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Philology in Tolkien's Work: the Creation of a Myth through the Power of languages

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Philology in Tolkien's Work

The Creation of a Myth through the Power of Languages

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“Not all those who wander are lost.”
—J. R. R. Tolkien

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Introduction

"Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them."
(R. L. Stevenson, "If This Were Faith" 33)

J. R. R. Tolkien, writer of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, is a puzzling man. The criticism of his work, good and bad, is often sadly unfair to the man and his many layers and complexities. Because of his book *The Hobbit*, he is thought of by some as just a writer of children's books; because of his narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, he is thought of by some as just a writer of epic stories set in a fairy world of elves and trolls; because of his book *The Silmarillion*, the mythological account of his world of Arda and Middle-Earth, he is thought of by some as just an author writing in an archaic and difficult-to-read style; and because of the film adaptations of his books, he is thought of by the die-hard fans, or even those less keen on the movies, as just the creator of a world made of small-sized characters with curly hair and hairy feet, of tall blonde elves with pointy ears talking in a weird-yet-strangely appealing language and in whispering voices, and of ugly orcs, the whole mixed up in a series of battles, long talks, breathtaking landscapes, entangled plots, and attempts by Frodo to destroy a ring. He is considered as one of the greatest writers and beloved authors of the 20th century (White, "Talking Tolkien"), his book *The Lord of the Rings* has been voted twice the most-loved book by two British polls (Waterson and BBC) in the recent years, and both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have enjoyed tremendous success, with the books selling more than 250 million copies worldwide (Russon, "Top 10 Best Selling Books"). Yet, very little is known by most of this audience about the man and his many layers; very little is known about his subsequent books; very little is known about his academic background and his scholarly

education in philology; and even less is known about the impressive linguistic work that went behind the writing of his narratives.

When his two most famous books were published, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, he received the harshest of critics, but also the kindest of reviews. Patrick Curry wonders how the reception of Tolkien's work could "combine remarkable popular success with extraordinary hostility" ("Tolkien and his Critics" 75). One of the most infamous critics he received was that which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1956, written by an anonymous reviewer: "This is not a work that many adults will read right through more than once" (Drout). His work is often considered pop culture and not literature, and yet, the more studied it is, the more subtle his writing and his world are found to be. It seems the scholars, aware of his philological background, do not forgive him for having given in such a trivial pursuit as the writing of a children's book and of an epic story; while his most enthusiast readers do not fully encompass the complexity of the man and how this complexity has shaped his work. One gets the feeling that wherever Tolkien goes, the views on his work are very restrictive and not the fair representation of the many layers of his personality.

Tolkien was a professor of English at Oxford University, a scholar of medieval and Norse studies and languages, and a philologist. He is the famous writer of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as *The Silmarillion* (slightly less known from the general audience); but he has also left an impressive legacy of posthumous books based on his many manuscripts, edited and published by his son Christopher, after he had died. Each of these books is a closer glimpse at the world Tolkien had spent his life creating, and at the complexity of his creation. The first element that springs to mind is the paramount importance, in every aspect of his work, of languages. Passionate about languages and philology, Tolkien was a creator of invented tongues, an activity he devoted himself to, with

great pleasure and meticulousness, and that served as the basis for his literary creation, since he said that his work was "primarily linguistic in inspiration" ("Foreword" xii). He often stressed the personal and individual nature of this undertaking:

> It must be emphasized that this process of invention [of Elven languages] was/is *a private enterprise undertaken to give pleasure to myself* by giving expression to my personal linguistic 'aesthetic', or taste, and its fluctuations. It was largely antecedent to the composing of legends and 'histories' in which these languages could be 'realized'; and the bulk of the nomenclature is constructed from these pre-existing languages. (*Letters* 380, my italics)

Yet, his books have nevertheless enjoyed a massive success, with Professor of English Jane Chance underlining that "a mere four decades after its publication, *Rings* has already assumed its place as a long, heroic epic-romance on the shelf next to the works of Spenser and Malory" (*Mythology* 9). Tolkien's books are now ranked amongst the myths of our century. And their linguistic aspect, that is to say the invented languages, seems to have created fascination and eagerness amongst a public of scholars but also of enthusiasts of a more general kind, who are slowly realising the depth and fine work put into this invention process. But why has Tolkien's enterprise of language creation created so much enthusiasm and had such a strong impact around the world, whereas it originally sprang from a unilateral initiative with a personal scope? Why and how has the individual undertaking of a scholar to give free expression to his own linguistic pleasure had so much influence around the world?

One needs first to better grasp what kind of a man Tolkien was, to understand the origins to his language-inventing initiative. This study will first focus on Tolkien's background as a lover of languages and a philologist to analyse the reasons that may have prompted him to create languages.

Then, we will look at his invented languages proper, with a closer analysis of two of his Elven tongues, as representing the perfect illustration of Tolkien's dedicated and thorough work, bearing the mark of his genius as a philologist.

Finally, I will endeavour to analyse why Tolkien's work and his invented languages have created so much passion around the world, and why his work can be considered as mythical, while Tolkien started this whole enterprise with languages, as a personal initiative. This will be studied by paying close attention to the fascinating interwoven of language and literature, and to the ways people, writers, scholars and artists alike have expressed their fascination for the imaginary world of J. R. R. Tolkien.

I

Tolkien, the philologist

Through an overview of Tolkien's life, love for languages and professional duties as a philologist, this part will aim to understand what led Tolkien to invent languages.

§ 1. THE GENESIS OF IT ALL

§ 1.1 An enthusiast learner

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on 3 January 1892, in Bloemfontein in South Africa. When Tolkien was only three, tragedy struck the family. His father, Arthur, died in South Africa, while Tolkien, his mother Mabel and his younger brother were on a family visit in England. This tragic turn of event meant that Mabel's financial situation suddenly became quite precarious, being left with no income to support her family of now three and thus "scarcely ha[ving] the resources to [maintain] an independent household", as Humphrey Carpenter relates in his biography of J. R. R. Tolkien (25). She took on the task of educating her two sons at home, trying her best to open their mind and curiosity to the knowledge of the world. Thanks to the tireless efforts of his mother, Tolkien, who "could have had no better teacher" (Carpenter 29), was encouraged to learn and to question. He was known to be a keen pupil from a very young age, "who could read by the time he was four and had soon learnt to write proficiently" (29). This enthusiasm for learning, which sprung from his mother, only grew as he got older. In her book *The Mythology of Power*, Jane Chance remarks that the tragedy of his father's death and the many and great disruptions it created shook up Tolkien's world and, as such, "it is perhaps no accident that for security Tolkien turned inward, and to

school and schooling" (3). Tolkien would find his safe place in the knowledge he built up and in the books he read. These were still, not moving, not changeable.

Among the many subjects Mabel would teach her sons, Tolkien's "favourite lessons were those that concerned languages" (Carpenter 29). His mother introduced him to Latin, French and German. This was his first encounter with new languages and sounds, which he quickly developed a passion for: "He was just as interested in the sounds and shapes of the words as in their meanings" (29). Tolkien soon began expressing that passion, that interest by creating his own languages, at first not precisely structured, but that first endeavour was the genesis of what was to come: "I do not remember a time when I was not building it. Many children make up, or begin to make up, imaginary languages. I have been at it since I could write" (Tolkien, "Letter" xv). Besides his mother's teachings, Tolkien's enthusiasm for this new field of study led him to teach himself, reading a lot and researching on these new languages he had discovered. Latin and English were those he liked best though, for the sounds of these languages were the most pleasing to him. And for young Tolkien, sounds played a major part in the wakening of his curiosity for this particular subject: he thought of words and felt them as a music lover would feel music, sometimes enjoying more their melody than being concerned by their actual meaning, so much so that "even at this early age, it appeared that what attracted Ronald to a language was the sound of it", says Leslie Jones in her biography of Tolkien (6). This idea is supported by Jared Lodbell who asserts in his book *Language, Religion and Adventure in Tolkien* that "we can see in his childhood reading of dictionaries a fascination with languages. Indeed, his mind was chiefly attuned to languages and the past" (3).

At the age of eight, he was admitted into King Edward's School, a public school in Birmingham with a good reputation and high academic standards. The house the Tolkien family lived in in Birmingham was right next to the railway lines and King's Heath Station,

which was on the line from Birmingham into Wales. Tolkien's many wanderings around his house would lead him there quite often and bring him to make a new linguistic discovery. On the trains passing on, he would see words from a new universe—sounds and spelling he had never heard or seen before, meanings he could not understand. And yet, he felt an irrepressible and strange appeal to this new language. Tolkien had discovered Welsh and "the music of its possible sounds opened new possibilities to a boy with an innate taste for language" (Jones 10). At King Edward's School, Tolkien started to learn Greek, still expanding his linguistic knowledge and proficiency. Tolkien said of his introduction to the Greek language: "The fluidity of Greek, punctuated by hardness, and with its surface glitter captivated me. But part of the attraction was antiquity and alien remoteness [from me]: it did not touch home" (qtd. in Carpenter 35).

Later on, he would discover Middle English through the works of Chaucer and his famous *Canterbury Tales* and quickly become captivated by it. Also, this new linguistic finding was particularly exciting as it brought new perspectives. Because he was studying the Classic languages, Tolkien already knew that languages existed within a time frame, that is to say he was aware that Greek and Latin had provided the roots for several words used in the current spoken languages such as English, French or German. However, with Middle English, that aspect was even clearer. It was not only about a few words here and there, but Tolkien could see, study, analyse the evolution of the grammar, of the words formation, of the vocabulary. And yet, this language that was just an older version of English and, at times, seemed so similar to the language he spoke, could also seem so far and strange. Middle English opened new possibilities for Tolkien. On the one side, on the story-telling level, if languages existed within a historical linguistic frame, it meant that this history could be traced back, explained, and for the language creator that Tolkien was, it could be invented and then told in stories. On the other side, on a literature level, studying Middle English meant going

through all the literature written during that linguistic period, for the most part Middle-Ages literature, that is to say epics, sagas of dragons, magicians, knights, of fairy and mythical lands… An imaginary world that would have a strong influence on Tolkien's writing.

It is still while being a pupil at King Edward's School, where Tolkien stayed from age eight to the end of his high school years, that he developed his particular interest in Nordic and Germanic languages, and in medieval literature. He started teaching himself Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, as well as the first basis to Old Norse, as Jane Chance indicates in her chronology of Tolkien's life, preceding her book *The Mythology of Power* (x). While having always had a particular aptitude and intuition for learning languages, it is during those years at King Edward's School that Tolkien truly wakened his curiosity and opened his mind to languages and the power of their sounds. The influence of his mother in his young age on his introduction to languages had been crucial; she had been the instigator and the driving force making him discover the fascinating sounds of foreign languages. But while at King Edward's, and while living in Birmingham, he started making of languages a personal passion and hobby, deciding for himself which language he wanted to learn or teach himself, as well as exploring a new range of languages with Middle and Old English, thus discovering new possibilities. As Mark Horne says in his biography of Tolkien, "his love of languages [drove] him to learn more" (23). And this love for languages would shape his career…

§ 1.2 From a degree in medieval studies to philology

When Tolkien was nineteen, on a second attempt, he was granted a scholarship to study at Exeter College in Oxford. At first, he was admitted to Exeter to study the Classics. His interest for Latin and Greek had compelled him to want to pursue his academic studies in this field. But he quickly realised that his real interest was somewhere else. His preference for

the Germanic field that had been growing since his high school years was stronger than ever in Oxford. He, himself, gives that strong preference as the reason for his failure in his original attempt to get a scholarship for Oxford when he was eighteen: "A large part of my failure was due to simply not working (at least not on classics) because I was studying something else: Gothic and what-not" (qtd. in Horne 29). So, in 1913, when he was twenty-one years old, he switched majors. An important encounter had also had a significant impact in that change. In his first years at Oxford, Tolkien made the acquaintance of Professor Joseph Wright, a man Tolkien would quickly feel admiration for. Like Tolkien, Wright was a self-taught man. Moreover, his research focused on Germanic languages and English dialects. Finally, he was passionate about mythology and the history of languages. All in all, he was a man with interests and a journey very similar to Tolkien's. Furthermore, Wright was a professor of comparative philology at Oxford. Philology, David Crystal explains in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, is "the study of the history of language, including the historical study of literary texts. It is also called comparative philology when the emphasis is on the comparison of the historical states of different languages." The study of comparative philology implies thinking language and literature together, how one influences the other, how they mutually shape each other. Bearing that in mind, we can easily understand how this field appealed to Tolkien, and we can already foresee the significant impact it would have on his literary production. What is also interesting to note is that, probably without realising it, Tolkien had already started to carry out the work of a philologist in his younger years, when he discovered Middle English and went on researching the history of the English language, as well as reading books in both Middle and Old English.

So, Tolkien gave up his study of the Classics and turned his mind to Medieval studies and Comparative Philology. In the meantime, his appetite for books, old languages and mythologies being satisfied in the beautiful academic libraries of Oxford, Tolkien started to

teach himself Finnish, a language known for its complexity and archaism. In 1915, he won First Class Honors in English language and literature, a diploma the focus of which was mainly on Old and Middle English, underlining once again how much he was made for such a course of studies. But the breakout of the war meant that his academic dream had to be put on hold for a little while as he was mobilised to go and fight in France. Struck with 'trench fever', he was sent back to England in 1917 and was given some time to recover from the tribulations of the war. This is when he started writing his *Silmarillion*, the background stories for his world depicted in *The Lord of the Rings*. This book is a combination of mythologies and descriptions of the languages of Middle Earth. Tolkien was finally giving more defined a shape to the languages he had started creating ever since he was young, and to his passion for languages, mythical stories and philology that had been driving his intellectual enthusiasm from a very young age. In 1918, Tolkien was given another opportunity to play and work around words when he was appointed as a "junior staff member of the *Oxford English Dictionary*" (Chance, "Chronology" x).

As much as Tolkien loved languages and the literatures of mythologies attached to them, he loved working around them, talking about them, and, evidently, teaching them. In 1920, he was appointed as reader of English language at Leeds University, only to become a professor just four years later. In the meantime, he kept on working on language creation, translations and philology for his own pleasure, continuing his work on his *Silmarillion*, collaborating with another professor from Leeds, E. V. Gordon, on a translation and critical edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and creating a club with Professor Gordon, the Vikings, dedicated to translating nursery rhymes into Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. In 1925, he returned to Oxford where he was appointed as Professor of Anglo-Saxon. Tolkien's teaching was very much appreciated by his students, as Michael Coren points out: "Il suscite l'enthousiasme pour sa matière—la langue et la littérature—qu'il présente comme un sujet

bien vivant" (76). By 1930, Tolkien and his wife, Edith, had four children, John, 13, Michael, 10, Christopher, 6, and Priscilla, 1. To entertain them, and as the great storyteller he was already known to be at the time (Chance, *Mythology* 3), he started making up and telling them stories, some pieces of which he would write down in a notebook, as some sort of reminder, including the famous words: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" (3). The draft for *The Hobbit* was on…

Later on, in 1945, he became Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford University. A description for this position, released by the Faculty of English Language and Literature, and of the criteria required to be considered eligible, read, in 2014: "The successful candidate will be a scholar of the highest international standing, with an outstanding record of research and publication in early modern literature". Although, the selection criteria have undoubtedly evolved from the time Tolkien was appointed, the Merton Professorship position is evidently a very prestigious one, reflecting Oxford's very high academic standards, and, consequently, one hard to obtain. By this time, Tolkien's *Hobbit* had been published for eight years and had been enjoying an international and quite immediate success, so much so that in the year of its publication, Tolkien's publishers had already asked him to work on other such books. But Tolkien did not let this newly gained fame make him forget his academic duties. He obviously kept on teaching at Merton College in Oxford, but he was also being asked to give lectures around Great Britain on works of medieval and fantasy literature, as well as lectures about Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon. Between 1954 and 1955, the three instalments of his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy were published. The final step of his academic career took place in 1972 when he was given an honorary doctorate of letters from Oxford (Chance, "Chronology" xiv). By this time, Edith had died so Tolkien had returned to Merton College where he stayed as resident honorary fellow. That same year, he

was made a Commander of the British Empire, an honorary title to celebrate his achievement in literature. He died a year later and was buried in Oxford.

As Lodbell points it out, "in Tolkien's professional life, as we know, the intersection of language and the past came in the realm of philology" (4). All through his life, that passion he had for languages and their sounds, and for mythologies, especially Norse sagas, was condensed and expressed through the discipline of philology, a subject he only discovered at the beginning of his academic journey, but which would have a great impact on his professional life ever after. Jane Chance underlines that it is "his success in medieval English languages and comparative philology" that compelled him to make of these fields of study, his field of teaching (3). It was his love for such subjects that made him a popular teacher. Besides, working on university grounds gave him a very desirable position for any man like him, who was such an enthusiast and curious learner: he could carry on his research, his self-teaching, his writing, etc., while still being able to perform his academic duties. The resources were right there for him. The realm of philology thus did not only have an impact on his professional life, but also on his creative life. Tolkien would speak of his love for "obscure languages, philology, or linguistic invention" (qtd. in Horne 29). And it is primarily this love that led him to create languages, which he recognised in his *Letters* to be "an art (or a pastime) comparatively rare" (379-80). But beyond the love for languages as a motivation for linguistic invention, we can also infer that a certain need to create acted as another driving force.

§ 2. INVENTING LANGUAGES: THE NEED TO CREATE

If Tolkien had an undeniable gift and passion for languages, we can wonder why he felt the need to create. What compelled him to create such precise and detailed systems of languages?

§ 2.1 "What's in a name?"

If Tolkien's work of linguistic creation took an ultimate and most-completed form with the Elvish languages that appear in *The Lord of the Rings*, his language-creation process did not start with the Elven tongues. It is a task he had already been at from a very young age, shaping different tongues with different sounds and alphabets, as he grew and was discovering new languages that he was influenced by. We know of at least two languages he devised or helped to devise in his youth, as Dimitra Fimi asserts in her dissertation about the use of scholarly knowledge in Tolkien's work (140). These were called *Nevbosh* and *Naffarin*, with a special mention for the latter since it was "a product of Tolkien's invention alone", Fimi says, thus marking the first personal endeavour and achievement in creating his own language. From there, the language-invention process would not stop. And peculiarly enough, the 'game' of devising languages when he was young, a childhood activity that he shares with many children, seemed only to serve as a work of preparation for what was to come. He slowly built up his language-devising methods, gathered knowledge about other languages, expanded his understanding of Germanic languages, of Old and Middle English, all leading to the discovery of the field of philology—a field that would give him tools to encompass the historical development of languages better, and as such enable him to increase and perfect his invented languages. As he said in a letter to Milton Waldman, appearing in the preface of *The Silmarillion*:

> I do not remember a time when I was not building [languages]. Many children make up, or begin to make up, imaginary languages. I have been at it since I could write. But I have never stopped, and of course, as a professional philologist (especially interested in linguistic aesthetics), I have changed in taste, improved in theory, and probably in craft. (xv)

Tolkien could have been contented with the mere learning of new languages. In fact, he already had a good command or working knowledge of quite a fair number of languages—Latin, Ancient Greek, Old and Middle English, Old Norse, Gothic, Welsh, Finnish, Spanish, French, German, Italian, but also Russian, Swedish, Danish, Dutch and Lombardic (Noel, 3-4)—a number and a prowess that would satisfy even the biggest enthusiast of languages; but he also had a gift for it, so could virtually learn with ease any new languages he wanted, even the hardest and most complex, such as Finnish. Yet, it was not enough. As Michael Adams says in his book *From Elvish to Klingon*, "his delight in learning new languages was so effusive that it required unknown ones to be called in existence" (96). In an essay called "A Secret Vice"—the transcript of one of his lectures in which he explains his creative process when inventing languages—which was published in a collection of essays called *The Monsters and the Critics*, Tolkien gives as an explanation to that creative impulse the fact that "in these invented languages the pleasure is more keen than it can be even in learning a new language . . . because more personal and fresh, more open to experiment and error" (206).

In one of his *Letters*, he makes a point of underlining the fact that, even though he is "using the linguistic faculty for amusement" ("Secret Vice", 206), this is not just a mere "hobby" (*Letters*, 219). For him, the interest of devising tongues resides in the pleasure he gets when he invents languages, the pleasure of creating words and finding enjoyment in their combinations, their evolutions and their different sound and shape patterns. As he explains,

once again in "A Secret Vice", "the instinct for 'linguistic invention'—the fitting of notion to oral symbol, and *pleasure in contemplating the new relation established,* is rationale, and not perverted" (206, his emphasis). This tongue-inventing process allowed him to create something concrete, something tangible, and to bring the idea of languages to another level than just theoretical. In his creations, he could use, incorporate and give existence to all he had learned before, and express, in a material form, his love for the linguistic field. His invented languages epitomise his journey as a linguist and a philologist. Helge F. Fauskanger aptly says in his "Quenya Course" that "Tolkien was not just a descriptive linguist, passively exploring and contemplating pre-existing tongues: he was a creative linguist as well" (9). As Jane Chance notes in *The Mythology of Power*, in this mastering of his craft, his "brilliance in language creation and analysis reveals far more about his role as a philosopher of language" (9). Learning and creating became two processes closely entwined. They fed each other: the more he knew about languages, the fuller and deeper his language creation became; conversely, the more he wanted to perfect his linguistic creation, the more he felt the urge to deepen his knowledge as a philologist. In the end, this led him to admit in his *Letters* that he considered his *Lord of the Rings* epic to be "largely an essay on 'linguistic aesthetics'" (220).

The most important element in his language-creating process, that for which he found infinite passion and endless possibilities, that was the source not only for his language invention, but also for the stories he wrote, was naming. As Matthew Dickerson reports in his book *Ents, Elves, and Eriador*, Tolkien confessed in an interview with the BBC in 1971: "It gives me great pleasure, a good name. I always in writing start with a name. Give me a name and it produces a story, not the other way about normally" (7). An evidence of this fact is the extensive presence in all the Appendices to his books, be it a book published while he was alive or edited by his son Christopher after his death, of an 'Index of Names', in which such

names used in his stories are deciphered and explained by their author, with their historical development being given, to account for their current form. Christopher Tolkien explains in *The Lost Road* that, "as the whole system [of devising words from a historical structure] evolved and expanded, the possibilities for word and name became greater and greater" (379). The case of Gandalf exemplifies well this pleasure and interest in naming; in Tolkien's world and stories, Gandalf is known with, at least, four other names, which are *Mithrandir*, *Tharkûn*, *Olórin* and *Incánus*. Jane Chance believes that this strong influence of language and naming in Tolkien's writing was, to him, "perceived as a philosophical means of ordering reality, [and] catalyzed Tolkien's interest in classical and medieval languages. . . . Tolkien's love of language, and thus his love of medieval language, pervades his fictional writing" (*Mythology*, 4).

