

THE STORY OF "THE SIMMARILLION" by JIM ALLAN.

PART ONE.

Through the publication of The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, and The Road Goes Ever On much of the private mythology of J.R.R. Tolkien has been given to the public. But as much or more still remains hidden, locked in unpublished manuscripts, or only within Tolkien's mind.

For example, in 1966 Tolkien was asked about Man ever reaching the potential he displayed at the end of TLotR. Tolkien replied, "I did write a continuation story, taking place about one hundred years after the end of The Lord of the Rings. Of course he'll go bad because he's sick of peace. Well, I haven't finished writing it because I didn't want to go on with it; it's called 'The New Shadow'. The people cannot bear peace for one hundred years. After a hundred years of peace and prosperity people would all be going into every kind of madness." (*1)

But if Tolkien has given up on a sequel, it is well known that he has for many years been working on a prequel, an account of what happened in the early days long before the Third Age world of LotR which will recount the events behind certain of the sketchy notes in the appendices of LotR and scattered through the main work. What is not so well known is that this work dates back before LotR was ever thought of. Tolkien has written, "The mythology (and associated languages) first began to take shape during the 1914-18 war, The Fall of Gandolin (sic) (and the birth of Earendil) was written in the hospital and on leave after surviving the Battle of the Somme in 1916. The kernel of the mythology, the matter of Luthien and Deren (sic) arise from a small woodland glade filled with "hemlocks" (or other white embellifers) near Ross on the Holderness peninsular - to which I occasionally went when free from regimental duties while in the Humber Garrison in 1913." (*2)

One can trace it back even further, for Tolkien has also said, "The real seed was starting when I was quite a child by inventing languages, largely to try and capture the ethetic mode of the languages I was learning, and I eventually made the discovery that language can't exist in a void and if you invent a language yourself you can't cut it in half. It had to come alive -- so really the languages came first and the country after." (*3)

Or, as Dick Plotz, founder of the Tolkien Society of America has put it, "While evolving his languages, Professor Tolkien began to create mythology and cultures and history and people to go with them. Then he invented a place for the people to live and struggle, a place he called Middle-earth." (*4)

Some of this invented mythology was used to provide background in The Hobbit, in which there were already some references to the older matter: Elrond, Gondolin, the High-elves, and the orcs." (I:5/viii)(*5) In the same place Tolkien says that though he started work on LotR soon after finishing The Hobbit and before its publication, he did not continue at it long, but returned to his older myths. "I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'History' for Elvish tongues.

"When those whose advice and opinion I sought corrected 'little hope' to 'no hope', I went back to the sequel", that is LotR. Tolkien supplements this elsewhere by the statement "when I offered it to the publishers first and they turned it down they were too high and mighty. But now TLotR has been a success they want it, and of course now it has to be made to fit."

So, since 1954, Tolkien has been off and on, polishing up these early tales and "making them fit". And certainly for almost as long his readers have been waiting to get the chance to read this work, to at last know the tales of the Elder Days. A few hints appeared in The Adventures of Tom Bombadil; the revised edition of LoTR contains a new section on Feanor at the beginning of appendix A; and a multitude of intriguing glimpses are supplied by the notes on Elvish texts in The Road Goes Ever On. (*6) However this is hardly satisfactory.

To satisfy my own curiosity as much as possible, I several years ago began collecting in one place as much data on the Elder Days as I could find in Tolkien's books and elsewhere. On each rereading of the books some new incident or previously unnoticed connection would come to my attention. The result is a reasonably coherent narrative, though not an unbroken one. From it, and from various fragments from other sources, I present the following tentative summary of The Silmarillion.

