



QUENTA SILMARILLION  
(The History of the Silmarils)

*together with*

AINULINDALĒ  
(The Music of the Ainur)

*and*

VALAQUENTA  
(Account of the Valar)

*To which is appended*

AKALLABĚTH  
(The Downfall of Númenor)

*and*

OF THE RINGS OF POWER AND THE THIRD AGE



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# FOREWORD

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*The Silmarillion*, now published four years after the death of its author, is an account of the Elder Days, or the First Age of the World. In *The Lord of the Rings* were narrated the great events at the end of the Third Age; but the tales of *The Silmarillion* are legends deriving from a much deeper past, when Morgoth, the first Dark Lord, dwelt in Middle-earth, and the High Elves made war upon him for the recovery of the Silmarils.

Not only, however, does *The Silmarillion* relate the events of a far earlier time than those of *The Lord of the Rings*; it is also, in all the essentials of its conception, far the earlier work. Indeed although it was not then called *The Silmarillion*, it was already in being half a century ago; and its battered notebooks extending back to 1917 can still be read the earliest versions, often hastily pencilled, of the central stories of the mythology. But it was never published (though some indications of its content could be gleaned from *The Lord of the Rings*), and throughout my father's long life I never abandoned it, nor ceased even in his last years to work on it. In all that time *The Silmarillion* was considered simply as a large narrative structure, underwent relatively little radical change; it became long ago a fixed tradition, and background to later writings. But it was far indeed from being a fixed text, and did not remain unchanged even in certain fundamental ideas concerning the nature of the world it portrays; while the same legends came to be retold in longer and shorter forms, and in different styles. As the years passed the changes and variants, both in detail and in larger perspective, became so complex, so pervasive, and so many-layered that a final and definitive version seemed unattainable. Moreover the old legends ('old' now not only in their derivation from the remote First Age, but also in terms of my father's life) became the vehicle and depository of his profoundest reflections. In his later writing mythology and poetry sank down behind his theological and philosophical preoccupations: from which arose incompatibilities of tone.

On my father's death it fell to me to try to bring the work into publishable form. It became clear to me that to attempt to present, within the covers of a single book, the diversity of the materials – to show *The Silmarillion* as in truth a continuing and evolving creation extending over more than half a century – would in fact lead only to confusion and the submerging of what is essential. I set myself therefore to work out a single text, selecting and arranging in such a way as seemed to me to produce the most coherent and internally self-consistent narrative. In this work the concluding chapters (from the death of Túrin Turambar) introduced peculiar difficulties, in that they had remained unchanged for many years, and were in some respects in serious disharmony with more developed conceptions in other parts of the book.

A complete consistency (either within the compass of *The Silmarillion* itself or between *The Silmarillion* and other published writings of my father's) is not to be looked for, and could only be achieved, if at all, at heavy and needless cost. Moreover, my father came to conceive *The Silmarillion* as a compilation, a compendious narrative, made long afterwards from sources of great diversity (poems, and annals, and oral tales) that had survived in a long tradition; and this conception has indeed its parallel in the actual history of the book, for a great deal of earlier prose and poetry do underlie it, and it is to some extent a compendium in fact and not only in theory. To this may be ascribed 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; and also some differences of tone and portrayal, some obscurities, and, here and there, some lack of cohesion. In the case of the *Valaquenta*, for instance, we have to assume that while it contains much that must go back to the earliest days of the Eldar in Valinor, it was remodelled in later

times; and thus explain its 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.

The book, though entitled as it must be *The Silmarillion*, contains not only the *Quenta Silmarillion* or *Silmarillion* proper, but also four other short works. The *Ainulindalë* and *Valaquenta*, which are given at the beginning, are indeed closely associated with *The Silmarillion*; but the *Akallabêth* and *The Rings of Power*, which appear at the end, are (it must be emphasised) wholly separate and independent. They are included according to my father's explicit intention, and by their inclusion the entire history is set forth from the Music of the Ainur in which the world began to the passing of the Ringbearers from the Havens of Mithlond at the end of the Third Age.

The number of names that occur in the book is very large, and I have provided a full index; but the number of persons (Elves and Men) who play an important part in the narrative of the First Age is very much smaller, and all of these will be found in the genealogical tables. In addition I have provided a table setting out the rather complex naming of the different Elvish peoples; a note on the pronunciation of Elvish names, and a list of some of the chief elements found in these names; and a map. It may be noted that the great mountain range in the east, Ered Luin or Ered Lindon, the Blue Mountains, appears in the extreme west of the map in *The Lord of the Rings*. In the body of the book there is a smaller map: the intention of this is to make clear at a glance where lay the kingdoms of the Elves after the return of the Noldor to Middle-earth. I have not burdened the book further with any sort of commentary or annotation.

In the difficult and doubtful task of preparing the text of the book I was very greatly assisted by Guy Kay, who worked with me in 1974–1975.

Christopher Tolkien

1977

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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Probably towards the end of 1951, when *The Lord of the Rings* was completed but difficulties lay in the way of its publication, my father wrote a very long letter to his friend Milton Waldman, at the time an editor at the publishing house of Collins. The context and occasion of this letter lay in the painful differences that arose over my father's insistence that *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* should be published in 'conjunction or in connexion' 'as one long Saga of the Jewels and the Rings'. There is however no need to enter into this matter here. The letter that he wrote with a view to justifying and explaining his contention emerged as a brilliant exposition of his conception of the earlier Ages (the latter part of the letter, as he himself said, was no more than 'a long and yet bald résumé' of the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*), and it is for this reason that I believe that it merits inclusion within the covers of *The Silmarillion*, as is done in this edition.

The original letter is lost, but Milton Waldman had a typescript made of it, and sent a copy to my father: it was from this copy that the letter was printed (in part) in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (1981), no.131. The text given here is that in *Letters*, pp.143–157, with minor corrections and the omission of some of the footnotes. There were many errors in the typescript, especially in names; these were very largely corrected by my father, but he did not observe the sentence on p.xviii: 'There was nothing wrong essentially in their lingering against counsel, *still sadly with* the mortal lands their old heroic deeds.' Here the typist certainly omitted words in the manuscript, and perhaps misread those given as well.

I have removed a number of errors in the text and index which until now have escaped correction in the hardback printings (only) of *The Silmarillion*. Chief among these are those that concern the numbering in sequence of certain of the rulers of Númenor (for these errors and an explanation of how they arose see *Unfinished Tales* (1980), p.226, note 11, and *The Peoples of Middle-earth* (1996) p.154, §31).

