

ATHRABETH FINROD AH ANDRETH

Bilbo writes: *Of all the texts I encountered in Rivendell, I have seen nothing like this one conversation between a spinster and an Elven-king. It is surely the strangest; indeed of all the literature I have read concerning the Elder Days or the differences between Elves and Men. The ideas presented within are unusual, and often seem contradictory to other significant texts in the Númenórean-Eldarin tradition.*

How the conversation was recorded, and by whom (assuming it is not a fabrication) is not known. The text is revered by the Dúnedain, and even by the Elves, who otherwise often mock the reliance of Men (and Hobbits!) on writing for their history: one notion is that the memory of the conversation was preserved in the household of Adanel, where it took place, whence it was passed down through her granddaughter Emeldir, to her son Beren Camlost. From there the tale or document would have passed to Dior, on to Elwing, and finally to Elrond and Elros. Some Númenórean authorities speculate that it was Elros himself who wrote it down, perhaps to justify his choice to embrace mortality. Other authorities suggest that the story was preserved in the family of Beleth, daughter of Bregolas, the grandniece of Andreth, from whose line came Erendis the sixth queen of Númenor, and the mother of Númenor's first ruling queen, Tar-Ancalimë. To me, this avenue of transmission seems more probable.

Certainly the Sindarin texts are very ancient and formal, both in dialect and mode of writing. It seems entirely possible to me that the Athrabeth was actually composed in Beleriand itself, though the elegiac tone suggests to me that if so, it was composed long after the impending Ruin that looms over the scene (The Battle of a Sudden Flame is foreshadowed at key moments in the conversation), but perhaps before the coming of the Host of the West and the breaking of Thangorodrim. Mayhap the mingling in close quarters of refugees of both kindreds at the Havens of Sirion and the Isle of Balar provided a secondary impetus for the messages of hope and caution that it offers. In some ways it's composition might make more sense in that setting.

No version of the Athrabeth offers anything in the way of a substantial preamble or introduction, but the text dives straight into the problems and early misunderstandings between Eldar and Edain about death, bodies (a rough translation of Quenya hröar) and spirits or souls or minds (Quenya fëar). The most authoritative text opens as follows:

OF DEATH AND THE CHILDREN OF ERU, AND THE MARRING OF MEN
THE CONVERSE OF FINROD AND ANDRETH
TO WHICH IS APPENDED "THE TALE OF ADANEL,"
AND "THE CONVERSE OF MANWË AND ERU"

Now the Eldar learned that, according to the lore of the Edain, Men believed that their *hröar** were not by right nature short-lived, but had been made so by the malice of Melkor.† It was not clear to the Eldar whether Men meant: by the general marring of Arda (which they themselves held to be the cause of the waning of their own *hröar*);‡ or by some special malice against Men as Men that was achieved in the dark ages before the Edain and the Eldar met in Beleriand; or by both. But to the Eldar it seemed that, if the mortality of Men had come by special malice, the nature of Men had been grievously changed from the first design of Eru;§ and this was a matter of wonder and dread to them, for, if

* Not an easy word to translate, so I have left it in elvish. It means, essentially, the material part of a person, the part which is mortal, vulnerable to illness or injury. You could say "the body" but it is certainly more complex than that. ~BB

† Melkor, as is well-known, is the ancient name of Morgoth Bauglir, the Black Foe of the World. Melkor was his name as the mightiest in power of the Ainur, who were before the world, and of the Valar who entered into it. Though he became an enemy to Eru, the Ainur, and the Valar before Arda was made, he was not named Morgoth until the darkening of Valinor, when he was cursed thus by Fëanor. Finrod's choice of "Melkor" probably says more about his attitude to Fëanor's rash words and deeds (though at this stage he remained friendly with Fëanor's sons) than it does about his attitude to the Enemy. ~BB

‡ The Eldar and the Dúnedain teach that the whole world (not just Middle-earth, but the heavens as well, and even the uttermost west – that is what is meant by "Arda") was "marred" – damaged, perverted, twisted, tainted, harmed – by the treachery of the great Enemy, Melkor Morgoth, at the very moment of creation. In some respects, all evil and suffering are seen as the effects of "Arda marred." ~BB

§ Eru or Ilúvatar, is "The One," the creator of Arda and all that is in and beyond it. The Lords of the West, or Valar, are those he created to serve him before time itself, while Elves and Men (and Dwarves and Hobbits, I assume!) are said to be his Children. The story of his creation of Arda is told in the *Ainulindalë*. ~BB

it were indeed so, then the power of Melkor must be (or have been in the beginning) far greater than even the Eldar had understood; whereas the original nature of Men must have been strange indeed and unlike that of any others of the dwellers in Arda.

Concerning these things it is recorded in the ancient lore of the Eldar that once Finrod Felagund and Andreth the Wise-woman conversed in Beleriand long ago. This tale, which the Eldar call *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth*, is here given in one of the forms that have been preserved.

Finrod (son of Finarfin, son of Finwë) was the wisest of the exiled Noldor, being more concerned than all others with matters of thought (rather than with making or with skill of hand); and he was eager moreover to discover all that he could concerning Mankind. He it was that first met Men in Beleriand and befriended them; and for this reason he was often called by the Eldar *Edennil*, 'the Friend of Men'. His chief love was given to the people of Bëor the Old, for it was these that he had first found in the woods of eastern Beleriand.* Andreth was a woman of the House of Bëor, the sister of Bregor father of Barahir (whose son was Beren One-hand the renowned). She was wise in thought, and learned in the lore of Men and their histories; for which reason the Eldar called her *Saelind*, 'Wise-heart'.

Of the Wise some were women, and they were greatly esteemed among Men, especially for their knowledge of the legends of ancient days. Another wise-woman, though of a different House and different tradition, was Adanel sister of Magor Dagorlind, grandfather of Hador Lorindol. She married Belemir of the House of Bëor, grandson of Belen second son

* Finrod Felagund was, by some accounts the mightiest of all the kings of Beleriand, before the Bragollach destroyed much of his realm, for his realms were exceedingly spacious: he was certainly the most well-beloved. Most famously, he built the underground citadel of Nargothrond, and (after the Bragollach) he laid down his crown and his own life to aid and protect Beren Camlost from Sauron. According to the *Quenta Silmarillion*, it was Bëor who first named Finrod and his people "Gnomes" (*Nómil*) a term which is still sometimes used for the Noldor in the Westron tongue. ~BB

of Bëor the Old, to whom the wisdom of Bëor (for Bëor himself had been one of the wise) was chiefly transmitted. And there had been great love between Belemir and Andreth his younger kinswoman (the daughter of his second cousin Boromir), and she dwelt long in his house, and so learned much of the lore also of the 'people of Marach' and the House of Hador from Adanel.

In the days of the peace before Melkor broke the Siege of Angband, Finrod would often visit Andreth, whom he loved in great friendship, for he found her more ready to impart her knowledge to him than were most of the Wise among Men. A shadow seemed to lie upon them, and there was a darkness behind them, of which they were loth to speak even among themselves. And they were in awe of the Eldar and would not easily reveal to them their thought or their legends. Indeed the Wise among Men (who were few) for the most part kept their wisdom secret and handed it on only to those whom they chose.

Now it chanced that on a time of spring* Finrod was for a while a guest in the house of Belemir; and he fell to talking with Andreth the Wise-woman concerning Men and their fates. For at that time Boron, Lord of the folk of Bëor, had but lately died soon after Yule, and Finrod was grieved.

'Sad to me, Andreth,' he said, 'is the swift passing of your people. For now Boron your father's father is gone; and though he was old, you say, as age goes among Men,† yet I had known him too briefly. Little while indeed it seems to me since I first saw Bëor in the east of this land, yet now he is gone, and his sons, and his son's son also.'

* Based on internal indications, this was around the 410th year of the sun, during the Long Peace (260-455). At that time Belemir and Adanel were old in the reckoning of Men, being some 70 years of age; but Andreth was in full vigor, being not yet 50. She was unwed, as was not uncommon for the Wise-women of Men. It was almost exactly a century since Men had first crossed into Beleriand. ~BB

† He was 93. ~BB

'More than a hundred years it is now,' said Andreth, 'since we came over the Mountains; and Bëor and Baran and Boron each lived beyond his ninetieth year. Our passing was swifter before we found this land.'^{*}

'Then are you content here?' said Finrod.

'Content?' said Andreth. 'No heart of Man is content. All passing and dying is a grief to it; but if the withering is less soon then that is some amendment, a little lifting of the Shadow.'

'What mean you by that?' said Finrod.

'Surely you know well!' said Andreth. 'The darkness that is now confined to the North, but once'; and here she paused and her eyes darkened, as if her mind were gone back into black years best forgot. 'But once lay upon all Middle-earth, while ye dwelt in your bliss.'[†]

'It was not concerning the Shadow that I asked,' said Finrod. 'What mean you, I would say, by the lifting of it? Or how is the swift fate of Men concerned with it? Ye[‡] also, we hold (being instructed by the Great who know), are Children of Eru, and your fate and nature is from Him.'

'I see,' said Andreth, 'that in this ye of the High-elves do not differ from your lesser kindred whom we have met in the world, though they

^{*} In 310, about 100 years before this. ~BB

[†] This text seems to depart at many points from the rather too tidy chronologies of the *Quentas* and the *Annals*, regarding the awakening of men, the arising of the Sun, and the Return of the Noldor to Middle-earth. Also, although Andreth was born and raised in Beleriand, she has a curious way of talking about mannish experiences from before her people crossed the mountains as if she could recall them personally. It may be that this is a way in which the Wise among the Edain manifested their wisdom. Here she clearly implies that Men were awake and subject to Morgoth while the Exiled Noldor were still in Valinor. ~BB

[‡] In order to capture some of the subtleties of the Sindarin original, it has been necessary to use some rather archaic pronouns and verb forms in the Westron, particularly around forms of address. For much of their conversation, Finrod's and Andreth are using formal, deferential plural forms of the second person in addressing one another ("ye"). Eventually, they will switch to a more personal and singular second person, which Hobbits also no longer use ("thou"). These Westron forms are still common in Gondor, for example, where Sindarin remains widely spoken as well. ~BB

have never dwelt in the Light. All ye Elves deem that we die swiftly by our true kind. That we are brittle and brief, and ye are strong and lasting. We may be "Children of Eru," as ye say in your lore; but we are children to *you* also: to be loved a little maybe, and yet creatures of less worth, upon whom ye may look down from the height of your power and your knowledge, with a smile, or with pity, or with a shaking of heads.'

'Alas, you speak near the truth,' said Finrod. 'At least of many of my people; but not of all, and certainly not of me. But consider this well, Andreth, when we name you "Children of Eru" we do not speak lightly; for that name we do not utter ever in jest or without full intent. When we speak so, we speak out of knowledge, not out of mere Elvish lore; and we proclaim that ye are our kin, in a kinship far closer (both of *hröa* and *fëa*)* than that which binds together all other creatures of Arda, and ourselves to them.

'Other creatures also in Middle-earth we love in their measure and kind: the beasts and birds who are our friends, the trees, and even the fair flowers that pass more swiftly than Men. Their passing we regret; but believe it to be a part of their nature, as much as are their shapes or their hues.

'But for you, who are our nearer kin, our regret is far greater. Yet, if we consider the briefness of life in all Middle-earth, must we not believe that your brevity is also part of your nature? Do not your own people believe this too? And yet from your words and their bitterness I guess that you think that we err.'

'I think that you err, and all who think likewise,' said Andreth; 'and that that error itself comes of the Shadow. But to speak of Men. Some will say this and some that; but most, thinking little, will ever hold that what is in their brief span in the world has ever been so, and shall so ever remain,

* *Hröa* has already been explained. These terms (which are from the high-elven tongue) refer to the shared assumption of the Eldar and the Edain that all the Children of Eru exist in two modes, or parts, or states: a material body, "house" or "raiment" called a *hröa* (plural *hröar*) and an "indwelling" mind or "spirit" called a *fëa* (pl. *fëar*). ~BB

whether they like it or no. But there are some that think otherwise; men call them "Wise", but heed them little. For they do not speak with assurance or with one voice, having no sure knowledge such as ye boast of, but perforce depending upon "lore", from which truth (if it can be found) must be winnowed. And in every winnowing there is chaff with the corn that is chosen, and doubtless some corn with the chaff which is rejected.

'Yet among my people, from Wise unto Wise out of the darkness, comes the voice saying that Men are not now as they were, nor as their true nature was in their beginning. And clearer still is this said by the Wise of the People of Marach,* who have preserved in memory a name for Him that ye call Eru, though in my folk He was almost forgotten. So I learn from Adanel. They say plainly that Men are *not* by nature short-lived, but have become so through the malice of the Lord of the Darkness whom they do not name.'

'That I can well believe,' said Finrod: 'that your bodies suffer in some measure the malice of Melkor. For you live in Arda Marred, as do we, and all the matter of Arda was tainted by him, before ye or we came forth and drew our *hröar* and their sustenance therefrom: all save only maybe

* The people of Marach were by far the most numerous of the three kindreds of the Edain. In legend they (or their lords) are often referred to as the House of Hador, though at the time of this conversation, Hador was only a young man. The people of Marach, perhaps on account of their numbers, preserved more of their ancient culture than the folk of Bëor. In fact, Marach's folk spoke the most ancient form of Westron. ~BB

† This would seem to be a direct contradiction of what the Elves describe as "The Gift of Men," *i.e.* mortality, as described in the *Ainulindalë*, where death and freedom from the circles of the world is the special destiny of men granted by Eru, a destiny denied to Elves.

