Book of the Lost Narrator: Re-reading the 1977 *Silmarillion* as a Unified Text¹

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1. Introduction

In Tolkien's famous essay about *Beowulf* and the critics, he chides his colleagues for failing to treat the poem as a literary object; they neglect its aesthetic beauty while snuffling around for philological or genealogical data. In a way, I apply much the same point to readers of Tolkien's own 1977 *Silmarillion*. Christopher Tolkien had once written that he treated the 1977 text "of the same order as the writings published by my father himself" (*UT* 3), a "completed and cohesive entity" rather than "a complex of divergent texts interlinked by commentary" (1). Christopher Tolkien later distanced himself from this position, deeply regretting that he "attached no importance" to his father's concerns about presentation (*LT I* xi) and thereby left for *The Silmarillion* "no suggestion of what it is and how (within the imagined world) it came to be" (xii). Understandably, Tolkien scholars followed this path, discounting *The Silmarillion* for the much more authentic-seeming History of Middle-earth. Additionally, they see the 1977 text, though powerful in places, as a product rife with flaws, uneven in structure and detail, sadly heterogeneous in style, and furthermore marred by the editor's unavoidable hand.

I wish to present an alternative reading of the 1977 text. Like Gergely Nagy, but for profoundly different reasons, I believe that *The Silmarillion*, "exactly as it stands in the 1977 text, is a profound work" ("Adapted" 35), a narrative and rhetorical masterpiece. I do not value *The Silmarillion* for its hint of *avant-texts* or textual prehistory, its echoes of oral folklore transformed into written forms. Nor do I see the work's supposed flaws as mimetically reproducing this transformation—in fact, I argue against there being flaws at all. Instead, I see *The Silmarillion* as a "completed and cohesive entity," a single *unified* text in which all five stories are structurally linked and thematically interlocked, where all the seeming inconsistencies and strange silences are actually part of an intentional rhetorical strategy devised by a single, anonymous author of high moral seriousness.

¹ This article originally appeared in *Tolkien Studies*, vol. 13, 2016, pp. 101-24. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/tks.2016.0008

Perhaps to the dismay of some, I also charge that this heavy narratorial hand renders questionable the “veracity” of the history he writes. Indeed, I see this anonymous writer as eerily similar to Geoffrey of Monmouth, someone who clearly worked from existent “sources, oral or written, in the British tradition” (Jankulak 14) but for whom “writing true accounts about real events” was not his prime intention (2). He modified—even invented—the historical record as the situation demanded. Ultimately, the writer of *The Silmarillion*, like Geoffrey of Monmouth, had a fundamentally *literary* purpose, a purpose *higher* than “true history”: the guidance of the reader toward the life rightly led.

My argument proceeds as follows. Section 2 deals with two preliminary matters: (a) the importance of treating *The Silmarillion* as an autonomous yet canonical text and (b) the “compilation” thesis against which my “unified text” thesis operates. In section 3, I analyze two brief passages representative of the whole. These passages, I argue, constitute a tour de force of careful rhetorical manipulation and guidance. Section 4 tackles the objection that an inconsistency of narrative style and level of detail indicates, contra my argument, a compilation of lost texts. Finally, section 5 shows how the final two stories in *The Silmarillion*, the “Akallabêth” and “Of the Rings of Power,” form codas thematically vital to the *Silmarillion*’s structure as a whole.

2. Complicating Factors

2.1 The Canonicity of the 1977 *Silmarillion*

When critics dismiss or discount the published *Silmarillion*, they generally do so from one of two poles. Brian Rosebury represents the first. He baldly states that Tolkien’s reputation must “very largely rest on *The Lord of the Rings*” (8), implying that his other works, such as *The Silmarillion*, do not merit much attention. The other pole of critics discount the book in favor of more “authentic” posthumous writings. The work of Verlyn Flieger and Douglas Charles Kane seems applicable here. According to Vladimir Brljak, Flieger tends to view Tolkien’s entire mythology, “rather than just the published, authorized works, as the proper, or at least as the ultimate, locus of a Tolkien critic’s attention” (5). Indeed, Flieger states explicitly that the 1977 text “gives a *misleading* impression of coherence and finality, *as if* it were a definitive, canonical text, whereas the mass of material from which that volume was taken is a jumble of overlapping and often competing stories, annals, and lexicons” (63, emphasis added). Likewise, Kane argues that the 1977 text pushes “the limits of editorial

intervention” (55), illicitly removing elements essential to Tolkien’s authorial intention (narrative frame, women’s roles, etc.), which thereby makes Christopher Tolkien’s edited text “a lesser work” (252).¹ Almost worse is the opinion of Charles Noad, who is grateful that the 1977 text appeared as it was only because “a more scholarly edition at that time would almost certainly have precluded later publication of *The History of Middle-earth*” (65).

The founding intuition behind this dismissal is perfectly understandable: the 1977 *Silmarillion* is a mediated text. If it really *is* just a “collaborative effort between J.R.R. Tolkien and his third son,” as Jason Fisher argues (133), then the History of Middle-earth at least possesses the virtue of displaying Tolkien in his full unedited glory. If this consideration is deemed paramount, any extended exegesis of *The Silmarillion* itself seems like a vain and idle exercise.

Nonetheless, readers and scholars unavoidably *do* treat *The Silmarillion* as canonical Tolkien. This seems like the most important takeaway from *The Silmarillion: Thirty Years On*, the only volume devoted solely to the 1977 text. For Allan Turner, the book stands “as the canonical work, the standard against which all variations are measured” by virtue of “its status as the first and most unified form of the mythology” (ii). Jason Fisher concurs. For “good or ill, the work now stands as something like a canonical text, despite the unavoidable intrusions of its editor” (113). Indeed, practical considerations—if nothing else—guarantee the published text’s importance. It “has a far larger audience than the exceedingly complicated welter of texts in *The History of Middle-earth*” and so represents for most readers “the standard, authoritative source of ‘information’ about the Elder Days” (Agøy 141). Thus, the 1977 text ought to be accorded a special status not likewise accorded to the other posthumous publications. As a result, dismissing *The Silmarillion* as either lacking literary merit or being misleading or nonrepresentative creates an excessively thorny issue.

