

Tolkien's Legendarium

These works are subcreations that explore the hidden patterns and possibilities within Tolkien's world. They aren't conventional stories, but ways of following Arda's logic and seeing what naturally unfolds. The goal is to engage with the world he built, without adding lessons or messages, just observing what happens when its threads are traced to their end.

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Mortality in Tolkien's Legendarium

This analysis abstracts Tolkien's mythology as a designed metaphysical system within Arda itself, independent of external theology; the principles described operate as internal rules of the world's architecture.

“An end is not annihilation; it is the only way to complete a pattern, and through that completion, the mortal become author and authored.

Thesis

This essay examines mortality in Tolkien's world not as a moral mystery but as a structural necessity. If Eru's reality functions as a self-consistent system of interwoven patterns, then death is the mechanism by which those patterns reach completion, an essential design feature rather than a defect, chosen though countless other designs were possible.

The Nature of Reality

Eru is external to the Music. He orchestrates and initiates it, providing the substrate through which existence is articulated. The Music is not an independent entity discovered by Eru; it is a deliberate projection of His mind, a means by which the infinite totality of Eru expresses reality. Just as the Dwarves are brought into being by Aulë yet are not Aulë himself, Arda and all that it contains are creations of Eru.

Within Tolkien's framework of sub-creation, mortality holds profound significance for Men. Unlike Elves bound to Arda's recursive cycles, Men can step beyond this substrate, not outside existence, but outside the ongoing modulation through which their lives are articulated as finite, self-contained patterns in Eru's Music.

Melkor's discord establishes a malignant tenancy within Eä's substance, infusing his fëa into its elements and imparting a latent pull toward domination; yet this corruption alters only the medium's texture, not its architecture, the systemic laws Eru inscribed remain inviolable.

The Music and the Fabric of Reality

Synergy is one of humanity's oldest intuitions about how reality works, the quiet, ancient magic by which interactions generate more than their parts. Long before we had language for systems, emergence, or dynamics, people recognized that tribes, trade, and relationships created new forms of meaning and agency through their patterned cooperation. Tolkien's Music of the Ainur can be seen then as a mythic rendering of this same substrate: a symbolic architecture for the swirling field of relations, harmonies, and dissonances that give rise to the world. The Music, then, is not literal sound but a conceptualization of the deep relational fabric of existence, where every note is an interaction and every theme an emergent synergy.

In this relational universe, a person's life forms a four-dimensional manifold of synergy, a continuous pattern traced through interactions that curve its fabric, forging identity and relational interactions. Mortality completes the pattern. Without an endpoint, a life remains an unfinished vibration in the relational field, never resolving into a distinct motif. Finality closes the form, granting it contour and ontological solidity, like the final stroke that turns a block of marble into a sculpture. A finite life, once complete, stands as a real and finished shape in the fabric of the world.

Mortality as Completed Whole

Gollum's life shows that completion through mortality holds even when a being has fallen into ruin. However distorted his path, his existence still forms a finite whole: it begins, unfolds, and ends. His corruption alters the shape of that whole but not its capacity to complete. In dying, his pattern closes in the same manner as all mortal lives, defined, bounded, and finished, achieving the integrity that Elvish existence, bound to endless return, can never reach.

In contrast, Aragorn shows the same law fulfilled through wisdom and will. Having accomplished his purpose through enduring trials and persistence, he then resolves. He exercises ultimate internal authorship by choosing to end his life on his own terms, shaping his pattern, resolving his motif, and departing Arda through reasoned, willing finality. He embodies deliberate composition within Eru's themes: a coherent life crafted responsively, each trial, love, and service a chosen note affirming his vision without dominating fate. His death becomes the final stroke of his design, not defeat, but harmonious closure that mirrors Eru's artistry through self-formed integrity in the greater Music.

The Dead Men of Dunharrow demonstrate corrupted mortality's suspension in recursive torment: their *fëar*, willfully mingled via oath-betrayal with Arda's marred substance, are denied natural crossing, fixated in eternal recursion of their betrayal's fixed pattern: rehearsing failure without growth, accrual, or modulation, a self-chosen anti-closure more desolate than Elvish waiting in Mandos. Men hold no power to dictate Eru's metaphysics, so Isildur's "curse" wields none; it accurately outlines the condition their prior choices already lock in, their *fëar* bound until realignment, but issues no dictate over Arda's substrate. Unlike Gollum's distorted yet bounded

whole or Aragorn's deliberate final stroke, their pattern locks into solipsistic echo until Aragorn invokes their oath, granting a second chance to fulfill it and thereby unbind their fëar from the mingling. This enforces the system's endpoint and restoring contour through immanent fulfillment. Aragorn operates within the curse's frame, seeing service as debt-payment and release as kingly absolution; yet consistently in the Legendarium, outcomes turn on personal choice, not external command, even Eru imposes no direct judgment on mortal closure. This affirms the invariant: even domination-warped mortality detaches from Arda's relational fabric, but willful alignment to the marring twists closure into iterative stasis, resolvable only through self-chosen decoupling.

