

Tolkien and the Classical World

Tolkien and the Classical World

edited by Hamish Williams



2021

Cormarë Series No. 45

Series Editors:

Peter Buchs • Thomas Honegger • Andrew Moglestue • Johanna Schön • Doreen Triebel

Series Editors responsible for this volume: Thomas Honegger & Doreen Triebel

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Hamish Williams (ed.):

Tolkien and the Classical World

ISBN 978-3-905703-45-0

Subject headings:

Tolkien, J.R.R. (John Ronald Reuel), 1892-1973

Classical Literature

Classical Reception

Classical Epic

Greek Philosophy

Fantasy

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Middle-earth

The Lord of the Rings

The Hobbit

The Silmarillion

Cormarë Series No. 45

First published 2021

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank Prof. Thomas Honegger (Friedrich Schiller University Jena) as the series editor at Walking Tree Publishers for guiding me through the various stages of the publication process and for providing clear, helpful advice. Thanks also to all the other staff at Walking Tree Publishers for their assistance, including Peter Buchs, Larissa Zoller, and Andrew Moglestue.

Second, I am thrilled to have an illustration by Jay Johnstone for the cover page of this book. The image, if we could etch it on a crumbling Athenian vase, would certainly fool an archaeologist, although the expert might be confused by the replacement of the Greeks and Polyphemus with Dwarves and Trolls!

Third, thanks to the various anonymous peer reviewers – across English literary studies, Classical studies, and other academic fields – for their insightful comments and helpful feedback to the various contributors of this volume.

Fourth, I am most grateful to the volume's fourteen contributors; I hope to work with many of you again on future projects. A special thank you to Graham Shipley, Professor of Ancient History at the University of Leicester, for his interest in our volume, for the contribution of his afterword, and for his help with the index.

Last but not least, to my family (Ksjusha, Kostja, Sasha), for your support and motivation.

Hamish Williams
28 June 2020

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Editor's Notes

1. On Latin and Greek Translations

I have asked the contributors to this volume to provide English translations of their quotations from ancient sources, both Latin and Greek. In some cases, these translations are the contributors', but in many cases contributors have provided published translations of the ancient works. The references for such translations can be found in the bibliography of each paper under the name of the translator; for example:

SHEWRING, Walter (trans.). 1980. *Homer: The Odyssey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In such cases where published translations have been used, I have also asked contributors (if possible in these times of mass lockdown) to provide page citations to the translated work in the body of their chapters, in addition of course to the citation of the ancient work; for example:

"We came to the land of the Cyclops race [...]" (Hom. *Od.* 9.106-107; Shewring (trans.) 1980: 101).

The citation above gives details both of the ancient source (for an explanation of abbreviations, see below) and the modern translation with the relevant page number. The goal here was to provide the reader without Latin/Greek easy access to relevant passages in a respected translation. It should be noted that not all contributors have chosen to provide Latin/Greek text, and in such cases, the English translation is the first port of call.

2. On Latin and Greek Abbreviations

For a full list of Classical abbreviations, many of which are employed in this volume, see:

HORNBLOWER, SIMON and ANTHONY SPAWFORTH (eds.). 2014 [1998]. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, xix-xxvii.

Contributors to this volume use abbreviations for both Classical writers (whose names are often omitted in citations when they are used repeatedly) and Classical works. Some common abbreviations for writers and works in this volume are as follows (in alphabetical order):

Apollodorus = Apollod.
Bibliotheca = *Bibl.*
 Aristotle = Arist.
Poetics = *Poet.*
 Augustine = August.
De Civitate Dei (The City of God) = *De civ. D.*
 Cassius Dio = Cass. Dio.
 Herodotus = Hdt.¹
 Homer = Hom.
Iliad = *Il.*
Odyssey = *Od.*
 Iamblichus = Iambl.
Vita Pythagorae = *VP*
 Ovid = Ov.
Metamorphoses = *Met.*
 Plato = Pl.
Laws = *Leg.*
Republic = *Resp.*
Timias = *Ti.*
 Tacitus = Tac.
Agricola = *Agr.*
Germania = *Germ.*
Histories = *Hist.*
 Thucydides = Thuc. (i.e. *The Peloponnesian Wars*)
 Virgil = Verg.
Aeneid = *Aen.*
Eclogues = *Ecl.*
Georgics = *G.*

¹ No work is cited because only one work is extant, i.e. *The Histories*.