Aman before he came there.* For know, it is not otherwise with the Quendi† themselves: their health and stature is diminished. Already those of us who dwell in Middle-earth, and even we who have returned to it, find that the change of their bodies is swifter than in the beginning. And that, I judge, must forebode that they will prove less strong to last than they were designed to be, though this may not be clearly revealed for many long years.

'And likewise with the *hröar* of Men, they are weaker than they should be. Thus it comes to pass that here in the West, to which of old his power scarcely extended, they have more health, as you say.'

'Nay, nay!' said Andreth. 'You do not understand my words. For you are ever in one mind, my lord: the Elves are the Elves, and Men are Men, and though they have a common Enemy, by whom both are injured, still the ordained interval remains between the lords and the humble, the firstcomers high and enduring, the followers lowly and of brief service.'

'That is not the voice that the Wise hear out of the darkness and from beyond it. Nay, lord, the Wise among Men say: "We were not made for death, nor born ever to die. Death was imposed upon us." And behold! the fear of it is with us always, and we flee from it for ever as the hart from the hunter. But for myself I deem that we cannot escape within this world, nay, not even if we could come to the Light beyond the Sea, or that Aman of which ye tell. In that hope we set out and have journeyed through many lives of Men; but the hope was vain. So said the Wise, but that did

* Perhaps to be compared with this is a passage in the Debate of the Valar in *Laws and Customs Among the Eldar*, where Nienna said to Manwë: 'Though the death of severance may find out the Eldar in thy realm, yet one thing cometh not to it, and shall not: and that is deforming and decay'; to which is added in a footnote: 'Yet after the slaying of the Trees it did so while Melkor remained there; and the body of Finwë, slain by Melkor, was withered and passed into dust, even as the Trees themselves had withered.' ~BB

† *Quendi* (high-elven: "speakers") is the ancient name of the Elves for themselves as a race. By using it, Finrod is making a claim about all elves whatsoever, whether High-elves who crossed over sea, or Dark Elves still living in the distant east of Middle-earth who refused the summons of Oromë entirely, or any in between. ~BB

not stay the march, for as I have said, they are little heeded. And lo! we have fled from the Shadow to the last shores of Middle-earth, to find only that it is here before us!"*

Then Finrod was silent; but after a while he said: 'These words are strange and terrible. And you speak with the bitterness of one whose pride has been humiliated, and seeks therefore to wound those to whom she speaks. If all the Wise among Men speak so, then well I can believe that ye have suffered some great hurt. But not by my people, Andreth, nor by any of the Quendi. If we are as we are, and ye are as we find you, that is not by any deed of ours, nor of our desire; and your sorrow does not rejoice us nor feed our pride. One only would say otherwise: that Enemy whom you do not name.

'Beware of the chaff with your corn, Andreth! For it may be deadly: lies of the Enemy that out of envy will breed hate. Not all the voices that come out of the darkness speak truth to those minds that listen for strange news.

'But who did you this hurt? Who imposed death upon you? Melkor, it is plain that you would say, or whatever name you have for him in secret. For you speak of death and his shadow, as if these were one and the same; and as if to escape from the Shadow was to escape also from Death.

*These phrases echo often in the tales of Men in the Elder Days. It is almost impossible to read this and not be reminded of the debate which took place in Estolad in the generation before Andreth, led by Bereg of the House of Bëor and Amlach of the House of Marach. In the *Quenta Silmarillion* the discontents are described as saying "We took long roads, desiring to escape the perils of Middle-earth and the dark things that dwell there; for we heard that there was Light in the West. But now we learn that the Light is beyond the Sea. Thither we cannot come where the gods dwell in bliss. Save one. For the Lord of the Dark is here before us, and the Eldar, wise but fell, who make endless war upon him. In the North he dwells, they say, and there is the pain and death from which we fled. We will not go that way." Likewise, in the *Narn I Chîn Húrin*, Sador Labadal says to the young Túrin, "A darkness lies behind us, and out of it few tales have come. The fathers of our fathers may have had things to tell, but they did not tell them... It may be that we fled from the fear of the Dark, only to find it here before us, and nowhere else to fly but the sea."~BB

'But these two are not the same, Andreth. So I deem, or death would not be found at all in this world which he did not design but Another. Nay, death is but the name that we give to something that he has tainted, and it sounds therefore evil; but untainted its name would be good.'^{*}

'What do ye know of death? Ye do not fear it, because ye do not know it,' said Andreth.

'We have seen it, and we fear it,' answered Finrod. 'We too may die, Andreth; and we have died. My father's father was cruelly slain, and many have followed him, exiles in the night, in the cruel ice, in the insatiable sea. And in Middle-earth we have died, by fire and by smoke, by venom and the cruel blades of battle. Fëanor is dead, and Fingolfin was trodden under the feet of the Morgoth.'[†]

'For what end? To overthrow the Shadow, or if that may not be, to keep it from spreading once more over all Middle-earth — to defend the Children of Eru, Andreth, all the Children and not the proud Eldar only!'

'I had heard,' said Andreth, 'that it was to regain your treasure that your Enemy had stolen; but maybe the House of Finarfin is not at one with the Sons of Fëanor. Nonetheless for all your valor, I say again: "what know ye of death?" To you it may be in pain, it may be bitter and a loss but only for a time, a little taken from abundance, unless I have been told

* Consider the words of Pengolodh at the end of the *Ainulindalë*, regarding the mortality of Men: 'Death is their fate, the gift of Ilúvatar, which as Time wears even the Valar shall envy. But Melkor has cast his shadow upon it, and confounded it with darkness, and brought forth evil out of good, and fear out of hope.' The teaching of the Eldar, later embraced by the wisest among Men, had always been that the possibility of death is a blessing to mankind, leading to a different manner of immortality than that of the Elves. ~BB

† Finrod's grandfather was Finwë, murdered by Morgoth at the doors of Formenos. The mention of Fingolfin's death is evidence, in the minds of some, that the *Athrabeth* is cannot be as ancient or authentic as it purports to be. If this was truly a conversation between Finrod and Andreth, it certainly took place *before* the Dagor Bragollach, whereas Fingolfin's fatal duel with Morgoth was the grim coda of that battle. Others maintain the reference is a mere scribal error, perhaps swapping in Fingolfin's demise for that of a less well-known decedent of the house of Finwë (of whom there were several, Fingolfin's son Argon, for instance).

untruth. For ye know that in dying you do not leave the world, and that you may return to life.

'Otherwise it is with us: dying we die, and we go out to no return. Death is an uttermost end, a loss irremediable. And it is abominable; for it is also a wrong that is done to us.'

'That difference I perceive,' said Finrod. 'You would say there are two deaths: the one is a harm and a loss but not an end, the other is an end without redress; and the Quendi suffer only the first?'

'Yes, but there is another difference also,' said Andreth. 'One is but a wound in the chances of the world, which the brave, or the strong, or the fortunate, may hope to avoid. The other is death ineluctable; death the hunter who cannot in the end be escaped. Be a Man strong, or swift, or bold; be he wise or a fool; be he evil, or be he in all the deeds of his days just and merciful, let him love the world or loathe it, he must die and must leave it — and become carrion that men are fain to hide or to burn.'

'And being thus pursued, have Men no hope?' said Finrod.

'They have no certainty and no knowledge, only fears, or dreams in the dark,' answered Andreth. 'But hope? Hope, that is another matter, of which even the Wise seldom speak.' Then her voice grew more gentle. 'Yet, Lord Finrod of the House of Finarfin, of the high and puissant Elves, perhaps we may speak of it anon, you and I.'

'Anon we may,' said Finrod, 'but as yet we walk in the shadows of fear. Thus far, then, I perceive that the great difference between Elves and Men is in the speed of the end. In this only. For if you deem that for the Quendi there is no death ineluctable, you err.

'Now none, of us know, though the Valar may know, the future of Arda, or how long it is ordained to endure. But it will not endure for ever. It was made by Eru, but He is not in it. The One only has no limits. Arda, and Eä itself, must therefore be bounded. You see us, the Quendi, still in the first ages of our being, and the end is far off. As maybe among you death may seem to a young man in his strength; save that we have long years of life and thought already behind us. But the end will come. That

we all know. And then we must die; we must perish utterly, it seems, for we, belong to Arda (in *hröa* and *fëa*). And beyond that what? "The going out to no return," as you say; "the uttermost end, the irremediable loss"?"*

'Our hunter is slow-footed, but he never loses the trail. Beyond the day when he shall blow the mort, we have no certainty, no knowledge. And no one speaks to us of hope.'

'I did not know this,' said Andreth; 'and yet .. .'

'And yet at least ours is slow-footed, you would say?' said Finrod. 'True. But it is not clear that a foreseen doom long delayed is in all ways a lighter burden than one that comes soon. But if I have understood your words thus far, you do not believe that this difference was designed so in the beginning. You were not at first doomed to swift death.'

'Much could be said concerning this belief (be it a true guess or no). But first I would ask: how do ye say that this has come about? By the malice of Melkor I guessed, and you have not denied it. But I see now that you do not speak of the diminishment that all in Arda Marred suffer;† but of some special stroke of enmity against your people, against Men as Men. Is that so?'

'It is indeed,' said Andreth.

'Then this is a matter of dread,' said Finrod. 'We know Melkor, the Morgoth, and know him to be mighty. Yea, I have seen him, and I have heard his voice; and I have stood blind in the night that is at the heart of

*Cf. *Laws and Customs*,: 'The new *fëa*, and therefore in their beginning all *fëar*, they [the Eldar] believe to come direct from Eru and from beyond Eä. Therefore many of them hold that it cannot be asserted that the fate of the Elves is to be confined within Arda for ever and with it to cease.' ~BB

† That is, because all of Arda was, in some sense equally "marred" by Morgoth, nothing that is derived from it, even in part (as the Children of Eru, at least in body/*hröar*) can escape the effects of the marring and be as good as the creator intended.

his shadow,* whereof you, Andreth, know nought save by hearsay and the memory of your people. But never even in the night have we believed that he could prevail against the Children of Eru. This one he might cozen — or that one he might corrupt; but to change the doom of a whole people of the Children, to rob them of their inheritance: if he could do that in Eru's despite, then greater and more terrible is he by far than we guessed; then all the valor of the Noldor is but presumption and folly — nay, Valinor and the Mountains of the Pelóri are builded on sand.'

'Behold!' said Andreth. 'Did I not say that ye do not know death? Lo! when you are made to face it in thought only, as we know it in deed and in thought all our lives, at once you fall into a despair. We know, if ye do not, that the Nameless is Lord of this World, and your valor, and ours too, is a folly; or at least it is fruitless.'

'Beware!' said Finrod. 'Beware lest you speak the unspeakable, wittingly or in ignorance, confounding Eru with the Enemy who would fain have you do so. The Lord of this World is not he, but the One who made him, and his Vicegerent is Manwë, the Elder King of Arda, who is blessed.

'Nay, Andreth, the mind darkened and distraught; to bow and yet to loathe; to flee and yet not to reject; to love the body and yet scorn it, the carrion-disgust: these things may come from the Morgoth, indeed. But to doom the deathless to death, from father unto son, and yet to leave to them the memory of an inheritance taken away, and the desire for what is lost: could the Morgoth do this? No, I say. And for that reason I said that if your tale is true, then all in Arda is vain, from the pinnacle of Oiolossë† to

* For some considerable time before the Darkening of Valinor (95 Valinorean Years according to the Annals of Aman, or the equivalent of over 900 Years of the Sun) Melkor was free in Valinor to mingle with Elves, Maiar and Valar. During this period, it is said that Melkor most frequently visited the Noldor. "The night that is at the heart of his shadow," must be a reference to Finrod's presence at the Darkening itself. ~BB

† High-elven "ever-white." A poetical name for Taniquetil, the holy mountain of Manwë in Valinor. ~BB

the uttermost abyss. For I do not believe your tale. None could have done this save the One.

'Therefore I say to you, Andreth, what did ye do, ye Men, long ago in the dark? How did ye anger Eru? For otherwise all your tales are but dark dreams devised in a Dark Mind. Will you say what you know or have heard?'

'I will not' said Andreth. 'We do not speak of this to those of other race. But indeed the Wise are uncertain and speak with contrary voices; for whatever happened long ago, we have fled from it; we have tried to forget, and so long have we tried that now we cannot remember any time when we were not as we are – save only legends of days when death came less swiftly and our span was still far longer, but already there was death.'^{*}

'Ye cannot remember?' said Finrod. 'Are there no tales of your days before death, though ye will not tell them to strangers?'

'Maybe,' said Andreth. 'If not among my folk, then among the folk of Adanel, perhaps.' She fell silent, and gazed at the fire.[†]

'Do you think that none know save yourselves?' said Finrod at last. 'Do not the Valar know?'

Andreth looked up and her eyes darkened. 'The Valar?' she said. 'How should I know, or any Man? Your Valar do not trouble us – either with care or with instruction. They sent no summons to us.'