Mortality belongs by design to Men alone, yet Lúthien's choice reveals an additional rule operating within Eru's system: that a being may, by deliberate union, merge its existence so entirely with another that their patterns resolve as one. Through her decision to share Beren's fate, Lúthien reconfigures her own ontology, not by losing immortality as penalty or reward, but because union with a mortal necessitates mortality for the whole to remain coherent. The act is willful and systemic: two beings choosing singularity within the design, producing a combined pattern that must end where the mortal half ends. What appears as love in language is, in design, a chosen convergence of being whose integrated completion confirms that the system's laws extend even to voluntary unity. This convergence reveals a deeper invariant: recursive patterns may subsume into finite ones through union, but never reverse, as mortality's closure horizon governs the merged whole and is irrevocable.

Even the fëar of the Elves, when sundered from their hröar, remain strictly within the Circles of the World. The "Halls of Mandos" are no exception; they serve not as exit but as places of convalescence, maintaining the integrity of each spirit so that no Elvish pattern ever achieves cessation. This condition preserves continuity rather than concludes it, anti-closure by design, ensuring that Elvish being is forever recursive within Arda's persistence.

Fëanor in this interpretation, though supremely creative and fiercely individual, illustrates the limits of Elvish life. Even at the highest expression of their power, he cannot move beyond the constraints of his design. His extraordinary spirit remains bound to the recursive cycles of Arda, passing to the Halls of Mandos rather than achieving final closure. Fëanor's brilliance resonates without end, showing that passion, intellect, and autonomy, at their absolute height, still cannot grant the self-contained authorship that mortality alone provides.

For Dwarves, recursion holds with a caveat. Like Elves, their fëar remain within Arda's frame, gathered in halls accorded to them; unlike Men, they do not step beyond the Circles. Yet their own traditions speak of a final summoning at the world's remaking, when they will labor with Aulë to renew Arda—rooted in the belief that their Seven Fathers already reincarnate across generations, as seen in the line of Durin where each king embodies the Father's returned spirit. This grants their pattern a promised consummation *within* recursion rather than an exit from it, an eschatological closure inside the frame instead of the author-like externality reserved to Men.

At first glance, the Istari seem confusing, their mortal-like deaths disrupting the seamless Ainuric freedom to assume and discard forms, making their fëar appear uniquely suspended. Yet causality follows standard Maia rules under constraint: the Valar housed their spirits in chosen hröar of Men, voluntarily binding their power during incarnation. Gandalf's fëa, intercepted and returned by

Ilúvatar himself, came back as the White with enhanced but finite limits, bypassing Valaric mediation; Saruman's fëa rose as a grey mist seeking the Doors of Valinor, only to face rejection for treason and scatter into powerless attenuation within Eä absent Eruic override.

Morgoth, by contrast, illustrates the inverse condition. He seeks to dominate the Music, to impose his own modulation upon the substrate, yet he cannot escape it, nor can he exist independently. True freedom, as granted to Men, is not about control of the Music, but about the ability to conclude one's pattern and withdraw from recursive articulation. In this sense, mortality is a form of relational likeness to Eru: it mirrors the Author's freedom from the Music, albeit from within the totality rather than outside it.

Mortality brings the system to self-completion. Each life becomes a finished design, both authored by the system and, through its completion, author of its own form. In that finality, Men step outside Arda's recursion: their patterns detach from the Music's ongoing articulation while still bearing its imprint. They exist as whole and independent constructs, finite, self-contained, and free within the total design.

Edge Cases

The origin of the Orcs is uncertain, and without that data, their relation to closure cannot be fully deduced. If they are corrupted Elves, their end would likely fall within the recursive pattern of Mandos; if altered Men, their lives would complete as finite wholes. Tolkien leaves the matter open, so the system cannot be modeled beyond these contingencies. Even so, their ambiguity demonstrates an important boundary: mortality as an event is not itself sufficient for closure, finality depends on the ontological type, not on the circumstance of death.

Hope without Guarantees

As Gandalf reminds Frodo, we do not choose the time we are given, only how we use it, this is estel stripped of eschatological baggage, a trust directed toward meaningful action in the living moment. No character in the Legendarium speaks of heaven, worships for reward, or shapes their life around anticipation of the Gift; their hope trusts that finite deeds resonate within Arda's circles without needing any promised beyond.

This absence of afterlife calculus frees their authorship completely: actions gain weight precisely because they stand or fall on their own patterning, not as investments in eternity. Estel becomes trust in Eru's inherent logic and intent, even when outcomes hide, allowing mortals to author toward the future they can touch, treating closure as sufficient unto itself.

Such hope perfects mortality's mechanism, aligning removal from Arda's cycles with Eru's own externality to the Music: complete patterns achieve transcendence through finality alone, not

reward or judgement. Any continuation beyond belongs to grace freely given, un presupposed and unrequired, preserving the finite life as its own arena of divine likeness, where wholeness emerges from self-contained resonance rather than eternal extension.

