

The earliest drafts of *The GEST of BEREN and LÚTHIEN* with commentary by C.S. Lewis

Certainly to their fans, the friendship between J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis is a well-known element of the lives of both men. For a period of at least twenty years, they were close confidantes and frequent companions. The extent to which this friendship included mutual admiration of their work was uneven. In general, Lewis was unstintingly admiring of Tolkien's work, and Tolkien was frequently irritated or dissatisfied with Lewis'.

Be that as it may, relatively early in their friendship (before 7 December 1929) gave Lewis the typescript to his long poem, *The Geste of Beren and Lúthien*, to read. Based on his correspondence with Tolkien, Lewis read at least the first two thousand lines of the poem at that time, and perhaps read as far as line 3000 (which was as far as the poem had gone at the end of 1929). It seems probable to me that eventually read the entire poem.

Not too long after this, Lewis gave or sent Tolkien fourteen pages of detailed and highly imaginative feedback on the first thousand lines of the poem. Instead of presenting his criticism and suggestions as his own opinions on his friend's work, he pretended to be conducting an overview of (nonexistent) critical opinions on the poem, including a divergent manuscript tradition of six main copies (identified by the letters **H**, **J**, **K**, **L**, **P**, and **R**), four distinguished experts, and even a German scholarly journal dedicated exclusively to the study of the poem. This was probably meant to take the sting out of some of Lewis' harsher critiques, and also allowed him propose alternate readings, but it was also a way of entering more fully into the spirit of Tolkien's entire sub-creative project, at least as far as he understood it at that point.

Tolkien took the entire critique quite seriously, making some sort of changes to most of the passages that Lewis flagged, although he seldom made the precise changes Lewis recommended, and sometimes expressed horror at Lewis' own proposed verses.

Up to now, it has only been possible to read this commentary in a rather disjointed and unsatisfactory way; it appears as an internal appendix to the already forbidding presentation of the poem in *The Lays of Beleriand*. What I have tried to do here is, using the material provided by Christopher Tolkien in that book, to reconstruct the first thousand lines of the *Gest* as Lewis would have seen them, and provide Lewis' annotations as footnotes so that they can be read in a more organic fashion. Lewis' notes (and any indications about changes Tolkien made to the poem based on them) are in this font; other

notes about early shifts in the poem that are apparently unrelated to Lewis' feedback are (like the main text) are in a serified typeface.

My hope is that by making the early changes in the poem, Lewis' commentary, and Tolkien's reactions to feedback more accessible, that writers of any kind can benefit from seeing the dynamism of feedback and revision in action.

I

A king was in the dawn of days:
his golden crown did brightly blaze
with ruby red and crystal clear;
his meats were sweet,¹ his dishes dear;
red robes of silk, an ivory throne,
and hoarded gold in gleaming grot

¹ *Meats were sweet.* This is the reading of **PRK**. Let any one believe if he can that our author gave such a cacophony. **J** reads *His drink was sweet his dishes dear*. **L** has *His drink was sweet his dish was dear*. (Many scholars have rejected lines 1-8 altogether as unworthy of the poet. 'They were added by a later hand to supply a gap in the arch type,' says Peabody; and adds 'The more melodious movement and surer narrative stride of the passage beginning with line 9 [*But fairer than are born to Men*] should convince the dullest that here, and here only, the authentic work of the poet begins.' I am not convinced that **H**, which had better be quoted in full, does not give the true opening of the *Geste*.

*That was long since in ages old
When first the stars in heaven rolled,
There dwelt beyond Broseliand,
While loneliness yet held the land,
A great king comely under crown,
The gold was woven in his gown,
The gold was clasped about his feet,
The gold about his waist did meet.
And in his many-pillared house
Many a gold bee and ivory mouse
And amber chessmen on their field
Of copper, many a drinking horn
Dear purchased from shy unicorn
Lay piled, with gold in gleaming grot.
All these he had etc.)*

all these he had and heeded not.²
But fairer than are born to Men
a daughter had he, Lúthien.³

Such lissom limbs no more shall run
on the green earth beneath the sun;
so fair a maid no more shall be
from dawn to dusk, from sun to sea.
Her robe was blue as summer skies,
but grey as evening were her eyes;
'twas sewn with golden lilies fair,
but dark as shadow was her hair.
Her feet were light as bird on wing,
her laughter lighter than the spring;
the slender willow, the bowing reed,
the fragrance of a flowering mead,

² The very first draft of the poem had a very different opening [left]. After the first major revision (after reading Lewis' commentary) Tolkien rewrote the main text to the version on the right.

*A king was in the dawn of days:
his golden crown did brightly blaze
with ruby red and crystal clear;
his meats were sweet, his dishes dear;
red robes of silk, an ivory throne,
and ancient halls of arched stone,
and wine and music lavished free,
and thirty champions and three,
all these he had and heeded not.
His daughter dear was Melilot:
from dawn to dusk, from sun to sea,
no fairer maiden found could be.
from England unto Eglamar
o'er folk and field and lands afar
Her robe was blue as summer skies
but not so blue as were her eyes;
'twas sewn with golden lilies fair,
but none so golden as her hair.*

*A king there was in days of old:
ere Men yet walked upon the mould
his power was reared in cavern's shade,
his hand was over glen and glade.
His shields were shining as the moon,
his lances keen of steel were hewn,
of silver grey his crown was wrought,
the starlight in his banners caught;
and silver thrilled his trumpets long
beneath the stars in challenge strong;
enchantment did his realm enfold,
where might and glory; wealth untold,
he wielded from his ivory throne
in many-pillared halls of stone.
There beryl, pearl, and opal pale,
and metal wrought like fishes' mail
buckler and corslet, axe and sword:
and gleaming spears were laid in hoard—
all these he had and loved them less
than a maiden once in Elfinesse:
for fairer than are born to Men'
a daughter had he, Luthien.*

³ The description of Lúthien has been too often and too justly praised to encourage the mere commentator in intruding.

the light upon the leaves of trees,
the voice of water, more than these
her beauty was and blissfulness,
her glory and her loveliness;
and her the king more dear did prize
than hand or heart or light of eyes.

They dwelt beyond Broseliand,⁴
while loneliness yet held the land,
in the forest dark of Doriath:
few ever thither found the path;
few ever dared the forest-eaves
to pass, or stir the listening leaves
with tongue of hounds a-hunting fleet
with horse, or horn, or mortal feet.
Yet came at whiles afar and dim
beneath the roots of mountains grim
a blowing and a sound of bells
a hidden hunt in hollow dells.
To North there lay the Land of Dread,
whence only evil pathways led
o'er hills of shadow bleak and cold;
to West and South the oceans rolled
unsailed and shoreless, wild and wide;
to East and East the hills did hide
beneath the tangled woodland shade
thorn and thicket, grove and glade,
whose brooding boughs with magic hung
were ancient when the world was young.

⁴ In the second typescript, at all occurrences, "Broseliand" was replaced with "Beleriand."

There Thingol in the Thousand Caves,
whose portals pale that river laves⁵
Esgalduin that fairies call,
in many a tall⁶ and torchlit hall
a dark and hidden king did dwell,
lord of the forest and the fell ;
and sharp his sword and high his helm,
the king of beech and oak and elm.⁷

There Lúthien the lissom maid
would dance in dell and grassy glade,
and music merrily, thin and clear,
went down the ways, more fair than ear
of mortal feaster ever heard⁸
and fairer than the song of bird.
When leaves were long and grass was green
then Dairon with his fingers lean,
as daylight melted into shade,

⁵ The original MS has the following quatrain. Note that (as Lúthien was called “Melilot” in the first MS), Thingol is called “Celegorm,” even though that name had already been assigned to a son of Fëanor even in the Lost Tales.

*There Celegorm his ageless days
doth wear amid the woven ways
the glimmering aisles and endless naves
whose pillared feet that river laves.*

⁶ Thus **PRKJH. L** has *vast*. Schick’s complimentary title of ‘internal rime’ for these cacophonies does not much mend matters. ‘The poet of the *Geste* knew nothing of internal rime, and its appearance (so called) is an infallible mark of corruption’ (Pumpernickel). But cf. 209, 413.

