

# THE SORTING OF THE SILMARILLION

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# The Sorting of the Silmarillion

## 1. Three Books of Lore

At first sight it is puzzling that in the preamble the *Annals of Valinor* are called *Pennas*, since the *Pennas* or *Quenta* (see p. 250-1) is clearly intended to represent a different literary tradition from the *Annals*, or at least a different mode of presenting the material. The preamble goes on to say, however, that this book *Pennas* is divided into three parts: the first part is *Valinórelúmien*, that is *Godéðles géargetæl* (i.e. *Annals of Valinor*); the second is *Beleriandes géargetæl* (i.e. *Annals of Beleriand*); and the third is *Quenta Noldorinwa* or *Pennas nan Goelið*, that is *Noldelfaracu* (the *History of the Noldorin Elves*). Thus, here at any rate, *Pennas* (*Quenta*) is used in both a stricter and a wider sense: the whole opus that Ælfwine translated in *Tol Eressëa* is the *Pennas* (*Quenta*), 'the History', but the term is also used more narrowly of the *Pennas nan Goelið* or *Quenta Noldorinwa*, which may be thought of as 'the *Silmarillion* proper', as opposed to the 'Annals'. In fact, in an addition to the very brief Old English version III of the *Annals of Valinor* (p. 347, note to line 5) it is expressly said: 'This third part is also called *Silmarillion*, that is the history of the *Eorclanstánas* [*Silmarils*].' (284)

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## 2. Suspicious Revisions

This version, on a single manuscript page, gives a slightly different form of the first twenty-odd lines of version II. It is much later than II, as is shown by *Melkor*, not *Melko* (see p. 282), but was nonetheless taken directly from it, as is shown by the continued absence of Ossë from the list of the Valar (see note to line 17 in version II). Later changes pencilled on version I are here embodied in the text (*Pengoloð* for *Pengolod*, *Taprobele* for *Tafrobele*, *Melkor* for *Melko*). (290)

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## 3. Sorting out the Chronology

This is the only further fragment of Ælfwine's work in Tol Eressëa in his own language. Its relation to the Modern English version is puzzling, since, though it largely corresponds closely to AB II, it also has features of the AB I text. For instance, the defiance of Fingolfin before Angband and the withdrawal of the Fëanorians to the southern shore of the lake is absent from annal 1; the date 'I-C' follows AB I; while *Mereth Aderthad* in annal XX agrees with AB II the annal is otherwise as AB I; and annal L is a confused mixture. The simple explanation that my father made the Old English version after AB I but before AB II (and hence the headnote to AB II 'Translation of Ælfwine') comes up against the difficulty that in the Old English the Siege of Angband lasted *tú hund géara oððe má* (line 81), whereas AB II has 'one hundred' emended to 'two hundred'. But the matter is not of importance. (337)

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## 4. Text and Source

**Annal 105** In this annal are described for the first time Morgoth's tests of the strength and watchfulness of the besiegers, referred to in annal 51, and which remain in *The Silmarillion* (p. 116). The first of these is there said to have taken place nearly a hundred years since Dagor Aglareb, not as here fifty-four; but the route taken by Morgoth's host is the same in both accounts, southwards down the coast between Ered Lómin and the sea to the Firth of Drengist. The story of the emergence of Glómund, not yet full-grown, from the gates of Angband by night, the flight of the Elves to Eredwethion and Taur-na-Danion, and the rout of Glómund by Fingon's horsed archers, is very close to the account in *The Silmarillion*, where however it took place a hundred years later after the attack that ended at Drengist: in AB II, again, the time was only half as long. These differences are associated with further great lengthening of the duration of the Siege. (336)

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## 5. How Time Flies

The shortness of the time as my father at this period conceived it is very remarkable, the more so in comparison with the later lavish millennia of the Second and Third Ages, not to mention the aeons allowed to the ages before the rising of the Sun and Moon. The history of Men in Beleriand is comprised in 150 years before the beginning of the Great Battle; Nargothrond, Doriath, and Gondolin were all destroyed within thirteen years; and the entire history from the rising of the Sun and Moon and the coming of the exiled Noldoli to the destruction of Beleriand and the end of the Elder Days covers two and a half centuries (or three according to the addition given in note 69: 'This great war lasted fifty years').  
(327)

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## 6. The Prose of AB I

**Year 1** Here Sun and Moon, made by the Gods after the death of the Two Trees of Valinor, appear. Thus measured time came into the Hither Lands. Fingolfin leads the second house of the Gnomes over the straits of Grinding Ice into the Hither Lands. With him came the son of Finrod, Felagund, and part of the third or youngest house. They march from the North as the Sun rises, and unfurl their banners; and they come to Mithrim, but there is feud between them and the sons of Fëanor. Morgoth at coming of Light retreats into his deepest dungeons, but smithies in secret, and sends forth black clouds. (295)

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## 7. Just the Facts

**207** Here Morgoth loosed a host of dragons over the mountains from the North and Gondolin's vale was taken and the city besieged. The Orcs sacked Gondolin and destroyed the king and most of his people; but Ecthelion of the Fountain slew there Gothmog lord of Balrogs ere he fell.

Tuor slew Meglin. Tuor, Idril and Eärendel escaped by a secret way devised by Idril and came to Cristhorn, Eagles' Cleft, a high pass beneath Fingolfin's cairn in the North. Glorfindel was there slain in an ambush, but Thorndor saved the remnant of Gondolin, and they escaped at last into the vale of Sirion.