As a side note, literary history does give a noble precedent for treating something like *The Silmarillion* as canonical for its author. Most Shakespearean scholars categorize *King Lear* as one of the Bard’s four central plays, yet the *King Lear* commonly taught to undergraduates was never actually “authorized” by Shakespeare himself. The play exists in two versions only, the 1608 quarto and the 1623 First Folio. Since each version contains valuable scenes missing from the other, most modern productions work off a merged or conflated text—a text never performed in Shakespeare’s lifetime or specifically authorized by Shakespeare himself. The justification, of course, is that the conflated version

offers a better and more interesting play than either the quarto or First Folio versions alone. Without being too tongue-in-cheek, textually speaking, we therefore might dub *The Silmarillion* as “Tolkien’s *King Lear*.”

2.2 A Compendium, the Impression of Depth, and the Unified Text Thesis

The Silmarillion has no narrative framework—nothing in the text itself to indicate how readers ought to approach it. Nonetheless, partly thanks to *Lord of the Rings*, partly thanks to clear authorial and editorial intention, most have *tried* reading it through the “lost texts” technique. Agøy defines this technique as “the pretense that the work in front of the reader is not really written by a modern author, but consists on translations and retellings of texts far older” (140). We may also call the lost texts technique the “compilation thesis,” a direct antithesis to my “unified text” thesis. Closely related to the compilation thesis—but not *inextricably* related to it—is what some critics deem the essence of Tolkien’s literary value: his impression of depth, his sense that countless texts and contexts lie behind the thing we are reading. As alluded to earlier, the compilation thesis rests on nearly undeniable foundations. Christopher Tolkien makes this point in his foreword. “My father,” he writes, “came to conceive *The Silmarillion* as a compilation, a compendious narrative, made long afterward from sources of great diversity (poems, and annals, and oral tales) that had survived in a long tradition” (S viii). Tolkien himself had formulated his artistic intentions early. For example, as a young man he warned against reading the Finnish *Kalevala* as a “national epic” akin to those of Europe’s more southerly countries; the *Kalevala* has to be read as a *collection* of tales rather than a unified whole.² We “can have your gargoyles on our noble cathedral; but northern Europe has lost much through too often trying to build Greek temples” (Tolkien, “Story of Kullervo” 265).

Following such leads as these, Gergely Nagy has claimed that *The Silmarillion* can be read as a “story about stories, both in the historical and a metafictional sense” (“Adapted” 36). Because the 1977 text references several *other* source texts within its pages, we get the hint of textual retextualizations.³ These references can be to *pseudo-texts* (referring to texts that do not exist and that Tolkien never wrote), *real-and-also-extant* sources (appearing in the History of Middle-earth), and possibly even *real-but-lost* sources—all of which mirrors the problems of medieval and philological scholarship in the Primary World.⁴ An *immense sense of depth* results—and inconsistencies of style and narrative detail within the 1977 text are explainable by the diversity of sources. The styles, Nagy claims, “change [even] within units of the text” (“Adapted” 20). This diversity

also leads to “a striking mix of limited knowledge and seeming omniscience” in different passages, which *possibly* indicates “at least two different Narrators, who are voicing different perspectives, probably stemming from different points in time” (Agøy 151, 152).

Building on Nagy’s work, Michael D. C. Drout, Namiko Hitotsubashi, and Rachel Scavera argue that the “impression of depth” is actually *increased* by the text’s various inconsistencies, both logical and stylistic. These inconsistencies hint “to the reader, perhaps even at a subconscious level, that the text is not the pure invention of a single author but rather a compilation of the work of multiple writers over many years—exactly what, by adopting the conceit that he is translating the Red Book of Westmarch, Tolkien claims his work to be” (180). On one hand, a single author may remove contradictions and smooth out style during revision. On the other hand, a compiler has less freedom than an author—he must take texts largely as he finds them.

The glorification of such inconsistencies, however, strikes me as overly sanguine. In contrast to Nagy and Drout et al., the text’s apparent problems frustrate Nils Ivar Agøy more than excite him. For him, reading *The Silmarillion* as a compilation of lost texts does “not so much provide depth or verisimilitude as confusion and disappointment” (160). Even Verlyn Flieger, who privileges “The Silmarillion” over the 1977 *Silmarillion*, acknowledges the limitations of the pseudo-translation (or lost texts) framework. It may best be “seen as an authorial conceit but not a substantial structural factor” because too “many things will not fit comfortably into the concept—narrative voice, point of view, the amount of knowledge each of these ‘authors’ could have had at any one time” (79).⁵ Indeed, I think Nagy, Drout et al., and many other like-minded critics fall prey to the tendency noted in section 2.1—discounting the published 1977 text in favor of its hypotexts or *avant-textes*,⁶ the prehistory of the final product.⁷ If we take *The Silmarillion* as a canonical work, as I think we must, it behooves us to read it in the best possible light—and rather than glorifying the text’s alleged flaws and inconsistencies, as Nagy and Drout et al. seem to do, or lamenting them, as Agøy does, my unified text theory proposes to *resolve* them.

Indeed, a critical concern with the hypotexts, which leads to the “gross heterogeneity” of *The Silmarillion*’s prose style (Drout et al. 184)—interpolations, pseudo-interpolations, and remnants of source material surviving into the final text—seems like an exercise fraught with peril. The 19th-century doctrine of *Liedertheorie* held that most epics, including the Greek ones, had begun as nonliterate “lays” or “ballads,” and critics (especially German critics)

often sought—vainly—to separate the authentic lays from the later literary interpolations. Drout himself acknowledges the dangers of such an approach when mining Ida Gordon’s edition of *The Seafarer* for possible influences from Tolkien—Drout admits finding himself attributing all “the most insightful emendations and suggestions to” Tolkien (“J.R.R. Tolkien’s Medieval” 159). Yet it may be answered that the History of Middle-earth allows us objectively to double-check our allegations of interpolation. Let me suggest that that is only *partially* true. Take the sentence, “The eagle has landed.” This sentence will have one meaning when uttered in a national park, another meaning when spoken to someone familiar with the novels of Jack Higgins, and yet another when discussing Apollo 11. In other words, context largely determines meaning. If a source text contains a certain passage, and another text repeats *the same passage verbatim*, the meaning of those two passages will nonetheless change because of differing surrounding materials. Meaning will change, not only because the passage appears in a new context but because the reader will bring to the passage new expectations—genre expectations, biographical expectations, and so on. The transplanted passage, furthermore, will be read in the light of the new work as a whole. For this reason, we cannot assume a simple transmission of meaning or intent, even if *The Silmarillion*’s writer (or Tolkien in the primary world) had copied some passages word by word from earlier texts. Instead, we should ask how the target text changes and modifies the transplanted passage—and how, correspondingly, the transplanted passages change and modify the target text as a whole.