In his letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien confessed, about *The Lord of the Rings*, that "in order of time, growth and composition, this stuff began with me—though I do not suppose that that is of much interest to anyone but myself" (xv). It is an important point: in reaffirming the paternity to the inspiration to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien dismissed the many allegations that wanted to see in his stories, allegories of the time he was living in. Tolkien did not like allegory, and he made a point of stressing so in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*: "I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations . . . . I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author" (xv). He added that, "for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none" (xv). The only inspiration and motivation he had to writing his epic was language, and his passion in their invention. What was particularly striking when Tolkien invented languages was his dedication to accuracy, detail and realism. As such, it confirms once more that language invention could not just be a mere

hobby for him; it embodied much more to him, to lead him to be so rigorous with every aspect and every step of the creation. For example, as a scholar of philology, Tolkien not only invented languages that could be used by a certain people at a given time, he also devised the historical development leading to the modern state of the language. Such endeavour did not only concern the history of the people and how events led to the changing of the language, but it also concerned the different forms the protolanguages could have taken. As such, and as will be further explained in the second part to this study, he invented roots and historical forms accounting for the modern form of such and such word. What is particularly noteworthy in this undertaking is the fact that, for some forms of the protolanguages, he preceded them with the * marker. In linguistics, when studying the historical development of a language, this marker is used to indicate a reconstructed, so hypothetical, form. For example, when analysing the current form of the European languages, linguists have noticed similarities between them, and that groups, or branches of languages, could be constituted. As such, they concluded that languages in a same branch would have a common origin, a conclusion leading a group of linguists to assert there would have been a common language of origin, that they named Indo-European. Because of the nearly complete lack of material on the European protolanguages, every time linguists reconstruct a form, based on available material and evidence, but as such not asserted and thus hypothetical, they precede the said-form with the * marker to indicate this fact. Tolkien used this convention as, for example, can be seen with the root form *ata-*, which means 'father', according to the etymology section in *The Lost Road* (387). In the most modern form of the Elven tongues, which are Quenya and Sindarin, in Quenya, 'father' is *atar*, and in Sindarin, it is *adar*. Now, the *ata-* entry in the etymology section indicates that the reconstructed Primitive Quendian form, that is to say the form in the protolanguage, is **atū* or **atar*. But one can wonder, why would Tolkien use this convention since he is the only source of all the inventions? These were his languages, so any

new word he wanted to create, any root he wanted to invent, he could do so. As such, there should be no uncertainty or hypothesis concerning the words in his languages. But Tolkien was too rigorous and precise a man not to display the most absolute accuracy possible in his work. If there can be doubts and hesitations concerning the root forms of natural languages, then there should be similar uncertainties in his invented languages.

The story behind the Westron language—one of Tolkien's invented languages and a language of Middle-Earth—is just another example of his quest for detail and accuracy, and of his love for languages. Westron is the Common Speech, Tolkien states in the Appendix E of *The Return of the King*, that is to say the common tongue to all people of Middle-Earth during the Third Age, the time during which *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* are set. In a lecture Michael D. C. Drout, professor of English, gave at Carnergie Mellon University in October 2013, he explains that "the story is focalized through the Hobbits. . . . [Throughout the books] Tolkien sticks to the point of the view of the various Hobbits". He goes on to explain that the stories of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are meant to be recorded in the Red Book of Westmarch, as told by the Hobbits, and in the Westron language. Because Middle-Earth is a world that is not ours, the Hobbits could not realistically be speaking English. However, releasing a whole book in an invented language only known by one man, would have proved to be, not only an incredible challenge, but also an undertaking doomed to fail in terms of success with the audience. To be consistent with his purpose and his imaginary world, Tolkien had to give its common people a language of their own; but to reach his audience and make the book understandable, Tolkien had to provide a theoretical 'translation' of a theoretical 'first book'. As such, as Ruth S. Noel explains, "those parts of *The Lord of the Rings* that are in English were Westron in the hypothetical original manuscript, but Westron is not English" (7). This linguistic position taken by Tolkien places him, not as the original writer of the stories anymore, but as the person transmitting them. He is placing himself in the

great literary traditions of the passing on of stories through generations, and is as such increasing the mythical power of his stories. Myths and stories are thus closely entwined with languages; they make each other live, and they cannot be thought separately.

§ 2.2 To create a mythology for England

It is generally admitted and said that Tolkien's project in creating his imaginary world, world that would serve as a cornerstone to the setting of his stories of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, was to create a mythology for England. From then on, the stories told, the battles described, the languages spoken would all be part of a broader mythical narrative, as a way of compensating for the lack of English mythology. In her book *Tolkien and the Invention of a Myth*, Jane Chance states that "it has become well known among scholars that Tolkien yearned to create a "mythology for England"" (1). However, Dimitra Fimi, in her dissertation, points out the fact that the term 'mythology for England' was, in reality, never used by Tolkien *stricto sensu* (71). It is his official biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, who employed this term to refer to Tolkien's design. But if Tolkien himself did not say 'mythology for England' proper, the use of such terminology by his biographer seems, in reality, aptly fitting for what Tolkien was aiming to achieve—a purpose he described in his letter to Milton Waldman: "Once upon a time . . . I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country" (xvi).

This grand design did not spring from a folly; having himself spent much of his young years learning about the great and inspiring Greek, Roman, Norse, etc., mythologies, he looked at the mythological legacy of England and was profoundly saddened to see that it had

none of the great tales found in other countries and cultures. As he went on to explain to Waldman:

> I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff (xvi).

He described to Waldman how he envisioned this project, one of a massive scale: "It should possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our 'air' . . ., and, while possessing . . . the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic . . . . The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole" (xv).

In the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien makes the notable remark that his work on *The Lord of the Rings*—and consequently on *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*—was "primarily linguistic in inspiration", and that the stories were subsequently started to give a framework to the historical development of the Elvish languages (xii). In fact, if there were languages, there also needed to be a world for their speakers. We see, once again, how the purpose of language invention went beyond the mere pastime of devising a lexicon and a grammar system. For Tolkien, it had to be encompassed in a much bigger setting, highlighting once more the close bond between language and story, linguistics and literature—the basic study tools for a philologist. In an article about "Language and Culture" on the website of the *National Geographic*, cultural anthropologist Wade Davis links language and culture, underlining the fact that they are inevitably entwined: "A language isn't just a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules. It is a flash of the human spirit, a vehicle through which the soul of a particular culture comes into the material world. And when we lose a language, we lose a vital element of the human dream." As such, Tolkien knew and felt that

his linguistic undertaking would not be complete if he did not create people to speak the languages he had invented, and a background for the languages to be realised. More than that, he knew that providing his languages with a cultural context would give them depth and thickness; but he also understood that creating a 'mythology' for England, without the linguistic background to go with it, would give the undertaking less weight, impact and power. If the linguistic invention was indeed the first project to come into place, the necessity to undertake the second, that is to say the mythological background, appeared quite quickly and evidently in the scheme of creation. On this subject, Lodbell says in his book *The World of the Ring*, Tolkien would often refer to a remark from Sjéra Tomas Saemundsson: "Languages are the chief distinguishing marks of peoples. No people in fact comes into being until it speaks a language of its own; let the languages perish, and the peoples perish too, or become different peoples" (qtd. in Lodbell 3). Yet, this change in peoples becoming "different peoples" is also something Tolkien was interested about, as shown, for example, in the evolution of his Elvish people, who, through the different changes of their cultures, the evolution of their languages through the split of Elvish in different branches, became quite different from their original ancestors[1].

If Tolkien wanted to write a mythology for England, one may ask how it is that Tolkien's invented languages seem decidedly away from the languages that have been spoken in England over time. It is hard to imagine people speaking in Elvish or Dwarvish on the English soil, even in a distant and long-gone past. Besides, Tolkien's maps and stories of events do not reflect the geographic aspect or the historical chronology of England. This point takes us back to the term stressed previously and wrongly associated to Tolkien's design: that of a 'mythology for England'. If Tolkien did not use these words proper, it is simply because he did mean to fill a gap *per se*, to give England what history and literature had not. The

[1] Part II of this study, especially section 1.2, will deal in more detail about this aspect of the Elvish languages.

important term he uses, though, is 'dedicate'; he wants to 'dedicate' his work to England. The lack of English mythological works saddened him, but only to prompt him to contemplate what it would be like to write the mythology of a land and its peoples. As such, he did not mean to represent England proper—Middle-Earth is not England as it was thousands of years ago—but rather took inspiration from its linguistic and cultural legacy (like Welsh and the Celtic cultures, amongst others) and from its geography, to create his own world. As Tolkien said it in his letter to Milton Waldman, it is the scarce availability of such mythological and grand texts that prompted his imagination and his writing: "But an equally basic passion of mine *ab initio* was for myth . . . and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little in the world (accessible to me) for my appetite" (xvi). However, Ruth S. Noel says in *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-Earth* that he did entertain himself at creating some associations that could have potentially worked in the evolution of the English language. She says that "some of Tolkien's intricate puns occur in the evolution of hobbit weekday names from the Elvish. For example, *Alduya* 'day of the two trees' becomes Trewsday: Tuesday" (59).

In her book *Tolkien and the Invention of a Myth*, Jane Chance says that Tolkien's narratives bear a similarity of tone and structure to medieval texts: "*The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* also, *Beowulf*-like, assimilate legend and digression as a means of layering cultural reality" (3). It is a noteworthy comparison, as the layering of texts, coming from different sources and re-used in other contexts, is the basis for a mythology to come to life, "as mythology is the articulation of . . . events in linguistic form, oral or textual, which is then used for various cultural aims and is retextualized in various forms and genres", Gergely Nagy says (qtd. in Jane Chance 4). Because Tolkien constructed his narratives on this pattern and added the thorough work of invented languages, he managed to compose a creation

bigger than just a mere story of fairy people; he achieved to give his world a mythical status, both at the scale of the mythology and at the scale of the cultural myth. However, the language-inventing process did not only spring from a happy, creative and passionate impulse; it was also the way for Tolkien to escape from tragedy and the horrible time he was living in.

§ 2.3 To get away from troubled times

Tolkien's life was particularly marked by tragedy and loss. Be it the loss of a dear one or the loss of a home, one gets the feeling, when reading biographical accounts of Tolkien's life, that fate and adversity did not spare him—a feeling that fades when one immerses oneself in his books and fascinating world. All of a sudden, despite the dusty aspect of his world, the hidden recess of his stories, all the layers of meaning, plots, characters and details, one feels that, through the lines and the setting of the world, Tolkien's life seems to find some unity and stability again. The suffering and trials some characters go through are counter-balanced by the messages of hope, and of triumph of good over evil his books convey, carried by endearing and warm characters, especially the Hobbits. Despite the hardship and the suffering, the evil times Tolkien was living in, his stories never reflected bitterness about the world and humankind. The world of Tolkien is so intricate and carefully designed, with nothing left to chance, with every aspect thoroughly thought of to make it look as realistic as possible, that any reader of his books feels the work and time Tolkien must have spent into the devising of a project of such a scale, the precision that he was aiming to achieve, and, most of all, the love and passion he poured into his work and, thus, his imaginary world. As Charles E. Noad, member of the Tolkien Society, expresses it in a 1988 BBC radio programme about "The Language of Elvish and Middle-Earth":

> You feel that Tolkien put so much work into imagining every detail, how it works, how it all hangs together. I suppose most imaginary worlds by other writers, you can see that things get up in a few weeks or maybe a couple of months, and that's it. But with Tolkien, you feel that years of thought have gone into it.

If Tolkien put so much of himself into his world, it is because it allowed him to get away from his own and real troubled world, and to reinvent a world for himself. This dedication to a craft was his way of staying deeply rooted in something tangible, and not to give into the hardship of the adversities.

Tolkien lost both his parents in his youth. His father died when he was only four and, a few years after his mother and brother had moved back to England, his mother died when Tolkien was twelve, leaving him to care for his younger brother. Naturally, they were put under the care of their family relatives, as Carpenter relates in his biography of Tolkien (29). But they had lost their pillar, their centre of gravity that had made it all hang together ever since they had left South Africa. Yet, Tolkien says in the *New York Times Magazine*'s article "The Prevalence of Hobbits" that "it was not an unhappy childhood. It was full of tragedies but it didn't tot up to an unhappy childhood" (qtd. by Norman 100).

The move from South Africa to England represented another challenge to face. Although it happened when Tolkien was still too young to keep clear images of South Africa, the feeling it created was one of a permanent kind, especially given the circumstances. While the travel to England was, firstly, of a happy nature, it turned sour when Arthur Tolkien suddenly died in South Africa, while the rest of the family was still visiting relatives in England—and while Arthur was supposed to join them, prompting Mabel and her two fatherless orphans to stay in England to be helped by her relatives. Although Tolkien went on to love England, as he often mentioned so—and as his so-called "mythology for England"

design is proof of—the sudden relinquishment of South Africa and the loss of a parent created a feeling of displacement and the sense of not belonging to the new place. He was not from England, but had to make it his home, nevertheless. Lodbell, in *The World of the Ring*, says that "South African-born Tolkien [was] isolated from ordinary English life as an orphan and a Roman Catholic. He was living in the round green land of England but was not of it" (xv).

In 1914, World War I broke out while Tolkien was in his third year of study at Oxford University. "World War I interrupted his peaceful studies at the university", says Jane Chance in *The Mythology of Power* (4). Like many young men around the country, he had to enrol and was sent to the front, an event that profoundly marked him and affected him. He says in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

> One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead. (xv)

The violence and death he was a witness of during this time in the trenches obviously shook up his world. Among those friends he lost, two of them were very dear to him. Because he suffered from trench fever[2], he was sent home back to Britain in 1917. It is from his return onwards that he started his early work on his *Silmarillion* (Chance, "Chronology" x). The world was only just starting to fail him, it was becoming absurd and full of suffering; the need to create one of his own, to immerse himself in it, felt like a necessity more than ever.

When World War II broke out in 1939, once again, Tolkien's world was shaken. He was not sent to battle but his son Christopher was. As a member of the Royal Air Force, he was stationed abroad. By this time, *The Hobbit* had already been published for two years and

[2] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives the definition of "Trench fever" as "infectious disease characterized by sudden onset with fever; headache; sore muscles, bones, and joints; and outbreaks of skin lesions on the chest and back. It is transmitted from one person to another by a body louse harbouring the causative organism. First recognized in 1915, trench fever was a major medical problem during World War I."

was enjoying such a success that Tolkien's publishing company had asked for another manuscript to publish. Tolkien had presented them with his work on *The Silmarillion*, but they refused it. So he started to work on his *Lord of the Rings*—work that was cut short because of the war, as he explains in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

> The composition of *The Lord of the* Rings went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949, a period in which I had many duties that I did not neglect, and many other interests as a learner and teacher that often absorbed me. The delay was . . . increased by the outbreak of war in 1939. . . . In spite of the darkness of the next five years I found that the story could not be wholly abandoned. (xiii)

World War II did not only bring chaos because of the war destruction; it also brought intellectual pain and philosophical questioning as for the state of humanity, because of all the atrocities that were perpetrated as a result of it. As Chance says in *The Mythology of Power*, "the historical context for Tolkien's writing of *Rings* and for its reception thus reveals a world in turmoil and chaos" (3). Isabelle Pantin, in her study *Tolkien et ses légendes*, brings forth another aspect that caused irremediable pain to Tolkien: « Parmi les destructions de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la plupart n'étaient pas ainsi réparables, et l'une d'elle touchait particulièrement Tolkien : l'usurpation par les Nazis d'un héritage culturel auquel il accordait une extrême valeur » (28). The cultural heritage she is talking about is that of Norse and Scandinavian mythology which the Nazis, in their theories about a pure European race, reclaimed as their own, and twisted to fit their purposes. Pantin mentions an event that had hurt Tolkien quite deeply when, in 1938, a publisher from Potsdam, wanting to publish a German translation of *The Hobbit*, had asked Allen and Unwin, Tolkien's British publishing house, if the author, given his name of Germanic sound, was of Aryan descent. Tolkien, distressed and angered by such a question, answered using his best weapon: his knowledge of philology.

> Je regrette de ne pas voir clairement ce que vous entendez par *arish*. Je ne suis pas d'extraction aryenne, c'est-à-dire indo-iranienne. Autant que je sache, aucun de mes ancêtres n'a parlé l'hindustani, le persan, le tsigane ni aucune langue apparentée. Mais si je dois comprendre que vous voulez savoir si je suis d'origine juive, je puis seulement répondre que je regrette de n'avoir aucun ancêtre dans ce peuple plein de dons. (28)

As Jane Chance points it out, "Tolkien's life and writings reflect the stresses and dysfunctions of the twentieth-century world" (*Mythology* 3). Because his world was consistently turned upside down, Tolkien needed to find a project in which he could commit himself and, somehow, find some sense. His imaginary world, by providing an intellectual shelter, brought him a purpose. Thankfully, he had a very happy family life and was happy with his position as a Professor, and that brought him some stability. But for a man of knowledge and reason, passionate about the old legends and lore of the past, the medieval romance and chivalry, the poetic tales in old and archaic languages, to see the turn the world and humankind was taking shook him profoundly. The refuge he found in creating and devising his imaginary world gave him the opportunity to go back to his first love, languages, and to offer, "like Bilbo to Frodo, [the] promise [of] a better world for his own progeny" (Chance, *Mythology* 5).

Language invention is at the heart and the beginning of his work, but, as we have seen, it was always closely entwined with the narrative in which the languages are set. The whole of this project offered him an escape from the world in turmoil he was living in, always giving him the opportunity, through words and stories, to reinvent a world for himself.

II

A study of Tolkien's invented languages: A closer look at Quenya and Sindarin

This part will aim to understand the range and depth of Tolkien's invented languages, and more specifically looking at two of his Elven tongues, Quenya and Sindarin, in more detail.

§ 1. INTRODUCTION

§ 1.1 How many languages did Tolkien create?

In her book *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-Earth*, Ruth S. Noel states that Tolkien's work *The Lord of the Rings* features fourteen invented languages which she aims to present in the most complete way (6). However, when trying to answer the difficult question of the total number of languages Tolkien created, Helge Fauskanger, a scholar of Tolkenian linguistics who developed a comprehensive grammar of the Quenya language, explained that the answer is much more complex than it may seem. In fact, Tolkien's imagination was so sharp and dense that he would perfuse his writings with many tongues, but some of which he only invented a few words for—so, how do we count them all, and how many of these tongues can be considered as languages proper?

The main collection where Tolkien's invented languages can be found comes from his works forming part of his 'legendarium', that is to say all the works taking place in Arda, the name given to the Earth in his imaginary world. Of course, the most famous of these are *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion.* The latter is slightly less known from the

general audience than the two other books; it is the narrative serving as a mythological background for his world, and the stories in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* take place after this narrative. But, Tolkien did not only invent languages within this frame. Since creating languages was his passion and an exercise he was at since he was really young, as we saw in the first part, it seems obvious that his language-invention process was not bound to his Arda imaginary world. Yet, it is extremely difficult to gather information on these other languages since they sometimes only consisted of a few words, a basis for a grammar system maybe, but, most importantly, they were hardly all recorded in books. Consequently, contrary to the tongues appearing in his legendarium—where even the scarcest fragments of a language are at least written down, so can be counted in a list, it is impossible to make an exhaustive list of all the tongues Tolkien invented.

Beyond the question of the number of tongues Tolkien created, another important question arises. Tolkien's created tongues are often referred to as 'invented *languages*', even when he only invented fragments of tongues. However, this is a tricky term, linguistically speaking; can we really consider them all as languages proper? This is not a trifling question because Tolkien did not go into the same depth of detail for each tongue he created, and, thus, they do not all stand on the same linguistic level. So we need to look at the different criteria that are used to determine what is a language and what is not, in order to help us to categorise Tolkien's linguistic creations better. Language, as a linguistic notion, is very complex and broad—countless linguists and scholars have endeavoured to define it and encompass it. Trying here to define such a term might easily end up in, either an unsatisfying generalisation of the notion, or in dwelling into too much detail and lead us astray from our original question. Instead, I will call upon my reader's basic experience and linguistic notions of language, which will be enough for the following demonstration and resolution of the

question. We deduce from our knowledge of languages and our learning of them the few essential criteria that make a language useful and usable[3]: a grammar—that is to say a set of rules established to make our sentences intelligible; a lexicon—often revised and expanded to reflect the needs and purpose of a society; the aim of communication—we talk to share our thoughts with our kindred; and consequently, a group, a community of people speaking the same language and, thus, able to communicate. This is why a language invented by a child is not a language proper if only spoken by said-child. In his essay "A Secret Vice", Tolkien remembered the "rare phenomenon" of two young children who had constructed a language made out almost entirely of names of animals, birds and fish, and who were conversing in it fluently (200). But in fact, most children, as Tolkien pointed out, if they create a tongue, will do so for themselves. Very rarely will they construct a system that agrees with somebody else, for reasons of time, practicality and difficulty. Quite often, the language-creating process happening when we are children springs from a wish to potentiate our creative and imaginative power, in and for our own world. Conversely, the systems of Verlan or Langue de Fe, well known from French children and young people to exclude unwanted listeners from their talks, resemble more a language, at least on a lexicon point of view, since these are systems shared and acknowledged by a community of people. Since they have been in existence for decades, any person wishing to use such systems simply has to learn the rules and follow the crowd. Tolkien made a reference to this "argot-group" type of languages in the essay mentioned before. To him, these are just "practical" as they only "serve the needs of a secret and persecuted society, or the queer instinct for pretending you belong to one", they only mean to "bewilder or to hoodwink the adult" (201). We understand from this quote that this practicality is not what Tolkien was interested in in his language-making process, looking rather for the "artistic" quality of a language. However, these argot-group languages base their

[3] These criteria are also given and explained by Professor of General Linguistic Robert Henry Robins; see his definition of 'Language' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for further explanation.

grammar entirely on a pre-existing one and do not invent a new system altogether. As such, they do fulfil three out of the four criteria mentioned before, but not the first one. Of course, the aim here is not to try to re-define what argot languages or tongues created by children on a unilateral motivation are, but rather to refine our consideration of Tolkien's invented tongues to better classify them.

