

The Linguistic Shifts in Tolkien's Elvish Languages from a Socio-political Lens

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As it is well known, Tolkien was a brilliant philologist and dedicated a big part of his life to what he called *glossopoeia* (complementing the concept of *mythopoeia*) by creating a variety of languages, a family in fact, including the variations of Elvish idioms. Gilson and Wynne say that “Tolkien also described the Elven languages themselves in terms of several versions of a “Tree of Tongues” drafted to accompany the *Lhammas* and *Lammasethen*, works describing the development of the languages within the history of Middle-earth” (187). It is therefore reasonable to assume that these languages not only evolved during the author's life, who continuously developed them, but that they also matured and transformed through the narratological aspects of his works. In fact, it may be argued that Tolkien used the narrative framework of his writings to explore the evolution of linguistics; as Ugolnik notes, “the invention of Elvish pre-dates the trilogy; in a true sense Tolkien created a world to act as a stage for a language” (18). This article will hence take into account the Elvish languages and explore how they changed based on the socio-political circumstances of the fictional characters who spoke them. The work will assume that Tolkien moulded the Elvish languages according not only to the

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linguistic and phonological phenomena of the Primary World that he understood perfectly, but as well as taking into account the motives and events within the Elvish chronicles; ultimately, Tolkien used a metaliterary process where both language and fiction interacted and intertwined.

To emphasize the impact of the narratological elements on the linguistic features, it is possible to compare Tolkien's technique of using unnamed intradiegetic narrators with the figures of the "wyrdrīteras," what could be called chroniclers or historians in Old English. Through this comparison, Gallant affirms that "the history of the Elves is one that is both *morally* ideological and *politically* ideological as the wyrdrīteras exposit the theme of Northern courage in their tales" (26).

The following paragraph will be useful to offer a brief and condensed representation of the family of Elvish tongues, their variations and their origin, as well as to give a general understanding of the dedication that Tolkien put into his works:

Sindarin and Quenya in *The Lord of the Rings*, as indicated by such texts as "Quendi and Eldar" and *The Silmarillion*, are, like all the other Elvish tongues, originated in Primitive Quendian, from which is derived Common Eldarin. From the Common Eldarin arose Vanyarin, Ñoldorin, and Telerin. Sindarin is an offshoot of Telerin (Common Telerin), the language of the Teleri, who started the Great Journey to Valinor together with the Vanyar and the Ñoldor. While the Vanyar and the Ñoldor reached the destination and developed Quenya in Valinor, part of the Teleri remained in Middle-earth. Those among the Teleri who went to Valinor developed Telerin (proper), whereas those who remained in Beleriand were the Sindar, whose language was Sindarin, and the Nandor (the Green-elves), from whose language evolved Silvan Elvish. (Hemmi 164)

This article will hence consider *The Silmarillion* and the *Histories of the Middle-earth* (from now on *HoMe* or simply *History*) as the central source material. It is also important to emphasize that both these works were published posthumously, the first one in 1977 and the second one between 1983 and 1996; this was accomplished by his son, Christopher Tolkien, who organized and edited all the fragments that his father had left unpublished. As Hiley explains, "[*The Silmarillion*] is a system of stories whose greatest effect stems from their interrelation, that they are separate tales but nonetheless can only fully be understood when read as a whole" (843). It is for this reason that Tolkien believed

The Silmarillion to be indispensable for the comprehension of *The Lord of the Rings*. Similarly, David Peterson comments that “[Tolkien] understood that language itself is inseparable from the culture that produces it and he felt that if the languages he was creating had no place to breathe, they wouldn’t have any kind of vitality” (10). It is exactly this intricacy of created myth and culture that this article aims to explore; it is quintessentially a Secondary world where the constructed language acts as a bonding agent for the events that transpire.

One of the aims of this article is to understand how the socio-political dimensions of the Secondary world change many aspects of its language. Echoes of the evolution of languages of the Primary world can be noticed with this study; as it will be explained, Tolkien was well aware of the historical and political dynamics that led to linguistic shifts – as he made them an intrinsic part within his own Secondary world. As an example, to explain the intricacies and dynamics of power, Michel Foucault explains in an interview how power is a “more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations” (198); this description equally permeates the Secondary world that Tolkien created. It is however important to contextualize one important aspect: although there is much room for speculation on how the writer was influenced to create the *Legendarium*, and what were his historical circumstances, critics should be attentive as to not perceive his works with a modern non-contextualised lens. While there are several current debates regarding Tolkien’s work, especially correlated with the depiction of the orcs and other hierarchical aspects within his world, this article will not focus on those nuances. It will instead give ample space to the lore of the Elvish tongue and its evolution and will rather focus on an intertextual analysis of the chronicles to analyse the conlangs that Tolkien crafted. The term conlang, although an anachronism when applied to Tolkien, will be hence used for simplicity.