Conclusion

The Gift of mortality enables Men to author complete, self-contained patterns within Eru's Music, independent of eternal life or afterlife guarantees. This capacity makes them microcosms of the Author's relational freedom, allowing exit from Arda's recursive cycles into fully realized motifs. This is structural necessity: like Eru external to his projection, mortal closure grants pattern-externality; recursion traps within the frame, denying divine likeness

Death realizes this design: a life's signal achieves closure and contour from within the totality, bearing the likeness of Eru's authorship. Even without presupposing continuation, finality itself confers divine resemblance, the mortal's power to complete a pattern within the Music. Freed from any demand for an afterlife, the Gift of Men stands as sufficient unto itself; any continuation beyond belongs to uncontracted grace, not a prize contingent on moral life.

Dagor Dagorath

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The Last Age

In the Last Age of Arda, Men carved dominion through cruelties not seen since the Akallabêth. Among them were Elves who, by fear, ambition, or despair, had fallen to the shadow of men's hearts. The Dwarves, bound to the forges of usurped authority, labored in darkness for masters they despised. Orcs still toiled beneath the hard cruelty of these new, petty lords, yet they were no longer the only servants of malice, only the most familiar.

Across the vast ruin that had once been Gondor, Mordor had fused its blight into one desolation, stretching unbroken into the withered reaches of Mirkwood and the cracked halls of Erebor, where warlords of Men brought forth a new craft of cold and calculated cruelty. Among them rose apostates who held power as virtue for its own sake, and unmaking as sanctity; their rites fulfilled yet never sated the hunger to consume the works of others. It was Men, above all, who seized and exalted this dark rule, wresting dominion from all others, turning every craft and kindred to their own exclusive use and giving form to the malice that had long lain latent in Arda's marred substance.

Elves, the last scattered singers of the Elder Days, languished in dazed domination or bound in devices of malignity, while some took refuge in secret hollows, their voices bent to dark rites or silenced by isolation and despair. Rivendell, once the stronghold of wisdom, lay a hollow vessel, its songs no longer sung. Dwarves, dragged from their secret deeps where they had endured long ages, were driven to forge under whip, hunger, and coercion, their craft turned to ends not their own. Moria stirred once more, its deep drums resounding from the black heart, doom older than the world of Men.

Yet not all was shadow. For the sake of Frodo and Bilbo, whose small courage once unmade the Great Ring, the Valar had set about a quiet ward upon the Shire. There, in a ~~green pocket of peace~~, life endured as it always had, a single unmoving star in a sky otherwise dimmed. And too, scattered across the broken lands were other small havens, hidden vales, forgotten by the world, where kindness flickered like embers waiting for a wind of renewal.

And still, far to the West beneath these same stars, Ulmo stirred in his deeps, his currents bearing faint telling of Arda's dwindling, the fell consequence of wills turned furthest from harmony. With him were Ossë and Uinen, their waves bearing witness to the true strain against the compounding

misunderstanding now risen unchecked among the Children. Alone among the Valar, Ulmo yet kept vigil over Arda's marred hearing, his tears falling for harms wrought not by shadow's hand alone but by the fear and desire Men had kindled within their own hearts.

Dark Discovery

In one of the great tribes of Men rose a tinkerer, goblin-hearted in his cunning and relentless craft, yet bearing the fire of Man's unchecked ambition. Through fevered dreams and whispers none could name, his mind had been seeded with covetous arcane designs: a thing of insatiable hunger, shaped by malice's shadow but ever unborn.

Under the Tinkerer's command, Dwarves were driven to delve far beyond their fathers' works, down toward Arda's trembling heart. They dug not for treasure nor craft, but to unearth the buried wounds where the Marring lay thickest.

The Dwarves found it first: a vault untouched for ages long forgotten. When they broke its seal, a silence fell that crushed breath and thought. A cold dread poured forth, and those first who entered froze where they stood. Others fled upward, choosing the lash or death rather than return.

Their broken accounts reached the Tinkerer in fragments: a chamber that swallowed sound, a cold that bit the spirit, and a darkness that stripped one bare. But the Elf heard more. In their quivering voices he recognized a presence he had hoped never to feel again, not the echo, but the memory of its absence. It was a diminished will, a privation, a remnant of the first discord sung in presence of the One, now lodged in a place of clotted malice. Long buried beneath ruin and time, that nameless nothingness had endured, cowardly slinking among the seams of corruption in the stone, carrying wounds of Utumno's fall like a fester that never healed.

So the Tinkerer descended, forcing the Elf as herald before him, down through narrowing shafts into the depths that was made ready for him. And when they reached the vault, the presence stirred.

It did not show itself. A voice, more an insight, rippled through the chamber, a thought easily mistaken for one's own: not command, but pervasive intent, faint as death's final rasp. Within the mind of the Elf, it murmured in the tongue of the Ainu, a language once of thunderous shaping now thinned to shadows and wisps.

The Elf, from remembered fear of whips no longer wielded, threw himself prostrate in terror, for he knew the nature of this echo, a malice that should long have faded. But the Tinkerer stood defiant, mistaking that weakened will, starved through lonely ages, for opportunity, as one mistakes the groan of a trap for an invitation.

