A Swann's Song in Middle-earth: An Exploration of Donald Swann's "The Road Goes Ever On" and the Development of a System of Lyric Diction for Tolkien's Constructed, Elvish Languages

Richard Garrett Leonberger

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, rg.leonberger@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations

Part of the Music Commons

Recommended Citation


This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
A SWANN’S SONG IN MIDDLE-EARTH: AN EXPLORATION OF DONALD SWANN’S *THE ROAD GOES EVER ON* AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM OF LYRIC DICTION FOR TOLKIEN’S CONSTRUCTED, ELVISH LANGUAGES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

Richard G. Leonberger
B.M., Stephen F. Austin State University, 2010
M.M., Binghamton University, 2012
November 2016
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people across the world contributed time, energy, and support to me and to this project. The following pages of thanks are far less than these people deserve.

To the Louisiana State University College of Music and Dramatic Arts, for the generous travel grant that made my research trip to the Marion E. Wade Center possible. Thanks also to all those who donated funds and resources to my research, especially Jess Koehn and Christine Bartelt, Yü Lee, Donald and Nancy Balmos, and many others. To the staff of the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, especially archivist Laura Schmidt, for their advice and research expertise.

To my friends in the Tolkien Society, including Eileen Moore, Alan Reynolds, Ian Collier and many others, for their experience and perspective. To my friends Carline Waugh, Janee Jarrell, Kenneth Wilks, Chelsey Geeting, Johanna Broussard, William Plummer, and Lucas Jameson, for camaraderie, support, and advice.

To Dr. Scott LaGraff, for giving me an example of a successful performer, teacher, and for helping me find the path to my own scholarship.

To Keilor Kastella, for his musicianship, dedication, time and energy, and with whom it has been my honor to collaborate in my years at Louisiana State University.

To Meilee Bridges, for all your perspective, encouragement, and help preparing this document.

To Leon Berger, for his encouragement, for generosity with his time, energy, and for his insights into Donald Swann’s life, personality, and music.

To the members of my committee, including…
The late Dr. Lisi Oliver, whom I knew for only a short time, but whose insights into my every area of study astounded me; I know she is sorely missed. Dr. Helen Regis, for being willing to serve and lend her experience to my first step into a lifetime of scholarship. Professor Sandra Moon and Dr. Lori Bade, for their encouragement, patience, instruction, and mentorship. Dr. Loraine Sims, for always listening and understanding, and for mentorship and insights that will last a lifetime. Professor Robert Grayson, for years of patience, support, for showing me new depths and heights of musicianship and vocal technique, and for over a year of hard work and encouragement, helping me to prepare this research project.

George Frankian, and Ani, Mihran, and Karen Aroian, you have my deepest thanks for the time, energy, and resources you have contributed to this project. However, those are the least of your contributions to my life. You have given me so much joy, so much support, so much love and acceptance, through times both good and bad, and I can never sufficiently thank or repay you.

Christopher and Nicole, thank you for believing in me. Katie and John, your support means so much. Drew, you are an inspiration to me every single day, “Keep on keeping on.” Brooke and Brian, I look forward to watching you two succeed and strengthen each other for years to come, thank for everything you have done for me and for our family. Ian and Aaron, I miss you boys every day, thank you for your love and support.

My parents: Lise Uhl and Tommy Edds, you first set me on the path to success, when I had no idea where that path was, or how to find it. You kept me on that path despite my best efforts to stray, and you have always given me what I needed. I would not be the man, musician, and scholar I am today, without your vision, love, and patient mentorship. I can never thank you enough. Richard and Tina Leonberger, you have given me love, support, and guidance all my
life. Your understanding and affection mean more to me than I can ever say; thank you. Lea
Anne Campbell, thank you for a lifetime of nurturing, for my home, for first fostering my pursuit
of music, and for always making me feel loved.

Finally, to Hasmig Aroian, for all your sacrifices, long nights, constant support and
effort. For sharing tears of joy and sorrow and anger. For years of love and devotion,
and for the privilege of loving and devoting myself to you in return. I look forward to many,
many more years going ever on and on this road with you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .............................................................................................................. ii  

ABSTRACT................................................................................................................................... vi  

INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................................................................1  

CHAPTER 1: LIFE, STYLE AND WORKS DONALD SWANN .......................................................3  

CHAPTER 2: LIFE, STYLE AND WORKS OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN .............................................13  

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ROAD GOES EVER ON ......................... 25  

CHAPTER 4: ELVISH LYRIC DICTION ....................................................................................35  

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE GUIDES ..................................................................................64  

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................118  

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................................119  