3. On Abbreviations for Works by Tolkien

Works by J.R.R. Tolkien are cited in the chapters of this volume by means of the following list of abbreviations.² The specific editions of cited works are referenced in the bibliographies of the contributors; the list below, however, gives the original publication details (which may or may not correspond to the specific text edition/version used by each contributor).

AI = 'The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun.' *Welsh Review* 4 (December 1945): 254-266.

See also i.

ATB = *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*.

London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962.

AW = *Ancrene Wisse*. Edited by J.R.R. Tolkien. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

AWHM 'Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meidhad.' *Essays and Studies*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1929. 104-126.

BC = *Beowulf and the Critics*. Edited by Michael D.C. Drout. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 248. Tempe AZ: Arizona Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2002.

BL = *Beren and Lúthien*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins, 2017.

BLS = *Bilbo's Last Song*. (Poster, 1974). Published as book by Unwin Hyman. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.

BLT1 = *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*. (The History of Middle-earth 1). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983 / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

BLT2 = *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*. (The History of Middle-earth 2). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

BMC = *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1937.

CH = *The Children of Húrin*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

CP = 'Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeve's Tale*.' *Transactions of the Philological Society*. London: David Nutt, 1934. 1-70.

FA = *The Fall of Arthur*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins, 2013.

FC = *Letters from Father Christmas*. Edited by Baillie Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin 1976; extended edition London: HarperCollins, 1999.

² This comprehensive list has been provided by Walking Tree Publishers; only a selection of these works are cited and referenced in this volume.

- FG = *The Fall of Gondolin*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.
- FGH = *Farmer Giles of Ham*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949.
- FH = *Finn and Hengest*. Edited by Alan Bliss. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981.
- FR = *The Fellowship of the Ring*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954.
- GN = 'Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*.' First published in *A Tolkien Compass*. Edited by Jared Lobdell. La Salle IL: Open Court, 1975. 153-201. (See also *Nomenclature*.)
- GPO = *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*. Translated by J.R.R. Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975.
- Hobbit = *The Hobbit*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937. Second edition, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951. 50th anniversary edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- HBBS = 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son.' *Essays and Studies*. London: Murray, 1953. 1-18.
- HME = *The History of Middle-earth*. Twelve volumes. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins, 1983-1996.
- Letters = *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Edited by Humphrey Carpenter, with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.
- LAI = *The Lay of Aotrou & Itroun*. Edited by Verlyn Flieger. London: HarperCollins, 2016.
- LB = *The Lays of Beleriand*. (The History of Middle-earth 3). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- LN = 'Leaf by Niggle.' *Dublin Review* (January 1945): 46-61.
- LR = *The Lost Road and Other Writings*. (The History of Middle-earth 5). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- LotR = *The Lord of the Rings*. 50th anniversary edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- LSG = *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin/London: HarperCollins, 2009.
- MB = *Mr. Bliss*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983.
- MC = *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.
- ME = *A Middle English Vocabulary*. Designed for use with Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1922.
- MR = *Morgoth's Ring*. (The History of Middle-earth 10). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

