


We Have Faces: “Orual’s rewriting of her book deconstructs her previous writing, and along with it her identity and her understanding of the gods.” Mineko Honda adds that “with Orual, the reader is also forced to reinterpret the invisibility of the castle and to think over the character of Orual, of God, and of Reality.” That is, Lewis’s novel, by its very structure, invites readers to participate in Orual’s redemption and sanctification. This is what leads Mara Donaldson to argue that the novel “is itself a story about the nature and importance of story”.

The same can be said of *Smith of Wootton Major*. When Smith meets the Queen of Faery on his last journey to that land, he lowers his eyes in shame both for himself and for his fellow humans, remembering the dancing doll on top of the cake when he was a child. In some way, readers also participate in this shame because the novel is structured in the beginning so that they will not judge Nokes’s decoration too harshly. When the Queen in effect forgives and blesses Smith, readers in some way participate in these as well.

Looking back at these novels and what they have meant to me, I realize that they have in a way had some of the same effect of ‘baptizing’ my imagination as Lewis reported upon reading *Phantastes*. I believe that something may be glimpsed in these novels that is deeper and more true than

our world of laptops, haircuts, MySpace, Halo 3 and hot-dogs. Something may be glimpsed that lies at the heart of why we write and read stories in the first place. On that note, I would like to end with my favourite lines from Smith, the words the Queen speaks to Smith after he remembers and is ashamed of the doll on top of the cake: “Do not be grieved for me, Starbrow, nor too much ashamed for your own folk. Better a little doll, maybe, than no memory of Faery at all. For some only a glimpse. For some the awakening.” 

1. Lewis, C. S. *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis* 590 (HarperCollins, 2005).
2. Lewis, C. S. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* 3, 48–9, 61, 71–6, 289, 294 (Harcourt, 1984).
3. Tolkien, J. R. R. ‘Smith of Wootton Major’ in *Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition* (ed. Flieger, V.) 84–101, 100–1 (Harper Collins, 2005).

This essay was originally given as a presentation at the Southwest Conference of Christianity and Literature in Dallas, Texas (October 2007). For those of you familiar with the nerves, scheduling, strong coffee and attempted courtesy of academic conferences, the paper went off remarkably smoothly. It assured this first-time graduate student that perhaps an academic career was on the cards. I’m thankful to many who have helped and are helping me share this paper and these thoughts again.

The words of Húrin and Morgoth: microcosm, macrocosm and the later legendarium

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In a 1951 letter to Milton Waldman (ref. 1, p. 144), Tolkien explained that “once upon a time . . . I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of fairy story.” Although he never completed this life’s work, the one most dear to his heart, through the dedicated hands of his son Christopher, a version of this grand tale was finally published more than 30 years ago as *The Silmarillion*. However, as Verlyn Flieger warns us², “the published *Silmarillion* gives a misleading impression of coherence and finality, as if it were a canonical text, whereas the mass of material from which that volume was taken is a jumble of overlapping and often competing stories, annals, and lexicons.” Our first peek into the sausage making that Christopher had taken upon himself was in the volume *Unfinished Tales*, which included an enlarged version of the story of Túrin Turambar entitled ‘Narn I Hîn Húrin’. Christopher Tolkien placed the major work on this saga to the 1950s, after the completion of *The Lord of the Rings*. One brief section of this 100+ page-long story is entitled ‘The Words of Húrin and Morgoth’, a

two-page conversation between Morgoth and his prisoner Húrin. Although interesting, the true depth of this section could not be discerned until the later publication of the *History of Middle-earth* volumes, especially *Morgoth’s Ring*. For in that volume, we see the depth and breadth of Tolkien’s post-*LOTR* revisiting of the legendarium.

Christopher Tolkien calls these writings a “record of prolonged interior debate” (ref. 3, p. 370), including attempts to make the cosmological elements of the legendarium more clearly aligned with the real universe. Among the elements of Tolkien’s “dismantling and reconstruction” (ref. 3, p. 370) are the following: Melkor’s ultimate power, especially in relation to ‘The Elder King’, Manwë; Melkor’s marring of the world, and how he became bound to the physical world; the Fall of Humans; the ultimate fate of Arda.