APPENDIX A: PHOTOCOPIES OF MANUSCRIPTS AND TYPESCRIPTS ......................... 122  

APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF PERMISSION .........................................................................124  

APPENDIX C: “ERRANTRY,” BY J. R. R. TOLKIEN ...............................................................125  

VITA ............................................................................................................................................128
ABSTRACT

Donald Swann is best known for his long-time collaboration with lyricist and singer Michael Flanders, with whom he served as composer, pianist and fellow singer. He composed many other serious works beyond the Flanders and Swann collaboration, including song cycles, operas, masses and other choral repertoire. This study explores one example of Swann’s classical repertory: *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle*, a collection of nine musical settings of texts by J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Beginning with biographical and stylistic synopses of both the composer and the poet, subsequent chapters include: an historical overview of the cycle’s composition, publication, and reception; an examination of Tolkien’s Elvish languages of Quenya and Sindarin and the proposal of systems of lyric diction for each; and interpretive performance guides for each of the songs, emphasizing the relationship between music and text. Appendices follow with permissions letters, documents of special interest, and poetic texts too lengthy for inclusion in the main body of the document.
INTRODUCTION

_The Road Goes Ever On_ is a cycle of nine songs composed by Donald Swann, setting poetry by J. R. R. Tolkien. Swann and J. R. R. Tolkien were each famous artists in their lifetimes: Swann as part of the duo responsible for the internationally known _At the Drop of a Hat_ shows and Tolkien as the author of _The Lord of the Rings_, one of the most widely read novels of the twentieth century. _The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle_ is the result of Swann’s love for Tolkien’s novel and Tolkien’s appreciation for Swann’s music, as well as a mutual respect and friendship that began with—but long outlasted—the composition of these songs.

While Swann was celebrated in his day for the popular music he wrote and performed with Michael Flanders, his classical art music is lesser known. Swann’s works include not only comedic songs like “The Hippopotamus Song” but also song cycles setting the poetry of Oscar Wilde, William Blake, and Emily Dickinson, as well as multiple operas and choral works, both sacred and secular.¹ It may be that the little musical scholarship that has been conducted on Swann’s compositional output is a result of his far more famous popular music outshining his classical compositions. As such, this study will contribute to a foundation for future research. It is my opinion that these songs and other vocal works by Donald Swann deserve increased attention by academics and performers alike.

Chapters 1 and 2 include a discussion of the lives of Swann and Tolkien, as well as commentary on their respective works and styles. In chapter 3, I will detail the composition and publication history of _The Road Goes Ever On_. Because these songs include settings of poetry in two of Tolkien’s Elvish languages, chapter 4 also includes a topical overview and pronunciation

guidelines for the artificial languages Quenya and Sindarin. The final chapter combines the context provided in the preceding chapters to give practical interpretive advice for musicians seeking to present these songs in performance.
CHAPTER 1: LIFE, STYLE, AND WORKS OF DONALD SWANN

Family and Early Life

Donald Ibrahim Swann was born in Llanelli, Wales, on September 30, 1923.² His parents were Herbert William Swann, a Russian doctor of British ancestry, and Naguimé Sultán Piszóva, a Tartar-Russian nurse.³ The Swanns had moved to England in 1920 to escape the Russian Revolution and lived in London while Herbert earned a British medical degree to replace his lost Russian credentials.⁴ Their first child, Marion Fatíma Swann, was born March 13, 1921, in Kirklington, Yorkshire, while Herbert worked in the practice of his “uncle,” Dr. Alfred Sevier.⁵ Shortly thereafter, Herbert accepted a position as a member of Dr. T. Reginald Davies’s medical practice in Llanelli, so the family relocated to Wales, where Donald was born two years later.⁶

Although highly successful and satisfied with his work in Llanelli, both Herbert and Naguimé missed their Russian friends in London, and Naguimé felt isolated in Wales by her Muslim background and her difficulty with the English language.⁷ The family moved back to London in October 1924, and by June 1925, Herbert had his own practice.⁸ They lived in a working-class area known as the Elephant and Castle, and Herbert initially had a difficult time

⁴ Herbert Swann, Home on the Neva (London: Gollancz, 1968), 175.
⁵ Ibid., 177.
⁷ Herbert Swann, Home on the Neva, 179; Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 42–3.
⁸ Herbert Swann, Home on the Neva, 180–1.
making ends meet. However, his practice grew steadily, and his status as one of the few local doctors who could speak Russian gained him some patients of considerable means.

The Swann family had been deeply appreciative of music for generations, and many of them were amateur musicians. Herbert’s grandfather had hosted “musical soirées” in his home in Russia. His mother had played the piano, and he and his brothers grew up playing the violin, cello, and four-hand piano reductions of symphonies and quartets. Herbert purchased an upright piano for their home in London in 1928. Donald showed an immediate interest: he taught himself to play parts of four-hand arrangements with his father and uncles, and his parents soon enrolled him in piano lessons.