⁷ The reader who wishes to acquire a touchstone for the true style of the *Geste* had better learn by heart this faultless and characteristic distych.

⁸ **HL** *Of mortal men at feast has heard*
[Tolkien changed the line in the next draft of this section to: *of mortal Men at feast hath heard,*]

a wandering music sweetly made,
enchanted fluting, warbling wild,
for love of Thingol's elfin child.

There bow was bent and shaft was sped,
and deer as fallow phantoms fled,
and horses pale with harness bright
went jingling by on moonlit night
there songs were made and things of gold⁹
and silver cups and jewels untold,
and the endless years of Faery land
rolled over far Broseliand,
until a day beneath the sun,
when many marvels were begun.

⁹ In the second typescript, the preceding lines were emended to:

*the fallow deer as phantoms fled,
and horses proud with braided mane,
with shining bit and silver rein,
went fleeting by on moonlit night,
as swallows arrow-swift in flight;
a blowing and-a sound of bells,
a hidden hunt in hollow dells.
There songs were made and things of gold,*

II¹⁰

Far in the North neath hills of stone¹¹
in caverns black there was a throne
by fires illumined underground,
that winds of ice with moaning sound
made flare and flicker in dark smoke;
the wavering bitter coils did choke
the sunless airs of dungeons deep
where evil things did crouch and creep.
There sat a king: no Elfin race
nor mortal blood, nor kindly grace
of earth or heaven might he own,
far older, stronger than the stone
the world is built of, than the fire
that burns within¹² more fierce and dire;
and thoughts profound were in his heart:
a gloomy power that dwelt apart.

Unconquerable spears of steel
were at his nod. No ruth did feel

¹⁰ Other than to names, very few changes were made between the manuscript and the first and second typescripts (other than in response to suggestions from Lewis. see below). Barahir was originally “Egnor,” Beren’s father in the Lost Tales, while Beren was Maglor (another unexpected and temporary reassignment of an existing name from the house of Fëanor). “Celegorm,” now displaced from being the “new” Thingol, now appears as the predecessor of Finrod Felagund, as founder of Nargothrond and beneficiary of Barahir's courage. Soon Celegorm would revert to being a son of Fëanor, but the connexion with Finrod and Nargothrond would remain and evolve.

¹¹ This [the first 50 lines of Canto II] is considered by all critics one of the noblest passages in the *Geste*.

¹² Notice the double sense of within (macrocosmic and microcosmic). That the original poet may have been unconscious of this need not detract from our pleasure.

his evil legions marshaled hate,¹³
on whom did wolf and raven wait;
and black the ravens sat and cried
upon their banners black, and wide
was heard their hideous chanting dread
above the reek and trampled dead.
Swift ruin red of fire and sword
leapt forth on all denied¹⁴ his word
and all the lads beyond the hills
were filled with sorrow and with ills.

But still there lived in hiding cold
undaunted, Barahir the bold,
of land bereaved, of lordship shorn,
who had this king once held in scorn¹⁵
and now an outlaw lurked and lay
in the hard heath and woodland grey,
and with him clung of faithful men

¹³ **H:** *The legions of his marching hate*

[Tolkien emended this line in the next draft to *the legions of his marshaled hate,*]

¹⁴ The relative understood. I suspect both the construction and the word denied, neither of which has the true ring. **H** reads:

*And ruin of red fire and sword
To all that would not hail him lord
Came fast, and far beyond the hills
Spread Northern wail and iron ills.
And therefore in wet woods and cold etc.*

[Tolkien revised these lines to read:

*With fire and sword his ruin red
on all that would not bow the head
like lightning fell. The Northern land
lay groaning neath his ghastly hand.]*

¹⁵ 'A weak line' (Peabody). [Tolkien emended this line to read *who once a prince of Men was born*]

but Beren his son and other ten.
Yet small as was their hunted band
still fell and fearless was each hand,
and strong deeds they wrought yet oft,¹⁶
and loved the woods, whose ways more soft
them seemed than thralls of that black throne
to live and languish in halls of stone.
King Morgoth still pursued them sore
with men and dogs, and wolf and boar
with spells of madness filled he sent
to slay them as in the woods they went;
yet nought hurt them for many years,
until, in brief to tell what tears
have oft bewailed in ages gone
nor ever tears enough, was done
a deed unhappy; unaware
their feet were caught in Morgoth's snare.

Gorlim it was, who wearying
of toil and flight and harrying,
one night by chance did turn his feet
o'er the dark fields by stealth to meet
with hidden friend within a dale,
and found a homestead looming pale
against the misty stars, all dark
save one small window, whence a spark
of fitful candle strayed without.
Therein he peeped, and filled with doubt
he saw, as in a dreaming deep.

¹⁶ Some emend. The rhythm, however, is good, and probably would occur more often if the syllabic prudery of scribes had not elsewhere 'emended' it.

when longing cheats the heart in sleep,
his wife beside a dying fire
lament him lost; her thin attire
and greying hair and paling cheek
of tears and loneliness did speak.
'Ah! fair and gentle Eilinel,
whom I had thought in darkling hell
long since emprisoned! Ere I fled
I deemed I saw thee slain and dead
upon that night of sudden fear
when all I lost¹⁷ that I held dear':
thus thought his heavy heart amazed
outside in darkness as he gazed.¹⁸
But ere he dared to call her name
or ask how she escaping and came¹⁹
to this far vale beneath the hills
he heard a cry beneath the hills!
There hooted near a hunting owl
with boding voice. He heard the howl
of the wild wolves that followed him
and dogged his feet through shadows dim.
Him unrelenting, well he knew,
the hunt of Morgoth did pursue.
Lest Eilinel with him they slay
without a word he turned away,

¹⁷ LH *When I lost all*

¹⁸ L *Thus, out of wet night while he gazed,
he thought, with heavy heart amazed*

¹⁹ *she escaping*. A Latinized phrase, at once betraying very late corruption. The ugly assonance *ere ... dared* confirms my suspicion of the distych. No satisfactory emendation has been proposed. [Tolkien changed the line to *she escaped and came*.]

and like a wild thing winding led
his devious ways o'er stony bed
of stream, and over quaking fen,
until far from the homes of men
he lay beside his fellows few
in a secret place; and darkness grew,
and waned, and still he watched unsleeping,
and saw the dismal dawn come creeping
in dank heavens above gloomy trees.
A sickness held his soul for ease²⁰
and ' hope, and even thralldom's chain
if he might find his wife again.
But all he thought twixt love of lord
and hatred of the king abhorred
and anguish for fair Eilinel
who drooped alone, what tale shall tell?

Yet at the last, when many days
of brooding did his mind amaze,
he found the servants of the king,
and bade them to their master bring
a rebel who forgiveness sought,
if haply²¹ forgiveness might be bought
with tidings of Barahir the bold,

²⁰ **H** *Whining, his spirit ached for ease.* Peabody observes of the whole passage: 'The combination of extreme/simplicity, with convincing truth of psychology, and the pathos which, without comment, makes us aware that Gorlim is at once pardonable and unpardonable, render this part of that history extremely affecting.'

²¹ *haply.* **LH** *chance.*

and where his hidings and his hold²²
might best be found by night or day.
And thus sad Gorlim, led away
unto those dark deep-dolven halls,
before the knees of Morgoth falls,
and puts his trust in that²³ cruel heart
wherein no truth had ever part.
Quoth Morgoth: 'Eilinel the fair
thou shalt most surely find, and there
where she doth dwell and wait for thee
together shall ye ever be,
and sundered shall ye sigh no more.
This guerdon shall he have that bore
these tidings sweet, O traitor dear!
For Eilinel she dwells not here,
but in the shades of death doth roam
widowed of husband and of home
a wraith of that which might have been,
methinks it is that thou hast seen!
Now shalt thou through the gates of pain
the land thou askest grimly gain;
thou shalt to the moonless mists of hell
descend and seek thy Eilinel.'

