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Skilled Smiths and Princes of Elves: The Wayland-legend and the First Age of Middle-earth

Lillian Hammen
Independent Scholar, lillianhammen@gmail.com

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Skilled Smiths and Princes of Elves: The Wayland-legend and the First Age of Middle-earth

Cover Page Footnote

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INTRODUCTION

J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction demonstrates a profound fascination with making. Artefacts – Glamdring, the Silmarils, and of course the Ring – populate Middle-earth and shape events as profoundly as the characters who use them. Yet this emphasis on created things is paired with a fixation upon the makers of such objects: the Ring responds to the will of Sauron; the pride and covetousness of the Elven smith Fëanor set the events of *The Silmarillion* in motion. Given Tolkien's fixation with makers, it is unsurprising Tolkien was interested in the archetypical smith of medieval Germanic legend, Wayland.[1]

Wayland appears in medieval Germanic literature primarily as a smith of great skill. Freidrich Klaeber, in his 1922 edition of *Beowulf* – the edition Tolkien requested his students utilize[2] – explains that 'if a weapon or armor in Old Germanic literature was attributed to Wēland, this was conclusive proof of its superior workmanship and venerable associations.'[3] Typically, Wayland appears in brief moments of allusive mention rather than as a central figure; for example, the eponymous hero of *Beowulf* describes his mail shirt as '*Wēlandes geweorc,'* Wayland's work.[4] But the Old Norse poem *Vǫlundarkviða,* preserved in the *Poetic Edda,* and the Old English poem *Deor* present a fuller version of Wayland's narrative. In *Vǫlundarkviða,* Vǫlundr (Wayland) is a supernaturally talented smith and *álfa ljódi*, a prince of elves. After he and his brothers are abandoned by their swan-maiden wives, Vǫlundr is captured by the king Níðuðr, who hamstrings and enslaves him, confiscating Vǫlundr's treasure. As revenge, Vǫlundr murders Níðuðr's young sons and uses their body parts to make objects for their parents and sister, Bǫðvildr. When Bǫðvildr breaks her ring, one Vǫlundr originally made for his swan-maiden wife Alvítr, she brings it to Vǫlundr for repair; he plies her with beer, impregnates her, abandons her, then flies to the king's hall. There, he informs Níðuðr of the princes' deaths and Bǫðvildr's impregnation. Vǫlundr, laughing, flies to freedom. The poem possesses many unique elements, but the overall trajectory of Vǫlundr's enslavement, mutilation, and revenge matches that presented in the first two stanzas of *Deor,* which relays a similar narrative in compressed form.

This legend in its various iterations attracted international engagement during Tolkien's lifetime. The period saw the publication of numerous landmark texts on Wayland and his attendant legends: Sophus Bugge's "The Norse Lay of

[1] The spelling of Wayland's name varies widely across texts. I will use the name Wayland to refer to the figure in general; in all other cases I will use the spelling employed by the text in question.
[2] Lectures and notes on 'Historical and legendary traditions in *Beowulf* and other Old English poems,' 1933, Tolkien Archive, MS Tolkien A 31/1-3, fol. 168, Bodleian Library.
[3] Friedrich Klaeber ed., *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg,* (Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1922), 145.
[4] Ibid., ln. 455.

Wayland (Vølundarkviða) and its Relation to English Tradition" (1897, reprinted in 1992), Peter Maurus' *Die Wielandsage in der Literatur* (1906), and H.R. Ellis Davidson's "Weland the Smith" (1958). Extent references to Wayland sparked dialogue across editions of *Beowulf*, *Deor*, and *Waldere*, as critics and commentators discussed the allusions to Wayland contained therein. Yet Wayland also attracted the attention of creative authors: Sir Walter Scott's 1821 novel *Kenilworth* includes a rationalized Wayland as a character, Andrew Lang published "Wayland the Smith" in *The Book of Romance* in 1902, and Rudyard Kipling included Weland and a sword of his making in his collection *Puck of Pook's Hill* in 1906.

Tolkien was likely familiar with these creative works and much of the scholarly discourse on Wayland; he was certainly familiar with the medieval legends.[5] He translated *Deor* as part of his undergraduate study in 1913,[6] and his final examinations as an undergraduate included a question about an Old English Wayland-poem and the figure's connection to Scandinavian literature.[7] As a professor, Tolkien's academic interests included 'common Germanic legends,' and Wayland particularly among these, as J.S. Ryan (2009) observes.[8] Yet Tolkien published little on Wayland. I have found only four explicit references to Wayland in Tolkien's published academic work: one in "*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics" (1936) where he reminds his audience that 'Beowulf's *byrne* was made by Weland'; two additional instances in earlier drafts of the same lecture (though these did not survive into the published version); and one in Tolkien's posthumous edition of *Beowulf* (2014).[9] Only the first of these appeared in print during Tolkien's lifetime. Nonetheless, his interest can be surmised from his notes and lecture offerings. He taught Wayland texts frequently.[10] His lecture notes for his 1935 course "The Legendary Traditions in *Beowulf* and *Déor's Lament*" contain several folios in which Tolkien considered Wayland's various names, suggesting an interest in the intertextual features of these poems and the philological

[5] For Tolkien's remarks on Lang, see "On Fairy-Stories"; for Tolkien's awareness of Kipling, see Shippey (2005), 397.

[6] Notebooks containing notes and essays on English philology and literature, compiled as an undergraduate and at Leeds, 1913-15, Tolkien Archive MS Tolkien A 21/1, Bodleian Library.

[7] J.S. Ryan, *Tolkien's View: Windows into his World,* (Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2009), 95.

[8] Ryan, *Tolkien's View,* 95.

[9] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays,* ed. C.J.R. Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 23; Michael Drout, ed., *Beowulf and the Critics,* by J.R.R. Tolkien (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002) A 37 and B 95; J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf together with Sellic Spell,* ed. Christopher Tolkien, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 242. I exclude from this paper Tolkien's occasional discussions of Wade, Wayland's father, who is outside the scope of this paper.

[10] Oronzo Cilli, *Tolkien's Library: An Annotated Checklist* (Edinburgh: Luna Press Publishing, 2019), 360-364.

connections between Wayland's names across languages.[11] Moreover, in 1936 – the same year Rayner Unwin recommended *The Hobbit* for publication and Tolkien delivered his seminal lecture "*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics" – he taught a course on "The Legend of Wayland the Smith, followed by a study of the text of *Déor's Lament* and of *Volundarkvida*."[12] Tolkien apparently found Wayland interesting enough to build a course around him and his literary corpora.

It should come as little surprise, then, that the Wayland-legend crept into Tolkien's creative life. "Enʒlaʒesíþ," a complicated document which includes Tolkien's plans to integrate existing names and legends into his mythology, provides two explicit attempts to incorporate Wayland, present on pages ER1d and ER1f-g of the manuscript.[13] The pages date to the period in which Tolkien was writing the *Lost Tales* in the late 1910s and early 1920s and mention Wayland by name.[14] ER1d states that 'Wéland' is known to the elves as 'Velindo or Gwilion the fay,' a servant of 'Aule.'[15] While Aule, who would eventually appear in *The Silmarillion* as the Vala Aulë, is characterized throughout Tolkien's work by the joy he takes in works of craft, Velindo is arrogant, choosing to abandon his master and remain amongst mortals due to 'the amazement of men and dwarves at his skill.'[16] Tolkien retained the idea of servants abandoning Aulë as the legendarium developed; Sauron, for instance, '[i]n his beginning was a Maiar of Aulë.'[17] The character Velindo, however, is shortly abandoned, and in ER1f-g Tolkien unequivocally states that 'Weyland = Feanor,' designating this linchpin character of his mythology as the vehicle for his adaptation of the Wayland myth.[18] In this outline, Feanor/Weyland is captured, 'forge[s] wings' to escape, meets Beaduhilde, and 'made love to her and fled with her but dropped her in a wood and could not find her'; the two are reunited when Beaduhilde finds him and 'obtains blessing