The family maintained acquaintances with a number of professional musicians, many of them through Donald’s uncle, the musicologist Alfred J. Swan. As they had in Russia, the Swanns frequently attended musical events and held performances in their home: their guests would perform on a variety of instruments, and Naguimé would often sing “Gypsy folk songs” accompanied either by guitar or by Donald at the piano.

Donald’s formal education began at Dulwich Preparatory School, where he excelled in his studies but felt his own Russian culture was at odds with that of his English classmates. He continued piano lessons and by age seven had won a prize at school for the composition of a

---


13 Ibid., 50.
In his last year at Dulwich, Donald became acquainted with future musicologist John Amis. The two bonded over a shared interest in music and established a lifelong friendship. Amis recalled afternoons with Donald, playing ping-pong, reading through Herbert’s collection of four-hand piano arrangements, and improvising their own impromptu duets on the Swann family piano.

In autumn of 1934, Naguimé had exploratory surgery to investigate a persistent abdominal pain, which revealed inoperable cancer. She was cared for by a Russian nurse at home but deteriorated over the next several months. Meanwhile, Donald earned a prestigious scholarship to Westminster School, which required him to live on campus. Westminster School had an isolated and unique culture, a rigid social order, and sometimes odd expectations for their students; Donald struggled to adapt at first. Naguimé Swann passed away on March 29, 1935, shortly after Donald had moved away from home. Donald later described the death of his mother as traumatic, especially when combined with the recent loss of his home environment and any contact with his Russian culture.

20 Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 52.
Donald’s studies at Westminster included philosophy, religion, music, and languages, and he especially enjoyed Latin, Greek, and German.\textsuperscript{21} His musical training continued under the auspices of the Royal College of Music (RCM), Herbert having secured permission from Westminster for Donald to study piano and composition with RCM instructors Angus Morrison and Hugo Anson.\textsuperscript{22} The composer later noted that he reached the peak of his technical prowess under their tutelage at the age of fourteen.\textsuperscript{23} However, he found himself struggling with more challenging classical repertoire. Instead, he focused on improvisation and his own style, which was increasingly influenced by folk music.

In January of 1939, Herbert remarried a violinist by the name of Irene Bonnett, whom the family called “Bunny.”\textsuperscript{24} Shortly after, anticipating bombings in London, the students of Westminster were sent into the country: first to Lancing College in 1939, then to Exeter University in 1940, and from there to Bromyard in 1941.\textsuperscript{25} It was at Exeter that Michael Flanders approached Donald to work with him on a revue for the school called \textit{Go To It!}\textsuperscript{26} Although Michael and Donald had attended Westminster together for some time, they were in different years and social groups; this was the first time they had interacted in a meaningful way, encouraged in part by the unusual academic conditions.\textsuperscript{27} This was the first of many

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} Donald Swann, \textit{Swann’s Way}, 55, 58, 62.
\textsuperscript{22} Herbert Swann, \textit{Home on the Neva}, 181; Donald Swann, \textit{Swann’s Way}, 55–58.
\textsuperscript{23} Donald Swann, \textit{Swann’s Way}, 55–58.
\textsuperscript{24} Herbert Swann, \textit{Home on the Neva}, 184–5.
\textsuperscript{25} Donald Swann, \textit{Swann’s Way}, 62–3.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 69–70.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 60.
\end{flushleft}
collaborations between Michael Flanders and Donald Swann. Donald and Mrs. Flanders accompanied the show on the piano and violin, respectively, while Michael performed most of the roles. The show was successful enough to earn a performance at the Everyman Theatre in Hampstead.28

**University and War**

Swann completed his studies at Westminster in 1941 and began at Oxford University in September of that year with a small financial award.29 He was not accepted as a formal music student, however, and instead took up modern languages and literature as his main area of study, including Russian, German, and French.30 He also continued to develop his own musical style, collaborating with fellow musicians at the university.31

It was during this time that Swann developed the pacifism that would characterize many of his political, philosophical, and religious beliefs for the rest of his life.32 He notes that he had “always had an acute mistrust of violence, revolution, and the war system,” especially because of the hardships suffered by his family during World War I.33 He turned 18 in September of 1941, making him eligible for conscription under the National Service Act. However, Donald had decided to register as a conscientious objector.34

---


29 Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 70.