* I have often wondered, based on passages like this one, and the obviously divergent sense of time between the Elves, who measure time by the stars, and for whom a year of the Sun is absurdly brief, and men or Hobbits, who are the creatures of the Sun, for whom the years are long, whether the 310 years that we are told intervened (by the Grey Annals, and other sources) between the rising of the sun and the coming of men into Beleriand, was not in fact a much greater time, perhaps measured, for instance in the Valinorean Years that the Eldar were accustomed to use, rather than the short years of the sun. §fb§

† There are some MS of the text that include at this point a narrative called "The Tale of Adanel" which recounts in more detail a tale of how Men were seduced and corrupted by Morgoth. This tale, whether or not it represents an authentic tradition of the Elder Days, clearly did not form a part of the original *Athrabeth*, but because it is an interesting text in its own right, I have included it as an appendix. See below. ~BB

'What do you know of them?' said Finrod. 'I have seen them and dwelt among them, and in the presence of Manwë and Varda, I have stood in the Light. Speak not of them so, nor of anything that is high above you. Such words came first out of the Lying Mouth.'

'Has it never entered into your thought, Andreth, that out there in ages long past ye may have put yourselves out of their care, and beyond the reach of their help? Or even that ye, the Children of Men, were not a matter that they could govern? For ye were too great. Yea, I mean this, and do not only flatter your pride: too great. Sole masters of yourselves within Arda, under the hand of the One. Beware then how you speak! If ye will not speak to others of your wound or how ye came by it, take heed lest (as unskilled leeches) ye misjudge the hurt, or in pride misplace the blame.'

'But let us turn now to other matters, since you will not say more of this. I would consider your first state before the wound. For what you say of that is also to me a wonder, and hard to understand. You say: "we were not made for death, nor born ever to die." What do you mean: that ye were as we are, or otherwise?'

'This lore takes no account of you,' said Andreth, 'for we knew nothing of the Eldar. We considered only dying and not-dying. Of life as long as the world but no longer we had not heard; indeed not until now has it entered my mind.'^{*}

'To speak truly,' said Finrod, 'I had thought that this belief of yours, that ye too were not made for death, was but a dream of your pride, bred in envy of the Quendi, 'to equal or surpass them. Not so, you will say. Yet long ere ye came to this land, ye met other folk of the Quendi, and by some were befriended. Were ye not then already mortal? And did ye never speak with them concerning life and death? Though without any words they would soon discover your mortality, and ere long you would perceive that they did not die.'

^{*} Such moments of frank surprise as this suggest to me that the *Athrabeth* preserves the memory of a real conversation, whether or not the interlocutors were the ones indicated here.

~BB

"Not so" I say indeed,' answered Andreth. 'We may have been mortal when first we met the Elves far away, or maybe we were not: our lore does not say, or at least none that I have learned. But already we had our lore, and needed none from the Elves: we knew that in our beginning we had been born never to die. And by that, my lord, we meant: born to life everlasting, without any shadow of any end.'

'Then have the Wise among you considered how strange is the true nature that they claim for the *Atani*?^{*}' said Finrod.

'Is it so strange?' said Andreth. 'Many of the Wise hold that in their true nature no living things would die.'

'In that the Eldar would say that they err,' said Finrod. 'To us your claim for Men is strange, and indeed hard to accept, for two reasons. You claim, if you fully understand your own words, to have had imperishable bodies, not bounded by the limits of Arda, and yet derived from its matter and sustained by it. And you claim also (though this you may not have perceived) to have had *hröar* and *fëar* that were from the beginning out of harmony. Yet harmony of *hröa* and *fëa* is, we believe, essential to the true nature unmarred of all the Incarnate: the *Mirróanwi* as we call the Children of Eru.'

'The first difficulty I perceive,' said Andreth, 'and to it our Wise have their own answer. The second, as you guess, I do not perceive.'

'Do you not?' said Finrod. 'Then you do not see yourselves clearly. But it may often happen that friends and kinsmen see some things plainly that are hidden from their friend himself.'

'Now we Eldar are your kinsmen, and your friends also (if you will believe it), and we have observed you already through three lives of Men with love and concern and much thought. Of this then we are certain without debate, or else all our wisdom is vain: the *fëar* of Men, though close akin indeed to the *fëar* of the Quendi, are yet not the same. For

^{*} *Atani* High-Elven term for mankind in general. The Sindarin equivalent, *Edain* (whence *Dúnedain*, "West-Men") was usually applied only to the three people's who crossed into Beleriand before the end of the Long Peace. ~BB

strange as we deem it, we see clearly that the *fëar* of Men are not, as are ours, confined to Arda, nor is Arda their home.

'Can you deny it? Now we Eldar do not deny that ye love Arda and all that is therein (in so far as ye are free from the Shadow) maybe even as greatly as do we. Yet otherwise. Each of our kindreds perceives Arda differently, and appraises its beauties in different mode and degree. How shall I say it? To me the difference seems like that between one who visits a strange country, and abides there a while (but need not), and one who has lived in that land always (and must). To the former all things that he sees are new and strange, and in that degree lovable. To the other all things are familiar, the only things that are his own, and in that degree precious.'

'If you mean that Men are the guests,' said Andreth.

'You have said the word,' said Finrod: 'that name we have given to you.'

'Lordly as ever,' said Andreth. 'But even if we be but guests in a land where all is your own, my lords, as you say, tell me what other land or things do we know?'

'Nay, tell me!' said Finrod. 'For if you do not know, how can we? But do you know that the Eldar say of Men that they look at no thing for itself; that if they study it, it is to discover something else; that if they love it, it is only (so it seems) because it reminds them of some other clearer thing? Yet with what is this comparison? Where are these other things?'

'We are both Elves and Men, in Arda and of Arda; and such knowledge as Men have is derived from Arda (or so it would appear). Whence then comes this memory that ye have with you, even before ye begin to learn?'

* One of the many poetic and (at least superficially) patronizing names bestowed on Men by the Eldar was "The Guests." Another (thematically related to this) was "The Strangers." Both were seen by Men as insulting, but were in fact meant to represent the insight (and puzzlement) of the Eldar regarding mannish character. ~BB

'It is not of other regions in Arda from which ye have journeyed. We also have journeyed from afar. But were you and I to go together to your ancient homes east away I should recognize the things there as part of my home, but I should see in your eyes the same wonder and compassion as I see in the eyes of Men in Beleriand who were born here.'

'You speak strange words, Finrod,' said Andreth, which I have not heard before. Yet my heart is stirred as if by some truth that it recognizes even if it does not understand it. But fleeting is that memory, and goes ere it can be grasped; and then we grow blind. And those among us who have known the Eldar, and maybe have loved them, say on our side: "There is no weariness in the eyes of the Elves." And we find that they do not understand the saying that goes among Men: *too often seen is seen no longer*. And they wonder much that in the tongues of Men the same word may mean both "long-known" and "stale".

'We have thought that this was so only because the Elves have lasting life and undiminished vigor. "Grown-up children" we, the guests, sometimes call you, my lord. And yet – and yet, if nothing in Arda for us holds its savor long, and all fair things grow dim, what then? Does it not come from the Shadow upon our hearts? Or do you say that it is not so, but this was ever our nature, even before the wound?'

'I say so, indeed,' answered Finrod. 'The Shadow may have darkened your unrest, bringing swifter weariness and soon turning it to disdain, but the unrest was ever there, I believe. And if this is so then can you not now perceive the disharmony that I spoke of? If indeed your Wisdom had lore like to ours, teaching that the *Mirróanwi* are made of a union of body and mind, of *hröa* and *fëa*, or as we say in picture the House and the Indweller.

'For what is the "death" that you mourn but the severing of these two? And what is the "deathlessness" that you have lost but that the two should remain united for ever?'

'But what then shall we think of the union in Man: of an Indweller, who is but a guest here in Arda and not here at home with a House that is built of the matter of Arda and must therefore (one would suppose) here remain?

'At least one would not hope for this House a life longer than Arda of which it is part. Yet you claim that the House too was immortal, do you not? I would rather believe that such a *fëa* of its own nature would at some time of its own will have abandoned the house of its sojourn here, even though the sojourn might have been longer than is now permitted. Then "death" would (as I said) have sounded otherwise to you: as a release, or return, nay! as going home! But this you do not believe, it seems?'

'Nay, I do not believe this,' said Andreth. 'For that would be contempt of the body, and is a thought of the Darkness unnatural in any of the Incarnate whose life uncorrupted is a union of mutual love. But the body is not an inn to keep a traveller warm for a night, ere he goes on his way, and then to receive another. It is a house made for one dweller only, indeed not only house but raiment also; and it is not dear to me that we should in this case speak only of the raiment being fitted to the wearer rather than of the wearer being fitted to the raiment.'

'I hold then that it is not to be thought that the severance of these two could be according to the true nature of Men. For were it "natural" for the body to be abandoned and die, but "natural" for the *fëa* to live on, then there would indeed be a disharmony in Man, and his parts would not be united by love. His body would be a hindrance at best, or a chain. An imposition indeed, not a gift. But there is one who imposes, and who devises chains, and if such were our nature in the beginning, then we should derive it from him — but that you say should not be spoken.'

'Alas! Out in the darkness men do say this nonetheless but not the *Atani** as thou knowest, not now. I hold that in this we are as ye are, truly Incarnates, and that we do not live in our right being and its fullness save in a union of love and peace between the House and the Dweller. Wherefore death which divides them, is a disaster to both.'

'Ever more you amaze my thought, Andreth,' said Finrod. 'For if your claim is true, then lo! a *fëa* which is here but a traveller is wedded indissolubly to a *hröa* of Arda; to divide them is a grievous hurt, and yet each must fulfil its right nature without tyranny of the other. Then this must surely follow: the *fëa* when it departs must take with it the *hröa*. And what can this mean unless it be that the *fëa* shall have the power to uplift the *hröa*, as its eternal spouse and companion, into an endurance everlasting beyond Eä, and beyond Time? Thus would Arda, or part thereof, be healed not only of the taint of Melkor, but released even from the limits that were set for It in the "Vision of Eru" of which the Valar speak.

'Therefore I say that if this can be believed, then mighty indeed under Eru were Men made in their beginning; and dreadful beyond all other calamities was the change in their state.

'Is it, then, a vision of what was designed to be when Arda was complete of living things and even of the very lands and seas of Arda made eternal and indestructible, for ever beautiful and new with which the *fëar* of Men compare what they see here? Or is there somewhere else a world of which all things which we see, all things that either Elves or Men know, are only tokens or reminders?'

'If so it resides in the mind of Eru, I deem,' said Andreth. 'To such questions how can we find the answers, here in the mists of Arda Marred? Otherwise it might have been, had we not been changed; but being as we are, even the Wise among us have given too little thought to Arda Itself, or

* Here Andreth uses *Atani* in the Sindarin sense of *Edain*: to describe only those men who crossed into Beleriand to ally themselves with the Elves against Morgoth. ~BB

to other things that dwell here. We have thought most of ourselves: of how our *hröar* and *fëar* should have dwelt together for ever in joy, and of the darkness impenetrable that now awaits us.'

'Then not only the High Eldar are forgetful of their kin! said Finrod. 'But this is strange to me, and even as did your heart when I spoke of your unrest, so now mine leaps up as at the hearing of good news.

'This then, I propound, was the errand of Men, not the followers, but the heirs and fulfillers of all: to heal the Marring of Arda, already foreshadowed before their devising; and to do more, as agents of the magnificence of Eru: to enlarge the Music and surpass the Vision of the World!*

'For that Arda Healed shall not be Arda Unmarred, but a third thing and a greater, and yet the same.† I have conversed with the Valar who were present at the making of the Music ere the being of the World began. And now I wonder: Did they hear the end of the Music? Was there not something in or beyond the final chords of Eru which, being overwhelmed thereby, they did not perceive?‡

* In the Music of Eru Men only entered after the discords of Melkor. ~BB Of course this was true of the Elves also. §fb§

† Cf. the words of Manwë at the end of the Debate of the Valar in *Laws and Customs*: 'For Arda Unmarred hath two aspects or senses. The first is the Unmarred that they (the Eldar) discern in the Marred ... : this is the ground upon which Hope is built. The second is the Unmarred that shall be: that is, to speak according to Time in which they have their being, the Arda Healed, which shall be greater and more fair than the first, because of the Marring: this is the Hope that sustaineth.' ~BB

‡ It is said in the *Ainulindalë* that 'the history was incomplete and the circles not full-wrought when the vision was taken away', to which in in some MS there is a note, attributed to Pengolodh: 'And some have said that the Vision ceased ere the fulfillment of the Dominion of Men and the fading of the Firstborn; wherefore, though the Music is over all, the Valar have not seen as with sight the Later Ages or the ending of the World.' In a rare and fragmentary, but very ancient, codex of the Annals of Aman it is said that Nienna could not endure to the end of the Music, and that 'therefore she has not the hope of Manwë.' No wonder she weeps all the time! ~BB

'Or again, since Eru is for ever free, maybe he made no Music and showed no Vision beyond a certain point. Beyond that point we cannot see or know, until by our own roads we come there, Valar or Eldar or Men.