So whereas others might see a gross heterogeneity of styles, textual inconsistencies, textual flaws, or strange discrepancies in levels of narratorial omniscience, I much prefer to see deliberately placed oddities that must be fitted into the whole and explained rather than explained away. Such a reading, I suggest, will effectively make the 1977 book a *stronger* book. We need not give up the “impression of depth” because, after all, the text does explicitly refer to several other texts. Still, I suggest refocusing our attention. The writer of *The Silmarillion* clearly worked from source materials and like Geoffrey of Monmouth, worked for a higher purpose. He wrote a single unified text to accomplish this focus, and this means we *should* give up the frustrating and confusing compilation thesis.

To that end, let us examine two concrete passages—and find out how they operate rhetorically. To the issue of the high craft of *The Silmarillion* we now turn.

3. Two Passages

Both passages appear late in the “Quenta Silmarillion.” The first depicts a conversation between the last two living sons of Fëanor, Maedhros and Maglor; the second describes Morgoth’s final capture. Initially, I will attempt to phrase my argument along “text-active” lines—the text does this, the text does that. I do not wish to presuppose the existence of a narrator/author-figure, since that is what I wish to prove.

Here, then, is the first passage. Maedhros and Maglor are trying to decide if they should fulfill their oath to regain the Silmarils at any cost. The Elvish host from Valinor currently possesses them, having just taken them from Morgoth in the War of Wrath. Maglor, who elsewhere has been described as “sick and weary with the burden of the dreadful oath” (S 247), initiates the dialogue:

“The oath says not that we may not bide our time, and it may be that in Valinor all shall be forgiven and forgot, and we shall come into our own in peace.”

But Maedhros answered that if they returned to Aman but the favour of the Valar were withheld from them, then their oath would still remain, but its fulfillment be beyond all hope; and he said, “Who can tell to what dreadful doom we shall come, if we disobey the Powers in their own land, or purpose ever to bring war again into their holy realm?” Yet Maglor still held back, saying: “If Manwë and Varda themselves deny the fulfillment of an oath to which we named them in witness, is it not made void?”

And Maedhros answered: “But how shall our voices reach to Ilúvatar beyond the Circles of the World? And by Ilúvatar we swore in our madness, and called the Everlasting Darkness upon us, if we kept not our word. Who shall release us?”

“If none can release us,” said Maglor, “then indeed the Everlasting Darkness shall be our lot, whether we keep our oath or break it; but less evil shall we do in the breaking.” (S 253)

Here ends the dialogue. Maglor’s last argument takes pride of place at the end. The passage’s moral intent seems clear: when faced with two awful choices, choose the lesser of two evils. Break the oath, give up the claim to the Silmarils. Maglor’s words begin the conversation; his words end it. Two separate objections are offered by Maedhros; Maglor answers them.

Yet, though the *dialogue* ends here, the action does not. Immediately we read, “Yet [Maglor] yielded at last to the will of Maedhros, and they took

counsel together how they should lay hands on the Silmarils” (S 253). This final resolve seems odd. Maglor, who espouses the righteous viewpoint, has somehow lost the argument. Immediately afterward, the brothers enter Eönwë’s camp, murder the guards, and steal the two remaining Silmarils. But why? Let us examine these two excerpts together. The bulk of the passage—202 words—argues for breaking the oath. Maedhros’s objections and Maglor’s rebuttals are given in direct speech, which highlights them. (Readers tend to privilege dialogue, hence mass-market paperbacks are mostly dialogue.) Nonetheless, the passage’s final sentence—a mere 23 words, or about 10 percent of the total—subverts the previous 90 percent.

Here is the situation. An “immoral” argument, presented by Maedhros, has defeated a “moral” argument. What is the immoral argument? We do not know; the text refuses to tell. It earlier seems willing to summarize an argument in indirect speech (“But Maedhros answered that”) but, for some reason, not here. Its strategy is silence; it merely tells that Maglor “yielded at last⁸ to the will of Maedhros.” It does not indicate why. Perhaps we could guess at Maglor’s psychology, tell ourselves a story about a domineering older brother or a lack of self-confidence, possibly even a lack of inner fortitude, but such stories would be us speaking and not the text. Nor would such stories explain why the text chose to devote 202 words to a failed argument and then suppress the reason for its failure.

It is almost as if the text does not want the reader to judge the arguments on their own respective merits. Consider the fundamental element in rational discourse: the fair presentation of *both* sides. For a mediator to sway the reader to one position unfairly, either through ad hominem or straw-man arguments or whitewashing counterarguments, is to manipulate the reader. The text seems fearful of letting the reader judge the respective arguments on their own merits. Perhaps the reader, hearing Maedhros at length, will come to adopt Maedhros’s point of view? After all, Maglor—who *did* hear this argument—eventually adopted Maedhros’s point of view. Maedhros corrupted Maglor; perhaps the text does not want Maedhros to corrupt the reader as well.⁹

Let us notice something else. Allegedly, this is a *private* conversation between two brothers; the text does not mention anyone else as present. On what authority does the text present this conversation? An earlier passage further calls everything into question: “Of the march of the host of the Valar to the north of Middle-earth little is said in any tale; for among them went none of those Elves who had dwelt and suffered in the Hither Lands, and who made the histories of

those days that still are known; and tidings of these things they only learned long afterwards from their kinsfolk in Aman” (S 251). The text admits that no reliable primary documentation exists for the War of Wrath. The few extant documents come only at secondhand, composed from information “learned long afterwards.” As any historian can attest, memory being what it is, even firsthand accounts can be unreliable, especially in emotionally traumatic situations like war. Accounts coming *secondhand* multiply the unreliability exponentially—details are added, memories change, individuals tend to overemphasize their own roles, and so on. (Gut instinct tells me that Tolkien had originally written this passage to give *some* explanation for how these events might become known to posterity; but, if so, the “explanation” seems to undermine his intention dreadfully.) Taking all this into account, how can the flesh-and-blood writer of the original dialogue have known with such precision the details of this unwitnessed conversation, occurring within the context of an entire war for which no solidly reliable account exist?