Let us look again at each criterion stated above and try to apply them to Tolkien's invented tongues. Since his tongues were created within a literary framework, Tolkien only came up with the vocabulary that was useful for his writing. Consequently, none of them has a vocabulary broad and wide enough to reflect any need of a society. He did entertain himself by translating some famous literary works into his languages, but he did not leave us a lexicon vast enough to deal, in his languages, with topics that would not appear in his stories—such as medicine, or every day needs, for example. It, thus, restricts dramatically the scope of use of his tongues, and consequently his invented languages would theoretically not fulfil the lexicon criterion, and neither the communication criterion, since the sharing of thoughts and information would be reduced to the vocabulary that is available to us. Furthermore, Tolkien being at the source of the language creation, the lexicon revision and expansion would technically be bound to his decisions, and has supposedly stopped with his death. Finally, Tolkien's tongues were meant for fictional people, in a fictional world. Never were they anybody's mother tongue, or intended as a substitute or an ideal language as Esperanto has been. As such, the criterion of a group of people speaking the language to communicate is only fulfilled in his world, but not in real life. As for the grammar criterion, only two of his invented tongues present a system developed and detailed enough to be used and worked with; these are Quenya and Sindarin. As Helge Fauskanger explains in his Quenya course, "Only [Quenya and Sindarin] are so complete that one can with some ease write substantial texts in them without resorting to massive inventions of their own" (6). With that being laid

out, an easy conclusion would be to say that Tolkien's so-called invented languages are not languages proper. But this is where the question becomes more complex, for two reasons. On the one hand, as quoted saying so in the introduction to this thesis, Tolkien never intended his languages to exist outside of the framework of his writings. As he stated in one of the letters compiled by his son Christopher and Humphrey Carpenter, it was a "private enterprise undertaken to give pleasure to [him]self" and he clearly stated that he created his Arda mythos so that there would be a world "in which these languages could be 'realised'" (380). For Tolkien, they were a work of aesthetics and he did not mean to potentiate them in the real world. But the linguistic and creative work on some of his tongues has been so precise and detailed that they cannot just be considered as nothing. As Tolkien pointed out in one of his *Letters*, they "have some existence, since I have composed them in some completeness" (175). They do bear the mark of a fine and rigorous intellectual work that could have assuredly been used in the real world; and his aim was to make them behave in as realistic a way as possible. On the other hand, and as a direct consequence of the latter point, people have ended up being so fascinated by Tolkien's languages that they have succeeded in making the tongues live on outside of Tolkien's legendarium framework, trying to teach themselves Quenya or Sindarin, debating over the proper use of such and such forms, trying to analyse Tolkien's published writings and manuscripts to further their knowledge of his languages, etc. This aspect will be studied further on in the third part of this thesis, but it shows that the languages have lived beyond the scopes of the books and the imaginary world of Arda.

Now, moving away from this linguistic consideration and trying to refine our answer to the question: how many languages did Tolkien create?, we need to focus our study on the languages we have a record of. As a philologist and a linguist, Tolkien was as much interested in creating the languages, as in coming up with a historical development to account for their

modern form. As such, he created Primitive Quendian, Common Eldarin and Common Telerin which serve as the protolanguages for Quenya and Sindarin. Following his thorough work on the question of how many languages Tolkien made, Helge Fauskanger explained that the languages appearing in Tolkien's legendarium can be broken down into four categories: the "*usable*" languages; the languages with a "*minimum of actual substance*"; the languages only made of "*fragments*"; and the languages he calls "*fictitious*", as Tolkien only alluded to them. Only two of Tolkien's languages fit in the category of the 'usable' languages, Quenya and Sindarin. These are Elvish languages, on which Tolkien dedicated a lot of his time. They are developed enough to have a lexicon made of a thousand of words, and to have a grammatical system of their own; they also present a comprehensive and thorough historical development. About ten of Tolkien's invented languages form part of the second category highlighted by Fauskanger: he cites two Elvish languages; a Mannish language—that is to say, a language of Men, in this instance Númenorean; a Dwarvish language—Khuzdul; and Westron, the Common Speech spoken by Men and Hobbits in Middle-Earth. Because these languages have a lexicon made of about thirty to a hundred words, but most of all feature sample sentences, they present enough material to try to work on them, and to try to deduce rules out of these sample sentences. However, they do not have a grammar of their own, so the work and the linguistic possibilities they offer are very limited. Concerning Westron, Tolkien did allude to a deeper and more thorough grammatical and lexical work on this tongue, but most of this work has not been published and, as of today, the corpus that specialists of Tolkenian linguistics have at their disposal remains very small. For the two last categories of languages highlighted by Fauskanger, the material available is so small that the languages it concerns are more of an idea, rather than an actual creation. For a language such as Black Speech, the language of Mordor, it is extremely fragmentary since the only words we know of this tongue are those inscribed on the ring, the famous prophecy about the "One Ring

to rule them all". Similarly, Valarin, the language of the Gods, has a lexicon made of no more than thirty words, but no sample sentences from which to work on. Finally, the last category are what Helge Fauskanger called "fictitious" languages in the sense that Tolkien alluded to them, but never really produced any material, or not more than one or two words on these languages. This is the case of the language of the Rohirrim which is represented by Old English in the books, or of the language of the Orcs, who are said to use many tongues, but the only known words are Orc names. This view is seconded by Ruth S. Noel in her section about the language of the Rohirrim in her book about the languages of Middle-Earth (23-9). In this section, she gives a list of 98 words that appear in Tolkien's stories as used by the people of Rohan. Out of these 98 words, she shows that two of them come from Middle English and the rest comes from Old English. She provides the literal translation of each word, as well as their meaning in the Arda mythos. What is interesting to note is that each of these words relates to military or royal positions, or to geographic places; none of them translate an everyday reality or even the description of a human feeling or activity. And yet, Tolkien referred to the tongue of the Rohirrim as a specific language of its own. This shows that, sometimes, Tolkien's linguistic intention was rather in the lines of the imaginary, but he never truly potentiated it.

This explanation gives a clearer comprehension of Tolkien's languages, of their status, and of the state of their development and the potential of their use. As mentioned before, the only two languages that Tolkien developed enough for us to be able to work with now, are the Elven tongues, Quenya and Sindarin. This is attested by Tolkien in his *Letters*—although, he was also aware of the limits of his creation: "It should be obvious that if it possible to compose fragments of verse in Quenya and Sindarin, those languages (and their relations one to another) must have reached a fairly high degree of organization—though of course, far

from completeness, either in vocabulary, or in idiom" (380). From the samples sentences featured in the books and from Tolkien's external work, we can in fact deduce that he had developed enough of a grammatical structure for both languages to make a wider use of them than just the use of isolated words or sentences here and there. Helge Fauskanger mentioned some one thousand words existing in the lexicons of Quenya and Sindarin, respectively. This is the availability of this relatively important material, from which we could work on, that prompted the enthusiasm and the curiosity of readers and specialists of Tolkienan linguistics to go deeper in the analysis of both languages. Later on, when the books of *The Lord of the Rings* were adapted to the cinema, these languages were featured in the movies, with a few dialogues being delivered in Quenya or Sindarin, sparkling a new interest from a younger generation. Consequently, these two tongues are Tolkien's most famous and most studied languages.

Besides, these are the two languages for which Tolkien developed the most extensive philological history. As David Salo points it out in his grammar guide *A Gateway to Sindarin*, "Tolkien constructed for Quenya and Sindarin a lengthy sequence of changes from an ancestral 'protolanguage'" (xiii). This increases not only the material available to study the languages, but also the enthusiasm surrounding these tongues. Readers of all ages have found pleasure in learning and dissecting the history and the development of these Elven tongues. As such, Quenya and Sindarin are the two languages that are the most interesting to look at, in the sense that they do represent the best example of the extent of Tolkien's rigorous and detailed philological work on his invented languages, from the very early stages of the languages to their rather more complete final form. Because Quenya and Sindarin are related, "both are descendants of the protolanguage *Common Eldarin*" says David Salo (xiii), they share some mutual and similar features, mainly in their pronunciation and the way their vocabulary is constructed and derives from the original roots. It seems thus more interesting

to study both languages comparatively and see where they meet and get away from each other, rather than one after the other, where their relations would hardly appear and be understood. And it seems quite appropriate, in the context of this thesis, to do this comparative study and, somehow, carry out our own little work of comparative philology…

§ 1.2 A little philological history of Quenya and Sindarin

David Salo explains that Tolkien began his work on his Elven tongues in the 1910s and pursued such work until his death in 1973 (xiii). When Tolkien died, his son Christopher began to put together all the manuscripts his father had left behind, with the aims, firstly, of honouring his father's literary legacy and, secondly, of satisfying Tolkien's readers who were eager to have a wider and better glimpse of his imaginary world. The task was, though, not an easy one: the manuscripts were all in disparate order, sometimes very hard to read, with corrections, numerous changes, words crossed-out, and revisions to the point where many statements, linguistic or literary choices were in contradiction with each other. In *The Lost Road*, Christopher Tolkien describes his father's "characteristic method of work [as] elaborate beginnings collapsing into scrawls; manuscripts overlaid with layer upon layer of emendation" (378). Tolkien spent his life working on his stories and his language creations, and was constantly revising what he had written in the past. Christopher talks about "a trail . . . greatly obscured" (377). His father did not seem to mind this much—especially when it concerned his linguistic creations, the phonological, philological or grammatical choices. As Christopher points it out in the chapter "The Etymologies" in *The Lost Road*, "finality and a system fixed at every point was not [Tolkien's] underlying aim" (377). Exemplyfing Tolkien's wish for detail but leading to a very complex creation is that of the Avarin tongue. He envisioned Avarin as a branch of the Primitive Elvish tongue, but never really explained it, expanded it, or explored it, which seemed like a deliberate choice since he said in an early

version of the Appendix for *The Lord of the Rings,* appearing in *The Peoples of Middle-Earth,* that "(the Avari Elves) and their many tongues do not concern this book" (29-30). Of course, only an artist so passionate and meticulous about his art would go to the trouble of imagining a tongue and a people without never going in depth into the explanation of it, only to give his tongues' historical development more realistic an aspect, and to give more thickness to his imaginary world. Naturally, it is such details that made Christopher Tolkien's task even harder, having to understand all the subtleties of his father's imagination, as he tried to put all the pieces together; enthusiasts of Tolkien's linguistics and literary worlds owe much to Christopher's dedication and input in the posthumous editions of Tolkien's unpublished manuscripts.

Tolkien took his role as a philologist very seriously when devising his languages. He detailed their historical development and the historical evolution of their speakers very carefully. He did so, or intended to do so, for each of the tongues he created. But once again, the two languages that have the most extensive historical explanations available to us are his two most complete creations, his Elven tongues, Quenya and Sindarin. In the letter he wrote to Milton Waldman, appearing in the preface to *The Silmarillion,* he said that the Elves were "assigned two related languages . . . nearly completed, whose history is written, and whose forms . . . are deduced scientifically from a common origin" (xv). Christopher Tolkien underlined the importance of this process: "Those languages were conceived, of course, from the very beginning in a deeply 'historical' way" (*Lost Road,* 377). Tolkien himself stressed the necessity of this historical background and development, stating that "a language requires a suitable habitation, and a history in which it can develop" (*Letters,* 375). Again in his letter to Milton Waldman, he wrote:

> Out of these languages are made nearly all the *names* that appear in my legends. This gives a certain character (a cohesion, a consistency of linguistic style, and an illusion

> of historicity) to the nomenclature, or so I believe, that is markedly lacking in other comparable things. Not all will feel this as important as I do, since I am cursed by acute sensibility in such matters. (xv)

Because the final forms of Quenya and Sindarin are "scientifically" deduced from a protolanguage, Tolkien gave evidence of such deduction and evolution throughout his manuscripts. The chapter aptly called "The Etymologies" in *The Lost Road* presents some of the early forms of the Elven words, to help the careful and skilful enthusiast of Tolkenian linguistics to carry out his or her research study and make his or her own deductions of the evolution, from the Elvish protolanguage to the more recent forms. To look into detail into such linguistic evolution would be a strenuous and long task, and would exceed the scope of this thesis; however, it is interesting to know a bit more about the history and the wanderings of the speakers of the Elven tongues, to understand why their tongues came to change and where the Eldarin (that is to say, Elvish) languages and their several branches come from.

The account of such historical evolution was Tolkien's purpose behind the writing of *The Silmarillion*. This narrative goes beyond the history of the Elves, as it is the mythology of the Arda world—that is to say, the earth in J. R. R. Tolkien's imaginary world. It is a challenging book of about four-hundred pages, the narration of which was envisaged by Tolkien as comparable to the founding mythologies or myths of creation that have impacted our Earthly civilisations. It is a complex collection of stories, genealogies, battles, exoduses, etc., all of which lead to the events at the core of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. But similarly, the history of the Elvish peoples goes beyond the scope of *The Silmarillion*. In his subsequent manuscripts published after his death, Tolkien developed some aspects of his myths and stories that are not featured in *The Silmarillion*. Because Tolkien worked on this narrative all of his life and it was put together by his son after his death, like the other books

published posthumously, it is safe to assume that these stories existing outside of the frame of *The Silmarillion* must have been the infamous revisions, corrections, annotations Tolkien was always doing, but were meant, ultimately, if the English author had been able to carry on his project to its completion, to be included in the larger mythological account, *The Silmarillion*. The history of the Elves, accounting for their language transformations and leading to the forms of Quenya and Sindarin, is essentially covered between chapter one and chapter fifteen of the book (37-148). It all started with Primitive Elvish; from there, two stages can be highlighted. The first stage was *Primitive Quendian*, the first Elvish language to be spoken in the world of Arda. The second stage occurred when *Primitive Quendian* was split between two branches, *Common Eldarin*, which would eventually lead to Quenya and Sindarin, and *Avarin*. The historical explanation goes as follows. [4]

The first Elves in Arda awoke at Cuiviénen (The Waters of Awakening) in 1050 (Valian Years) and were named Quendi, which means 'the people'. Tolkien makes the distinction between Valian Years, which started with the beginning of the Two Trees, and the Years of the Sun, marking the beginning of the First Age (*The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* happen during the Third Age)—distinction useful to point out here only because the length of time a year represents differ from one time unit to the next. In *The War of the Jewels*, Tolkien states that 365 Valian Years equal to 3 500 Years of the Sun (one Year of the Sun is equal to one year in our own solar system) (20). The first Elves spoke the original language, which is *Primitive Quendian*. They dwelt in peace in Cuiviénen for thirty Valian Years (approximately 280 Years of the Sun). Around Valian Years 1080, they were found by Melkor, one of the Ainur[5] who had turned to evil and destroyed the Two Trees, and by his spies, and they were tormented by them. In Valian Years 1085, the Quendi were found by

[4] See Appendices 1 and 2 for a more visual overview of the different branches of Elvish and Appendix 3 for a map of the areas subsequently mentioned.
[5] Ainur, or the Holy Ones, are the divine and immortal creatures created by Ilúvatar, the One, who created the world through the Music of the Ainur, called *Ainulindalë* in Quenya.

Oromë who undertook to convince them to leave Cuiviénen and Middle-Earth, and to walk west towards the Undying Lands. This is when the second stage of the Elvish language starts with the split of *Primitive Quendian* into its two branches, *Common Eldarin*, the language developed during the March west, and *Avarin*. The Avari people were Elves who refused to undertake the Great Journey west and decided to stay in Middle-Earth; their name means 'the Unwilling'. As mentioned before, Tolkien imagined this branch in the development of his Elvish languages but never really intended to cover the history of these people or even to devise a tongue for them. As Helge Fauskanger says, "[it] seems he left the Avarin virtually unexplored", in an article he aptly named "Avarin—All in Six Words".

The separation of the Quendi, which happened in Valian Years 1105, thus led to their division between the Avari and the Eldar, or the High-Elves, which, themselves, were divided into three branches: the Vanyar, the Noldor, and the Teleri. The Vanyar and the Noldor went over the sea to the Undying Lands, called Aman in Quenya. The *Common Eldarin* tongue they were speaking later developed into *Old Quenya*, and finally into *Quenya*. Their Great Journey from Cuiviénen to Aman lasted from Valian Years 1105 to 1132; in Aman, they settled in a region called Valinor, that is why Quenya is also sometimes called the tongue of Valinor. The Teleri had much less linear a journey. They were the last to leave Cuiviénen, not eager at first to leave Middle-Earth. Eventually they were convinced by Oromë, but, because they were the last group marching to the west, they were named Teleri, which means 'hindmost' in Quenya. During the March, because of parallel events, they split into three groups. One group decided to leave the rest of the Teleri mid-journey and went south; they were named Nandor. Another group, while sailing to the Undying Lands, fell in love with the ocean and decided to stay at sea, thus taking the name of Sea-Elves. Eventually, they went on to go to Aman but settled, not on the main island, but on the little island called Tol Eressëa, near the Bay of Eldamar. The last group, once reaching the coast of Middle-Earth, just before

taking the boat to Aman, found their peace in the region called Beleriand and decided to stay there. They went on to be known as the Sindar, or Grey-Elves. So, after the linguistic split between *Common Eldarin* and *Avarin*, *Common Eldarin* was divided into two branches, *Quenya* and *Common Telerin*, the language spoken by the Hindmost. The Quenya language did not know another split or development, if only for the fact that the Vanyar and the Noldor, being two different peoples, did not truly speak the same language per se, but with a few small differences in their vocabulary. As for *Common Telerin*, it was divided into three branches: *Nandorin*, spoken by the Nandor, *Telerin*, spoken by the Sea-Elves, and *Sindarin*, spoken by the Sindar.

Quenya, however, went on to be introduced into Middle-Earth, because of an incident that happened during the First Age, but it never reached the status of widely-spoken language. The Noldor people rebelled over the decisions taken by the Vanyar and the Valar (another people living in Aman) on how to fight Melkor and his disciples. Most of them left Aman and went into exile in Middle-Earth, in Beleriand, where the Sindar had settled. However, the Noldor, speakers of Quenya, were outnumbered by the speakers of Sindarin; although both languages had a common origin, they were in fact already very different by this time, and the Noldor quickly adopted the tongue of the Grey-Elves. Also, when the Noldor asked for the help of the Teleri people in their fight against Melkor, the Teleri refused to lend the Noldor boats, and the Noldor thus slained the people of Teleri, as well as their King, over on the island of Tol Eressëa. When the Sindar King learned about the king slaying, who happened to be of his kin, he ordered his people never to speak Quenya again. The Noldor people accepted the decree, weakening once again the number of Quenya speakers. Eventually, Quenya reached the status of High Speech and went on to be spoken only by the Lords of the Noldor or as a language of lore. Quenya ceased to be a birth tongue in Middle-Earth with time and its only subsistence in Middle-Earth consisted of its ceremonial use ("Quenya Course", 7).

Now that the historical context and proceedings of events have been laid out, let us turn our attention to a more technical and linguistic aspect of Quenya and Sindarin, their functioning, proper, as languages.

§ 2. THE ELVEN TONGUES

§ 2.1 History and influence

When Tolkien presented his Elvish-invented languages in his letter to Milton Waldman, he referred to Quenya and Sindarin as "representing two different sides of [his] linguistic taste" (xv). These sides have been identified, but were also clearly mentioned by Tolkien, as being Finnish for Quenya and Welsh for Sindarin (*Languages of Middle-Earth*, 5). Tolkien had been fascinated by the Welsh tongue ever since, in his youth, he discovered its strange sounds and words on the trains passing through the train station adjoining his house. More than any other languages he was learning at the time, the strange and unusual combinations of letters captivated and filled his imagination. He learned Finnish later on in his life, as a more crafted scholar of linguistics and philology, while he was studying at Oxford. However, Finnish was not part of his degree, but as he said in his *Letters*, he was "quite intoxicated" by it when he discovered it. It is this fascination that led him to teach himself this language. It seems quite inevitable that Tolkien drew inspiration from the knowledge he had gathered throughout his life, and from what he was passionate about and drawn towards. Tolkien was aware of such inspiration and ready to acknowledge it. As he mentioned in *The Peoples of Middle-Earth*, his "Elvish languages are inevitably full of . . . reminiscences" from the languages he had learned in his youth (368). Naturally, some people saw an opening in those confessions and started looking for further evidence of inspiration

from existing languages in Tolkien's creations—from the vocabulary to the grammatical systems he devised. Dimitra Fimi explains in her dissertation that the question of how the roots of the words were created was one that has captivated some writers of Tolkien criticism, who have gone to great length to show the links between Tolkien's invention and the languages of the world, dead or still spoken. She adds that this question could "possibly be answered through a combination of totally arbitrary sound sequences which sounded 'right' to fit the chosen notion, by 'historical punning', or even in some cases by actual borrowings from real languages" (168). Tolkien was aware of such interpretations and speculations of borrowing as a key to his method of language invention, but he did not like it, saying in his *Letters*: "The borrowing, when it occurs (not often) is simply of sounds that are then integrated in a new construction" (387). He meant sure to signify to his critics that the external sources were inspirations only, and that trying to find too much of a correspondence of meanings between his words and actual languages was useless:

> . . . the bulk of the nomenclature is constructed from these pre-existing languages, and where the resulting names have analysable meanings (as is usual) these are relevant solely to the fiction with which they are integrated. The 'source', if any, provided solely the sound sequence . . . and its purport in the source is totally irrelevant. (380)

Tolkien started devising his Quenya tongue as early as 1914 when he wrote his first poem about a character called Earendel. This character was inspired from an Old English religious poem *Crist*, written by Cynewulf, that Tolkien had read just a few years prior; this poem was itself inspired by Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, an account of Norse mythology. Tolkien was twenty-two years old, and his creative impulse and his enthusiasm in myths and languages of the past were already deeply fuelling his imagination. Ruth S. Noel indicates that "during the following two years [he] began to combine the theme of Eärendil with an invented

language, based on Finnish, which was to become Quenya" (5). In his "Quenya Course", Helge Fauskanger underlines, however, that it would be a mistake to think of Quenya as having many similarities with Finnish, as being some sort of a pale copy of an already-existing language. As mentioned before, Tolkien did not like such assumptions much and it would not do justice to the extensive work he carried out on his Elvish languages. As always, Finnish was only an inspiration; as Fauskanger explains, "only a few words of Quenya display any resemblance to the corresponding Finnish words" (6). After Tolkien had started working on his Quenya tongue, the work on the other Elvish languages—Sindarin and the different branches of the more primitive languages—soon followed. In her guide to *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-Earth,* Ruth S. Noel quotes Tolkien underlining the inspiration of Welsh when he devised his Sindarin tongue: "The 'Sindarin', a Grey-Elven language, is in fact constructed deliberately to resemble Welsh phonology" (5). Because of the evolution of both languages from the first common tongue, linked to the journey of the peoples speaking it, Quenya and Sindarin, although related, have ended up having very different systems and features. Fauskanger indicates that "in many respect, Quenya stands closer to [the] primitive original language than the other languages" ("Quenya Course", 6). As such, albeit different, it still bears many features of the original tongue and has undergone the least drastic changes—contrary to Sindarin, as will be shown below. If any changes it underwent, Tolkien says, "its altering . . . [came] in the making of new words (for things old and new) and in the softening and harmonizing of the sounds and patterns that seemed to the Noldor more beautiful" (*War of the Jewels*, 20). For these reasons, Quenya and Sindarin also enjoyed a difference of status. Quenya was considered the noble tongue, spoken by the High-Elves in Valinor, or Aman, the "ancient tongue of Eldamar beyond the Sea, the first to be recorded in writing", Tolkien says in the Appendix F to *The Lord of the Rings* (1101). As mentioned before, it was not a birth tongue in Middle-Earth anymore by the time of the Third Age, but was still used for

ceremonies and for "high matters of lore and song" (1101), highlighting once again its noble status. Somehow, for Tolkien, Quenya was to the Elven people what Latin has been to our Western cultures: a language of culture, of knowledge and a sort of perfection to aspire to.