Broken Heart of Arda

The vault became their workshop, though few entered it willingly. The Tinkerer commanded, the Dwarves labored, and the Elf - hollow-eyed and gaunt - sang the ancient strains he had learned in torment beneath Thangorodrim. Yet none of them truly led, for the presence in the dark guided all.

The Dwarves carved stone and shaped metal to the Tinkerer's dark design, working in terror as the vault's air grew ever colder, the warmth of the world were being bled from the living stone. Crystal veins were cut from the deep rock, obsidian ground and burnished til it shone like black water. The Elf traced vitiated sigils he had long feared to recall, his hands shaking as each stroke rent his fëa with remembered discord.

The Tinkerer bound it all, mortal ingenuity woven through ancient art. He gloried in the slow unveiling of his machinations, mistaking their unlight for mastery, while the Nameless bent his will ever further toward the deep. Piece by piece, the device took form: rings of obsidian, crystal shards held in impossible suspension, and roots of dark metal inthrusts the stone, alive with a low susurrations. The Elf sensed the discord as Eä twisted upon itself, straining into disharmony.

A heaviness gathered as the design neared unveiling. Those who had shaped the world felt it through their being: in Arda's groaning bones, seas' restless surge, growth's faltering pulse, stone's forgotten strength, and the high fires where stars' patterns wavered. From every quarter their unease drew them west, a slow convergence of wills unmarred.

Lens of Binding

The Lens was not a device in a mortal sense, nor a work of craft alone. It arose from the mingling of wills: the Tinkerer's restless ambition, the Elf's unwilling memory of ancient art, the Dwarves' forced craft, and the quiet stirring of something none of them could place. Yet its true source lay deeper still, in the corruption Morgoth had poured into the very substance of Arda, a residue of his intent whose resentful occupation clung in malign tenancy. The Lens was the first work of sub-creation to draw that residue into a singular focused form.

In the Elder Days, Morgoth's malice bled into Eä itself, staining its innermost substance so that all things bore his corruption's touch. Though cast beyond the Circles of the World, that power endured, scattered, directionless, a shadow coiled through stone and air and flesh. No craft of Elf or Man could summon him forth; yet the Lens gathered what lingered: drawing Morgoth's diffused discord into dread coherence.

This focusing bent Eä at its core. Harmony strained; the ordered world faltered. The fëar of the living felt the pull toward the Lens, not to unmaking, for no fëa may be unmade, but to bending. As their spirits wavered, their hröar grew frail; no substance endures the Marring's full weight. The Lens wrenched their essence from true alignment, heedless of kind, compelling closer to the gathered corruption.

Thus the Lens stood as a knot of discord, a point where the long-scattered corruption of Morgoth became briefly confined. It was not a portal, nor a summoning, nor a weapon of dominion, but the final concentration of a will that had marred the foundations of the world.

From the deep places the distortion bled outward, and its tension thrummed through every element of Arda. The seas lifted against their bounds, the earth gave forth a low unrest, and the airs trembled in their courses. One by one the Valar turned their thought toward the west, and in turn they drew toward Valmar. There they assembled beneath the high seat of Manwë, in still accord, each awaiting the turning of the balance. Yet he sat unmoving, his thought hearkening beyond hearing, for he would not move until a sign was given that would remove all doubt.

Culminating Discord

The Lens stirred like a simulacrum of awakening, not shaping the world but drawing it inward, its emptiness exerting a relentless pull upon the marred substance of Arda. The vault trembled as the corruption it gathered deepened, a rending groan rising. Mote by mote it grew. Warmth and will its hunger consumed. The world itself leaned ever toward the absence that now revealed its empty heart.

Its first touch fell upon the hröa. The Tinkerer felt his strength drawn from him, as though the marrow of his being were unspooled into the dark. The Elf shattered, a reeling cry as the emptiness reached through him, a twisting in the core where spirit clings to flesh. Stone resettled, dust silting from cracks. Yet the Lens's pull deepened, and the very matter of Arda yawed toward its hollow. Above, Dwarves and Men staggered as their bodies failed, hearts faltering, breath stolen, limbs collapsing under the unseen drain. Some died where they stood; others fell into the shafts long before their fëar slipped free. For the Lens did not seek to unmake, but to bind without distinction of kind.

As the bodies were felled, the fëar were drawn downward, caught like leaves in a tightening whirlpool. They drifted through stone as through water, lamenting and aware, unable to resist the pull of the gathered corruption. The cries of the sundered were not heard by ears, but by the world itself, a soft wailing woven into the trembling of the deep.

The Nameless drew forth, its design nearly wrought, the shadow of its malice growing with its arrogance and pride. In its rising it beheld itself magnified, and for a breath believed the design complete. But as the gathered malice of Morgoth redoubled upon itself, the Lens drank deeper. Inexorably the Nameless was drawn in and in that moment it knew its fate: that the will it had served would not preserve it, and that in the fulfillment of its purpose lay its own enslavement.

The vault drew tight around the deepening whirl. The Tinkerer staggered, his fëa half-torn from its hröa, yet clinging even as the relentless pull dragged him inward, the Elf lay broken, spirit already spiraling into the Lens's dark geometry, and as the Nameless fell inward upon itself, its fëa flared, driving the Lens to its culmination.