Let me propose that whoever physically wrote these passages down in the fictional world had simply *invented the entire conversation*. (And now I begin to drop the pose of “text-active” language.) We know that the Maedhros-Maglor passage, by itself, is no “innocent” rendering of a conversation—it deliberately suppresses pieces of dialogue that certainly occurred in the event-story; the strategy makes Maglor’s views prominent without calling attention to their failure. So whoever wrote this passage—and *someone* obviously did—had a clear moral purpose: he wanted to uphold a certain ethical principle, the idea that—when faced with two evil choices—the lesser of two evils should be done.

Furthermore, the writer-narrator presumably knows that Maglor and Maedhros perished in some fashion, perhaps even a *bad* fashion. (Major events like death are more easily cross-checked than others.) The writer *also* knows how easy it can be to write prophecies retroactively. Thus, he attributes to the brothers motivations that he considers morally unworthy, and when those two die in unworthy fashion, the ethical principle that the writer wishes to uphold is miraculously upheld: lives lived in evil will to evil ends come.

In other words, the writer-narrator *begins* with the awful fates of Maglor and Maedhros and works backward, retroactively attributing poor choices or character flaws to explain those awful fates. He then takes the opportunity—created, incidentally, by himself—to have Maglor articulate the lesson the reader ought to learn. The writer then composes the dialogue in such a way that unwary readers might gloss over the fact that Maglor, in the end, did not ultimately accept his own argument.¹⁰

If we start reading *The Silmarillion* a little more suspiciously, we may

more easily notice the narrator's customary slyness. Let us take another example. It occurs deep in the mines below Thangorodrim. "There Morgoth stood at last at bay, and yet unvaliant. He fled into the deepest of his mines, and sued for peace and pardon; but his feet were hewn from under him, and he was hurled upon his face" (S 252). Morgoth, obviously, is *The Silmarillion*'s whipping boy. There is no evil that does not somehow originate in him. Correspondingly, the text always attributes vice to him but never virtue. (Indeed, Melkor and Ungoliant are arguably responsible for the most exciting passage in *The Silmarillion*, the blighting of the Two Trees of Valinor, but the text will grant nothing like "fearlessness" to the enemy.) The passage just quoted follows suit. When Morgoth makes his last stand, the text describes that stand as "unvaliant." Again we ask, as we asked earlier, how does the writer of this passage *know*? Worse, his explicit value judgment ("unvaliant," cowardly) is not consistent with the best practices of modern historiographic writing. For example, no modern historian would write, "Hitler killed himself like a coward to avoid capture by the Allies"—however laudable the sentiment, the bias of the text would be too clear. Our writer-narrator clearly makes no pretensions to be writing a scientific "true" history.

We might legitimately question some of the details of this capture, too. His "feet were hewn from under him" is a very specific detail. It is odd that the text can be specific about that *and yet not be specific about who did the deed*. In what was arguably the most glorious individual deed of the First Age, it seems exceedingly strange that no one was given *credit* for that deed. We know that Isildur, after all, slew Sauron to end the First Age. We know that a king of the Elves, Fingolfin, *attempted* to slay Morgoth. But the text's writer decides not to reveal who finally captured Arda's Satan.

The question of who finally slew Morgoth, of course, really has no answer within the 1977 text. We can speculate, though—and I think such guesses illustrate the ways in which we, as readers, need to question the writer of *The Silmarillion*. Perhaps the Elves of Valinor had no desire for personal glory, so never bothered to sing the praises of the captor to Elvish historians. Or, perhaps, the captor came from a nonnoble house; the text's writer does seem to have a clear aristocratic bias. Or, most interestingly, perhaps the glorious capture of Morgoth was not really so glorious. In the chivalric tradition, granting mercy to foes who sue for peace is considered honorable. The captor denied Morgoth that mercy. Is denying such mercy really in line with the narrator's moral compass? I suggest not.¹¹ So, assuming that the writer did not invent the scene out of whole cloth (always a possibility), *perhaps* the narrator *deliberately* suppresses the name of Morgoth's captor because those actions, no matter their context, worked against

the narrator's larger moral project. He refuses to glorify—or let the reader glorify—someone who shamefully refused to grant an enemy mercy.

Such careful rhetorical maneuvering, I submit, is a general feature of *The Silmarillion*. We can begin to see the narrator's rhetorical maneuverings everywhere. Taking just one more quick example at random, when Morgoth surprises the Noldor at the Second Battle in the wars of Beleriand, the *Dagor-nuin-Giliath*, the text says, "The Noldor, outnumbered and taken at unawares [by Morgoth's armies], were yet swiftly victorious; for the light of Aman was not yet dimmed in their eyes" (S 106). On the face of it, unless the narrator's craft has successfully seduced the reader, this statement sounds ridiculous. "Possessing the light of Aman in one's eyes" is not a valid military principle. The narrator is setting Fëanor up for a downfall, so he can hardly attribute military genius to the person responsible for the Kinslaying—even if that explanation seems more likely. Ironically, Fëanor soon dies in that same battle, slightly undercutting the wonderfulness of Aman light possession.

It should be noted that I do not consider being "seduced" by the text necessarily a bad thing. What I call suspicious reading—or just paying attention to how the narrator manipulates the reader—is, in a way, the attempt to resist the irresistible suspension of disbelief that attends successful subcreation. Only by so doing, however, can we properly begin to appreciate the art (from which we get *artifice*) that undergirds *The Silmarillion* as a whole. The following section shows how that art applies even to those aspects that some critics deem most flawed.

4. Different Styles in the Text

One benefit of the compilation thesis is that it allows readers to salvage an allegedly flawed text composed by a writer they admire. Most readers, strangely, seem unwilling to argue that *The Silmarillion* is *not* actually flawed. Half apologetically, Christopher Tolkien ascribes to the compilation method such features as "the varying speed of the narrative and fullness of detail in different parts, the contrast (for example) of the precise recollections of place and motive in the legend of Túrin Turambar beside the high and remote account of the end of the First Age, when Thangorodrim was broken and Morgoth overthrown" (S viii).¹² In other words, not only does the style¹³ vary among the five stories in the book, but the style can even vary inside one and the same story or chapter. We may detect Christopher Tolkien's unstated principle: *if* a text had been unified by a lone writer, then its narrative style and level of detail should remain consistent throughout.