In the sections to follow, we are going to have a closer look at the Quenya and Sindarin's systems proper, in order to have a better understanding of Tolkien's creation and of his fine and detailed scholarly work. Before we go into such detail, some clarifications need to be made. Tolkien succinctly began to describe the functioning of his languages in the Appendices E and F to the third volume of his *Lord of the Rings* narrative, *The Return of the King* (1087-1102). In them, he gives a small guide to the pronunciation (not in linguistic terminology but with explanations that can be understood by all of his readers), and to the writing of his Elvish languages. He also gives a brief historical account of their evolution—no more than twenty-five lines. More information about his tongues was subsequently given when his following books or manuscripts were edited and published, but it always rather focused on the vocabulary, and was as scattered as the thousands of notes he left when he died. As Christopher Tolkien says in *The Lost Road*, "the philological papers were left in the greatest disorder" (378). The rest of the material was in the books, in the sample sentences appearing in his stories. From there, the synthesising and the deciphering have been the work of enthusiasts and scholars of Tolkenian linguistics, devoting themselves to a meticulous work of analysis and understanding of Tolkien's writings. As it is always best to go back to the original source, Tolkien's Appendices are the first source material in the following presentation of his Elvish languages. Given its scarce amount of information, the second source material are the secondary sources provided by Helge Fauskanger and his "Quenya Course", and David Salo and his book *A Gateway to Sindarin*, a grammar guide to Sindarin (the examples given below will also be taken from their books). Helge Fauskanger is a scholar

of linguistics (mainly Scandinavian linguistics), and a self-taught specialist of Tolkenian linguistics, who publishes the result of his research on his website, *Ardalambion*. David Salo is a linguist who also specialises in Tolkenian linguistics and who was the main consultant regarding Tolkien's languages for Peter Jackson's movies *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. Both authors' grammar guides are particular: they present a 'neo' version of Elvish—neo-Quenya and neo-Sindarin, that is to say a standardised and regularised form of these two Elven tongues. The idea of neo-Elvish is problematic in itself since it relies on the choices of the person standardising it whenever Tolkien gave contradictory forms, left doubts about the rules behind his revisions, or simply did not give any material on a given form (for example, this is the case of the verb 'be' in both Quenya and Sindarin which simply exist in two forms, but the full constructions of the verb were never given by Tolkien). In such cases, a partisan of neo-Elvish will make up for this lack of information by analysing other similar forms and assuming the theoretical missing form. This obviously creates a rift between Tolkenian purists and partisans of neo-Elvish, a question which will be tackled in the third part. Besides, it is important to note that it does not mean Fauskanger and Salo's accounts of Quenya and Sindarin are not accurate: both are rigorous scholars who have analysed to the extent available the material currently at our disposal, and their grammar guides have been recognised as precise and reliable[6]. The issue underlying here is rather one of content and of betrayal to Tolkien's work and spirit, which will be further explored in the third part. In the following sections, the aim is rather to give an insight of the extent to which Tolkien devised these languages, and to give an overview of the profoundly gifted and crafted philologist and

[6] Fauskanger's "Quenya Course" has been described as the "most up-to-date and accurate account of Neo-Quenya" on the website of the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship, devoted to the scholarly study of Tolkien's invented languages and responsible for the publication of journals presenting Tolkien's manuscripts until then unpublished (see Part III, 2.1); Salo credits the help of Fauskanger in the preface to his book (xv) and has published a few articles on Fauskanger's website, underlining their shared commitment to rigorous and accurate work. Salo regularly publishes revised versions of his grammar guide when more material is made available.

linguist he was. The presentation of Quenya and Sindarin will focus on two main aspects, those of pronunciation and grammar, with a shorter last section on the question of vocabulary.

§ 2.2 Pronunciation

Before presenting the pronunciation of each phoneme of Quenya and Sindarin, a precision needs to be made, linked to an incoherence of form Tolkien displayed in his writings, concerning the letters <k> and <c>. Tolkien seems to have started to write his Elvish words with only the letter <k> to represent the sound [k] as a way of stressing the right pronunciation he was aiming for, and thus of avoiding all confusion the letter <c> could cause, as it is sometimes pronounced as an [s] sound in some languages. Later on, he settled on transcribing this [k] sound with the letter <c> in order to "produce words and names that do not look uncouth in modern letters" ("Appendix E", 1087). He also added as an explanation that the Elven tongues "[have] been spelt as much like Latin as its sounds allowed. For this reason *c* has been preferred to *k* in both Eldarin languages", although this late choice created inconsistencies between his former works and his next.

Although in the Appendix E, Tolkien did not explain his pronunciation with a linguistic terminology and linguistic symbols (a choice also retained by Fauskanger), the following presentation of the sounds of Quenya and Sindarin will be done using the symbols of the International Phonetics Alphabet for more phonological accuracy (a choice also made by Salo).

Vowels

The vowels of Quenya and Sindarin are: *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, with the addition of *y* for Sindarin only. They can be long and short. The short vowels sound the same in both languages.

a [ɑ] e [ɛ] i [i] o [ɔ] u [u] y [y]

In Sindarin, Salo points out, when *i* is before a vowel, it is pronounced [j], as for example in Ioreth (20). Also, Fauskanger insistently adds that the vowels are always pronounced fully and distinctly; there shall never be a reducing of vowels (contrary to English), whatever the position of the vowel ("Quenya Course", 44). As such, *e* and *a* in final positions will often be spelt *ë* and *ä* to remind the speaker to pronounce them fully, although Tolkien recognised this spelling was not followed "consistently" throughout his writings (1090). The long vowels tend to have the same quality than the short vowels, albeit the fact that they are longer. This is especially true for Sindarin, a result Tolkien explains by the fact that they had been "derived in comparatively recent times from [the short vowels]" ("Appendix E", 1089). However, he gives the precision that this is not the rule for long *e* and *o* in Quenya which are, "when correctly pronounced, as by the Eldar, tenser and 'closer' than the short vowels". Tolkien also adds a scriptural precision, stating that the "long vowels are usually marked with the 'acute accent' . . . . In Sindarin long vowels in stressed monosyllables are marked with the circumflex, since they tended in such cases to be specially prolonged" (1089).

á [ɑː] é [ɛː] (S) / [eː] (Q) í [iː] ú [uː]

ó [ɔː](S) / in Quenya, between [ɔː] and [uː], I have interpreted to be close to [ɵː]

Diphthongs

In Quenya, there are only two types of diphthongs: in -i and in -u.

ai [ɑɪ] oi [oɪ] ui [uɪ]

eu [ɛʊ] au [ɑʊ] iu [iʊ]

In other instances where two vowels would follow each other, they are to be fully pronounced; sometimes a diaeresis will be added on the second vowel to underline its fully-pronounced quality. In Sindarin, the diphthongs go as follows:

ae [αɛ] ai [αɪ] au [αʊ] ei [ɛɪ] oe [ɔɛ] ui [ʊɪ]

Consonants

Consonants sounds and distribution in Quenya and Sindarin go as follows:

Quenya	Sindarin	Pronun.	Note
	b	[b]	
c/k	c/k	[k]	
	ch	[x]	
d	d	[d]	
	dh	[ð]	
f	f	[f]	(Sindarin only) At the end of a word or before *n*, [v]
g	g	[g]	
gw	gw	[gw]	
	h	[h]	For the pronunciation of *h* in Quenya, see below.
hw	hw	[ʍ]	
hy		[ç]	
l	l	[l]	Never [ɬ]
ly		[lj]	
m	m	[m]	
n	n	[n]	In Sindarin, realised as [ŋ] before *c* and *g*.
	ng	[ŋ]	
	nth	[nθ]	
nw		[nw]	
ny		[ɲ]	
p	p	[p]	

(Continuation)

Quenya	Sindarin	Pronun.	Note
	ph	[f]	
qu/cw		[kw]	
r	r	[r]	"Represents a trilled *r* in all positions" ("Appendice E", 1088)
s	s	[s]	
t	t	[t]	
	th	[θ]	
ty		[tj]	
v		[v]	
y		[j]	
w	w	[w]	

What is interesting to note with this table is the distribution of consonants between the two languages. Quenya has comparatively much fewer consonants than Sindarin, and they are as well much less altered in terms of sounds, accounting for its more archaic nature, closer to Primitive Quendian, explained at the beginning of this section. Another aspect of this archaic nature is illustrated by the sound evolution of some syllables when their spelling remained the same. This is the case of the syllables *hl* and *hr*. Originally, they existed to stress the voiceless quality of the consonant following the *h* and, as such, to mark the difference with *l* and *r*. However, with time this difference tended to fade and their pronunciation tended to be harmonized with *l* and *r*, though the writing stayed. As Tolkien explained it in the section dealing with the letter *L*, "in (archaic) Quenya this is written *hl*, but was in the Third Age usually pronounced as *l*" ("Appendix E", 1088, Tolkien's parentheses).

In Quenya still, some consonants have interesting patterns. The sets of consonants gw/hw/nw/qu/cw and hy/ly/ny/ty should be, as such, noted. Although they are formed with two consonants, they have to be thought of and realised as one syllable, and never as two distinct sounds, Fauskanger stresses (56). The added -w or -y is therefore not there to symbolise an extra sound, but to change, or define better, the quality of the preceding consonant. As such, the set gw/hw/nw/qu/cw stands for labialised consonants, where the lips will be rounded as much as possible to allow the sound of the preceding consonant to be as fronted in the mouth as possible; and the set hy/ly/ny/ty stands for palatalised consonants, where the back of the tongue will be held up towards the palatal region to give these preceding syllables a palatalised sound contrasting with their single counterparts. Because these syllables have to be realised as a single sound, words like *nyarna* ("tale") or *alya* ("rich") will not be realised as [nɪɑrnɑ] or [ɑlɪɑ], but as [njɑrnɑ] and [ɑljɑ]. As mentioned in the table above, the sequence <qu> is similar to that of <cw>, and as such should be realised as [kw], so does represent a labialised consonant. But Fauskanger explains that "qu is simply an aesthetic way of spelling what would otherwise be represented as cw" (42). As such, Quenya is not pronounced [kɛnɪɑ] but [kwɛnjɑ] (exemplifying therefore the two cases mentioned above), a precision manifestly interesting to make in the context of this study.

Sometimes in Quenya, a consonant will be doubled, as can appear in the sequences cc/ll/mm/nn/pp/rr/ss/tt, indicating that they should be realised as long consonants. The letter <s>, be it in Quenya or Sindarin, is always unvoiced and realised as [s]. Fauskanger notes an interesting historical development when dealing with this phoneme. He indicates that, when <s> now appears between vowels, it represents an earlier letter, þ, which was realised as [θ] in Primitive Elvish (54). Quenya-form *nausë* ("imagination") was written *nauþë* in an earlier form.

Finally, the evolution of the phonetic realisations of <h> in Quenya is of particular interest—especially to scholars of English linguistics as it strangely and excitingly resembles that of the phonetic realisations of <h> in English. In Primitive Elvish, *h* was pronounced as [x]. When evolving towards its modern form Quenya, the [x] sound at the beginning of words underwent a weakening and was replaced by a [h] sound. The weakening happened also for *h* located in the middle of a word, although in such cases, the pronunciation [x] can be retained. Because of this original pronunciation, when *h* is followed by *t* in the sequence <ht>, then *h* is pronounced as [x], thus giving the sequence [xt]. However when this <ht> sequence is preceded by the vowels *e* or *i*, the [x] sound is weakened in another form and should be pronounced [ç], thus somehow amusingly mirroring the weakening process the phoneme /h/ underwent towards the end of the Old English period and the beginning of Middle English. It is no great surprise, though, given Tolkien's philological and linguistic background and his deep appreciation for both Old and Middle English, that he was not only most probably aware of such evolution in his native language, but that it also served as another inspiration in devising his own phonological and historical development for his invented languages. The last important point to be made about the pronunciation is the fact that none of the consonants in Quenya or Sindarin, especially those that are realised as such in English, are aspirated. Fauskanger explains that in Primitive Elvish *th*, *ph* and *kh* used to be aspirated sounds, but were replaced respectively by *s*, *f* and *h*; so, no aspirated consonant remains in the modern forms of Elvish (55-6).

Concerning the question of stress, Tolkien explained that its position "is not marked, since in the Eldarin languages (Quenya and Sindarin) its place is determined by the form of the word" (1090). He adds some precisions however, indicating that two-syllable words have the stress falling on the first syllable; in longer words, it falls on the penultimate syllable,

unless the penultimate syllable contains a "short vowel followed by only one (or no consonant), the stress [falling] on the syllable before it, the third from the end."

This presentation of the pronunciation of Tolkien's languages gives a clearer perception of his imaginary world through the evocative power of the sounds of his Elven tongues. It also gives a better overview of the kind of precision Tolkien has endeavoured to achieve, looking carefully into every detail not to leave anything to chance. Such precision can also be found in the way he devised his grammatical systems for Quenya and Sindarin.

§ 2.3 Grammar

The objective when presenting the grammatical systems of Quenya and Sindarin is, once again, not to give a grammar guide to these tongues—Salo and Fauskanger have done so extensively; neither is it to side with their positions of neo-Elvish and present this alternative as the only way to encompass the Eldarin tongues. It is rather to show the extent of depth and detail to which Tolkien went when he devised the grammar to these languages, the fine philological and linguistic work he subjected himself to. The grammars to Quenya and Sindarin are indeed very complex—that of Sindarin, even more so. In face of such complexity, it can be a daunting read to go through the different points of his systems. The choice of study here is to give an overview of such systems, detailed enough to encompass the precise work of Tolkien, but still clear and succinct enough not to get lost in the twists and turns of Tolkien's grammatical specificities. As such, we will look at some basic grammatical points, yet quite representative of a language: nouns, articles, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. A special aspect will be tackled regarding Sindarin, which is that of mutations, a complex and difficult rule of phonetic and spelling shifts, yet inevitable to look at when dealing with Sindarin (although mutations might be mentioned in some of the following grammatical points, we will see how they work only at the end of the section not to make it too daunting

from the start; examples will be given where needed for a better understanding of the grammatical notion, or when the mutation makes the grammatical rule).

Nouns

Both Quenya and Sindarin are systems where any inflexions (plural, genitive, possessive pronoun, etc.), when they occur, are put at the end of the relevant word. There are two plurals in Quenya, *-r* for the words finishing with a vowel or -ië, and *-i* for the words finishing with a consonant or -ë.

Elda ("Elf") → Eldar ("Elves") – Vala ("God") → Valar ("Gods") – Ainu → Ainur[7]

Elen ("star") → Eleni ("stars")

It is interesting to note here that *Quendi*, the name given to the First Elves and meaning "The people", is the plural form of *Quendë*. Conversely, *quendi* ("elf woman") forms its plural in *quendir*. In Sindarin, however, Salo says that the noun is "not marked for case by any overt morpheme" (93), which means that the only mark of plural will happen through a mutation—a vowel mutation.

Naug ("Dwarf") → Noeg ("Dwarves") – dûr ("dark" sg) → duir ("dark" pl)

êl ("star") → elin ("stars")

Articles

In Quenya as much as in Sindarin, there is no account of an indefinite article; only the definite article is formulated. Not mentioning an article with a noun would thus simply signify that it is indefinite. Fauskanger draws the parallel between this rule and a similar pattern happening in Classical Greek, a language Tolkien was introduced to from a young age (70). The definite article in Quenya is *i*: *i elen* ('the star'), as opposed to *elen* ('a star').

[7] For the meaning of this word, cf. note 5 (p.42)

In Sindarin, it is a bit more complicated as the article agrees with number and with case; four cases exist for nouns: nominative and accusative (they follow the same pattern in this instance), genitive, and prepositional. The distribution goes as follows:

	Singular	Plural
Nominative/Accusative	*I*	*in+mutation*
Genitive	*en*	*in+mutation*
Prepositional	*en*	*in+mutation*

As an example, *en-arwen* means 'of the noble woman' and *e-mbar* means 'of the home'.

Adjectives

In Quenya, they can end either in *-a*, in *-ë* or in *-in*. They agree with number.

Sg	Pl
-a	-ë
-ëa	-ië
-ë	-i
-in	-i

As such, we have *vanya* ("beautiful"), *taura* ("mighty"), *úmëa* ("evil") or *morë* ("black").

In Sindarin, the adjective follows the noun and agrees with it in number. David Salo does not give a specific rule regarding the formation of adjectives; he rather lists the different mutations they undergo depending on their position. For example, *dínen* ("silent") is transformed into *dor dhínen* ("silent land") when following the noun; *morn* ("black") gives *eryn vorn* ("black wood") when associated to the noun. However, to make the adjective plural, an i-affection occurs. For example, *calen* ("green") in the singular form becomes *celin* in the plural form.

Pronouns

For both Quenya and Sindarin, pronouns are added at the end of words. Quenya has five pronouns, I, you/thou, it, we and one (indefinite pronoun, equivalent to the French *on*), which are respectively, *-n*/*-nyë*, *-l*/*-lyë*, *-s*, *-lmë*/*-mmë* and *quen*. Sindarin has four pronouns, I, we, it and they, which are respectively *-n*, *-me*, - (third person is null) and *-r*. They are declined in four cases, nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. Concerning Sindarin, David Salo makes a mention of the second-person pronoun. He explains that it is attested in its genitive and dative cases in Tolkien's writings, but not in the others. So, for the missing cases he reconstructed the forms, basing himself on evidence and researching; such evidence and researching lead him to believe Sindarin's form for thou (the only form, accounting for both singular and plural) would be a modified form borrowed from Quenya *elyë*/*-lyë* (106). As such, he concludes that the reconstructed form would be *!le* (the ! marker signals the reconstructed form).

Verbs

Quenya, as does Sindarin, has two categories of verbs: Primary verbs, consisting of the primary root with no addition; and A-stem verbs, consisting of the root with the addition of an ending in -a- (this ending can take many forms, such as -ta, -la, etc.) In Sindarin, the distinction is only between I-stem and A-stem verbs.

In Quenya, the present tense is formed by adding -a to the root or stem, with a lengthening of the stem vowel. In the case of A-stem verbs, to avoid the double -aa, it is instead represented as -ëa. So, for example the verb *sil* ("shine") gives *síla*; the verb *linda* ("sing") gives *líndëa*. The verb agrees with its subject in number with the addition of *-r* if the form is plural. For example: *elen síla* ("a star shines"), *eleni sílar* ("stars shine"). In Sindarin, the present tense is formed simply by adding the personal ending to the stem. For example,

for the verb *naro* (“tell”), we have *naron* (‘I tell’), *naram* (‘we tell’), *nara* (‘he/she tells’), *narar* (‘they tell’). Fauskanger makes the notable remark that Quenya has an aorist tense, that is to say a tense describing “an ongoing action” (119). As such, when the verb *quet* (“speak”) is conjugated with the form seen above, *quétan*, it means ‘I am speaking’, but when it is conjugated with the form *quetën*, it means ‘I speak’. Salo does mention the aorist tense in his grammar guide, but does not devote a section to it, leaving us guessing that Sindarin does not have such a distinction.

The past tense in Quenya is formed by adding *-(n)ë* to the root for Primary verbs and *-në* to the stem for A-stem verbs. For example, *tir* (“watch”) gives *tirnë* (“watched”); *sinta* (“fade”) gives *sintarnë* (“faded”). In Sindarin, it is a bit more complicated since the past tense can be formed in four different ways. The first is by nasal affixation, that is to say the infixation or suffixation of a nasal before the final consonant of the root. For example, *naro* (“tell”) gives *narnen* (‘I told’), *narnem* (‘we told’), *narn* (‘he/she told’) and *narner* (‘they told’). The second is by reduplication: a short vowel “identical in quality to the root vowel [is] placed before the root vowel”, with the root vowel undergoing a long ablaut and the initial consonant undergoing a short mutation (117). For example, *anno* (“give”) gives *onen* (‘I gave’), *onem* (‘we gave’), *aun* (‘he/she gave’) and *oner* (‘they gave’). The third is by ablaut where the stem is made of the root with the vowel in strong grade and the suffixes of the reduplicated past. For example, *delio* (“hide”) gives *dolen* (‘I hid’), *dolem* (‘we hid’), *dual* (‘he/she hid’) and *doler* (‘they hid’). The fourth is by addition of a suffix. It is the most common type, says Salo, often “substituted for other types” (119). It consists of the stem and the addition of -nt- or -nn-. For example, *renio* (“wander”) gives *reniannen* (‘I wandered’), *reniannem* (‘we wandered’), *reniant* (‘he/she wandered’) and *renianner* (‘they wandered’).

