

THE POETIC POTENTIAL OF THE ELVISH LANGUAGES CONSTRUCTED BY

J.R.R.TOLKIEN

Olena TYKHOMYROVA

Kyiv National Linguistic University

В основі створення ельфійських мов Дж. Р. Р. Толкіна, тісно пов'язаних з міфологією Середзем'я, лежить принцип фоноестетичної насолоди, що обумовлює їх поетичний потенціал. В даному дослідженні розглядаються поетичні втілення ельфійської мови (на прикладі «квен'я») як у творчості самого Толкіна, так і в ряді творів інших авторів (поезія, музика, кінематограф).

Ключові слова: Дж. Р. Р. Толкін, поезія, ельфійські мови, принцип фоноестетичної насолоди

Devising his Elven-tongues, deeply rooted in the Middle-earth mythology, J.R.R.Tolkien embraced the principle of phonaesthetic pleasure, which accounts for the great poetic potential of these languages. The research focuses on poetical manifestations of Quenya, one of the Elven languages, both in Tolkien's heritage and in a selection of other works (poetry, music, and cinematography).

Keywords: J.R.R.Tolkien, poetry, Elven-tongues, the principle of phonaesthetic pleasure

J.R.R.Tolkien's mythology of Arda is represented by a huge body of versatile texts, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* being only the tip of the iceberg. An important component of the mythology is its linguistic landscape shaped by several invented languages. Tolkien spent decades devising and perfecting these languages, out of which the most developed are the "Elven-tongues", Quenya and Sindarin. Studying these languages both within the context of Tolkien's mythology and in a wider intermedial perspective can bring an insight into poetic nature of the metagenre of fantasy. The aim of this paper is to elucidate the poetic potential of invented languages in various contexts and media, using Quenya as the most representative example.

J. R. R. Tolkien revealed his language-making credo in the essay *A Secret Vice*, where he emphasized the principle of phonaesthetic pleasure (the enjoyment of certain sounds and their combinations), dwelling also on the notion of phonosemantics (or sound-symbolism), based on the appreciation of the relation between sound and notion [7, p. 206]. Inventing a language is thus viewed as an art form, suitable for self-expression and symbolic usage. Besides, he spoke of a "hypothetical historical background" that should accompany the creation of a new language [7, p. 210]. In analyzing Tolkien's linguistic principles and philosophy, Ross Smith pointed out that associating certain sounds with certain notions or phenomena is a complex mental process based on metaphoric perception and it is vital for both the scientific understanding of language and poetic expression [4, p. 150]. The scholar classifies artificial languages into three main groups (philosophical, auxiliary and poetic languages) and places Tolkien's Quenya and Sindarin among the latter, together with the ones developed by Jorge Luis Borges, George Orwell, Anthony Burgess and Ursula Le Guin [4, p. 83 – 84].

For Tolkien himself language-making came first, while myth-making followed it, shaping a background and an environment for the invented languages. The internal (mythological) evolution of Quenya mirrors that of the Elves in Arda, with their turbulent history and complicated movements across the fantastic worldscape. Eventually, Quenya acquired the status of "Elf Latin", the language of learning and wisdom, and was used as such during the Third Age (the era of the events in *The Lord of the Rings*). It is best exemplified by *Namárië*, a poem also known as *Galadriel's Lament in Lórien*.

Externally, Quenya is an agglutinative language based (phonologically and grammatically) on Finnish, Latin and Greek. It underwent several revisions in Tolkien's lifetime and is now represented by a number of names, texts, glossaries and drafts published in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, *The History of Middle-earth* and two specialized journals, *Vinyar Tengwar* and *Parma Eldalamberon*. A number of linguists have studied and even developed the language further after Tolkien's death.

Quenya's internal history is intricately connected with the key motifs of Arda's mythology. Among them is the ubiquitous fantasy motif of *thinning*, "*the passing away of a higher and more intense reality*" [1, p. 942], which is manifested through the images of Elves and their tongues. It is often coupled with the dichotomy of immortality and mortality, realized in a number of scenarios: meeting of human characters with Elves, love between mortals and immortals, etc. Mortals (humans, hobbits, dwarves) are filled with wonder, longing and other poignant feelings during their contacts with the Elves. The impact of *Namárië* on Frodo, for example, is ambivalent: Galadriel's song does not comfort him, nor can he understand the words, yet he is deeply impressed and remembers the lament well: "*Yet as is the way of Elvish words, they remained graven in his memory, and long afterwards he interpreted them, as well as he could: the language was that of Elven-song and spoke of things little known on Middle-earth*" [8, p. 490]. Since preservation of the memory of fading Elves and their culture comprises one of the aims of the metaquest that permeates the whole history of Arda, the importance of Quenya in this process is paramount.