32 Ibid., 66.

33 Ibid., 36.

34 Ibid., 70.
Swann met other pacifists at Oxford, and with their support and encouragement, his own beliefs matured. He found that he could not bring himself to serve in the military, even in a non-combat role, but wanted to serve the nation in some capacity.\(^{35}\) In 1942, after his first year of university study, he was called to national service and successfully defended his conscientious-objector status before a tribunal.\(^{36}\) Instead of military service, he volunteered to serve as an assistant in hospitals and shortly after transferred to the Friends’ Ambulance Unit. The FAU was a medical and relief service founded and run by the Quakers, intended to give pacifists the opportunity to alleviate the suffering caused by war.\(^{37}\)

Swann trained as a Greek translator and ambulance driver and served first in the Middle East and then in Greece. He acted as a personnel officer, facilitating communication among the Greek refugees, the military, and the relief forces.\(^{38}\) He also absorbed a significant amount of Greek folk music and culture, which had a lasting impact on his compositional style.\(^{39}\)

After spending two and a half years in relief service abroad, Swann returned to Oxford in 1946 to complete his degree.\(^{40}\) He added Modern Greek to his other language studies, “thinking it would be a good idea to study the language that I’d learned orally.”\(^{41}\) During his post-war years at Oxford, Donald began setting to music the texts of poets such as John Betjeman, 

\(^{35}\) Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 72.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 72–4.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 76.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 85.


\(^{41}\) Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 97.
Pushkin, Froissart, and Ronsard.\textsuperscript{42} He also collaborated with and accompanied the revue shows of future composer and lyricist, Sandy Wilson.\textsuperscript{43} Swann approached the West End impresario Laurier Lister near the end of his time at Oxford, who accepted some of the young composer’s works and performed them in his revue shows.\textsuperscript{44}

**Post-Oxford Life**

Although Donald found his study of languages intellectually satisfying, by the time he graduated from Oxford in 1948, he was determined to pursue a career as a professional musician.\textsuperscript{45} After graduation, he began working regularly with Lister and other West End directors and lyricists, both as an accompanist and as a composer of light revue music.\textsuperscript{46} Swann also renewed his collaborative relationship Michael Flanders, who had contracted polio and lost the use of his legs during his service in the Royal Navy.\textsuperscript{47} The two began a productive, lucrative relationship as a lyricist and composer, writing over 200 songs together between 1948 and 1956.\textsuperscript{48} In 1955, Swann married Janet Oxborrow, with whom he would have two daughters: Rachel, born in 1956, and Natasha, born in 1959.\textsuperscript{49} Although Swann collaborated with many

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Donald Swann, *The Space between the Bars*, 81; Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 100.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Donald Swann, *The Space Between The Bars*, 85.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 85.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 113.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 99.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 113, 121.
\end{itemize}
other artists in the West End during this period, his work with Flanders proved to be frequently requested and consistently successful.

By 1956, Swann and Flanders were writing together “prolifically” and had discussed the idea of performing their own material personally.50 This was prompted, in part, by frustration with what they felt were shortcomings in other professional musicians, especially the loss of meaningful or intelligent text.51 They began to perform together as part of larger performances or at private, impromptu gatherings.52 These personal collaborations received positive feedback, especially after Flanders began to script witty, comedic interludes to link their songs together. The two decided to develop their routine into an unstaged show; they sang their own works on stage together, with Swann accompanying them at the piano. Flanders created semi-scripted sketches for their performances, which were included between songs.

Flanders and Swann gave their first official show together at the New Lindsey Theatre in Kensington on 31 December 1956.53 By January 1957, the two had a successful touring show called At the Drop of a Hat.54 “Flanders and Swann” became a household name in Britain and abroad, and their shows, At the Drop of a Hat and At the Drop of Another Hat, toured the world from 1956 to 1967, performing across the United Kingdom, the United States, Europe, Australia, and Hong Kong.55

---

50 Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 125.
52 Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 127.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 129.
55 Ibid., 137–9.
Although Flanders and Swann achieved great success in their years together, the composer felt his other music was stifled by the constant travel and performing of his revue repertoire.\textsuperscript{56} Swann did compose some art music during his partnership with Flanders. In 1961, Swann began work on the opera \textit{Perelandra}, with David Marsh’s libretto based on C. S. Lewis’s novel of the same name.\textsuperscript{57} Because of the failure to secure rights to the text before Lewis’s death, conflicts with Lewis’s estate, and the selling of the dramatization rights to the novel, there exist three musical settings of \textit{Perelandra} by Swann: a three-act opera and a two-act operetta, neither of which can be professionally performed, as well as a choral suite, written later.\textsuperscript{58}

After finishing the 1964–1965 tour of \textit{At the Drop of a Hat}, Swann set several poems from J. R. R. Tolkien’s novel \textit{The Lord of the Rings} as a collection of art songs that he later called \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}.\textsuperscript{59} This project led to Swann meeting and becoming close friends with Professor and Mrs. Tolkien. Tolkien was enthusiastic about Swann’s settings of his texts, and the two collaborated and corresponded about the cycle’s performance and publication.\textsuperscript{60} Swann and Tolkien bonded over a shared love of linguistics, their mutual respect and appreciation for each other’s art, and the common experiences of their formative years: the death of a parent, their service in war, and their educations at Oxford.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} Donald Swann, \textit{Swann’s Way}, 187.