[11] MS Tolkien A 31/1-2, fol. 4, 98-101.
[12] Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion & Guide: Chronology*, (London: Harper Collins, 2017), 192-202.
[13] Arden R. Smith, ed., "Early Runic Documents," *Parma Eldalamberon* 15 (2004): 89-121. Smith publishes "Enʒlaʒesíþ" in "Early Runic Documents"; he includes "Enʒlaʒesíþ" because Tolkien had placed it in a file with manuscripts of runic alphabets. I follow Smith's pagination. See Smith 89.
[14] Ibid., 96, 98. Hammond and Scull accept Smith's dating, see *Chronology* 114.
[15] Smith, "ERD," 96. Tolkien marks the Wéland-entry with a non-runic symbol to designate it as having a particular connection to his mythology. See Smith 98 for Tolkien's use of symbols in this document.
[16] Ibid. See *The Silmarillion* 18, and 37-39 for Aulë's characterization.
[17] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion,* ed. C.J.R. Tolkien (New York: Del Rey Books, 1977), 23.
[18] Smith, "ERD," 97. The names of Tolkien's characters often changed, sometimes dramatically, over the course of his revisions. I default to the name and spelling presented in *The Silmarillion* when discussing a character in general, but when engaging a specific passage I will use the name and spelling utilized in that text.

upon her son,' presumably his child.[19] Although Tolkien abandoned these outlines, they demonstrate clear intent to integrate Wayland into Tolkien's nascent mythology and cohere with later developments in the legendarium. ER1f-g, for example, establishes this early iteration of Fëanor as an incredibly skilled smith, a feature that remained a core part of Fëanor's characterization until Tolkien's death.

Though these outlines alone indicate the apparent room for inquiry surrounding the connection between Tolkien's creative works and the Wayland legend, few individuals have examined these connections. Åke Ohlmarks' introduction to the Swedish translation of *The Lord of the Rings* inexplicably declares Tom Bombadil and Gollum both reflect something of Wayland Smith: Tolkien describes Ohlmarks' conclusion as 'nonsensical.'[20] Andrew Scott Higgins, looking at Tolkien's own notes, highlights Tolkien's identification of Fëanor as a Wayland-figure, but does not explore the connection.[21] Tolkien scholars such as Tom Shippey, Oronzo Cilli, J.S. Ryan, Michael Drout, Christina Scull, and Wayne G. Hammond have helpfully indexed Tolkien's works and doings, allowing a general sketch of Tolkien's engagement with the Wayland-legend to be identified, drawn from his notes, drafts, letters, and teaching – but they do not dwell on the Wayland connection.

The connection hinted at in these index entries and scholarly commentaries is in fact a profound one, and particularly influences the development of two Elven smiths, Fëanor and Eöl the Dark Elf, and their attendant narratives in *The Silmarillion.* Fëanor embodies a destructive possessiveness, derived from his identity as a craftsman, similar to that which motivates Vǫlundr's revenge in *Vǫlundarkviða.* Eöl similarly inherits the medieval smith's vengeful nature, turning Wayland's avarice towards other persons; his wife Aredhel Ar-Feiniel draws heavily upon the swan-maidens and Bǫðvildr of *Vǫlundarkviða*. These parallels, moreover, have vast thematic ramifications for interpreting Tolkien's legendarium and *The Silmarillion* as a whole.

FËANOR, WAYLAND, AND MAKER'S VENGEANCE

Of all the Elves, the smith Fëanor is perhaps the most obvious heir to Wayland's legend within Tolkien's mythology. In *The Silmarillion* (1977), Fëanor's crowning achievement is his creation of the Silmarils, three shining gems of such extraordinary beauty that 'all who dwelt in Aman were filled with wonder and

[19]Ibid. I follow Smith's editorial conventions, enclosing deletions in curly brackets and editorial insertions in brackets.

[20]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien,* ed. Humphrey Carpenter, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2006), 305.

[21]Andrew Scott Higgins, "'Those Who Cling in Queer Corners to the Forgotten Tongues and Memories of an Elder Day': J.R.R. Tolkien, Finns, and Elves," *Journal of Tolkien Research* 3, no. 2 (2016): 9.

delight' by them.[22] The jewels, which gave their name to *The Silmarillion,* prove to be a major element of Fëanor's undoing, as his 'heart…was fast bound to these things that he himself had made.'[23] Their theft prompts his wrath and leads directly to Fëanor's untimely death; nonetheless, the Silmarils and the war to reclaim them far outlive Fëanor and dominate *The Silmarillion*'s portrayal of the First Age of Middle-earth.

Wayland and Fëanor, as Higgins (2016) aptly notes, possess a definite 'link.'[24] Even ignoring Tolkien's equation of Fëanor with Wayland in "Enʒlaʒesíþ," Fëanor's immense skill as a craftsman – he is 'the most subtle in mind and most skilled in hand' of all the Noldor, preeminent among even a branch of the Elves known for their artistry – would provide a strong conceptual link to Wayland Smith via the two smiths' creative power.[25] Overt similarities between Fëanor and Vǫlundr – especially their identities as elven smiths and princes and their somewhat similar creations – suggest influence from *Vǫlundarkviða*'s portrayal of Vǫlundr. More telling, however, is the smiths' intense vengefulness, inspired by over-attachment to their crafted works.

Vǫlundr and Fëanor share a few obvious characteristics. Both are princes of elves; Fëanor is the son the Noldor's king Finwë, while *Vǫlundarkviða* describes Vǫlundr as 'álfa lióði,' prince of elves.[26] Both are smiths, recognized as the best of their era. Tolkien firmly declares Fëanor the 'most skilled in hand' of all the Noldor;[27] Vǫlundr's skill is so highly regarded he becomes a target of kingly avarice. Moreover, their craftsmanship is supernatural in excellence. After Vǫlundr murders Níðuðr's sons, he uses their dismembered corpses as raw materials, including 'ór augom / iarknasteina,' making 'precious stones from their eyes.'[28] While the poem does not describe Vǫlundr's making of the gems, one is left to presume the involvement of magic in such a drastic transformation. Fëanor's creation of the Silmarils, though far less gruesome, is equally extraordinary: the 'inner fire of the Silmarils Fëanor made of the blended light of the Trees of Valinor,'

[22] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 70.
[23] Ibid.
[24]Higgins, "Tolkien, Finns, and Elves," 9. Higgins engages this link primarily as a feature of Tolkien's connection between Finns and Elves.
[25] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 65.
[26] Ursula Dronke trans., *The Poetic Edda: Volume II, Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 11, 3; Carolyne Larrington, translator, *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10,2. All Old Norse translations of *Vǫlundarkviða* are from Dronke, all modern English from Larrington's text. Where stanza and lineation differs, I will list Dronke's then Larrington's stanza and line numbers, separated by a semicolon.
[27]Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 65.
[28]*Vǫlundarkviða,* 25, 9-10; 25, 1. The connection between 'iarknasteina' and 'Arkenstone' is notable, though outside this discussion. See Rateliff 604-606 for an analysis.

producing gems that 'of their own radiance shone like the stars.'[29] Moreover, the Silmarils are linguistically linked to Vǫlundr's gems. As Rateliff (2007) notes, Tolkien occasionally used the Old English cognate of *iarknastein, eorclanstán,* to describe the Silmarils in his c. 1930s writings.[30] Though buried by intervening decades of revision, this linguistic underpinning further connects the creations of these two immensely skillful smiths, despite the very different circumstances of their creations.

Preternatural skill aside, Fëanor and Vǫlundr both display the 'intense possessiveness, an identification of the works of their art as part of themselves' typical to the 'great smiths of legend' described by Ursula Dronke in her 1969 commentary on *Vǫlundarkviða*.[31] Vǫlundr's vengefulness is apparent and extreme, manifested in violence towards innocent individuals affiliated with the target of his revenge. Vǫlundr's exultation over the ruined Níðuðr demonstrates Vǫlundr's ruthless vengeance:

'Gakk þú til smiðio, þeirar er þú gørðir, þar fiðr þú belgi blóði stokna: sneið ek af hǫfuð húna þinna, ok undir fen fiǫturs fœtr um lagðak.	'Go to the smithy, the one that you built, there you'll find bellows spattered with blood: I cut off the heads of your young cubs and in the mud of the forge I laid their limbs.
'En þær skálar, er und skǫrom vóro, sveip ek útan silfri, selda ek Níðaði. En ór augom iarknasteina senda ek kunnigri kván Níðaðar. En ór tǫnnom tveggia þeira sló ek brióstkringlor, senda ek Bǫðvildi.	'And their skulls which were under their hair, I chased with silver, sent them to Nidud: and the precious stones from the eyes, I sent to Nidud's cunning wife; and from the teeth of the two I struck round brooches; Sent them to Bodvild.