Thus, reading *The Silmarillion* as a compilation seems like a neat

solution—except, of course, that it does not work, as indicated in section 2.2. Another solution is possible, however. Oddly enough, James Joyce provides a model. Each of *Ulysses*'s 18 chapters is written in a radically different style—yet only *one* man managed to write them all. Although Tolkien had clearly never *intended* a radical heterogeneity of styles, since that contravened his traditional notion of *good* prose, he nevertheless accomplished just that. The question then becomes, as it does with *Ulysses*, how do the different individual styles contribute to the overall effect of *The Silmarillion*?

As my test case, I take the example provided by Christopher Tolkien—the stylistic differences between the Túrin Turambar legend and the War of Wrath. Just to repeat, the main discrepancy cited is *narrative speed*. From this discrepancy in speed derives the attendant problems of different levels of detail (faster narrative, fewer details) and how “close” the point of view seems to the events narrated. (Generally, the faster the summary, the higher and more remote its presentation.) To begin, let me state something with which few readers would disagree: these stylistic differences *do* exist. Rather than focus on what this stylistic diversity implies about compilation, however, I want to focus on what it implies for the reader—that is, *why* the narrator might have chosen to narrate these different passages differently. Let us focus on the War of Wrath. Within the War of Wrath is located—by Drout—an “eucatastrophic” moment, but this passage also comes under heavy fire by him. He considers the eucatastrophe “diminished” by how the text gives “more narrative space [to Maedhros and Maglor] than the victory itself (“Reflections” 44). Moreover, the war itself is flawed by its “very swift, skeletal narration” (44).¹⁴ All this might be laid at the feet of a careless editor (in the textual world, of course) and a consequence of the consequence of compilation of lost texts.¹⁵

Yet an entirely different answer is possible. We can hypothesize that the narrator glosses so rapidly over the War of Wrath not *only* thanks to limited quality sources but because—fundamentally—*the details of the war do not matter to him*. The most important event is not the war itself or even the capture of Morgoth, which is anyway dishonorable, but the moral dilemma that plagues Maglor. The narrator wants to get the war “over with” as soon as possible so he may tackle the issues that really matter. But does this not undercut the eucatastrophe of the War of Wrath itself? Not at all. Unlike Drout, I do not locate the eucatastrophic moment in the war. Rather, I locate it at the very end of the Voyage of Eärendil. Specifically, these lines:

Now when first Vingilot was set to sail in the seas of heaven, it rose unlooked for, glittering and bright; and the people of Middle-earth beheld it from afar and wondered, and they took it for a sign, and called it Gil-Estel, the Star of High Hope. . . .

Then the Elves looked up, and despaired no longer; but Morgoth was filled with doubt. (S 250)

The War of Wrath is denouement only; even then, it has value only as a preface to the dialogue between Maglor and Maedhros. It is the rising of Gil-Estel that confers the “*sudden* joyous ‘turn,’” the “*sudden* and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur” (OFS 75, emphasis added), the “*sudden* un hoped-for happy ending,” and the “*sudden* happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears” (Letters 100, emphasis added). The Star appears suddenly, out of nowhere, “unlooked for,” by the peoples of Middle-earth. This is *their* eucatastrophe, not ours or the narrator’s readers, hence the immeasurably different feel from the horns of Rohan.

Thus, the chapter titled “The Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath” is divided into equal halves, yet the War of Wrath in the second half has been subordinated to the Maglor-Maedhros dialogue. That structurally links the dialogue as the thematic counterpart to the Voyage of Eärendil. After the star of Gil-Estel rises, the sons of Fëanor fall.

This reading, then, explains the otherwise surprising rapidity of the War of Wrath—war matters less to our narrator than Maglor’s moral truths or Eärendil’s saving voyage. What, then, of narrative speed in the Túrin story?

The key might be the “suddenness” of Gil-Estel for the people of Middle-earth. Only endless woe and long defeat can pave the way for the miraculous appearance of that last poetic image. In the six chapters prior to the War of Wrath, we witness tales of devastation and ruin punctuated by small moments of non-lasting success. Beleriand is ruined; Fingolfin perishes; the Fifth Battle is lost; Túrin is doomed; the hidden realms of Nargothrond, Doriath, and Gondolin are felled. Or, put otherwise, these tales of doom last 120 pages. The Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath that follow last merely 11.

Yet the differing narrative speeds of these preceding six chapters operate against one another to heighten the reader’s sense of despair for Middle-earth—or so the narrator intends. The two “slowest” chapters focus on Beren and Túrin; the dyscatastrophe of Túrin undermines the minor eucatastrophe of Beren. Yet each of these “slow” chapters is surrounded by a “fast” chapter. These fast chapters describe wide-scale destruction and tragedy. Túrin’s slow, drawn-out individual

doom follows the rapid-fire dyscatastrophe of the northlands in the Nirnaeth Arnoediad, which itself (intentionally) undermines the minor eucatastrophe of Beren and Lúthien, which *itself* is only a temporary palliative to the preceding “Ruin” of Beleriand. Then, having established how the individual doom of Túrin contributed to the social and political doom of Nargothrond, the narrator has laid the groundwork for the subsequent downfalls of Doriath and Gondolin. The narrator does not *need* to spend as much time on them. Moreover, structurally, having *two* fast chapters follow the Túrin story (rather than one, as with “Beren and Lúthien”) accentuates the sense of precipitous decline for the reader. When a statue topples, it topples slowly at the beginning; only when near the ground is its momentum the greatest. The narrator re-creates Gil-Estel’s eucatastrophe by rescuing the “statue” just before it shatters forever.

Such a unified structure is lost, I suggest, if we attempt to reduce *The Silmarillion* to a compilation of hypotexts. Combined, these chapters are powerful. That power can be best explained by a writer-narrator’s careful, guiding hand.

5. Uniting All Five Stories

To my mind, the biggest obstacle remaining to my unified text thesis is Christopher Tolkien’s flat-out declaration that “the *Akallabêth* and *Of the Rings of Power*, which appear at the end, are (it must be emphasized) *wholly separate and independent*” from the preceding three stories (S viii, emphasis added). Yet, he says, they are “included according to my father’s explicit intention” (S viii). Before I tackle this last objection in-depth, let me briefly examine one prefatory problem.

5.1 Twice-Written Passages

Many stories that occur in *The Silmarillion* happen to be “twice told.” This occurs especially in the beginning of each of the five major tales. For example, the first two paragraphs in the “Valaquenta” summarize the “Ainulindalë.” This apparent wordiness and repetition allegedly supports the compilation thesis because it violates the Ockham’s razor theory of good prose. If a skilled writer composes a text—and I argue that our narrator is very skilled indeed—then the writers should be skilled enough to tell the story adequately the first time, especially in a purported history.