It is particularly the Elves that have the most dynamic changes in their language, and through them Tolkien also explores spiritual and dilemmas and anxieties. As Fimi notes, “they are an 'experiment' in sub-creation, an attempt to construct a Secondary World in which dying means different things for different beings. The Elves are central because they provide a viewpoint from which deep human questions are explored through a Secondary World” (10). Various theological aspects will intertwine with the world building itself as it will be evident from the chronicles themselves. The work will hence examine the Elvish languages according to their evolution within the confinements of the Secondary world. Rather than outward process, where characteristics from the Secondary world are

critically cross-referenced with a Primary world lens, the process will be inward, hence understanding the criteria that were used to create the Secondary world. Although it is impossible to think of the political reality of the Elves in a vacuum, it will be assumed nevertheless that Tolkien's intent was merely to give his stories the equal sense of vitality that David Peterson inferred. This line of reasoning is also supported by Lewis, acknowledging how the socio-political dimension constitutes a point of authenticity within the narrative:

So the political slant to events is what gives *The Silmarillion* a realism far removed from mere contrivance. The incidences of narrative bias throughout the text towards certain characters and against others seem to suggest that they were placed there on purpose by the author, rather than a natural development, reinforcing in my belief the enormous skill of the author by which the work gains such credibility and realism for the reader.
(164)

The article hence recognises that there are different degrees in which the socio-political dimension of a text may be analysed and represented, however it is a choice to limit the observations and confine them only within the stories – or histories – of the Secondary world as they give ample room for speculation.

Lastly, given the vastness of the considered topic and the available study materials, this article will provide an explanation of the background of Elvish lore and then focus mostly on one particular of these tribes, the Ñoldor. This decision was made not only because the Ñoldor are pivotal in the social dynamics of the Elvish tribes, but also because their agency implies drastic political shifts as well, and these in turn have a series of repercussions on their language as it will be emphasized through the examples provided. Furthermore, “the political rhetoric and sententiae of the Ñoldorin wyrdwīteras embedded in the text show how the *Silmarillion* (and by extension the Elvish history continuing in *The Lord of the Rings*) develop a sense of depth and authenticity that we find in Primary World histories and the medieval exemplum” (Gallant 27).

When Chronicles, Music, and Linguistics Meet

The first chapter of the *Silmarillion*, “Ainulindalë: The Music of the Ainur,” introduces the Eru Ilúvatar, a Creator-God that generated the Ainur, or Holy Ones, angelic and supreme beings akin to gods. Musicality and sound are a cornerstone in Tolkien's world building: not only did Ilúvatar create the world through music,

but he also taught the Ainur through song. As it will be explained further on, there subsists a distinct correlation between this attention to music and the evolution of Tolkien's conlangs and sense of linguistic aesthetics. As Chance emphasizes upon considering *The Silmarillion*,

It is no mistake that this work begins with the words "There was Eru, the One," and concludes with the words "story and song." Because these tales celebrate the power of creation and goodness through the image of song, music, and its triumph over destruction and evil as represented by broken and inharmonious song, this very "Book of Lost Tales" might be viewed as itself a praise of creation – and creativity. (189)

Subsequently, Melkor, one of the greatest Ainur, attempts to increase his power and glory by altering his part in the music the Ainur sang before Ilúvatar; this narratological element is an echo of the Judeo-Christian story of Creation and the fall from Eden. This initial attempted shift of power dynamics however also leads to discord amongst the Ainur themselves until Ilúvatar intervene. By putting an end to the Music, he shows them a vision of the world and its unfolding history: "Behold your music – for through it was the world made" (*Silmarillion* 6). The images in fact portray the Children of Ilúvatar and many of the Ainur, feeling love for this progeny, decide to descend upon the world and prepare it for their arrival. Those who descend are called Valar and their helpers, lesser deities nevertheless, are named Maiar. Once their preparations are completed, they leave Middle-earth and go to Aman and establishing their home in Valinor, also referred to as the Blessed Realm. There Yavanna, one of the Valar, creates the two trees of Valinor: Telperion (dark green and silver) and Laurelin (light green and gold). It is at this point that the narrative style and portrayal of a mythical past starts to transition to the style of a chronicle, an account of events that is marked by the passage of time; the Years of the Trees, as Tolkien calls them, will hence give a dimension of historical credibility to his fictional characters, settings, and events. The Valar will await the children of Ilúvatar and this progeny will be composed of Elves (or Quendi), firstborn and immortal, and Men, also called Atani.