Dick Plotz states, "The Silmarillion, Professor Tolkien said, is a collection of epic poems and stories covering the origins and early history of many of the people and events presented in TLotR. There are stories of the beginnings of the Valar, the angelic powers: Middle-earth is a monotheistic world, with a God called The One, Eru in Elvish. His sons are the angelic powers who are the guardians of the world. Eru keeps a watchful eye over them, but they actually fulfill the same purpose as the Greek and Norse gods." (*4) Professor Clyde S. Kilby, who in 1966, had the opportunity to read the work as it then existed, has said, "The whole story will, Prof. Tolkien thinks, be about as long as the RING when it is published. In 1964 he told me, by way of a very quick - a sort of one sentence summary - that it was about the Creation and Fall. That covers quite a bit of territory. ...There is in it a beautiful - a truly beautiful - creation story, and then there is a rebel among the sort of angelic host. If this sounds very prosaic, I can tell you that the story as a whole is comparable in details and power to the RING." (*7)

The name of this "evil Valar", this "prime Enemy", (III:426) is Melchar. (*8) The name resembles Melqart, the god of the ancient city of Tyre, whose name seems to mean "King of the City". In Phoenician mythology he was the son of Ba'al Hadad, the supreme god of the pantheon whom the Greeks identified with their Zeus. Melqart they called Heracles but could not have felt the identification to be too close as they usually went out of their way to distinguish the "Tyrian Heracles" from their own native one. This does not appear to be very sinister.

However, like his father Hadad, Melqart was often given the title Ba'al, a common Canaanite and Hebrew word meaning "lord" or "master". And this Tyrian Ba'al appears in the Bible almost continuously from I Kings 16 when his worship is introduced in Samaria by King Ahab after his marriage to the Phoenician Princess Jezebel, to II Kings 11 when this Ba'al's Judean temple is finally destroyed by the young king Jehoiaada. This is the Ba'al whose worship is so strongly opposed by the prophet Elijah, and whose cult was so strongly advanced by Queen Jezebel, who is presented in the sources as a fountain of unending wickedness.

The Valar, Tolkien's angels, may owe their name to the Finnish word "valari", "Shining ones". The Valar were spiritual entities who could assume various shapes. After their demiurgic labours, they came and dwelt in Arda, "The Realm". They did so because of their love and desire for the Children of God (Erusen), for whom they were to prepare the "realm". The future forms of Elves and Men had been revealed to them though they had no part in their design or making, and the precise time of their appearance was not known. ...The Valar assumed these forms. ...Fana is an Elvish element with the primary meaning "veil".... In Quenya, however, the simple word fana acquired a special sense.

Owing to the close association of the High-Elves with the Valar, it was applied to the "veils" or "raiment" in which the Valar presented themselves to physical eyes. They were bodies in which they were self-incarnated. ...In these fanar they later presented themselves to the Elves, and appeared as persons of majestic (but not gigantic) stature, vested in robes expressing their individual natures and functions. The high-Elves said that these forms were always in some degree radiant, as if suffused with a light from within." (R:66)

The Lord of the Valar was named Manwe in Quenya, and also known as the Elder King. (R:61) His name is vaguely reminiscent of Manawydan, a Celtic god connected with the sea, and called Manannan in Irish tales. Manwe's wife was called Varda "the Exalted" in Quenya and Elbereth "Star-queen" in Sindarin. She was also called Elentari, "Star-queen" and Tintalle "Star-kindler" in Quenya, the latter title also appearing in Sindarin as the epithet Gilthoniel. A final Sindarin name was Fanuilos "bright (angelic) figure ever white (as snow)" and is rendered as "Snow-white" in the song of Gildor and his companions. Varda was credited with sowing the stars in the Sunless year, apparently referring to a time in the creation of the universe before the sun existed. (I:28f/117; R:59, 61f, 66.)

"She was often thought of or depicted, as standing on a great height looking towards Middle-earth, with eyes that penetrated the Shadows, and listening to the cries for aid of the Elves (and Men) in peril or grief." (R:65).

The huntsman of the Valar was called Oromë in Quenya, Araw in Sindarin, and Bema by men. He "alone of the Valar came often to Middle-earth in the Elder days"; and he was credited with introducing the ancestor of the mearang, the long-lived, enormously swift and powerful, extremely intelligent royal horses of Rohan, from beyond the Sea. The "King of Araw" may be so named either because he also brought them over, or because he was accustomed to



hunt them (III:319/395, 346/431). This Araw who comes from the West, Annun in Sindarin, is obviously connected with the ancient British deity Arawn, Head of Annwn who appears as a huntsman following a pack of white red-eared hounds, and in The Mabinogion is credited with bestowing on mankind the race of pigs.