The question then becomes, of course, whether this repetition actually *is* needless. My argument, as before, is that rather than see these twice-told passages as

mistakes or careless repetitions in an insufficiently edited compilation, we ought to attend to the rhetorical effects these passages have in their second telling. In the “Valaquenta” opening, repeating the creation myth operates as a type of transition. It makes explicit a link between “Valaquenta” and “Ainulindalë,” but the differing style—more heavily abbreviated, a more rigid narrative voice—tips the reader off on the nature of the story to follow. Rather than the fraught tension of contending wills, we will encounter a lecture and summary incorporating valuable information for later. The complete neglect of Morgoth’s role in the creation, furthermore, reaffirms the fundamental original goodness of the creation. A good summary leaves out the least important tidbits; by leaving Morgoth out of the creation, the narrator corrects an impression that “Ainulindalë” may have left, that Morgoth was somehow *essential* to the creation. This reminder becomes necessary because the writer knows that Eru will disappear almost entirely from the rest of the text.

5.2 The Unified Text: The Two Codas

A major hurdle to the ultimate unity of *The Silmarillion* rests not only with Christopher Tolkien’s denial, cited earlier, but also with the immense difference in feel between the “Quenta Silmarillion” and following story, the “Akallabêth.” I doubt that I am alone among readers in thinking that the eucatastrophic endnote of the book’s major story *feels* like the end of the text entirely; it almost takes an act of will to begin the “Akallabêth.” As Mary R. Bowman has pointed out, however, narrative theory has often questioned the exact nature of endings. Speaking of *The Lord of the Rings*, she says that the “book is denied strong closure by the presence of another structural feature, the appendices” (276). Those appendices undermine Bilbo’s “happily ever after” ending and indicate, conversely, the arbitrariness of what constitutes a *beginning*—Appendix A shows how *The Hobbit* began much earlier than indicated in the actual book. Coming at the issue from a Bakhtinian perspective, the literary critic Gary Saul Morson makes a similar point. According to Bakhtin, the essential feature of the “present” is its *unfinalizability*. “We sense the present . . . as open. We sense the past as closed, because its outcome—our own situation—is already known and determined” (Morson 87). But the sense of *finalizability* implied by an ending is only a fiction. Our sense of the openness of the present can extend backwards into the past; one literary way of creating this effect is to question beginnings and endings.

Though many of the writer’s greatest themes have already been articulated by the ending of the “Quenta Silmarillion,” he must nevertheless deal with the

onward thrust of time. History never just *stops*; the writer must bring his history up to his present. In the “Akallabêth,” we see a story line roughly equivalent to what we have seen before—initial bliss, followed by hubris or self-assertiveness, and a Fall—but one in which the narrator’s concerns have been subtly shifted to accommodate a new focal point. Though the writer is still tied to the past by his Elvish sympathies, he tackles a potential impediment to perfect moral goodness that was previously unimportant: the fear of death.

We turn to the opening of the “Akallabêth.” It retells the story of Eärendil’s voyage and the War of Wrath. Yet this retelling contains less doubt and sadness, fewer of the conflicts, fewer of the rhetorical flourishes meant to heighten emotion. Being twice told, *this* version cannot be “sudden”; it cannot lead to eucatastrophe in the same sense. It serves a different purpose. First, rather than signaling the divine grace of a literal *deus ex machina*, this second telling operates as a *literary* tool. It foreshadows Amandil’s voyage west near the story’s end; Amandil intends, as both his speech and the narrator’s commentary make clear, to reenact the “embassy” of Amandil’s ancestor Eärendil (S 276). Amandil fails.¹⁶ Yet before he fails, the narrator allows Amandil to articulate the moral center of “Akallabêth,” a sentiment that might, had it been uttered by Maglor, spared that elf from doom: “I would betray the King,” says Amandil, for “there is but one loyalty from which no man can be absolved in heart for any cause” (S 275). Amandil means loyalty to Ilúvatar, of course. Yet the narrator does not permit Amandil to name Ilúvatar explicitly—because it is better to preach subtly rather than overtly, as Tolkien himself implies in the Milton Waldman letter when he notes that any explicit reference to the Christian religion would be “fatal” for fairy stories (*Letters* 144).

Under my reading, the major point of “Akallabêth” is to depict Númenor as different from Beleriand, the last place “upon Earth . . . where the memory of a time without evil is preserved” (S 279), but now cut off permanently from Aman by its own folly. It thus serves as a fundamental link between *The Silmarillion*’s first three stories and “Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age.” The narrator’s final story concerns a land that *has always* remembered evil and what such a land must look like. What such a land looks like, of course, is the narrator’s *own* land.

Here, then, is the basic action for the five stories of the *Silmarillion*. The story of the Elder Days, incorporating the first three stories, ends with decline and eventually destruction. It constitutes the bulk of the entire book because the narrator must make his story plausible, especially to an audience perhaps skeptical of the author’s basic moral viewpoint and ignorant of Elvish tradition (Agøy 159). The reader must be shown, step by step, the onset of the Fall from the originally blessed state.

Then Númenor in the Second Age arises. The narrator presents his material as a rapid summary because, in a sense, the same story has already been told about the First Age. The narrator glosses over 23 kings of Númenor because he does not really care about Númenor itself.¹⁷ He is concerned with Men as beings who are inferior to the Elves and whose fear of death—rather than their desire for the fruits of their labor—becomes the instrument of their corruption by evil. The narrator's final story is both a coda to "Quenta Silmarillion" and a continuation of the Fall. That Fall will be completed at the end of the Third Age, when the Elves disappear forever into the West. The War of the Ring, the greatest triumph of Men—ironically accomplished by a "Halfling"—cannot really be an *ultimate* triumph, not when so much of beauty had been lost: a theme foreshadowed by the earlier "ultimate" triumphs over evil.

