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## Carry on My Wayward Sonne (and Moon): Common Cosmological Quirks in the Norse Fimbul-winter and Tolkien's Early Legendarium

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*An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the 2021 International Medieval Congress sponsored by the University of Leeds, and is the third of three related works on Tolkien's early cosmology.*

Abstract: There exist interesting shared details in the Norse mythology of Ragnarök and the eschatology of J.R.R. Tolkien's Secondary World (especially its earliest iterations in *The Book of Lost Tales*). These include the assigned gender identities of the celestial bodies, their sometimes seemingly erratic motions (and resulting implications for climate), their imperfections (reflecting our current flawed world), and their prophesied death and rebirth (at the promised renewal of the world). It will be shown that Tolkien's treatment of *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* forms a bridge between these Primary World and Secondary World cosmologies.

In a previous conference paper “The Walls of the World and the Voyages of the Evening Star,”<sup>1</sup> I traced Tolkien's transition from an initially rather geocentric (Earth-centered) to an identifiably heliocentric (Sun-centered) cosmology by the time of his late “Myths Transformed” essays in *Morgoth's Ring*. In Text II (*MR* 376), the primeval struggles between Melkor and the Valar is seen to “roughly, correspond to supposed primeval epochs before Earth became habitable.” Among his other chaos, Melkor “disarrayed the Sun so that at periods it was too hot, and at others too cold. Whether this was due to the state of the Sun, or alterations in the orbit of Earth, need not be made precise: both are possible” (*MR* 376). In my previous paper the changes in the orbit of the Earth were relevant. But what of the possibility that the Sun itself was affected? In this myth the Moon is created by the Valar as a watchtower against Melkor, who succeeds in “driving out the Vala Tilion” who steers the Moon, leaving our satellite “sterless and vagrant” (*MR* 376). Returning to the Sun, we find that Melkor also assails Áren,<sup>2</sup> the maiden who drives the Sun. When ravished by Melkor, “she went up in a flame of wrath and anguish and her spirit was released from Eä,” leaving Melkor forever charred (*MR* 376-7). The Sun afterwards “remained a Lonely fire, polluted by Melkor” (*MR* 377). In an alternate version, Tolkien notes that “the worst of the deeds of the wrath of Melkor was seen in the Sun,” a grievous thing because “the Sun was designed to be the heart of Arda,” as I previously pointed out clearly a heliocentric perspective (*MR* 380). But more importantly the Sun is supposed to shine “unceasingly and without wearying or diminution” (*MR* 380).

For this reason Varda assigns the “ardent and beautiful” Árië to steer the Sun, aided by a “portion of the gift of Ilúvatar so that the Sun should endure and be

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<sup>1</sup> <https://scholar.valpo.edu/journaloftolkienresearch/vol13/iss1/3/>

<sup>2</sup> Tolkien changes his mind about the Sun maiden's name several times in the later essays.

blessed and give blessing” (*MR* 380). Since Melkor “lusted after all light” he demands she be his wife, which she refuses, and she is ravished, Melkor “desiring both to abase her and to take into himself her powers” (*MR* 381). *Árië*’s spirit departs from Arda “a flame of anguish and wrath,” leaving the Sun “bereft of the Light of Arda,” and forever “stained” and driverless (*MR* 381). Left to its own devices, the Sun “flamed with excessive heat or grew too cool,” causing “grievous hurt” to the world “until with long toil the Valar made a new order” (*MR* 381). A marginal note explains that the orbit of the Earth was also “disarrayed by Melkor, so that the Earth was at times drawn too near the Sun, and at others went too far off” (*MR* 381). These late tales highlight Melkor’s lust and pride, a type of gold-greed applied to the Sun and heavenly lights in general. If this was a paper on dragons instead of astronomy, we would leap into a discussion of dragon-sickness. But it isn’t, so we won’t.<sup>3</sup> Well, not much.