In Valinor was the Mountain Wall, the Pelori. The highest of the Pelori, and so of all the mountains then on earth, was Taniquetil "high white peak", also called Oiolosse, "ever-snow-white". "Upon its summit were the domed halls of Manwe and Varda." The land of the Valar was illuminated by the light of two trees, Telperion the White, eldest of trees, and Laurelin the Golden. They stood on a mound near which was Valimar or Valmar, "Angel-home", the city of the Valar. (III:250/308f, 314/388;R:61f.)

Let us now pass from the Valar dwelling in the Undying Lands and turn to the Mortal world of Middle-earth. This of course is simply Earth as we know it, though apparently in those days there was some kind of solid connection between it and the Undying Lands in what is now the Mid-Atlantic. The name "Middle-earth" suggests the concept found in most cultures that their land or the group of lands of which they have knowledge are in the centre of creation, with the other more fantastic realms of gods, demons, marvelous lands of men, the sky, the Underworld, and the encircling sea round about. In Old English Middle-earth is distinguished from Heaven, Hell, and Faerie. In the Norse Eddas the corresponding Midgard (Middle-yard) is surrounded by Niflheim (Mist-home) to the north, firey Muspell in the South and Jötunheim (giant-home) to the north and east. Above somewhere is Asgard where the gods dwell and Alfheim (Elvenhome), while below are the subterranean lands of the Dark elves - corresponding to Tolkien's Orcs -, and Niflhel (Mist-hell), the land of the dead. There is also Vanaheim, perhaps thought to be in the far west.

In Tolkien's Middle-earth several sentient races came into being. The Elves are called the "Elder Kindred" (III:249/308), "Elder Race" (III:84/101), "Elder People" (II:288/365), and "Firstborn" (I:235/294, 257/320, II:45/55) and would therefore seem to be the first created. Through the woods they "roamed while men till slept" (II:45/55) A memory of their creation may be hidden in the comparison of Merry and Pippin in Fangorn to "elf-children in the deeps of time peering out of the Wild Wood in wonder at their first Dawn." (II:62/78)

"The Elves far back in the Elder Days became divided into two main branches: the West Elves (the Eldar) and the East Elves." (III:405/505) "Elves has been used to translate both Quendi, "the speakers", the High-elfen name of all their kind, and Eldar, the name of the three kindreds that sought the Undying Realm." Eldar would seem to mean "people of the Stars". (III:415/519)

As for men, "Men were created 'somewhere near Lake Baikal'" (*9) Other than that, we know nothing.

The Dwarves are said to be a "race apart". "Of their strange beginnings and why they are both like and unlike Elves and Men, the Silmarillion tells, but of this tale the lesser Elves of Middle-earth had no knowledge, while the tales of later Men are confused with memories of other races" (III:410/512) These "tales of later men" may refer to the account in the Eddas in which the gods created the Universe out of the flesh of Ymir, the dead frost-giant. Maggots bred in his decaying flesh and "by the decree of the gods they acquired human understanding and the appearance of men, although they lived in the earth and in rocks." (*10)

"Tolkien's Dwarves called themselves Khazad, a name which had remained

"since Aule gave it to them at their making in the deeps of time."
The Dwarves of LotR were "descendants of the Naugrim (Dwarf-folk) of the Elder Days, in whose hearts still burns the ancient fire of Aule the Smith, and the embers smoulder of their long grudge against the Elves." (III:415/518f) Aule the Smith is most plausibly considered a Vala, but of course it is not impossible that he was an Elf, a Man, or even one of the first Dwarves.

