

The Doom of the World

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The ultimate fate of Arda is a subject that Tolkien has left somewhat vague. Yet it is of great interest to his readers because it entails the destinies of all the beings he sub-created. Many people have discussed and theorized about what happens to Elves, Men, Hobbits etc. after they die (for our purposes, death will mean the end of existence in corporal form). The prevailing, and correct¹, opinion about the death of Elves is that they are reincarnated and remain 'within the confines of the world'². This holds true for all Elves except the Noldor under the curse of Mandos (Námo). Their "houseless spirits ...[go] to Mandos ... and yearn for [their] bodies" (QS p.88). The fate of Men who die in Arda has yet to be definitively stated. This is also true for Hobbits and most other creatures. Yet regardless of what happens to individuals immediately after they die, the ultimate destiny of every living being, from the least of the 'olvar' to the Valar themselves, is determined by "the ordained fate of Eä, which can be altered only by Ilúvatar"³. Therefore, I believe that some discussion should be given to this fate.

Anything Tolkien has told us about the final future of Arda is to be found in The Silmarillion. In reference to the Great Music of the Ainur, he says:

"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" (QS p.15F).

When the Ainur first made the Great Music, and Melkor added his discord, Ilúvatar gave 'Being' and life to their music. Thus, with the exception of the Children of Iluvatar, all of Eä was designed by the Ainur and then created by Eru. The above passage suggests that after the 'end of days', or the destruction of Arda, the Ainur will again be given the opportunity to design a universe; only this time, with the addition of the thoughts of the Children of Ilúvatar, who did not yet exist when the First Music was made. It also appears that this Second Music will be untouched by evil, for "the themes of Ilúvatar will be played aright" and he will be "well pleased". The idea that the Second Music will be uncorrupted and 'better' than the first is born out by another passage in The Silmarillion. Eru knows that Men "being set amid the turmoils of the powers of the world [will] stray often ..." (QS p.41). But of these men he says, "These too in their time shall find that all that they do redounds at the end only to the glory of my work."

According to The Silmarillion, however, this pure Second Music can be made only "after the end of days..." Therefore, the 'end of days' would seem to entail the destruction of Arda. It is said also that the Dwarves believe their fate is to be given "a place among the Children in the End" and "to aid (Aulë) in the remaking of Arda after the Last Battle" (QS p.44). Hence, it would appear that the Last Battle, or the 'Dagor Dagorath'⁴, will accomplish virtually the total destruction of the World.

What will happen to all of the creatures living in Arda when it is destroyed? And what of the spirits of all

[1] H. Carpenter (ed.): The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981, letter 153.

[2] J.R.R. Tolkien: The Silmarillion, George Allen & Unwin, London, (ed. C. Tolkien), 1977, cf p.187.

[3] R. Foster: The Complete Guide to Middle-earth, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1978, p.90.

[4] J.R.R. Tolkien: Unfinished Tales, George Allen & Unwin, London, (ed. C. Tolkien), 1980, p.395-6; 402 n. 8.

the Men, Hobbits, Ents, Dwarves, 'olvar' and 'kelvar' who died in all the ages before the Final Battle? Again, The Silmarillion would seem to hold the answer, at least so far as the ultimate destinies of Elves, Men and Dwarves are concerned. These three are all considered the Children of Iluvatar and would, presumably, join the 'choirs of the Ainur' in making the Second Music. Hobbits would most likely be counted among the Children along with Men, "since [they] are, of course, really meant to be a branch of the specifically human race [not Elves or Dwarves]" (Letters p.158n.). However, in the case of the Elves' fate, there is a discrepancy. The passage on page 15 of The Silmarillion suggests that all of the Children of Iluvatar will add their thoughts to the new design of Arda in the Second Music. Yet also in the same book it says, "of old the Valar declared to the Elves in Valinor that Men shall join in the Second Music of the Ainur: whereas Iluvatar has not revealed what he purposes for the Elves after the World's end..." [QS p.42]. This would appear to mean that the spirits of the Elves will not participate in the Second Music of the Ainur.

As for the spirits of the Ents, the olvar, and the kelvar, their fate after the 'end of days' is still a mystery. So, for that matter, is the destiny of all the evil creatures corrupted by Melkor from, and in mockery of, other beings.

Now that I have covered, somewhat scantily, the events after the 'end of days', I would like to turn to how this end will come about. The Doom of the World is foretold in "the second prophecy of Mandos, which does not appear in The Silmarillion" (UT p.402 note 8) and, so far as I know, has not yet been published. What has been published, and this I have already stated, is that at the End the Dagor Dagorath⁵, or Last Battle, will probably bring about the destruction of Arda. However, Robert Foster has said that "the End will not be a termination but a triumph. Evil will be defeated in the Last Battle..." (Complete Guide p.121). A statement written by Tolkien in an essay about the Istari seems to agree and to suggest that evil will be totally defeated and that this defeat will include the destruction of Morgoth:

"Manwë will not descend from the Mountain until the Dagor Dagorath, and the coming of the End, when Melkor returns" (UT p.395).

Thus is the way with Tolkien. The

[5] Dagor Dagorath = Battle of Battles? See J. Allen: An Introduction to Elvish, Bran's Head Books, 1978, p.73 (entry -ath, -iath).

more that is known, the more unanswered questions there are. When, for instance, will the End of Arda come? How could the banished spirit of Morgoth return to Arda despite the watchful eyes of the Valar? What role will the inhabitants of Middle-earth play in the Last Battle? What will the new, remade, pure Arda be like? The list goes on and on and there are probably many more tantalising bits of information as yet unpublished. We shall all just have to wait and see.



[THE TALE OF JARI,
continued from p.17]

Thróin motioned Vestri to lead him to Jari; the wounded Dwarf sat with his head in his hands.

"Come Jari, who can tell how each of us will face his great trial? We have strength in measure, but not all evils can be overcome with force; there need be no shame."

He took the shaking Dwarf by the shoulders.

"Courage brother. Come to my chambers and tell me your tale again. Then be at peace and help us; we have much to do."

Jari stood, his eyes shining, and led the blind Dwarf from the hall.



STRIDER'S SONG

Each day I see thy soft, smooth face,
And cherish the mist-bright shadow's
trace:

I drink in streams of midnight hair,
Thine elf-sheen blood-and-cream cheeks
fair;

Sense sorrows deep in tear-clear eyes
And sigh at smiles and smile at sighs:
For thee I pace the paths of night,
Alone but not lonely, craving light.

Andy Orchard