These late myths featuring an unruly Sun are contrasted with the well-known tradition in *The Silmarillion*, where it is the Moon’s driver, Tilion, that is “wayward and uncertain in speed, and held not to his appointed path” relative to the Sun (*Sil* 100). Like the proverbial moth to a flame, Tilion is attracted to the glory of Arien, the Sun’s driver, despite being burned by the Sun, causing the Moon’s phases. In response to complaints of a lack of sleep and stargazing, Varda redirects Tilion to only appear in the sky once Arien has set. However, “Tilion went with uncertain pace” and sometimes passed close enough to Arien to cause a solar eclipse (*Sil* 101). The “Quenta Silmarillion,” written circa 1937 and published in *The Lost Road*, is largely the source of this myth as published in *The Silmarillion*, describing the Sun and Moon as the final fruit and flower of the Two Trees of Valinor, birthed with great effort after the trees had been killed by Melkor and the monstrous spider Ungoliant.

“The Ambarkanta,” another work from the 1930s, adds that “days are measured by the courses of the Sun,” while the seasons are caused by the Sun’s driver bending “her course northward or southward, not waywardly but in due procession” (*SOME* 237). This is a nicely poetic description of the seasonal variations in the Sun’s apparent path in the sky, more northerly in the summer and more southerly in winter (as viewed in the Northern Hemisphere). While the Sun is certainly well-organized, it is not eternal; as the 1930 work the “Quenta” explains, in the distant future “Morgoth shall come back through the Door out of the Timeless Night; and he shall destroy the Sun and the Moon” (*SOME* 165). The combined forces of Eärendel, the Vala Tulkas, Fionwë the son of Manwë, and Túrin Turambar will ultimately defeat Melkor. The Silmarils will be recovered and used by Yavanna to “rekindle” the Two Trees, the Elvish dead will be restored, and the Valar will “grow young” (*SOME* 165).

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<sup>3</sup> See Tom Shippey, “Tolkien and the *Beowulf*-Poet” and “The Versions of ‘The Hoard’” (*Root and Branches* 13-15, 342-4) for more discussion on gold-greed and “dragon-sickness.”

The main aspects of Tolkien's *Silmarillion* cosmology include the following:

1. Creation of the Sun and Moon associated with female and male entities, respectively;
2. Ordering of their motions, leading to timekeeping, including days and seasons (the year);
3. Imperfections/complications exist, leading to eclipses and extreme weather events;
4. The Sun and Moon will die before the great battle, which will ultimately lead to the renewal of the world in a better state.

So deep-rooted are these tenets in Tolkien's cosmology that they carry through (in modified ways) through the post-*LOTR* writings. In a 1951 letter Tolkien describes his vision of the final battle as owing "more to the Norse vision of Ragnarök than to anything else, though it is not much like it" (Carpenter 149). As with a number of items in his letters, this comment might need to be qualified a tad.

In fact, Tolkien borrows much from Norse myth, including obvious aspects of Ragnarök (e.g. Burns 227; Dimond 179; Whittingham 172). For example, Yvette Kisor clearly connects the gendering of the Sun and Moon in Tolkien's legendarium with similar gendered choices in Old Norse and Old English (215). To understand just how many of the cosmological aspects of Ragnarök are apparent in the cosmology of Middle-Earth, we need to analyze the first section of the *Elder Edda*, "Völuspá, the Vala's Prophecy" (Thorpe 1). The Seer begins her tale with the birth of the world and the emergence of structure from chaos. The Sun and Moon exist but do not know what they are supposed to do until the gods known as the Æsir determine their motions, including their relation to timekeeping (through the naming of the phases of the Moon and the hourly positions of the Sun) (Thorpe 1-2). The Seer is approached by Ódin, who grants her the power to divine. She afterwards has visions of the first war, between the Æsir and another group of gods, the Vanir, in a dispute over gold-greed and the perceived abuse of magical arts. In this war some of the original order of the world is lost before a truce emerges (Thorpe 4). The Seer ends with a vision of Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods, and the remaking of the world. The idea that the Sun is not perfectly designed is made clear in "The Lay of Grimnir," where it is noted that the Sun chariot is affixed with a shield called Svalin that protects the "rocks and oceans" from burning up from its full luminescence (Thorpe 23).