\textsuperscript{57} William Phemister, “Fantasy Set to Music,” 69.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 68–9.


These and other compositional projects notwithstanding, Swann felt the need to bring his full-time partnership with Flanders to an end in 1967. Although the fans of his popular compositions lamented the end of “Flanders and Swann,” the composer felt freed to pursue new musical ventures. Swann spent the subsequent decades composing new operas, musical-theater shows, song-cycles, masses, and many other classical works. However, he always expressed concern that despite the vast body of “serious music” he left behind, he would always be known as the composer of popular music in the vein of “The Hippopotamus Song.”

Swann passed away on March 23, 1994, having spent his life creating music in many different genres and styles and having collaborated with some of the most successful authors and lyricists of the twentieth century. His classical work is, sadly, underperformed; I hope that this project will begin work toward addressing that.

---


63 Ibid., 199.

CHAPTER 2: LIFE, STYLE, AND WORKS OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN

Introduction

J. R. R. Tolkien was one of the most influential writers of fiction in the twentieth century. Tom Shippey credits *The Lord of the Rings* with the modern popularization of heroic fantasy as a genre and notes that few modern works of fantasy fiction “[are] entirely without the mark of Tolkien.”

Tolkien was also an important scholar of the English language, especially Middle and Old English, and his research in literature and linguistics is still relevant today. It should come as no surprise that a number of scholarly works exploring his life have been written prior to my research. As such, this chapter should not be read as a definitive biography for Professor Tolkien but rather as a topical summary exploring primarily the aspects of Tolkien’s life related to his work with artificial languages and his Legendarium: the stories set in Middle-earth and its larger world of Arda.

The importance of Tolkien’s linguistic interests and aesthetic cannot be overstated when discussing his literary works, because his constructed languages not only predate the creation of his Legendarium but actually inspired it. He called his work “fundamentally linguistic in inspiration” and noted that the legends and histories of Middle-earth “were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse.”

---


Tolkien’s languages, one can better understand and appreciate the origins of his works of fantasy.


**Childhood**

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, called Ronald by his family, was born to Arthur Reuel Tolkien and Mabel Suffield Tolkien on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, in what is now South Africa.  

Ronald’s parents were British subjects who had moved to Africa to facilitate Arthur’s banking career. The earliest years of Ronald’s life were spent in Bloemfontein with his parents and younger brother, Hilary. In 1895, concerned that the harsh climate was taking a toll on her sons’ health, Mabel took Ronald and Hilary to visit her parents in Birmingham, England. Arthur promised he would soon follow, staying behind to handle business matters. However, he fell ill with rheumatic fever and died in February of 1896.

Arthur’s estate left behind little financial support for his family, and Mabel decided to move with her sons to Sarehole, a small village south of Birmingham. The lower cost of living, combined with some assistance provided by her brother-in-law, Walter Incledon, allowed Mabel to raise and educate Ronald and Hilary at home. The young Ronald was interested in drawing,

---

68 Raymond Edwards, *Tolkien*, 19–22. Bloemfontein was the capital of the Orange Free State, a former Dutch colony that became an independent Republic, before it was absorbed into British South Africa.

calligraphy, and botany and also shared with his mother a fascination with language study, which Mabel encouraged by teaching him Latin and French.  

Even in his youth, Tolkien saw languages and their invention as not merely an interesting area of study but also a source of entertainment and enjoyment. In their childhood, Ronald and his cousins, Mary and Marjorie Incledon, invented a language called Animalic, which consisted primarily of replacing English vocabulary with the names of animals. A few years later, he and Mary would go on to create “a new and more sophisticated language,” called Nevbosh, in part from French and Latin vocabulary they had studied but which also included entirely some new, original words. This would continue throughout his life, leading to the creation of languages such as Quenya and Sindarin as a means for expressing his aesthetic linguistic ideals.