A Migration and a Shift in Languages

As reported in the *History*, the first one to encounter the Elves is Oromë, a Valar linked to hunting and exploration. He is the first to wander Middle-earth and thus discover Ilúvatar's progeny:

Thus it was that Oromë came upon the Quendi by chance in his wandering, while they dwelt yet silent upon the star-lit mere, Cuiviénen, Water of Awakening, in the East of Middle-earth. For a while he abode with them and aided them in the making of language [...] (*HoMe* – Book 10, Part 3, 160)

In this resoundingly archaic style, Tolkien describes the Elves being born – or rather waking up – on the banks of Lake Cuiviénen; it is not by chance that he describes the waters as those of Awakening. Most of the details that Tolkien employs are in fact literary mechanisms, imitating to an extent the style of religious or mythological texts, through which he creates the fictional mythos of his world while also keeping the tone of a distant reality.

Oromë is the one who helps the Elves develop a way of verbal communication, the Eldarin, at first only in its oral form, as is the case with many other embryonic languages. Tolkien's knowledge of linguistics makes him start from the very beginning, by stating that the tongue was only spoken and that writing had not been invented yet, gives a feeling of step-by-step linguistic and cultural evolution. Oromë then invites the Elves to follow him to the Blessed Realm of the Valar and this marks an important event in their chronicles. In Tolkien's words,

[the Valar] feared for the Quendi in the dangerous world amid the deceits of the starlit dusk; and they were filled moreover with the love of the beauty of the Elves and desired their fellowship. At the last, therefore, the Valar summoned the Quendi to Valinor. [...] But the Elves were at first unwilling to hearken to the summons [...] and they were filled with dread. Therefore Oromë was sent again to them and he chose from among them ambassadors who should go to Valinor and speak for their people. [...] Then Oromë brought them back to Cuiviénen, and they spoke before their people, and counselled them to heed the summons of the Valar and remove into the West (*Silmarillion*, 49-50)

While most Elves decided to follow Oromë, setting in motion what is referred to as the Great Migration, not all of them actually arrive in Valinor. After this exodus, there are three main linguistic variants: Telerin, Sindarin and Quenya. Telerin is the one most similar to the original Proto Quenya as the Elves that speak it, the Teleri, choose to remain on the island Tol Eressea until the end of time. Given that it is impossible for others to arrive at said island, it is also impossible for Telerin to receive other linguistic nuances or variations. The second tribe of Elves, the Sindar, end up not reaching the Blessed Realm; they instead occupy the territories of

Beleriand and develop Sindarin. The last variation of the proto-language is Quenya; it is spoken by the Vanya and the Ñoldo, the only tribes that eventually reach the Blessed Realm.

Because of the socio-political motives that alter Quenya, it is this particular linguistic variation that will be analysed for the purpose of this article. Tolkien modelled the evolution of Quenya based on the history of the Primary World: he employed examples taking into account the history of Latin and the development of the other romance languages.

The first Elves to arrive in Valinor speak what is referred to as Proto Quenya; they arrive in 1133 and this lasts until 1179 when Rumil, an elf, develops the graphemes to write said language. This marks an important transition in which the language becomes what is referred to as Old or Classical Quenya, a variation used between 1179 and 1200/1250. Classical Quenya, much like Latin in the Primary World during the Middle Ages, was less used because a more common form, Middle Quenya, starts to take its place being used more frequently. One of these more noticeable changes was the shift from \mathfrak{P} to s, as Christopher Tolkien suggests:

The change $\mathfrak{P} > s$ must therefore have been a conscious and deliberate change agreed to and accepted by a majority of the Ñoldor, however initiated, after the separation of their dwellings from the Vanyar. It must have occurred after the birth of Míriel, but (probably) before the birth of Fëanor. The special connexion of these two persons with the change and its later history needs some consideration. The change was a general one, based primarily on phonetic “taste” and theory, but it had yet to become universal. (*HoMe, The Peoples of Middle-earth*, 332)