The Sun and Moon are relentlessly pursued by the wolves Sköll (repulsion) and Hati (hatred), who occasionally succeed in swallowing the heavenly orbs, causing an eclipse. The wolves only drop their prey due to the "deafening clamour" provided by observant humans (Guerber 8-9). Note that in Tolkien's version it is

the Moon chasing the Sun that causes eclipses, taking out the middlemen of the two wolves. The Twilight of the Gods will be heralded by the Sun and Moon, fearing their imminent deaths, being tentative in their appointed paths, the Sun's abandonment of her usual path resulting in the deadly Fimbul-winter lasting three years. When the wolves finally devour their prey, stars fall from the sky, the Earth shakes, and the giant Heimdall blasts a warning to the world on his Gjallar-horn. This rallies the forces of Ódin (who himself is one of the first to die). Eventually all the gods and monsters are killed when the flames of the demon Surtr envelop the world in utter conflagration (Guerber 330-7).

After the deaths of the gods in Ragnarök, the dead god Balder will be reborn, and a new Sun, the daughter of the original and "more lovely" (Thorpe 327), will spread light over a new world, Gimlé, "cleansed and regenerated" (Davidson 38). Interestingly abnormally cold summers and Fimbul-type winters can be caused by volcanic ash in the atmosphere screening out sunlight. Such a real-world event in the 6<sup>th</sup> century of our world possibly played a major role in the creation of the myth of Ragnarök itself (Holmberg et al. 7). The natural cleansing of the ash from the atmosphere, and with it, a return to a full-strength, unpolluted sunlight, would align with the rebirth of the Sun, seeming more beautiful than before.

We certainly do see parallels between Norse myths and the *Silmarillion* cosmology. But the motions of the Sun and Moon have been problematic since the very beginning of the legendarium. What we learn of the Sun and Moon in the *Silmarillion* texts is but a faint echo of a richer original cosmology. We therefore turn to *The Book of Lost Tales*, written circa 1916-early 1920s, especially the chapter entitled "The Tale of the Sun and Moon."

Valinor, the home of the Valar, was lit by two luminous trees, the golden, Laurelin, and the silver, Silpion (later named Telperion). The Trees gave off a perfect amount of soothing light, waxing and waning in a predictable pattern where each was at maximum light for 12 hours, allowing for dimmer periods of gentle intermingled light (*BOLT I 73*). After the Trees' tragic deaths at the hand of Melko and Móru, as Melkor and Ungoliant are originally named, Manwë reveals a plan to "build a great vessel brimming with golden light and the hoarded dews of Laurelin" which he would set to sail in the heavens "between the East and West, for Melko held the North and Ungweliant the South" (*BOLT I 182*).

Laurelin is tended by Yavanna and Vána and blooms again, but its petals are blown off, appearing as "jets of fire, and folk thought there was evil in that;" they could only be contained in metal baskets (*BOLT I 185*). A single, humongous fruit grows from the tree, and catches Aulë's eye, deeming it proof that "Ilúvatar has brought my desire into my hand" (*BOLT I 185*). Aulë roughly severs the fruit from the tree, to the palpable horror of witnesses, who "gasped and were astonished at his ruthlessness. Loudly they murmured, and some cried: 'Woe to him that ravishes anew our Tree'" (*BOLT I 185*). Aulë essentially tells them to shut up, but

carelessly trips while carrying the fruit away with Tulkas, causing the fruit to hit the ground and break in two. The light it emits is unworldly, even by Valinor standards, and Aulë is entranced, boasting that he can use it to “make a ship of light – surpassing even the desire of Manwë” (*BOLT I* 186). Again, we see here a hint of greed, of gold-lust, perhaps not unexpected from the Vala of minerals and mining. The covetousness of this creation is later shifted to the creation of the Dwarves by Aulë post-*LOTR*, circa 1958 (*WoJ* 213), where Aulë desires to have children of his own.