[29] Tolkien, *The Silmarillion,* 69.
[30] John D. Rateliff, *The History of The Hobbit,* (London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2007), 604.
[31] Dronke, *Edda,* 257.

‘Nú gengr Bǫðvildr	'Now Bǫðvildr
barni aukin,	goes with child,
einga dóttir	the only daughter
ykkor beggia.	of you both.'[32]

Niðuðr’s children did not capture, imprison, mutilate, or enslave Vǫlundr, yet their proximity to the main object of Vǫlundr’s ire rendered them targets all the same. Vǫlundr may use the boys’ corpses as raw materials for his smithcraft, but he uses their deaths and their sisters’ impregnation to wreak his revenge upon their father.

While Vǫlundr has several good reasons for desiring vengeance – his imprisonment, his enslavement, his hamstringing – it is the loss of the objects he created that pains him most. Vǫlundr voices his anger at length:

Skínn Níðaði	There shines at Nidud’s
[skyggt] sverð á linda,	belt a sword,
þat er ek hvesta	which I sharpened
sem ek hagast kunna,	most skilfully as I knew how,
sem ek herðak	and I tempered
sem mér hœgst þótti.	as seemed to me best;
Sá er mér frán[n] mækir	that gleaming blade
æ fiarri borinn—	is forever borne far from me,
sékka ek þann Vǫlundi	I shall not see that brought
til smiðio borinn.	to Volund in the smithy;
Nú berr Bǫðvildr	‘now Bodvild wears
brúðar minnar—	my bride’s—
bíðka ek þess bót—	I don’t expect redress for this—
bauga rauða.	red-gold rings.[33]

Vǫlundr broods, not upon his enslavement or mutilation, but upon the objects he created being taken from him and paraded just beyond his reach. His thought dwells upon his sword and the effort gone into creating it, and upon the ring made for Alvítr, now worn by Bǫðvildr. The tension and sense of anger conveyed by the stanza builds, and is itself interrupted by the intercalary clause expressing the unlikeliness of redress, as if Vǫlundr’s anger on this point forces itself upon even his train of thought. Notably, Vǫlundr never comments upon his enslavement or mutilation, save for a moment in which he declares ‘[n]ú hefi ek hefnt/ harma minna,’ ‘[N]ow I have avenged my sorrow.’[34] But while this statement obliquely refers to his hamstringing and enslavement by touching upon his *harma* generally,

[32] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 34-36.
[33] *Vǫlundarkviða,*18; 18-19.
[34] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 28, 5-6; 28, 3.

he gives them no specific mention at any point in the poem. Instead, it is the theft of the items he made which gives rise, more than any other cause, to his anger.

Fëanor, like Vǫlundr, has suffered more than one wrong, but in his case as well the theft of the things he made supersedes his other causes for anger. After Melkor steals the Silmarils, Fëanor's speech to the Noldor focuses most upon the death of his father Finwë and the theft of the Silmarils. He initially gives these concerns equal weight: Fëanor declares he 'would not dwell longer in the same land with the kin of [his] father's slayer and the thief of [his] treasure.'[35] The two crimes thus seem paired in Fëanor's thought, expressed in parallel syntactic structures and given equal weight, but as Fëanor's speech progresses he mentions Finwë less frequently. After reminding the Noldor they have 'lost [their] King,' Fëanor advocates a war that will only end 'when we have conquered and regained the Silmarils,' thereby predicating victory not on defeating Melkor or avenging Finwë, but on the reclamation of Fëanor's stolen jewels.[36] Moreover, the oath with which Fëanor closes his haranguing does not mention vengeance for Finwë's death. Instead, Fëanor vows 'to pursue with vengeance and hatred to the ends of the World Vala, Demon, Elf or Man as yet unborn, or any creature, great or small, good or evil…whoso should hold or take or keep a Silmaril from [his] possession.'[37] Fëanor clearly recognizes his purpose as one of vengeance, but at this crucial moment he does not mention Finwë, only the jewels he so desperately wishes to reclaim. The obsession underpinning this 'terrible oath' manifests in atrocities, including the Kinslaying, the first fighting between Elves.[38] The Teleri, who Fëanor attacks unprovoked, are innocent in the wrongs Fëanor has suffered: but Fëanor seizes their ships by force when they refuse to aid his pursuit of Morgoth. Like Vǫlundr, willing to murder children for the sake of revenge, in Fëanor's mind reclaiming his creations supersedes the collateral damage his vengeance precipitates.

Fëanor and Vǫlundr thus possess multiple parallels: they are elven princes and supernaturally skilled smiths, they fixate upon the theft of their crafted works, and the possessiveness they feel for their creations spawns a ruthless desire for vengeance, one that renders them fully willing to sacrifice innocents in pursuit of it. The predication of their vengefulness upon their creativity, moreover, is not incidental, and is, as I will argue, an intentional development of Fëanor's character, undertaken as Tolkien revised Fëanor's narratives from the *Book of Lost Tales* onward.

In Tolkien's first prose work of the legendarium, *The Book of Lost Tales,* written between 1916 and 1919, Fëanor already possesses many of his fundamental

[35] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 89.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid, 90.
[38] Ibid.

characteristics and narrative moments.[39] He is the maker of the Silmarils, already described as 'the most beautiful jewels that ever shone'[40]; Melko 'with his own hand…slew Bruithwir father of Fëanor' and 'laid hands upon those most glorious gems, even the Silmarils';[41] after the murder and theft Fëanor urges the Nodoli (Noldor) to 'see what is [their] own' again, retrieving 'by violence' their stolen creations.[42]

Nonetheless, in this early version of the narrative the Silmarils and Fëanor's desire for them are radically less significant in his rebellion than they would become in subsequent years. After Melko's attacks and theft, Fëanor's response expresses grief rather than anger or possessiveness: 'who shall give us back the joyous heart without which works of loveliness and magic cannot be? – and Bruithwir is dead, and my heart also.'[43] These words gesture towards the full grief of the tragedy he has experienced: the loss of someone he loved has caused him such profound sorrow as to cut him off from joy, and thus his ability to create. Nonetheless, it is Bruithwir, not the Silmarils, whose loss Fëanor laments. Only after Fëanor meditates on Bruithwir's tomb, 'brood[ing]…bitter thoughts, till his brain grew dazed by the black vapours of his heart' does Fëanor bid his people leave.[44] It is the death, rather than the theft, that motivates his rebellion.

Fëanor, however, underwent major changes in the subsequent redraftings of the legendarium that shifted his attachments. Tolkien wrote 'increase the element of the desire for the Silmarils' next to Fëanor's haranguing of the Noldoli in the *Lost Tales'* manuscript, and as Tolkien redrafted the tales to respond to this new direction, he also incorporated more elements of Vǫlundr's characterization into Fëanor.[45] In the next major revisiting of the Fëanor material, the incomplete poem 'The Flight of the Noldoli,' written in 1925,[46] Christopher Tolkien (2002) observes 'it is clear that the Silmarils had already gained greatly in significance,' an observation supported by the poem's contents.[47] Elevated to princedom, Fëanor speaks to the Noldoli to instigate their flight to Middle-earth:

> Our gems are gone, our jewels vanished;
> and the Three, my Three, thrice enchanted

[39] Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion & Guide: Reader's Guide Part I: A-M,* (London: Harper Collins, 2017), 104, 115.; J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales: Part One,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 160.
[40] Tolkien, *Lost Tales I,* 128.
[41] Ibid., 145.
[42] Ibid., 150.
[43] Ibid., 149.
[44] Ibid., 149.
[45] Ibid., 169.
[46] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lays of Beleriand,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 131.
[47] Ibid., 38.