The narrator maintains his moral focus throughout his story: the subtle warnings to the reader to avoid evil because evil will ultimately destroy itself; the affirmation that divine grace *will* intercede in history, though *only* after much sorrow; and that the single best way to handle one's fate is through humility, submission to the higher powers, and—if necessary—self-sacrifice. Whether these particular virtues are salutary or the final word must depend on the individual reader. But what is certainly magnificent about *The Silmarillion* is the skill and craft utilized by the book's writer to entreat—to guide, to seduce—the reader to that writer's particular vision of the Good.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have argued against the "compilation" or "lost texts" thesis. Both lead to reading *The Silmarillion* as a flawed or inconsistent work, valuable only for its echoes of an ancient literary past yet and ultimately superseded by *Unfinished Tales* and the History of Middle-earth. Such a view, I believe, does a disservice to the published 1977 text. For my part, as a reader, I have never felt the lack of any narrative framing device to *be* a lack—and the lack of that narrative framework, I maintain, means that we must radically reread *The Silmarillion*, even in ways not intended by the author. Nor can we simply ignore this problem; as argued in section 2.1, the 1977 text ought be accorded a special, privileged status not likewise accorded Tolkien's other posthumous publications. It is a *King Lear*-type of conflated text, never specifically authorized by the author but greater than the individual versions produced by him. Ultimately, the "unified text" thesis holds that all the pieces within the published *Silmarillion* fit together, have meaning, and relate to a larger whole—regardless of whether individual passages may be traced verbatim to "earlier" texts.

Section 3 examined the great rhetorical skill apparent within two passages. Section 4 looked at the diversity of narrative speeds within the “Quenta Silmarillion” and showed how, assuming great rhetorical skill, this diversity might extend and deepen the overall effect. The final section, section 5.2, argued for the structural and thematic unity between all five stories in *The Silmarillion*.

Closely tied to the “unified text” thesis is the idea that, within the textual world, a writer-narrator must have written this unified text and intended its higher meaning. We know nothing about him beyond what may be gleaned from his composition. As Nils Ivar Agøy has suggested, this narrator is probably a Man speaking to a Mannish audience that knows little of Elvish tradition; the narrator must come from the Fourth Age or later (159). To these characteristics, I have added “extreme rhetorical skill” and a “moral viewpoint of high seriousness.” More concerned with ethical knowledge than with “true history,” this writer-narrator aims to lead his audience to the Good Life, the life rightly led—rectitude in the face of tragedy, humility toward God or the gods. I would diverge from Agøy, though, by refusing to equate the narrator’s voice with Tolkien’s own. As most narrative theory holds, and as Paul Edmund Thomas says, the “narrator’s voice is not and cannot be precisely equivalent to Tolkien’s voice, because Tolkien stands both inside and outside the novel” (162). Our narrator may share Tolkien’s moral earnestness and “silver tongue,” but they are not the same.

Let me close with a suggestion. Previously, I compared the *Silmarillion*’s narrator to Geoffrey of Monmouth, but another appropriate comparison might be the ancient Greek writer Xenophon. Alongside Plato, Xenophon was the only student of Socrates to write *about* Socrates. Today his reputation as a writer tends to be low: philosophers dismiss his philosophy, historians his history. Yet Xenophon never considered himself a philosopher *or* a historian. He called himself an “*orator*,” a man who possessed the *art* of public speaking, of adapting speech to audience. He used his art to teach his audience virtue. Poetry, Aristotle had said, is a higher art than history. The historian is limited to the world-as-it-is, but the poet can depict the world-as-it-ought-to-be. Sir Philip Sydney had called Xenophon a Poet. For our purposes, in our text, the narrator of the 1977 *Silmarillion* is neither philosopher nor historian but a Xenophonic Poet—a moralist, a rhetorician, an orator-in-writing.

Notes

1. In other words, the 1977 text fascinates Kane but not as much as a hypothetical, finished-but-unaltered text. Compare the much more dismissive Rosebury: “The absence of the distinctive virtues of *The Lord of the Rings*—the

exhilarating, expansive realization of Middle-earth, the unified plot whose excitements are integrated with that realization, the transparent prose which is the medium for both—has made *The Silmarillion* a confessed disappointment to many, perhaps most, of the admirers won for Tolkien by the earlier-published work” (103).

2. Verlyn Flieger notes that, whereas Elias Lönnrot provided Tolkien a personal model for his mythology, Lönnrot worked his texts over so heavily that they no longer seemed to denote a properly folkloric past. The Arthurian romances, in contrast, provided a better *textual* model, showing Tolkien a “multilayered and ongoing process” where “the material was cast first as poetry and then, to validate its authenticity, recast as prose” (39). Both these points give credence to the compilation thesis. In contrast, I argue that the 1977 text *has* been heavily worked over by a single author—to the point where it has achieved “unity” and its parts interlock.

3. A partial listing of references include the *Aldudénië* (S 76), the Maglor-composed *Noldolantë* (S 87), the *Lay of Leithian* (S 162), the *Narn i Hîn Húrin* (S 198), the *Laer Cú Beleg* (S 209), the *Fall of Gondolin* (S 242), the *Lay of Eärendil* (S 246, 259), etc. We have several allusions to sources not named, most often indicated by the phrase “it is told” (S 43, 53, 98), “it is said” (S 54, 276), or “some hold that” (S 285). Sometimes, *The Silmarillion* even complicates the issue. The Túrin story, for example, is here in this text “told in brief” but elsewhere “full told” (S 198–99)—which, as Gergely Nagy points out, indicates that the Túrin story is therefore “a compressed retextualization of another text. This is where depth is again created by a claim of a unknown text and a corresponding textual relation” (“Great Chain” 243). Nonetheless, there *does* exist evidence that someone has set his or her hand editing these stories. The final story, “Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age,” references stories given earlier in the book—the “Quenta Silmarillion” (S 286) and the “Akallabêth” (S 290). Other phrases, such as “as has been told,” refer to information given in previous chapters. We even have one reference in “Akallabêth” about Sauron (S 267) to the *following* story in the book, “Of the Rings of Power.”

4. Nagy unpacks the textual complexities when he notes that *The Silmarillion* is a precursor of *Lord of the Rings* and offers it context and that it allows us to both comprehend and interpret the allusions in *Lord of the Rings*. But within *The Silmarillion*’s textual world, Túrin’s story enjoys its own textual history—it is a compressed rewriting of earlier texts existing within that textual world itself (“Great Chain” 243).

5. She makes this point of *Lord of the Rings*, but I think it applies doubly to *The*

Silmarillion.

6. “Hypotext” is the term used by the French narrative theorist Gérard Genette, “*avant-texte*” the term used by French genetic criticism. Indeed, when Vladimir Brljak denies that the History of Middle-earth is a “literary work,” he does so on the grounds that its only interest lies in “genetic criticism” (24).