As we have seen, the poetic effect of Quenya in Tolkien's texts can be linked to its phonaesthetic portrait and its profound significance within the mythology. Besides, as with all other invented languages in Tolkien texts, Quenya contributes greatly to the effect of *depth* that is so admired by the readers of *The Lord of the Rings* and other texts about Middle-earth: "*a sense of larger reality*", as it was described by Ross Smith [4, p. 15]. The idea that this reality can be lost (as the above mentioned thinning motif presupposes) makes for the famous feeling of sadness and nostalgia at the end of the story, visualized by the departure of the ships to the West. The secondary world created by Tolkien carries an unprecedented sense of authenticity, and Quenya, among other linguistic aspects of the worldscape, accounts for a large portion of this effect.

Since Quenya and Sindarin have been used by other authors across the media, it is possible to speak of their poetic potential in a wider context. Firstly, they were incorporated in Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, for which purpose both languages were extended by the linguist David Salo (Sindarin in particular). The moments with their usage emphasize special relationship between certain characters (Aragorn and Legolas, Aragorn and Galadriel, etc), adding an extra romantic dimension into the Aragorn / Arwen love story and foregrounding Aragorn's special status. An incantation in Quenya, used by Saruman, Gandalf's attempts to open the Gates of Moria, as well as Arwen's summoning of the river in Sindarin aim at a "magic" effect, which comes naturally with invented languages. Aragorn's coronation is accompanied, as in Tolkien's text, with a phrase in Quenya, known as Elendil's Oath: "*Et Eärello Endoreнна utúlien. Sinome maruvan ar*

Hildinyar tenn' Ambar-metta!" (*Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place I will abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world*) [9, p. 297 – 298]. Excellently performed by Viggo Mortensen, who plays Aragorn in the film trilogy, the oath turns into a song that carries across the epic grandeur of the moment. Besides, the general effect of "depth" is greatly enhanced by the use of these languages and can be listed among the few artistic achievements of the film.

When poetry and songs in Quenya are concerned, it is possible to speak of the phonaesthetic effect as such, since many people find the language pleasing and poetic in itself. As an example, we can consider a Quenya translation of Natalia Nekrasova's song *Goldolin* (based on the events of the First Age in Tolkien's mythology of Arda and originally performed in Russian). The translation, entitled *Ondolinde*, was made in 2003 by a group of Ukrainian Quenya enthusiasts and later performed by Telenis (Kateryna Prognimak). The Quenya version has been admired by many listeners for its euphonic effect. Apart from the beauty of the language itself, the translation brings out the poetic potential of Quenya by artful alliterations, assonances and sound-symbolism, as can be seen in the refrain, where the sound of the bell is imitated: "*Tamba ve indo i nyelle ondonen / Ondolindenya, i lama loaron! / Mi hyelle moresse nillireo / Niqua enyalie le, a inya Ondolinde*" (*The stone bell is beating as a heart / My Goldolin, the echo of long years / In the mirror of the starlit sky / The memory of you is frozen, my Goldolin*) [5].

While *Ondolinde* is an example of a poetic text rendered fully in Quenya, a more common way of treating the language in songs is to combine it with other languages. A well-known song with minor inclusions of Quenya is *May It Be* by Enya, performed in 2001 for *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. The lyrics of the song, written by Roma Ryan, are in English, but two Quenya lines are inserted: "*Mornië utúlië*" (*Darkness has come*) and "*Mornië alantië*" (*Darkness has fallen*) [2]. These lines, intermingled with the English text, do not in any way "stand out", phonetically or musically, and they hardly contribute anything to the general effect. The lines' "dark" meaning may have meant to present contrast to the more optimistic English lines, but they fail to do so. Thus, the potential of Quenya is virtually lost here, although a slight "mystic" resonance can perhaps be noted, as well as the affiliation with Tolkien's mythology.