Amidst those converged before the seat of Manwë, Varda did not speak, but her thought turned toward distant shores. Before them, in memory of light, arose the gleam of the Shire's ancient ward, steadfast through the lingering shadow. It shone not as dominion reclaimed, but as remembrance of what must not fall, the last undimmed witness of the One's harmony made mortal. In that moment, the choice was no longer distant nor deferred: the hour had come to guard what still endured.

Then Manwë's purpose gathered to a singular will. All doubt and hesitation fell away, and he rose in renewed accord, his course made clear beyond reckoning. In that hour the Valar once more took up the mantle of their stewardship against the perversion of Arda's substance. And so together, Ainur and Maiar, the lingering expression of the One's first Music, descended into the breaking of the world.

The True Dagor Dagorath

The last clash between Morgoth and the Valar was no battle of forms, but a raw struggle in the deep places of thought, where the Music's primordial harmony met its pervasive discord, the Ainulindalë's strife reverberating through history now closing at both ends.

The faithful, arrayed in solemn unity within the deeps of thought, loosed their ancient Music before the Lens. High and low among the Powers, from mightiest throne to humblest tide, every voice was drawn into the great straining harmony. Yet the Lens answered only with privation; its unquenchable emptiness slackened its pull as the song of the primordial Theme rose in defiance of that fell convergence. But the strength of that ancient malice was not so lightly diminished, and already the lesser among the faithful felt their tones waver, their steadfastness thinning beneath the weight of the discord.

From that metaphysical fray, Arda's marred substance gave dire witness as physical ramification. The sun dimmed to a sullen red, its ancient fire guttering low as if the heights themselves yielded to the void-pull. Seas receded from every shore, baring glistening ocean floors like flesh stripped from bone beneath the dimming vault. Winds fell utterly still, cloaking the world in liminal silence. In that surreal hush, hill and hollow joined unwitting chorus, every marred fiber dragged toward the Lens's coiled abyss.

Lesser Maiar faltered first. Their themes unraveled into gasping confusion as their fëar were drawn, irresistibly, toward the corrupted design. The great Valar song turned not to conquest but to anguished anchorage. In sacrificial dispersion their unified Music splintered into fragile preservation, noble yet doomed. Each sustaining note spent in mooring thinned the greater harmony, for every voice turned to preservation left the command unsounded; and thus even the mightiest within Eä found they could neither guard nor renew against the gathered discord.

Then came the sound: a note high as the peaks of the mountains and deep as the abyssal sea. It rang through every heart, pain and hope entwined: pain at the discord's final cry, hope at the One's

mercy heard within it. And all knew it for what it was: the voice of Ilúvatar, the first sound since the beginning of the Music.

Silence

At the note's end, silence fell absolute; and with it, the burden of the Marring was lifted from the world. Morgoth was resolved.

First Notes of a Second Music

The lifting of the Marring did not bring instant harmony. The Lens loomed still in the shattered deeps, its warped geometry stilled, gathering no discord, feeding on no malice, though fëar remained entangled within its silent workings. Yet the weight of Morgoth's discord was gone, the Children of Ilúvatar awoke into a world reshaped yet familiar. Freed from the long shadow, they found themselves disoriented, habits of fear, domination, and despair lingering like echoes in a newly quiet hall. The wounds of Ages did not vanish; they simply ceased to deepen.

Among Men, confusion reigned. Some felt the sudden absence of the old dread as a kind of vertigo, clinging to power structures that no longer had metaphysical fuel. Warlords, stripped of the shadow that once magnified their will, grasped desperately at authority. Others, long oppressed, struggled to trust that the world was truly changed. The Gift of Men shone unclouded again, yet many did not know how to live without the fear that had shaped their choices for generations.

The Elves, released from the slow suffocation of accumulated sorrow, found their fëar suddenly unburdened. But clarity did not erase memory. Those who had been enslaved or twisted by despair needed time to rediscover themselves. Some wandered in quiet wonder, relearning joy; others recoiled from the light, unsure how to step into a world no longer bent beneath them.

The Dwarves emerged from bondage with a fierce, bewildered pride. Their craft, once forced into dark service, yearned toward creation rather than endurance. Yet they too bore scars-of hunger, of humiliation, of the deep places where they had labored under the lash. Their healing would come through making, but even that required guidance and patience.

Even the Orcs, long shaped by domination and distortion, stood at a strange threshold. Some faded swiftly, their being too bound to the old discord to endure its absence. Others, dimly aware of a freedom they had never known, hesitated on the edge of becoming-what, none could yet say.

In this fragile dawn, conflict arose not from a Dark Power but from the Children themselves, struggling to understand a world no longer ruled by malice. To meet this moment, the Ainur stepped forth-not as distant rulers nor veiled wanderers, but as companions in the work of renewal. The greater among them tended to the land and the deep fabric of the world; the lesser walked

beside Elves, Men, Dwarves, and others, offering counsel, clarity, and hope. They sought to persuade rather than command, to heal rather than judge, yet they did not shrink from strength when gentler paths failed.