Fëanor takes a central role in the political stage and development of the life of the Elves. From the tribe of the Ñoldor, he is the son of King Finwë and Míriel.¹ While the transition to the s sound is common amongst the Ñoldor, it is rebuked by Fëanor because his mother taught him that using the \mathfrak{P} sound is the proper way to speak. Furthermore, Fëanor hates his father for marrying anew after Míriel’s death. The political frictions between King Finwë and Fëanor take a linguistic form: the Elves that support Fëanor maintain the original \mathfrak{P} , whereas the others shift to the s sound. The choice to use one rather than the other unavoidably implied a political statement.

¹ Fëanor’s birth leaves his mother so devastated in spirit that she decides to die; this is a first in the history of the Elves, immortal beings until then. Given her decision, King Finwë also decides to marry once again, another unique event until that moment.

A further consideration on phonetics can be found in Anthony Ugolnik who analyses the nature of Tolkien's linguistic aesthetics; within his article, he demonstrated how these are pivotal in determining the laws of the conlang of the Secondary Word. Ugolnik concentrates on examples in both Quenya and in the Black Speech² of Sauron, not only because they represent antithetical examples, but also because they are bound to moral absolutes that are indicative of Tolkien's linguistic aesthetics. In examining one of Galadriel's songs, he therefore explains the phonetic elements that associate Quenya to music and musicality:

The first feature of Quenya which becomes immediately evident is the preponderance of liquids (l, r) and nasals (m, n). Every disyllabic word in our sample contains at least one liquid or nasal sound, and most contain more. The coupling of consonants invariably includes a liquid or a nasal. The r, according to Tolkien's pronunciational [sic] guide, was consistently trilled, and the l was palatalized (III, 488). Thus if we read, or preferably chant, this selection from Galadriel's song, we will note that the tongue, though it may drop back to form the back vowels, must return forward with staccato-like frequency to form the recurring alveolar [sic] (/, r) and alveolar nasal (n). In joined consonants these alveolars give way to the alveolar stops d and t, keeping the tongue forward. Vaguely reminiscent of Celtic and modern Finnish, Quenya possesses a strong rhythmic flow and a tendency to voiced consonants [sic]. (Ugolnik 25)

Through these phonetic considerations, given how vocalized consonants blend easily into the vowels that follow them, it is easy to understand why Quenya would be more easily and ideally suited for songs and chants. If Ilúvatar created the world through song, as seen previously, then it also stands to reason for a language that stemmed from the Elves who reached Valinor to also have akin musical qualities.

The Fëanor Case

Fëanor is also an important linguist for the Elves: he creates the tengwar script, a new writing system that represents a linguistic innovation and marks the passage

² Black Speech, similar to Tolkien's conflicted position on the genesis of the orc (see Fimi 154-155), constitutes another point that has been largely under scrutiny and that this article will however not consider. It will simply assume rather that within this context it refers to a dichotomy between the forces of good and evil in a mythological or theological sense, rather than a question of superiority and inferiority.

towards Modern Quenya. As previously explained, Tolkien uses the style of a chronicled history not only to show the lore of the Elves, but also to emphasize the evolution of their language based on a social and cultural context. The initial shifts are in fact based on necessity, communication and finally migration. It is only with the conflict between Fëanor and King Finwë that it is possible to notice how the political dimensions start to interact with the linguistic ones.

Another crucial point in the history of the Elves comes with the creation of the Silmarils, three jewels crafted by Fëanor himself by capturing the light of the Two Trees of Valinor. It will be at this point that the rebellious Valar Melkor³ makes his return, destroying the Two Trees and stealing the Silmarils. This event has dire repercussions on all the Elf communities and even greater consequences because of Fëanor's reaction. In 1495 of the Year of the Trees, Fëanor and his seven sons pronounce an Oath that they will not rest until the three Silmarils are back in their hands, and to make war on any who dare halt them. As read in *History*, the vow states:

Be he foe or friend, be he foul or clean,
 brood of Morgoth or bright Vala,
 Elda or Maia or Aftercomer,
 Man yet unborn upon Middle-earth,
 neither law, nor love, nor league of swords,
 dread nor danger, not Doom itself,
 shall defend him from Fëanor, and Fëanor's kin,
 whoso hideth or hoardeth, or in hand taketh,
 finding keepeth or afar casteth
 a Silmaril. This swear we all:
 death we will deal him ere Day's ending,
 woe unto world's end! Our word hear thou,
 Eru Allfather! To the everlasting
 Darkness doom us if our deed faileth.
 On the holy mountain hear in witness
 and our vow remember, Manwë and Varda! (*The Annals of Aman* 112)

This historical moment for the Elves is a representation not of brotherhood or peace, but a true declaration of war and division between the various tribes; it symbolizes a point of rupture in which a society that previously coexisted is torn apart. It is also

³ Fëanor names him Morgoth, Dark Enemy of the World.

a theme that will be encompassed in other aspects of Tolkien's production: in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, for example, which portrays events that unfold much later from a chronological standpoint, there is a clear admonition not to swear an oath. Elrond, an Elf who remembers the painful past and what Fëanor's Oath entails, says "yet no oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will. For you do not yet know the strength of your hearts, and you cannot foresee what each may meet upon the road." While this statement seems less important to a casual reader of the *Trilogy*, it is through the parts of lore addressed within the *Silmarillion* and the *History of Middle-earth* that it becomes evident how Tolkien intertwines all the different narratological elements. As Gallant affirms,

The wisdom of Elrond may be apparent simply because he is of the Eldar, but it is also imbued with the cultural and moral authority of the Fingolfians. As a Ñoldo of the First Age, Elrond is certainly aware of the power and devastating effect of oaths. Of course Gimli, although of the 'Free Peoples of Middle-earth,' is an outsider to the Eldar-Mannish culture. While Gimli speaks of oaths as binding sources of strength and loyalty, Elrond speaks from the authoritative narratives that illustrate examples of tragedy due to binding oaths. (40)

Fëanor's oath in fact leads to a chain of dreadful events for the Elves; with his seven sons he leads the charge against Melkor, heading towards Middle-earth and indeed stops at nothing to reach his goal. The Kingslaying at Alqualondë is in fact the first case of an Elf slayed by another Elf; since the Teleri of Alqualondë, the Swanhaven, do not give Fëanor the ships he requests in his pursuit, the Ñoldor takes them by force (*Silmarillion*, chapter 9). Fëanor then proceeded to burn down the swan-ships once he reaches Losgar as to impede other Elves from chasing and stopping him and presumably even to obstruct his own Ñoldor from turning back. Fëanor's actions are so crude for the Elf tribes that did not know war until that moment that they make the other Elves mark him as an outcast, never to make his return to Valinor. As Lewis points out, "the *Silmarillion* is essentially an elvish viewpoint of the world and its history, and of the kindred of the elves it is essentially Noldorin but distinctly anti-Fëanorian" (160). Fëanor's agency changes not only the behaviour and culture of the Elves, but also influences their decisions as they are forced to pick a side over the other; one of the outcomes, as it will be explained, even leads some of the Elves to self-isolation.

Throughout the rest of Middle-earth there are several repercussions as well: Thingol, ruler of Doriath, one of the Elven kingdoms that forms in Beleriand,

decides accordingly to prohibit the use of Quenya precisely because of Fëanor's atrocities. In other words, Quenya is correlated with the one who develops its alphabet and the tribe of Ñoldor. Given the lifespan of Elves, immortal beings at their core, this stigmatization of Quenya is much more impactful because of the concept of time.⁴

The arrival of the Ñoldor in Middle-earth and their exile in the territory of Beleriand also implies linguistic exchanges between Middle Quenya, the language they speak, and Sindarin, the language used by the Sindar Elves that does not migrate towards the Blessed Realm. The Ñoldor are inferior in number and this signifies an initial difficulty in communication between the two tribes; a slow merger between these two factions leads to different linguistic variations. While Sindarin remains the more colloquial language used in Middle-earth, it eventually does add some elements from Ñoldorin; on the other hand, the Quenya spoken by the Ñoldorin maintains a status of a more refined language. This process is also parallel to the one Tolkien was aware of in the Primary World, as Goering suggests,

The situation of Sindarin as a living, colloquial language in Middle-Earth alongside learned Quenya therefore bears considerable resemblance to the circumstances of the vernacular languages of Europe (including, of course, Welsh) alongside Medieval Latin in the Middle Ages. (69)

For Tolkien this distinction was clear and indicates that whereas Sindarin is subjected to a wider degree of changes, Quenya remains an “archaic language of lore” (Letter 144). The linguistic shifts are however not present in the case of the Sindarin spoken in Dorianth and Gondolin; this is due to the previously mentioned prohibition as well as to the fact that these territories are geographically inaccessible.