The last fruit of Laurelin and some of the fiery petals of its last flower are placed into a special vessel to sail the heavens, steered by the maiden Urwendi, producing a time of constant and unworldly brilliant sunlight. For a week the Sun wanders aimlessly, “beating about the heavens where it listed, since Manwë had not as yet ruled its course and Urwendi was bidden fare as seemed good to her” (*BOLT I* 190). The extreme heat withers flowers and silences songbirds, causing Lórien to request that Manwë recall the grotesquely bright Sun that “sailed nearer to the Earth than it now does” (*BOLT I* 190). “Rather the darkness and our memories than this, for this is not the old loveliness of Laurelin,” Lórien sadly notes (*BOLT I* 190). Indeed, the Valar are said to understand the weight of the irrevocable thing they have done.

Sara Brown (n.p.) examines the process of transformation in *The Lord of the Rings* and using an analysis of metaphorical alchemy argues that the One Ring cannot be made of true gold. Similarly, the creation of the Sun (and Moon) from the Two Trees is a kind of reverse alchemy, moving from the perfect to something lesser, a base metal, so to speak. We see this in the shift from the description of the tree Laurelin as gold and golden to the Sun as unnaturally bright and radiant. In a 1951 letter Tolkien makes a point to explain that the light of the Sun and Moon “is derived from the Trees only after they were sullied by Evil” and thus “the Sun is not a divine symbol, but a second-best thing, and the ‘light of the Sun’ (the world under the Sun) become terms for a fallen world, and a dislocated imperfect vision” (Carpenter 148).

Lórien’s request is ultimately denied, so in sorrow he visits the dead silver tree, which dimly glows under his touch. A single rose grows from Silpion, almost as large as the Sun fruit. Lórien refuses to pluck it from the branch, “being enamoured of its loveliness and lusting to see it grow mightier than the fruit of noon, more glorious than the Sun” (*BOLT I* 191). Once again, lust and pride lose out, as the bough snaps, unceremoniously dumping the flower, which crushes a petal and creates the surface features on the Moon. Rána, the Moon-ship, is piloted by Ilinsor, but is not as naturally as buoyant as the Sun. For this reason it is only seen at night for fourteen days and then spends another fourteen days of “refueling.” Being “heavier and less filled with magic and with power,” it is dimmer than the Sun and closer to the Earth (*BOLT I* 193). It is also less stable in its flight; its

shrouds are torn by the winds and must be repeatedly replaced by the Valar, explaining the Moon's phases. Its uneven sailing also explains why the orientation of the crescent phase can appear at various angles, "his prow now dipping, now his stern" (*BOLTI* 193).

Note that in this earliest cosmology, as in the Norse one, both the Sun and Moon are initially wayward. In the next chapter, "The Hiding of Valinor," Tolkien makes a point that "so wide were the wanderings of those boats of light that the Gods found it no easy thing to govern all their comings and goings as they had purposed at the first" (*BOLTI* 207). In particular, both Ilinsor and Urwendi refuse to wait their turn to be in the sky. Manwë realizes that "his design was not complete, and that the wisdom of the Valar must needs be bent once more to the more perfect government of the Sun and Moon" (*BOLTI* 208). Instead, the Valar spend time separating Valinor from the rest of the world, accessible only by special paths, such as the rainbow (Ilweran), the Road of Death, and the Road of Dreams (*BOLTI* 211-13).