- Myth = 'Mythopoeia.' First published in *Tree and Leaf*. Second edition. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988 / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- Nom = 'Nomenclature of *The Lord of the Rings*.' In Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull. *A Reader's Companion*. London: HarperCollins, 2005. 750-782.
- NV = *A Northern Venture*. Verses by members of the Leeds University English School Association. Leeds: At the Swan Press, 1923.
- OFS = 'On Fairy-Stories.' *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*. London: Oxford University Press, 1947. 38-89. See also *TOFS*.
- OK = 'Ósanwe-Kenta.' Edited with introduction, glossary, and additional notes by Carl F. Hostetter. *Vinyar Tengwar* 39 (1998): 21-34.
- OEE = *The Old English Exodus*. Text, translation, and commentary by J.R.R. Tolkien. Edited by Joan Turville-Petre. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1981.
- Pic = *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979.
- PME = *The Peoples of Middle-earth*. (The History of Middle-earth 12). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.
- PS = *Poems and Stories*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980 / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.
- Rov = *Roverandom*. Edited by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. London: HarperCollins, 1998.
- RBG = 'The Rivers and Beacon-hills of Gondor.' *Vinyar Tengwar* 42 (2001): 5-31.
- RGEO = *The Road Goes Ever On*. (with Donald Swann). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967 / London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968.
- RK = *The Return of the King*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955.
- RS = *The Return of the Shadow*. (The History of Middle-earth 6). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
- Sil = *The Silmarillion*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.
- SD = *Sauron Defeated*. (The History of Middle-earth 9). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.
- SGGK = *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Edited by J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1925.
- SME = *The Shaping of Middle-earth*. (The History of Middle-earth 4). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.
- SP = *Songs for the Philologists*. By J.R.R. Tolkien, E.V. Gordon and others. London: The Department of English at University College, 1936.
- SV = *A Secret Vice*. Edited by Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins. London: HarperCollins, 2016.
- SWM = *Smith of Wootton Major*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967. Extended edition prepared by Verlyn Flieger. London: HarperCollins, 2005.

- TI* = *The Treason of Isengard*. (The History of Middle-earth 7). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- TL* = *Tree and Leaf*. London: Unwin Books, 1964. Second edition. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988 / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- TOFS* = *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories*. Edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson. London: HarperCollins, 2008.
- TT* = *The Two Towers*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954.
- UT* = *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.
- WJ* = *The War of the Jewels*. (The History of Middle-earth 11). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.
- WR* = *The War of the Ring*. (The History of Middle-earth 8). Edited by Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Hyman / Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Hamish Williams

16 June 2020

Classical Influences on the Role of Music in Tolkien's Legendarium

Abstract

The paper presents a brief survey of several Classical ideas on the role of music from the writings of Plato, Iamblichus, Cicero, Macrobius, and other ancient philosophers that might have infiltrated Tolkien's subcreation. Starting with the idea of Tolkien's world as *kosmos* (an object of beauty), the article proceeds with a comparative analysis of some roles music plays in Classical thought and Tolkien's legendarium: namely, a) a cosmogonic and cosmological force; b) a source of influence and magic; and c) a means of salvation. Particular attention is paid to Plato's Sirens and Fates, as represented in the Myth of Er, in comparison to Tolkien's Maiar, Ainur, and their influence on the fate of the world.

Tolkien's musical cosmogony in the *Ainulindalë* and the general role which music plays in his world have been regarded as being strongly influenced by Christian or Catholic musicological ideas, springing from his medieval studies and religious beliefs.¹ Yet as several researchers in this volume have already demonstrated, Tolkien had substantial Classical training and knowledge. Tolkien might well, for example, have been familiar with the Classical concept of the 'music of the spheres' in its Pythagorean and (Neo)Platonic variations and its cosmological function, which was further developed in Christian theological and philosophical thought.² Accordingly, Eden posits that as Tolkien was both "a classicist and medievalist, 'the music of the spheres' concept would have been deeply ingrained in his educational training, and his Catholic background would also have influenced his thought and creative processes" (2002: 183). The music of the spheres plays an important role in different Classical and, later, medieval cosmological teachings. More generally, in the Middle Ages, "the whole concept of scientific thinking on the subject of music is *essentially classical in nature*. The

¹ See, for example, Bertoglio 2018, 2019; Devaux 2017; Eden 2002; Houghton 2002; McIntosh 2010.

² For the development of the concept of music of the spheres from the Classical antiquity until the epoch of Romanticism, see Godwin 1992.

sources of musical thinking of the Middle Ages faithfully reproduce central pieces of classical theory and are firmly rooted in *the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions*” (Hanegraaff et al. (eds.) 2006: 810; italics added).