'As may a master in the telling of tales keep hidden the greatest moment until it comes in due course. It may be guessed at indeed, in some measure, by those of us who have listened with full heart and mind; but so the teller would wish. In no wise is the surprise and wonder of his art thus diminished, for thus we share, as it were, in his authorship. But not so, if all were told us in a preface before we entered in!'

'What then would you say is the supreme moment that Eru has reserved?' Andreth asked.

'Ah, wise lady!' said Finrod. 'I am an Elda, and again I was thinking of my own people. But nay, of all the Children of Eru. I was thinking that by the Second Children we might have been delivered from death. For ever as we spoke of death being a division of the united, I thought in my heart of a death that is not so: but the ending together of both. For that is what lies before us, so far as our reason could see: the completion of Arda and its end, and therefore also of us children of Arda; the end when all the long lives of the Elves shall be wholly in the past.

'And then suddenly I beheld as a vision Arda Remade; and there the Eldar completed but not ended could abide in the present for ever, and there walk, maybe, with the Children of Men, their deliverers, and sing to them such songs as, even in the Bliss beyond bliss, should make the green valleys ring and the everlasting mountain-tops to throb like harps.'

Then Andreth looked under her brows at Finrod: 'And what, when ye were not singing, would ye say to us?' she asked.

Finrod laughed. 'I can only guess,' he said. 'Why, wise lady, I think that we should tell you tales of the Past and of Arda that was Before, of the perils and great deeds and the making of the Silmarils! We were the lordly ones then! But ye, ye would then be at home, looking at all things intently, as your own. Ye would be the lordly ones. "The eyes of Elves are always thinking of something else," ye would say. But ye would know then of

what we were reminded: of the days when we first met, and our hands touched in the dark. Beyond the End of the World we shall not change; for in memory is our great talent, as shall be seen ever more clearly as the ages of this Arda pass: a heavy burden to be, I fear; but in the Days of which we now speak a great wealth.' And then he paused, for he saw that Andreth was weeping silently.

'Alas, lord!' she said. 'What then is to be done now? For we speak as if these things are, or as if they will assuredly be. But Men have been diminished and their power is taken away. We look for no Arda Remade: darkness lies before us, into which we stare in vain. If by our aid your everlasting mansions were to be prepared, they will not be builded now.'

'Have ye then no hope?' said Finrod.

'What is hope?' she said. 'An expectation of good, which though uncertain has some foundation in what is known? Then we have none.'

'That is one thing that Men call "hope", ' said Finrod. *Amdir* we call it, "looking up". But there is another which is founded deeper. *Estel* we call it, that is "trust." It is not defeated by the ways of the world, for it does not come from experience, but from our nature and first being. If we are indeed the *Eruhín*, the Children of the One, then He will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own, not by any Enemy, not even by ourselves. This is the last foundation of *Estel*, which we keep even when we contemplate the End: of all His designs the issue must be for His Children's joy. *Amdir* you have not, you say. Does no *Estel* at all abide?'

'Maybe,' she said. 'But no! Do you not perceive that it is part of our wound that *Estel* should falter and its foundations be shaken? Are we the Children of the One? Are we not cast off finally? Or were we ever so? Is not the Nameless the Lord of the World?'

'Say it not even in question!' said Finrod.

'It cannot be unsaid,' answered Andreth, 'if you would understand the despair in which we walk. Or in which most Men walk. Among the

Atani,* as you call us, or the Seekers as we say: those who left the lands of despair and the Men of darkness and journeyed west in vain hope: it is believed that healing may yet be found, or that there is some way of escape. But is this indeed *Estel*? Is it not *Amdir* rather; but without reason: mere flight in a dream from what waking they know: that there is no escape from darkness and death?'

'*Mere flight in a dream* you say,' answered Finrod. 'In dream many desires are revealed; and desire may be the last flicker of *Estel*. But you do not mean *dream*, Andreth. You confound *dream* and *waking* with *hope* and *belief*, to make the one more doubtful and the other more sure. Are they asleep when they speak of escape and healing?'

'Asleep or awake, they say nothing clearly,' answered Andreth. 'How or when shall healing come? To what manner of being shall those who see that time be re-made? And what of us who before it go out into darkness unhealed? To such questions only those of the "Old Hope" (as they call themselves) have any guess of an answer.'[†]

'*Those of the Old Hope?*' said Finrod. 'Who are they?'

'A few,' she said; 'but their number has grown since we came to this land, and they see that the Nameless can (as they think) be defied. Yet that is no good reason. To defy him does not undo his work of old. And if the valor of the Eldar fails here, then their despair will be deeper. For it was not on the might of Men, or of any of the peoples of Arda, that the old hope was grounded.'

'What then was this hope, if you know?' Finrod asked.

'They say,' answered Andreth: 'they say that the One will himself enter into Arda, and heal Men and all the Marring from the beginning to

* Again, *Atani* is used in the same limited sense as *Edain*.

[†] The passage which follows is certainly the most peculiar passage of this whole peculiar text. I have read very widely in the matter of the Elder Days and in the surviving lore of Númenor, but this is the only allusion I found to this strange belief or to the term "Old Hope." ~BB

the end. This they say also, or they feign, is a rumor that has come down through years uncounted, even from the days of our undoing.^{1*}

'They say, they feign?' said Finrod. 'Are you then not one of them?'

'How can I be, lord? All wisdom is against them. Who is the One, whom ye call Eru? If we put aside the Men who serve the, Nameless, as do many in Middle-earth, still many Men perceive the world only as a war between Light and Dark equipotent. But you will say: nay, that is Manwë and Melkor; Eru is above them. Is then Eru only the greatest of the Valar, a great god among gods, as most Men will say, even among the Atani: a king who dwells far from his kingdom and leaves lesser princes to do here much as they will? Again you say: nay, Eru is One, alone without peer, and He made Eä, and is beyond it; and the Valar are greater than we, but yet no nearer to His majesty. Is this not so?'

'Yes,' said Finrod. 'We say this, and the Valar we know, and they say the same, all save one. But which, think you, is more likely to lie: those who make themselves humble, or he that exalts himself?'

'I do not doubt,' said Andreth. 'And for that reason the saying of Hope passes my understanding. How could Eru enter into the thing that He has made, and than which He is beyond measure greater? Can the singer enter into his tale or the designer into his picture?'

'He is already in it, as well as outside,' said Finrod. 'But indeed the "in-dwelling" and the "out-living" are not in the same mode.'

'Truly,' said Andreth. 'So may Eru in that mode be present in Eä that proceeded from Him. But they speak of Eru Himself entering into Arda, and that is a thing wholly different. How could He the greater do this? Would it not shatter Arda, or indeed all Ea?'

* As I noted above, phrases like 'a rumor that has come down through years uncounted', seems to suggest a deeper, longer history for mankind before coming into Beleriand, than official chronicles such as the Grey Annals describe. The traditional chronology of the Years of the Sun is however maintained in the *Athrabeth*, with the dating of the meeting of Finrod and Andreth as 'about 410 during the Long Peace (260-455)' §fb§

'Ask me not,' said Finrod. 'These things are beyond the compass of the wisdom of the Eldar, or of the Valar maybe. But I doubt that our words may mislead us, and that when you say "greater" you think of the dimensions of Arda, in which the greater vessel may not be contained in the less.

'But such words may not be used of the Measureless. If Eru wished to do this, I do not doubt that He would find a way, though I cannot foresee it. For, as it seems to me, even if He in Himself were to enter in, He must still remain also as He is: the Author without. And yet, Andreth, to speak with humility, I cannot conceive how else this healing could be achieved. Since Eru will surely not suffer Melkor to turn the world to his own will and to triumph in the end. Yet there is no power conceivable greater than Melkor save Eru only. Therefore Eru, if He will not relinquish His work to Melkor, who must else proceed to mastery, then Eru must come in to conquer him.

'More: even if Melkor (or the Morgoth that he has become) could in any way be thrown down or thrust from Arda, still his Shadow would remain, and the evil that he has wrought and sown as a seed would wax and multiply. And if any remedy for this is to be found, ere all is ended, any new light to oppose the shadow, or any medicine for the wounds: then it must, I deem, come from without.'

'Then, lord,' said Andreth, and she looked up in wonder, 'you believe in this Hope?'

'Ask me not yet,' he answered. 'For it is still to me but strange news that comes from afar. No such hope was ever spoken to the Quendi. To you only it was sent. And yet through you we may hear it and lift up our hearts.' He paused a while, and then looking gravely at Andreth he said: 'Yes, Wise-woman, maybe it was ordained that we Quendi, and ye Atani, ere the world grows old, should meet and bring news one to another, and so we should learn of the Hope from you: ordained, indeed, that thou and I, Andreth, should sit here and speak together, across the gulf that divides

our kindreds, so that while the Shadow still broods in the North we should not be wholly afraid.'

'Across the gulf that divides our kindreds!' said Andreth. 'Is there no bridge but mere words?' And then she wept again.

'There may be. For some. I do not know,' he said. 'The gulf, maybe, is between our fates rather, for else we are close akin, closer than any other creatures in the world. Yet perilous is it to cross a gulf set by doom; and should any do so, they will not find joy upon the other side, but the griefs of both. So I deem.

'But why dost thou say "mere words"? Do not words overpass the gulf between one life and another? Between thee and me surely more has passed than empty sound? Have we not drawn near at all? But that is, I think, little comfort to thee.'

'I have not asked for comfort,' said Andreth. 'For what do I need it?'

'For the doom of Men that has touched thee as a woman,'* said Finrod. 'Dost thou think that I do not know? Is he not my brother dearly loved? Ægnor: *Aikanár*,† the Sharp-flame, swift and eager. And not long are the years since you first met, and your hands touched in this darkness. Yet then thou wert a maiden, brave and eager, in the morning upon the high hills of Dorthonion.‡'

'Say on!' said Andreth. 'Say: who art now but a wise-woman, alone, and age that shall not touch him has already set winter's grey in thy hair! But say not "thou" to me, for so he once did!'

* I confess that I don't think I understand what Finrod means here, unless by the "Doom" he means not only death but aging in general. ~BB

† *Aikanár* is Ægnor's name in high-elven tongue. In a sense it is his "real" name. ~BB

‡ Ægnor and Angrod, Finrod's younger brothers, were the Lords of Dorthonion before they were slain in the Bragollach, some 45 years after this conversation was supposed to have taken place. The people of Bëor, Andreth's folk, had settled in Ladros, at the easternmost end of this realm. ~BB

'Alas!' said Finrod. 'That is the bitterness, beloved *adaneth*, woman of Men,* is it not? that has run through all your words. If I could speak any comfort, you would deem it lordly from one on my side of the sundering doom. But what can I say, save to remind you of the Hope that you yourself have revealed?'

'I did not say that it was ever my hope,' answered Andreth. 'And even were it so, I would still cry: why should this hurt come here and now? Why should we love you, and why should ye love us (if ye do), and yet set the gulf between?'

'Because we were so made, close kin,' said Finrod. 'But we did not make ourselves, and therefore we, the Eldar, did not set the gulf. Nay, *adaneth*, we are not lordly in this, but pitiful.† That word will displease thee. Yet pity is of two kinds: one is of kinship recognized, and is near to love; the other is of difference of fortune perceived, and is near to pride. I speak of the former.'

'Speak of neither to me!' said Andreth. 'I desire neither. I was young and I looked on his flame, and now I am old and lost. He was young and his flame leaped towards me, but he turned away, and he is young still. Do candles pity moths?'

'Or moths candles, when the wind blows them out?' said Finrod. '*Adaneth*, I tell thee, *Aikanár* the Sharp-flame loved thee. For thy sake now he will never take the hand of any bride of his own kindred, but live alone to the end, remembering the morning in the hills of Dorthonion. But too soon in the North wind his flame will go out! Foresight is given to the Eldar in many things not far off, though seldom of joy, and I say to thee

* As translator, I have left the word *adaneth* (the word for a woman of the Edain, as opposed to an Elf-woman) in Sindarin, but doubled it in this one instance to give a sense of *how* it means in Finrod's mouth. ~BB

† The Sindarin word here is difficult to match in Westron. It means both *filled with pity or compassion* AND *deserving of the same*. The word "pitiful" approaches both of these meanings without quite reaching either, and ends up sounding fit to describe something pathetic, like Gollum, or the dreaded S-B's! ~BB

thou shalt live long in the order of your kind, and he will go forth before thee and he will not wish to return.'^{*}

Then Andreth stood up and stretched her hands to the fire. 'Then why did he turn away? Why leave me while I had still a few good years to spend?'

'Alas!' said Finrod. 'I fear the truth will not satisfy thee. The Eldar have one kind, and ye another; and each judges the others by themselves; until they learn, as do few. This is time of war, Andreth, and in such days the Elves do not wed or bear child;[†] but prepare for death or for flight. Ægnor has no trust (nor have I) in this siege of Angband that it will last long; and then what will become of this land? If his heart ruled, he would have wished to take thee and flee far away, east or south, forsaking his kin, and thine. Love and loyalty hold him to his. What of thee to thine? Thou hast said thyself that there is no escape by flight within the bounds of the world.'

'For one year, one day, of the flame I would have given all: kin, youth, and hope itself: *adaneth* as I am,' said Andreth.