The future tenses in both languages are fairly simple. In Quenya, it only consists of the addition of *-uva* to the root or the stem. For example *mat* (“eat”) gives *matuvas* (‘he will eat’)

or *matuvalyë* (‘you/thou will eat’). In Sindarin, *-tha* is added to the stem and is then conjugated like an A-stem verb. For example, still with the verb *naro*, we have *narathon* (‘I will tell’), *naratham* (‘we will tell’), *naratha* (‘he/she will tell’) and *narathar* (‘they will tell’).

Finally, the perfect tense is made, in Quenya, by adding -ië to the stem or the root, as well as lengthening the stem vowel and repeating it at the beginning of the word; and, in Sindarin, it is made by adding -en to the past stem (a rule that is interestingly reminding of a similar process happening to some verbs in the German language and, more generally, in Germanic languages). So for example, we have, in Quenya: *cen* (“see”) which gives *ecénië* (‘has seen’), or *mat* (“eat”) which gives *amátië* (“has eaten”); and in Sindarin, we have *narnen* (‘having been told’), with its plural form *narnin*, and *dolen* (‘having been hidden’), with its plural form *dolin*. Fauskanger gives a helpful example featuring the perfect tense and the rule of ‘suffixing’ the pronouns, with the verb *tuv* (“find”): *utúvie**nye***s (‘**I** have found it’) (138).

The question of ‘be’ needs to be addressed, especially given the fact that both linguists have different approaches to it. They both state the fact that, although ‘be’ is alluded to in both languages, it only exists in two or three forms, and we do not even know the root form for it. In Quenya, the only forms we know of ‘be’ are *ná* (“is”) and *né* (“was”). In Sindarin, the only existing forms are *nad* (“being”) and *no* (“be!”). But while Fauskanger decides not to further explore this verb, given the significant lack of material, and states that, although we can make assumptions, “it may be safer to simply use independent pronouns and leave out the copula “to be” altogether” (314), Salo makes the choice of giving into these assumptions, basing himself and his evidence on the Quenya form *ná* and on the fact that both languages descend from a common tongue, so some consistency may exist (121).

Mutations

The final point will be about the complex question of mutations in Sindarin. It is one of the main aspects of Sindarin grammar, as seen in the section above, and is the legacy of the many transformations the tongue underwent before it acquired its most recent form. However, the complexity of this notion is increased by the fact that we lack material on this given point, and Salo gives this warning:

> There is not enough evidence to reconstruct every detail of the mutation system; the attempt has been made, within the scope of what is known about the phonological history of Sindarin, but because the system does not necessarily follow strictly from historical processes of sound change . . ., it is possible that much is mistaken. (73)

Mutations concern both consonants and vowels. For consonants, it deals with the initial consonant which changes depending on the situations. Five categories of mutations are to be highlighted: the soft mutation, the most common, where, for example, a voiceless stop will become a voiced stop (t → d), a nonnasal voiced stop will become a voiced fricative (d → dh, g → ‘), or a voiceless liquid will become a liquid (lh → l); the nasal mutation, where, for example, a nonnasal voiced stop will become a nasal (d → n, b → m); the stop mutation, where, for example, a voiceless stop will become a voiceless fricative (t → th); the liquid mutation, where, for example, a voiceless stop will become a voiced stop (p → ph); and the mixed mutation, taking features from other mutations and happening on specific occasions. For both the stop mutation and the liquid mutation, Salo preceded each form with the ! marker, so both are in fact reconstructed assumptions.

For the vowels, Salo explains that the mutations happened “because of the disturbing influence of certain nearby vowels or semi-vowels” (82). There are three categories of mutations: the a-affection, where the vowels *i* or *u* will change to *e* or *o*, when they preceded a final ‘a’, later lost in Old Sindarin (for example, OS **dimba* → S *dem* (“gloomy”)); the a-

affection of u, happening when the a-affection precedes a nasal or n/w, with, for example OS **kurwa* becoming S *coru* (“cunning”); and finally, the i-affection, happening on three different instances. The first is the primary final affection, when going from the singular form to the plural form (as seen in the section above dealing with nouns), where, for example, *e* becomes *i* (*certh* (“rune”) → *cirth* (“runes”)), or *o* becomes *y* (*orn* (“tree”) → *yrn* (“trees”)); the second is the primary internal affection, happening in syllables immediately preceding the vowel *i*, where *a* and *o* become *e*; the third and last is the secondary affection, which is the result of a vowel altered from a primary i-affection, where *a* becomes *e* (*aran* → *erain* (“kings”), *amon* → *emyn* (“hills”)), *o* becomes *e* (*morben* → *merbin* (“dark Elves”)), and *u* becomes *y* (*tulus* → *tylys* (“poplars”)).

Through this overview of the grammars of Tolkien’s Eldarin languages, what is most interesting and fascinating to note is where Tolkien’s work as a philologist comes into play. Of course, the depth of precision and invention for his grammars is impressive, but what is really staggering is how each of the rules he devised is an account of the languages’ evolution from the protolanguages. This is especially visible with Sindarin or when analysing the two languages in parallel, since Quenya still retains a much more primitive quality to it than Sindarin. When studying this evolution, it is easy to immerse ourselves in the world of the Elves, and to imagine how and why the different Elvish peoples were speaking in such and such ways, and do so with the same enthusiasm we would have, thinking about the evolution of our own European languages. As such, Tolkien’s languages are not merely a game of puzzle, with pieces put here and there together, albeit methodically and mathematically, by a genius mind; they carry us to another world, imagined and created by a brilliant storyteller. As Ruth S. Noel states, “the story of the evolution of the languages of Middle-Earth is the story of a compelling hobby of a linguistic genius. The story of the evolution of the languages *in*

Middle-Earth is a complex tribute to Tolkien's combined talents as linguist and storyteller" (6).

§ 2.4 Vocabulary

The vocabulary part of Tolkien's invented languages is where he could give full expression to his philological craft. Tolkien found much more pleasure in the study of the evolution of the words of his languages than he did in devising their grammatical systems. Christopher Tolkien says in *The Lost Road* that "[his] father was perhaps more interested in the processes of change than he was in displaying the structure . . . of the languages" (378). This is why Tolkien left quite a substantial amount of notes and records of his lexicon invention, changes and evolution, while he never really gave a guide to his grammars and left the task of deciphering his sample sentences to his readers. As always, the more manuscripts are put together and edited by Christopher Tolkien, the more we know about the extent of the vocabulary Tolkien had created, as much for his Primitive Eldarin tongues as for Quenya and Sindarin, in the case of Elvish languages. The publication of *The Lost Road*, particularly including its section called "The Etymologies", was a major addition to that collection of vocabulary, and was a helpful contribution to the understanding of the languages' evolution.

As mentioned before, for Tolkien, the forms he gave to each of the words he invented could not be random. They were "deduced scientifically from a common origin" ("Letter to Milton Waldman", xv); or at least they had to appear so. As Christopher Tolkien explains:

> My father did not . . . 'invent' new words and names arbitrarily: in principle, he devised them from within the historical structure, proceeding from the 'bases' or primitive stems, adding suffix or prefix or compounds, deciding (or, as he would have said, 'finding out') when the word came into the language. (*The Lost Road*, 379)

His process for the historical development of his languages happened in two ways. The first way is that described by Christopher Tolkien, which consists in starting from the original stem in Primitive Quendian and, by the addition of suffix or prefix or through a change of sounds, finding the form for the subsequent languages. But Michael Adams, in his book *From Elvish to Klingon*, in which he devotes a chapter to Tolkien's invented languages, shows that, as a second way of establishing the historical development to his languages, Tolkien would also use the reverse process to that mentioned above: he would, Adams says, "choose a word-form [he] like[d], and fabricate its root by running the 'tendencies of development' backwards" (89). This process of development analysis is of course similar to that used by nowadays linguists and philologists who work their way back in time to try to reconstruct the hypothetical Indo-European language. As such, if the first process seems to be the most logical and the most immediate when thinking of and devising an invented language, the second is in fact the most noteworthy. It bears the true mark of Tolkien's work as a philologist, and of his quest for detail and precision when creating his languages. The task of consistency was far more difficult than with the other process—natural and obvious—because the rule found for the modern word to come from the original stem had to agree with all the branches already existing. In her book about Tolkien's languages, Ruth S. Noel gives some elements of comparison between Quenya and Sindarin that allow us to see the similarities between some words in the two languages (73-4). For example, 'January' is *Narvinyë* in Quenya and *Narwain* in Sindarin; 'June' is *Nárië* in Quenya and *Norui* in Sindarin; or 'earth' is *arda* in Quenya and *arth* in Sindarin.

Behind the notion of vocabulary lies the issue of the number of words available. As explained before, Tolkien did not create a lexicon vast enough to allow any aspiring Elvish speakers to deal with all the matters of everyday life. The posthumous publications have offered a new range of vocabulary unknown before, but it is still not enough to make the two

languages truly practical. As Ruth S. Noel points it out, "it is certain that he knew more than was published, but it is doubtful that he ever created enough vocabulary for a living language" (*The Languages of Tolkien*, 61). However, this scarce availability of vocabulary material has not discouraged enthusiasts and learners of Quenya and Sindarin. Like the neo forms of these Eldarin languages have been brought forth through a thorough work of investigation, assumptions and reconstruction, a "neo vocabulary" trend has arisen. Specialists and enthusiasts of Tolkenian linguistics alike follow the same process than for the grammar; they conduct a precise study of the lexicon and roots currently available, of the patterns used to form words, and invent, create, assume new vocabulary, basing themselves on the evidence found in their research. Once again, this angle of approach can be controversial, and in fact is, but has allowed the outburst of more possibilities. As Fauskanger explains, it allowed the enrichment of the Quenya texts available—as well as those of Sindarin: "Numerous enthusiasts have brought forth a limited, but steadily growing body of Quenya literature, especially since a substantial amount of vocabulary finally became available with the publication of *The Lost Road* in 1987" (7).

Through this overview of Tolkien's Quenya and Sindarin, we can better see the scale of the author's philological work and the brilliance of his mind. If the pronunciation is the first technical aspect to his languages that Tolkien was careful to give precisions to, it is because he knew that the right utterance of the foreign words was the gateway to his imaginary world. If his readers were not able to pronounce the many Elvish names featuring in his stories and might, thus, have looked past them without reading them, the long-term impact of his world and the potential to create fascination and excitement would have been drastically reduced. The languages are as much part of the significance of the stories and of the mythology, as are Aragorn, Sauron, Legolas or Gandalf. And in fact, not all readers have

the resources and the will enough to engage in a thorough philological work of Tolkien's languages. Such study can be carried out for those who wish to do so, as seen when dealing with the grammar or the vocabulary of Quenya and Sindarin, but the books of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*—even *The Silmarillion* to a certain extent, were meant for the general audience. By providing his guide to the pronunciation, Tolkien allowed all of his readers to truly get into the story, inside his world, and make the unique experience of fantasy—highlighting the importance of speaking the languages.

§ 3. PERFORMING THE LANGUAGES

§ 3.1 To speak the word

Ruth S. Noel says, at the beginning of her chapter about the Elven tongues in her book *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-Earth*, that "it is significant in Tolkien's works that the spoken word is essential for the Creation", stressing how Ilúvatar, The One, started the process of creation in Arda by uttering *Ea!* ("Let it be!"), and drawing a parallel with the Old Testament and the biblical myth of creation (55). Besides, the blessed spirits of the Ainur created the world with their songs and their chants. So, from the beginning of *The Silmarillion*, the act of speaking and the enchanting power of music and melodies are put forth. These two aspects were very important to Tolkien. He did not devise his tongues for them to be practical, but always with the creative-driving force that the sounds should be pleasing to the ears and the word forms beautiful to the eyes. In *The Monsters and the Critics*, he talks about the "basic pleasure" that one can find "in the phonetic elements of a language and in the style of their patterns" (190). He also uses the term "phonaethestetic pleasure" in his *Letters*, to describe a criterion to determine if a language is beautiful (176). The form of the word may be even more important than the content. Still in *The Monsters and the Critics*,

in his essay "A Secret Vice", he mentions that "the very-word form itself, of course, even unassociated with notions, is capable of giving pleasure—a perception of beauty, which if of a minor sort is not more foolish and irrational than being sensitive to the line of a hill, light and shade, or colour" (207). He adds, however, that one of the dangers of such tendency is for the words to become "over-pretty, to be *phonetically and semantically* sentimental—while their bare meaning is probably trivial" (213).

Speaking the word, rather than just reading it, also means making it come alive, giving the language a full potential of existence. The feeling one gets when reading Tolkien's narratives is that of a distant and forgotten past, a time long gone in a world that feels almost just like a memory; yet, it also feels incredibly close to us, thanks to the story being told with the point of view of the Hobbits and the likeable nature of their characters. If the Elvish tongues had been presented as these distant languages, unreachable to us, something of an ancient time, not spoken anymore if only by scholars, like Latin and Greek are for us nowadays, the appeal they would have created would have been significantly less strong. Quenya is meant to have this distant and 'non-graspable' quality, but Sindarin is a language anchored in its time, spoken by its people, and is the continuing reflection of a culture still in existence. Naturally, Latin and Greek do generate appeal and fascination nowadays, but they do not lead a massive number of people to speak, converse in and use them on a daily basis, contrary to the languages still spoken. If Quenya and Sindarin have an obvious reduced impact on people all over the world compared to natural languages, the dedication of scholars and enthusiasts shown before, and the passion and fascination these languages have produced, as will be explored in the third part, are the testimony to their durable, appealing and reachable aspect. If some "reviewers were . . . puzzled or . . . irritated by all the linguistic material in [Tolkien's] work", Dimitra Fimi says in her dissertation, many readers showed, on the contrary, "interest in clarifying linguistic matters in Middle-Earth", in understanding them

and in knowing more about them (126-7). The fact that they can be performed encourages people to engage in them, to explore and analyse them. If speaking the language makes it come alive, it also makes it become timeless. Just like music, the 'notes' of the language do not only exist on paper anymore, but they are articulated and sung, provoking new emotions and sensations with the listener or the speaker. To help the brave beginner, Tolkien recorded himself speaking his languages, and a *J. R. R. Tolkien Audio Collection*, featuring his recordings from 1952, as well as readings from his son Christopher, was published by Abridged Edition and made available to the general audience—a glimpse into the sounds of the Eldarin tongues as they were intended to be spoken. These recordings are very rare and, quite often, of poor sound quality; some of them (legally or illegally uploaded?) are featured on the YouTube platform, and it is exhilarating to listen to Tolkien declaim his *Namarië* poem or the Ring prophecy. One does get closer and deeper into Tolkien's world, feeling, at the same time estranged from this place, and yet incredibly part of it.

If word-form and phonetic aesthetics and pleasure were the chief creative-driving force for Tolkien, pleasure was also found in another aspect of language: the aestheticism appeal of calligraphy. Tolkien devised his own alphabet to represent his Elven tongues. It is called 'Tengwar', which means 'letters' in Elvish. It is a rather complex system where the vowels, 'Tehtar', are written above the preceding consonant for Quenya, and above the following consonant for Sindarin ("Appendix E", 1095). Tolkien describes *Tengwar* as being a writing form "brought to Middle-Earth by the exiled Noldor", and as being "not in origin an 'alphabet', that is, a haphazard series of letters, each with an independent value of its own, recited in a traditional order that has no reference either to their shapes or to their functions", but rather as "a system of consonantal signs, of similar shapes and style . . . . None of the

letters had in itself a fixed value” (1091-3). Their ‘value’ was decided based on ‘grades’, grades which were themselves established on the basis of the letter’s phonological realisation. Just as much as the Elvish languages underwent historical changes, the system of Tengwar evolved through time, and it was that called *Fëanorian* which was adopted during the Third Age. In the Appendix E, Tolkien gives a presentation, in a table, of the Tengwar system, ranked by grades (1092); in her book *The Languages of Tolkien’s Middle-Earth*, Ruth S. Noel gives a more precise representation of the system, with the sounds associated with each Tengwar or Tehtar letter (46-50) (see Appendices 4 and 5). With the help of both sources, we can thus infer that the Quenya word, *elen* (“stars”), would be spelt as such: . From another example taken from the section about the Elven tongues in this part, *eleni síluvar* (Q “stars will shine”) would be spelt . Sindarin *naratham* (“we will tell”) would be spelt .

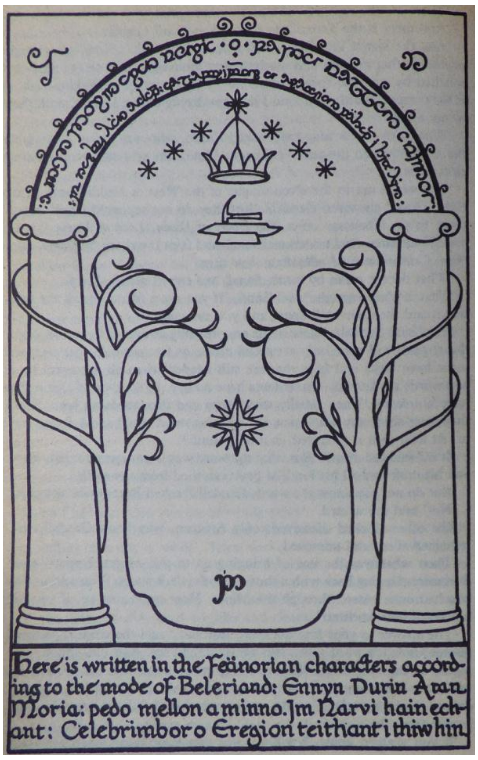


Fig. 1: Inscriptions in Tengwar over the mine of Moria's gate, drawn by Tolkien in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (298)

An important source of 'performance' of the Elven tongues, of course, came with the film adaptations of Tolkien's novels. Because Elvish was quite extensively used throughout the movies, it did not only re-actualise the pronunciation, but sparked a new interest in Tolkien's invented languages from a younger generation.

§ 3.1 The work in Peter Jackson's movies

Several dialect and Tolkien specialists worked together with Peter Jackson and his team on the film adaptations to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, in order to give the movies a quality as authentic and as close to Tolkien's spirit as possible. David Salo was involved in the pre-production: to give the movies more authenticity, many more quotes than those which appear in the books were added in the scripts. However, since such quotes did not exist in the original material, David Salo was asked to devise them, as he explains on his website. To do so, he had to create the neo-Sindarin form, the standardised form of Sindarin, in order to be able to work more easily around the language and to create new sentences from there. The results of this work led to the publication of his *Gateway to Sindarin*. Some Quenya sentences appear in the movies; however the Elven language mostly used was Sindarin, since only five dialogues are uttered in Quenya over all of the *Lord of the Rings* movies[8]. But some dialogues are also uttered in other languages invented by Tolkien, such as Black Speech and Khuzdul. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this part, these languages were never devised by Tolkien; he only invented a few words for them. There came David Salo's work into play once more. Of course, his range of action and his possibilities were very much reduced by the limited amount of material available on these languages. And it brings back the question of faithfulness to Tolkien's work and vision, since Salo must have relied on quite a lot of assumptions to create the dialogues in these two languages. As shown

[8] A list of all the dialogues declaimed in Tolkien's invented languages in Peter Jackson's movies appears on the website of *The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship*.

on the website of the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship, which features an article about the invented languages appearing in the movies, the dialogues in Black Speech and Khuzdul are very few and not sentences proper, more of a series of words to create war cry or interjections. As Dimitra Fimi explains in her dissertation, this "approach" to Tolkien's work, which is "more interested in *using* Tolkien's languages and maintaining them as living organisms, without, however, avoiding such disputable issues as regularizing them, and choosing one form over another, some times arbitrarily" and "represented by such linguists as David Salo . . . was crucial for the success of Peter Jackson's film trilogy in depicting as accurately as possible a very important aspect of Tolkien's world." (136-7)

Once Salo had created the dialogues, the work of two dialect and creative languages coaches, Andrew Jack and Roísín Carty, began. They worked from the onset with the actors to help them speak the different languages used in the movies, with the correct pronunciation ("An Interview with Andrew Jack", Somers). This work was not only bound to the Elvish languages. For each culture, people or language appearing in the movies, a specific accent was developed—either using Tolkien's recommendations or imagining what sort of accent such people could have. Andrew Jack explains in the *Guide officiel du film*: « Le choix des accents avait d'abord pour but . . . de donner le sentiment que l'histoire se déroulait dans un autre monde et à une autre époque » (101). However, two challenges were faced when dealing with languages and accents in the movies. The first is stressed by Roísín Carty in a behind-the-scenes video dealing with the Elvish languages in the trilogy and posted on the official website of *The Lord of the Rings* movies. She explains that the difficulty was to get the actors to pronounce the words with the actual accent, and not that they thought was accurate, because, as she says, "there is a tendency when you get a line of a foreign language that you don't understand . . . you impose your own intonation pattern." Such undesirable tendency was confirmed by actor Sir Ian McKellen, playing Gandalf in the movies, who recalls, in a

blog post he wrote on his official website while shooting the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, a specific situation on set:

> For instance, I have to learn a new pronunciation. All this time we have being saying "palanTIR" instead of the Old English stress on the first syllable. Just as the word was about to be committed to the soundtrack, a correction came from Andrew Jack, the Dialect Coach . . . . Palantir, being strictly of elvish origin should follow Tolkien's rule that the syllable before a double consonant should be stressed–"paLANTir" making a sound which is close to "lantern".