Christopher Tolkien provides a valuable window into his father’s later thoughts on these issues in such texts as ‘Laws and Customs Among the Eldar’, the ‘Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth’, the essays referred to as ‘Myths Transformed’, and various versions of the ‘Ainulindalë’. However, ‘The Words of



Húrin and Morgoth's references all these elements, and now read with the hindsight of having read the *History of Middle-earth*, and reproduced as part of the volume *The Children of Húrin*, we can see that it is a clear microcosm reflecting the greater macrocosm of the post-*LOTR* writings and the tension involved in revisiting the legendarium.

Among Melkor's taunting remarks to Húrin is a rebuke of the human's understanding of the Valar: "Have you seen the Valar, or measured the power of Manwë or Varda? Do you know the reach of their thought? Or do you think, perhaps, that their thought is upon you, and that they may shield you from afar?" (ref. 4, pp. 63–64).

Húrin admits to not knowing the answer, but asserts that: "the Elder King shall not be dethroned while Arda endures." Morgoth concurs: "I am the Elder King: Melkor, first and mightiest of all the Valar..." (ref. 4, pp. 63–64).

This exchange between Húrin and Melkor hints at a deeper ongoing thread throughout Tolkien's revisions of the legendarium, namely the ultimate power of Melkor, especially in relation to that of Manwë. References to Manwë as the 'Elder King' can be found in letters written in 1957 and 1958 (ref. 1, pp. 259, 283). In the latter, he explains that Manwë "was Lord of the Valar and therefore the high or elder king". In Text II of 'Myths Transformed', Tolkien writes "Chief of the Valar of Arda was he whom the Eldar afterwards named Manwë, the Blessed: the Elder King, since he was the first of all kings in Eä" (ref. 3, pp. 378–379). Text VII of 'Myths Transformed' explains that Manwë was "the spirit of greatest wisdom and prudence in Arda" (ref. 3, p. 402). He is represented as having had the greatest knowledge of the Music, as a whole, possessed by any one mind; and he alone of all persons or minds in that time is represented as having the power of direct recourse to and communication with Eru." The same text explains (ref. 3, p. 399) that the "Elder King is obviously not going to be finally defeated or destroyed, at least not before some ultimate 'Ragnarok' ... so he can have no real adventures. When we move Manwë it will be the last battle, and the end of the World (or of 'Arda Marred') as the Eldar would say."

As undoubtedly mighty as Manwë is made out to be, Tolkien increases the relative power of Melkor throughout his revisions to the legendarium. Christopher Tolkien notes in a commentary to the 'Ainulindalë B' (written in the 1930s) that in this version of the creation myth we find "the first unequivocal statement of the idea that Melko was the mightiest of all the Ainur" (ref. 5, p. 164), when his father writes that "To Melko 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" (ref. 5, p. 157). Indeed, in the curious text entitled 'Ainulindalë C*' (the 'round earth' cosmology written in the 1940s), Melkor actually rips off a piece of the earth and forms the moon (ref. 3, p. 410). In Text II of 'Myths Transformed' we read that Arda is important in a cosmological sense (ref. 3, p. 375) as "the scene for the main drama of the conflict of Melkor with Ilúvatar, and the Children of Eru. Melkor is the supreme spirit of Pride and Revolt not just the chief Vala of the Earth, who has turned to evil". So who is the real first king, Manwë or Melkor? Not