> globes of crystal by gleam undying
> illumined, lit by living splendour
> and all hues' essence, their eager flame—
> Morgoth has them in his monstrous hold
> my Silmarils.[48]

Rather than dwelling on the death of his father, this later Fëanor fixates upon the theft of the jewels. Switching from the *our* aimed at the public audience of the Noldoli to the *my* of his own motivations, Fëanor momentarily abandons diatribe to wax poetic upon the Silmarils' radiant beauty. Yet the knowledge that Morgoth, a 'monstrous' being, possesses them causes an abrupt turn away from memories of their beauty to present anger about their theft. Structurally, the passage resembles the stanza of *Vǫlundarkviða* discussed above, in which Vǫlundr speaks of his anger at the theft of his treasures: both move from the fact of the theft to ruminations upon the items themselves, ruminations interrupted by expressions of anger sparked by recollection of the items' theft. Fëanor, like Vǫlundr, regards the stolen items as rightfully his, describing them as *my Silmarils*. Yet more telling, these ruminations lead into the earliest version of the Fëanorian oath of vengeance.

Fëanor, then, elevated to princehood and fixated upon the Silmarils, bears a closer resemblance to Vǫlundr than he does in the *Lost Tales.* This shift becomes more pronounced in later reworkings. The 1930 *Quenta Noldorinwa* introduced the narrator's assertion that 'the heart of Fëanor was wound about the things he himself had made' emphasizing Fëanor's increasing obsession with the jewels.[49] In the circa 1937 *Quenta Silmarillion,* the narrator states 'Fëanor loved the Silmarils with a greedy love, and began to grudge the sight of them to all save himself and his sons,' attaching miserly, even wicked, associations to Fëanor's obsession. [50] At this point in Fëanor's development, his grief was 'great…both for his father and *not less for the Silmarils.'*[51] This line showcases the reversal in Fëanor's attachments since *Lost Tales,* asserting in no uncertain terms that the grief over the Silmarils' theft is *not less* – is possibly greater – than his grief over Finwë's death. Fëanor seems by this point to have absorbed Vǫlundr's obsession with the theft of the things he made. It has supplanted his earlier motivations.

In examining these early drafts, one can observe a pointed, intentional shift in Fëanor's character as it evolves to mirror the fundamental characteristics of Vǫlundr. Over time, Fëanor's attachment to the Silmarils became increasingly

[48] Ibid., lns. 103-109.
[49] Scull and Hammond, *Chronology,* 161; Tolkien, *Lays,* 88, 94.
[50] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lost Road and Other Writings,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 229.
[51] Ibid., 232 (my emphasis).

intrinsic to his character and motivations.[52] He becomes a vengeful being intent on the reclamation of his stolen masterpieces, willing to pursue his vengeance at any cost. Fëanor may be respected as the most talented of all the Elven smiths, just as Wayland is respected as the best of all the Germanic smiths: but he absorbs the legendary figure's vindictiveness and possessive nature as well. In this similarity Fëanor demonstrates the flaw that Shippey (2002) sees in Tolkien's Elves, 'a restless desire to make things,' a desire that causes the Elves to Fall: 'in Valinor…the Fall came when conscious creatures became "more interested in their own creations than in God's."'[53] In his fixation upon his own works and the desire for vengeance that his possessiveness inspires, Fëanor enacts Waylandian tendencies on a tragic scale: to the doom of himself and many others besides.

EÖL, WAYLAND, AND FAMILIAL DOMINATION

Fëanor, however, is not the only Elven smith who resembles Wayland; so too does Eöl, *The Silmarillion*'s 'Dark Elf.'[54] Tolkien did not leave any published indication he intended to make Eöl a Wayland-type, but several overt parallels in plot provide a strong argument that Wayland influenced the development of Eöl and the narrative in which he is a principal actor; these parallels are reinforced by Eöl's characterization and revision history. However, Eöl's resonance with Wayland – and indeed, the character flaws leading to Eöl's downfall – depend as much on the convergence of the marital and familial relationships in Eöl's story, which themselves take some colour from the Wayland-myth, as on his identity as a smith. As such, Eöl's connection to Wayland consists of both the many overt parallels with the Waylands of *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Þidrekssaga* and a complex investigation of a tenuously-constructed family triad – husband, son, (unwilling) wife – present in both Tolkien's and the medieval narratives. This triad spawns its own additional concern: the critical interplay between Bǫðvildr and Aredhel, and the questions of consent their respective impregnations bring into their narratives.

Eöl, like all versions of Wayland, is a smith of extraordinary talent. In addition to inventing a new kind of metal, he forges a sword that in its fantastic sharpness recalls Mimung: the blade Anglachel 'would cleave all earth-delved iron'; the Wayland-figure of *Þidrekssaga*, Velent, proves the quality of the sword Mimung by striking 'so that [Mimung] split the helmet and the head, the byrnie and the body' to demonstrate his superior skill as a smith.[55] Both smiths impregnate a woman under suspect circumstances: Vǫlundr impregnated Bǫðvildr when he 'Bar

[52] While Tolkien continued to revise Fëanor's narratives, this obsession with the Silmarils persists into the material of the 1950s, and eventually into Christopher's 1977 *Silmarillion* volume.
[53] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth,* (London: HarperCollins, 2005)*,* 273.
[54] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 154.
[55] Ibid., 241; Edward Haymes, *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern,* (New York: Garland, 1988), chap 68.

hann hana bióri,' 'overcame her with beer';[56] Eöl employs a less odious yet still suspect method in drawing Aredhel to himself, 'set[ting] his enchantments about her so that she could not find the ways out, but drew ever nearer to his dwelling.'[57] Both smiths have a son. And both are abandoned by a wife: Alvítr eventually flies south, while Aredhel uses Eöl's absence 'to leave Nan Elmoth for ever.'[58]

In addition to those parallels extent in *The Silmarillion*, the circa 1970 typescript of the tale, upon which Christopher based *The Silmarillion*'s text of the narrative, reveals a stronger connection to *Vǫlundarkviða*. In a note musing upon Eöl's name and appellation 'Dark Elf,' Tolkien observes the term 'was sometimes applied to Elves captured by Morgoth and enslaved and then released.'[59] This narrative – in which a skilled smith is captured, enslaved, then escapes – strongly parallels the basic narrative of the Wayland-legend, and hearkens back to Tolkien's aborted considerations for a Waylandian Fëanor in "Enʒlaʒesíþ." Tolkien scrapped this imprisonment narrative – but his decision to make Eöl's connections dwarvish creates a parallel with *Þidrekssaga*, in which Velent is trained in part by dwarves.[60]

Beyond the basic similarities between Eöl and his medieval antecedent, Eöl plays upon, in magnified form, the possessive attitude Wayland displays towards others in *Vǫlundarkviða.* Vǫlundr's desire for revenge leads him to murder the young princes and impregnate Bǫðvildr. Vǫlundr's attitude towards Bǫðvildr is, admittedly, ambiguous. He extracts a promise for Bǫðvildr's safety from Níðuðr:

Eiða skaltu mér áðr	First you shall give me
alla vinna,	all these oaths:
at skips borði	by the side of a ship
ok at skildar rǫnd,	and the rim of a shield,
at mars bœgi	the back of a horse
ok at mækis egg,	and the edge of a blade,
at þú kveliat	that you will not torment
kván Vǫlundar,	Volund's lady,
né brúði minni	nor be the slayer
at bana verði –	of my bride,
þótt vér kván e[i]gim,	though I have a wife
þá er þér kunnið,	who is known to you,
eð[a] ióð eigim	and we have a child
innan hallar.	inside your hall.[61]

[56] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 28, 1; 29, 1.
[57] Tolkien, *The Silmarillion, 1*55.
[58] Ibid., 157.
[59] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The War of the Jewels,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 320.
[60] Ibid., 321.
[61] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 33.