A much stronger effect is achieved by the German performer Oonagh, who often combines lyrics in German with refrains in Quenya in her songs. One of such songs is *Eldamar* (2014), where the effect is achieved by stark contrast between the two languages, reinforced by the music and performance. The lyrics are loosely based on Tolkien's mythology and tap into the motif of the longing for the West ("*Eldamar*" means "*Elvenhome*" in Quenya). The German part of the lyrics vaguely speaks of the desire to find home beyond the horizon, while the Quenya refrain is explicit in naming this home, using several proper names belonging to the mythology of Arda (*Eldamar*, *Menelmacar*, *Endor*) [3]. Thus, the contrast of the languages is enhanced on all levels, from sound to the meaning.

To conclude, Tolkien's invented languages have a vast poetic potential that can be used in different media. Various effects can be achieved through phonaesthetic side of these languages, as well as phonosemantics and their capacity to channel mythological patterns. Quenya and Sindarin can be successfully used in cinema,

poetry and song to render characterization, create the atmosphere of magic, and, above all, authenticate the secondary world by strengthening the feeling of its “depth”. Moreover, there is a similar potential in other languages created by fantasy authors (such as, for example, G. R. R. Martin in his *A Song of Ice and Fire*). Language-making within the context of myth-making underpins the poetic potential of the metagenre of fantasy with its deeply metaphoric nature and propensity to associate magic with words. Tolkien’s “*Elvish craft*”, as Dwayne Thorpe dubbed it, relied heavily in “*placing the exotic inside the familiar*”, thus fusing the mundane and the transcendent [6, p. 316]. This technique, more generally known as “*defamiliarization*” in Viktor Shklovsky’s terms, is one of fantasy cornerstones and its verbal and poetic possibilities are limitless.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Clute J., Grant J. The Encyclopedia of Fantasy / John Clute, John Grant. – N. Y : St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999. – 1088 p.
2. Enya, Ryan R. May It Be : [lyrics] [Internet source] / Enya, Roma Ryan. – Access at : http://lyrics.wikia.com/wiki/Enya:May_It_Be.
3. Oonagh. Eldamar : [lyrics] [Internet source] / Oonagh. – Access at : <http://www.songtexte.com/songtext/oonagh/eldamar-5b4bdf80.html>.
4. Smith R. Inside Language. Linguistic and Aesthetic Theory in Tolkien / Ross Smith. – Walking Tree Publishers, 2007. – 154 p.
5. Telenis. Ondolinde : [lyrics] [Internet source] / Telenis. – Access at : https://the-fasol.com/page_sound.php?id=100326.
6. Thorpe D. Tolkien’s Elvish Craft / Dwayne Thorpe // Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference. – Oxford : The Tolkien Society, 1992. – 458 p.
7. Tolkien J. R. R. A Secret Vice // The Monsters and The Critics / J. R. R. Tolkien. – L. : Harper Collins, 1997. – P. 198 – 223.
8. Tolkien J. R. R. The Fellowship of the Ring / J. R. R. Tolkien. – L. : Harper Collins Publishers, 1993. – 529 p.
9. Tolkien J. R. R. The Return of the Ring / J. R. R. Tolkien. – L. : Harper Collins Publishers, 1993. – 556 p.

ФЕНОМЕН ФЕНТЕЗІ-ПІСНІ У ПОСТ-РАДЯНСЬКОМУ КУЛЬТУРНОМУ ПРОСТОРИ

Дар’я МОСКВІТІНА

Запорізький державний медичний університет

Глобальне захоплення творчістю Дж. Р. Р. Толкіна та його послідовників стало потужним натхненником креативної активності як професійних митців, так і численних аматорів. Найбільш яскраво вона проявилася у жанрі фентезі-пісні, що набула особливої популярності у пост-радянському культурному просторі, у середовищі так званих «рольовиків». У статті зроблена спроба наукового осмислення цього феномену: визначення його генетичних зв’язків, класифікація його провідних різновидів та окреслення магістральних шляхів розвитку.

Ключові слова: фентезі-пісня, авторська пісня, Дж. Р. Р. Толкін, «рольовий» рух, фентезійний модус, метажанр