Christopher Tolkien  
1995



# FROM A LETTER BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN TO MILTON WALDMAN, 1951

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My dear Milton,

You asked for a brief sketch of my stuff that is connected with my imaginary world. It is difficult to say anything without saying too much: the attempt to say a few words opens a floodgate of excitement, the egoist and artist at once desires to say how the stuff has grown, what it is like, and what (he thinks) he means or is trying to represent by it all. I shall inflict some of this on you; but I will append a mere résumé of its contents: which is (may be) all that you want or will have use or time for.

In order of time, growth and composition, this stuff began with me – though I do not suppose that that is of much interest to anyone but myself. I mean, I do not remember a time when I was not building it. Many children make up, or begin to make up, imaginary languages. I have been at it since I could write. But I have never stopped, and of course, as a professional philologist (especially interested in linguistic aesthetics), I have changed in taste, improved in theory, and probably in craft. Behind my stories is now a nexus of languages (mostly only structurally sketched). But to those creatures which in English I call misleadingly Elves are assigned two related languages more nearly completed, whose history is written, and whose forms (representing two different sides of my own linguistic taste) are deduced scientifically from a common origin. Out of these languages are made nearly all the *names* that appear in my legends. This gives a certain character (a cohesion, consistency of linguistic style, and an illusion of historicity) to the nomenclature, or so I believe, that is markedly lacking in other comparable things. Not all will feel this as important as I do, since I am cursed by acute sensibility in such matters.

But an equally basic passion of mine *ab initio* was for myth (not allegory!) and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little in the world (accessible to me) for my appetite. I was an undergraduate before thought and experience revealed to me that these were not divergent interests – opposite poles of science and romance – but integrally related. I am *not* ‘learned’\* in the matters of myth and fairy-story, however, for in such things (as far as known to me) I have always been seeking material, things of a certain tone and atmosphere and not simple knowledge. Also – and here I hope I shall not sound absurd – I was from early days grievously by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff. Of course there was all the Arthurian world, but powerful as it is, it is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not with English; and does not replace what I felt to be missing. For one thing its ‘faerie’ is too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive. For another and more important thing it is involved in, and explicitly contains the Christian religion.

For reasons which I will not elaborate, that seems to me fatal. Myth and fairy-story must, as all art reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary ‘real’ world. (I am speaking, of course, of our present situation, not of ancient pagan, pre-Christian days. And I will not repeat what I tried to say in my essay, which you may read.)

Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-

story – the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths – which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country. It should possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our ‘air’ (the climate and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East), and, while possessing (if I could achieve it) the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic (though it is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things), it should be ‘high’, purged of the gross and fit for the more adult mind of a land long now steeped in poetry. I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. Absurd.

Of course, such an overweening purpose did not develop all at once. The mere stories were the thing. They arose in my mind as ‘given’ things, and as they came, separately, so too the links grew. A absorbing, though continually interrupted labour (especially since, even apart from the necessities of life, the mind would wing to the other pole and spend itself on the linguistics): yet always I had the sense of recording what was already ‘there’, somewhere: not of ‘inventing’.

Of course, I made up and even wrote lots of other things (especially for my children). Some escaped from the grasp of this branching acquisitive theme, being ultimately and radically unrelated. *Leaf by Niggle* and *Farmer Giles*, for instance, the only two that have been printed. *The Hobbit*, which has much more essential life in it, was quite independently conceived: I did not know as I began it that it belonged. But it proved to be the discovery of the completion of the whole, its mode of descent to earth, and merging into ‘history’. As the high Legends of the beginnings are supposed to look at things through Elvish minds, so the middle tale of the Hobbit takes a virtually human point of view – and the last tale blends them.

I dislike Allegory – the conscious and intentional allegory – yet any attempt to explain the purpose of myth or fairytale must use allegorical language. (And, of course, the more ‘life’ a story has the more readily will it be susceptible of allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made the more nearly will it be acceptable just as a story.) Anyway all this stuff\* is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine. With Fall inevitably, and that motive occurs in several modes. With Mortality, especially as it affects art and the creative (or as I should say, sub-creative) desire which seems to have no biological function, and to be apart from the satisfactions of plain ordinary biological life, with which, in our world, it is indeed usually at strife. This desire is once wedded to a passionate love of the real primary world, and hence filled with the sense of mortality, and yet unsatisfied by it. It has various opportunities of ‘Fall’. It may become possessive, clinging to the things made as its own, the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation. He will rebel against the laws of the Creator – especially against mortality. Both of these (alone or together) will lead to the desire for Power, for making the will more quickly effective, – and so to the Machine (or Magic). By the last I intend all use of external plans or devices (apparatus) instead of developments of the inherent inner powers or talents – or even the use of these talents with the corrupted motive of dominating: bulldozing the real world, or coercing other wills. The Machine in our more obvious modern form though more closely related to Magic than is usually recognised.

I have not used ‘magic’ consistently, and indeed the Elven-queen Galadriel is obliged to remonstrate with the Hobbits on their confused use of the word both for the devices and operations of the Enemy, and for those of the Elves. I have not, because there is not a word for the latter (since all human stories have suffered the same confusion). But the Elves are there (in my tales) to demonstrate the difference. Their ‘magic’ is Art, delivered from many of its human limitations: more effortless, more quick, more complete (product, and vision in unflawed correspondence). And its object is Art, not Power, sub-creation not domination and tyrannous reforming of Creation. The ‘Elves’ are

‘immortal’, at least as far as this world goes: and hence are concerned rather with the griefs and burdens of deathlessness in time and change, than with death. The Enemy in successive forms always ‘naturally’ concerned with sheer Domination, and so the Lord of magic and machines; but the problem: that this frightful evil can and does arise from an apparently good root, the desire to benefit the world and others\* – speedily and according to the benefactors own plans – is a recurrent motive.

The cycles begin with a cosmogonical myth: the *Music of the Ainur*. God and the Valar (or powers, Englished as gods) are revealed. These latter are as we should say angelic powers, whose function is to exercise delegated authority in their spheres (of rule and government, *not* creation, making or re-making). They are ‘divine’, that is, were originally ‘outside’ and existed ‘before’ the making of the world. Their power and wisdom is derived from their Knowledge of the cosmogonical drama, which they perceived first as a drama (that is as in a fashion we perceive a story composed by someone else) and later as a ‘reality’. On the side of mere narrative device, this is, of course, meant to provide beings of the same order of beauty, power, and majesty as the ‘gods’ of higher mythology, which can yet be accepted – well, shall we say baldly, by a mind that believes in the Blessed Trinity.