The second challenge was to be sure the fans of the books would accept the pronunciation chosen, or rather to satisfy their imagination and be as close to Tolkien's instructions as possible. As Thierry Somers explains in his interview with Andrew Jack, "the director of *The Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson, was aware of LOTR fans already knowing from the books how this language would sound and realised that they would be very critical judges of how the Elvish language would be used in the film." Andrew Jack answers:

> We were very strict with ourselves. We followed the rules that Tolkien wrote—the information you can find in the appendices of the book—virtually to the letter. . . . I think we pleased the audience by doing it like this and not dramatically changing a lot by keeping the pronunciation very close to the way Tolkien had originally intended.

Film adaptations of literary work, especially when they are as loved as Tolkien's books and when they involve an imaginary world which the readers already have a very clear image of, are bound to disappoint a few, or at least to create criticism and skepticism. However, as Peter Jackson underlines it in the behind-the-scenes video: "We worked very hard at making it as authentic as possible". One of the merits of Peter Jackson's movies is to have revived the Tolkien-mania, or at least to have helped it carry on. By giving a voice and a

tone to the Elven tongues, he gives them a legacy far more substantial than just a recording of poor quality from 1952, even though declaimed by their original creator. The tongues are, more than ever, associated with a visual world, and each actor bears the quality and beauty of the languages through their acting and characters. It is thus not uncommon to read, over the internet, accounts of young people who have decided to learn the languages, or to know more about them, because they were captivated and inspired by what they had heard in the movies, and because like many others, they were fascinated by Tolkien's creation and the incredible fact that he went to the extent of inventing languages, with such a detailed and fine work—work that gives his imaginary world another dimension. In the behind-the-scenes video, actor Orlando Bloom, who plays Legolas in the movies, aptly described the thought had by many when thinking of Tolkien's invented languages: "It's surreal that there is even an Elvish language really, isn't it?"

III

Beyond the linguistic creation: the impact

Tolkien's invented languages are a complex case. As seen in the introduction, Tolkien said that this inventing exercise was, for him, of a private nature, undertaken for his personal pleasure. He made constant changing to his languages, their forms, their grammar rules, most often not explaining the inconsistencies that could arise from such modifications, as if they were not the concern of anybody but him, and him only knew the reasons accounting for these changes. He never published, or even intended to publish, guides or booklets to his languages, contrary to what some linguists who recently invented languages for television series or for the cinema did. His linguistic creation, when he died, was all scattered, not unified or uniform, and did not present any note helping to put the pieces back together; this task was left to his son. And yet, Tolkien knew of the fascination his languages produced, and tried, with the inclusion of Appendices to the subsequent editions of his books, to give elements of explanation about them to his readers. Moreover, the scattered aspect of his creation could have discouraged most of the potential enthusiasts of his languages; yet, it did not, with the arisen of societies, publications and conventions discussing aspects of his language invention and trying to give meaning to these contradictions. This part will study why, in spite of all that, Tolkien's languages and world have sparked such fascination, to the point of Tolkien's work becoming a myth, and how this fascination has been expressed ever since *The Hobbit* was published in 1937.

§ 1. A GROUND BREAKING UNDERTAKING

§ 1.1 The complex and fascinating interwoven of language and literature

If when one thinks of *The Lord of the Rings*, of *The Hobbit*, or of the world of J. R. R. Tolkien, the first images to come to mind might be child-sized characters, epic battles, fairy people, evil characters or magicians, these are not the first elements that were at the genesis of the creation of his world. Languages came first; the invention of languages was the first purpose, then came the imaginary world to give a historical background to the tongues Tolkien had created. As he said in his *Letters*, "the invention of languages is the foundation. The 'stories' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse" (219)—an aspect he stressed again in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring* where he explained the creative process that led to the writing of his *Lord of the Rings* narrative:

> This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since *it was primarily linguistic in inspiration* and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues. (xii, my italics)

Tolkien could not be more wrong to think that people would not be interested in his work. Even if *The Hobbit* was primarily written as a children's book, it already featured elements of invented tongues, or hinting at a linguistic creation to come. In *The Hobbit* are included runic letters to represent the language of the Dwarves, and Tolkien was surprised to see the interest

it sparked in his readers and the games they dedicated themselves to, to "puzzle them out", adults and children alike (*Letters*, 27). Moreover, as Douglas Anderson points it out in his note at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*, it is with the intention of satisfying the curiosity of his readers that Tolkien included the Appendices E and F to the new edition of *The Return of the King*—appendices that included guides to the pronunciation, the history and the writing system of the Elvish languages.

Language is evidently at the heart of his creation. If, to him, it had only been a detail for his world, he would not have gone into such intricate and meticulous work to devise his tongues, as we explored in the second part of this study. And because they were so important to him, Tolkien would have liked to give them a much bigger part of his narratives, saying in his *Letters* that, "[he] should have preferred to write in 'Elvish'. But, of course, such a work as *The Lord of the Rings* has been edited and only as much 'language' has been left in as I thought would be stomached by readers. (I now find that many would have liked more.)" (219-20). Indeed, the fascination surrounding the languages soon extended beyond the scope of just a game of puzzle concerning runic letters. With the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* started the deep and real enthusiasm for Tolkien's invented languages, as this work featured many more of them, and gave them a much bigger place. But this fascination has not been that of geeky readers only living in Tolkien's world, or is not that of a peculiar kind, Michael Adams explains. Because the organisation of the invented languages displays the fine work of a philologist and scholar, their analysis can produce special joy and satisfaction to anybody who likes words and the entertaining deciphering of the combinations of sounds. As he says in his book *From Elvish to Klingon*:

> Because Tolkien constructed his Elvish language family using the pattern of real-world language change, it is possible for the investigation of Elvish to create the same intellectual and aesthetic pleasure that can be found in real-world philology, delighting

> in the relations and histories of words. Even the non-linguist can derive a pleasurable satisfaction from deducing the relationship of similar names; but Tolkien has set up a whole world of connections hidden beneath dissimilar words and names. The apprehension of these complex relationships . . . is a source of fascination whether the context is Elvish or English etymology. (90)

However, languages could not be everything. In fact, if he wanted his invented languages to model natural languages, he needed to invent a historical development for them. But he was aware that for languages to have a history, an evolution, there needed to be people there to speak them. David Lyle Jeffrey points out in his essay "Tolkien as Philologist" that "Tolkien was above all a philologist—and a very good one. . . . He believed, with other philologists, that behind present words (and stories) lies the history of their speakers (and tellers)" (66). There came the necessity to create the myths behind the languages, the stories accounting for them and their current form. However, if Tolkien specifically stressed the fact that the myth-creation only came second in his world-invention process, this is an affirmation that, in reality, can be discussed, with the analysis of Michael Adams. Tolkien said in his *Letters* that "[he] made the discovery that "legends" depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the "legends" which it conveys by tradition" (180). With this quote, Tolkien stresses the close, and seemingly unbreakable, bond between language and myth. This point is also argued by Michael Adams: "As [Tolkien's] languages and tales developed, they became deeply entwined, as each was extended and adapted to accommodate new elements in the other" (98). He adds as a conclusion that "Tolkien's myth-making and his language-making . . . reached the critical point of fusion" (98). Besides, it seems incoherent for Tolkien to think that the languages came before the myths since he often argued, as Michael Adams explains, that, although he admired the initiative, he often thought

that the cause of failure of the Esperanto language was the fact that it did not have a background of legends to go with it (98). This is not to say that Tolkien is lying to us or to himself when highlighting so much the importance of language invention as the foundation to the world invention; the aim is rather to underline how, if the invention of languages certainly worked as the primary driving force, the myth-invention aspect is one that must have come very early in the steps to the creation, otherwise his invented languages would have been limited to the devising of a state of a language, at a given time.

Ruth S. Noel adds an important point about the status of language, in her book *The Languages of Tolkien's Midde-Earth*, stating that "language reflects culture. . . . The Elves are a living memory of ages beyond the imagination of man. Vocabularies for ruling and military ranks, names that reflect past glories, songs rich in tradition establish much of the culture of the men and Elves at the time of the War of the Ring." (58-9) As such, if language and myth are closely entwined, such are also the fascination they create. Being seduced by the melodic sounds of the Elven tongues means wanting to know more about the peoples who speak them and the cultures in which they are used; similarly, being bewitched by the beautiful beings that are the Elves, by their art and their way of life means wanting to explore the language that gives life to their world. Because Tolkien succeeded so well in linking these two aspects together, making them one, they managed to feed each other in the enthusiasm and interest they brought about in people. They also appeared as much fuller and deeper, increasing even more their captivating power.

If readers have been so fascinated by *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien's world, it is because he managed to incorporate in them elements of shared-culture and knowledge, old and new, with an incredible ability to make them co-exist. Jane Chance says in *The Mythology of Power* that "*Rings* has generally been recognized as a powerful work of creative imagination whose levels of understanding are dependent on the synthesis and assimilation of

a variety of medieval and modern material" (9). This is a point shared by Michael D. C. Drout who argued, in his lecture "How to read Tolkien?" at Carnegie Mellon University, that through different literary devices, Tolkien manages to make us feel part of his world and wishing to know more about its vast culture, even though it is distant and set in a long-gone past. He explains that, because the characters make references to a background of events they assume the readers know, "readers have to assume the existence of a rich cultural context outside of that story." Through this epistemic regime, where elements unknown to the readers seem obvious to the characters, "[the characters] take [these elements] for granted and so will refer to them utterly casually, and that dynamic will naturalise many of the things about Middle-Earth that are otherwise different and distant from our world." Drout also credits the "textual tradition", hinted at by Jane Chance in the quote above, as a major element in the success of Tolkien's work:

> What seemed to be traditional reference in *The Lord of the Rings* makes the work not only appear to participate in a wider culture, but to be part of a tradition . . .: a textual tradition. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, we find hints that the cultural background that's informing the broken references is instantiated and transmitted primarily through texts.

Through this ingenious handling of the narrative and of the devising of his imaginary world, Tolkien manages not to make it this unreachable, old and distant world; on the contrary, he achieves not to make us feel estranged from it, but as if we were part of it, with the incredible feeling, as Michael Drout says, while reading, that there is this world with "vast cultural depth" that we are eager to enter and discover.

This clever handling of literature and the powerful link between language and myth, language and stories, are some of the reasons why Tolkien's work created so much fascination

and enthusiasm. Yet, the time in which the books were published and the themes they involve give another reason for their popularity.

§ 1.2 A world in need of inspiration

The political context of the release of Tolkien's books was that of troubled and unsettled times. *The Hobbit* was released in 1937, during the interwar years and the rise of Nazism. The three books of *The Lord of the Rings* narrative were released between 1954 and 1955, a time when Europe was embroiled in the Cold War and the rebuilding of countries, following the Second World War. Besides, these times brought to the surface many questions about the state of humanity and the hope left for humankind, because of the atrocities that were perpetrated during the Second World War, and the rise of nationalism and of very questionable and disturbing theories. Humanity was left facing a world of desolation, both on a physical point of view, with the lands being devastated, as on an intellectual point of view. Jane Chance says in *The Mythology of Power* that "the popularity of the work coincided with a contemporary need for escape, from the political and military tensions wracking the world and for stability in an increasingly unstable environment" (8). Many of Tolkien's images in his stories coincided with the state of the world. Lodbell mentions "the entire set of trench-warfare imagery devoted to Mordor" (xii); the deforestation of Isengard to build Saruman's Orc fortress and where he bred his Uruk-Hai symbolised the destruction of the land in favour of war and industrialisation; the fight against an evil power; the struggle not to become corrupt, etc. All were images that people could relate to, and they could find in Tolkien's literature and stories that sharing of experience that would help the catharsis. One quote from *The Hobbit* says that "Men changed the language that they had learned of elves in the days when all the world was beautiful" (202). It somehow mirrors the situation of European

history: with the decay of languages, comes the decay of a world. In Tolkien's world, Arda, this former more "beautiful" then corresponds to the time of the Elves, a time idealised by the characters, Hobbits, Men and Dwarves alike, living in the Third Age marked by war, hardship and desolation. In our own world, this idealised former then would be the time of the Greeks, of the Romans, of the Vikings—times not necessarily less violent but with a code of conduct, moral and heroic values, embodied in the legacy of literature and mythology, that could inspire a world that had lost its beacon. It is thus not surprising that Tolkien's work, carrier of such themes and of this feeling of a former time, had so much popularity.

People could find an escape in this new world they were invited in. Besides, the books relied upon promising themes, such as the triumph of good over evil, or the successful quest of even the littlest person. Such themes would give hope and an encouraging answer to a humanity which had lost faith in itself. People could also find relief in this shelter-like world Tolkien had created. As Jane Chance explains it in *The Mythology of Power*:

> In some ways a mirror image of the pastoral England that Tolkien . . . idealized in opposition to the rise of late-Victorian urban industrialization, the Shire within Middle-Earth seemed to guarantee a near-utopian existence for its childlike hobbit inhabitants—a group to which a part of us all, regardless of generation, nation, and age, desires to belong. (8-9)

A special case of popularity that Tolkien's work enjoyed happened in the United States in the 1960s. At this time, the Anti-Establishment movement was rapidly expanding in America, especially amongst the younger population and the students. In the context of the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the fight for equal rights or the question on the distribution of wealth, people taking part to the Anti-Establishment movement would question the state of society, the motives of their government, and would oppose "The Establishment", that is to

say the privileged few who were in possession of the decisional powers. Jane Chance says that, in such a context, "it was the right time for a cult work like *Rings*." (*Mythology* 6) While walls in campuses would be stamped with graffito stating 'God is dead', it would soon be completed by another kind of graffiti: 'Frodo lives' (6). For Jane Chance, the reason for such enthusiasm for Tolkien's work was that, "perhaps because Tolkien recognized the specialness of such marginalized or disempowered groups as hobbits, children, and college students, *(The Lord of the) Rings* was received enthusiastically" (5). She adds that, as such, "it is no wonder that Tolkien provided a voice for the dispossessed in what was initially viewed only as an eccentric but popular work of fantasy – *The Lord of the Rings*" (6). As Lobdell points out that, as this "new generation of Tolkien fans, concentrated on college campuses, was not quite the same as the old", Tolkien had "passed into popular culture" (xi).

Besides the theme of hope that Tolkien's stories conveyed, they addressed another element that was important in these times of loss of faith: that of the afterlife. When the time of the Elves on earth is done, they leave Middle-Earth from the port of the Gray Havens to go back to their land of origin, the Immortal Land of Aman, or Valinor. By offering this alternative to an Eden-like place, but not linked to a religion proper, Tolkien was offering his readers the, albeit fictional, comforting refuge of a hope of immortality and peaceful life after death, out of the realms of any human-made religions that so many were questioning and rejecting. Finally, for a humanity that had lost its inspirational flame, the graceful characters of the Elves represented everything that was beautiful about humankind, and something to aspire to. As Tolkien expressed it in his *Letters*, "the Elves represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men" (176).

As Jane Chance pointed out in *The Mythology of Power*, the meaning and significance of Tolkien's stories has naturally changed since they were first released (10). However, they have lost none of their applicability, and the themes and quests presented are still relevant, and will always be relevant. That is because, Chance says, "the masterpiece offers a twentieth-century understanding of the nature of good and evil, the value of community, the natural order of the universe, and the singularity of the individual" (9). It finds its applicability on two levels, that of society, as described by Chance, but also on an individual level, as Michael Drout explains in his lecture at Carnegie Mellon University. He shows how the books are of the kind of a *bildungsroman*[9]. Through the development of the stories, the reader learns with the characters, by making inferences, just as the latter do. In doing so, Drout says, "the cognitive experience of the reader [is] very like that of the focal character: participants in the culture, . . . learning about their own world's history and culture . . . in the way that, we, as children learn about our world, overhearing conversations, making connections." As such the books are an experience, thanks to which the readers can learn and grow. Because of the initiation aspect of the stories, they create a special appeal to the readers who are given an opportunity to understand and grow.

Finally, the last element that can account for the popularity of Tolkien's work, and still linked to humanity's loss of inspiration, is the idea of a lost past that we would like to go back to, a time when everything seemed better, less full of anxiety and despair, a time of happiness and of insouciance. This is different from the regrets of an ancient past of an ancient civilisation mentioned before. This one refers to the regret of a time in our lifetime that was comforting and felt safe, that place within ourselves we would like to go back to anytime the world around us fails us. Michael Drout describes that as the "absolute pastness, an insistence of the pastness of the past" and says that it is "the generator of the dominant emotion in

[9] German term referring to the literary genre of the *roman d'apprentissage*, or coming-of-age novel.

Tolkien's work . . .: nostalgia. The pain for the loss of one's own home." Tolkien deals extremely well with this aspect. Although we, as readers, feel the loss of home the Hobbits felt when forced to leave their peaceful Shire, and we can relate to it and apply it to our own lives, this does not lead us to incredible and incurable sadness and despair when closing the book. On the contrary, Tolkien manages to make us reach and long for that special place within ourselves, but always knowing that, just like the Hobbits vanquished evil, we can too, and that this nostalgia of home is a refuge within ourselves we can always go back to when in need of strength. This is the lesson of hope and optimism any reader of *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings* feels when immersing themselves in these stories; because they present this universal experience, their impact is everlasting, and not bound to a culture or an age, accounting once more for the tremendous success they have enjoyed ever since they were released. As such, the myth surrounding the work and world of Tolkien is one of a never-ending nature, borne and carried on by the dedication of the many enthusiasts of his imaginary world.

§ 2. THE MYTH WILL LIVE ON

§ 2.1 From Tolkien's legacy to the legacy of Tolkenian linguistics' enthusiasts

From Tolkien's personal initiative sprang a general enthusiasm for his work, thanks to the evocative power of his languages and the fascination created by his world. This is attested by the substantial fan mail he received after the publication of *The Hobbit*, as Fimi explains in her dissertation (126), or by the number of requests for more information concerning his invented languages he received after the publication of the different *Lord of the Rings* books. As Douglas Anderson says in the note to the re-edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, before

the *Return of the King* was published, "Tolkien worked to keep a promise he had made in the foreword to volume one: that 'an index of names and strange words' would appear in the third volume" (ix). He also mentions that the first publications of *The Lord of the Rings* books contained errors made, willingly or unwillingly, by the publishers, but that it proved to be quite a problem for those readers who already wanted to study in more details the linguistic work of Tolkien: "In a work such as *The Lord of the Rings*, containing invented languages . . . , errors and inconsistencies impede both the understanding and the appreciation of serious readers—and Tolkien had many such readers from very early on" (ix).

This enthusiasm is confirmed by the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* was voted number 1 in a poll conducted by Waterstone in 1997 to try to determine the book of the century, as reported by Giles Foden in *The Guardian*. *The Hobbit* reached place number 19. *The Lord of the Rings* replicated the prowess in 2003 when the BBC's "The Big Read" conducted its own poll to find "the nation's best-loved novels", while *The Hobbit* reached place number 25. Moreover, *The Lord of the Rings* has sold more than 150 million copies worldwide, and *The Hobbit* more than 100 million[10]. Also, the popularity that Peter Jackson's film adaptations enjoyed sparked a renewal of interest and passion, often from a younger generation, inspired by Tolkien's work and incepting it in another, but just as creative, way. The uncountable number of websites dedicated to Tolkien's universe, where every aspect of his creation is analysed, discussed, or is a source of pleasure and enjoyment, is another testimony and legacy of the impact his work has had over the years.

The main aspect of this impact, because the languages are so paramount to Tolkien's imaginary world, is the development of a Tolkenian linguistic scholarship. As Jane Chance explains in *The Mythology of Power*, "the result [*The Lord of the Rings*] occasioned [was] widespread popularity, unauthorised paperback publication in the United States, and a Tolkien

[10] Figures given by Mary-Ann Russon in an article for The International Business Time.

culture of millions, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s" (8). And Lobdell clarifies that "[This] new enthusiasm was of the sort that plays itself out in fanzines and 'looks behind *The Lord of the Rings*'" (xi). In her dissertation, Dimitra Fimi explains the reasons behind that gained popularity in the 1960s in the United States. As explained before, a cult work like *The Lord of the Rings* and the rise of the Anti-Establishment movement in the 1960s coincided well in the scheme of things. But, this does not explain how a book that had been published at least five years before such movement enjoyed this renewal of popularity. Fimi explains that a particular event helped this outcome to happen. In 1965, an unauthorized version of *The Lord of the Rings* was published, leading to a legal dispute between the publishers of this version and Tolkien's publishing house, fighting for the author's rights. Peculiarly enough, this created a wider interest in Tolkien's work and, as Fimi calls it, an "explosion of Tolkien fan-activity" (127). This led to the forming of several Tolkien societies; the societies discussed any aspect of the books and of Tolkien's universe, but, naturally, many members were interested in the linguistic aspect of Tolkien's creation. As Ann Haywood, secretary of the British Tolkien Society, quite sarcastically said in an interview conducted with the BBC in 1988 about "The Language of Elvish and Middle-Earth":

> There's a lot of research on the language side. Some people get really keen on Tolkien's languages and every time a volume of *The History of Middle-Earth* comes out, they seize it, leap upon new words, new verbs, and publish learned articles. This is totally beyond me. But the languages seem to inspire people.

In 1971, the Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship was founded; this society is responsible for the edition and publication of two journals, *Parma Eldalamberon* and *Vinyar Tengwar*, the journals of reference when thinking about Tolkenian linguistics' legacy. They regurlarly, or as soon as they are made available, publish so-far unpublished Tolkien's manuscripts, added with a scholarly study and discussion of the new texts. One of their editors, Carl F. Hostetter,

manages the website of the Elvish, or Mythopoeic, Linguistic Fellowship, and frequently publishes his own scholarly study of Tolkenian linguistics. The scholarly discussion of Tolkien's languages can also take the form of conferences. For example, an international conference on Tolkien's invented languages takes place every year, each time in a different location. This conference bears the name of *Omentielva*, derived from Quenya in which *omentië* means 'meeting'. The first conference took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2007, and each conference is concluded with the publication of a journal called *Arda Philology* which gives an account of all the lectures and discussions that took place during the meeting. Helge Fauskanger, regular contributor to *Arda Philology*, explains that interest and dedication for Tolkien's languages in an article called "Tolkien's Not-So-Secret Vice", dedication that could be thought of as 'peculiar':

> Some of us have embarked on the study of Elvish, perhaps with somewhat the same attitude as people enjoying a well-made crossword puzzle: the very fact that no real Elvish grammars written by Tolkien have been published makes it a fascinating challenge to "break the code". Or it may be pure romanticism, a special form of literary immersion . . . . Or, less romantically, we want to study the constructions of a talented linguist and the creative process of a genius, engaged in his work of love. And many simply enjoy the Elvish languages as one might enjoy music.