It is likely, then, that a comparative analysis of Classical philosophical roots could provide a more detailed picture of the place of music in Tolkien’s cosmogony and cosmology³ and the influence of music on his invented world, as presented in *The Silmarillion*. In particular, our paper presents a brief survey of several ideas connected with music from the writings of Plato, Iamblichus, Cicero, Macrobius, and other Classical philosophers that might have infiltrated Tolkien’s subcreation.

“Eä, the World that is” (*Sil* 9), whose creation is described in Tolkien’s cosmogonic myth *Ainulindalë*, comes into being through music, which is conceived by Ilúvatar, the supreme deity of Tolkien’s invented universe, and which is performed by his angelic creatures, the Ainur, “the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made” (*Sil* 3). Collins has observed that “Tolkien approaches the essential nature of being in aesthetic terms, seeking the nature and purpose of creation not as physical or theological extrapolation, but as aesthetic process governed by formal principles” (2000: 257). Tolkien’s invented world can be considered a *kosmos* in the Greek sense of the word as something not only good but necessarily *beautiful*. As American philosopher Charles Kahn underscores, “the peculiar richness of the term [*kosmos*] lies in its capacity to denote a concrete arrangement of beauty or utility, as well as the more abstract idea of moral and social ‘order’. We may suppose that it was, first of all, the physical sense of ‘arrangement, neat disposition’ which led to the use of *κόσμος* to designate the natural order of the universe, but the ‘goodness’ of the order was immediately implied” (1960: 222). Kahn further argues that gradually “the conception of the world as *an object of beauty* comes to the fore, so that the Romans translate

3 In mythology, the term *cosmogony* refers to the origin or creation of the world; this is the first story almost in every mythology and quite often includes anthropogenesis (myths of the origin of the first human beings). The term *cosmology* refers to the description of the structure of the universe, the laws which govern it, its evolution, and ultimate destruction (eschatology). Both cosmogonies and cosmologies can be mythological, religious, philosophical, and scientific. In the case of Tolkien’s universe, it is possible to speak about an invented ‘mythological’ cosmogony and cosmology that synthesise cosmogonic and cosmological elements from several mythological, religious, and philosophical systems of the primary world.

κόσμος by *mundus*, ‘adornment’” (1960: 223; italics added). Many Classical philosophers in their description of the universe provide a picture of majestic orderliness and visual splendour. It is comprised of several planetary spheres in constant circular movement: three spheres in early Pythagoreanism, eight in Plato’s interpretation, and nine in later commentators such as the Stoic Cicero and Neoplatonist Macrobius. These early cosmological models are predominantly geocentric, seeing the Earth as the centre of this cosmos of revolving spheres, the uttermost of which is the sphere of the fixed stars. The entire structure was surrounded by the void. The revolution of the spheres produces unutterably beautiful and harmonious sounds that are known as the *music of the spheres*. The introduction of the concept of the music of the spheres is ascribed to Pythagoras. Iamblichus describes this music as follows:

[T]he universal harmony and music of the spheres and of the stars which move within them, uttering a song more complete and satisfying than any human melody, composed of subtly varied sounds of motion and speeds and sizes and positions, organized in a logical and harmonious relation to each other, and achieving a melodious circuit of subtle and exceptional beauty. (Iambl. *VP* 15.65; Clark (trans.) 1989: 27)

In Classical antiquity, the universe was seen as a grandiose and complex revolving structure whose movements produced a harmonious and never-ceasing sound.

A similar correlation between visual order or beauty and heavenly music exists in Tolkien’s cosmogonic myth, although, in contrast to the Classical model, the music is not the effect of the functioning of the universe but, rather, its cause and seems to precede the created world. In *Ainulindalë*, the Music of Ainur is deeply connected with ‘the Vision of Ilúvatar’, through which he reveals his design:

‘Behold your Music!’ And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where *before* was only hearing; and they saw *a new World made visible* before them, and it was *globed* amid the Void, and it was sustained therein, but was not of it. And as they looked and wondered this World began to unfold its history, and it seemed to them that it lived and grew. (*Sil* 6; italics added)