Thus Gorlim died a bitter death
and cursed himself with dying breath,
and Barahir was caught and slain,
and all good deeds were made in vain.

²² One of the few passages in which Schick's theory of deliberate internal rime finds some support. [See note 3]

²³ **H** *the*

But Morgoth's guile for ever failed,
nor wholly o'er his foes prevailed
and some were ever that still fought
unmaking that which malice wrought.
Thus men believed that Morgoth made
the fiendish phantom that betrayed
the soul of Gorlim, and so brought
the lingering hope forlorn to nought
that lived amid the lonely wood;
yet Beren had by fortune good
long hunted far afield that day,
and benighted in strange places lay
far from his fellows. In his sleep
he felt a dreadful darkness creep
upon his heart, and thought the trees
were bare and bent in mournful breeze;
no leaves they had, but ravens dark
sat thick as leaves on bough and bark
and croaked, and as they croaked each neb
let fall a gout of blood; a web
unseen entwined him hand and limb,
until worn out, upon the rim
of stagnant pool he lay and shivered.
There saw he that a shadow quivered
far out upon the water wan,
and grew to a faint form thereon
that glided o'er the silent lake,
and coming slowly, softly spake
and sadly said: 'Lo! Gorlim here,
traitor betrayed, now stands! Nor fear,
but haste! For Morgoth's fingers close
upon thy father's throat. He knows

your secret tryst, your hidden lair',
and all the evil he laid bare
that he had done and Morgoth wrought.
Then Beren waking swiftly sought
his sword and bow, and sped like wind
that cuts with knives the branches thinned
of autumn trees. At last he came,
his heart afire with burning flame,
where Barahir his father lay;
he came too late. At dawn of day
he found the homes of hunted men,
a wooded island in the fen,
and birds rose up in sudden cloud
no fen-fowl were they crying loud.
The raven and the carrion-crow
sat in the alders all a-row;
one croaked: 'Ha! Beren comes too late',
and answered all: 'Too late! Too late!'
There Beren buried his father's bones,
and piled a heap of boulder-stones,
and cursed the name of Morgoth thrice,
but wept not, for his heart was ice.

Then over fen and field and mountain
he followed, till beside a fountain
upgushing hot from fires below
he found the slayers and his foe,
the murderous soldiers of the king.
And one there laughed, and showed a ring
he took from Barahir's dead hand.
'This ring in far Beleriand,
now mark ye, mates,' he said, 'was wrought.

Its like with gold could not be bought,
for this same Barahir I slew,
this robber fool, they say, did do
a deed of service long ago
for Felagund. It may be so;
for Morgoth bade me bring it back,
and yet, methinks, he has no lack
of weightier treasure in his hoard.
Such greed befits not such a lord,
and I am minded to declare
the hand of Barahir was bare!
yet as he spake an arrow sped;
with riven heart he crumpled dead.
Thus Morgoth loved that his own foe
should in his service deal the blow
that punished the breaking of his word.²⁴
But Morgoth laughed not when he heard
that Beren like a wolf alone
sprang madly from behind a stone
amid that camp beside the well,
and seized the ring, and ere the yell
of wrath and rage had left their throat
had fled his foes. His gleaming coat
was made of rings of steel no shaft
could pierce, a web of dwarvish craft;

²⁴ **H** reads

Thus Morgoth loved that his own foe

Should in his service deal the blow.

Then Beren ...

'Our scribe is right in his erasure of the second distych, but wrong in his erasure of the first' (Peabody). The first erased couplet certainly deserves to remain in the text; indeed its loss seriously impairs the reality of Morgoth. I should print as in **H**, enclosing *Thus ... blow* in brackets or dashes.

and he was lost in rock and thorn,
for in charmed hour was Beren born;
their hungry hunting never learned
the way his fearless feet had turned.

As fearless Beren was renowned,
as man most hardy upon ground,
while Barahir yet lived and fought;
but sorrow now his soul had wrought
to dark despair, and robbed his life
of sweetness, that he longed for knife,
or shaft, or sword, to end his pain,
and dreaded only thralldom's chain.
Danger he sought and death pursued,
and thus escaped the fate he wooed,
and deeds of breathless wonder dared
whose whispered glory widely fared,
and softly songs were sung at eve
of marvels he did once achieve
alone, beleaguered, lost at night
by mist or moon, or neath the light
of the broad eye of day. The woods
that northward looked with bitter feuds
he filled and death for Morgoth's folk;
his comrades were the beech and oak,
who failed him not, and many things
with fur and fell and feathered wings;
and many spirits, that in stone
in mountains old and wastes alone,
do dwell and wander, were his friends.
Yet seldom well an outlaw ends,
and Morgoth was a king more strong

than all the world has since in song
recorded, and his wisdom wide
slow and surely who him defied
did hem and hedge. Thus at the last
must Beren flee the forest fast
and lands he loved where lay his sire
by reeds bewailed beneath the mire.
Beneath a heap of mossy stones
now crumble those once mighty bones,
but Beren flees the friendless North
one autumn night, and creeps him forth;
the leaguer of his watchful foes
he passes- silently he goes.
No more his hidden bowstring sings,
no more his shaven arrow wings,
no more his hunted head doth lie
upon the heath beneath the sky.
The moon that looked amid the mist
upon the pines, the wind that hissed
among the heather and the fern
found him no more. The stars that burn
about the North with silver fire
in frosty airs, the Burning Briar
that Men did name in days long gone,
were set behind his back, and shone
o'er land and lake and darkened hill,
forsaken fen and mountain rill.

His face was South from the Land of Dread,
whence only evil pathways led,
and only the feet of men most bold
might cross the Shadowy Mountains cold.

Their northern slopes were filled with woe,
with evil and with mortal foe;
their southern faces mounted sheer
in rocky pinnacle and pier,
whose roots were woven with deceit
and washed with waters bitter-sweet.
There magic lurked in gulf and glen,
for far away beyond the ken
of searching eyes, unless it were
from dizzy tower that pricked the air
where only eagles lived and cried,
might grey and gleaming be descried
Broseliand, Broseliand,
the borders of the faery land.²⁵

²⁵ Of Canto II as a whole Peabody writes: 'If this is not good romantic narrative, I confess myself ignorant of the meaning of the words.'

III

There once, and long and long ago,²⁶
before the sun and moon we know
were lit to sail above the world,
when first the shaggy woods unfurled,
and shadowy shapes did stare and roam
beneath the dark and starry dome
that hung above the dawn of Earth,
the silences with silver mirth
were shaken; the rocks were ringing,
the birds of Melian were singing,
the first to sing in mortal lands,
the nightingales with her own hands
she fed, that fay of garments grey;²⁷
and dark and long her tresses lay
beneath her silver girdle's seat
and down unto her silver feet.

She had wayward wandered on a time
from gardens of the Gods, to climb
the everlasting mountains free

²⁶ A more philosophical account of the period is given in the so called *Poema Historiale*, probably contemporary with the earliest MSS of the *Geste*. The relevant passage runs as follows:

*There was a time before the ancient sun
And swinging wheels of heaven had learned to run
More certainly than dreams; for dreams themselves
Had bodies then and filled the world with elves.
The starveling lusts whose walk is now confined
To darkness and the cellarage of the mind,
And shudden'ngs and despairs and shapes of sin
Then walked at large, and were not cooped within.
Thought cast a shadow: brutes could speak: and men
Get children on a star. For spirit then
Kneaded a fluid world and dreamed it new
Each moment. Nothing yet was false or true.*

²⁷ Another instance where the 'internal rime' theory is justified.

that look upon the outmost sea,
and never wandered back, but stayed
and softly sang from glade to glade.
Her voice it was that Thingol heard,
and sudden singing of a bird,
in that old time when new-come Elves
had all the wide world to themselves.
Yet all his kin now marched away,
as old tales tell, to seek the bay
on the last shore of mortal lands,
where mighty ships with magic hands
they made, and sailed beyond the seas.
The Gods them bade to lands of ease
and gardens fair, where earth and sky
together flow, and none shall die.
But Thingol stayed, enchanted, still,
one moment to hearken to the thrill
of that sweet singing in the trees:
Enchanted moments such as these
from gardens of the God of Sleep,
where fountains play and shadows creep,
do come, and count as many years
in mortal lands.²⁸ With many tears
his people seek him ere they sail,

²⁸ Almost certainly spurious. This abstract philosophical statement—which would not surprise us in the scholastic verse of the period, such as the *Poema Historiale*—is quite foreign to the manner of the *Geste*. L reads:

*... singing in the wood
And long he stood and long he stood
Till, many a day, with hound and hail
His people seek him ere they sail,
Then, finding not, take ship with tears.
But after a long tale of years
(Though but an hour to him it seemed)
He found her where she lay and dreamed.*

while Thingol listens in the dale.
There after but an hour, him seems,
he finds her where she lies and dreams,
pale Melian with her dark hair
upon a bed of leaves. Beware!
There slumber and a sleep is twined!
He touched her tresses and his mind
was drowned in the forgetful deep,
and dark the years rolled o'er his sleep.