However, this development of Tolkenian linguistic scholarship, sprung from a fascination for Tolkien's invented languages, led to the distinction of two schools of thought regarding Tolkien's linguistic legacy. Dimitra Fimi gives a good explanation of the distinction between the two:

> The one aims at studying Tolkien's languages in a descriptive way, treating them as a linguist would treat historical languages and recognizing all the information that

> Tolkien provided on them as genuine and worth of study—even if that information is contradictory and incoherent many times; this attitude is mainly represented by the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship scholars, who are responsible for the edition of Tolkien's unpublished linguistic manuscripts. The other approach is more interested in *using* Tolkien's languages and maintaining them as living organisms, without, however, avoiding such disputable issues as regularizing them, and choosing one form over another, some times arbitrarily. (136-7)

She adds that "the first approach has led to academic articles on Tolkien's invented languages of high standards, including some serious publications . . ., while the second was crucial for the success of Peter Jackson's film trilogy in depicting as accurately as possible a very important aspect of Tolkien's world" (136-7). In fact, as briefly seen in the second part of this study, to be able to visually recreate Tolkien's world, the team working with Peter Jackson had to envision a world where Elvish could be spoken as any natural language would. But, given the fact that Tolkien's linguistic material was only made of a few sample sentences, at best a poem of about ten lines, they had to extrapolate. They did so with the help of Tolkenian linguists who had no objection to, or simply who believed in, such practices. If this work of regularization was essential for the movies, it did not start with them as such. Some scholars of Tolkenian linguistics already had their view on this question, and had already started encompassing the Elven tongues in a movement of standardisation, with the possibilities of a neo-tongue.

This position underlines an important issue: that of faithfulness to Tolkien's work and intention. In fact, the standardisation implies making assumptions and choices when Tolkien was incoherent. But when a linguist does such work, they leave their stamps, or input, on Tolkien's own creation. The underlying question is how legitimate is such linguist to do so?

What did Tolkien want for his creations? Is it not betraying his legacy? The two schools of thought are very much opposed, as one can expect, in their views on the subject.

The arguments in favour of the first approach—that of complete faithfulness to Tolkien's existing work—start with his son Christopher, very much protective of the non-alteration of his father's legacy. In *The Lost Road*, he explains that his father's endless revisions of his tongues are "a quality fundamental to the art, in which (as I believe) finality and a system fixed at every point was not its underlying aim" (377). He also adds that "the nearest [his father] ever came to a sustained account of Elvish vocabulary is not in the form of nor intended to serve as a dictionary in the ordinary sense, but is an etymological dictionary of word-relationships" (379), underlining once more his father's aim not to create a stable and fixed system of languages. To him, "the philological component in the evolution of Middle-Earth can scarcely be analysed, and most certainly cannot be presented, as can the literary texts. In any case, my father was perhaps more interested in the processes of change than he was in displaying the structure and use of the languages at any given time" (378). Christopher Tolkien, the President of the Tolkien Estate, the company in charge of the inheritance of Tolkien's legacy, has never been an enthusiast of the undertakings of modernisation of his father's work. In an interview he gave to *Le Monde* in 2012, he voiced his profound dislike of the film adaptations, saying that « ils ont éviscéré le livre, en en faisant un film d'action pour les 15-25 ans. » But, to him, the problem of faithfulness goes beyond the liberties taken by a film director in a film adaptation: « Tolkien est devenu un monstre, dévoré par sa popularité et absorbé par l'absurdité de l'époque. . . . Le fossé qui s'est creusé entre la beauté, le sérieux de l'œuvre, et ce qu'elle est devenue, tout cela me dépasse. Un tel degré de commercialisation réduit à rien la portée esthétique et philosophique de cette création. » The Tolkien Estate has always been extremely protective of Tolkien's work, more often than not condemning anything that was not a source material, any mention or use of Tolkien's work, and suing any

illegal reference to Tolkien's work that they deemed not in keeping with Tolkien's work and legacy. Such dedication and protection can be thought of as honourable, but it brings up the question of the ultimate aim they want to give to Tolkien's work. Should Tolkien's work stay as it is, never to be betrayed, or should the Tolkien Estate recognise the establishment of Tolkien's work as a myth, now in the hands of others, and embrace the change? This is the same issue and duality that happens with the question of the languages, and of course, always with divided opinions. The editor of *Parma Eldalamberon*, Carl Hostetter, is also one to place himself in favour of absolute accuracy and faithfulness to Tolkien's work. In the "Tolkenian Linguistics FAQ" available on his website for *The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship*, the short answer he gives to the question "Is it possible to learn Quenya and Sindarin?" is "no", stressing the lack of material available to achieve such aim, and making a strong point in saying that "if an author claims to be able to speak Quenya or Sindarin, . . . or even that it should eventually be possible to do so, be very suspicious. They are wrong." He does concede, not without some cynicism, that "the artificial, homogenized Quenya presented on Helge Fauskanger's *Ardalambion* site, or the pseudo-Sindarin inventions of David Salo for Peter Jackson's films are [not] without interest or merit (but neither are they without serious problems)", but to him, the only "meaningful study of Tolkien's languages . . . *must* be always and primarily based and centered on reading" (His italics).

Conversely, defender of the neo-Elvish forms, Helge Fauskanger has argued, in his "Quenya course", in favour of the second approach:

> My favorite angle on the study of Tolkien's languages is probably this (building on the musical analogy suggested by Carpenter, [Tolkien's biographer]): I'd say we are in somewhat the same situation as if a genius composer were to invent a new form of music, writing a great deal about its structure, but making relatively few actual compositions—some of them not even published during the lifetime of the composer

> himself. Yet these few compositions gain a steadily growing international audience, an audience that would very much like to hear more—much more—music of this kind. The original composer being dead, what are we to do? There is only one way to go: We must carry out a thorough study of both the published compositions and the more theoretical writings, to make out and internalize the rules and principles for this kind of music. Then we can start to compose ourselves, making entirely new melodies that yet comply with the general structure devised by the original inventor. (11-2)

What is particularly interesting in Fauskanger's answer to those who would condemn his work is the emphasis on "complying" with the original wishes and intention of the author. It is a point he had stressed before in his argumentation defending his purpose, saying that "we must start by carefully internalizing the information provided by Tolkien's own material, as far as it is available to us" (7). This issue of faithfulness, not bound to the linguistic question, but relating to the whole of Tolkien's work, is a very important question and one where both sides, quite understandably, can hardly reconcile; yet it is one of paramount importance in thinking the durable legacy of Tolkien's work.

But it is undeniable that the everlasting enthusiasm of fans, scholars and artists alike for Tolkien's world and myths has created an abundant amount of secondary sources. Additionally to what has been mentioned above, the impact of Tolkien's work on the cultural scene has been tremendous. The music composed by Howard Shore for Peter Jackson's movies is of such a scale that it is often considered as a work of its own. Through different cues and instruments, Shore aptly represents, in music, each aspect of Tolkien's world. It also features songs in Elvish, often as original lyrics, Ryszard Derdzinski explains in his article about "Tolkien's languages in *The Lord of the Rings* soundtrack". References have also been made in popular TV series like *The Simpsons*, *Friends*, or *How I Met Your Mother?*. The children cartoon *Veggie Tales* made an episode entitled "Lord of the Beans", in which they

use and twist the names of the original characters for comic effect[11]. For example, Gandalf becomes Randalf, Bilbo becomes Billboy, and Legolas becomes Leg-O-Lamb. In the British TV series *The Thick of It*, character Phil Smith is obsessed with *The Lord of the Rings* and only talks using references to the famous book[12]. Lately, in the movie *The Martian*, released in October 2015, a reference was made to the Council of Elrond—a secret council taking place in *The Fellowship of the Ring*—to refer to the name given to a secret mission undertook by a group of scientists and members of NASA. The reference was made double, most probably with the aim of creating excitement among Tolkien's enthusiasts, when one of the people present at the meeting did not understand the name chosen for the mission, and the explanation was given by Mith Henderson, character played by Sean Bean, who himself played the role of Boromir in the movie adaptation of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and was attending the 'original' Council of Elrond.

This profusion of second-source material, of references in popular culture, of debates over the good and bad uses of Tolkien's work shows the impact the work of the author has generated. When Tolkien scholar and specialist Tom Shippey was asked by Claire White in an interview what he thought remained unique in Tolkien's work, he answered, two aspects:

> The poetry, and the sense of shape. There are a lot of poems in *The Lord of the Rings*, in many different styles and formats, and not many other fantasy writers have the confidence or the literary background to go inventing whole new poetic traditions (or re-inventing old ones). But this gives Tolkien's work a mythic and imaginative dimension which has never been duplicated.

With this answer, Tom Shippey sums up well what makes Tolkien's work so special and unduplicated. Through his clever use of different source materials, his layering of legends and texts, his use of invented languages, Tolkien has revolutionised the fantasy genre, having a

[11] Source from an article on IMDb. See the bibliography for the complete reference.
[12] Source from the BBC. See the bibliography for the complete reference.

considerable impact consequences on how the subsequent writers of this genre have encompassed it.

§ 2.2 The redefinition of fantasy standards

When Tom Shippey was asked, in his interview with Claire White, the effect Tolkien has had on modern fantasy, he replied that Tolkien "created the genre—not quite single-handed, but very nearly so", adding that "the shelves in modern bookstores would look very different if Tolkien had not written, or if Stanley Unwin had decided not to publish him after all, back in the early 1950s." In his lecture at Carnegie Mellon University, Drout mentioned the use of textual tradition as one of the reasons behind Tolkien's success: it is through the layering of texts, the references to other and older legends, peoples and times, that Tolkien manages to give so much depth to his world—and to make it interesting and not too daunting to enter. Drout adds that, if *The Lord of the Rings* was often criticised for being too archaic, especially when it was published, this seemingly archaic quality is what makes it seem part of this "long textual tradition", rather than just a work invented on the spur of the moment and not inscribing itself on a longer and larger scale. Tom Shippey believes that "the eagerness with which [Tolkien] was followed suggests that there was a suppressed desire for the kind of thing he did, but nobody before him quite knew how to do it, or thought it was allowed."

It is particularly interesting to see how many modern works of fantasy follow the pattern first used by Tolkien. One needs only to think of *Harry Potter* or the popular *Game of Thrones* to see how this device of "long textual tradition" seems now like a standard to follow for anybody who would like to create a world with depth and meaning, and generator of fascination. Conversely, a work of fantasy or science-fiction will lose all its evocative power if it does not manage to create this vast cultural depth. But because Tolkien's first fascination

was for languages, it is interesting to look at how this aspect has been dealt with in modern fantasy. Once again, it seems like Tolkien, with his quest for detail, accuracy and his elaborated languages, has set a standard for the genre. Many modern works, be visual or literary, of fantasy or science-fiction feature invented languages as the means to give more depth to the world depicted. In some instance, the creation will be very limited like in *Star Wars* for example, where the use of invented languages is often restricted to a few words or even just sounds.

A contemporary work to *Star Wars* has made a more extensive use of an invented language. This is *Star Trek* with the language "Klingon". In their book *For the Love of Languages*, Kate Burridge and Tonya Stebbins explain that Klingon was created by Mark Okrand, "a linguist with a penchant for grammar" (34). In his book *From Elvish to Klingon*, Michael Adams notes an important aspect of languages—one already known by Tolkien, and quite important in the reasons why modern works of science-fiction and fantasy resort to the use of invented languages, with more detail and precision than just a few words here and there, to give more depth to the worlds they depict. He states the fact that "languages express a great deal about the peoples and cultures to which they are attached" (136). As such, he says "Klingon was purposely crafted to sound guttural and harsh, reflecting the aggressive character of Klingon people" (136). Kate Burridge and Tonya Stebbins also mention as an invented language that created by linguist Paul Frommer for the Na'vi people from James Cameron's movie *Avatar*. And since the release of the film, Frommer "has expanded Na'vi's vocabulary to more than 1,500 words and has also published the grammar" for it (34). One of the most recent language inventions, though, is that of David J. Peterson, with the Dothraki language for the television adaptation of *Game of Thrones*.

Case study: the Dothraki language

As it is explained in the foreword to the guide to Dothraki, *Dothraki: A Conversational Language Course*, the language for the Dothraki people—language named after them—was designed by David Peterson, member of the Language Creation Society, after having been approached by the producers of the television series *Game of Thrones* (6). This first point is noteworthy, insofar as the language for the Dothraki people was not devised by George R. R. Martin, the author of the books at the source of the television adaptation. Many readers of Martin's books or viewers of the TV series make parallels between the universe of Martin's and that of Tolkien's. However, contrary to Tolkien, Martin did not go to the trouble of inventing a language for his indigenous people. Yet, interestingly enough, the producers of the television adaptation felt the need for the Dothraki to have their own tongue. After the broadcast of the TV series, David Peterson decided to publish a step-by-step language guide to his creation, to allow the many enthusiasts of the Dothraki language the possibility to have a better glimpse, or even a better mastering, of the language. The guide is divided between a section for the pronunciation, a section with basic expressions, a grammar section, a vocabulary section, a section with dialogues and a section with exercises, each of them punctuated with little "cultural notes" to give more background to the language, and in relation with what people would know from the show. Just like in Elvish, Dothraki is marked by case, and the verbs agree in number with their subject (35). A similar aspect to both Dothraki and Elvish is also the absence of the copula 'be' (50); although we do not know if Tolkien did intend his Elvish languages not to feature the verb 'to be', or if he simply did not cover its forms in his writings, it is interesting to note that in the completed forms we know of these two languages, they both resort to the exclusion of a copula 'be' in their grammars. In Dothraki, Peterson explains, the apparent difficulty the absence of the verb might cause is resolved through the simple adjoining of two nouns, or pronouns, together.

Because the Dothraki people are riders and their horses symbolise their power and social status (when a Khal, the leader of the Dothraki, falls from his horse, he ceases to be Khal), this aspect of their culture is reflected in their language. For example, 'how are you?' will be expressed by saying *Hash yer dothrae chek?*, which means, literally, 'Do you ride well?'; similarly, 'I'm fine' will translate by *Anha dothrak chek*, meaning, literally, 'I ride well' (26). We can also see in these two sample sentences that the root for the verb 'to ride' is also the root used for the name of the people, Dothraki.

Through this last aspect of the Dothraki language, we can see the interesting case of the culture of the Dothraki being incorporated into the language, for the language and the culture of the people complement each other. However, when comparing this language creation with those of Tolkien's, two major differences that are worthy of noticing arise. First of all, the most prominent lack a person acquainted with Tolkien's invented languages would feel when looking at Dothraki is the total absence of any history or any historical development attached to the language. The culture of the people is explained, but only at a given time. This aspect is underlined by the fact that for the language of the *Game of Thrones*' universe, the name of the tongue corresponds to that of the people; with Tolkien's languages, they do not, because, even the broadest term used for them—Elvish tongues, does not qualify the peoples speaking it, but the 'species'. Second of all, the presentation of the Dothraki language is done in a very clear and methodical way, miles away from the scattered pieces and notes from Tolkien's languages. It is not as such a bad point, making it easier for the Dothraki enthusiasts to learn the language, and a clarity that would appear as desirable by many brave learners or scholars of the Elvish languages. But another point comes into play. Taken from the foreword to the guide to Dothraki that the work on the language was started in summer 2009 and that the first broadcast of the TV series happened in April 2010, with shooting happening in between, it only gave David Peterson, at most, a mere eight months to devise his language.

With such a limited time, he did not have the flexibility Tolkien had when devising his languages and, naturally, had to resort to essential facts and basic linguistic features.

Although Tolkien had an undeniable impact on the way fantasy and science-fiction are dealt with today, more often than not, the pressure of time the language creators or authors are subjected to means they cannot quite reach the level of depth and precision Tolkien achieved. Such precision is not a requirement per se. And in fact, in the case of *Game of Thrones*, the Dothraki language is supported by a rich cultural background displayed in the TV series, thanks also to the influence of the books. And yet, when looking at the Dothraki grammar guide, one cannot help but feel to be reading the presentation of a technical and mathematical language, rather than that of an enchanting tongue, carrying all the depth of the culture of its speakers…

Conclusion

It will have taken time, a few historical events and much scholarly research for Tolkien's work to be accepted as a groundbreaking and highly influential work—which is not just a work of popular culture, but indeed worthy of scholarly study. As Jane Chance aptly says in *The Mythology of Powers*, "*Rings* today . . . has finally been accepted as the masterpiece that it is" (8).

If it all sprung from Tolkien's love for languages, the literary and the linguistic works were soon entwined together to give Tolkien's imaginary world all its depth and mythical nature.

Although the enterprise of inventing languages was, for Tolkien, primarily personal, as a way of giving expression to his vivid imagination, carrying out his design of creating a mythological-like narrative, and escaping from the tragedies of his life and the times he was living in, it soon went beyond the individual scope, to reach people who were as much in search of meaning as he was, and who found in his world an escape and an understanding of theirs. Just as myths and legends cannot be thought separately in the great literary traditions of old, in Tolkien's work, myths and languages have to be thought of as closely linked and feeding one another. This is through his layering of sources, texts and material that Tolkien's work achieves its incredible depth, and is the representation of Tolkien's crafty, meticulous and detailed work in every step of the creation of his imaginary world. His work as a whole then is a true myth: it is a work of mythology for the peoples featured in his Arda world; it is a mythical work for the audience incepting it and fascinated by it, because of all the symbolism and the possibility of complete immersion it offers.

As with all myths comes the question of legacy. Tolkien's enthusiasts have expressed their love and passion for the work of the philologist and for his Legendarium through many mediums. But now that such legacy seems to be in the hands of the audience, the issue of faithfulness to Tolkien's intention, in every new enterprise dealing with Tolkien's world, arises. The Tolkien Estate is particularly concerned with the question of legacy. They are very protective of Tolkien's work, to a point where one can wonder if such attitude is not in danger of becoming detrimental to the work. Not being pro-protective does not mean betraying Tolkien's intentions. It would mean, instead, extending the scope of his work with, primarily, the question of the languages and their standardisation. In fact, would not allowing the extension of the creation be doing justice to the whole of it? Tolkien encompassed his creation as whole, not as a fragmented work—even though it took this form after his death.

Besides, if the Tolkien Estate wants to stay as true as possible to Tolkien's writings and the available material, concentrated in complex and hard-to-read manuscripts, there is a risk that Tolkien's scholarly study of his languages stays bound to the initiated person. While Tolkien was thought of as a writer of children's books, at first, not giving full justice to the whole of his talent and genius, the point of view taken by the Tolkien Estate, runs the risk of reversing the extreme: restricting the mastering of the study of Tolkenian linguistics to a privileged few.

The question at stake now is: do we confine the myth to what it is, with the risk of not letting it live, or do we allow its growth, with the risk of not entirely encompassing Tolkien's creative wishes? This is an issue that is worth studying and exploring, since it is at the heart of the interpretation and encompassing of Tolkien's work, as well as of the way each reader and Tolkenian enthusiast receives the work.

I believe in the development of Tolkien's work and languages, while staying faithful to his intentions, and that, to make it happen, we can trust those who are specialists of their

fields. Especially in the realm of Tolkenian linguistics, those who are vouching for evolution and presenting works in this line are not all untrustworthy scholars, nor intending to disrespect the work of the author. They try, through a careful analysis of Tolkien's available material, to make inferences, but always basing themselves on evidence. It would be interesting to look into their practices to see if, indeed, such work is possible and can work hand in hand with fidelity to the original source material. In an article entitled "Elvish as She Is Spoke", Carl Hostetter, rather on the side of the pro-protective, discussed the challenges represented by Neo-Elvish. However, he did offer the start to a solution to the problem by saying that, according him, the only way to stay faithful to Tolkien's spirit, while still endeavouring to develop the Elvish languages, would be to, "rather than translating from English into Elvish, thereby bending and distorting the Elvish to serve the needs of the English—all too often, alas, beyond recognition—turn this process around" (22). His idea would be to, first look at Elvish, encompass it truly as a foreign language, and then study the applicability of English to it, and not the Elvish tongue's applicability to English.

One important aspect of Tolkien's work is that, in achieving to reach a mythical status, it has slowly slipped away from the hands of its creator to belong to humanity. Tolkien could not avoid that; and he knew it: "Of course *The L(ord of the) R(ings)* does not belong to me. It has been brought forth and must now go its appointed way in the world, though naturally I take a deep interest in its fortunes, as a parent would of a child. I am comforted to know that it has good friends to defend it" (413-14). The Tolkien Estate can neither avoid it, and should trust some of those "good friends" who do exist. But taking this stance should not be a renunciation or a painful concession. It is part of the process of any work becoming a myth. Joan Breton Connelly, Professor of Archeology and Art History at New York University,

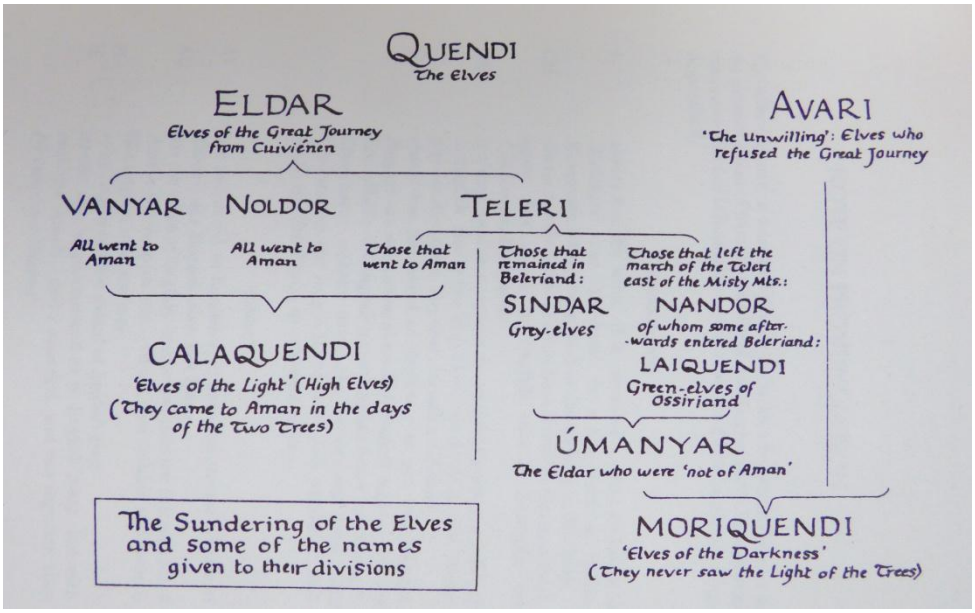
explained this process, this time relating to *Star Wars*, in a documentary about the origins of the saga:

> What's so exciting about approaching the *Star Wars* cycle is that it's like an excavation . . . . What's fun for me personally is that I get to a point where I say: "Did George Lucas mean for this connection to be made or am I making it? Am I participating, as part of the poet, the creator, I see the connections?" And that is the mythological process, everyone sees a bit of themselves.