Life and growth are *visual* manifestations of the Music. Yet how can one speak about the precedence of anything in ‘the Timeless Halls’ before Time was actually created? As Chiara Bertoglio points out, “in reality outside time,

such as that of divine mind, all moments are simultaneously present in an eternal instant; the unfolding of the divine thought in the comprehension of the created being is a translation from atemporal to the temporal, symbolised by the most temporal of all arts, music” (2019: 6). Tolkien even calls his creation myth “a drama” (*Sil* xiv), implying, thus, the audio-visual unity of this stage of his cosmogony. Hence, it can be argued that division into stages is rather a narrative device to describe supra-cosmic experiences ungraspable for humans or even Elves, who live in “the Deeps of Time.”

The ultimate result of this drama is the creation of a physical cosmos: “and I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be” (*Sil* 9). As in almost all Classical and medieval cosmologies, the created cosmos is geo-centric (or rather Arda-centric): “[a]nd amid all the splendours of the World, its vast halls and spaces, and its wheeling fires, Ilúvatar chose a place for their habitation in the Deeps of Time and in the midst of the innumerable stars” (*Sil* 7). This universe, which is the embodiment of the divine audio-visual drama, is necessarily beautiful. Tolkien creates the world of unparalleled cosmic and natural beauty: he ‘paints’ striking visions of the skies, sweeping landscapes, and enchanted realms; his Elves are the most beautiful creatures to ever inhabit his world; all his protagonists and lesser characters in *The Silmarillion* are described as fair and possessing great loveliness, and even his evil is full of aesthetic grandeur. Echoing the Classical understanding of the concept of *kosmos*, Tolkien’s cosmos is an object of intense, piercing beauty, and the loss or diminishing of this beauty due to the intervention of evil seems to be the greatest of all tragedies.

Yet, unlike Pythagorean concepts of the music of the spheres, which is produced by the movement of heavenly spheres, Tolkien creates beings who sing his cosmic music. In the very first version of *Ainulindalë*, Ilúvatar sang the Ainur into being and then taught them music (Devaux 2017: 86). Michael Devaux compares the singing of the Ainur to the Catholic tradition of angelic music; yet he mentions that “Tolkien moved from a Latin conception of angel musicians (instrumentalists) to a more Byzantine one (singers)” (2017: 88n18). However, choirs of angels and other celestial beings can be found in the celestial hierarchy of the late Hellenistic, early Christian author

Dionysius the Areopagite, whose mystical writings were influential in the Western world.⁴ Moreover, in the Classical tradition there are other *singing* creatures involved in cosmological processes: for example, Plato's Sirens and Fates from 'the Myth of Er'. Plato creates a peculiar cosmological structure which consists of "eight whorls in all, lying in one another with their rims showing as circles from above, while from the back they form one continuous whorl around the stem, which is driven right through the middle of the eighth" (Pl. *Resp.* 10.616e; Bloom (trans.) 1991: 299-300). These circles have different breadth, velocity, direction of revolution, and colour (white, yellow, reddish, and a multi-coloured sphere of stars), and they create a complex yet comprehensible picture of the heavenly machinery. Unlike other Classical cosmologies, these circles are 'inhabited'.

Above, on each of its circles, is perched a Siren, accompanying its revolution, *uttering a single sound, one note; from all eight [circles] is produced the accord of a single harmony*. Three others are seated round about at equal distances, each on a throne. Daughters of Necessity, Fates – Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos – clad in white with wreaths on their heads, they *sing to the Sirens' harmony, Lachesis of what has been, Clotho of what is, and Atropos of what is going to be*. And Clotho puts her right hand to the outer revolution of the spindle and joins in turning it, ceasing from time to time; and Atropos with her left hand does the same to the inner ones; but Lachesis puts one hand to one and the other hand to the other, each in turn. (Pl. *Resp.* 10.617b-c; Bloom (trans.) 1991: 300; italics added).