Thus began the Second Music, tentative notes weaving through the silence, not a swift restoration, but a patient remaking born of choice and companionship. Though echoes of the Marring lingered in memory and wound, Arda's fabric slowly straightened under Eru's unseen harmony, the world's deep wound beginning to close, not in perfection, but in hope renewed.

The Second Music: Eucatastrophic Apocalypse

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The Fall

The Second Music is the moment, at the end of the Dagor Dagorath, when the weight of Morgoth's marring finally falls away from the world. The Marring had seeped into the very substance of Arda, a heaviness borne by every creature without knowing its source. It was the lingering echo of Morgoth's discord, woven into the matter of the world itself - a truth hinted at in the later lore, where the Dark Power is said to have "entered into the very matter of the Earth".¹ When Eru at last silences that ancient reverberation, the long burden lifts. The world becomes what it was always meant to be, and every being within it becomes more itself - freer, clearer, more whole.

[1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" - Tolkien describes Morgoth dispersing his power into the physical matter of Arda.

The Unmaking of the Morgoth

Though Morgoth himself is long removed from Arda, the deeper wound he left behind was never merely personal. In the ancient ages he poured his power into the very substance of the world,¹ diffusing his will-to-dominate into earth, water, air, and even the hearts of the Children.² This diffusion was not a moral failing but a metaphysical distortion—a dark gravity that bent all things subtly toward fear, possessiveness, and despair.³ Its presence made evil more than choice; it made it *weight*.⁴

The healing of Arda, therefore, is not the erasure of the idea of domination—for free beings may still err—but the cleansing of its embodiment.⁵ The Dagor Dagorath was the final unbinding of this corruption: the dissolution of the ambient force that once magnified malice and made sorrow cling like shadow.⁶ With this corruption purged, the Children remain free, yet no longer labor under a world tilted against them.⁷ Their missteps are their own, not echoes of a fallen Vala's dispersed power.⁸

Thus the unmaking of Morgoth is not the destruction of a person, nor the denial of repentance, but the purification of Arda from the lingering distortion of a rogue impulse within the divine theme - a fragment of Eru's thought turned against its purpose; a concept that has proven itself unending.⁹

What began in apparent strength and inevitability waned through the long ages, until at last, by Ilúvatar's mercy, it came to its appointed end. Only when that distortion was lifted could the Second Music begin-not in perfection imposed, but in freedom restored.¹⁰

[1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" - Morgoth disperses his power into the matter of Arda.

[2]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Part One: Ainulindalë" - Melkor's discord affects the shaping of the Children.

[3]: *The Silmarillion*, "Ainulindalë" - Melkor's discord introduces fear, confusion, and possessiveness.

[4]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Part Five: Mythmaking in Tolkien" - the Marring as a metaphysical burden or "weight."

[5]: *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, "Last Writings" - reflections on the Marring as an embodied corruption.

[6]: *The Shaping of Middle-earth*, "The Quenta" - early accounts of the Last Battle and Morgoth's final undoing.

[7]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Part One" - the Marring tilts the conditions of life against the Children.

[8]: *Morgoth's Ring*, Vol. 10 - Morgoth's dispersed power influencing the moral environment of Arda.

[9]: *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, No. 153 - Ainur as thoughts of Eru and evil as a misuse of divine intention.

[10]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" - Arda Healed and the renewal following the removal of the Marring.

Arda and the Ainur

Arda Healed is not a new beginning nor a replacement, but the unveiling of what always lay beneath the Marring-the world as it was first sung. With the weight of Morgoth's corruption at last lifted, its true pattern stands revealed, though not yet fully wrought.¹ The lands and seas do not leap instantly into their perfected form; rather, freed from fear and distortion, all the Children and the Powers may at last shape them according to Ilúvatar's unmarred design. What was bent may now be straightened, what was dimmed may grow bright, and what was wounded may be made whole-not by sudden remaking, but through the harmonious labor of Arda working as it was meant to work.² Thus Arda Healed is both familiar and ever-renewing: its hidden beauty emerging as its peoples bring it forth in freedom.

In the healing of Arda, the Ainur rejoice not with the untouched wonder of their first shaping, but with the deep, aching gladness of those who have carried a long vigil and finally see their labors made whole. They would remember the griefs-the darkening of Valinor, the long wars, the slow wounding of the Children-and those memories would still stir sorrow, like the echo of a lament whose final chord has at last resolved. Yet their joy would be greater for that remembrance, for in Arda Healed they behold the world as they once glimpsed it in the mind of Ilúvatar: every valley and star restored to its unmarred design, every green thing growing without fear, every work of their hands no longer shadowed by Morgoth's malice.³ The burden of guardianship falls away, and what remains is the pure delight of sub-creators whose themes now ring true-the Music they loved from the beginning returning to them, whole and shining, after ages of distortion.⁴

Now that the burden of stewardship has passed, they look with new, unburdened eyes upon the true diversity of Eru's Children, and marvel rises within them like a dawn after endless night.⁵ The Valar behold the diversity of being and intent-each a distinct theme, vibrant and whole, sounding forth in freedoms no guardianship could have foreseen; and in that multiplicity, the mighty spirits find not diminishment, but the greater glory of Ilúvatar's inexhaustible design.⁶

- [1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" VII - Arda Re-made as unveiling imperishable design beneath marring
- [2]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" IX; *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth* - gradual healing through sub-creation
- [3]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" VIII - Ainur's joy remembering griefs resolved in restoration
- [4]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" VII-IX - themes ringing true after discord, sub-creators' delight
- [5]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" VIII - Ainur's release from guardianship revealing new wonders.
- [6]: *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, No. 131 - sub-creation's consummation in unity through diversity of free wills.