It moves then swiftly to the *History of the Elves*, or the *Silmarillion* proper; to the world as we perceive it, but of course transfigured in a still half-mythical mode: that is it deals with rational incarnate creatures of more or less comparable stature with our own. The Knowledge of the Creation Drama was incomplete: incomplete in each individual ‘god’, and incomplete if all the knowledge of the pantheon were pooled. For (partly to redress the evil of the rebel Melkor, partly for the completion of all in an ultimate finesse of detail) the Creator had not revealed all. The making, and nature, of the Children of God, were the two chief secrets. All that the gods knew was that they would come, at appointed times. The Children of God are thus primevally related and akin, and primevally differentiated. Since also they are something wholly ‘other’ to the gods, in the making of which the gods played no part, they are the object of the special desire and love of the gods. These are the *First-born*, the *Elves* and the *Followers* Men. The doom of the Elves is to be immortal, to love the beauty of the world, to bring it to full flower with their gifts of delicacy and perfection, to last while it lasts, never leaving even when ‘slain’, but returning – and yet, when the Followers come, to teach them, and make way for them, to ‘fade’ as the Followers grow and absorb the life from which both proceed. The Doom (or the Gift) of Men is mortality, freedom from the circles of the world. Since the point of view of the whole cycle is the Elvish, mortality is not explained mythically: it is a mystery of God of which no more is known than that ‘what God has purposed for Men is hidden’: a grief and an envy to the immortal Elves.

As I say, the legendary *Silmarillion* is peculiar, and differs from all similar things that I know in not being anthropocentric. Its centre of view and interest is not Men but ‘Elves’. Men come in inevitably: after all the author is a man, and if he has an audience they will be Men and Men must come in to our tales, as such, and not merely transfigured or partially represented as Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, etc. But they remain peripheral – late comers, and however growingly important, not principals.

In the cosmogony there is a fall: a fall of Angels we should say. Though quite different in form, of course, to that of Christian myth. These tales are ‘new’, they are not directly derived from other myths and legends, but they must inevitably contain a large measure of ancient wide-spread motives and elements. After all, I believe that legends and myths are largely made of ‘truth’, and indeed preserve aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear. There cannot be any ‘story’ without a fall – all stories are ultimately about the fall – at least not for human minds as we know them and have them.

So, proceeding, the Elves have a fall, before their 'history' can become storied. (The first fall of Man, for reasons explained, nowhere appears – Men do not come on the stage until all that is long past, and there is only a rumour that for a while they fell under the domination of the Enemy and then some repented.) The main body of the tale, the *Silmarillion* proper, is about the fall of the most gifted kindred of the Elves, their exile from Valinor (a kind of Paradise, the home of the Gods) in the furthest West, their re-entry into Middle-earth, the land of their birth but long under the rule of the Enemy, and their strife with him, the power of Evil still visibly incarnate. It receives its name because the events are all threaded upon the fate and significance of the *Silmarilli* ('radiance of pure light') Primeval Jewels. By the making of gems the sub-creative function of the Elves is chiefly symbolized, but the *Silmarilli* were more than just beautiful things as such. There was Light. There was the Light of Valinor made visible in the Two Trees of Silver and Gold.\* These were slain by the Enemy out of malice, and Valinor was darkened, though from them, ere they died utterly, were derived the lights of the Sun and Moon. (A marked difference here between these legends and most others is that the Sun is not a divine symbol, but a second-best thing, and the 'light of the Sun' (the world under the sun) becomes the terms for a fallen world, and a dislocated imperfect vision).

But the chief artificer of the Elves (Fëanor) had imprisoned the Light of Valinor in the three supreme jewels, the *Silmarilli*, before the Trees were sullied or slain. This Light thus lived thereafter only in these gems. The fall of the Elves comes about through the possessive attitude of Fëanor and his seven sons to these gems. They are captured by the Enemy, set in his Iron Crown, and guarded in his impenetrable stronghold. The sons of Fëanor take a terrible and blasphemous oath of enmity and vengeance against all or any, even of the gods, who dares to claim any part or right in the *Silmarilli*. They pervert the greater part of their kindred, who rebel against the gods, and depart from paradise and go to make hopeless war upon the Enemy. The first fruit of their fall is war in Paradise, the slaying of Elves by Elves, and this and their evil oath dogs all their later heroism, generating treacheries and undoing all victories. The *Silmarillion* is the history of the War of the Exiled Elves against the Enemy, which all takes place in the North-west of the world (Middle-earth). Several tales of victory and tragedy are caught up in it; but it ends with catastrophe, and the passing of the Ancient World, the world of the long *First Age*. The jewels are recovered (by the final intervention of the gods) only to be lost for ever to the Elves, one in the sea, one in the depths of earth, and one as a star in heaven. This legendarium ends with a vision of the end of the world, its breaking and remaking, and the recovery of the *Silmarilli* and the 'light before the Sun' – after a final battle which owes, I suppose, more to the Norse vision of Ragnarök than to anything else, though it is not much like it.

As the stories become less mythical, and more like stories and romances, Men are interwoven. For the most part these are 'good Men' – families and their chiefs who rejecting the service of Evil, and hearing rumours of the Gods of the West and the High Elves, flee westward and come into contact with the Exiled Elves in the midst of their war. The Men who appear are mainly those of the Three Houses of the Fathers of Men, whose chieftains become allies of the Elflords. The contact of Men and Elves already fore-shadows the history of the later Ages, and a recurrent theme is the idea that in Men (as they now are) there is a strand of 'blood' and inheritance, derived from the Elves, and that the art and poetry of Men is largely dependent on it, or modified by it.\* There are thus two marriages of mortal and elf – both later coalescing in the kindred of Eärendil, represented by Elrond the Half-elf who appears in all the stories, even *The Hobbit*. The chief of the stories of *The Silmarillion*, and the one most fully treated is the *Story of Beren and Lúthien the Elfmaiden*. Here we meet, among other things, the first example of the motive (to become dominant in Hobbits) that the great policies of world history, 'the wheels of the world', are often turned not by the Lords and Governors, even gods, but by the seemingly unknown and weak – owing to the secret life in creation, and the part unknowable to all wisdom but One, that resides in the intrusions of the Children of God into the

Drama. It is Beren the outlawed mortal who succeeds (with the help of Lúthien, a mere maiden even an elf of royalty) where all the armies and warriors have failed: he penetrates the stronghold of the Enemy and wrests one of the Silmarilli from the Iron Crown. Thus he wins the hand of Lúthien and the first marriage of mortal and immortal is achieved.