Thus Thingol sailed not on the seas
but dwelt amid the land of trees,
And Melian he loved, divine,
whose voice was potent as the wine
the Gods drink in their golden halls
where flower blooms and fountain falls;
but when she sang it was a spell,
and no flower stirred nor fountain fell.
A king and queen thus lived they long,
and Doriath was filled with song,
and all the elves that missed their way
and never found the western bay,
the gleaning walls of their long home
by the grey seas and the white foam,
who never passed the golden gate
where dooryards of the Gods do wait,
all these were gathered in their realm
beneath the beach and oak and elm.

In later days when Morgoth first,
fleeing the Gods, their bondage burst,
and on the mortal lands set feet,

and in the North his mighty seat
founded and fortified, and all
the newborn race of Men were thrall
unto his power, and Elf and Gnome
his slaves, or wandered without home,
or scattered fastnesses walled with fear
up raised upon his borders drear,
and each one fell, yet reigned there still
in Doriath beyond his will
Thingol and deathless Melian,
whose magic yet no evil can
that cometh from without surpass.
Here still was laughter and green grass,
and leaves were lit with the white sun,
and many marvels were begun.

In sunshine and in sheen of moon,
with silken robe and silver shoon,
the daughter of the deathless queen
now danced on the undying green,
half-elven-fair and half divine;
and when the stars began to shine
unseen but near a piping woke,
and in the branches of an oak,
or seated on the beech-leaves brown,
Dairon the dark with ferny crown
played with bewildering wizard's art
music for breaking of the heart.
Such players have there only been
thrice in all Elfinesse, I ween:
Tinfang Warble who still the moon
enchants on summer nights of June

and kindles the pale firstling star;
and he who harps upon the far
forgotten beaches and dark shores
where western foam forever roars,
from England unto Eglamar
on rock and dune and sandy bar,
Maglor whose voice is like the sea;
and Dairon, mightiest of the three.

Now it befell on summer night,
upon a lawn where lingering light
yet lay and faded faint and grey,
that Lúthien danced while he did play.
The chestnuts on the turf had shed
their flowering candles,²⁹ white and red;
the silent elms stood dark and tall
and round their boles did shadows fall³⁰
where glimmered faint the umbels thick
of hemlocks like a mist, and quick
the moths on pallid wings of white
with tiny eyes of fiery light
were fluttering softly, and the voles
crept out to listen from their holes;

²⁹ Flowering candles. The reader should notice how the normally plain style of the *Geste* has yet the power of rising into such expressions as this without losing its unity.

³⁰ **PRK** have *did fall*, **JL** *let fall*. Though neither is good, **PRK** seems the better reading. Its slight clumsiness may be passed over by a reader intent on the story: the 'neat' evasion *let*, with its purely formal attribution of an active rôle to the trees, is much worse, as cheap scenery is worse than a plain backcloth. **H** reads:

The silent elms stood tall and grey

And at the roots long shadows lay

[Tolkien emended the couplet to read: *here darkling stood a silent elm/and pale beneath its shadow-helm*]

the little owls were hushed and still;
the moon was yet behind the hill.
Her arms like ivory were gleaming,
her long hair like a cloud was streaming,
her feet a-twinkle wandered roaming
in misty mazes in the gloaming;³¹
and glowworms shimmered round her feet,
and moths in moving garland fleet
above her head went wavering wan
and this the moon now looked upon,
up risen slow, and round, and white,
above the branches of the night.
Then clearly thrilled her voice and rang;
with sudden ecstasy she sang
a song of nightingales she learned
and with her elvish magic turned
to such bewildering delight
the moon hung moveless in the night.³²
And this it was that Beren heard,
and this he saw, without a word,
enchanted dumb, yet filled with fire
of such a wonder and desire
that all his mortal mind was dim;
her magic bound and fettered him,
and faint he leaned against a tree.

³¹ The two preceding couplets were marked on typescript with an X, but no actual revisions seem to have been made.

³² 'This passage', Peabody observes, 'amply atones for the poet's lapse (*dormitat Homerus*) at 518. *Ipsa mollities*.' [The Latin phrases used by 'Peabody' translate as "Homer Dozes"—a reference to longer phrase implying that even Homer has dull moments sometimes—and "it is the very perfection of delicacy," a phrase from C.S. Lewis' particular academic specialty, John Milton.]

Forwandered, wayworn, gaunt was he,
his body sick and heart gone cold,
grey in his hair, his youth turned old;
for those that tread that lonely way
a price of woe and anguish pay. .
And now his heart was healed and slain
with a new life and with new pain.³³

He gazed, and as he gazed her hair
within its golden³⁴ web did snare
the silver moonbeams sifting white
between the leaves, and glinting bright
the tremulous starlight of the skies

³³ 'O si sic omnia! Does not our poet show glimpses of the true empyrean of poesy, however, in his workmanlike humility, he has chosen more often to inhabit the milder and aerial (not aetherial) middle heaven?' (Pumpernickel). Some have seen in the conception of death-into-life a late accretion. But cf. the very early lyric preserved in the MS N 3057, now in the public library at Narrothrode (the ancient *Nargothrond*), which is probably as early as the *Geste*, though like all the scholastic verse it strikes a more modern note:

*Because of endless pride
Reborn with endless error,
Each hour I look aside
Upon my secret mirror,
And practice postures there
To make my image fair.*

*You give me grapes, and I,
Though staring, turn to see
How dark the cool globes lie
In the white hand of me,
And stand, yet gazing thither,
Till the live clusters wither.*

*So should I quickly die
Narcissus-like for want,
Save that betimes my eye
Sees there such shapes as haunt
Beyond nightmare and make
Pride humble for pride's sake.*

*Then, and then only, turning
The stiff neck round, I grow
A molten man all burning
And look behind, and know
Who made the flaw, what light makes
dark, what fair*

*Makes foul my shadowy form reflected
there,
That self-love, big with love, dying, its
child may bear.*

[Lewis later published a version of this poem in the *Pilgrim's Regress*. 'Pumpernickel's' Latin phrase means "If only it were always this way"]

³⁴ emended to *cloudy*:

was caught and mirrored in her eyes.
Then all his journey's lonely fare,
the hunger and the haggard care,
the awful mountains' stones he stained
with blood of weary feet, and gained
only a land of ghosts, and fear
in dark ravines imprisoned sheer-
there mighty spiders wove their webs,
old creatures foul with birdlike nebs
that span their traps in dizzy air,
and filled it with clinging black despair,
and there they lived, and the sucked bones
lay white beneath on the dank stones
now all these horrors like a cloud
faded from mind. The waters loud
falling from pineclad heights no more
he heard, those waters grey and frore
that bittersweet he drank and filled
his mind with madness all was stilled.
He recked not now the burning road,
the paths demented where he strode
endlessly... and ever new
horizons stretched before his view,
as each blue ridge with bleeding feet
was climbed, and down he went to meet
battle with creatures old and strong
and monsters in the dark, and long,
long watches in the haunted night
while evil shapes with baleful light
in clustered eyes did crawl and snuff

beneath his tree not half enough³⁵
the price he deemed to come at last
to that pale moon when day had passed,
to those clear stars of Elfinesse,
the hearts-ease and the loveliness.