In early 1900, Mabel, her sister May Suffield Incledon, and the boys began to attend Roman Catholic Mass, and in June, Mabel and May were officially received into the Church. This caused a rift between Mabel and the rest of the family. May’s husband, Walter, returned to England from South Africa when he heard of his wife’s conversion, and forbade her from continuing her Catholic practice. Mabel’s parents disowned her, and nearly all financial assistance stopped, with the exception of a distant Tolkien cousin who agreed to pay for

70 Raymond Edwards, Tolkien, 19–22.


72 Humphrey Carpenter, J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography, 43.

73 J. R. R. Tolkien, The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays, 205.

74 Scull and Hammond, Chronology, 6.
Ronald’s tuition to attend King Edward’s School in Birmingham. Mabel soon moved the family into Birmingham to keep Ronald closer to school.

In early 1904, Mabel was diagnosed with diabetes. At this time, no effective treatment for the disease had been discovered, and on November 8, she sank into a diabetic coma, dying six days later. Father Francis Morgan, a close friend of the Tolkiens, was named Ronald and Hilary’s guardian in Mabel’s will, in part to ensure they were kept in the Catholic faith. Father Francis oversaw the Tolkiens’ upbringing, supplemented their small income from his own, and became a life-long mentor to Ronald. After an unhappy stay with their aunt, Beatrice Suffield, in 1907, Father Francis arranged for the boys to live with the Faulkners, a family active in the Birmingham Oratory parish where Father Francis served and who were known to take lodgers.

Ronald focused on schoolwork in his grief and was introduced by his instructors at King Edward’s to Anglo-Saxon, or Old English. He was fascinated with the idea that languages could change over time and soon immersed himself in the study of various Germanic languages and in philology, the comparative study of languages, their changes throughout history, and their historical texts.

Also lodging with the Faulkners was a nineteen-year-old orphan by the name of Edith Bratt. Edith and the Tolkien boys quickly became close friends, and she and Ronald soon

77 Ibid., 40.
78 Ibid., 43.
80 Ibid., 23–5.
became romantically involved. However, Father Francis soon heard of the romance and demanded that Ronald put a stop to it, seeing the relationship as a distraction from Ronald’s preparations for university. This may not have been entirely inaccurate, as Ronald failed his first scholarship examination for Oxford University shortly thereafter. Following this setback, Father Morgan arranged for the Tolkiens to stay elsewhere. Ronald and Edith continued to meet in secret but were soon found out, and Father Morgan threatened to revoke his financial support and prevent Ronald from attending university. Ronald agreed, and Edith soon left Birmingham.

University

In December of 1910, Tolkien attempted his second entrance examination and earned an exhibition, a financial award smaller than a scholarship, to attend Oxford as a student in classics, the study of Greek and Latin languages, literature, history, and archaeology. However, he found himself much more interested in the study of linguistics and Germanic languages, especially Old English.

Tolkien scrupulously followed Father Francis’s orders not to contact Edith. However, on midnight of his twenty-first birthday, no longer under legal guardianship, he immediately wrote Edith and asked her to marry him. This presented some problems because in the three years since they had broken contact, Edith had agreed to marry someone else. Tolkien traveled to Cheltenham to meet with her in person and convinced her to break off her engagement. Tolkien and Edith would marry after he finished his studies at Oxford.

---


Tolkien’s mid-degree evaluations were less than impressive but included a perfect evaluation on a comparative philology paper. Following this mixed success, his professors advised him to change his course of study to that of English language and literature, in which he excelled.

Meanwhile, Tolkien continued feeding his appetite for language study with Greek, Latin, Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon, adding Finnish and Welsh to his already extensive repertoire. Tom Shippey believed that Tolkien would have described himself first as a philologist, then as a mythologist, and then as an “author of fantasy fiction.” The study of languages was not only a field of technical expertise for Tolkien but also an area of aesthetic appreciation that fulfilled the same craving as attending an opera or viewing a painting. He once said that “studying a Gothic dictionary” could yield a “purely artistic pleasure, of a keen and high order.” In the same speech, he expressed the opinion that the creation of languages was an art form and blends “phonetic pleasure” with the “delight of establishing novel relations between symbol and significance.”

Tolkien considered a language called Naffarin his first mature attempt at language creation. Naffarin was based on Spanish and Latin and avoided common English sounds, but little beyond this is known because it was abandoned and any records lost. This was prompted, in part, by Tolkien’s first encounter with the Finnish language. Tolkien described the effect of

---


87 Ibid., 218.

88 Ibid., 208–10.
reading a Finnish grammar as intoxicating, comparing it to a “cellar filled with bottles of amazing wine of a kind and flavour never tasted before.”89 Setting aside Naffarin and a constructed Germanic language identified as either neo-Gothic or “Gautisk,” Tolkien began work on a new language that incorporated the sounds and grammar of Finnish as part of its core aesthetic, which would become the earliest form of Quenya.90 However, Tolkien was not content only to create the structure and words of his new language; he wanted also to give it a feeling of life and realism by creating for it stories and poetry. This was the foundation of Tolkien’s Legendarium; Tolkien’s new legends included influence from Old Norse myth blended with elements taken from various fairy tales and fantasy stories he had read throughout his childhood and young adult life.91 Thus, rather than creating his artificial world and then making languages for its inhabitants to give a sense of realism, Tolkien’s artificial world and its inhabitants were crafted to make his languages seem more real.