'That he knew,' said Finrod; 'and he withdrew and did not grasp what lay to his hand: *elda* as he is. For such barter is paid for in anguish that cannot be guessed, until it comes, and in ignorance rather than in courage the Eldar judge that they are made.'

* Finrod here foresees his brother's death in battle, but also predicts that Andreth will live to a very great age, witnessing the ruin of her own people and the house of Finarfin in the Bragollach. ~BB

† Cf. *Laws and Customs*: 'it would seem to any of the Eldar a grievous thing if a wedded pair were sundered during the bearing of a child, or while the first years of its childhood lasted. For which reason the Eldar would beget children only in days of happiness and peace if they could.' However the exceptions to this rule would seem to be numerous, including the great marriages between high-elves and Men. In fact, the Long Peace (which has encompassed Andreth's entire life) would seem to be best possible time for Elvish marrying in the history of the First Age. ~BB

'Nay, *adaneth*, if any marriage can be between our kindred and thine, then it shall be for some high purpose of Doom. Brief it will be and hard at the end. Yea, the least cruel fate that could befall would be that death should soon end it.'*

'But the end is always cruel for Men,' said Andreth. 'I would not have troubled him, when my short youth was spent. I would not have hobbled as a hag after his bright feet, when I could no longer run beside him!'

'Maybe not,' said Finrod. 'So you feel now. But do you think of him? He would not have run before thee. He would have stayed at thy side to uphold thee. Then pity thou wouldst have had in every hour, pity inescapable. He would not have thee so shamed.'

'Andreth *adaneth*, the life and love of the Eldar dwells much in memory; and we (if not ye) would rather have a memory that is fair but unfinished than one that goes on to a grievous end. Now he will ever remember thee in the sun of morning, and that last evening by the water of Aeluin in which he saw thy face mirrored with a star caught in thy hair ever, until the North-wind brings the night of his flame. Yea, and after that, sitting in the House of Mandos in the Halls of Awaiting until the end of Arda.'

'And what shall I remember?' said she. '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? Even the memory of rejection. That at least.'

Finrod sighed and stood up. 'The Eldar have no healing words for such thoughts, *adaneth*,' he said. 'But would you wish that Elves and Men had never met? Is the light of the flame, which otherwise you would never

* More evidence as to the antiquity and authenticity of the conversation. Finrod's words might be seen as a foreshadowing (perhaps knowingly, on the part of the author) of the achievements and doom of Beren and Lúthien. But it reckons not the more joyful marriage of Tuor and Idril.

~BB

THE KING AND LADY ARWEN HAVE NOW BEEN MARRIED MANY MANY LONG YEARS. THEY ARE VERY HAPPY, ACCORDING TO ELANOR. SG

have seen, of no worth even now? You believe yourself scorned? Put away at least that thought, which comes out of the Darkness, and then our speech together will not have been wholly in vain. Farewell!

Darkness fell in the room. He took her hand in the light of the fire. 'Whither go you?' she said.

'North away,' he said: 'to the swords, and the siege, and the walls of defense — that yet for a while in Beleriand rivers may run clean, leaves spring, and birds build their nests, ere Night comes.'

'Will he be there, bright and tall, and the wind in his hair? Tell him. Tell him not to be reckless. Not to seek danger beyond need!'

'I will tell him,' said Finrod. 'But I might as well tell thee not to weep. He is a warrior, Andreth, and a spirit of wrath. In every stroke that he deals he sees the Enemy who long ago did thee this hurt.'

'But you are not for Arda. Whither you go may you find light. Await us there, my brother — and me.'

THE TALE OF ADANEL

Then Andreth being urged by Finrod said at last: 'This is the tale that Adanel of the House of Hador told to me:'*

Some say the Disaster happened at the beginning of the history of our people, before any had yet died. The Voice had spoken to us, and we had listened. The Voice said: 'Ye are my children. I have sent you to dwell here. In time ye will inherit all this Earth, but first ye must be children and learn. Call on me and I shall hear; for I am watching over you.'

We understood the Voice in our hearts, though we had no words yet. Then the desire for words awoke in us, and we began to make them. But we were few, and the world was wide and strange. Though we greatly desired to understand, learning was difficult, and the making of words was slow. In that time we called often and the Voice answered. But it seldom answered our questions, saying only: 'First seek to find the answer for yourselves. For ye will have joy in the finding, and so grow from childhood and become wise. Do not seek to leave childhood before your time.'

But we were in haste, and we desired to order things to our will; and the shapes of many things that we wished to make awoke in our minds. Therefore we spoke less and less to the Voice.

Then one appeared among us, in our own form visible, but greater and more beautiful; and he said that he had come out of pity. 'Ye should not have been left alone and uninstructed, he said. 'The world is full of marvelous riches which knowledge can unlock. Ye could have food more

*There is not a shred of doubt in my mind that this fragment does not constitute an authentic part of the *Athrabeth*. Andreth's refusal to speak on this subject is so firm, and the description of her capitulation here so unconvincing, that it seems certain not to have formed part of the original piece. However "The Tale of Adanel" may well represent an authentic tradition from the people of Marach, preserved in Númenor. On the other hand, it may have been inspired by the worship of Sauron which the Númenóreans encountered on their voyages to Middle-Earth. Or perhaps that was merely a continuation or renewal of the old cult of Melkor (encouraged by Sauron) that is described in the tale. ~BB

abundant and more delicious than the poor things that ye now eat. Ye could have dwellings of ease, in which ye could keep light and shut out the night. Ye could be clad even as I.' .

Then we looked and lo! he was clad in raiment that shone like silver and gold, and he had a crown on his head, and gems in his hair. 'If ye wish to be like me,' he said, 'I will teach you.' Then we took him as teacher. He was less swift than we had hoped to teach us how to find, or to make for ourselves, the things that we desired, though he had awakened many desires in our hearts. But if any doubted or were impatient, he would bring and set before us all that we wished for. 'I am the Giver of Gifts, he said; and the gifts shall never fail as long as ye trust me.' Therefore we revered him, and we were enthralled by him; and we depended upon his gifts, fearing to return to the life without them that now seemed poor and hard. And we believed all that he taught. For we were eager to know about the world and its being: about the beasts and birds, and the plants that grew in the Earth; about our own making; and about the lights of heaven, and the countless stars, and the Dark in which they are set.

All that he taught seemed good, for he had great knowledge. But ever more and more he would speak of the Dark. 'Greatest of all is the Dark,' he said, 'for It has no bounds. I came out of the Dark but I am Its master. For I have made Light. I made the Sun and the Moon and the countless stars. I will protect you from the Dark, which else would devour you.'

Then we spoke of the Voice. But his face became terrible; for he was angry. 'Fools!' he said. 'That was the Voice of the Dark. It wishes to keep you from me; for it is hungry for you.'

Then he went away, and we did not see him for a long time, and without his gifts we were poor. And there came a day when suddenly the Sun's light began to fail, until it was blotted out and a great shadow fell on the world; and all the beasts and birds were afraid. Then he came again, walking through the shadow like a bright fire. .

We fell upon our faces. 'There are some among you who are still listening to the Voice of the Dark,' he said, 'and therefore It is drawing nearer. Choose now! Ye may have the Dark as Lord, or ye may have Me. But unless ye take Me for Lord and swear to serve Me, I shall depart and leave you; for I have other realms and dwelling places, and I do not need the Earth, nor you.' Then in fear we spoke as he commanded, saying: 'Thou art the Lord; Thee only we will serve. The Voice we abjure and will not hearken to it again.'

'So be it!' he said. 'Now build Me a house upon a high place, and call it the House of the Lord. Thither I will come when I will. There ye shall call on Me and make your petitions to Me.'

And when we had built a great house, he came and stood before the high seat, and the house was lit as with fire. 'Now,' he said, 'come forth any who still listen to the Voice!' There were some, but for fear they remained still and said naught. 'Then bow before Me and acknowledge Me!' he said.

And all bowed to the ground before him, saying: 'Thou art the One Great, and we are Thine.' Thereupon he went up as in a great flame and smoke, and we were scorched by the heat. But suddenly he was gone, and it was darker than night; and we fled from the House.

Ever after we went in great dread of the Dark; but he seldom appeared among us again in fair form, and he brought few gifts. If at great need we dared to go to the House and pray to him to help us, we heard his voice, and received his commands. But now he would always command us to do some deed, or to give him some gift, before he would listen to our prayer; and ever the deeds became worse, and the gifts harder to give up.

The first Voice we never heard again, save once. In the stillness of the night It spoke, saying: 'Ye have abjured Me, but ye remain Mine. I gave you life. Now it shall be shortened, and each of you in a little while shall come to Me, to learn who is your Lord: the one ye worship, or I who made him.'

Then our terror of the Dark was increased; for we believed that the Voice was of the Darkness behind the stars. And some of us began to die in horror and anguish, fearing to go out into the Dark. Then we called on our Master to save us from death, and he did not answer. But when we went to the House and all bowed down there, at last he came, great and majestic, but his face was cruel and proud.

'Now ye are Mine and must do My will,' he said. '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.'

Thereafter we were grievously afflicted, by weariness, and hunger, and sickness; and the Earth and all things in it were turned against us. Fire and Water rebelled against us. The birds and beasts shunned us, or if they were strong they assailed us. Plants gave us poison; and we feared the shadows under trees. Then we yearned for our life as it was before our Master came; and we hated him, but feared him no less than the Dark. And we did his bidding, and more than his bidding; for anything that we thought would please him, however evil, we did, in the hope that he would lighten our afflictions, and at the least would not slay us.

For most of us this was in vain. But to some he began to show favor: to the strongest and cruelest, and to those who went most often to the House. He gave gifts to them, and knowledge that they kept secret; and they became powerful and proud, and they enslaved us, so that we had no rest from labour amidst our afflictions.

Then there arose some among us who said openly in their despair: 'Now we know at last who lied, and who desired to devour us. Not the first Voice. It is the Master that we have taken who is the Darkness; and he did not come forth from it, as he said, but he dwells in it. We will serve him no longer! He is our Enemy.'

Then in fear lest he should hear them and punish us all, we slew them, if we could; and those that fled we hunted; and if any were caught,

our masters, his friends, commanded that they should be taken to the House and there done to death by fire. That pleased him greatly, his friends said; and indeed for a while it seemed that our afflictions were lightened.

But it is told that there were a few that escaped us, and went away into far countries, fleeing from the shadow. Yet they did not escape from the anger of the Voice; for they had built the House and bowed down in it. And they came at last to the land's end and the shores of the impassable water and behold! the Enemy was there before them. '

Bilbo writes: *This is variant text—an isolated fragment really—from some other version of the Athrabeth describing the relationship between fëar and hröar:*

FIRE AND BREATH

'What says the wisdom of Men concerning the nature of the *Mirruanwa*?' said Finrod. 'Or what do you hold, Andreth, who know also much of the teaching of the Eldar?'

'Men say various things, be they Wise or no,' said Andreth. 'Many hold that there is but a single thing: the body, and that we are one of the beasts, though the latest come and the most cunning. But others hold that the body is not all, but contains some other thing. For often we speak of the body as a "house", or as "raiment", and that implies an indwelling, though of what we speak in uncertainty.

'Among my folk men speak mostly of the "breath" (or the "breath of life"), and they say that if it leaves the house, it may by seeing eyes be seen as a wraith, a shadowy image of the living thing that was.'

'That is but a guess,' said Finrod, 'and long ago we said things similar, but we know now that the Indweller is not "breath"³¹ (which the *hröa* uses), and that seeing eyes cannot see one that is houseless, but that the living eyes may draw from the *fëa* within an image which the houseless conveys to the housed: the memory of itself.'

'Maybe,' said Andreth. 'But among the people of Marach men speak rather of the "fire", or the "fire on the hearth", from whose burning the house is warmed, and from which arise the heats of the heart, or the smokes of wrath.'

'That is another guess,' said Finrod, 'and holds also some truth, I believe.'

'Doubtless,' said Andreth. 'But those who speak thus, of the "breath" or of the "fire", do not think of it as belonging to Men only, but as the life of all living things. As Men have their houses, but beasts also have their dwellings in holes or in nests, so both have a life within that may grow cold or go forth.'

'Then in what way do Men differ from beasts in such lore?' said Finrod. 'How can they claim ever to have had a life indestructible?'

'The Wise have considered this,' said Andreth. 'And among them are some that speak more after the manner of the Eldar. But they speak rather of three things: the earth and the fire and the Dweller. By which they intend the stuff of which the body is built, which of itself is inert and does not grow or move; and the life which grows and takes to itself increase; and the Indweller who dwells there, and is master both of house and of hearth — or once was.'

'And wishes never to leave them- and once need never do so? It was then the Indweller who suffered the wound?' said Finrod.

'Not so,' said Andreth. 'Clearly not so; but Man, the whole: house, life, and master.'

'But the Master must have been the one that was wronged (as you say), or did wrong (as I guess); for the house might suffer for the folly of the Master, but hardly the Master for the misdeeds of the house! But let that be, for you do not desire to speak of it. Do you yourself hold this belief?'

'It is not a belief,' said Andreth. 'For we do not know enough for any certainty concerning earth or growth or thought, and maybe never shall; for if they were designed by the One, then doubtless they will ever hold

for us some mystery inscrutable, however much we learn. But it is a guess that is near, I hold.'