Lo! all forgetting he was drawn
unheeding toward the glimmering lawn
by love and wonder that compelled
his feet from hiding; music welled
within his heart, and songs unmade
on themes unthought-of moved and swayed
his soul with sweetness; out he came,
a shadow in the moon's pale flame
till fear then seized her, all alone,
and Dairon's flute as sudden stops
as lark before it steeply drops,
as grasshopper within the grass
listening for heavy feet to pass.
'Flee, Lúthien!', and 'Lúthien!'
from hiding Dairon called again;
'A stranger walks the woods! Away!'
But Lúthien would wondering stay;
fear had she never felt or known,
till fear then seized her, all alone,
seeing that shape with shagged hair

³⁵ *Sic* in all MSS. The passage is, of course, genuine, and truly worthy of the *Geste*. But surely it must originally have stood at ll 391 or 393 [i.e. at the end of Canto II]? The artificial insertion of Beren's journey in its present place—where it appears as retrospect not as direct narrative, though defensible, belongs to a kind of art more sophisticated than that of the *Geste*: it is just such a transposition as a late Broseliandic literary redactor would make under the influence of the classical epic.

[Tolkien eventually took this advice, when he rewrote the first few cantos 25 years later.]

and shadow long that halted there.
Then sudden she vanished like a dream
in dark oblivion, a gleam
in hurrying clouds, for she had leapt
among the hemlocks tall, and crept
under a mighty plant with leaves
all long and dark, whose stem in sheaves
upheld an hundred umbels fair;
and her white arms and shoulders bare
her raiment pale, and in her hair
the wild white roses glimmering there,
all lay like spattered moonlight hoar
in gleaming pools upon the floor.
Then stared he wild in dumbness bound
at silent trees, deserted ground;
the dizzy moon was twisted grey
in tears, for she had fled away.³⁶
He blindly groped across the glade
to the dark trees' encircling shade,
and, while she watched with veiled eyes,
touched her soft arm in sweet surprise.

³⁶ Thus in **PRKJ**. The Latinized adverbial use of the adjective in wild and the omitted articles in the next line are suspicious.

L:

*But wildly Beren gazed around
On silent trees (and)* empty ground.
The dizzy moon etc.*

*Peabody supplies *and*. But the monosyllabic foot is quite possible. Cf. 687

H:

*But wildly Beren gazed around.
Emptied the tall trees stood. The ground
Lay empty. A lonely moon looked grey
Upon the untrodden forest way.*

I prefer **H** because it gets rid of the conceit (it is little more) about the moon. (This sort of half-hearted; personification is, of course, to be distinguished from genuine mythology.) [Against Lewis' note, Tolkien wrote: 'Not so!! The moon was dizzy and twisted because of the tears in his eyes.' However he also cut the couplet about the "dizzy moon" from the poem.]

Like startled moth from deathlike sleep
in sunless nook or bushes deep³⁷
she darted swift, and to and fro
with cunning that elvish dancers know
about the trunks of trees she twined
a path fantastic. Far behind
bewildered enchanted, and forlorn³⁸
Beren came blundering, bruised and torn:
Esgalduin the elven-stream,
in which amid tree-shadows gleam
the stars, flowed strong before his feet.
Some secret way she found, and fleet
passed over and was seen no more,
and left him forsaken on the shore.
'Darkly the sundering flood rolls past!
To this my long way comes at last
enchanted waters pitiless,
a heartache and a loneliness,'³⁹
Thus thought his heart. No words would come
from his fast lips, for smitten dumb
a spell lay on him, as a dream
in longing chained beside the stream.

³⁷ An excellent simile.

³⁸ Peabody, though a great friend to metrical resolutions in general, finds this particular resolution (*Bewildered, enchanted*) 'singularly harsh'. Perhaps the original text read *wildered*. [Tolkien emended the line to *enchanted, wildered, and forlorn*.]

³⁹ **JHL** transpose. [Tolkien reversed the order of these two lines]

A summer waned, an autumn glowed,⁴⁰
and Beren in the woods abode,
as wild and wary as a faun
that sudden wakes at rustling dawn,
and flits from shade to shade, and flees
the brightness of the sun, yet sees
all stealthy movements in the wood.
The murmurous warmth in weathers good,
the hum of many wings, the call
of many a bird, the pattering fall
of sudden rain upon the trees,
the windy tide in leafy seas,
the creaking of the boughs, he heard;
but not the song of sweetest bird
brought joy, or comfort to his heart,
a wanderer dumb who dwelt apart;
who sought unceasing and in vain
to hear and see those things again:
a song more fair than nightingale,
a wonder in the moonlight pale.⁴¹

An autumn waned, a winter laid
the withered leaves in grove and glade;
the beeches bare were gaunt and grey,

⁴⁰ Only in **PR**. Almost undoubtedly spurious. 'The latest redactors', says Pumpnickel, 'were always needlessly amplifying as if the imagination of their readers could do nothing for itself and thus blunting the true force and energy of the *Geste...*' Read:

A heartache and a loneliness,

Enchanted waters pitiless.'

A summer waned etc.

[In addition to switching the lines, Tolkien replaced *heartache* with *hunger*, and deleted the four lines between *loneliness* and *a summer*.]

⁴¹ Of this admirable passage Peabody remarks: 'It is as if the wood itself were speaking.'

and red their leaves beneath them lay.
From cavern pale the moist moon eyes
the white mists that from earth arise
to hide the morrow's sun and drip⁴²
all the grey day from each twig's tip.
By dawn and dusk he seeks her still;
by noon and night in valleys chill,
nor hears a sound but the slow beat⁴³
on sodden leaves of his own feet.

The wind of winter winds his horn;
the misty veil is rent and torn.
The wind dies; the starry choirs
leap in the silent sky to fires,
whose light comes bitter-cold and sheer
through domes of frozen crystal clear.

A sparkle through the darkling trees,
a piercing glint of light he sees,
and there she dances all alone
upon a treeless knoll of stone!
Her mantle blue with jewels white
caught all the rays of frosted light.
She shone with cold and wintry flame,
as dancing down the hill she came,
and passed his watchful silent gaze,

⁴² LH reads:

*From her dim cave the damp moon eyed
White mists that float from earth to hide
The sluggard morrow's sun and drip*

⁴³ *Beat*, which is utterly inappropriate to the sound described, must be a corruption. No plausible emendation has been suggested.

a glimmer as of stars ablaze.
And snowdrops sprang beneath her feet,
and one bird, sudden, late and sweet,
shrilled as she wayward passed along.
A frozen brook to bubbling song
awoke and laughed; but Beren stood
still bound enchanted in the wood.
Her starlight faded and the night
closed o'er the snowdrops glimmering white.⁴⁴

Thereafter on a hillock green
he saw afar⁴⁵ the elven-sheen
of shining limb and jewel bright
often and oft on moonlit night;
and Dairon's pipe awoke once more,
and soft she sang as once before.
Then stole he nigh⁴⁶ beneath the trees,
and heartache mingled with hearts-ease.

A night there was when winter died;
then all alone she sang and cried
and danced until the dawn of spring,
and chanted some wild magic thing
that stirred him, till it sudden broke
the bonds that held him, and he woke
to madness sweet and brave despair.

⁴⁴ In praise of this passage I need not add to the innumerable eulogies of my predecessors.