As such the story is (I think a beautiful and powerful) heroic-fairy-romance, receivable in itself with only a very general vague knowledge of the background. But it is also a fundamental link in the cycle, deprived of its full significance out of its place therein. For the capture of the Silmaril, supreme victory, leads to disaster. The oath of the sons of Fëanor becomes operative, and lust for the Silmaril brings all the kingdoms of the Elves to ruin.

There are other stories almost equally full in treatment, and equally independent and yet linked to the general history. There is the *Children of Húrin*, the tragic tale of Túrin Turambar and his sister Níniel – of which Túrin is the hero: a figure that might be said (by people who like that sort of thing though it is not very useful) to be derived from elements in Sigurd the Volsung, Oedipus, and the Finnish Kullervo. There is the *Fall of Gondolin*: the chief Elvish stronghold. And the tale, or tales, of *Eärendil the Wanderer*. He is important as the person who brings the Silmarillion to its end, and providing in his offspring the main links to and persons in the tales of later Ages. His function, as representative of both Kindreds, Elves and Men, is to find a sea-passage back to the Land of the Gods and as ambassador persuade them to take thought again for the Exiles, to pity them, and rescue them from the Enemy. His wife Elwing descends from Lúthien and still possesses the Silmaril. But the curse still works, and Eärendil's home is destroyed by the sons of Fëanor. But this provides the solution: Elwing casting herself into the Sea to save the Jewel comes to Eärendil, and with the power of the great Gem they pass at last to Valinor, and accomplish their errand – at the cost of never being allowed to return or dwell again with Elves or Men. The gods then move again, and great power comes out of the West, and the Stronghold of the Enemy is destroyed; and he himself [is] thrust out of the World into the Void, never to reappear there in incarnate form again. The remaining two Silmarils are regained from the Iron Crown – only to be lost. The last two sons of Fëanor, compelled by their oath steal them, and are destroyed by them, casting themselves into the sea, and the pits of the earth. The ship of Eärendil adorned with the last Silmaril is set in heaven as the brightest star. So ends *The Silmarillion* and the tales of the First Age.

The next cycle deals (or would deal) with the Second Age. But it is on Earth a dark age, and not very much of its history is (or need be) told. In the great battles against the First Enemy the lands were broken and ruined, and the West of Middle-earth became desolate. We learn that the Exiled Elves were, if not commanded, at least sternly counselled to return into the West, and there be at peace. They were not to dwell permanently in Valinor again, but in the Lonely Isle of Eressëa within sight of the Blessed Realm. The Men of the Three Houses were rewarded for their valour and faithful alliance by being allowed to dwell 'westernmost of all mortals', in the great 'Atlantis' isle of *Númenóre*. The doom or gift of God, of mortality, the gods of course cannot abrogate, but the Númenóreans have a great span of life. They set sail and leave Middle-earth, and establish a great kingdom of mariners just within furthest sight of Eressëa (but not of Valinor). Most of the High Elves depart also back into the West. Not all. Some men akin to the Númenóreans remain in the land not far from the shores of the Sea. Some of the Exiles will not return, or delay their return (for the way west is ever open to the immortals and in the Grey Havens ships are ever ready to sail away for ever). Also the Orcs (goblins) and other monsters bred by the First Enemy are not wholly destroyed. And there is *Sauron*. In the *Silmarillion* and Tales of the First Age Sauron was a being of Valinor perverted to the service of the Enemy and becoming his chief captain and servant. He repents in fear when the First Enemy is uttered.

defeated, but in the end does not do as was commanded, return to the judgement of the gods. He lingers in Middle-earth. Very slowly, beginning with fair motives: the reorganising and rehabilitation of the ruin of Middle-earth, 'neglected by the gods', he becomes a re-incarnation of Evil, and a thing lusty for Complete Power – and so consumed ever more fiercely with hate (especially of gods and Elves). All through the twilight of the Second Age the Shadow is growing in the East of Middle-earth, spreading its sway more and more over Men – who multiply as the Elves begin to fade. The three main themes are thus The Delaying Elves that lingered in Middle-earth; Sauron's growth to a new Dark Lord, master and god of Men; and Númenor-Atlantis. They are dealt with annalistically, and in two Tales or Accounts, *The Rings of Power* and the *Downfall of Númenor*. Both are the essential background to *The Hobbit* and its sequel.

In the first we see a sort of second fall or at least 'error' of the Elves. There was nothing wrong essentially in their lingering against counsel, still sadly with\* the mortal lands of their old heroic deeds. But they wanted to have their cake without eating it. They wanted the peace and bliss and perfect memory of 'The West', and yet to remain on the ordinary earth where their prestige as the highest people, above wild Elves, dwarves, and Men, was greater than at the bottom of the hierarchy of Valinor. They thus became obsessed with 'fading', the mode in which the changes of time (the lapse of the world under the sun) was perceived by them. They became sad, and their art (shall we say antiquarian, and their efforts all really a kind of embalming – even though they also retained the old motive of their kind, the adornment of earth, and the healing of its hurts. We hear of a lingering kingdom, in the extreme North-west more or less in what was left in the old lands of *The Silmarillion* under Gilgalad; and of other settlements, such as Imladris (Rivendell) near Elrond; and a great one in Eregion at the Western feet of the Misty Mountains, adjacent to the Mines of Moria, the major realm of the Dwarves in the Second Age. There arose a friendship between the usually hostile folk (of Elves and Dwarves) for the first and only time, and smithcraft reached its highest development. But many of the Elves listened to Sauron. He was still fair in that early time, and his motives and those of the Elves seemed to go partly together: the healing of the desolate lands. Sauron found their weak point by suggesting that, helping one another, they could make Western Middle-earth as beautiful as Valinor. It was really a veiled attack on the gods, an incitement to try and make a separate independent paradise. Gilgalad repulsed all such overtures, as also did Elrond. But at Eregion great work began – and the Elves came their nearest to falling to 'magic' and machinery. With the aid of Sauron's lore they made the *Rings of Power* ('power' is an ominous and sinister word in all these tales, except as applied to the gods).