7. Let me admit a possible bias. I approach *The Silmarillion* as a literary critic of 20th-century literature—not as a medievalist. For that reason, seeing the text as a “story about stories” may simply strike me as less exciting than it does others. Of course, the charge of bias may always be reversed, though it may be answered that such biases mirror Tolkien’s own.

8. This sentence, in fact, provides a wonderful test case for the compilation thesis versus the unified text thesis. The phrase “at last” constitutes a clear editorial addition by Christopher Tolkien; the original passage from the 1937 “Quenta Silmarillion” simply read, “Yet he yielded to the will of Maedhros” (*Lost Road* 330). The change is so small, in fact, that Douglas Charles Kane does not even consider it worthy of mention in *Arda Reconstructed*—yet this slight change affects the meaning of the passage as a whole, since it *now* becomes apparent that, in the 1977 text, Maglor needed convincing by Maedhros, whereas the 1937 text permits us to believe that Maglor capitulated without time-consuming argument and discussion. The compilation thesis might suggest that “at last” is simply an interpolation by the editor (which, of course, it is). If so, we could justifiably discount it as “inauthentic.” This, then, changes the interpretation: the text no longer so clearly “hides” Maedhros’s successful-yet-immoral arguments, since maybe he never makes any such arguments at all. Maglor might have capitulated for other reasons. The unified text thesis, however, argues that we must accept the 1977 text *exactly as we find it*. This “at last,” interpolation though it be, indicates that *some* time passes, the events for which go undescribed by the text. My reading, I believe, has one strong advantage. Whereas the compilation thesis might see “at last” as a flaw, a regrettable error by a careless scribe (perhaps), the unified text theory sees this “flaw” as creating a whole new text—something that creates, enlarges, and deepens the meaning of the whole, which must be accounted for *as is*. The “narrator” of *The Silmarillion* then becomes, therefore, a type of hypothetical construct useful for explaining what otherwise might be seen as a frustrating or inauthentic interpolation.

A similar issue crops up later in the chapter: “They knew that those jewels could not be found or brought together again unless the world be broken and remade” (S 254). Kane criticizes Christopher Tolkien for putting “unless” instead of “until,” which is what the source text has—Kane disapproves

of the editor excising the Second Prophecy of Mandos (234). Now, if literary critics were to ask, “What was Tolkien’s original intention?” then perhaps Kane’s criticism is valid. (Even so, I would counter that “original intent” is a red herring here.) And yet, if literary critics instead ask, “How ought we to read this new text physically in front of us?” then Kane’s qualms fail to have any genuine bearing on the issue. For some reason, our hypothetical narrator *wanted* to write “unless.” It then becomes our job as readers to figure out why. Nor can we simply ignore the 1977 book since, as I argued in section 2.1, *The Silmarillion* is a vital part of Tolkien’s corpus.

9. Concerning one philosophical story in the History of Middle-earth, David Bratman praises Tolkien for avoiding the argumentative “trick found so often in bad novels in which the ‘wrong’ character offers only easily dismissed straw-man arguments” (76). Let me hasten to say that I do not consider the Maglor passage a “trick” in any sense. Instead, let me suggest that the narrator simply shares Tolkien’s trait of placing “rhetorical approval behind those characters with whom he agrees” (Saxton 172).

10. I have spelled out the argument at length, but the unreliability of premodern historians is relatively well-known. Prior to the 19th century, most historians did not think the purpose of writing history was to uncover *facts*. Indeed, facts—by themselves—were quite *unimportant*. Andrew Hadfield says that the prime difficulty for writing his biography of Edmund Spenser was that “in the sixteenth century lives of even quite prominent people only really mattered when they told a useful, moral story that could be applied with profit to the reader’s own case” (1). Biographies contemporary to Spenser were “made to fit obviously useful patterns” and tended “to conform to familiar narratives” (2). I suggest that the “lives” of Maglor and Maedhros are intentionally made to fit one of these familiar narratives.

11. It certainly was not within *Tolkien’s* moral compass. Bilbo refused to shed Gollum’s blood, and Frodo *wanted* to let Saruman depart in peace from the Shire, despite Saruman’s crimes.

12. Christopher Tolkien also refers to the “*Valaquenta’s*” “continual shifting of tense and viewpoint, so that the divine powers seem now present and active in the world, now remote, a vanished order known only to memory” (ix). Such shifting helped lead Agøy to his unenthusiastic hypothesis of two narrators voicing different perspectives from different points of time (152). This section focuses on narrative speed rather than shifting tense and viewpoint, mostly due to space limitations, but my points on narrative speed would apply as well.

13. When Drout et al. discuss styles, they mostly mean stylistic variation.

“Segments of a text may differ in vocabulary (both content and function words), sentence length or structure, repetition or avoidance of rhyme and alliteration, and other linguistic features” (184), all of which suggest interpolation or pseudo-interpolation to them. This section uses “style” to discuss an idea somewhat larger than linguistic features, namely, the level of detail offered and the various paces at which the narrative moves.

14. Drout does not use the word “flawed,” but I think it implied. The narration creates a “very different emotional effect than the horns of Rohan” (44), and he feels compelled to defend his reading as a personal idiosyncrasy (45).

15. Nonetheless, the entire War of Wrath scene, it must be said, comes nearly unaltered from Tolkien’s own manuscript for the conclusion of the 1937 “earlier *Quenta*.” His post-*Lord of the Rings* emendations, published in *The War of the Jewels*, are slight.

16. Well, the narrator first says without qualification that Amandil fails (S 276) but later hedges his bets—speculating that Amandil *may* have nonetheless succeeded (279). The narrator has no evidence of this, of course, as he himself has admitted earlier, but throwing this possibility out there reaffirms the possibility of divine grace, by now expected by the reader.

17. Here is just one of many places where my reading clashes with the compilation thesis. In *Unfinished Tales*, we are told that the peoples of Gondor and Imladris did not bother preserving documents about Númenor, since “all but a few regarded study of what was left of its history as vain, breeding only useless regret” (165). The compilation thesis would say that the narrator glosses over the 23 kings because he lacks good sources for them. Yet I have argued (see section 3) that lacking sources would not have stopped the narrator had it served his larger purpose to write about this subject. His admitted lack of knowledge about Amandil’s fate, likewise, does not stop him from speculating.

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