"Durin is the name that the Dwarves used for the eldest of the Seven Fathers of their race, and the ancestor of all the kings of the Long-beards." (III:352/438) "the eldest race of Dwarves." (H.63/62) "He slept alone, until in the deeps of time and the awakening of that people he came to Azanulbizar." (III:352/438), that is, Dimril Dale. In Gimli's song Durin awoke alone in an age before the moon was marred by the dark patches now spotting it. He walked alone giving names to all he saw, as does the first man in many a folk tale. At last he arrived at Dimril Dale and looked in Kheledzaram, the Mirror Mere, where he saw appear about his head in the reflection the stars of the Great Dipper in the appearance of a crown, a sign it seems, of his future kingship. Accepting the sign, Durin made his home there "in the caves above Kheledzaram... in the east of the Misty Mountains... where afterwards were the Mines of Moria renowned in song.

"There he lived so long that he was known far and wide as Durin the Deathless. Yet in the end he died before the Elder Days had passed, and his tomb was in Khazad-dum (Moria); but his line never failed." (I:329f/411f; III:352/438, 439f) And ever after those who looked in the Mirror Mere saw no image of themselves, but only reflections of the surrounding mountains and, even in daylight, the stars. (I:348/434)
Compare this with the verse from the Eddas:

Motsognir was their night ruler,
Greatest of dwarves, and Durin after him:
The dwarves did as Durin directed,

Many man-forms made from the earth. (*11)

This is followed by a list of names from which Tolkien has borrowed most of the dwarf names found in LotR. Durin itself means "sleepy" in Old Norse.

"The most ancient people surviving in the Third Age were the Onodrim or Enyd. Ent was the form of their name in the language of Rohan." (III:408/510) It is not clear whether Tolkien means that the Ent race is even older than the Elvish race, or only that by the Third Age there were Ents still living who were older than any Elf still dwelling in Middle-earth. The Ents "were known to the Eldar in ancient days, and to the Eldar indeed the Ents ascribed not their own language, but the desire for speech." (III:408/510) As Treebeard says, "It was the elves that cured us of dumbness long ago." (II:76/95). Of their earlier creation, we know nothing, save that Treebeard claims they were "made of the bones of the earth." (II:89/113)

"The Ents and Entwives ...walked together and they housed together. ...The Ents loved the great trees, and the wild woods, and the slopes of the high hills; and they drank of the mountain-streams, and ate only such food as the trees let fall in the path; and they learned of the Elves and spoke with the trees. But the Entwives gave their minds to the lesser trees, and to the meads in sunshine beyond the feet of the forests; and they saw the sloe... and the wild apple and the cherry ...and the green herbs... and the seeding grasses. They did not desire to speak with these things, but they wished them to hear and obey what was said to them. The Entwives ordered them to grow according to their wishes; and bear leaf and fruit to their liking... So the Entwives made gardens to live in. But

(the Ents) went on wandering, and (they) only came to the gardens now and again."(II:79/99)

The role of the Eldar in bestowing speech on the Ents seems typical of their activity in the Elder Days. "they always wished to talk to everything, the Old Elves did.... Elves began it, waking trees up, and learning their tree-talk."(II:71/90) The talking birds who appear still in the Third Age may also be the results of such Eldarin experimenting, for to a being who can induce sentience and speech in plants the achievement of it in animals would be but little mastery. Tom Bombadil, or Iarwain Ben-adar, "oldest and fatherless"(I:278/347) claims to have been around before even the first drop of water, not to speak of the first tree.(I:142/182) Yet Gandalf gives the title of "the oldest of all living things"(II:142/209) to Treebeard the Ent. Perhaps the Iarwain, though existing previously as some sort of spirit of nature, was only given a full living existence by the Eldar following the creation of Ents. Or his incarnation in a living form may be the result of the Valar or of his own will.