Meanwhile, the sky above them is "full of the ungoverned glory of the Ships of Light" (*BOLTI* 213), so after hiding the Blessed Lands, Manwë finally directs his brethren to return to a consideration of "the waywardness of the Sun and Moon" (*BOLTI* 214). It was decided to move the Sun and Moon to "higher paths" to prevent the Earth from becoming "unbearable by reason of the great light and heat of those bright things" (*BOLTI* 214). As described in my previous talk, the initial plan is to have the Sun and Moon travel below the Earth from west to east back to their respective gates. But the Sunship proves too "frail and lissom," and for a time Urwendi was lost in the underground grottoes until she is found and led safely out by Fionwë, motivating the Valar to construct the Door of Night, leading into the void (*BOLTI* 215). While this seems to regulate the Sun, the Moon is less regular, partly because he encountered difficulties during his travels beneath the Earth. It is important to note that while adherence to astronomical realism demands a well-regulated Sun (taking into account seasonal variations), the Moon has three<sup>4</sup> obvious types of "waywardness": its changing appearance (i.e. phases), apparent distance from the Sun in the sky (including the occasional solar eclipse), and time of rising (on average 50 minutes later each day over the course of the phases, the

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<sup>4</sup> There is another type of "fickleness," the Moon's variance from the Sun's apparent path relative to the stars (the ecliptic). This is caused by the 5-degree tilt of the plane of the Moon's orbit with respect to the plane of the Earth's orbit around the Sun (which defines the ecliptic). This assures that we don't get solar and lunar eclipses at every new and full Moon, respectively, but rather only a few times per year. Note that we are not stressing lunar eclipses in this paper because Tolkien mentions them less obviously in the legendarium, although they are more openly referenced in other works, such as the "Father Christmas Letters." See Larsen, "Darkness Amid the Day," for more information.

approximate answer to Tolkien's famous question in a 1944 letter to son Christopher [Carpenter 74]).<sup>5</sup>

The revisions to the celestial motions are deemed satisfactory by the Valar, but eventually due to "certain tidings" (not explained by Tolkien, but perhaps reflecting Norse mythology), the Valar fear for the Sun and Moon. In a side story named "The Weaving of the Days and Months and of the Years" Tolkien explains how three strange elderly brothers named Danuin (Day), Ranuin (Month), and Fanuin (Year) arrive unexpectedly in Valinor and offer to standardize the Sun and Moon's motions once and for all. In Aulë's house they "spin and weave in secret" (*BOLT I* 217) for 24 hours, 28 days, and 13 Moon cycles, respectively, creating special invisible ropes that are used to bind the Sun and Moon and synchronize their motions. The rise and setting of the Sun are set to a standard 24-hour day, while 28 days are set as one cycle of the Moon's phases (what we would call a lunar month). Thirteen lunar months are defined to be one year, but of 28 times 13 or 364 days (one day too short).<sup>6</sup>

This is a very early and very obvious description of Tolkien's deep-rooted misconception concerning the length of one lunar cycle, an error that found its way into *The Hobbit* (Larsen, "Lunacy" 20-1).<sup>7</sup> In reality, there are, on average, about 29.5 days in each synodic (Moon phase) lunar month. For this reason, most luni-solar calendars, such as the Chinese, Jewish, and Tibetan, use 12 lunar months, alternating between 29 and 30 days, to define a year, and include "make-up" or intercalary months every few years to make up the roughly 12 day annual shortfall. In contrast, the Islamic calendar is strictly lunar, and does not try to align with the solar (or tropical) year of seasons. For this reason, some Islamic holidays, such as the holy month of Ramadan, can occur in any season, depending on the year.

While the work of the three brothers binds the Sun and Moon and "all the world and the dwellers within it" to the hand of time, the motions of the heavenly bodies are fixed only until the "Great End" (*BOLT I* 219). The tale ends with the warning that

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<sup>5</sup> The precise answer depends on the observer's latitude as well as the phase of the Moon and the distance between the Moon and Earth on that date (Talcott n.p.). If he had been writing today, Tolkien could have looked up a precise answer to his question on <https://www.timeanddate.com/Moon/uk/oxford> (although he would have had to put in the approximate latitude of the locations in question in Middle-Earth). Instead he would have had to consult *The Nautical Almanac* produced annually by the Royal Greenwich Observatory or a similar work. I revisit this issue in another work (to appear in *Amon Hen*).