Examples of Linguistic Shifts. The *Parma Eldalamberon* is a journal edited by Christopher Gilson with the support of Christopher Tolkien and the permission of the Tolkien Estate. It is devoted to the study of Tolkien's conlangs and analyses the fragments, both published and unpublished, of his writings from a linguistic point of view. Volume 21 of this journal published Tolkien's 1931 treaty on Quenya grammar and nouns. In “Common Eldarin: Noun Structure,” Tolkien explains how the philosophy and practice of Elvish name-giving is distinguished between *Essekarme* (name-making) and *Essekilme* (name-choosing). In Eldarin, children

⁴ The prohibition is lifted only after the destruction of the Ring and the defeat of Sauron at the end of the Third Era, after almost ten thousand years.

are given names devised by the parents and this is the name by which they are usually known to others; however, when the children learn to speak (at about seven years⁵ amongst the Ñoldor who are considered the swiftest at word-mastery) they are also aware of their own sound predilections (lamatyave) and phonetic characters. This predilection is the Essekilme, or name-choosing, as explained in the following paragraph:

The lamatyave was held, especially by the Noldor, to be a characteristic of the person as interesting as others (such as colour, height, and bodily aptitudes and peculiarities), and far more important than most, on a par with the most fundamental mental talents and aptitudes. This lamatyave the child was supposed to express now in the Chosen Name. In later times, when there was a great store of names in existence (which children eagerly learned and savoured), the Chosen Name might well be one merely selected from known names, originally for the most part the products of bygone Essekarme. But it was still so chosen because of its sound-pattern. In elder times, and at all later times most usually, the “Chosen Name” was actually freshly devised, with (or often without) previous significance, as a pattern or sound-sequence that gave aesthetic pleasure, special personal pleasure according to the chooser's lamatyave, when contemplating this pattern (non-significant, or emptied of previous significance) in relation to himself. (84)

As such, for the Elves, names have a certain importance and weight. For the purpose of this article, two particular cases shall be considered and analysed to further explain the phonetic and phonologic shifts: that of Thingol and that of Maedhros.

Thingol, one of the kings of the Teleri, has already been mentioned as being king of Dorianth. The Quenya name he is known by in Middle-earth is Elwë Singollo. Elwë is composed of the initial element *él* (star) and the suffix *-wë*, common in ancient names (*HoMe, Peoples of Middle-earth* 340), whereas Singollo (first appearance in *HoMe, Morgoth's Ring* 82) is the combination of *sinda/sindë* (grey) and *collo* (cloak). Singollo also appears in its longer forms, Sindicollo and Sindacollo (*Silmarillion* Appendix). His name in Sindarin becomes Elu Thingol with the short final vowels disappearing and the [w] grapheme shifting to a [u]: Elwe>Elw>Elu. His epithet, Greymantle (*Silmarillion* 56) or Greycloak (*HoMe, The War of the Jewels* 410), remains as Thingol.

⁵ The Eldar can “talk” within the first year, but control over the structure of the language and its aesthetics is reached later on.

Another interesting case that may be considered for the purpose of this analysis is that of Maedhros, the eldest son of Fëanor; named by his father Nelyafinwë (literally, Finwë the Third) and by his mother Maitimo, he is also known for his lamatyave, Russandol. While Maitimo seems to be a compound of *maitë* (shapely) and the agental suffix *-mo*, translated to “Well-shaped One” (*HoMe, Peoples of Middle-earth* 353, 366), Russandol combined *russa* (red-haired) and the derivative of the root *-ndol* (head) and literally translates to “Copper-top.” Russandol accompanies Fëanor through the above-mentioned events that drastically shape the Elvish political stage and arrives in Middle-earth. Although he speaks Quenya, to communicate with the other Elves he is forced to change his own epithet into Sindarin; he does so by a type of translation and union of his original names, *Maitimo*>*Maed* (well-shaped) in Sindarin and *Russandol*>*ross* (red-haired). As such, in Sindarin he is known as Maedhros, or more properly spelled Maedros (*HoMe, Peoples of Middle-earth* 352).