Of Elves

Elves, bound to Arda from the beginning, find themselves immersed in this healed world as if stepping out of a long illness.¹ The weariness and fading that marked their long history slips softly away. What Mandos does in sorrow and necessity becomes the natural state of their being: restoration, clarity, and harmony. They remain themselves - wise, enduring, deeply attuned - but now the ages of grief and loss are tempered and made whole within their unburdened hearts. Sorrow is no longer a weight to bear, but a depth of understanding that gives shape to their joy.

[1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" - Tolkien's discussion of Elvish weariness, fading, and the hope of Arda Healed.

The Second Born

Men stand revealed in this healed world, their innate mode of being now unclouded. They move with urgency and reverence born of mortality's truth-coveting life's span, as immortals cannot. The Gift shines clear in its nature: some embrace the crossing eagerly, others hesitate, a few feel unease at the unknown; yet all respond freely, without Morgoth's lies twisting death to oblivion's dread.

Death, no longer boundary or burden-the Gift met openly, its mystery unshadowed.¹ That lingering unease-of uncharted horizon, not twisting of the Gift-precisely shapes their immediacy, the passion immortals lack. In Arda Healed, mortality marks transcendence: their span woven into Ilúvatar's vast thought, ever seeking the greater Music.

[1]: *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, No. 212 - Tolkien's explanation of the Gift of Men and the unshadowed nature of death as intended by Ilúvatar.

The Adopted

When the Second Music begins and the deep marring of the earth is lifted, none feel it more sharply than the Dwarves. Made of the substance of Arda itself,¹ they have borne its corruption in

their very being since their awakening. Now that weight falls away, not as repentance but release. Their nature - stubborn, proud, fiery, fierce in loyalty - remains unchanged, only unburdened. In them the healing of the world is bodily: the bones of the earth made sound again.

Then Aulë calls them, and the long-waiting Halls are opened.² From these halls the Fathers of the Seven Houses rise, and the living answer their Maker's call. The scattered Houses gather-Durin's Folk from the West, the Firebeards and Broadbeams from the Blue Mountains, and at last the far Eastern kindreds long sundered from their kin.³ For the first time since their making, the Seven Fathers stand together, and the Dwarves are one.

Thus their ancient hope is fulfilled: they aid Aulë in the remaking of Arda.⁴ Beneath the cleansed mountains their hammers sound anew, setting the deep foundations right. Their work remains unseen at the first, yet it endures in the world's renewed strength - for in its hidden stone the Dwarves have written their joy.

[1]: *The Silmarillion*, "Of Aulë and Yavanna" - Aulë's making of the Dwarves from the substance of Arda.

[2]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Laws and Customs among the Eldar" - references to the Halls of Waiting and the fate of created beings.

[3]: *The Lord of the Rings*, "Appendix A" - genealogies and histories of the Seven Houses of the Dwarves.

[4]: *The Peoples of Middle-earth*, "Of Dwarves and Men" - Tolkien's notes on the Dwarves' role in the remaking of Arda.

Willful Discord

In this healed creation, Elves and Men stand together as companions - each bringing what the other lacks.¹ Elves offer their long memory and deep understanding; Men bring the fire and clarity forged in short lives. And the Ainur, no longer burdened by the marring, work alongside them with joy. In the Second Music, the Ainur and the Children work together in a harmony of free wills, each contributing what Ilúvatar placed uniquely within them; and when Men shape or imagine something new, the Ainur answer as fellow sub-creators, rejoicing that the Children bring themes no one else could have conceived.²

Yet this harmony does not abolish freedom or difference. Beings may still err, disagree, even wound-but without the marring's weight, evil bends no longer toward metaphysical domination. Without Morgoth's lies about the nature of reality, no one mistakes power for meaning or destruction for creation. Discord remains possible, but it does not become metaphysical; it does not organize the world around itself.³

[1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" - Finrod imagines "Friendship shall be restored" between the Kindreds in the ultimate restoration.

[2]: *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, No. 131 - Unity-in-diversity as the consummation of sub-creation.

[3]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" - Corruption of Arda as metaphysical; healing restores moral freedom without enforced uniformity.