Though the narrative of this passage is clear – Vǫlundr requires oaths for Bǫðvildr's safety before answering Níðuðr's questions – the tone with which Vǫlundr addresses the king is not. One could interpret the passage as voicing sincere concern for Bǫðvildr, or at least, as Dronke (1969) describes it, an acknowledgement of 'his obligations to *his* bride and *his* child.'[62] He could, after all, have left Bǫðvildr to deal with her father alone. Yet Anne Burson (1983), in her analysis of the poem, regards Vǫlundr's discussion of *kván Vǫlundar* and *brúði minni* as 'sarcastic.'[63] Burson does not explain her assessment of Vǫlundr's tone, but I agree with her that Vǫlundr's motives require some scrutiny. In this moment, Vǫlundr gloats: safely out of Níðuðr's reach, he holds vital information hostage. Rather than naming Bǫðvildr immediately, he delays, obscuring her identity by referring to her as *kván Vǫlundar,* Vǫlundr's wife and *brúði minni*, my bride. Does he withhold her name out of genuine care, protecting her identity until Níðuðr guarantees her safety, or is Vǫlundr simply increasing the king's torment by presenting him with another mystery? Moreover, since Vǫlundr uses Bǫðvildr as an instrument of revenge, it is possible this speech exists to protect his own interest: Vǫlundr cannot supplant Níðuðr's bloodline without Bǫðvildr – or rather, without the unborn son she carries – and so may secure her safety simply for the benefit of his own designs. He may view her merely as a tool

Eöl, like Vǫlundr, treats his sexual partner possessively. The paragraph after Tolkien states 'Eöl took [Aredhel] to wife,' he informs the audience that 'at Eöl's command she must shun the sunlight,' and that 'Eöl forbade her to seek the sons of Fëanor, or any others of the Noldor.'[64] The language of *command* and *forbade* points to curtailment, couched in language insinuating freedom is a privilege afforded by her spouse. The commands' content, moreover, does not bode well for Eöl's moral character: only the wicked creatures of Tolkien's world fear or dislike sunlight, and he isolates Aredhel from her friends and family in a world in which lineage and allegiance are paramount. Later, when Aredhel jumps between Maeglin and Eöl's poisoned javelin, Eöl tells no one the javelin was poisoned.[65] He could have ensured Aredhel's proper medical treatment in the long hours between her injury and her death, but he chooses to let her die—tacitly enforcing a punishment for defiance upon her.

While Eöl's dominating temperament destroys Aredhel's happiness and life, these features manifest even more apparently in Eöl's possessive treatment of his son. When Maeglin asks his father for permission to visit his relatives, Eöl's response is 'wrathful'; he forbids his son from any dealings with the Noldor and

[62] Dronke, *Edda,* 257.
[63] Anne Burson, "Swan Maidens and Smiths: A Structural Study of Völundarkviða," *Scandinavian Studies* 55, no. 1 (1983): 7.
[64] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 155.
[65] Ibid., 161.

declares '[i]n this you shall obey me, or I will set you in bonds.'[66] Eöl's response evinces his immediate, and extreme, change in mood when someone suggests a path contrary to his will; moreover, it reveals Eöl's willingness to use threats and force to ensure compliance. When Aredhel and Maeglin leave, their departure similarly prompts Eöl's wrath: 'so great was his anger that he followed after them even by the light of day,' enduring the sunlight he despises in order to reclaim them.[67]

When Eöl reaches Gondolin, he restrains his anger long enough to make his demands of the king:

> "I care nothing for your secrets and I came…to claim my own: my wife and my son. Yet if in Aredhel your sister you have some claim, then let her remain…But not so Maeglin. My son you shall not withhold from me. Come, Maeglin son of Eöl! Your father commands you. Leave the house of his enemies…or be accursed!"[68]

Eöl's words provide insight into his paternal and conjugal expectations. He describes the pair of escapees as *my own,* repeating his claims to them by describing them as *my wife,* and *my son,* rather than by name. He acknowledges Aredhel's connection to Turgon only in terms of Turgon's *claim* over her, discussing her as if she were a possession, and does not acknowledge any analogous claim Aredhel or Turgon may have over Maeglin, despite their ties as mother and uncle. Eöl only acknowledges Maeglin's claim over himself by obliquely denying he has one, addressing Maeglin only in the imperative: *come, leave, your father commands you.* The command, significantly, predicates itself upon the relationship between the two.

Maeglin himself 'answered nothing' at his father's exhortation, despite Eöl's threats.[69] But Turgon offers a choice: the laws of Gondolin stipulate 'that none who finds the way hither [to Gondolin] shall depart' in order to preserve the secret of its location, and so Eöl – and Maeglin – must choose 'to abide [in Gondolin], or to die [in Gondolin].'[70] Eöl's immediate silence following Turgon's declaration seems less a hesitation and more the pause of a snake coiling to strike:

> Then Eöl looked into the eyes of King Turgon, and he was not daunted, but stood long without word or movement while a still silence fell upon the hall…Suddenly, swift as a serpent, he seized a javelin that he held hid beneath his cloak and cast it at Maeglin,

[66] Ibid., 156.
[67] Ibid., 157.
[68] Ibid., 160.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

> crying: 'The second choice I take and for my son also! You shall not hold what is mine!'[71]

Eöl's words betray a deeply possessive fury. He chooses for Maeglin, and moreover chooses to kill his son himself. He regards Maeglin as a possession, as a *what* that is *mine,* rather than as an independent being with his own will. The idea of another person *holding,* possessing, this son-object with which Eöl so closely identifies himself moves him to deadly anger. Even after waiting overnight for his execution, Eöl does not waver; his last words pronounce a curse upon Maeglin.[72] That Eöl persists in his course, despite having time to repent, suffuses his crimes with a sense of determined maliciousness.

Eöl's actions towards his son largely treat Maeglin as a possession – in Eöl's final words, he describes Maeglin as *ill-gotten,* a term better suited to describing stolen treasure than one's own child – but, crucially, this possessiveness is linked to Eöl's smithcraft: Eöl regards Maeglin as his own creation.[73] While Tolkien eventually chose the name *Maeglin,* meaning *sharp glance,* for Eöl's son and states Eöl picked the name based upon a feature his son displayed (one, tellingly, inherited from Eöl himself), from approximately 1951 to 1970 Maeglin's character was named *after* 'the metal of Ëol, which he himself devised, and it was dark, supple, and yet strong; and even so was his son.'[74] Though Eöl demonstrates attentiveness to Maeglin's developing qualities, that he gives his material invention and his offspring the same name indicates his egotism and possessiveness: the metal and the son are both *his* creations, the two are compared, and Eöl abhors the thought of giving his son to Turgon.[75] This feature of Eöl's possessive attitude explains his lesser attachment to Aredhel – he considers himself Maeglin's maker, but cannot make the same claim over his wife – and develops Eöl's possessiveness as arising from his identity as a smith, further linking him to Vǫlundr's characterization. Though weathered away by subsequent revisions – Tolkien decided '[t]he metal must *not* have the same name as Maeglin' and changed the name of the metal sometime around 1970 – that such a naming was seriously entertained implies the profound depth of Eöl's possessive nature.[76]

AREDHEL, BǪÐVILDR, AND ALVÍTR: THE ISSUE OF CONSENT

Eöl's treatment of Aredhel and Maeglin reveals his domineering tendencies; however, in Eöl's relationship with Aredhel exists another point of resonance

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 161.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Tolkien, *War of the Jewels,* 48.
[75] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 241.
[76] Tolkien, *War of the Jewels,* 322.

between Tolkien's work and *Vǫlundarkviða.* In Aredhel Tolkien develops a character that responds to Bǫðvildr and the swan-maiden Alvítr, and particularly to the issue of their consent to their relationships with Vǫlundr. Aredhel's development over subsequent drafts and her relationship to the Norse poem suggests that Aredhel's character can be meaningfully read as a synthesis of Alvítr and Bǫðvildr, engages the question of female consent in *Vǫlundarkviða*, and ultimately links to Tolkien's thematic concerns.

