

Cheryl Cardoza

A Secret Vice: The Desire to Understand JRR Tolkien's Quenya, Or Out of the Frying-Pan into the Fire: Creating a Realistic Language as a Basis for Fiction

My first focus is on my efforts to understand Quenya and why I feel driven to do so as an author. I will discuss the need for a linguistic and mythic core for any kind of fantasy tale. The depth and realism of this core is what makes the tale enduring. I will then turn to the problems inherent in creating a realistic linguistic and mythic core by examining the evolution of verbs in Quenya. I explain that I have chosen verbs for the center of my analysis because I feel that verbs, the action words of the language, are the most alive and most central to language creation. This analysis aims to analyze the shifts Tolkien underwent as he aimed to create a language that evolved naturally over time among the people Tolkien imagined speaking it. The analysis of verb forms and the evolution of Tolkien's thoughts about Quenya will lead to a discussion of how someone writing today might go about creating a realistic linguistic and mythic core for his/her own work, taking Tolkien's path as a model and a warning. I will end with a brief discussion of my own efforts to create an Elvish language for the novel I am working on.

A Professor of English at Truckee Meadows Community College, Cheryl has long been interested in fantasy literature, especially Tolkien's work. as a subject of study, but also for recreational purposes. She dreams of one day producing fiction as beloved as Tolkien's with a world as rich as Middle-earth.



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