<sup>6</sup> Actually about 1.25 days short; Tolkien later delves into issues of leap days and comes up with a solution in the Númenórean calendar that he brags is more accurate than our official Gregorian calendar (*Letters* 229).

<sup>7</sup> Recall that the Moon is described in "The Tale of the Sun and Moon" as appearing in the night sky for 14 days and then disappearing for another 14 to recharge its light and buoyancy.



ere the Great End come Melko shall in some wise contrive a quarrel between Moon and Sun, and Ilinsor shall seek to follow Urwendi through the Gates, and when they are gone the Gates of both East and West will be destroyed, and Urwendi and Ilinsor shall be lost. So shall it be that Fionwë Úrion, son of Manwë, of love for Urwendi shall in the end be Melko's bane, and shall destroy the world to destroy his foe, and so shall all things then be rolled away. (*BOLTI* 219)

As is well known, Tolkien's mythology was never "finished" to his satisfaction, and each stage of the legendarium contains numerous drafts and experimental "side-cars." Christopher Tolkien notes that the original conclusion to *The Book of Lost Tales* was to be "rejected in its entirety" and perhaps replaced with a version outlined in what Christopher calls "notebook C" (*BOLT II* 280-1). Here Melkor climbs the great Pine of Tavrobel pursued by Telimektar and Ingil, the sons of the Vala Tulkas and Elven King Inwë respectively, who "remain now in the sky to ward it" as the constellation Orion and bright star Sirius. Melkor continues to wreak havoc by causing eclipses and meteors, and manages to "upset the Sun, so that Urwendi fell into the Sea, and the Ship fell near the ground, scorching regions of the Earth. The clarity of the Sun's radiance has not been so great since, and something of magic has gone from it" (*BOLT II* 280-1). This scorching of the Earth and the loss of the Sun's driver is reminiscent of the tale of Phaethon and the Sun chariot from Greek mythology, and it is interesting that Tolkien returns to similar imagery in the post-*LOTR* essays, as noted in the start of this paper.

Perhaps the reason for the staying power of this myth in Tolkien's cauldron of story is that a similar assault on the Sun also appears in another work that played an essential role in shaping Tolkien's legendarium, the *Kalevala*. In Runo 47-9, the Sun and Moon are stolen by Louhi, the sorceress queen of Pohjola. Ukko, the sky god, creates a new sky fire, which ends up getting into all sorts of mischief and is finally swallowed by a fish. After being cut out of the fish, the faux-Sun drives erratically, similar to Phaethon, scorching parts of the Earth before being coaxed into a tinderbox. As animals die from the lack of sunlight Ilmarinen, the blacksmith God, manufactures his own Sun and Moon, but when he mounts them in tall trees they fail to provide light. Vainamoinen, the central character of the *Kalevala*, locates where the Sun and Moon have been imprisoned but is unable to rescue them. They are eventually released, unharmed, by Louhi herself, when she learns that Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen intend to attack her men and imprison her for eternity (Kirby 228-59). This imprisonment of the Sun brings to mind two brief references to the Sun (and in one case also the Moon) being imprisoned beneath the Earth by Móru (Ungoliant) (*BOLTI* 151; *BOLT II* 286). The connection of the Sun and Moon

to two trees is uncanny, as is the specific connection that it is the failed Sun and Moon that are mounted in these two trees.

A recurring refrain in Tolkien's early legendarium is the "rekindling of the Magic Sun" (e.g., *BOLT I* 17, 25, 65, 179, 199), a future event in which the Two Trees might be restored, and perhaps Urwendi as well (*BOLT II* 286). The basic premise is still seen in the 1930 "Quenta," where, as previously described, the Two Trees are restored with the help of the silmarils. Referring back to Sara Brown's paper, this rekindling of the Trees in Arda Re-made parallels the new Sun in Gimlé in the myth of Ragnarök, and represents a true alchemical process (metaphorically the base metal transformed to gold).