Here the Sirens, who perform simpler music (only one note), seem to be in charge of the harmony of their respective spheres, while a higher class of beings, the three Fates, perform elaborate songs about the doom of the entire Universe and influence its motion. Commenting on this fragment, Proclus, one of the last Classical Neoplatonists, refers to the Sirens as divine planetary souls who "form as it were a *choir around a single coryphaeus* [the leader of a chorus], the World-Soul" (*in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*. Essay 16; Godwin (trans.) 1992: 74; italics added). In the same passage, Proclus argues further that there are three races of the Sirens: celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean.

These motifs of singing divine creatures and a choir under the governance of a higher divine being are echoed in Tolkien's supra-cosmic musical arrange-

⁴ Note the water imagery in the description of angelic singing in both Dionysius the Areopagite (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*. 7.4) and in Tolkien's *Ainulindalë* (*Sil* 8).

ments through images that cast Ilúvatar as a *coryphaeus* of Creation with the choir of the Ainur around him. Moreover, the Music of the Ainur develops through three themes, which define the history of Eä, as shown to the Ainur in the Vision (*Sil* 6), in a similar way to how the singing of the three Fates shapes the flow of events in Plato's vision of the universe. The division of simpler and more complex performances – notes for the Sirens and songs for the Fates – and different levels of involvement in the functioning of the universe in Plato's account may be compared to Tolkien's hierarchy of divine beings, the Valar and the Maiar.

The Sirens parallel the Maiar, whose range of power is more restricted in comparison to that of the Valar, the Powers of Arda. It might even be said that there are three types of Maiar: celestial, who stay with Ilúvatar outside Eä; terrestrial, who go to Arda with the Valar (Ossë, Uinen, Melian, and Olórin); and subterranean, who become the corrupted servants of Morgoth (the Balrogs). One such 'Siren', who is very cunning in magical singing, becomes Sauron (Mairon, a Maia of Aulë). Sauron's musical power is revealed in the song contest with Finrod (*Sil* 200-201), and he is defeated only by another singing creature, the half-Maia Lúthien, who "sang the song that no walls of stone could hinder" (*Sil* 204). Lúthien, as a semi-Maia, also possesses a tremendous musical power over the world,⁵ which she inherits from her mother Melian, a Maia who was extremely "skilled in songs of enchantment" (*Sil* 54) and who taught nightingales their song. Lúthien even manages to defeat Morgoth with "a song of such surpassing loveliness, and of such blinding power, that he listened perforce; and a blindness came upon him" (*Sil* 212), and later she moves Mandos to pity with "the song most fair that ever in words was woven, and the song most sorrowful that ever the world shall hear" (*Sil* 220). While the singing power of the Maiar over the world is comparable to the power of Plato's Sirens, his Fates may be compared to the Valar who rule the world, turning its *circles*. They also possess musical power over the world, which becomes a means of subcreation as, for example, in many of Yavanna's songs which awaken life on Arda.

5 For how her singing can alter the natural world, see *Sil* 193.

It is possible to see other parallels with the Classical tradition in Tolkien's created world. In all Classical interpretations of the music of the spheres, music is not a creational force per se. However, music, being an intrinsic part of the universe, permeates the very fabric of the world; it is always present, although, as the Pythagoreans argue, we do not hear it with our ears but with our souls. According to Macrobius, 'the world soul', which is the life force of all things, "provides all creatures with life [...] consequently it is natural for everything that breathes to be captivated by music since *the heavenly Soul that animates the universe sprang from music*. In quickening the spheres to motion it produces tones separated by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, in accordance with its primeval fabric" (Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 2.3.11; Stahl (trans.) 1990:195-196; italics added). In a similar manner, the Music of the Ainur continues 'to structure' the created world, to be a powerful cosmological force. Tolkien's world 'remembers' this music and is remarkably susceptible to musical influences. Ulmo's water music seems to permeate and influence the entire World: "In the deep places he [Ulmo] gives thought to music great and terrible; and the echo of that music runs through all the veins of the world in sorrow and in joy; for if joyful is the fountain that rises in the sun, its springs are in the wells of sorrow unfathomed at the foundations of the Earth" (*Sil* 34). Music and songs become a means of transmitting knowledge and preserving memories; it is also a source of magic in Tolkien's world. Tolkien calls this kind of magic "art, derived from many of its human limitations: more effortless, more quick, more complete (product, and vision in unflawed correspondence)" (*Sil* xiv). Thus, within the already-created world, music becomes a means of subcreation. The *Valaquenta*, Tolkien's account of the deeds of the Valar in the created world, provides a striking example of subcreation in Yavanna's song:

Yavanna Kementári sang before them and they watched. And as they watched, upon the mound there came forth two slender shoots; and silence was over all the world in that hour, nor was there any other sound save the chanting of Yavanna. Under her song the saplings grew and became fair and tall, and came to flower; and thus there awoke in the world the Two Trees of Valinor. (*Sil* 31)

The third aspect of Tolkien's musical dialogue with the Classics concerns harmony and discord. In the Classical tradition, there is evidence of the am-

bivalent nature of music, as demonstrated in the story of Pythagoras and a young man from Tauromenion. In this story, the young man is driven into a frenzy by flute music yet is cured from this abnormal state by a change of tune. Pythagoras' discovery of the musical intervals in a blacksmith's shop shows that music is a phenomenon that necessarily includes both concord and discord; there will be no music without either of these aspects (Iambl. *VP* 15.65). Through the musical design of his cosmos, Tolkien produces a specific aesthetic theodicy: discord is a necessary part of the Music – there would be no music (and no Eä) at all without it. Thus, Melkor seems to be the Ainu who was conceived to be in charge of discord (whence his great power), and his “fall is described in the *Ainulindalë* in exquisitely musical terms” (Bertoglio 2018: 97). As Collins points out, Melkor “presents an aesthetic challenge, which exercises the ingenuity and control of the artist/composer” (2000: 259). He exists to create a greater glory in the ‘Great Music’ as any dissonance necessarily resolves into a consonance: “for he that attempteth this shall prove but *mine instrument* in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined” (*Sil* 6; italics added). Thus, in Tolkien's world, music, like any artistic means, seems to be a thing beyond good or evil from its very beginning. And later, when in the created world the powers take sides, they can equally use music for opposing ends: as is the case of Yavanna's subcreating songs or Sauron's song of power which defeated Finrod (*Sil* 200-201).

Music has one more important function both in Pythagorean and Platonic teaching and in Tolkien's world. Ancient philosophers viewed music as a means of deliverance from the soul's earthly bondage, as it is vividly described in ‘The Dream of Scipio’ by Cicero: the human soul originates from the uppermost and most wondrous among all nine spheres, the spheres of stars, and forever yearns to return to its astral home. A soul's salvation, moreover, can be attained through music: “gifted men, imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as have those who have devoted their exceptional abilities to a search for divine truths” (Macrob. *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 5.2; Stahl (trans.) 1990: 74). This recurrent motif depicting music as a means of deliverance from the soul's earthly bondage and connecting the fate of the human soul to harmony

of the spheres is a peculiar feature of Pythagorean and Platonic teaching. In Tolkien's legendarium, the ultimate salvation of the world will be achieved in the Second Music created by the choirs of the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the destruction of the first Creation, which was marred by Melkor's interference with the First Music (*Sil* 4). On an individual level, music, in particular singing, is also a great means for breaking bondage. Here again, Lúthien's songs provide vivid examples: with mighty magical songs, she delivers Beren from imprisonment in Tol-in-Gaurhoth and destroys that fortress (*Sil* 204-206); with the song about her love and sorrows sung before Mandos, she manages to break the most powerful bondage, the bondage of death and her own bond to the fate of the Eldar (*Sil* 220-221).

In conclusion, it can be remarked that Tolkien's synthetic mythology comprises a peculiar amalgamation of many traditions, and this allows a great variety of interpretations. Our paper uncovers only some possible influences of the Classical ideas of music on Tolkien's legendarium. Yet, these Classical elements do not contradict the overall Christian or Catholic ideology of Tolkien's creation; rather, they reveal a continuity of ideas and concepts.

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AFTERWORD