The three Kindreds of the Eldar were "the Light-elves and the Deep-elves and the Sea-elves."(H:178/164). The Eldar were tall, fair of skin and grey-eyed, though their locks were dark, save in the golden house of Finrod; and their voices had more melodies than any mortal voice that is now heard."(III:416/519) It would seem that the greater part of the Eldar settled in Beleriand, an area of land which was beyond the Blue Mountains and which later sank into the sea. They called it, or at least that part where they dwelt, Elvenhome.(I:204/258; T.B.:14). Of its geography we have only names: Tasarinan/Nan-tasarion "vale of willows", Ossiriand where flowed the seven rivers of Ossir, the high-land of Dorthonion /Orod-na-Thon, and the forest of Neldoreth/Taur-na-Neldor through which ran the enchanted river Esgalduin.(I:206/260; II:72/90; III:434)

The glories of the Elvish culture of the Elder days, and of the ending of those glories, are told in the first stanza of the poem "The Hoard":

When the moon was new and the sun young
of silver and gold the gods sung:
in the green grass they silver spilled,
and the white water they with gold filled.
Ere the pit was dug or Hell yawned,
ere dwarf was bred or dragon spawned,
there were Elves of Old, and strong spells
under green hills in hollow dells
they sang as they wrought many fair things,
and the bright crowns of the Elf-kings.
But their doom fell, and their song waned,
by iron hewn and by steel chained.
Greed that sang not, nor with mouth smiled,
in dark holes their wealth piled,
graven silver and carven gold:
over Elvenhome the shadow rolled. (T.B:53)

The villain of the piece is Molchar, now known as the Great Enemy (I:206/260), The Dark Power of the North (III:406/507), and in Sindarin as Morgoth which contains the element mor meaning "black" and so might mean "Black Power". His iron crown (I:206/260) connects him with the "iron" mentioned in the above poem, as does Angband, the name of the place in the North where he dwelt, which contains the Elvish word ang "iron".(I:206/260) Morgoth's realm was a land of unnatural bitter cold, some of which still lingered in the Third Age a little more than a hundred leagues north of the Shire.(III:321/399)

So "the Great Darkness came, and (the Eldar) passed away over the Sea, or fled into far valleys, and hid themselves, and made songs of days that would never come again"(II:71/90) "Then when the Darkness came in the North, the Entwives crossed the Great River, and made new gardens, and tilled new fields, and (the Ents) saw them more seldom."(II:79/99)

"The Orcs were first bred by the Dark Power of the North in the Elder Days."(III:409/511) "It is a mark of evil things that came in the Great Darkness that they cannot abide the Sun" (II:76f/96), and so it is that Orcs "don't like the Sun: it makes their legs wobble and their heads giddy." (H:100/95) They "are cruel, wicked and bad-hearted. They make no beautiful things, but they make many clever ones. They can tunnel and mine as well as any but the most skillful dwarves, when they take the trouble, though they are usually untidy and dirty. ...They hate everybody and everything, and particularly the orderly and prosperous."(H:73/70) "They had no language of their own, but took what they could of other tongues and perverted it to their own liking; yet they made only brutal jargons, scarcely sufficient even for their own needs, unless it were for curses and abuse. And these creatures, being filled with malice, hating even their own kind, quickly developed as many barbarous dialects as there were groups or settlements of their race, so that their Orkish speech was of little use to them in intercourse between different tribes."(III:409/511)

"Trolls are...counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents as Orcs were of Elves. Ents are stronger than trolls" (II:89/113) "In their beginning far back in the twilight of the Elder Days, these were creatures of dull and lumpish nature and had no more language than beasts."(III:410/511) "Trolls... must be underground before dawn, or they go back to the stuff of the mountains they are made of, and never move again."(H:51/52)

Another horror created or used by Morgoth were Balrogs, apparently some sort of fire spirit.(I:344/438; II:105/134f; III:353/439) Finally there were evil things in spider shape, the children of Ungoliant. (II:332/422)

Of the horrors inflicted on Elves and Men in those days we can but guess. Nor is it clear why all did not attempt to flee over the Sea. The Realm was supposedly prepared for the, yet Men were forbidden to ever seek to come there, but must remain mortal. "The Valar were not permitted to take from them the Gift of Men."(III 315/390) Nor is it ever clearly stated that the East-elves were allowed this journey, which may thus have been limited to the Eldar alone. The reasons for this ban remain as yet unrevealed.

TO BE CONTINUED IN MALLORN 8