Finally; another text closely associated with manuscripts of the Athrabeth, although it would seem to have more to do with Elves only than with Elves and Men:

THE CONVERSE OF MANWË AND ERU

Manwë spoke to Eru, saying: 'Behold! an evil appears in Arda that we did not look for: the First-born Children, whom Thou madest immortal, suffer now severance of spirit and body. Many of the *fëar* of the Elves in Middle-earth are now houseless; and even in Aman there is one. The houseless we summon to Aman, to keep them from the Darkness and all who hear our voice abide here in waiting. What further is to be done? Is there no means by which their lives may be renewed, to follow the courses which Thou hast designed? And what of the bereaved who mourn those that have gone?'

Eru answered: 'Let the houseless be re-housed!'

Manwë asked: 'How shall this be done?'

Eru answered: 'Let the body that was destroyed be re-made. Or let the naked *fëa* be re-born as a child.'

Manwë said: 'Is it Thy will that we should attempt these things? For we fear to meddle with Thy Children.'

Eru answered: 'Have I not given to the Valar the rule of Arda and power over all the substance thereof, to shape it at their will under My will? Ye have not been backward in these things. As for my First-born, have ye not removed great numbers of them to Aman from the Middle-earth in which I set them?'

Manwë answered: 'This we have done, for fear of Melkor, and with good intent, though not without misgiving. But to use our power upon the

flesh that Thou hast designed, to house the spirits of Thy Children, this seems a matter beyond our authority, even were it not beyond our skill.'

Eru said: 'I give you authority. The skills ye have already, If ye will take heed. Look and ye will find that each spirit of My Children retaineth in itself the full imprint and memory of its former house and in its nakedness it is open to you, so that ye may clearly perceive all that is in it. After this imprint ye may make for it again such a house in all particulars as it had ere, evil befell it. Thus ye may send It back to the lands of the living.

Then Manwë asked further: 'O Ilúvatar, hast Thou not spoken also of re-birth? Is that too within our power and authority?' . . .

Eru answered: 'It shall be within your authority, but it is not in your power. Those whom ye judge fit to be re-born, if they desire it and understand clearly what they incur, ye shall surrender to Me; and I will consider them.'

**J.R.R. Tolkien: Notes and Commentary on
ATHRABETH FINROD AH ANDRETH
The Debate of Finrod and Andreth**

Tolkien sometimes, usually in letters, might dwell at length on the intended meaning or practical ramifications of different elements of his mythology. The Athrabeth is unusual in that he allows ordinary persons within the legendarium to discuss such things at length. However he also followed the dialogue with a lengthy commentary of his own, complete with further commentary on the commentary. I include it here.

This* is not presented as an argument of any cogency for Men in their present situation (or the one in which they believe themselves to be), though it may have some interest for Men who start with similar beliefs or assumptions to those held by the Elvish king Finrod.

It is in fact simply part of the portrayal of the imaginary world of the *Silmarillion*, and an example of the kind of thing that enquiring minds on either side, the Elvish or the Human, must have said to one another after they became acquainted. We see here the attempt of a generous Elvish mind to fathom the relations of Elves and Men, and the part they were designed to play in what he would have called the *Oienkarmë Eruo* (The One's perpetual production), which might be rendered by 'God's management of the Drama'.

There are certain things in this world† that have to be accepted as 'facts':

I: *The existence of Elves*: that is of a race of beings closely akin to Men, so closely indeed that they must be regarded as physically (or biologically) simply branches of the same race.

A: The Elves appeared on Earth earlier, but not (mythologically or geologically) much earlier;

* I am not certain whether "This" refers to the *Athrabeth*, or this commentary on it. It appears that the commentary was written hastily, and I have tried to use formatting as a means to make it clearer.

† Meaning the world of Finrod and Andreth, Middle Earth, Arda.

B: they were 'immortal', and did not 'die' except by accident. Men, when they appeared on the scene (that is, when they met the Elves), were, however, much as they now are: they 'died', even if they escaped all accidents, at about the age of 70 to 80.

II: *The existence of the Valar*: that is of certain angelic Beings (created, but at least as powerful as the 'gods' of human mythologies), the chief of whom still resided in an actual physical part of the Earth. They were the agents and vice-regents of Eru (God). They had been for nameless ages engaged in a demiurgic labour* completing to the design of Eru the structure of the Universe (Eä); but were now concentrated on Earth for the principal Drama of Creation: the war of the *Eruhín* (The Children of God), Elves and Men, against Melkor. Melkor, originally the most powerful of the Valar, had become a rebel, against his brethren and against Eru, and was the prime Spirit of Evil.

With regard to King Finrod, it must be understood that he also starts with certain basic beliefs, which he would have said were derived from one or more of these sources: his created nature; angelic instruction; thought; and experience.

1. There exists Eru (The One); that is, One God Creator, who made (or more strictly designed) the World, but is not Himself the World. This world, or Universe, Finrod calls *Eä*, an Elvish word that means 'It is', or 'Let It Be'.

2. There are on Earth 'incarnate' creatures, Elves and Men: these are made of a union of *hröa* and *fëa* (roughly but not exactly equivalent to 'body' and 'soul'). This, he would say, was a known fact concerning Elvish nature, and could therefore be deduced for human nature from the close kinship of Elves and Men.

* *demiurgic labour*: the creative work of 'demiurges', in the sense of mighty but limited beings subordinate to God, e.g.. the Valar.

3. *Hröa* and *fëa* he would say are wholly distinct in kind, and not on the 'same plane of derivation from Eru',* but were designed each for the other, to abide in perpetual harmony. The *fëa* is indestructible, a unique identity which cannot be disintegrated or absorbed into any other identity. The *hröa*, however, can be destroyed and dissolved: that is a fact of experience. (In such a case he would describe the *fëa* as 'exiled' or 'houseless'.)

4. The separation of *fëa* and *hröa* is 'unnatural', and proceeds not from the original design, but from the 'Marring of Arda' which is due to the operations of Melkor.

5. Elvish 'immortality' is bounded within a part of Time (which Finrod would call the History of Arda), and is therefore strictly to be called rather 'serial longevity', the utmost limit of which is the length of the existence of Arda.† A corollary of this is that the Elvish *fëa* is also limited to the Time of Arda, or at least held within it and unable to leave it, while it lasts.

6. From this it would follow in thought, if it were not a fact of Elvish experience, that a 'houseless' Elvish *fëa* must have the power or opportunity to return to incarnate life, if it has the desire or will to do so. (Actually the Elves discovered that their *fëar* had not this power in themselves, but that the opportunity and means were provided by the Valar, by the special permission of Eru for the amendment of the unnatural state of divorce. It was not lawful for the Valar to force a *fëa* to return; but they could impose conditions, and judge whether return should be permitted at all, and if so, in what way or after how long.)‡

* See Author's Note 1, on p. 43 (These authorial notes on the commentary are, in general, much too long to put into footnotes, although that would be my editorial preference).

† Author's Note 2, p. 44

‡ Author's Note 3, p. 53

7. Since Men die, without accident, and whether they will to do so or not, their *fëar* must have a different relation to Time. The Elves believed, though they had no certain information, that the *fëar* of Men, if disembodied, left Time (sooner or later), and never returned.*

The Elves observed that all Men died (a fact confirmed by Men). They therefore deduced that this was 'natural' to Men (that is, it was by the design of Eru), and supposed that the brevity of human life was due to this character of the human *fëa*: that it was not designed to stay long in Arda. Whereas their own *fëar*, being designed to remain in Arda to its end, imposed long endurance on their bodies; for they were (as a fact of experience) in far greater control of them.†

Beyond the 'End of Arda' Elvish thought could not penetrate, and they were without any specific instruction.‡ It seemed clear to them that their *hröar* must then end, and therefore any kind of re-incarnation would be impossible.§ All the Elves would then 'die' at the End of Arda. What this would mean they did not know. They said therefore that Men had a shadow behind them, but the Elves had a shadow before them.

Their dilemma was this: the thought of existence as *fëar* only was revolting to them, and they found it hard to believe that it was natural or designed for them, since they were essentially 'dwellers in Arda', and by nature wholly in love with Arda. The alternative: that their *fëar* would also cease to exist at 'the End', seemed even more intolerable. Both absolute annihilation, and cessation of conscious identity, were wholly repugnant to thought and desire.**

Some argued that, although integral and unique (as Eru from whom they directly proceeded), each *fëa*, being created, was finite, and might

* Author's Note 4, p. 55

† Author's Note 5, p. 56

‡ Author's Note 6: Because the Valar had no information or because information was withheld. See Note 2 [fifth paragraph].

§ Author's Note 7, p. 56

** Author's Note 8, p. 58

therefore be also of finite duration. It was not destructible within its appointed term, but when that was reached it ceased to be; or ceased to have any more experience, and 'resided only in the Past'.

But the Elves saw that this did not provide any escape. For, even if an Elvish *fëa* was able 'consciously' to dwell in or contemplate the Past this would be a condition wholly unsatisfying to its desire.* The Elves had (as they said themselves) a 'great talent' for memory, but this tended to regret rather than to joy. Also, however long the History of the Elves might become before it ended, it would be an object of too limited range. To be perpetually 'imprisoned in a tale' (as they said), even if it was a very great tale ending triumphantly, would become a torment.† For greater than the talent of memory was the Elvish talent for making, and for discovery. The Elvish *fëa* was above all designed to make things in co-operation with its *hröa*.

Therefore in the last resort the Elves were obliged to rest on 'naked *estel*' (as they said): the trust in Eru, that whatever He designed beyond the End would be recognized by each *fëa* as wholly satisfying (at the least). Probably it would contain Joys unforeseeable. But they remained in the belief that it would remain in intelligible relation with their present nature and desires, proceed from them, and include them.

For these reasons the Elves were less sympathetic than Men expected to the lack of hope (or *estel*) in Men faced by death. Men were, of course, in general entirely ignorant of the 'Shadow Ahead' which conditioned Elvish thought and feeling, and simply envied Elvish 'immortality'. But the Elves were on their part generally ignorant of the persistent tradition among Men that Men were also by nature immortal.

As is seen in the *Athrabeth*, Finrod is deeply moved and amazed to discover this tradition. He uncovers a concomitant tradition that the change in the condition of Men from their original design was due to a

* Again, see Note 8, p 58

† Cf. Finrod's words in the *Athrabeth*: 'Beyond the End of the World we shall not change; for in memory is our great talent, as shall be seen ever more clearly as the ages of this Arda pass: a heavy burden to be, I fear; but in the Days of which we now speak a great wealth.'

primeval disaster, about which human lore is unclear, or Andreth is at least unwilling to say much.* He remains, nonetheless, in the opinion that the condition of Men before the disaster (or as we might say, the condition of unfallen Man) cannot have been the same as that of the Elves. That is, their 'immortality' cannot have been the longevity within Arda of the Elves; otherwise they would have been simply Elves, and their separate introduction later into the Drama by Eru would have no function. He thinks that the notion of Men that, unchanged, they would not have died (in the sense of leaving Arda) is due to human misrepresentation of their own tradition, and possibly to envious comparison of themselves to the Elves. For one thing, he does not think this fits, as we might say, 'the observable peculiarities of human psychology', as compared with Elvish feelings towards the visible world.

He therefore guesses that it is the fear of death that is the result of the disaster. It is feared because it now is combined with severance of *hröa* and *fëa*. But the *fëar* of Men must have been designed to leave Arda willingly or indeed by desire—maybe after a longer time than the present average human life, but still in a time very short compared with Elvish lives. Then basing his argument on the axiom that severance of *hröa* and *fëa* is unnatural and contrary to design, he comes (or if you like jumps) to the conclusion that the *fëa* of unfallen Man would have taken with it its *hröa* into the new mode of existence (free from Time). In other words, that 'assumption' was the natural end of each human life, though as far as we know it has been the end of the only 'unfallen' member of Mankind} He then has a vision of Men as the agents of the 'unmarring' of Arda, not merely undoing the marring or evil wrought by Melkor, but by producing a third thing, 'Arda Re-made'—for Eru never merely undoes the past, but brings into being something new, richer than the 'first design'. In Arda Re-made Elves and Men will each separately find joy and content, and an interplay of friendship, a bond of which will be the Past.