⁴⁵ Bentley reads *saw far off*, to avoid the ugliness that always results from w-final followed by an initial vowel in the next word. [Tolkien emended the line as suggested]

⁴⁶ *Stole he PRK. He stole JHL. PRK* looks like the metrical 'improvement' of a scribe: dearly bought by a meaningless inversion. [Tolkien changed the line to *Then nigh he stole.*]

He flung his arms to the night air,
and out he danced unheeding, fleet,
enchanted, with enchanted feet.
He sped towards the hillock green,⁴⁷
the lissom limbs, the dancing sheen;
the hillock green he leapt upon
the elfin loveliness was gone;⁴⁸
his arms were empty, and she fled;
away, away her white feet sped.
But as she went he swiftly came
and called her with the tender name
of nightingales in elvish tongue,
that all the woods now sudden rung:
'Tinúviel! Tinúviel!'
And clear his voice was as a bell;
its echoes wove, a halting spell.⁴⁹
'Tinúviel! Tinúviel!'
His voice such love and longing fill
one moment stood she, touched and still;
one moment only, but he came

⁴⁷ This passage [referring the next 18 lines of verse], as it stands, is seriously corrupt, though the beauty of the original can still be discerned.

⁴⁸ Intolerable bathos and prose in a passage of such tension. [Tolkien changed the couplet to read: *he leapt upon the grassy hill/his arms with loveliness to fill.*]

⁴⁹ Why *halting*? 'Let the amanuensis take back his rubbish' (Bentley). [Tolkien wrote in Lewis' margin 'A spell to halt anyone,' but emended the word to *binding*.]

and all his heart was burned with flame.⁵⁰
He leaped towards her as she stayed
and caught and kissed that elfin maid.

As love there woke in sweet surprise
the starlight trembled in her eyes.
Ah! Lúthien! Ah! Lúthien!
more fair than any child of Men;
O! loveliest maid of Elfinesse,
what madness does thee now possess!
A! lissom limbs and shadowy hair
and chaplet of white snowdrops there;
O! starry diadem and white
pale hands beneath the pale moonlight!
She left his arms and slipped-away
just at the breaking of the day.

⁵⁰ The historic present is always to be suspected. The second line [of the preceding four] is hopelessly corrupt. *Touched* in this sense is impossible in the language of the *Geste*: and if the word were possible, the conception is fitter for a nineteenth century drawing-room in Narrowthrode than for the loves of heroes. **HL** read:

*And clear his voice came as a bell
Whose echoes wove a wavering spell
Tinúviel. Tinúviel.
Such love and longing filled his voice
That, one moment, without choice,
One moment without fear or shame,
Tinúviel stood; and like a flame
He leapt towards her as she stayed
And caught and kissed that elfin maid.*

[Tolkien changed the equivalent lines to read:

*And clear his voice was as a bell;
its echoes wove, a binding spell:
'Tinúviel! Tinúviel!'
His voice such love and longing filled
one moment stood she, fear was stilled;
one moment only; like a flame
he leaped towards her as she stayed
and caught and kissed that elven maid.*

although this arrangement left a stray unrhymed line, which he never corrected.]

IV

He lay upon the leafy mould,
his face upon earth's bosom cold,
aswoon in mingled grief and bliss,
enchanted of an elvish kiss,⁵¹
and saw within his blinded eyes
a light that danced like silver flies
a starlit face of tenderness
crowned by the stars of Elfinesse.
A mist was in his face like hair,
and laughing whispers moved the air'
O! dance with me now, Beren. Dance!' a
silver laugh, a mocking glance:⁵²
'Come dance the wild and headlong maze
those dance, we're told, beyond the ways
who dwell that lead to lands of Men!
Come teach the feet of Lúthien!'
The shadows wrapped her. Like a stone

⁵¹ **L:**

*Aswoon with grief, aswoon with bliss,
Enchanted of an elvish kiss.*

[Tolkien revised the couplet to:

*aswoon in overwhelming bliss,
enchanted of an elvish kiss.]*

⁵² **L:** *a silver laughter, an arch glance*

'Whether mocking or arch is the more intolerably miss-ish I care not to decide' (Peabody).

[Tolkien deleted the line]

the daylight found him cold and lone.⁵³

'Where art thou gone? The day is bare,
the sunlight dark, and cold the air!⁵⁴
Tinúviel, where went thy feet?
O wayward star! O maiden sweet!
O flower of Elfland all too fair
for mortal heart! The woods are bare!
The woods are bare!' he rose and cried.
'Ere spring was born, the spring hath died!
And wandering in path and mind
he groped as one gone sudden blind,
who seeks to grasp the hidden light
with faltering hands in more than night.

And thus in anguish Beren paid
for that great doom upon him laid,
the deathless love of Lúthien,

⁵³ **JHL** omit. Is not the whole passage [from the beginning of the Canto to this point in the text] unworthy of the poet?
[Tolkien replaced all the material between this note and the preceding one with the following lines:

*seeing within his darkened eyes
the light that for no darkness dies,
the loveliness that doth not fade,
though all in ashes cold be laid.
Then folded in the mists of sleep
he sank into abysses deep,
drowned in an overwhelming grief
for parting after meeting brief;
a shadow and a fragrance fair
lingered, and waned, and was not there.
Forsaken, barren, bare as stone,
the daylight found him cold, alone.]*

⁵⁴ The chiasmus is suspiciously classical. **H** gives *Dark is the sun, cold is the air*.
[Tolkien, not above irritation with Lewis' sensibilities, wrote against this comment: 'But classics did not invent chiasmus!—it is perfectly natural.']

too fair for love of mortal Men;
and in his doom was Lúthien snared,
the deathless, in his dying shared;
and Fate them forged a binding chain
of living love and mortal pain.

Beyond all hope her feet returned
at eve, when in the sky there burned
the flame of stars; and in her eyes
there trembled the starlight of the skies,
and from her hair the fragrance fell
of elven-flowers in elven-dell.

Thus Lúthien, whom no pursuit,
no snare, no dart that hunters shoot,
might hope to win or hold, she came
at the sweet calling of her name;
and thus in his her slender hand
was linked in far Broseliand;
in hour enchanted long ago
her arms about his neck did go,
and gently down she drew to rest
his weary head upon her breast.

Ah! Lúthien, Tinúviel,
why wentest thou to darkling dell
with shining eyes and dancing pace,
the twilight glimmering in thy face?
Each day before the end of eve
she sought her love, nor would him leave,
until the stars were dimmed, and day
came glimmering eastward silver-grey.

Then trembling-veiled she would appear
and dance before him, half in fear;
there flitting just before his feet
she gently chid with laughter sweet:
'Come! dance now, Beren, dance with me!
For fain thy dancing I would see.
Come! thou must woo with nimbler feet,
than those who walk where mountains meet
the bitter skies beyond this realm
of marvelous moonlit beech and elm.'

In Doriath Beren long ago
new art and lore he learned to know;
his limbs were freed; his eyes alight,
kindled with a new enchanted sight;
and to her dancing feet his feet
attuned went dancing free and fleet;
his laughter welled as from a spring
of music, and his voice would sing
as voices of those in Doriath
where paved with flowers are floor and path.
The year thus on to summer rolled,
from spring to a summertime of gold.

Thus fleeting fast their short hour flies,
while Dairon watches with fiery eyes,
haunting the gloom of tangled trees
all day, until at night he sees
in the fickle moon their moving feet,
two lovers linked in dancing sweet,
two shadows shimmering on the green

where lonely-dancing maid had been.

'Hateful art thou, O Land of Trees!
My flute shall finger no more seize;
may music perish⁵⁵ and voices fail
and trees stand dumb in dell and dale!'

It seemed a hush had fallen there
upon the waiting woodland air;
and often murmured Thingol's folk
in wonder, and to their king they spoke:
'This spell of silence who hath wrought?
What web hath Dairon's music caught?
It seems the very birds sing low;
murmurless Esgalduin cloth flow;
the leaves scarce whisper on the trees,
and soundless beat the wings of bees!'

