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Tolkienian Glóssology: Or A Study of the Primitive Elvish Vocabulary of Tolkien's Quenya Lexicon and Gnomish Lexicon from the Late 1910's, the Precursors of Quenya and Sindarin, by Mark T. Hooker [no place]: Llyfrawr 2020. xxxviii, 264 pages. \$14.95 (trade paperback) ISBN 9798570879379.

This is the latest in a series of monographs by Mark T. Hooker, a visiting scholar at Indiana University's Russian and East European Institute (REEI) and a member of the Board of Academic Advisors for Walking Tree Publishers. Since 2006, Hooker has published a series of books focused on elements of Tolkien's languages. One of his more recent works before this one, *Tolkien and Sanskrit: "The Silmarillion" in the Cradle of Proto-Indo-European* (2016), was reviewed by Nelson Goering in the *Journal of Tolkien Research*, volume 3. In his review Goering characterised Hooker's works as "a series of essay collections on Tolkien and various subjects, often with a linguistic (especially onomastic) and folkloric bent, which he treats in a series of short, often overlapping essay-chapters" (1). This volume follows a similar pattern to the one Goering suggests. In this case Hooker focuses on the roots and words drawn from Tolkien's earliest Elvish language invention from the 1910's; the Elvish languages of *Quenya* and *Goldogrin/Gnomish* which are, as it says in the long book subtitle, the precursors of the later *Quenya* and *Sindarin*. Hooker digs deep into the two source-works for these languages published in the Elvish Linguistic Journals *Parma Eldalamberon 11* and *12*, as well as additional linguistic information found in the narratives of *The Book of Lost Tales*.

Hooker's entire methodological approach to Tolkien's languages stems from one form of reader reception that admirers of Tolkien's invented language adapted from the mid-1950s, the first time Elvish appeared in the published *The Lord of the Rings*. This particular group were known as "decoders" and their objective in exploring and working with Tolkien's languages was to find a "code" for the invented words and nomenclature mainly by linking these invented names to the primary world languages. For example, the suggestion that the name Sauron derives from the Old English word "sar" meaning sickness (*Secret Vice*, 123). Tolkien himself addressed these attempts in the draft of an unfinished letter to a Mr. Rang by dismissing any primary world associations for his names as "no more than private amusements, and as such I have no right or power to object to them, they are, I think, valueless for the elucidation or interpretation of my fiction" (*Letters*, 379-380). Tolkien did not deny that he used elements of primary world languages in his own invention but he clarified that these were usually selected due to their phonetic "sound sequence" (380) and that their "meaning" only came when the sound of the words (or phonemes) were placed in the "linguistic situation in my story" (383). Hooker however chooses to entirely dismiss Tolkien's comments as he sets out in this volume to find a first or primary world link to almost every Elvish root and word found in these early Elvish lexicons, brooking no idea of linguistic creativity on the young Tolkien's part. To accomplish this, Hooker uses (and I would suggest

slightly over uses) the very often evoked trope of what Tolkien himself characterised as “stored with a ‘leaf mould’ of memories” (*Letters*, 409) which Hooker classifies for his purposes as the “linguistic baggage” Tolkien carried into his own language invention from his primary world language studies. As Hooker states in his introduction “this study is a look at the linguistic baggage that Tolkien took with him to Middle-earth” (x); although at the time Tolkien invented these words and names Middle-earth did not yet exist.

Another interesting premise that Hooker launches his exploration with is the suggestion that these early Elvish words and names are “fertile hunting grounds for examples of Elvish words with first-world cognates because this early stage of his language creation is more like a series of notes for forms that would be fun to develop than like a lexicon developed from corpus of historical texts. In this primitive Elvish stage the relationship between Elvish and first-world forms is easier to see than in mature Elvish” (viii). This is interesting as although these roots and words are indeed the earliest known versions of Tolkien’s Elvish language invention, this is certainly not the first time Tolkien invented languages. As he explored in his November 1931 talk to The Samuel Johnson Society of Pembroke College Oxford “A Secret Vice,” by the time Tolkien had invented his first Elvish root or word he had been engaged in his “secret vice” of language invention for quite some time—indeed going back to 1906-07. In his talk Tolkien charts his own development as a language inventor from boyhood by first becoming involved with his cousins invention of the code language of Animalic to his own invention of the more complex languages of Nevbosh, Naffarin, possibly Fonwegian and Gautisk before starting to invent Elvish (see *Secret Vice*, 8-24). Therefore, Hooker’s assumption that Tolkien was a fledgling inventor of languages when he invented the earliest forms of Elvish does not bare up under these facts.