Andreth says that in that case the disaster to Men was appalling; for this re-making (if indeed it was the proper function of Men) cannot now be achieved. Finrod evidently remains in the hope that it will be

* Author's Note 9, p. 59

achieved, though he does not say how that could be. He now sees, however, that the power of Melkor was greater than had been understood (even by the Elves, who had actually seen him in incarnate form): if he had been able to change Men, and so destroy the plan.*

More strictly speaking, he would say that Melkor had not 'changed' Men, but 'seduced' them (to allegiance to himself) very early in their history, so that Eru had changed their 'fate'. For Melkor could seduce individual minds and wills, but he could not make this heritable, or alter (contrary to the will and design of Eru) the relation of a whole people to Time and Arda. But the power of Melkor over material things was plainly vast. The whole of Arda (and indeed probably many other parts of Eä) had been marred-by him. Melkor was not just a local Evil on Earth, nor a Guardian Angel of Earth who had gone wrong: he was the Spirit of Evil, arising even before the making of Eä. His attempt to dominate the structure of Eä, and of Arda in particular, and alter the designs of Eru (which governed all the operations of the faithful Valar), had introduced evil, or a tendency to aberration from the design, into all the physical matter of Arda. It was for this reason, no doubt, that he had been totally successful with Men, but only partially so with Elves (who remained as a people 'unfallen'). His power was wielded over matter, and through it.† But by nature the *fëar* of Men were in much less strong control of their *hröar* than was the case with the Elves. Individual Elves might be seduced to a kind of minor 'Melkorism': desiring to be their own masters in Arda, and to have things their own way, leading in extreme cases to rebellion against the tutelage of the Valar; but not one had ever entered the service or allegiance of Melkor himself, nor ever denied the existence and absolute supremacy of Eru. Some dreadful things of this sort, Finrod

* This analysis does not adhere strictly to the actual course of the *Athrabeth*, and (as is expressly stated) was not intended to do so. Thus it was in fact Finrod who said that 'the disaster to Men was appalling' ('dreadful beyond all other calamities was the change in their state', p. 318); and his recognition that 'the power of Melkor was greater than had been understood' comes much earlier in the debate ('to change the doom of a whole people of the Children, to rob them of their inheritance: if he could do that in Eru's despite, then greater and more terrible is he by far than we guessed').

† Author's Note 10, p. 59

guesses, Men must have done, as a whole; but Andreth does not reveal what were Men's traditions on this point.*

Finrod, however, sees now that, as things were, no created thing or being in Arda, or in all Eä, was powerful enough to counteract or heal Evil: that is to subdue Melkor (in his present person, reduced though that was) *and* the Evil that he had dissipated and sent out from himself into the very structure of the world.

Only Eru himself could do this. Therefore, since it was unthinkable that Eru would abandon the world to the ultimate triumph and domination of Melkor (which could mean its ruin and reduction to chaos), Eru Himself must at some time come to oppose Melkor. But Eru could not enter wholly into the world and its history, which is, however great, only a finite Drama. He must as Author always remain 'outside' the Drama, even though that Drama depends on His design and His will for its beginning and continuance, in every detail and moment. Finrod therefore thinks that He will, when He comes have to be both 'outside' and inside and so he glimpses the possibility of complexity or of distinctions in the nature of Eru which nonetheless leaves Him 'The One'.†

Since Finrod had already guessed that the redemptive function was originally, specially assigned to Men, he probably proceeded to the expectation that 'the coming of Eru', if it took place, would be specially and primarily concerned with Men: that is to an imaginative guess or

* Again, see author's note 9

† Author's Note 11, p 60

vision that Eru would come incarnated in human form. This, however, does not appear in the *Athrabeth*.*

The argument is not, of course, presented in the *Athrabeth* in these terms, or in this order, or so precisely. The *Athrabeth* is a conversation, in which many assumptions and steps of thought have to be supplied by the reader. Actually, though it deals with such things as death and the relations of Elves and Men to Time and Arda, and to one another, its real purpose is dramatic: to exhibit the generosity of Finrod's mind, his love and pity for Andreth, and the tragic situations that must arise in the meeting of Elves and Men (in the ages of the youth of the Elves). For as eventually becomes plain, Andreth had in youth fallen in love with Ægnor, Finrod's brother; and though she knew that he returned her love (or could have done so if he had deigned to), he had not declared it, but had left her—and she believed that she was rejected as too lowly for an Elf. Finrod (though she was not aware of this) knew about this situation. For this reason he understood and did not take offence at the bitterness with which she spoke of the Elves, and even of the Valar. He succeeded in the end in making her understand that she was not rejected out of scorn or Elvish lordliness; but that the departure of Ægnor was for motives of 'wisdom', and cost Ægnor great pain: he was an equal victim of the tragedy.

In the event Ægnor perished soon after this conversation when Melkor broke the Siege of Angband in the ruinous Battle of Sudden

* In other notes regarding the *Athrabeth*, Tolkien wrote the following:

Query: Is it not right to make Andreth refuse to discuss any of traditions or legends of the 'Fall'? Already it is (if inevitably) too like a parody of Christianity. Any legend of the Fall would make it completely so?

Originally instead of refusal to talk of it Andreth was made (under pressure) to say something of this sort:

It is said that Melkor looked fair in ancient days, and that when he had gained Men's love he blasphemed Eru, denying his existence and claiming that he was the Lord; and Men assented and took him as Lord and God. Thereupon (say some) our spirits having denied their own true nature at once became darkened and weakened; and through this weakness they lost the mastery of their bodies, which fell into unhealth. Others say that Eru Himself spoke in wrath, saying: 'If the Darkness be your god, on earth ye shall have little Light and shall leave it soon and come before Me to learn who lieth: your god or I who made him.' And these are the most afraid of death

Flame, and the destruction of the Elvish realms in Beleriand was begun.* Finrod took refuge in the great southern stronghold of Nargothrond; but not long after sacrificed his life to save Beren One-hand. (It is probable, though nowhere stated, that Andreth herself perished at this time, for all the northern realm where Finrod and his brothers, and the People of Bëor, dwelt was devastated and conquered by Melkor. But she would by then be a very old woman.†

Finrod thus was slain before the two marriages of Elves and Men had taken place, though without his aid the marriage of Beren and Lúthien would not have come to pass. The marriage of Beren certainly fulfilled his prediction that such marriages would only be for some high purpose of Doom, and that the least cruel fate would be that death should soon end them.

Author's Notes on the "Commentary"

Note 1

Because *fëar* were held to be directly created by Eru, and 'sent into' Eä whereas Eä was achieved mediately by the Valar.

According to the *Ainulindalë* there were five stages in Creation.

1. The creation of the Ainur.
2. The communication by Eru of his Design to the Ainur.
3. The Great Music, which was (as it were) a rehearsal, and remained in the stage of thought or imagination.
4. The 'Vision' of Eru, which was again only a foreshowing of possibility, and was incomplete.
5. The Achievement, which is still going on.

* "Soon" must be understood here in Elvish terms. The Bragollach was still several decades away.

† Andreth was 48 years old at the time of the conversation with Finrod, which was supposed to have taken place about the year 409. By 455, the year of the Battle of Sudden Flame, she would have been 94—a vast age, but one in keeping with her forebears.

The Eldar held that Eru was and is free at all stages. This freedom was shown in the Music by His introduction, after the arising of the discords of Melkor, of the two new themes, representing the coming of Elves and Men, which were not in His first communication.* He may therefore in the Achievement stage introduce things directly, which were not in the Music and so are not achieved through the Valar. It remains, nonetheless, true in general to regard Eä as achieved through their mediation.

The additions of Eru, however, will not be 'alien'; they will be accommodated to the nature and character of Eä and of those that dwell in it; they may enhance the past and enrich its purpose and significance, but they will contain it and not destroy it.

Thus the 'newness' of the themes of the Children of Eru, Elves and Men, consisted in the association of *fëar* with, or 'housing' them in, *hröar* belonging to Eä, in such a way that either were incomplete without the others. But the *fëar* were not spirits of a wholly different kind to the Ainur; whereas the bodies were of a kind closely akin to the bodies of living things already in the primary design (even if adapted to their new function or modified by the indwelling *fëar*). '

Note 2

Arda, or 'The Kingdom of Arda' (as being directly under the kingship of Eru's vicegerent Manwë) is not easy to translate since neither 'earth' nor 'world' are entirely suitable. Physically Arda was what we should call the Solar System.† Presumably the Eldar could have had as much and as

* In the *Ainulindale* it says that the Children of Ilúvatar 'came with the Third Theme, and were not in the theme which Ilúvatar propounded at the beginning'. Of the Second Theme the *Ainulindale* says that 'Manwë . . . was the chief instrument of the Second Theme that Ilúvatar had raised up against the discord of Melkor.' Christopher Tolkien speculates that each kind of the Children had its own "theme" within the greater Third Theme. He dismisses this possibility, but I am less inclined to. Tolkien struggled to be orderly, systematic, "grammatical," one might say, about his creation, and Christopher, as executor, has struggled mightily to respect that tendency. But myths and legends are not orderly in the conventional sense, and that (not a "world" is what the matter if the Elder days represents at its most compelling.

† A marginal note here states: 'Arda means Realm'.

accurate information concerning this, its structure, origin, and its relation to the rest of Eä (the Universe) as they could comprehend. Probably those who were interested did acquire this knowledge. Not all the Eldar were interested in everything; most of them concentrated their attention on (or as they said 'were in love with') the Earth.

The traditions here referred to have come down from the Eldar of the First Age, through Elves who never were directly acquainted with the Valar, and through Men who received 'lore' from the Elves, but who had myths and cosmogonic legends, and astronomical guesses, of their own. There is, however, nothing in them that seriously conflicts with present human notions of the Solar System, and its size and position relative to the Universe. It must be remembered, however, that it does not necessarily follow that 'True Information' concerning Arda (such as the ancient Eldar might have received from the Valar) must agree with Men's present theories. Also, the Eldar and the Valar were not overwhelmed or even principally Impressed by notions of size and distance. Their interest certainly the interest of the *Silmarillion* and all related matter may be termed 'dramatic'. Places or worlds were interesting or important because of what happened in them.

It is certainly the case with the Elvish traditions that the principal part of Arda was the Earth (*Imbar* 'The Habitation'),* as the scene of the Drama of the war of the Valar and the Children of Eru with Melkor: so that loosely used Arda often seems to mean the Earth: and that from this point of view the function of the Solar System was to make possible the existence of Imbar.

With regard to the relation of Arda to Eä, the assertion that the principal demiurgic Ainur (the Valar), including the original greatest of all, Melkor, had taken up their residence in Arda, ever since its establishment,

* In earlier writing Tolkien had usually used the word *Ambar* to describe the earth, as in the *Ambarkanta*, or "Shape of the World", or Aragorn and Elendil's *Ambar-metta*, the ending of the world. But the word *Ambar*, in some contexts, also seems to mean "fate," or "doom," as in Túrin Turambar, "Master of Doom." It seems likely to me that those meanings or values were originally *meant* to be linked this way. After all, for the elves, the world *is* their fate. But perhaps Tolkien wished to suggest some separation of the concepts.

also implies that however minute Arda was dramatically the chief point in Eä.

These views are not mathematical or astronomical, or even biological, and so cannot be held necessarily to conflict with the theories of our physical sciences. We cannot say that there 'must' be elsewhere in Eä other solar systems 'like' Arda, still less that if there are they or any one of them must contain a parallel to Imbar. We cannot even say that these things are mathematically very 'likely'. But even if the presence elsewhere in Eä of biological 'life' was demonstrable, it would not invalidate the Elvish view that Arda (at least while it endures) is the dramatic centre. The demonstration that there existed elsewhere Incarnates, parallel to the Children of Eru, would of course modify the picture, though not wholly invalidate it. The Elvish answer would probably be: 'Well, that is another Tale. It is not our Tale. Eru can no doubt bring to pass more than one. Not everything is adumbrated in the *Ainulindalë*; or the *Ainulindalë* may have a wider reference than we knew: other dramas like in kind if different in process and result, may have gone on in Eä, or may yet go on.' But they would certainly add: 'But they are not going on now. The drama of Arda is the present concern of Eä.' Actually it is plainly the view of the Elvish tradition that the Drama of Arda is unique. We cannot at present assert that this is untrue.

The Elves were of course primarily and deeply (more deeply than Men) concerned with Arda, and Imbar in particular. They appear to have held that the physical universe, Eä, had a beginning and would have an end: that it was limited and finite, in all dimensions. They certainly held that all things or 'makings,' that is constructed (however simply and incipiently) from basic 'matter', which they called *erma*, were Impermanent, within Eä. They were therefore much concerned with 'The End of Arda'. They knew themselves to be limited by Arda; but the length of its existence they do not seem to have known. Possibly the Valar did not know. More probably, they were not informed by the will or design of Eru, who appears in the Elvish tradition to demand two things from His Children (of either Kindred): belief in Him, and proceeding from that, hope or trust in Him (called by the Eldar *estel*).

But in any case, whether adumbrated in the Music or not, the End could be brought about by Eru at any time by intervention, so that it

could not be certainly foreseen. (A minor and as it were foreshadowing intervention of this sort was the catastrophe in which Númenor was obliterated, and the physical residence of the Valar in Imbar was ended.) The Elvish conception of the End was in fact *catastrophic*. They did not think that Arda or at any rate Imbar) would just run down into lifeless inanition. But this conception was not embodied by them in any myth or legend. See also Note 7.

Note 3

In Elvish tradition their re-incarnation was a special permission granted by Eru to Manwë, when Manwë directly consulted Him at the time of the debate concerning Finwë and Míriel.* (Míriel 'died' in Aman by refusing to live any longer in the body, and so raised the whole question of the unnatural divorce of an Elvish *fëa* and its *hröa*, and of the bereavement of Elves that still lived: Finwë, her husband, was left solitary.) The Valar, or Mandos as the mouthpiece of all commands and in many cases their executor, were given power to summon, with full authority, all houseless *fëar* of Elves to Aman. There they were given the choice to remain houseless, or (if they wished) to be re-housed in the same form and shape as they had had.† Normally they must nonetheless remain in Aman.‡ Therefore, if they dwelt in Middle-earth, their bereavement of friends and kin, and the bereavement of these, was not amended. Death was not wholly healed. But as Andreth saw, this certitude concerning their immediate future after death, and the knowledge that at the least they would again if they wished be able as *incarnates* to do and make things

* This is a reference to "The Converse of Manwë and Eru," which can be found on pp 32-33. The significance of the Finwë/Míriel incident in general is pretty much glossed over in the published *Silmarillion*, but in Tolkien's view it was a crisis of vast existential and metaphysical—even cosmic!—implications, and he wrote an enormous amount on the subject.