The chief power (of all the rings alike) was the prevention or slowing of *decay* (i.e. 'change' viewed as a regrettable thing), the preservation of what is desired or loved, or its semblance – this was more or less an Elvish motive. But also they enhanced the natural powers of a possessor – thus approaching 'magic', a motive easily corruptible into evil, a lust for domination. And finally they had other powers, more directly derived from Sauron ('the Necromancer': so he is called as he casts a fleeting shadow and presage on the pages of *The Hobbit*): such as rendering invisible the material body, and making things of the invisible world visible.

The Elves of Eregion made Three supremely beautiful and powerful rings, almost solely of their own imagination, and directed to the preservation of beauty: they did not confer invisibility. But secretly in the subterranean Fire, in his own Black Land, Sauron made One Ring, the Ruling Ring that contained the powers of all the others, and controlled them, so that its wearer could see the thoughts of all those that used the lesser rings, could govern all that they did, and in the end could utterly enslave them. He reckoned, however, without the wisdom and subtle perceptions of the Elves. The moment he assumed the One, they were aware of it, and of his secret purpose, and were afraid. They hid the Three Rings, so that not even Sauron ever discovered where they were and they remained unsullied. The

others they tried to destroy.

In the resulting war between Sauron and the Elves Middle-earth, especially in the west, was further ruined. Eregion was captured and destroyed, and Sauron seized many Rings of Power. These he gave for their ultimate corruption and enslavement, to those who would accept them (out of ambition or greed). Hence the 'ancient rhyme' that appears as the leit-motif of *The Lord of the Rings*,

Three Rings for the Elven-Kings under the sky,  
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,  
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,  
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne  
In the Land of Mordor where the shadows lie.

Sauron became thus almost supreme in Middle-earth. The Elves held out in secret places (not yet revealed). The last Elf-Kingdom of Gilgalad is maintained precariously on the extreme west-shore where are the havens of the Ships. Elrond the Half-elven, son of Eärendil, maintains a kind of enchanted sanctuary at *Imladris* (in English *Rivendell*) on the extreme eastern margin of the western lands.\* But Sauron dominates all the multiplying hordes of Men that have had no contact with the Elves and so indirectly with the true and unfallen Valar and gods. He rules a growing empire from the great dark tower of Barad-dûr in Mordor, near to the Mountain of Fire, wielding the One Ring.

But to achieve this he had been obliged to let a great part of his own inherent power (a frequent and very significant motive in myth and fairy-story) pass into the One Ring. While he wore it, his power on earth was actually enhanced. But even if he did not wear it, that power existed and was in 'rapport' with himself: he was not 'diminished'. Unless some other seized it and became possessed of it. If that happened, the new possessor could (if sufficiently strong and heroic by nature) challenge Sauron and become master of all that he had learned or done since the making of the One Ring, and so overthrow him and usurp his place. This was the essential weakness he had introduced into his situation in his effort (largely unsuccessful) to enslave the Elves, and in his desire to establish a control over the minds and wills of his servants. There was another weakness: if the One Ring was actually *unmade* or annihilated, then its power would be dissolved, Sauron's own being would be diminished to vanishing point, and he would be reduced to a shadow, a mere memory of malicious will. But that he never contemplated nor feared. The Ring was unbreakable by any smithcraft less than his own. It was indissoluble in any fire, save the undying subterranean fire where it was made – and that was unapproachable, in Mordor. Also so great was the Ring's power of lust, that anyone who used it became mastered by it; it was beyond the strength of any will (even his own) to injure it, cast it away or neglect it. So he thought. It was in any case on his finger.

Thus, as the Second Age draws on, we have a great Kingdom and evil theocracy (for Sauron is also the god of his slaves) growing up in Middle-earth. In the West – actually the North-West is the only part clearly envisaged in these tales – lie the precarious refuges of the Elves, while Men in those parts remain more or less uncorrupted if ignorant. The better and nobler sort of Men are in fact the kindred of those that had departed to Númenor, but remain in a simple 'Homeric' state of patriarchal and tribal life.

Meanwhile *Númenor* has grown in wealth, wisdom, and glory, under its lines of great kings of long life, directly descended from Elros, Eärendil's son, brother of Elrond. The *Downfall of Númenor*, the Second Fall of Man (or Man rehabilitated but still mortal), brings on the catastrophic end, not only of the Second Age, but of the Old World, the primeval world of legend (envisaged as flat and bounded

After which the Third Age began, a Twilight Age, a Medium Aevum, the first of the broken and changed world; the last of the lingering dominion of visible fully incarnate Elves, and the last also which Evil assumes a single dominant incarnate shape.

*The Downfall* is partly the result of an inner weakness in Men – consequent, if you will, upon the first Fall (unrecorded in these tales), repented but not finally healed. Reward on earth is more dangerous for men than punishment! The Fall is achieved by the cunning of Sauron in exploiting the weakness. Its central theme is (inevitably, I think, in a story of Men) a Ban, or Prohibition.

The Númenóreans dwell within far sight of the easternmost ‘immortal’ land, Eressëa; and as the only men to speak an Elvish tongue (learned in the days of their Alliance) they are in constant communication with their ancient friends and allies, either in the bliss of Eressëa, or in the kingdom of Gilgalad on the shores of Middle-earth. They became thus in appearance, and even in powers of mind, hardly distinguishable from the Elves – but they remained mortal, even though rewarded by a triple, or more than a triple, span of years. Their reward is their undoing – or the means of the temptation. Their long life aids their achievements in art and wisdom, but breeds a possessive attitude to these things, and desire awakes for more *time* for their enjoyment. Foreseeing this in part, the god laid a Ban on the Númenóreans from the beginning: they must never sail to Eressëa, nor westward out of sight of their own land. In all other directions they could go as they would. They must not set foot on ‘immortal’ lands, and so become enamoured of an immortality (within the world), which was against their law, the special doom or gift of Ilúvatar (God), and which their nature could not in fact endure.\*

There are three phases in their fall from grace. First acquiescence, obedience that is free and willing, though without complete understanding. Then for long they obey unwillingly, murmuring more and more openly. Finally they rebel – and a rift appears between the King’s men and rebels, and the small minority of persecuted Faithful.

In the first stage, being men of peace, their courage is devoted to sea-voyages. As descendants of Eärendil, they became the supreme mariners, and being barred from the West, they sail to the uttermost north, and south, and east. Mostly they come to the west-shores of Middle-earth, where they aid the Elves and Men against Sauron, and incur his undying hatred. In those days they would come amongst Wild Men as almost divine benefactors, bringing gifts of arts and knowledge, and passing away again – leaving many legends behind of kings and gods out of the sunset.