**War**

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, many British universities were nearly emptied of students.92 Tolkien, however, was resolved to finish his degree before joining the military. Instead, he took part in an officers training group until he completed his degree in 1915, after which he received a commission as a second lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers. Tolkien and Edith married on March 22, 1916, shortly before he was deployed to serve in France.

---


91 Ibid., 24–5.

Tolkien’s active duty on the Western Front lasted only a few months, but in that time, he lost some of his closest friends to the horrors of trench warfare, and Tolkien himself contracted trench fever, which resulted in his return to England to spend months in a hospital.\textsuperscript{93} While recuperating from his illness, he continued his work on the myths and legends associated with his fictive language, at that time known as “Qenya.” John Garth and other scholars believe that Tolkien’s experiences in World War I were formative influences on his fiction.\textsuperscript{94}

Tolkien was ill throughout much of 1917 and 1918 and stayed in England to serve in various training and educational capacities.\textsuperscript{95} The Tolkiens’ first child, John Francis Reuel, was born on November 16, 1917.\textsuperscript{96} While stationed in England, Tolkien continued to work on his Legendarium, and another artificial language appeared alongside Quenya, called Gnomish or Goldogrin. This new Elvish language was based on Welsh and would eventually develop into Sindarin.\textsuperscript{97}

**Scholar and Author**

After the end of the war in 1918, Tolkien took a number of jobs: he served as an assistant lexicographer for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, worked as a private tutor to English undergraduates at Oxford, and contributed to a Middle English glossary for a student anthology of fourteenth-century literature.\textsuperscript{98} In 1920, he was hired as a reader of English language at the

\textsuperscript{93} John Garth, “A Brief Biography,” in Lee, 12.


\textsuperscript{95} Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 103.


\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{98} John Garth, “A Brief Biography,” in Lee, 12.
University of Leeds, where he and his family would spend the next four years. Shortly after his first term at Leeds began, the Tolkiens’ second son, Michael Hilary Reuel, was born.99 All the while, his work on his private languages and the mythology that accompanied them continued, taking on a form recognizable to those familiar with *The Silmarillion*.100 In 1924, Tolkien was promoted to the rank of full professor, and a third son, Christopher Michael Reuel, was born in November. In June of 1925, Tolkien was hired as the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University, returning to his alma mater as a full professor and chair at the young age of thirty-three.

Tolkien spent the rest of his professional life at Oxford, publishing a few influential scholarly works on the translation of Anglo-Saxon and Welsh, lecturing on Anglo-Saxon and philology, and supervising postgraduate students.101 In 1929, Tolkien and Edith’s daughter, Priscilla Mary Reuel, was born.102

Tolkien had an informal group of friends at Oxford who shared similar interests, including, among other things, Christianity and literature.103 The membership of this group varied but included the author and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis, who would be one of Tolkien’s closest friends for many years.104 This group called itself the Inklings; they met at


101 Ibid., 141–2.


various venues to discuss one another’s writings, philosophy, religion, and mythmaking. They were among the first people to hear excerpts from what would later become Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as Lewis’s *Space Trilogy* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Tolkien recalled that *The Hobbit* had its origin on an exam he was grading in the late twenties or early thirties. In a moment of boredom, on a page a student had left blank, Tolkien wrote the words, “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.” The word *hobbit* had no meaning as far as Tolkien knew, and the professor’s further explorations of what exactly a hobbit was resulted in stories he told his children and finally in a novel published in 1937. *The Hobbit* was a great success, and Tolkien’s publishers asked for a sequel.

The sequel proved a challenge for Tolkien. Over the years, his body of myth and legends had grown considerably into what he was calling the *Quenta Silmarillion*, but it was vastly different in both tone and scope from *The Hobbit*. He presented this to his publishers, who expressed their concern that it would prove too difficult to publish and asked again for a *Hobbit* sequel, to which Tolkien eventually agreed.

The resulting novel took over a decade to complete and ended up as a compromise between the story presented in *The Hobbit* and the thematic and stylistic material presented in his *Quenta Silmarillion* mythos, in which the professor blended the two. This resulted in *The Lord of the Rings*.

---

105 Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 146.