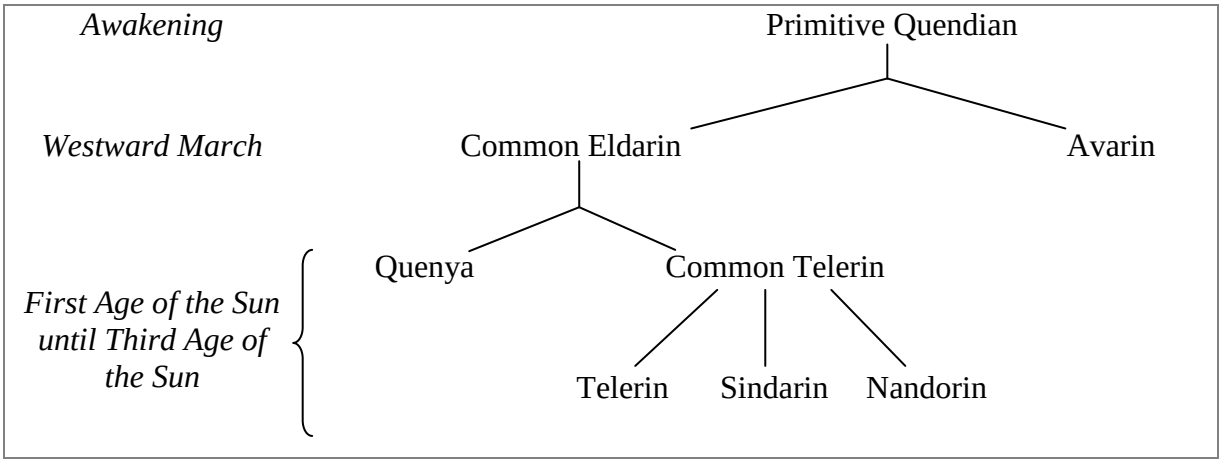
This process has been enjoyed by many works of literature through times, some of which served as inspiration to Tolkien's stories. By following this natural process of 're-appropriation', his work would then fulfil the quality that makes Tolkien's world so deep and culturally vast, by becoming in its turn a part of another textual tradition…

Appendices

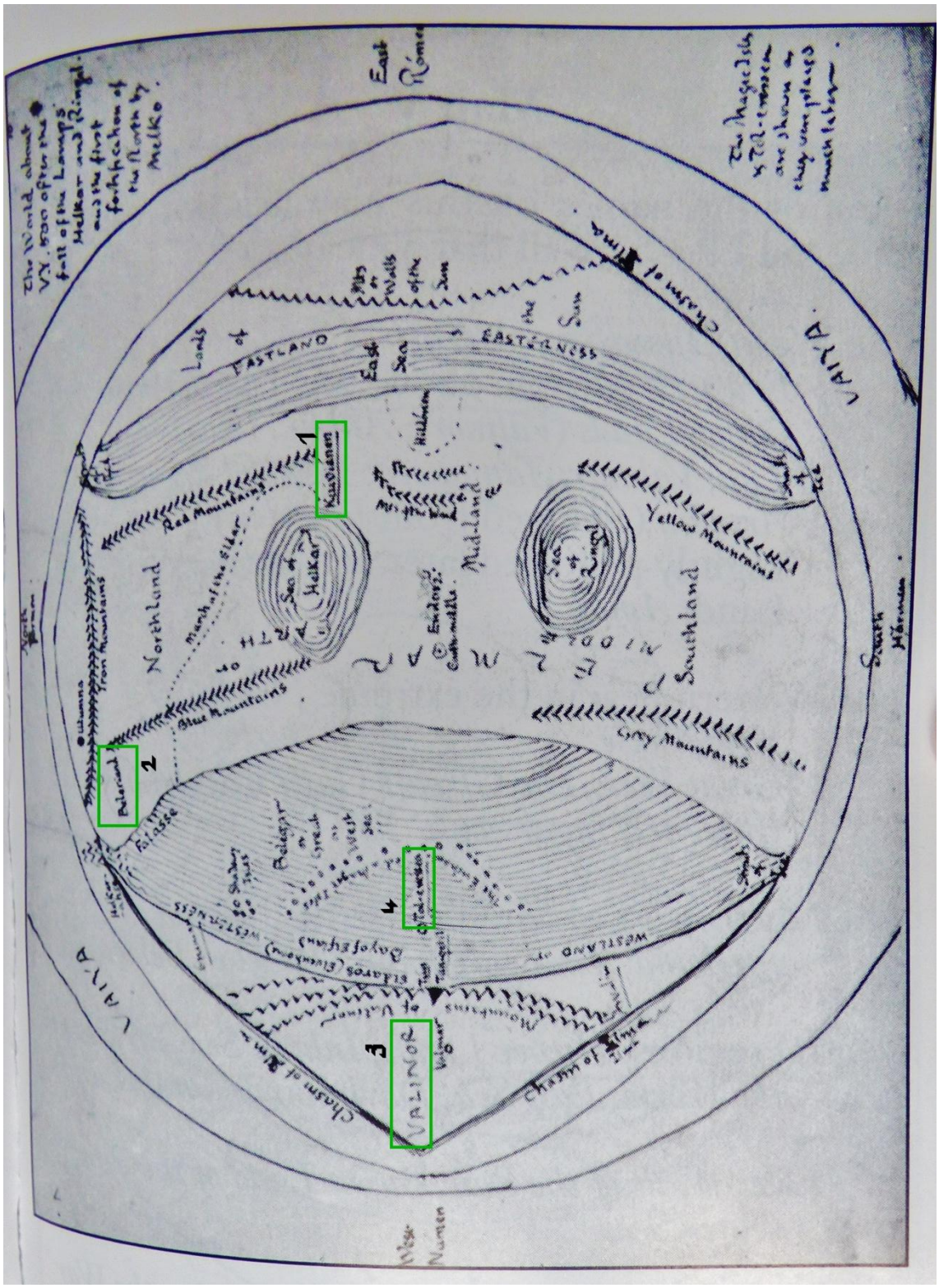
Appendix 1: "The Sundering of the Elves", by J. R. R. Tolkien



Appendix 2: Evolution of the Elven tongues

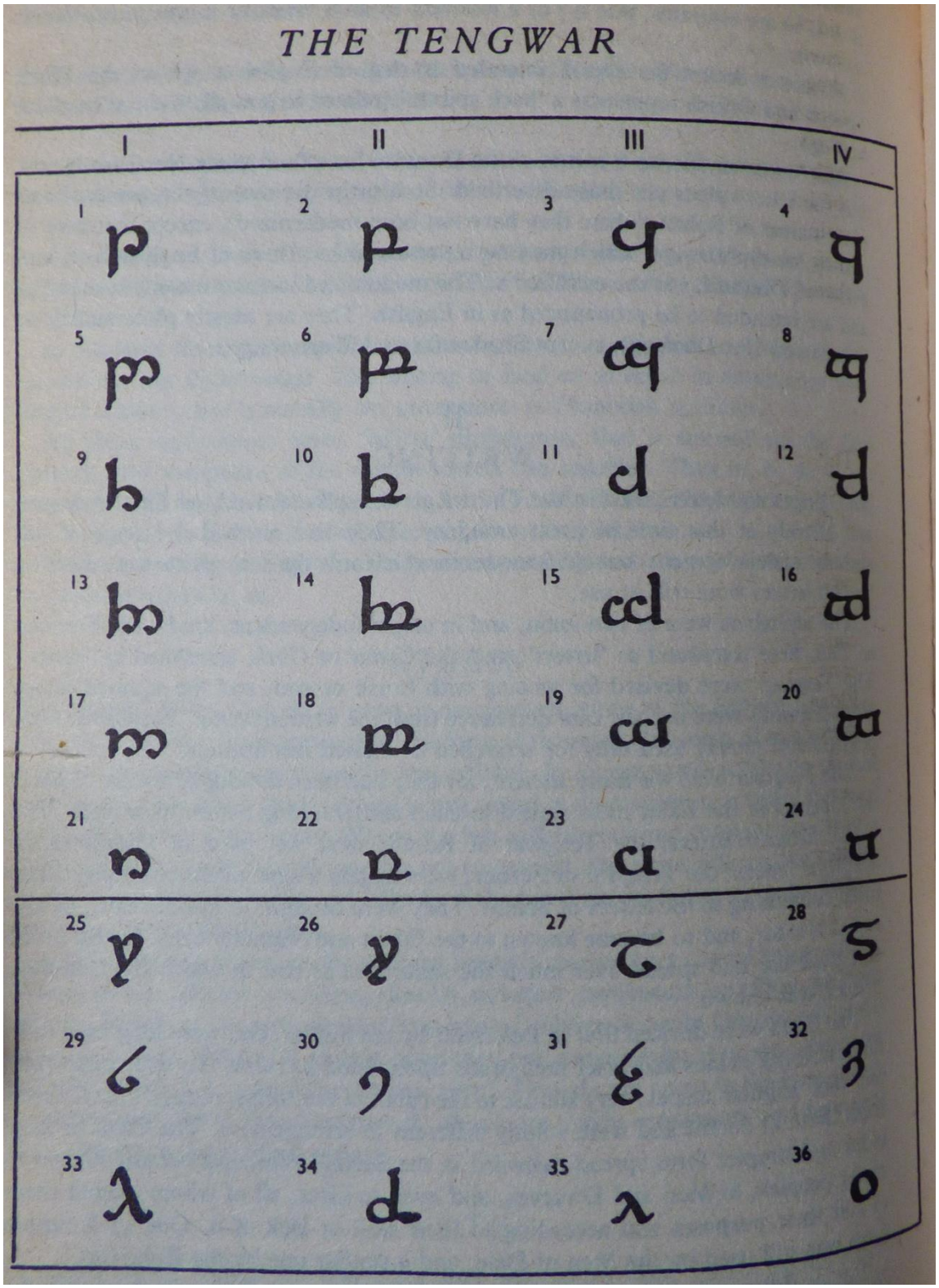


Appendix 3: "Map IV", by J. R. R. Tolkien

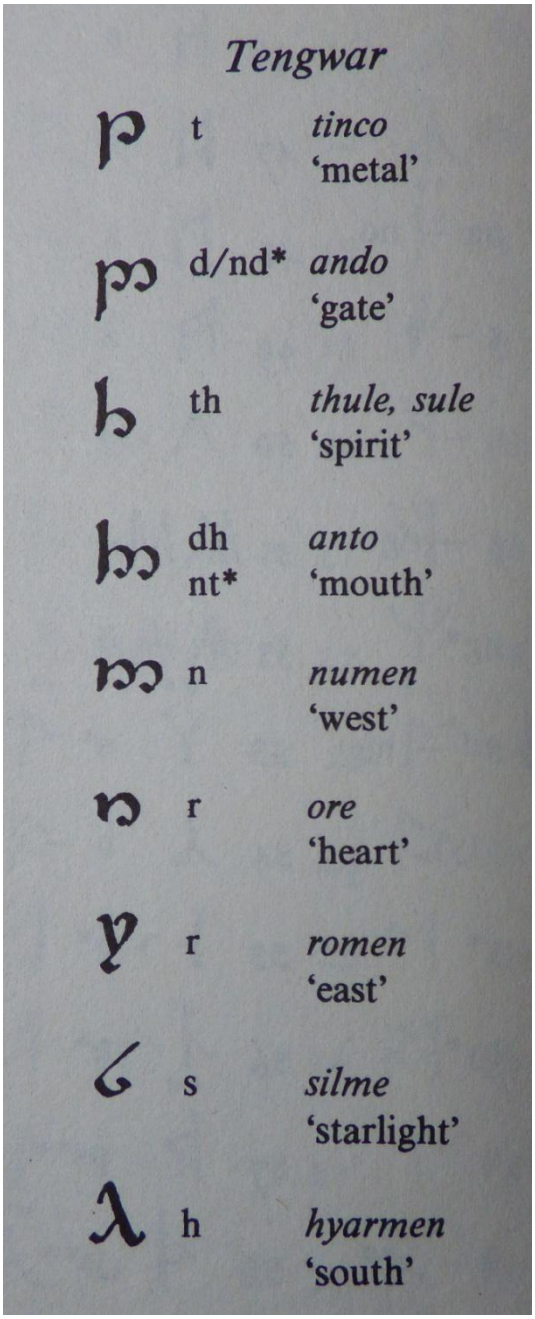


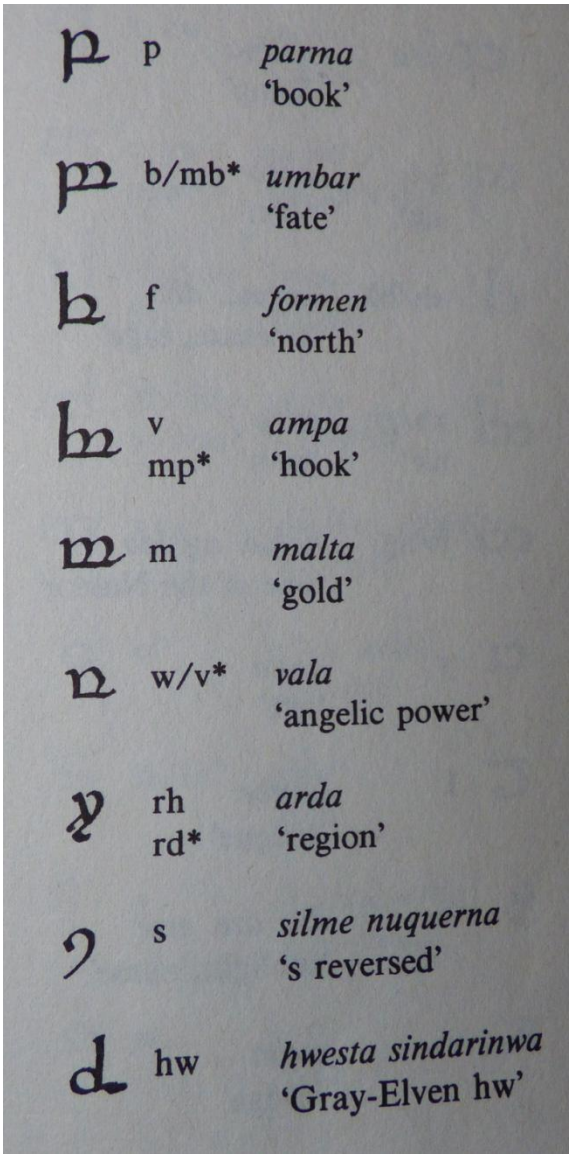
1: Cuiviénen, spelt here Kuiviénen; Quenya form, *Koivië-néni* (*Shaping of Middle-Earth*, 422). See Part II, 2.2 for an explanation of Tolkien's inconsistency regarding the use of the letters c and k.
2: Beleriand.
3: The Undying Lands, or Aman, as represented by the name Valinor, from the region of the same name.
4: Tol Eressëa.

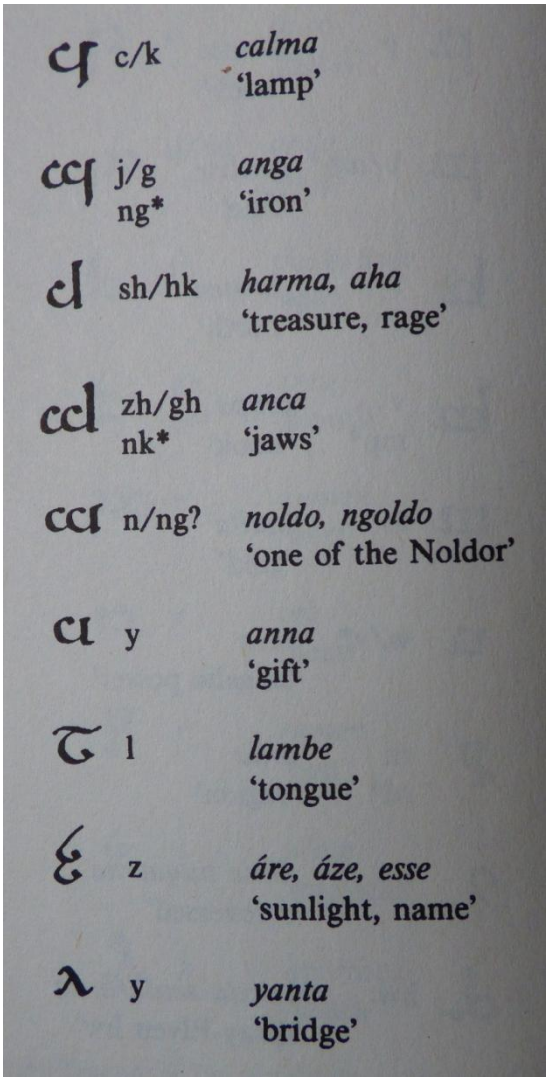
Appendix 4: "The Tengwar", by J. R. R. Tolkien



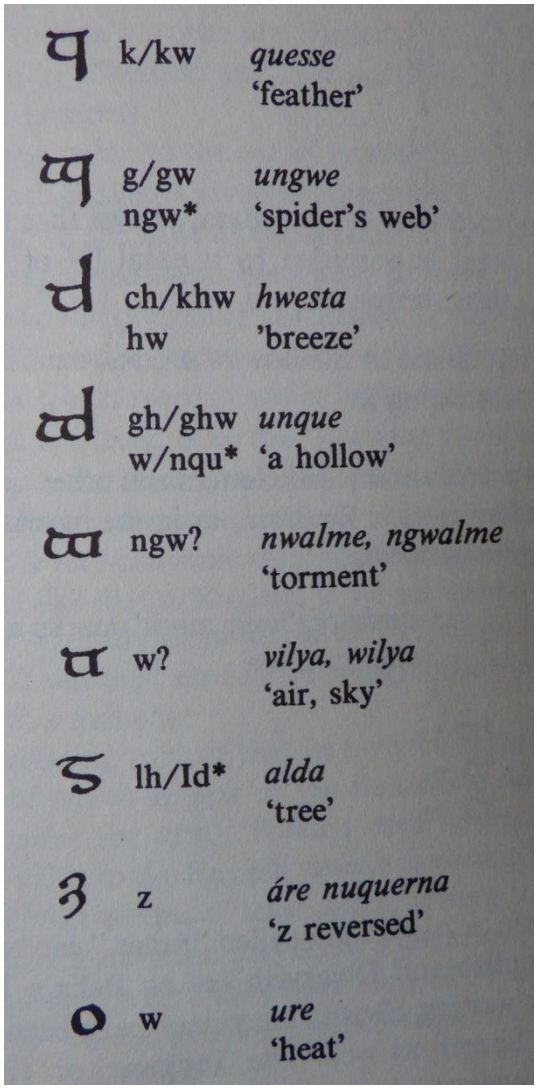
Appendix 5: "The Tengwar and Tehtar", by Ruth S. Noel



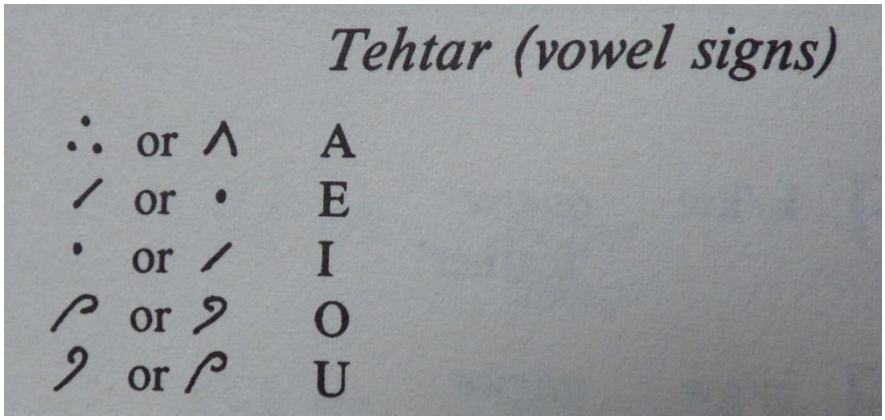




c/k	*calma*	'lamp'
j/g ng*	*anga*	'iron'
sh/hk	*harma, aha*	'treasure, rage'
zh/gh nk*	*anca*	'jaws'
n/ng?	*noldo, ngoldo*	'one of the Noldor'
y	*anna*	'gift'
l	*lambe*	'tongue'
z	*áre, áze, esse*	'sunlight, name'
y	*yanta*	'bridge'



k/kw	*quesse*	'feather'
g/gw ngw*	*ungwe*	'spider's web'
ch/khw hw	*hwesta*	'breeze'
gh/ghw w/nqu*	*unque*	'a hollow'
ngw?	*nwalme, ngwalme*	'torment'
w?	*vilya, wilya*	'air, sky'
lh/ld*	*alda*	'tree'
z	*áre nuquerna*	'z reversed'
w	*ure*	'heat'



Tehtar (vowel signs)

∴	or ∧	A
´	or •	E
•	or ´	I
◜	or ◞	O
◞	or ◜	U

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