Bǫðvildr's character can be difficult to interpret, particularly as it regards the question of her consent to her son's conception. Even recent literature about Bǫðvildr displays a deep ambivalence about her consent, evident in critics's varying descriptions of the events. Motz (1986) writes that Vǫlundr 'seduce[s] [the king's] daughter,' implying she gave her consent in some form, while Burson consistently identifies Vǫlundr's actions as those of 'drugging and raping' Bǫðvildr.[77] McKinnell (1990), like Motz, uses the word *seduce*; he describes the scene as a 'drink-supported seduction' and as 'a girl falling asleep before being seduced.'[78] Yet while *seduce* implies consent, McKinnell's remark that Bǫðvildr is already asleep when the 'seduction' occurs suggests that what transpired was rape, as the sleeping princess was unable to give consent of any kind. McKinnell is, perhaps, attempting to be delicate about the matter, but the tension between his diction and his account of the events somewhat obscures his interpretation of this crucial scene. Dronke's edition (1969), on the other hand, avoids terminology as loaded as *rape* or *seduce* entirely. She describes Bǫðvildr's weeping as 'terrified' but asserts Vǫlundr 'showed no cruelty' to Bǫðvildr, that 'he must, indeed, have behaved tenderly with her, as she weeps to see him go,' implying Dronke's affirmation of some emotional connection between the characters.[79]

Though a modern understanding of rape and consent would argue that Vǫlundr's actions constitute rape – thoroughly intoxicated, she is unable to make and voice a clear decision about her willingness or lack thereof – the ambiguous nature of the scene as preserved in the poem does impede interpretation. We see little of their conversation due to the manuscript's defective condition, and so have lost vital information about the tenor of their interaction.[80] The poet does provide a description of the events:

[77] Burson, *Swan Maidens,* 10.; Lotte Motz, "New Thoughts on Vǫlundarkviða," *Saga-Book* 22, (1986-1989): 50.
[78] John McKinnell, "The Context of Vǫlundarkviða," *Saga-Book* 23, (1990-1993): 225, 240.
[79] Dronke, *Edda,* 257, 264.
[80] See Dronke 264 for a discussion of what material may have been lost.

Bar hann hana bióri,	He overcame her with beer,
þvíat hann betr kunni,	because he was cleverer,
svá at hón í sessi	so that on the couch
um sofnaði.	she fell asleep
‘Nú hefi ek hefnt	‘Now I have avenged
harma minna –	my sorrow,
allra né einna	all except one
íviðgirna!	of the wicked injuries![81]

The poet does not report upon their dialogue, on Bǫðvildr’s reactions to Vǫlundr, or how his *kunnandi* manifested. Yet the stanza begins with beer, the language of *bar* and *betr kunni* suggest conflict, and the pronouncement of his completed vengeance appears after she is asleep. The immediacy of the revenge-announcement – *nú hefi,* right now – predicates Vǫlundr’s liaison with Bǫðvildr upon his desire for revenge against Níðuðr, not on attachment to her. Even if their physical involvement was consensual, he has taken advantage of her. Then he abandons her:

Grátandi Bǫðvildr	Weeping, Bodvild
gekk ór eyio,	went from the island,
tregði fǫr friðils	she grieved for her lover’s departure
ok fǫður reiði.	and her father’s fury.[82]

While Bǫðvildr does not describe her own feelings at this point, her *grátandi,* weeping, evinces her great sorrow, and the poet’s words provide us with the reasons for her tears. Vǫlundr abandoned her; she weeps for sorrow at his going and from fear, knowing her father will feel *reiði,* wrath, when he learns of these events. This sorrow, however, does not necessarily stem from an emotional connection to the smith: being abandoned could in itself be traumatic. Moreover, the word used to describe Vǫlundr here, *friðill,* lover, has as its closest analog the feminine variant *friðla,* mistress or concubine: it denotes a sexual relationship, not necessarily a romantic one.[83]

Bǫðvildr’s own voice on the situation remains silent or suspect for the duration of the poem. When Níðuðr confronts her with Vǫlundr’s claims, she admits her physical involvement with him, but attributes it to his power over her and her inability to resist him:

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[81] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 28.
[82] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 29.
[83] *An Icelandic-English Dictionary Online,* ed. Richard Cleaseby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, (Oxford, 1874), s.v. “friðill,” s.v. friðla.

‘Satt er þat, Níðaðr,	‘It is true, Nidud,
er sagði þér:	what he said to you:
sáto vit Vǫlundr	Volund and I sat
saman í hólmi	together on the island,
--eina ǫgurstund—	alone for a tide-turning time;
æva skyldi	it should never have happened!
Ek vætr hánom	I did not know
[vinna] kunnak,	how to strive against him,
ek vætr hánom	I was not able
vinna máttak.’	to strive against him!’[84]

McKinnell identifies the tone here as ‘uneasy’ for good reason.[85] Bǫðvildr is in a compromised position: she is pregnant by her father’s enemy. This speech, moreover, has distinct rhetorical facets. Níðuðr is not honorable or kindly; she may not know of the oaths securing her safety or may doubt his willingness to keep them. One might, as McKinnell does, accuse her of insincerity when she claims she was forced, but given the circumstances of her admission *defensive* or *astute* may offer a better description than *insincere*. One can hardly blame her for trying to protect herself – especially given that the poem’s narrator informs us Vǫlundr had been *betr kunni*, more cunning, and he *bar* her, overbore her. Her words, if fashioned with rhetorical intent, nonetheless agree with the narrator’s portrayal of the events.

Bǫðvildr thus presents a fascinating and nuanced character, and though Tolkien published little about her, “Enʒlaʒesíþ” voices his interest. Aredhel, as I hope to demonstrate, is the fruit of that interest. Her identity and narrative parallels Bǫðvildr; she is a princess, a mother, and conceives her son under problematic circumstances. When Eöl sees Aredhel in Nan Elmoth:

> [H]e desired her; and he set his enchantments about her so that she could not find the ways out, but drew ever nearer to his dwelling in the depths of the wood…. when Aredhel, weary with wandering, came at last to his doors, he revealed himself; and he welcomed her… there she remained; for Eöl took her to wife, and it was long ere any of her kin heard of her again.[86]

While Aredhel is not plied with alcohol, Eöl’s wooing relies on enchantment. By the time she arrives, she is vulnerable: *weary,* lost, and probably grateful for the

[84] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 41.
[85] McKinnell, “Context,” 22.
[86] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 155.

'welcom[ing]' reception. The agency is his; she becomes the object of the sentences: Eöl took *her* to wife, her kin do not hear *of her*.

Tolkien's discussion of Aredhel and Eöl's sexual relationship, like Bǫðvildr and Vǫlundr's, is enmeshed in uncomfortable ambiguity. Tolkien writes '[i]t is not said that Aredhel was wholly unwilling.'[87] This seems, in some respects, an assurance that what transpired was not rape: she was not *wholly un*willing, therefore was *at least somewhat* willing, however her feelings about the relationship may have changed later. Stylistically, the expression fits with the understatement and passive syntactic constructions underpinning *The Silmarillion's* language at large, hinting at a neutral interpretation such as *Aredhel accepted the union.* Nonetheless, this statement does not suggest the wholehearted and joyful acceptance that one would hope for in a marital union, and it reports received opinion – *it is not said that* – rather than asserting Aredhel's feelings. Tolkien, in fact, does not mention Aredhel's happiness at any point in the context of her marriage; only when she leaves is she 'glad.'[88] It is little wonder that recent scholarship on Aredhel regards this 'not wholly unwilling' construction with scrutiny, sensing in the ambiguity a tacit indication of nonconsent. Lynn Whitaker (2010) interprets the passage as indicating that 'Aredhel's willingness was at best compromised and at worse non-existent'[89]; Brendan Anderson (2020) regards the conclusion that 'Aredhel was *not* wholly willing' as 'inevitable,' a source of horror within *The Silmarillion*'s pages.[90]

Aredhel's words about her marriage, though they do little to alleviate the ambiguity surrounding her consent, provide additional insight to this assertion by the narrator. Her first response to learning Eöl followed her and Maeglin to Gondolin seems to express distress and sorrow – 'Alas! Eöl has followed us, even as I feared' — but she immediately follows this expression of emotion by unequivocally asserting that 'I am his wife,' affirming their relationship.[91] Like Bǫðvildr, she is called upon in public to explain her relationship, but she does not denounce her son's father, as Bǫðvildr does. She may be unhappy to hear of Eöl's arrival, yet she seems to construe their marriage as legitimate. Notably, as the king's sister, Aredhel has real power over Eöl and his fate in this moment. She could have safely rejected him, and Aredhel's persistent willfulness suggests that she would follow her own desires and personal resolutions even in such a fraught case. Instead, she chooses to describe herself as Eöl's wife – but she does not explain why she

[87] Ibid., 155.
[88] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 157.
[89] Lynn Whitaker, "Corrupting Beauty: Rape Narrative in The Silmarillion," Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature: Vol. 29: No. 1, Article 5 (2010), 56.; Shippy, *Road,* 286.
[90] Brendan Anderson, "The Girl in the Woods: on Fairy Stories and the Virgin Horror," *Journal of Tolkien Research:* Vol. 10: Iss.1, Article 3 (2020), 12.
[91] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 159.

chooses to do so, nor does Tolkien allow the reader the interiority needed to ascertain her feelings.