Conclusions

As Elizabeth Kirk underlines upon analysing the various linguistic aspects of *Lord of the Rings*,

Tolkien has created an entire world in its spatial and chronological dimensions, peopling it with languages which have, in a necessarily stylized and simplified version, all the basic features of language, from writing systems and sound changes through diction and syntax to style. By playing them against one another, he has created a "model" (in the scientific sense of the term) for the relationship of language to action, to values and to civilization. (10)

If this reasoning is valid for the *Trilogy*, then by extension it should also be applied and understood on a more ample framework. Upon considering Tolkien's *Legendarium*, it is important to remember that the *Trilogy*, although admittedly his most renowned work, represents but a fraction of the whole. *The Lord of the Rings* should be regarded therefore more as a point of arrival for Tolkien's conlangs, one where a multitude of events have already formed and determined the linguistic dynamics and moulded the languages of Middle-earth. These shifts however are present and shown by Tolkien in his various works; his *Legendarium* behaves as an organic ensemble that comprises not only the *Silmarillion*, the *History* and the *Trilogy*, but also many other fragments, such as lectures, letters and appendixes.

The sheer magnitude of Tolkien's works create a Secondary World where the events, as well as the languages that govern them, become vivid and intrinsically interconnected – in many ways akin to the Primary one. Because of his profound understanding of linguistics, both from a grammatical as well as an anthropological and social point of view, Tolkien understood how to apply said knowledge to the conlangs of his own imagined lore. As Gallant says, “With one foot in the Primary World and one foot in the Secondary World, we may treat the history of the Elves as a fictional historiography” (29); it is only by appreciating the complexities of the socio-political agencies that mould the evolution of a language in any given moment that one can better understand Tolkien's approach to his own fictitious creations. As it has been demonstrated, several events have drastically changed and determined the evolution of Tolkien's languages; most notably these are the Elvish Migration, as well as the theft of the Silmarils on behalf of Melkor and the subsequent reaction of Fëanor. It is also paramount to recognise the importance of the timespan of these proceedings: while Elves are immortals, the less than five hundred years since Rumil first invents the Elvish graphemes until the exile of the Ñoldor is but a minor fraction in the lifespan of an elf. For reference, it takes the Elves nearly fifty thousand years from the moment they wake up on the banks of Cuiviénen to arrive to Valinor and less than four hundred years later Melkor steals the Silmarils. Astutely Tolkien understood the importance of time for a language to form and change and by setting all these transformations within a short period of time actually emphasizes the importance of the events not only within the Elvish lore, but also the impact they had on his entire world building.

By taking inspiration from the historical events of the Primary world, such as how an oral tongue used for communications transitions into a written form or how a previously united civilization may fall apart – for political or social reasons – and with it also its language may become fragmented, Tolkien recreated said dynamics in his Secondary World. This process in turn gives the readers a feeling of complexity and profoundness. As Peterson says, “This is precisely how natural languages evolve in our world, and would naturally be appropriate for a fictional setting that has an alternate history with any kind of time depth similar to ours on Earth” (10). It is exactly this sense of depth that this article tried to explain through the various intertextual elements. Except for several examples from the *Trilogy*, this analysis has however mostly taken into account the events of the first era, whereas Tolkien's conlangs evolved through the span of all four eras of Arda. Additional studies might further explain and emphasize the intricacies and

dynamics between the socio-politic dimensions and the linguistic ones, especially considering several other more recent debates considering Tolkien's works. Specific examples might include the shifts from the coexistence of the Sindarin and Adunaic tongues on the island of Numenor, to the total prohibition of the Elvish language during the second era. The distancing process of Numenor from the Valar is in fact a progressive transition that starts with the thirteenth sovereign, Tar-Ciryatan, and culminates with the twentieth one, Ar-Adunakhor; he is the first ruler to claim the throne with an Adunaic name and also the one to ultimately forbid the Elvish language from the island. This detail is also important when considering Tolkien's aesthetics of linguistics, musicality and the light of the Valar; the Adunaic tongue, as opposed to Elvish one, is in fact more consonantal and harsh-sounding.

Ultimately, it is by understanding how socio-political circumstances can utterly change the usage of a language, influence it and mould it accordingly, that Tolkien was able to write the chronicles of the Elves. As Nagy remarks, "these are not simply *stories* but *histories*" (247, emphasis in original) precisely because of the way Tolkien added that profound dimension which, although fictional, has a strong historical and anthropological anchoring point that he understood masterfully and employed accordingly.

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