After an introduction which sets out the main objectives and methodology of the book, Hooker provides a very helpful section on definitions from historical and comparative philology followed by a short chapter on his concept of ‘Elvo-Indo-European’. While Hooker’s name ‘Elvo-Indo-European’ is his creation, the concept behind it is not new. In her 1976 paper ‘Elvish Loan Words in Indo-European: Cultural Implications’ published in Jim Allan’s *An Introduction to Elvish* (1978)¹ the American linguist Lise Menn (b. 1941) explored the concept and conceit that the Elves had contact with speakers of Proto-Indo-European and thus words in the family of PIE languages can be traced to origins in Elvish. Hooker uses this as a way to blur the borders between Tolkien’s secondary world language and the primary world cognates that can be derived from them. As Hooker states, ‘Taken to its logical conclusion, Tolkien’s conceit is that first-world languages like Greek, Latin, German, Dutch, Russian and English have cognates of older Elvish forms that can be

¹ Although only taking into account what was known about the languages before the publishing of *The Silmarillion* in 1977, Allan’s book remains one of the most thorough treatments of the grammar and structure of Tolkien’s languages.

traced through time, like the cognates of Sanskrit that are found in these languages by comparative historical linguists. Middle-earth is, in Tolkien's conceit, the predecessor of our own reality, occupying the same space but at a different time (*L[etters]*, 220) and 'modern' first-world languages and stories derive from the culture he is describing in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*" (2). While Hooker does include Menn's article in the notes for this chapter (3) I would have liked to see him engage more with some of Menn's ideas on how this transmission might have occurred, as outlined in her paper.

The next chapter explores Tolkien's Sound Changes and here Hooker provides a very detailed analysis which includes an good outline of some of the key sounds changes that effected the branches of Indo-European languages; especially Grimm's Law for the Germanic languages. This is very detailed and certainly shows Hooker's philological chops.

The rest of the volume consists of short overlapping chapters grouping the key roots, words and names found in the two early Elvish lexicons into fourteen key headings including ones based on cognates with primary world languages (Germanic, Greek, Latin, Russian, Spanish, Sanskrit, English, Welsh) as well as chapters on "Imported Vocabulary" (for those Elvish words Hooker can not find direct cognates for), "Primitive Elvish Month Names" and "Vocabulary from Tolkien's Faith (Catholicism)." Hooker presents these chapters in a fun, highly illustrated way with interesting illustrations.

I think one of the real interesting elements of Hooker's analysis in each of these chapters is the discursive (one might say at times even meandering) nature of his explanations, which can jump from a purely linguistic analysis of the cognate elements of Tolkien's words and names with their suggested primary world counterparts and then to a really interesting exiguous of background material drawn from myth, legend, history and even advertising. Hooker's approach reminds me of a really good lecturer on a given topic who tends to veer off into lots of interesting (and somewhat tangentially related) avenues of exploration. Along the way the reader encounters lots of interesting information from the description of the language of the fairies by the Cambro-Norman Archdeacon of Brecon, Giraldus Cambrensis to the sun boats of the Egyptians to the story of Isaac Newton sitting under the apple tree! The reader will also get to see a lot of Tolkien's early Elvish language which may be helpful if the sources are not available to the reader.

While these are very interesting and fun explorations I do echo what Nelson Goering says at the conclusion of his review of Hooker's *Tolkien and Sanskrit* book: "Readers, especially non-linguists who may be tempted to regard Hooker as an authority, should approach all of his philological claims with caution, and substantial portions of the book depend on highly dubious ways of approaching Tolkien's linguistic inventions" (12). In all Hooker has written another interesting book which offers lots of information to explore but what it actually tells us about Tolkien's invented languages and his process for invention seems to become lost at times in the vast, possibly perilous, onomastic adventures Hooker offers to his unwary readers.

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