The ruin of the Elves was now well-nigh complete, and no refuge or strong place or realm remained to them. (307-308)

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## 8. Death by Misadventure

**189** Blodrin Ban's son betrays their hiding place, and Túrin is taken alive. Beleg healed of his wounds follows in pursuit. He comes upon Flinding son of Fuilin, who escaped from Morgoth's mines; together they rescue Túrin from the Orcs. Túrin slays Beleg by misadventure. (304)

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## 9. Filling in the Corners

**20** Feast and Games of Reuniting were held in Nan Tathrin, the Land of Willows, near the delta of Sirion, between the Elves of Valinor returning and the Dark-elves, both those of the Western Havens (Brithombar and Eldorest) and the scattered Wood-elves of the West, and ambassadors of Thingol. A time of peace followed. (296)

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## 10. Ulmo's Urgency

**195** Glómund with a host of Orcs comes over Erydlómin and defeats the Gnomes between Narog and Taiglin. Handir is slain. Flinding dies refusing succour of Túrin. Túrin hastens back to Nargothrond but it is sacked ere his coming. He is deceived and spellbound by Glómund. Finduilas and the women of Nargothrond are taken as thralls, but Túrin deceived by Glómund goes to Hithlum to seek Morwen.

News comes to Doriath that Nargothrond is taken and Mormakil is Túrin.

Tuor was led out of Hithlum by a secret way under Ulmo's guidance, and journeying along the coast past the ruined havens of Brithombar and Eldorest and reached Sirion's mouth. (305)

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## 11. Masters of Doom

**196** Here Tuor meets Bronweg at Sirion's mouth. Ulmo himself appears to him in Nan-tathrin; and Tuor and Bronweg guided by Ulmo find Gondolin. They are received after questioning, and Tuor speaks the embassy of Ulmo. Turgon does not now harken to it, partly because of the urging of Meglin. But Tuor for his kindred's sake is held in great honour.

Morwen goes to Nargothrond, whither Glómund has returned and lies on the treasure of Felagund. She seeks for tidings of Túrin. Nienor against her bidding rides in disguise with her escort of Elves of the folk of Thingol.

Glómund lays a spell on the company and disperses it. Morwen vanishes in the woods; and a great darkness of mind comes on Nienor.

Túrin found Nienor hunted by the Orcs. He names her Níniel, the tearful, since she knew not her name, and himself Turambar. (305-306)

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## 12. Sorrow and Joy

**199** Glómund seeks out the dwellings of Túrin. Túrin slays him with Gurtholfin his sword; but falls aswoon beside him. Nienor finds him, but Glómund ere death releases her from the spell and declares her kindred. Nienor casts herself away over the waterfall in that place. Brandir reveals the truth to Túrin and is slain by him. Túrin bids Gurtholfin slay him, and he dies. So ended the worst of Morgoth's evil; but Húrin was released from Angband, bowed with age, and sought for Morwen.

Tuor weds Idril Celebrindal daughter of [Turgon of] Gondolin, and earns the secret hate of Meglin. (306)

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## 13. Blessing and Cursing

**200** Here was born Eärendel the Bright, the star of the Two Kindreds, unto Tuor and Idril in Gondolin. Here was born also Elwing the White, fairest of women save Lúthien, unto Dior in Ossiriand.

Húrin gathers men unto him. They find the treasure of Nargothrond and slay Mîm the Dwarf who had taken it to himself. The treasure is cursed. The treasure is brought to Thingol. But Húrin departs from Doriath with bitter words, but of his fate and of Morwen's after no certain tidings are known. (306)

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## 14. Húrin and Gondolin

**155** Turgon was not at that battle, nor Haleth or any but few of his folk. It is said that Húrin was at foster with Haleth, and that Haleth and Húrin hunting in Sirion's vale came upon some of Turgon's folk, and were brought into the secret vale of Gondolin, whereof of those outside none yet knew save Thorndor King of Eagles; for Turgon had messages and dreams sent by the God Ulmo, Lord of Waters, up Sirion warning him that help of Men was necessary for him. But Haleth and Húrin swore oaths of secrecy and never revealed Gondolin, but Haleth learned something of the counsels of Turgon, and told them after to Húrin. Great liking had Turgon for the boy Húrin and would keep him in Gondolin, but the grievous tidings of the great battle came and they departed. (298-299)

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## 15. Ulmo's Foresight Increases

**50** Morgoth's might begins to move once more. Earthquakes in the North. Orc-raids begin. Turgon son of Fingolfin is great in friendship with Felagund son of Finrod; but Orodreth, Angrod, and Egnor, sons of Finrod, are friends of the sons of Fëanor, especially Celegorm and Curufin.

Turgon and Felagund are troubled by dreams and forebodings. Felagund finds the caves of Narog and established his armouries there. Turgon alone discovers the hidden vale of Gondolin. Being still troubled in heart he gathers folk about him and departs from Hithlum, the Land of Mist about Mithrim, where his brother Fingon remains. (296)

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## 16. The Sheep and the Goats

**247** Fionwë's host draws nigh to the Hither Lands and his trumpets from the sea ring in the western woods. Here was fought the Battle of Eldorest, where Ingwil son of Ingwë made a landing. Great war comes into Beleriand, and Fionwë summons all Elves, and Dwarves, and Men, and Beasts, and birds to his standards, who do not elect to fight for Morgoth. But the power and dread of Morgoth was very great, and many did not obey.  
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## 17. The Elves in the Great Lands

**51-255** This time is called the Siege of Angband and was a time of bliss, and the world had peace and light, and Beleriand became exceedingly fair, and Men waxed and multiplied and spread, and had converse with the Dark-elves of the East, and learned much of them, and they heard rumours of the Blessed Realms of the West and of the Powers that dwelt there, and many in their wanderings moved slowly thither. (331)