This Lúthien heard, and there the queen
her sudden glances saw unseen.
But Thingol marveled, and he sent
for Dairon the piper, ere he went
and sat upon his mounded seat
his grassy throne by the grey feet

⁵⁵ Clearly corrupt. **HJL**:

*Oh hateful land of trees be mute!
My fingers, now forget the flute!*

[About this suggestion Tolkien wrote: 'Frightful 18th century!!!' But first he rewrote the second line: *my fingers the flute shall no more seize*. Not much later on he rewrote the whole passage:

*'Hateful art thou, O Land of Trees!
May fear and silence on thee seize!
My flute shall fall from idle hand
and mirth shall leave Beleriand;
music shall perish etc.]*

of the Queen of Beeches, Hirilorn,
upon whose triple piers were borne
the mightiest vault of leaf and bough
from world's beginning until now.
She stood above Esgalduin's shore,
where long slopes fell beside the door,
the guarded gates, the portals stark
of the Thousand echoing Caverns dark.

There Thingol sat and heard no sound
save far off footsteps on the ground;
no flute, no voice, no song of bird,
no choirs of windy leaves there stirred;
and Dairon coming no word spoke,
silent amid the woodland folk.⁵⁶
Then Thingol said: 'O Dairon fair,
thou master of all musics rare,
O magic heart and wisdom wild,
whose ear nor eye may be beguiled,
what omen doth this silence bear?
What horn afar upon the air,
what summons do the woods await?
Mayhap the Lord Tavros from his gate
and tree-propped halls, the forest-god,
rides his wild stallion golden-shod
amid the trumpets' tempest loud,
amid his green-clad hunters proud,
leaving his deer and friths divine
and emerald forests? Some faint sign
of his great onset may have come
upon the Western winds, and dumb

⁵⁶ 'These lines [i.e. the preceding 34 lines] are very noble' (Pumpernickel).

the woods now listen for a chase
that here once more shall thundering race
beneath the shade of mortal trees.
Would it were so! The Lands of Ease
hath Tavros left not many an age,
since Morgoth evil wars did wage,
since ruin fell upon the North
and the Gnomes unhappy wandered forth.
But if not he, who comes or what?⁹¹

And Dairon answered: 'He cometh not!⁵⁷
No feet divine shall leave those shores,
those white rocks where the last tide roars⁵⁸
till many things be come to pass,
and many evils wrought. Alas!
the guest is here. The woods are still,
but wait not; for a marvel chill
them holds at the strange deeds they see,
but kings see not- though queens, maybe,
may guess, and maidens, maybe, know.
Where one went lonely two now go!'

'Whither thy riddle points is plain'
the king in anger said, 'but deign
to make it plainer! Who is he

⁵⁷ **HJL** has *comes*. **HJL** is certainly the more emphatic rhythm.

⁵⁸ 'Where *eight* dull words oft creep in one low line.' Lines of monosyllables are often to be found in the *Geste*, but rarely so clustered with consonants as this. No satisfactory emendation has been suggested. I suspect this is a garbled version of ll 1142-43. Our scribes do not always accept or understand epic repetition. [Tolkien changed the lines to match those mentioned: *that shore, / where the Shadowy Seas' last surges roar*. Lewis's paraphrase is from Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, where the number is ten, not eight.]

that earns my wrath? How walks he free
within my woods amid my folk,
a stranger to both beech and oak?'

But Dairon looked on Lúthien
and would he had not spoken then,
and no more would he speak that day,
though Thingol's face with wrath was grey.
Then Lúthien stepped lightly forth:

'Far in the mountain-leaguered North,
my father,' said she, 'lies the land
that groans beneath King Morgoth's hand.
Thence came one hither, bent and worn
in wars and travail, who had sworn
undying hatred of that king;
the last of Bëor's sons, they sing,
and even hither far and deep within
thy woods the echoes creep
through the wild mountain-passes cold,
the last of Beor's house to hold
a sword unconquered, neck unbowed,
a heart by evil power uncowed.
No evil needst thou think or fear
of Beren son of Barahir!

If aught thou hast to say to him,
then swear to hurt not flesh nor limb,
and I will lead him to thy hall,
a son of kings, no mortal thrall.'

Then long King Thingol looked on her
while hand nor foot nor tongue did stir,
and Melian, silent, unamazed,
on Lúthien and Thingol gazed.

'No blade nor chain his limbs shall mar'
the king then swore. 'He wanders far,
and news, mayhap, he hath for me,
and words I have for him, maybe!'
Now Thingol bade them all depart
save Dairon, whom he called: 'What art,
what wizardry of Northern mist
hath this illcomer brought us? List!
Tonight go thou by secret path,
who knowest all wide Doriath,
and watch that Lúthien- daughter mine,
what madness doth thy heart entwine,
what web from Morgoth's dreadful halls
hath caught thy feet and thee enthralls! -
that she bid not this Beren flee
back whence he came. I would him see!
Take with thee woodland archers wise.
Let naught beguile your hearts or eyes!'

Thus Dairon heavy-hearted did,
and the woods were filled with watchers hid;
yet needless, for Lúthien that night
led Beren by the golden light
of mounting moon unto the shore
and bridge before her father's door;
and the white light silent looked within

the waiting portals yawning dim.⁵⁹
With gentle hand there she him led
down corridors⁶⁰ of carven dread
whose turn were lit by lanterns hung
or flames from torches that were flung
on dragons hewn in the cold stone
with jewelled eyes and teeth of bone.
Then sudden, deep beneath the earth
the silences with silver mirth
were shaken and the rocks were ringing,
the birds of Melian were singing;
and wide the ways of shadow spread
as into arched halls was led⁶¹
Beren in wonder. There a light
like day immortal and like night
of stars unclouded, shone and gleamed.
A vault of topless trees it seemed,

⁵⁹ In *Gestestudien* Vol. XIII pp. 9-930 the reader will find a summary of the critical war that has raged round the possibility of the assonance (or rime) of *within-dim*. Perhaps a great deal of ink would have been saved if the scholars of the last century had been familiar with the L reading *Where out of yawning arches came/A white light like unmoving flame*. 'My own conclusion is that if the assonance in the *textus receptus* is correct, the same phenomenon must originally have occurred often, and have been suppressed elsewhere by the scribes. Editorial effort might profitably be devoted to restoring it' (Schuffer). But cf. ll 1140-1. [Lewis' fictional array of *Geste* scholars now have their own scholarly journal dedicated to the poem, which is apparently German. *textus receptus* means "received text" in Latin, thus, the most common version of text.]

⁶⁰ J *Downward with gentle hand she him led*, which explains the corruption. The -verse originally ran *Downward with gentle hand she led*. The scribe of J, wrongly believing an object to be needed, inserted him. *Vulg.* then 'emends' the meter by dropping *Downward* and inserting *there*: thus giving a clumsy line.
[Tolkien emended the sentence to *Downward with gentle hand she led/through corridors etc. Vulg.* (short for *Vulgate*) means the "common" form of a literary work. This was rare case where Tolkien followed Lewis' advice to the letter, even writing "CSL" in the margin by the emended line]

⁶¹ HJL *she led* [Tolkien made this edit as well]

whose trunks of carven stone there stood⁶²
like towers of an enchanted wood
in magic fast for ever bound,
bearing a roof whose branches wound
in endless tracery of green
lit by some leaf-emprisoned sheen
of moon and sun, and wrought of gems,
and each leaf hung on golden stems.

Lo! there amid immortal flowers
the nightingales in shining bowers
sang o'er the head of Melian,
while waters endless dripped and ran⁶³
from fountains in the rocky floor.
There Thingol sat. His crown he wore
of green and silver, and round his chair
a host in gleaming armor fair.
Then Beren looked upon the king
and stood amazed; and swift a ring
of elvish weapons hemmed him round.
Then Beren looked upon the ground,
for Melian's gaze had sought his face,
and dazed there drooped he in that place,
and when the king spake deep and slow:
'Who art thou stumblest hither? Know
that none unbidden seek this throne
and ever leave these halls of stone!'
no word he answered, filled with dread.
But Lúthien answered in his stead:

⁶² L *in old stone carven stood*

⁶³ H *While water forever dript and ran* [Tolkien took the suggestion on phrasing but rejected the spelling.]

'Behold, my father, one who came
pursued by hatred like a flame!
Lo! Beren son of Barahir!
What need hath he thy wrath to fear,
foe of our foes, without a friend,
whose knees to Morgoth do not bend?'