Such ambiguity, however, reveals influence from earlier drafts of Aredhel's story. In the earliest form of the tale, a circa 1916 outline, in which Aredhel is named Isfin, she is clearly *un*willing.[92] In it, 'Isfin…[is] loved from afar by Eöl' and 'loathes him.'[93] This text already describes Meglin (Maeglin) as their child, but the circa 1920 *Lay of the Fall of Gondolin* provides the earliest explanation of Meglin's conception. The *Lay* explains that Isfin, fleeing the aftermath of a battle was 'wildered' in Doriath, where Eöl saw her 'and caught the white-limbed Isfin, that she ever since hath been / his mate in Doriath's forest, where she weepeth in the gloam.'[94] Isfin's status as a captive is undoubtable in this version of the tale. Eöl *caught* her whilst she is *wildered*, implying Eöl's exploitation of weakness. Though 'Meglin she sent to Gondolin,' Isfin never escapes.[95] Like Þǫðvildr, *grátandi*, weeping, in the aftermath of her rape, Aredhel *weepeth*; their sons will someday win renown, but they remain mired in sorrow.[96]

The language of captive and captor utilized in the unfinished *Lay* remains a standard feature of the Isfin narrative for around a decade: she 'was *trapped* by the Dark Elf Eöl' in a 1926 version of the tale, and 'was *captured* by' him in a 1930 text.[97] But in this 1930 work, Isfin reclaims her freedom: 'On a time Eöl was lost…and Isfin came through great peril and dread unto Gondolin.'[98] She takes the opportunity to escape, and that she comes through *great peril* and *dread* tinges her narrative with a sense of desperation: a journey of such imminent danger would only be undertaken if equipped with a strong motivation for flight. Her unhappiness must have been profound.

After around 1930, however, Isfin's characterization and the nature of her relationship to Eöl changes. The language surrounding her tenure in Eöl's home reflects ambivalence; we are told in the earliest *Annals of Beleriand* that Isfin 'is taken to wife by Eöl,' and Tolkien makes no mention of *capture.*[99] The circumstances surrounding her meeting with her husband also change; Isfin merely 'strays out of Gondolin.'[100] Her circumstances under Ëol's sway evolve during the fifties; for the first time, Ëol becomes associated with 'enchantment,' and 'suffered

[92] For Aredhel's name-changes, see *HME* 11, 317-318.
[93]J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales: Part Two,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 220.
[94] Tolkien, *Lays,* 146, lines 7, 11-12.
[95] Ibid., 13.
[96] The stanza in *Deor* about Beadohild similarly focuses upon her *sar,* pain. See Kemp (1933), *Deor,* ln. 9.
[97] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 34, 136 (my emphasis).
[98] Ibid., 140.
[99] Ibid., 301.
[100] Ibid.

her not to stray far, nor to fare abroad except in the dark or the twilight.'[101] These limitations motivate her departure, and the language – she fle[es] from Eöl' — contextualizes it as an escape, one *from* her spouse.[102]

These later revisions also introduce Aredhel's more willful qualities, the restlessness and desire for movement that characterize her later forms. These elements seem connected to the swan-maidens of *Vǫlundarkviða,* likewise characterized by their inexorable desire to move, which prompts them to leave their spouses:

Sáto síðan	They stayed thus
siau vetr at þat,	for seven winters,
en inn átta	but all the eighth
allan þráðo,	they suffered anguish,
en enn níunda	and in the ninth
nauðr um skiliði.	necessity parted them;
Meyiar fýstoz	the girls yearned
á myrkvan við,	for the dark wood,
alvítr unga[r],	the strange, young creatures,
ørlǫg drýgia.	to fulfil fate.[103]

Having lingered too long with their husbands, the swan-maidens *þráðo,* suffered anguish. The yearning and longing they feel is part of their natures, causing the *nauðr,* the necessity that drives them to depart. Aredhel's behavior contains a similar pattern of restlessness: Her 'weari[ness] of the guarded city of Gondolin' caused her to leave;[104] she dwells happily in Celegorm's kingdom until she 'became restless again';[105] after 'many years' Aredhel leaves Nan Elmoth 'glad[ly].'[106] Eöl himself recognizes this migratory pattern, and conceptualizes her as possessing a bird-like desire for freedom: 'let the bird go back to the cage, where soon she will sicken again.'[107] Her association with woodlands, particularly the shadowy Nan Elmoth, further recalls the *myrkr viðr,* the dark wood, to which Alvítr returns. Finally, the name *Feiniel,* meaning 'White Lady,' recalls the whiteness of swan's feathers, and particularly the name of the swan-maiden *Svanhvítr*, meaning *swan-white.*[108] Though Bǫðvildr and Aredhel have their resemblances, especially in Aredhel's earlier iterations, in her latest form she possesses a strong connection to

[101] Tolkien, *War of the Jewels,* 47.
[102] Ibid., 48.
[103] *Vǫlundarkviða,* 3.
[104] Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 152.
[105] Ibid., 154.
[106] Ibid., 155-157.
[107] Ibid., 160.
[108] Ibid., 152.

the swan-maidens, to their restlessness, willfulness, and crucial decision to abandon their spouses.

While the exact nature of Wayland's influence upon Eöl and Aredhel varied over time, in their latest form their narratives draw strongly upon the Wayland-legend and particularly *Vǫlundarkviða.* In Aredhel, Tolkien blends the migratory nature of the swan-maiden with Bǫðvildr's grief and rape at Vǫlundr's hands. Eöl, talented but possessive, dominating, and violent, forms a parallel for Vǫlundr. Their son Maeglin completes the family triad. The interaction of these three characters, however, creates tragedy and violence, ultimately leading to the fall of Gondolin.

This flawed family, created by drawing upon the Wayland-legend and the uncomfortable questions of familial ties where sexual consent is not apparent, arises from Tolkien's thoughts on the fallenness of his created world and the Elves. He outlines an ideal of marital relationships in the circa 1959 "Laws and Customs of the Eldar," one in which choices of partner 'seldom err,' and in which '[t]he Eldar wedded once only in life, and for love or at the least by free will upon either part.'[109] Yet Tolkien acknowledges that 'many of the Eldar in Middle-earth became corrupted, and their hearts darkened by the shadow that lies upon Arda.'[110] Their marriages can fail; such is Aredhel and Eöl's union. Even if their relationship is consensual, Eöl's domineering tendencies are an ill-suited match for Aredhel's restlessness and independence. Yet in combining swan-maiden with Bǫðvildr, Tolkien unites the two ends of the scale present in the Norse poem, folding the 'idyll of unforced love, with no shadow of abduction upon it' from the poem's opening stanzas into the violence of the poem's end.[111] Eöl's duplicity and controlling nature, like Vǫlundr's, poisons his union from the start. By modern standards, Eöl's use of enchantment to lure Aredhel into his home would call into question any 'consent' she may have given, just as Vǫlundr's beer-bemusing of Bǫðvildr does, but their union, even if entered freely, breaks. The relationship between Eöl and Maeglin is similarly corrupted: Eöl views Maeglin, essentially, as another creation, and holds him so jealously that he would rather kill Maeglin than release him. Eöl, Aredhel, and Maeglin illustrate an enshadowed corruption of happy ideals. By placing Tolkien's text in dialogue with *Vǫlundarkviða,* the fraught nature of these relationships and the resonances between the texts are heightened, bringing the depth and nuance of these familial tragedies to light.