The Unshackled

When the Marring is lifted, the last chains of Morgoth fall away, and the Orcs stand bewildered beneath a sky that no longer commands their fear. No master drives them now; no voice compels. Some cry out for orders that do not come, others flinch from blows that never fall. In that strange stillness begins the first free thought - rough, uncertain, but their own.¹

Not all endure it. Some fade swiftly, unable to bear a world no longer shaped by terror.² Others linger, wounded and wary, and for a time the wilds remain troubled - not with the great dread of old, but with the violence of the broken, who strike from habit rather than command, many of whom were slain. Yet even this shadow thins. A few drift toward the edges of the Free Peoples and live out their days quietly at the margins, tolerated but watchful, until the years take them.

No new ones arise³, and when they die they do not remain as a race apart; the Firstborn among them return to Mandos, the Secondborn pass beyond the Circles of the World,⁴ and thus the long thralldom ends in release rather than ruin. Even the last servants of the Shadow come to rest, and the Music that once was twisted receives again the voices that were lost to it, the dark note resolving at last into harmony as the wounds of will are made whole.

[1]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Myths Transformed" - Morgoth's will sustains corrupted creatures and collapses when he is removed.

[2]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Orcs" essays - Tolkien's exploration of Orc origins, enslavement of will, and their dependence on domination.

[3]: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Part One: Ainulindalë" - Melkor's discord distorts the unfolding of the Children, enabling corrupted forms that cannot persist without him.

[4]: *The History of Middle-earth*, Vol. 10: *Morgoth's Ring*, "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth" - metaphysics of fëar and the restoration of beings after the Marring.

Chordal Harmonics

In the Second Music, the Children of Ilúvatar and the Ainur each embody distinct modes of being, and it is in the interplay of these modes that the world's fullness is realized. These modes are not limits upon any soul, for all the Children are polyphonic—capable of will, wisdom, endurance, and feeling—but each race bears a native resonance, a fundamental voicing through which its nature most readily sounds.

There are those who can—the Ainur—whose nature is power and agency, shaping and sustaining Arda according to vision and will. There are those who know—the Elves—whose long memory and deep understanding perceive patterns, consequences, and the harmonies woven into the substance of the world. There are those who feel—Men—whose finitude grants them immediacy, passion, and the luminous sensitivity to life's fleeting beauty. And there are those who endure—the Dwarves—whose steadfastness, once hardened by fear and exile, now stands unburdened: a strength without bitterness, a constancy without suspicion, the deep foundation upon which

renewal takes root.

In Arda Healed, these modes no longer compete under the weight of the marring but resonate together: the Ainur bring their capability without domination, the Elves their enduring insight without cold abstraction, Men their fiery presence without the fear of their mortality, and the Dwarves their unyielding strength without animosity. Each contributes what the others cannot, and in their unity through difference, the Second Music unfolds—a harmony that is neither enforced nor uniform, yet complete, echoing the theme that Ilúvatar first laid into being.

This is the Second Music: the world healing, the Children of Ilúvatar whole, and all voices—Ainur, Elves, Dwarves, and Men—joined in the harmony that was always meant to be.¹

[1]: *The Silmarillion*, "Ainulindalë" — Ilúvatar's theme and the vision of all voices joined in the Music.

The Little Folk

Being a quiet branch of the Secondborn they scarcely mark the change at all. Great matters seldom trouble them, and the remaking of Arda is no exception. They do not speak of the Second Music, nor of the lifting of the Marring; such thoughts belong to Elves and lore-masters. Yet even they feel something different, though they would not name it. The days seem a touch more cheerful, the harvests a little surer, and neighbors a shade less sharp-tongued when gossip turns sour. The world sits more comfortably around them, as if it has finally settled into its proper shape.

But their lives go on much as before: pipes are lit, long-bottom leaf is savored, and good ale is shared at day's end. They remain content with gardens, hearths, and the small pleasures that have always been their strength. If any Hobbit were told that the world had been healed, they might nod politely, but they would think mostly of whether the taters were boiling over. For they have always lived close to the quiet heart of things, and in Arda Healed they simply continue as they ever have - steady, cheerful, and untroubled by the great works of the Big Folk.

The Quiet Memory of Old Tom

Not all will speak of the Second Music in the tongue of the Valar. There are some, older and simpler, who need no word for renewal. Down by the water-meadows, Tom would not give a grand answer about the lifting of the Marring or the remaking of the world. Such talk belongs to the Elves and the Wise (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book I, chs. 6-8, for Tom's nature beyond fear or burden).

If Goldberry asked him what had changed, Tom would only laugh and shake his head.



Just a change, my pretty lady.
Things are always a-changing.
But this one... this one I remember.

For him, the world made whole would not be a revelation, but a return - the long rhythm of Arda's breathing come round again. While others marvel at the Music restored, Tom would hum along, untroubled, as though it had been there all along.

Ever Present Horizon

Yet even this harmony is not the end. For Ilúvatar's thought is inexhaustible, and no music He begins can ever be the last. The Second Music will stand for ages unnumbered, bright and whole, until perhaps, beyond all reckonings, another theme is heard-soft at first, older and yet new. And those who remember the first will listen in wonder, knowing that every ending is but a pause in a greater song, and that the heart of Eru is not silence, but everlasting beginning.