In the second stage, the days of Pride and Glory and grudging of the Ban, they begin to seek wealth rather than bliss. The desire to escape death produced a cult of the dead, and they lavished wealth and art on tombs and memorials. They now made settlements on the west-shores, but these became rather strongholds and ‘factories’ of lords seeking wealth, and the Númenóreans became tax-gatherers, carrying off over the sea ever more and more goods in their great ships. The Númenóreans began the forging of arms and engines.

This phase ended and the last began with the ascent of the throne by the thirteenth† king of the line of Elros, Tar-Calion the Golden, the most powerful and proud of all kings. When he learned that Sauron had taken the title of King of Kings and Lord of the World, he resolved to put down the ‘pretender’. He goes in strength and majesty to Middle-earth, and so vast is his armament, and so terrible are the Númenóreans in the day of their glory that Sauron’s servants will not face them. Sauron humbles himself, does homage to Tar-Calion, and is carried off to Númenor as hostage and prisoner. But there he swiftly rises by his cunning and knowledge from servant to chief counsellor of the king, and seduces the king and most of the lords and people with his lies. He denies the existence of God, saying that the One is a mere invention of the jealous Valar of the West, the oracle of their own wishes. The chief of the gods is he that dwells in the Void, who will conquer in the end, and in the void make endless realms for his servants. The Ban is only a lying device of fear to restrain the King.



of Men from seizing everlasting life and rivalling the Valar.

~~A new religion, and worship of the Dark, with its temple under Sauron arises. The Faithful are persecuted and sacrificed. The Númenóreans carry their evil also to Middle-earth and there become cruel and wicked lords of necromancy, slaying and tormenting men; and the old legends are overlaid with dark tales of horror. This does not happen, however, in the North West; for thither, because of the Elven, only the Faithful who remain Elf-friends will come. The chief haven of the good Númenóreans is near the mouth of the great river Anduin. Thence the still beneficent influence of Númenor spreads up the River and along the coasts as far north as the realm of Gilgalad, as a Common Speech grows up.~~

But at last Sauron's plot comes to fulfilment, Tar-Calion feels old age and death approaching, and he listens to the last prompting of Sauron, and building the greatest of all armadas, he sets sail into the West, breaking the Ban, and going up with war to wrest from the gods 'everlasting life within the circles of the world'. Faced by this rebellion, of appalling folly and blasphemy, and also real peril (since the Númenóreans directed by Sauron could have wrought ruin in Valinor itself ) the Valar lay down their delegated power and appeal to God, and receive the power and permission to deal with the situation; the old world is broken and changed. A chasm is opened in the sea and Tar-Calion and his armada is engulfed. Númenor itself on the edge of the rift topples and vanishes for ever with all its glory in the abyss. Thereafter there is no visible dwelling of the divine or immortal on earth. Valinor (or Paradise) and even Eressëa are removed, remaining only in the memory of the earth. Men may sail now West, if they will, as far as they may, and come no nearer to Valinor or the Blessed Realm, but return only into the east and so back again; for the world is round, and finite, and a circle inescapable – save by death. Only the 'immortals', the lingering Elves, may still if they will, wearying of the circle of the world, take ship and find the 'straight way', and come to the ancient or True West, and be at peace.

So the end of the Second Age draws on in a major catastrophe; but it is not yet quite concluded. From the cataclysm there are survivors: *Elendil* the Fair, chief of the Faithful (his name means *Elf-friend*), and his sons *Isildur* and *Anarion*. Elendil, a Noachian figure, who has held off from the rebellion, and kept ships manned and furnished off the east coast of Númenor, flees before the overwhelming storm of the wrath of the West, and is borne high upon the towering waves that bring ruin to the west of the Middle-earth. He and his folk are cast away as exiles upon the shores. There they establish the Númenórean kingdoms of Arnor in the north close to the realm of Gilgalad, and Gondor about the mouths of Anduin further south. Sauron, being an immortal, hardly escapes the ruin of Númenor and returns to Mordor, where after a while he is strong enough to challenge the exiles of Númenor.

The Second Age ends with the *Last Alliance* (of Elves and Men), and the great siege of Mordor. It ends with the overthrow of Sauron and destruction of the second visible incarnation of evil. But at a cost, and with one disastrous mistake. Gilgalad and Elendil are slain in the act of slaying Sauron. Isildur, Elendil's son, cuts the ring from Sauron's hand, and his power departs, and his spirit flees into the shadows. But the evil begins to work. Isildur claims the Ring as his own, as 'the Weregild of his father', and refuses to cast it into the Fire nearby. He marches away, but is drowned in the Great River and the Ring is lost, passing out of all knowledge. But it is not unmade, and the Dark Tower built with its aid still stands, empty but not destroyed. So ends the Second Age with the coming of the Númenórean realms and the passing of the last kingship of the High Elves.



## The Music of the Ainur

There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy One, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad. But for a long while they sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened; for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Ilúvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. Yet ever as they listened they came to deeper understanding, and increased in unison and harmony.

And it came to pass that Ilúvatar called together all the Ainur and declared to them a mighty theme, unfolding to them things greater and more wonderful than he had yet revealed; and the glory of its beginning and the splendour of its end amazed the Ainur, so that they bowed before Ilúvatar and were silent.

Then Ilúvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been wakened into song.'

Then the voices of the Ainur, like unto harps and lutes, and pipes and trumpets, and viols and organs, and like unto countless choirs singing with words, began to fashion the theme of Ilúvatar to a great music; and a sound arose of endless interchanging melodies woven in harmony that passed beyond hearing into the depths and into the heights, and the places of the dwelling of Ilúvatar were filled to overflowing, and the music and the echo of the music went out into the Void, and it was no void. Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar by the choirs of the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased.

But now Ilúvatar sat and hearkened, and for a great while it seemed good to him, for in the music there were no flaws. But as the theme progressed, it came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought there to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself. To Melkor among the Ainur had been given the greatest gifts of power and knowledge, and he had a share in all the gifts of his brethren. He had gone often alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame; for desire grew hot within him to bring into Being things of his own, and it seemed to him that Ilúvatar took no thought for the Void, and he was impatient of its emptiness. Yet he found not the Fire, for it is with Ilúvatar. But being alone he had begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren.