'Let Beren answer!' Thingol said.
'What wouldst thou here? What hither led
thy wandering feet, O mortal wild?
How hast thou Lúthien beguiled
or darest thus to walk this wood
unasked, in secret? Reason good
'twere best declare now if thou may,
or never again see light of day!'

Then Beren looked in Lúthien's eyes
and saw a light of starry skies,
and thence was slowly drawn his gaze
to Melian's face. As from a maze
of wonder dumb he woke; his heart
the bonds of awe there burst apart
and filled with the fearless pride of old;
in his glance now gleamed an anger cold.
'My feet hath fate, O king,' he said,
'here over the mountains bleeding led,
and what I sought not I have found,
and love it is hath here me bound.
Thy dearest treasure I desire;
nor rocks nor steel nor Morgoth's fire
nor all the power of Elfinesse
shall keep that gem I would possess.
For fairer than are born to Men

A daughter hast thou, Lúthien.'

Silence then fell upon the hall;
like graven stone there stood they all,
save one who cast her eyes aground,
and one who laughed with bitter sound.
Dairon the piper leant there pale
against a pillar. His fingers frail
there touched a flute that whispered not;
his eyes were dark; his heart was hot.
'Death is the guerdon thou hast earned,
O baseborn mortal, who hast learned
in Morgoth's realm to spy and lurk
like Orcs that do his evil work!'
'Death!' echoed Dairon fierce and low,
but Lúthien trembling gasped in woe.
'And death,' said Thingol, 'thou shouldst taste,
had I not sworn an oath in haste
that blade nor chain thy flesh should mar.
Yet captive bound by never a bar,
unchained, unfettered, shalt thou be
in lightless labyrinths⁶⁴ endlessly
that coils about my halls profound
by magic bewildered and enwound;
there wandering in hopelessness,
thou shalt learn the power of Elfinesse!'
'That may not be!' Lo! Beren spake,
and through the king's words coldly brake.
'What are thy mazes but a chain
wherein the captive blind is slain?'

⁶⁴ *Labyrinths* **HJL** *Laborynth* [Tolkien accepted the suggestion to go from plural to singular, but wrote against Lewis' note "Why this spelling?"]

Twist not thy oaths, O elvish king,
like faithless Morgoth! By this ring-
the token of a lasting bond
that Felagund of Nargothrond
once swore in love to Barahir,
who sheltered him with shield and spear
and saved him from pursuing foe
on Northern battlefields long ago
death thou canst give unearned to me,
but names I will not take from thee
of baseborn, spy, or Morgoth's thrall!
Are these the ways of Thingol's hall?
Proud are the words, and all there turned
to see the jewels green that burned
in Beren's ring. These Gnomes had set
as eyes of serpents twined that met
beneath a golden crown of flowers,
that one upholds and one devours:
the badge that Finrod⁶⁵ made of yore
and Felagund his son now bore.

His anger was chilled, but little less,
and dark thoughts Thingol did possess,
though Melian the pale leant to his side
and whispered: 'O king, forgo thy pride!
Such is my counsel. Not by thee
shall Beren be slain, for far and free
from these deep halls his fate doth lead,

⁶⁵ At this stage of the mythology (and indeed for a long time after) "Finrod" was the name of the third son of Finwë (better known to readers of the *Silmarillion* as Finarfin) and his son in turn, was known simply as Felagund (or later, Inglor Felagund).

yet wound with thine. O king, take heed!
But Thingol looked on Lúthien.
'Fairest of Elves! Unhappy Men,
children of little lords and kings
mortal and frail, these fading things,
shall they then look with love on thee?'
his heart within him thought. 'I see
thy ring,' he said, 'O mighty man!
But to win the child of Melian
a father's deeds shall not avail,
nor thy proud words at which I quail.
A treasure dear I too desire,
but rocks and steel and Morgoth's fire
from all the powers of Elfinesse
do keep the jewel I would possess.
Yet bonds like these I hear thee say
affright thee not. Now go thy way!
Bring me one shining Silmaril
from Morgoth's crown, then if she will,
may Lúthien set her hand in thine;
then shalt thou have this jewel of mine.'⁶⁶

Then Thingol's warriors loud and long
they laughed; for wide renown in song
had Fëanor's gems o'er land and sea,
the peerless Silmarils; and three
alone he made and kindled slow
in the land of the Valar long ago,
and there in Tûn of their own light

⁶⁶ The whole of this passage [*i.e.* the entire scene between Thingol, Lúthien, and Beren—the preceding 150 ll or so] has always been deservedly regarded as one of the gems of the *Geste*.

they shone like marvelous stars at night,
in the great. Gnomish hoards of Tûn,
while Glingal flowered and Belthil's bloom
yet lit the land beyond the shore
where the Shadowy Seas' last surges roar,
ere Morgoth stole them and the Gnomes
seeking their glory left their homes,
ere sorrows fell on Elves and Men,
ere Beren was or Lúthien,
ere Fëanor's sons in madness swore
their dreadful oath. But now no more
their beauty was seen, save shining clear
in Morgoth's dungeons vast and drear.
His iron crown they must adorn,
and gleam above Ores and slaves forlorn,
treasured in Hell above all wealth,
more than his eyes; and might nor stealth
could touch them, or even gaze too long
upon their magic. Throng on throng
of Orcs with reddened scimitars
encircled him, and mighty bars
and everlasting gates and walls,

who wore them now amidst his thralls.⁶⁷

Then Beren laughed more loud than they
in bitterness, and thus did say:

'For little price do elven-kings
their daughters sell for gems and things
and things of gold! If such thy will,
thy bidding I will now fulfill.

On Beren son of Barahir
thou hast not looked the last, I fear.
Farewell, Tinúviel, starlit maiden!
Ere the pale winter pass snow-laden,
I will return, not thee to buy
with any jewel in Elfinesse,
but to find my love in loveliness,
a flower that grows beneath the sky. '
Bowling before Melian and the king
he turned, and thrust aside the ring

⁶⁷ I suspect that this passage has been greatly expanded by the late redactors who found their audience sometimes very ignorant of the myths. It is, as it stands, far from satisfactory. On the one hand it is too long an interruption of the action: on the other it is too succinct for a reader who knows nothing of the mythology. It is also obscure: thus in [1145 few readers can grasp that *their* means 'the Silmarils'. The shorter version of **H** and **L**, though not good, may in some respects be nearer the original:

*Then Thingol's warriors loud and long
Laughed: for wide renown in song
Had Fëanor's gems o'er land and sea,
The Silmarils, the shiners three,
Three only, and in every one
The light that was before the sun
And moon, shone yet. But now no more
Those leavings of the lights of yore
Were seen on earth's back: in the drear
Abysm of Morgoth blazing clear
His iron crown they must adorn
And glitter on Orcs and slaves forlorn etc.*

[Next to *shiners three*, a phrase that Tolkien would surely have loathed, he placed an exclamation point. But he also placed an X next to lines 1144-45 in his typescript, designating them for revision.]

of guards about him, and was gone,
and his footsteps faded one by one
in the dark corridors.

'A guileful oath
thou swore, father! Thou hast both
to blade and chain his flesh now doomed
in Morgoth's dungeons deep entombed,'
said Lúthien, and welling tears
sprang in her eyes, and hideous fears
clutched at her heart. All looked away,
and later remembered the sad day
whereafter Lúthien no more sang.
Then clear in the silence the cold words rang
of Melian: 'Counsel cunning-wise,
O king!' she said. 'Yet if mine eyes
lose not their power, 'twere well for thee
that Beren failed his errantry.
Well for thee, but for thy child
a dark doom and a wandering wild.'

'I sell not to Men those whom I love'
said Thingol, 'whom all things above
I cherish; and if hope there were
that Beren should ever living fare
to the Thousand Caves once more, I swear
he should not ever have seen the air
or light of heaven's stars again.'
But Melian smiled, and there was pain
as of far knowledge in her eyes;
for such is the sorrow of the wise.