As we have seen, *The Book of Lost Tales* strongly follows the four properties identified in both the *Silmarillion* cosmology and Norse cosmology, demonstrating how deeply rooted the framework is in his cosmology. A further connection between all of these can be seen in his "New Lays," posthumously published as *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. According to Christopher Tolkien, his father "gave lectures and classes on Norse language and literature in every year from 1926 until at least 1939," which gave rise to this work. Although Christopher is unable to precisely date its writing, his "inclination is to date them later rather than earlier in his years at Oxford before the Second War, perhaps to the earlier 1930s," situating it as roughly contemporary with the *Silmarillion* texts and clearly after *The Book of Lost Tales* (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 4-5).

The first poem, "Upphaf (Beginning)" covers part of the "Völuspá." He briefly mentions the creation of the Sun and its initial location in the south, and references the war between the Æsir and Vanir and the resulting marring of the Earth. Parallels can be seen with the battles between Valar and Melkor both before and after the creation of the Two Trees, including injury to the Sun:

To the world came war...  
The mountains were moved,  
Mighty Ocean  
Surged and thundered,  
The Sun trembled...  
Sun they rekindled,  
And silver Moon  
They set to sail  
On seas of stars. (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 61-4)

Note the specific use of the term "rekindled" to describe the Gods' healing of the Sun, connecting this work to Tolkien's own mythology. Tolkien adds another aspect from his mythology into his revisioning of the Norse mythology, the role of Sigurd as the one who alone holds the fate of the Gods and the world in his hands.

As Tolkien himself notes in his commentary, “This motive of the special function of Sigurd is an invention of the present poet, or an interpretation of the Norse sources in which it is not explicit” (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 53-4). Christopher Tolkien opines that “An association with his own mythology seems to me at least extremely probable,” in particular to the special role of Túrin Turambar as the one who will ultimately slay Melkor, a “mysterious conception” that first appeared in the earliest writings and “reappeared as a prophecy in the *Silmarillion* texts of the 1930s” (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 184).

While Tolkien’s “Upphaf” does not recount the details of Ragnarök found in “Völuspá” some of them do appear in “The Prophecy of the Sibyl,” included as Appendix B of *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. These include the death of the Sun - “darkened shall the Sunlight be” (365) - and the renewal of the Earth, which “from Ocean green shall grow” (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 366). The renewal of the Sun is reflected in

A house I see that standeth there  
bright-built, than the Sun more fair:  
e’er Gimlé shine its tiles of gold,  
its halls no grief nor evil hold (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 367).

Again, we see the alchemical transformation from the worldly and base to the super-worldly and golden. The poem ends with a rejoicing that the

ruined halls of Ódin’s host,  
the windy towers on heaven’s coast,  
shall golden be rebuilt again,  
all ills be healed in Baldur’s reign. (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 367)

We began in *Morgoth’s Ring*, and we shall end there as well. In his notes to the post-*LOTR* work “Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth” Tolkien explains that Finrod’s vision of the “‘unmarring’ of Arda [is] not merely undoing the marring or evil wrought by Melkor, but by producing a third thing, ‘Arda Re-made’ . . . . 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” (*MR* 333). Compare this with the line from “The Prophecy of the Sibyl” that after Ragnarok in Gimlé (the world remade) “there shall worthy men and true/in living days delight pursue” (*Sigurd and Gudrún* 367). Not only did Northern mythologies (including the Kalevala) clearly influence Tolkien, but Tolkien’s original mythology certainly impacted his interpretation of Northern mythology. In Tolkien’s legendarium, the proper ordering of the Sun’s motions are not only problematic, but of central importance, and their perfection is

only achievable in the end, with the breaking and reordering of the world writ large.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> As an aside, the transition from a geocentric to heliocentric worldview in our Primary World, the Copernican Revolution, was only made possible through an uncomfortable abandonment of the Aristotelian ideal of the perfection of the heavens. The work of Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) demonstrated that the orbits of heavenly bodies are not perfect circles, nor are their orbital speeds constant. For example, planets move fastest in their orbits when nearer the sun and slower when more distant in their orbits, due to the influence of gravity.

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