Some of these thoughts he now wove into his music, and straightway discord arose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to his rather than to the thought which they had at first. Then the discord of Melkor spread ever wider, and the melodies which had been heard before foundered in a sea of turbulent sound. But Ilúvatar sat and hearkened until it seemed that about his throne there was a raging storm, as of dark waters that made war one upon another in an endless wrath that would not be assuaged.

Then Ilúvatar arose, and the Ainur perceived that he smiled; and he lifted up his left hand, and new theme began amid the storm, like and yet unlike to the former theme, and it gathered power and had new beauty. But the discord of Melkor rose in uproar and contended with it, and again there was war of sound more violent than before, until many of the Ainur were dismayed and sang no longer, and Melkor had the mastery. Then again Ilúvatar arose, and the Ainur perceived that his countenance was stern; and he lifted up his right hand, and behold! a third theme grew amid the confusion, and was unlike the others. For it seemed at first soft and sweet, a mere rippling of gentle sounds in delicate melodies; but it could not be quenched, and it took to itself power and profundity. And it seemed last that there were two musics progressing at one time before the seat of Ilúvatar, and they were utterly at variance. The one was deep and wide and beautiful, but slow and blended with an immeasurable sorrow, from which its beauty chiefly came. The other had now achieved a unity of its own; but it was loud, and vain, and endlessly repeated; and it had little harmony, but rather clamorous unison as of many trumpets braying upon a few notes. And it essayed to drown the other music by the violence of its voice, but it seemed that its most triumphant notes were taken by the other and woven into its own solemn pattern.

In the midst of this strife, whereat the halls of Ilúvatar shook and a tremor ran out into the silence yet unmoved, Ilúvatar arose a third time, and his face was terrible to behold. Then he raised up both his hands, and in one chord, deeper than the Abyss, higher than the Firmament, piercing as the light of the eye of Ilúvatar, the Music ceased.

Then Ilúvatar spoke, and he said: 'Mighty are the Ainur, and mightiest among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Ilúvatar, those things that ye have sung, I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which I himself hath not imagined.'

Then the Ainur were afraid, and they did not yet comprehend the words that were said to them; and Melkor was filled with shame, of which came secret anger. But Ilúvatar arose in splendour, and he went forth from the fair regions that he had made for the Ainur; and the Ainur followed him.

But when they were come into the Void, Ilúvatar said to them: 'Behold your Music!' And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where before was only hearing; and they saw a new World made visible before them, and it was globed amid the Void, and it was sustained therein, but was not of it. And as they looked and wondered this World began to unfold its history, and it seemed to them that it lived and grew. And when the Ainur had gazed for a while and were silent, Ilúvatar said again: 'Behold your Music! This is your minstrelsy; and each of you shall find contained herein, amid the design that I set before you, all those things which it may seem that he himself devised or added. And thou, Melkor, wilt discover all the secret thoughts of thy mind, and wilt perceive that they are but a part of the whole and tributary to its glory.'

And many other things Ilúvatar spoke to the Ainur at that time, and because of their memory of his words, and the knowledge that each has of the music that he himself made, the Ainur know much of what was, and is, and is to come, and few things are unseen by them. Yet some things there are that they cannot see, neither alone nor taking counsel together; for to none but himself has Ilúvatar revealed all that he has in store, and in every age there come forth things that are new and have no foretelling, for they do not proceed from the past. And so it was that as this vision of the World was played before them, the Ainur saw that it contained things which they had not thought. And they saw with amazement the coming of the Children of Ilúvatar, and the habitation that was prepared for them, and they perceived that they themselves in the labour of their music had been busy with the preparation of this dwelling, and yet knew not that it had any purpose beyond its own beauty. For the

Children of Ilúvatar were conceived by him alone; and they came with the third theme, and were not in the theme which Ilúvatar propounded at the beginning, and none of the Ainur had part in their making. Therefore when they beheld them, the more did they love them, being things other than themselves, strange and free, wherein they saw the mind of Ilúvatar reflected anew, and learned yet a little more of his wisdom, which otherwise had been hidden even from the Ainur.

Now the Children of Ilúvatar are Elves and Men, the Firstborn and the Followers. And amid all the splendours of the World, its vast halls and spaces, and its wheeling fires, Ilúvatar chose a place for their habitation in the Deeps of Time and in the midst of the innumerable stars. And this habitation might seem a little thing to those who consider only the majesty of the Ainur, and not their terrible sharpness; as who should take the whole field of Arda for the foundation of a pillar and so raise it unto the cone of its summit were more bitter than a needle; or who consider only the immeasurable vastness of the World, which still the Ainur are shaping, and not the minute precision to which they shape all things therein. But when the Ainur had beheld this habitation in a vision and had seen the Children of Ilúvatar arise therein, then many of the most mighty among them bent all their thoughts and their desire towards that place. And of these Melkor was the chief, even as he was in the beginning the greatest of the Ainur who took part in the Music. And he feigned, even to himself at first, that he desired to go thither and order all things for the good of the Children of Ilúvatar, controlling the turmoils of the heat and the cold that had come to pass through him. But he desired rather to subdue by his will both Elves and Men, envying the gifts with which Ilúvatar promised to endow them; and he wished himself to have subjects and servants, and to be called Lord, and to be a master over other wills.

But the other Ainur looked upon this habitation set within the vast spaces of the World, which the Elves call Arda, the Earth; and their hearts rejoiced in light, and their eyes beholding many colours were filled with gladness; but because of the roaring of the sea they felt a great unquiet. And they observed the winds and the air, and the matters of which Arda was made, of iron and stone and silver and gold and many substances: but of all these water they most greatly praised. And it is said by the Eldar that in water there lives yet the echo of the Music of the Ainur more than in any substance else that is in this Earth; and many of the Children of Ilúvatar hearken still unsated to the voices of the Sea and yet know not for what they listen.

Now to water had that Ainu whom the Elves call Ulmo turned his thought, and of all most deep was he instructed by Ilúvatar in music. But of the airs and winds Manwë most had pondered, who was the noblest of the Ainur. Of the fabric of Earth had Aulë thought, to whom Ilúvatar had given skill and knowledge scarce less than to Melkor; but the delight and pride of Aulë is in the deed of making, and in the thing made, and neither in possession nor in his own mastery; wherefore he gives and hoards not, and is free from care, passing ever on to some new work.

