gondolin* are no exceptions to this, although it is true that while reading the former might be of a too great difficulty for the inexperienced, the later does a better job in

facilitating the reading, both through its structure and the use of a clear and easy-to-follow language, to those readers who navigate these waters for the first time. However, and being most likely influenced by my profound interest in the works of Tolkien and in contrast with my opinion in this matter about *The Children of Húrin*, I without any doubt recommend reading the main sources of *The Legendarium*, i.e. *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Silmarilion*, to better contextualise them in the broader picture presented by Middle-earth.

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