† In most of Tolkien's writing about "Elvish reincarnation" prior to the late 1950's, the assumption was that Elves are "reborn among their children" (as it says in *Ainulindalë*). Around the time of the *Athrabeth*, that notion was rejected.

‡ These reasons get explained farther down.

and continue their experience of Arda, made death to the Elves a totally different thing from death as it appeared to Men.

They were given a choice, because Eru did not allow their free will to be taken away. Similarly the houseless *fëar* were summoned, not brought, to Mandos. They could refuse the summons, but this would imply that they were in some way tainted, or they would not wish to refuse the authority of Mandos: refusal had grave consequences, inevitably proceeding from the rebellion against authority.

They 'normally remained in Aman'. Simply because they were, when rehoused, again in actual physical bodies, and return to Middle-Earth [from Aman] was therefore very difficult and perilous.* Also during the period of the Exile of the Noldor the Valar had for the time being cut all communications (by physical means) between Aman and Middle-earth. The Valar could of course have arranged for the transference, if there was sufficiently grave reason. Bereavement of friends and kin was, apparently, not considered a sufficient reason. Probably under instruction of Eru. In any case, as far as the Noldor were concerned, these had, as a people, cut themselves off from mercy; they had left Aman demanding absolute freedom to be their own masters, to carry on their war against Melkor with their own unaided valor, and to face death and its consequences. The only case of a special arrangement recorded in the Histories is that of Beren and Lúthien. Beren was slain soon after their marriage, and Lúthien died of grief. They were both re-housed and sent back to Beleriand; but both became 'mortal' and died later according to the normal human span. The reasons for this, which must have been done by an express permission of Eru, were not fully apparent until later, but were certainly of unique weight. The grief of Lúthien was so great that according to the Eldar it moved the pity of even Mandos the Unmoved. Beren and Lúthien together had achieved the greatest of all the deeds against Melkor: regaining one of the Silmarils. Lúthien was not of the Noldor but the daughter of Thingol (of the Teleri), and her mother Melian was 'divine', a *Maia* (one of the minor members of the spirit-race of the Valar). Thus from the union of Lúthien and Beren which was made possible by their return, the infusion of a 'divine' and an Elvish strain into

* There were exceptions to this, viz. Glorfindel.

Mankind was to be brought about, providing a link between Mankind and the Elder World, after the establishment of the Dominion of Men.

Note 4

Sooner or later: because the Elves believed that the *fëar* of dead Men also went to Mandos (without choice in the matter: their free will with regard to death was taken away). There they waited until they were surrendered to Eru. The truth of this is not asserted. No living Man was allowed to go to Aman. No *fëa* of a dead Man ever returned to life in Middle-earth. To all such statements and decrees there are always some exceptions (because of the 'freedom of Eru'). Eärendil reached Aman, even in the time of the Ban; but he bore the Silmaril recovered by his ancestress Lúthien, and he was 'half-elven': [also] he was not allowed to return to Middle-earth.* Beren returned to actual life, for a short time; but he was not actually seen again by living Men.

The passing 'oversea' to Eressëa (an isle within sight of Aman) was permitted to, and indeed urged upon, all Elves remaining in Middle-earth after the downfall of Morgoth in Angband. This really marked the beginning of the Dominion of Men, though there was (in our view) a long twilight period between the downfall of Morgoth and the final overthrow of Sauron: lasting, that is, through the Second and Third Ages. But at the end of the Second Age came the great Catastrophe (by an Intervention of Eru that foreshadowed, as it were, the End of Arda): the annihilation of Númenor, and the 'removal' of Aman from the physical world. The passing 'oversea', therefore, of Mortals after the Catastrophe—which is recorded in *The Lord of the Rings*—is not quite the same thing. It was in any case a special grace. An opportunity for dying according to the original plan for the unfallen: they went to a state in which they could acquire greater knowledge and peace of mind, and being healed of all hurts both of mind and body, could at last surrender themselves: die of

* Technically, of course, Lúthien was Elwing's ancestress, not Eärendil's. Whether or not Eärendil and Elwing entered Aman together (as with most elements of the Eärendil legend) may never have been finally determined in Tolkien's mind. The statement that Eärendil never returned to Middle-earth seems odd, or must be taken with a grain of salt at least, since he was present at the breaking of Thangorodrim, and is credited with slaying Ancalagon the Black.

free will, and even of desire, in *estel*. A thing which Aragorn achieved without any such aid.

Note 5

They [the Elves] were thus capable of far greater and longer physical exertions (in pursuit of some dominant purpose of their minds) without weariness; they were not subject to diseases; they healed rapidly and completely after injuries that would have proved fatal to Men; and they could endure great physical pain for long periods. Their bodies could not, however survive vital injuries, or violent assaults upon their structure; nor replace missing members (such as a hand hewn off). On the reverse side: the Elves could die, and did die, by their will; as for example because of great grief or bereavement, or because of the frustration of their dominant desires and purposes. This wilful death was not regarded as wicked, but it was a fault implying some defect or taint in the *fëa*, and those who came to Mandos by this means might be refused further incarnate life.

Note 7

See also Note 2. The Elves expected the End of Arda to be catastrophic. They thought that it would be brought about by the dissolution of the structure of Imbar at least, if not of the whole system. 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 Eä was ultimately finite. It is noteworthy that the Elves had no myths or legends dealing with the end of the world. The myth that appears at the end of the *Silmarillion* is of Numenórean origin;* it is clearly made by Men, though Men acquainted

* This is *not* a reference to the end of the published *Silmarillion*, but to the Prophecy (sometimes called the Second Prophecy) of Mandos, describing the struggle at the End of Time when Melkor will return from the void, which comes at the very end of the *Silmarillion* as it stood in the mid-1930s phase of writing on the Elder Days, when the histories of the second and third ages were just barely being thought of. Christopher Tolkien, not without some reason, excluded the Second Prophecy from his 1977 edition of the text. But comments such as this one in Tolkien's later writings suggest that he never wholly discarded the idea, even if he had come to see it as a "mannish" interpolation.

with Elvish tradition. All Elvish traditions are presented as 'histories', or as accounts of what once was.

We are here dealing with Elvish thought at an early period, when the Eldar were still fully 'physical' in bodily form. Much later when the process (already glimpsed by Finrod) called 'waning' or 'fading' had become more effective, their views of the End of Arda, so far as it affected themselves, must have been modified. But there are few records of any contacts of Elvish and Human thought in such latter days. They eventually became housed, if it can be called that, not in actual visible and tangible *hröar*, but only in the memory of the *fëa* of its bodily form and its desire for it and therefore not dependent for mere existence upon the material of Arda.* But they appear to have held, and indeed still to hold, that this desire for the *hröa* shows that their later (and present) condition is not natural to them, and they remain in *estel* that Eru will heal it. 'Not natural', whether it is due wholly, as they earlier thought, to the weakening of the *hröa* (derived from the debility introduced by Melkor into the substance of Arda upon which it must feed), or partly to the inevitable working of a dominant *fëa* upon a material *hröa* through many ages. (In the latter case 'natural' can refer only to an ideal state, in which unmarred matter could for ever endure the indwelling of a perfectly adapted *fëa*. It cannot refer to the actual design of Eru, since the Themes of the Children were introduced after the arising of the discords of Melkor. The 'waning' of the Elvish *hröar* must therefore be part of the History of Arda as envisaged by Eru, and the mode in which the Elves were to make way for the Dominion of Men. The Elves find their supersession by Men a mystery, and a cause of grief; for they say that Men, at least so largely governed as they are by the evil of Melkor, have less and less love for Arda in itself, and are largely busy in destroying it in the attempt to dominate it. They still believe that Eru's

* In *Laws and Customs among the Eldar* it is said:

As ages passed the dominance of their *fëar* ever increased, 'consuming' their bodies . . . The end of this process is their 'fading' ... ; for the body becomes at last, as it were, a mere memory held by the *fëa*; and that end has already been achieved in many regions of Middle-earth, so that the Elves are indeed deathless and may not be destroyed or changed.

healing of all the griefs of Arda will come now by or through Men; but the Elves' part in the healing or redemption will be chiefly in the restoration of the love of Arda, to which their memory of the Past and understanding of what might have been will contribute. Arda they say will be destroyed by wicked Men (or the wickedness in Men); but healed through the goodness in Men. The wickedness, the domineering lovelessness, the Elves will offset. By the holiness of good men—their direct attachment to Eru, before and above all Eru's works—the Elves may be delivered from the last of their griefs: sadness; the sadness that must come even from the unselfish love of anything less than Eru.

Note 8

Desire. The Elves insisted that 'desires', especially such fundamental desires as are here dealt with, were to be taken as indications of the true natures of the Incarnates, and of the direction in which their unmarred fulfillment must lie. They distinguished between desire of the *fëa* (perception that something right or necessary is not present, leading to desire or hope for it); wish, or personal wish (the feeling of the lack of something, the force of which primarily concerns oneself, and which may have little or no reference to the general fitness of things); illusion, the refusal to recognize that things are not as they should be, leading to the delusion that they are as one would desire them to be, when they are not so. (The last might now be called 'wishful thinking', legitimately; but this term, the Elves would say, is quite illegitimate when applied to the first. The last can be disproved by reference to facts. The first not so. Unless desirability is held to be always delusory, and the sole basis for the hope of amendment. But desires of the *fëa* may often be shown to be reasonable by arguments quite unconnected with personal wish. The fact that they accord with 'desire', or even with personal wish, does not invalidate them. Actually the Elves believed that the 'lightening of the heart' or the 'stirring of joy' (to which they often refer), which may accompany the hearing of a proposition or an argument, is not an indication of its falsity but of the recognition by the *fëa* that it is on the path of truth.)

Note 9

It is probable that Andreth was actually unwilling to say more. Partly by a kind of loyalty that restrained Men from revealing to the Elves all that they knew about the darkness in their past; partly because she felt unable to make up her own mind about the conflicting human traditions. Longer recensions of the *Athrabeth*, evidently edited under Númenórean influence, make her give, under pressure, a more precise answer. Some are very brief some longer. All agree, however, in making the cause of disaster the acceptance by Men of Melkor as King (or King and God). In one version a complete legend (compressed in timescale) is given explicitly as a Númenórean tradition, for it makes Andreth say: *This is the Tale that Adanel of the House of Hador told to me*. The Númenóreans were largely (and their non-Elvish traditions mainly, derived from) the People of Marach, of whom the House of Hador were the chieftains.* The legend bears certain resemblances to the Númenórean traditions concerning the part played by Sauron in the downfall of Númenor. But this does not prove that it is entirely a fiction of post-downfall days. It is no doubt mainly derived from actual lore of the People of Marach, quite independent of the *Athrabeth*.† The operations of Sauron naturally and inevitably resembled or repeated those of his master. That a people in possession of such a legend or tradition should have later been deluded by Sauron is sad but, in view of human history generally, not incredible. Indeed if fish had fish-lore and Wise-fish, it is probable that the business of anglers would be very little hindered.

Note 10

'Matter' is not regarded as evil or opposed to 'Spirit'. Matter was wholly good in origin. It remained a 'creature of Eru' and still largely good, and indeed self-healing, when not interfered with: that is, when the latent evil intruded by Melkor was not deliberately roused and used by evil minds. Melkor had concentrated his attention on 'matter', because spirits could only be dominated completely by fear; and fear was most easily exerted

* This is the "Tale of Adanel" included on pp. 32-38 of this document.

† Marginal note: "Nothing is hereby asserted concerning its 'truth,' historical or otherwise."

through matter (especially in the case of the Incarnates, whom he most desired to subjugate). For example by fear that material things that were loved might be destroyed, or the fear (in Incarnates) that their bodies might be hurt. (Melkor also used and perverted for his purposes the 'fear of Eru', fully or vaguely understood. But this was more difficult and perilous and required more cunning. Lesser spirits might be lured by love or admiration of himself and his powers, and so led at last into a posture of rebellion against Eru. Their fear of Him might then be darkened, so that they adhered to Melkor, as a captain and protector, becoming at last too terrified to return to the allegiance of Eru, even after they had discovered Melkor and had begun to hate him.)

Note 11

This is actually already glimpsed in the *Ainulindalë*, in which reference is made to the 'Flame Imperishable'. This appears to mean the Creative activity of Eru (in some sense distinct from or within Him), by which things could be given a 'real' and independent (though derivative and created) existence. The Flame Imperishable is sent out from Eru, to dwell in the heart of the world, and the world then is, on the same plane as the Ainur, and they can enter into it. But this is not, of course, the same as the re-entry of Eru to defeat Melkor. It refers rather to the mystery of 'authorship', by which the author, while remaining 'outside' and independent of his work, also 'indwells' in it, on its derivative plane, below that of his own being, as the source and guarantee of its being.