And Ilúvatar spoke to Ulmo, and said: 'Seest thou not how here in this little realm in the Deeps of Time Melkor hath made war upon thy province? He hath bethought him of bitter cold immoderate and yet hath not destroyed the beauty of thy fountains, nor of thy clear pools. Behold the snow, and the cunning work of frost! Melkor hath devised heats and fire without restraint, and hath not dried up thy desire nor utterly quelled the music of the sea. Behold rather the height and glory of the clouds, and the everchanging mists; and listen to the fall of rain upon the Earth! And in these clouds thou art drawn nearer to Manwë, thy friend, whom thou lovest.'

Then Ulmo answered: 'Truly, Water is become now fairer than my heart imagined, neither had my secret thought conceived the snowflake, nor in all my music was contained the falling of the rain. I will seek Manwë, that he and I may make melodies for ever to thy delight!' And Manwë and Ulmo have from the beginning been allied, and in all things have served most faithfully the purpose of Ilúvatar.

But even as Ulmo spoke, and while the Ainur were yet gazing upon this vision, it was taken away and hidden from their sight; and it seemed to them that in that moment they perceived a new thing, Darkness, which they had not known before except in thought. But they had become enamoured of the beauty of the vision and engrossed in the unfolding of the World which came there to being, and their minds were filled with it; for the history was incomplete and the circles of time not full-wrought when the vision was taken away. And some have said that the vision ceased ere the fulfilment of the Dominion of Men and the fading of the Firstborn; wherefore, though the Music is over all, the Valar have not seen as with sight the Later Ages or the ending of the World.

Then there was unrest among the Ainur; but Ilúvatar called to them, and said: 'I know the desire of your minds that what ye have seen should verily be, not only in your thought, but even as ye yourselves are, and yet other. Therefore I say: *Eä!* Let these things Be! And I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be; and those of you that will may go down into it.' And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame; and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing: *Eä*, the World that Is.

Thus it came to pass that of the Ainur some abode still with Ilúvatar beyond the confines of the World; but others, and among them many of the greatest and most fair, took the leave of Ilúvatar and descended into it. But this condition Ilúvatar made, or it is the necessity of their love, that their power should thenceforward be contained and bounded in the World, to be within it for ever, until it is complete, so that they are its life and it is theirs. And therefore they are named the Valar, the Powers of the World.

But when the Valar entered into *Eä* they were at first astounded and at a loss, for it was as if naught was yet made which they had seen in vision, and all was but on point to begin and yet unshaped, and it was dark. For the Great Music had been but the growth and flowering of thought in the Timeless Hall, and the Vision only a foreshowing; but now they had entered in at the beginning of Time, and the Valar perceived that the World had been but foreshadowed and foresung, and they must achieve it. So began their great labours in wastes unmeasured and unexplored, and in ages uncounted and forgotten until in the Deeps of Time and in the midst of the vast halls of *Eä* there came to be that hour and the place where was made the habitation of the Children of Ilúvatar. And in this work the chief part was taken by Manwë and Aulë and Ulmo; but Melkor too was there from the first, and he meddled in all that was done, turning it if he might to his own desires and purposes; and he kindled great fires. Wherefore Earth was yet young and full of flame Melkor coveted it, and he said to the other Valar: 'This shall be my own kingdom; and I name it unto myself!'

But Manwë was the brother of Melkor in the mind of Ilúvatar, and he was the chief instrument of the second theme that Ilúvatar had raised up against the discord of Melkor; and he called unto himself many spirits both greater and less, and they came down into the fields of Arda and aided Manwë, lest Melkor should hinder the fulfilment of their labour for ever, and Earth should wither ere it flowered. And Manwë said unto Melkor: 'This kingdom thou shalt not take for thine own, wrongfully, for many others have laboured here no less than thou.' And there was strife between Melkor and the other Valar, and for that time Melkor withdrew and departed to other regions and did there what he would; but he did not put the desire of the Kingdom of Arda from his heart.

Now the Valar took to themselves shape and hue; and because they were drawn into the World by the love of the Children of Ilúvatar, for whom they hoped, they took shape after that manner which they had beheld in the Vision of Ilúvatar, save only in majesty and splendour. Moreover their shape came of their knowledge of the visible World, rather than of the World itself; and they need it not, save only as we use raiment, and yet we may be naked and suffer no loss of our being. Therefore the Valar may walk, if they will, unclad, and then even the Eldar cannot clearly perceive them, though they be

present. But when they desire to clothe themselves the Valar take upon them forms some as of male and some as of female; for that difference of temper they had even from their beginning, and it is bodied forth in the choice of each, not made by the choice, even as with us male and female may be shown by the raiment but is not made thereby. But the shapes wherein the Great Ones array themselves are not at all times like to the shapes of the kings and queens of the Children of Ilúvatar; for at times they may clothe themselves in their own thought, made visible in forms of majesty and dread.

And the Valar drew unto them many companions, some less, some well nigh as great as themselves, and they laboured together in the ordering of the Earth and the curbing of its tumult. Then Melkor saw what was done, and that the Valar walked on Earth as powers visible, clad in the raiment of the World, and were lovely and glorious to see, and blissful, and that the Earth was becoming as a garden for their delight, for its turmoils were subdued. His envy grew then the greater within him; and he also took visible form, but because of his mood and the malice that burned in him that form was dark and terrible. And he descended upon Arda in power and majesty greater than any other of the Valar, as a mountain that wades in the sea and has its head above the clouds and is clad in ice and crowned with smoke and fire; and the light of the eyes of Melkor was like a flame that withered with heat and pierces with a deadly cold.

Thus began the first battle of the Valar with Melkor for the dominion of Arda; and of those tumults the Elves know but little. For what has here been declared is come from the Valar themselves, with whom the Eldalië spoke in the land of Valinor, and by whom they were instructed; but little would the Valar ever tell of the wars before the coming of the Elves. Yet it is told among the Eldar that the Valar endeavoured ever, in despite of Melkor, to rule the Earth and to prepare it for the coming of the Firstborn; and they built lands and Melkor destroyed them; valleys they delved and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down; seas they hollowed and Melkor spilled them; and naught might have peace or come to lasting growth, for as surely as the Valar began their labour so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it. And yet their labour was not all in vain; and though nowhere and in no work was their will and purpose wholly fulfilled, and all things were in hue and shape other than the Valar had at first intended, slowly nonetheless the Earth was fashioned and made firm. And thus was the habitation of the Children of Ilúvatar established at the last in the Deeps of Time and amidst the innumerable stars.





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