so obvious, is it? In Tolkien's commentary to the 'Athrabeth', we read that Melkor was "originally the most powerful of the Valar" and "was the prime Spirit of Evil" (ref. 3, p. 330). Recall Melkor's taunt to Húrin: "I am the Elder King: Melkor, first and mightiest of all the Valar." Is he technically wrong in this boast? In the 'Athrabeth' itself, Finrod explains: "there is no power conceivably greater than Melkor save Eru only" (ref. 3, p. 322). Mightier than Manwë? So one might be led to believe. Tolkien himself described his conscious attempts to increase the relative power of Melkor in Text VI of 'Myths Transformed' in the essay entitled 'Melkor Morgoth'. Here we read that "Melkor must be made far more powerful in original nature. The greatest power under Eru (sc. the greatest created power). (He was to make/devise/begin; Manwë (a little less great) was to improve, carry out, complete.)" (ref. 3, p. 390). Tolkien even diminishes Manwë further in Text VII of 'Myths Transformed', when he explains that at the end of the First Age when Melkor was shut out beyond the Door of Night that this was "the end of Manwë's prime function and task as Elder King, until the End. He had been the Adversary of the Enemy" (ref. 3, p. 404). It thus appears the Lord of Lies was actually telling the truth to Húrin, at least on this point, a point which Tom Shippey briefly ponders in *The Road to Middle-earth*⁶.

Húrin refuses to believe Melkor's curse upon his family, claiming that Melkor did not have the power to "see them, nor govern them from afar: not while you keep this shape, and desire still to be a King visible on earth." Melkor reminds him that "The shadow of my purpose lies upon Arda, and all that is in it bends slowly and surely to my will" (ref. 4, pp. 63–64). This concept of 'Arda Marred' is an important and enduring concept within the legendarium, and we do not have sufficient time here to do it justice. A concrete example of the effects of Melkor's marring can be found in the 'Laws and Customs Among the Eldar', another post-*LOTR* text, namely the death of Miriel (and the deaths of elves in general). Here it is said that "nothing ... utterly avoids the Shadow upon Arda or is wholly unmarred, so as to proceed unhindered upon its right course" (ref. 3, p. 217).

In Text VII of 'Myths Transformed', an essay which Christopher Tolkien calls "the most comprehensive account that my father wrote of how, in his later years, he had come to 'interpret' the nature of Evil in his mythology" (ref. 3, p. 406), Tolkien explains in detail how Melkor further marred the world by becoming bound to it in a manner far beyond that of the other Valar. We read how:

to gain domination over Arda, Morgoth had let most of his being pass into the physical constituents of the Earth — hence all things that were born on Earth and lived on and by it, beasts or plants or incarnate spirits, were liable to be 'stained'. Morgoth at the time of the War of the Jewels had become permanently 'incarnate'.
(ref. 3, pp. 394–395)

But in the process Morgoth paid an awful price, and "lost ... the greater part of his original 'angelic' powers, of

mind and spirit, while gaining a terrible grip upon the physical world. . . . The whole of Middle-earth was Morgoth's Ring" (ref. 3, p. 400).


We see this reflected in Húrin's words to Melkor: "Before Arda you were, but others also; and you did not make it. Neither are you the most mighty; for you have spent your strength upon yourself and wasted it in your own emptiness" (ref. 4, p. 64). It was therefore possible for the Valar to ultimately defeat Morgoth in physical form and push him out into the void, although his power over Arda ultimately remained in the form of the shadow he had already cast upon it.

Among the permanent shadows that Melkor left behind was the fall of humanity and their lingering doubts as to the true nature of death, the so-called 'Gift of Ilúvatar'. Húrin perhaps spoke too boldly (or blindly) when he tells Melkor that "we escaped from your shadow" (ref. 4, p. 64). A different point of view can be seen in the 'Athrabeth', where Andreth voices the opinion that humans have been permanently marred from their original state of being by Melkor, and that their bodies were not originally made to be so short-lived. Details of the fall of humans are found in 'The Tale of Adanel', an addendum to the 'Athrabeth', in which Melkor appears to humans claiming that "Greatest of all is the Dark, for It has no bounds. I came out of the Dark, but I am its master . . . I will protect you from the Dark, which else would devour you" (ref. 3, p. 346). Although humans eventually realized that Melkor was really the enemy, the damage had already been done, especially to the humans' perception of death. For as Melkor warned them: "I do not trouble that some of you die and go to appease the hunger of the Dark; for otherwise there would soon be too many of you, crawling like lice on the Earth. But if ye do not do My will, ye will feel My anger, and ye will die sooner, for I will slay you" (ref. 3, p. 348). We see this fear of the dark, especially the ultimate darkness which lay after death, in the words of Andreth. When Finrod tells her that her beloved, Finrod's brother, will forever remember her when he is "sitting in the House of Mandos in the Halls of Awaiting until the end of Arda". Andreth counters, "And what shall I remember? . . . And when I go, to what halls shall I come? To a darkness in which even the memory of the sharp flame shall be quenched?" (ref. 3, p. 325). Compare Andreth's fears to Melkor's taunts to Húrin: "Beyond the Circles of the World there is Nothing" (ref. 4, p. 65).