CONCLUSION

While the influence of Wayland the Smith and his literary corpora upon Tolkien's legendarium is perhaps less obvious then other medievalisms apparent in Tolkien's

[109] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Morgoth's Ring,* (London: HarperCollins, 2002) 210.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Dronke, *Edda,* 257.

work, Wayland nonetheless had a profound impact on Fëanor, Eöl, and their attendant narratives. *Vǫlundarkviða* in particular influenced Tolkien's development of these characters, evidenced in Wayland's elvishness, his vengeful and possessive qualities, and in Aredhel's connections to Bǫðvildr and Alvítr. Moreover, my method of blending reading of *The Silmarillion* with investigation of the materials published in *The History of Middle-earth* and elsewhere allowed me to trace the development of Eöl's and Fëanor's revision history from 1916 onward, thereby revealing how Waylandish influence emerged and transformed over time. *HME* also allowed me to engage Tolkien's language and thinking more directly than possible in *The Silmarillion*, as *HME* is less filtered by Christopher Tolkien's attempts to bring the mass of material, much of it a 'chaotic palimpsest, with layer upon layer of correction and wholesale rewriting, of riders and deletions,' into good enough order for publication in a single volume.[112] In addition to this web of primary sources, the editorial efforts undertaken in the indexing and publication of Tolkien's texts and the study of his life – work undertaken by such commentators as Carpenter, Cicere, Hammond, Higgins, Scull, Shippey, and Ryan – provided valuable indications of where Tolkien's rare mentions of and connections to Wayland occurred.

This mass of material, when read in dialogue with the medieval texts and academic commentary of Tolkien's career, reveals the parallels between Tolkien's characters and their medieval predecessors, and these resonances themselves have vast thematic ramifications in Tolkien's fiction. Tolkien's handling of his medieval inheritance emphasizes the moral dimension of his sub-creative instincts and the philosophical feelings underpinning his writing. Fëanor and Eöl may have been suffused with Wayland's characteristics, but Tolkien, in his tales, firmly classifies these personality traits – Fëanor's extreme possessiveness over his creations and Eöl's egotistic domination of his spouse and son – as destructive, even sinful. This feature is most obvious when Tolkien's texts are compared to the medieval sources and the creative engagements of the Wayland-legend published by his contemporaries. *Vǫlundarkviða* is a revenge story – Vǫlundr is harmed by Níðuðr; he wreaks vengeance in retaliation and escapes in triumph – but also, for a modern audience, contains an unresolved moral problem: Vǫlundr's extreme cruelty. Kaaren Grimstad (1983) looks at this issue in her essay "The Revenge of Vǫlundr," as she ponders why '[w]ithin the context of the poem it is clear that justice is served by leaving the villain alive, a broken man,' despite the fact that Vǫlundr's injuries are 'not grave enough by heroic standards to warrant the revenge taken.'[113] Her rather convincing attempts to settle the question revolve around her interpretation of Vǫlundr as an elf, as '[f]rom the point of view of the elf the resolution of the

[112] Tolkien, *Lost Road,* 199.

[113] Kaaren Grimstad, "The Revenge of Vǫlundr," in *The Edda: A Collection of Essays,* ed. R.J Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, (Canada: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), 192.

poem is entirely satisfactory; Nidudr is the villain and deserves his punishment, and the audience can hardly fail to comprehend the tale's broader message: let sleeping elves lie,' an interpretation that situates the poem within the traditional folkloric pattern of a supernatural character punishing a mortal.[114]

McKinnell notes, however, that '[w]hen gods come to be judged by the ethical standards normally applied to human beings, it is not uncommon for Eddic poets to find them wanting,'[115] and Andrew Lang's 1902 reworking of the Norse poem seems to recognize – and avoid – the problematic 'justice' depicted therein. Lang recasts his Wayland as the suffering hero, and Freya herself promises him 'Alvida shall stay by you for the rest of your life, and when you die she shall carry you in her arms to the country of Walhalla.'[116] Wayland's actions receive divine approval, and Lang's treatment of the legend thereby excises much gruesomeness.

Tolkien, however, does not reward nor shelter his Waylands from the consequences of their actions. While Vǫlundr exults in his exit, flying to freedom – 'Hlæiandi Vǫlundr/ hófz at lopti,' 'Laughing, Volund rose in the air' – Fëanor's spirit 'was borne away like smoke' after his death, and Eöl perishes when he is 'cast…down from the sheer walls of [Gondolin].'[117] Their deaths, both a potent reversal of Vǫlundr's triumphant flight, provide the author's sanction against their transgressions. Indeed, analysis of the *Lost Tales,* in which Fëanor's later vengefulness and fixation upon the Silmarils is not apparent, depicts him as responding far more reasonably to their loss: other, more compelling, circumstances motivate his desire for vengeance. Though his actions have catastrophic consequences, at this point he is sympathetic: grief-stricken, seeking redress, but not yet prideful. In *The Silmarillion,* however, Fëanor is stricken by pride and vindictiveness, and his flaws set in motion tragedy and his death. Eöl as well becomes enmeshed in tragic outcome as he becomes more Wayland-like.

Ascribing such catastrophic outcomes to Eöl's and Fëanor's flaws, however, links each Elven smith to one of the two chief sins of Tolkien's story-world. In a 1951 letter, in which Tolkien explains the scope and significance of the Silmarillion material, Tolkien states the metaphysical Fall of the Elves 'is into possessiveness,' 'clinging to the things made as "its own," the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation.'[118] In *The Silmarillion,* this sentiment is expressed most clearly as a warning: 'love not too well the work of thy hands and devices of thy heart.'[119] Fëanor embodies such over-attachment to his creations.

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[114] Ibid., 201.
[115] McKinnell, "Context," 25.
[116]Andrew Lang, "Wayland the Smith," in *The Book of Romance* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 319.
[117] *Vǫludarkviða* 38, 1; Tolkien, *Silmarillion,* 122, 161.
[118] Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien,* 146-145. See also Shippey (2005) 273-276 for Elvish pride and possessiveness in Tolkien's works.
[119] Tolkien, *The Silmarillion,* 146.

Eöl, on the other hand, embodies a darker transgression, explored in *The Lord of the Rings*: the 'supremely bad… domination of other "free" wills,' which Tolkien frequently asserts is the greatest evil in his letters.[120] Sauron, too, is a talented smith, and while Eöl is no Sauron, he too attempts to control others. Eöl's attempts – and especially his attempt to rule his son, whom he regards as one of his creations – lead to destruction. Eöl differs from Sauron only in scale and might.

There is no denying, however, that Tolkien *liked* smiths (and other makers). He repeatedly returned to Wayland, his sub-created world is populated by artists and makers and their creations – he writes '[t]he Elves represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men' – and the protagonist of one of his last pieces, the eponymous Smith of *Smith of Wootton Major*, is a smith by trade.[121] But these two traits – possessiveness and domination – are the two ever-present evils in Middle-earth: and it is telling that they manifest so strongly in sub-creators. Admittedly, love for beautiful things and following one's own free will are not inherently wicked. Fëanor's desire to create beautiful objects exhibits the characteristic, and laudable, love of the Elves for beautifying the world they love so dearly; it is when the love for things he has made grows *too strong* that Fëanor tips into viciousness. Had he been willing to give up the Silmarils at the very beginning – as Aulë is willing to give up his creation, the dwarves – much grief could have been avoided.[122] Eöl's attachment to his wife and son could likewise have been beautiful – as Beren's to Lúthien, or Bilbo's to Frodo – but it tilted into coercion. In doing so, these narratives display one of the fundamental aspects of Tolkien's writing; they, as Ralph Wood (2003) puts it, 'demonstrate…[Tolkien's] fundamental conviction that evil preys on our virtues far more than our vices.'[123]

Tolkien wrote that 'the desire to express' his feelings 'about good, evil, fair, foul in some way… generated Morgoth and the History of the Gnomes.'[124] Wayland's influence, mediated and transformed in Fëanor and Eöl, participates in that exploration. There is much more to be done with Tolkien's early work. But for my own project, I have shown that Fëanor and Eöl, and their medieval ancestor Wayland, provide a glimpse at, not 'the evil side of heroic life,' as *Beowulf*'s dragon does, but the evil side of *creative* life: the part of human existence that these *álfa lióðar,* these lords of the Elves, embody in Tolkien's story-world.[125]

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[120] Ibid., 200. See also letters 131, 144, 156, 181, 212 for similar statements.
[121]Ibid., 236.
[122] For the creation of the dwarves, see *The Silmarillion,* 37-39.
[123] Ralph Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien,* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 62.
[124] Tolkien, *Letters,* 78.
[125] Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics* (London: HarperCollins*Publishers*, 2006), 34.

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