What lies beyond the end of human life is certainly a thorny philosophical issue, but even more so is what lies beyond the end of the entire world as we know it. In the published *Silmarillion*, we read little of the conversation between Húrin and Morgoth, only that Húrin "defied and mocked him" and then Morgoth cursed Húrin and his family, because⁷ "Thou hast dared to mock me, and to question the power of Melkor, Master of the fates of Arda." This line appears with little change in the full conversation in *The Children of Húrin*. Just what did Melkor mean in calling himself the "Master of the fates of Arda"? What is the ultimate fate of Arda? What about Eä, the universe as a whole? In the post-*LOTR* deconstruction of the legendarium, Tol-

kien pondered what the ultimate fate of Arda might be, and whether or not Melkor's marring of Arda would be undone. In his commentary to the 'Athrabeth', Tolkien noted that "Beyond the 'End of Arda' Elvish thought could not penetrate" (ref. 3, p. 331), and that they believed that their bodies would be destroyed, negating the possibility of reincarnation. This meant that all Elves would die (permanently) at the End of Arda. Not surprisingly, the Elves "expected the End of Arda to be catastrophic", and would bring about the end of the Earth and perhaps the entire solar system. Tolkien was clear to note that "The End of Arda is not, of course, the same thing as the end of Eä. About this they held that nothing could be known, except that Ea was ultimately finite" (ref. 3, p. 342).

In several of the post-*LOTR* texts, such as the 'Athrabeth', 'Laws', and the texts of 'Myths Transformed', Tolkien pondered whether the end of Arda and the ultimate victory of good over evil will result in Arda Unmarred, Arda Healed, or a New Arda. What will happen to the Elves at the end of the world? What would be the role of humanity? Has the initial role of humanity been forever changed by the hand of Melkor? Is Melkor truly the Master of the fates of Arda? As with many ideas pondered by Tolkien in this time, there are multiple versions. Here are a few of Tolkien's thoughts on this issue. In the 'Athrabeth' it is posited that perhaps the ultimate role of humanity is to take part (in some undescribed yet apparently important way) in the healing of Arda in the end. Finrod explains that "Arda Healed shall not be Arda Unmarred, but a third thing and a greater, and yet the same." In the 'Laws', Manwë explains to the other Valar that there are two meanings or aspects to Arda Unmarred — one aspect is an unmarred state which is simply the removal of all the marred aspects, while the second is "the Unmarred that shall be . . . the Arda Healed, which shall be greater and more fair than the first, because of the Marring" (ref. 3, p. 245). If this is true, then Melkor does help determine the fate of the world, for its healing is a greater thing because of the marring that must be overcome.

The post-*LOTR* period of Tolkien's writing was one of tremendously creative thought, yet little definitive progress in reaching his goal of a self-consistent and complete legendarium. The brief conversation between Húrin and Melkor offers us a synopsis of his conflicting thoughts on many important and intertwined aspects of his mythology. Ultimately Tolkien's attempts to radically change pieces of his legendarium failed, and perhaps he should have known that they would. For as Gandalf said to Saruman, "he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom"⁸. 

1. Carpenter, H. (ed.) *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* Revised edn (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).
2. Flieger, V. *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* 63 (Kent Univ. Press, 2005).
3. Tolkien, J. R. R. *Morgoth's Ring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).
4. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Children of Húrin* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007).
5. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lost Road* (Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
6. Shippey, T. *The Road to Middle-earth* Revised edn, 262–263 (Houghton Mifflin, 2003).
7. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Silmarillion* Second edn, 197 (Houghton Mifflin, 2001).
8. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Fellowship of the Ring* Second edn, 272 (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).