108 Ibid., 179.

of the Rings, which was published as three volumes in 1954 and 1955, motivated primarily by publishing costs and concerns that readers would find the full-length novel intimidating.\textsuperscript{110}

Where The Hobbit proved well loved and a critical and commercial success, The Lord of the Rings became a worldwide phenomenon and one of the most widely read and best-selling books of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{111} Tolkien even modified later editions of The Hobbit to strengthen the thematic connections between the two because The Hobbit was not originally envisioned to have been part of the Legendarium.\textsuperscript{112}

After achieving widespread fame with The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien turned his attention to his Quenta Silmarillion, hoping to realize its publication. However, repeated revisions to the mythos, even down to its most basic elements, prevented this from ever occurring in his lifetime.\textsuperscript{113} He retired from Oxford in 1959 and spent the last decades of his life working on the millennia of fictive history, language, and legends that predated the events of The Lord of the Rings, upon which he had already spent decades of work.\textsuperscript{114} Tolkien’s son, Christopher, would eventually see to the publication of The Silmarillion years after his father’s death.\textsuperscript{115}


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 551.

\textsuperscript{112} Raymond Edwards, Tolkien, 177.


\textsuperscript{114} Raymond Edwards, Tolkien, 259.

Professor Tolkien died on September 2, 1973, two years after Edith passed.  

Included on their graves were the names of characters whose great romance formed one of the most important cores of Tolkien’s Legendarium and who had been inspired, in part, by their own love story: “Beren” for Professor Tolkien and “Lúthien” for Edith.

---


CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF *THE ROAD GOES EVER ON*
Composition, Performances, and Publication

The most recent publication of *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle*, the third edition published by HarperCollins in 2002, includes Swann’s nine settings of texts by Tolkien: “The Road Goes Ever On,” “Upon the Hearth the Fire is Red,” “In the Willow-meats of Tasarinan,” “In Western Lands,” “Namárië,” “I Sit beside the Fire,” “Errantry,” “Bilbo’s Last Song,” and “Lúthien Tinúviel.” However, these songs were composed at various points over 12 years of Swann’s musical output, published in three editions between 1967 and 2002. The differing musical and auxiliary content of each edition can complicate the purchase of music and impact song preparation and recital programming. Awareness of the historical details of the songs’ composition, publication, notable performances, and critical reception can help musicians make informed decisions regarding this cycle.

**The First Edition**

Donald Swann was introduced to *The Lord of the Rings* by his first wife, Janet.\(^{118}\) He enjoyed the novel tremendously, reading it every year and shipping the hardback volumes across the world rather than go without them during his 1964–65 tour of *At the Drop of a Hat*. After the tour’s end in early 1965, Swann and his family spent time in Ramallah, a city north of Jerusalem. It was there that Swann set seven poems from *The Lord of the Rings* in what he described as a “Lieder song-cycle.”\(^{119}\) The texts included “The Road Goes Ever On,” “Upon the Hearth the Fire is Red,” “A Elbereth Gilthoniel,” and Sit beside the Fire” from *The Fellowship of the Ring*; “In the Willow-meats of Tasarinan,” and “O Orofarnë, Lassemista, Carnimírië” from *The Two


\(^{119}\) Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 205.
Towers; and “In Western Lands” from *The Return of the King.*\(^{120}\) By the time the Swanns returned to England in March, the composer had discarded his setting of “O Orofarnë…” as being too similar to “Dido’s Lament” from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas.*\(^{121}\) Subsequently, this was replaced with a setting of Galadriel’s farewell lament, “Namárië,” from *The Fellowship of the Ring.*\(^{122}\)

Swann wrote to Tolkien’s publisher in March of 1965, requesting permission to set the texts and hoping for a chance to speak with the author and play the cycle for him.\(^{123}\) Professor and Mrs. Tolkien agreed to meet with Swann on May 30 at the home of their daughter, Priscilla, where a piano was available for the presentation.\(^{124}\) The Tolkiens enjoyed Swann’s performance of his works and were enthusiastic about the cycle, with one exception. Professor Tolkien objected to the setting of “Namárië,” noting that he had imagined it differently when writing the scene, and hummed a tune that Swann identified as a Catholic plainsong chant. Swann discarded his original arrangement and set the text to Professor Tolkien’s chant melody, leaving it unaccompanied except for a piano introduction, interlude, and conclusion.\(^{125}\)


\(^{123}\) Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 630.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 632.

In June of 1965, Joy Hill, the professor’s long-time secretary and friend, introduced Swann to a young baritone by the name of William Elvin, then a student at the Royal Academy of Music. Swann thought his voice ideal for the performance of the song cycle, and Tolkien called his name a good omen. Swann and Elvin prepared the songs together and corresponded and coached with Tolkien, especially regarding the pronunciation of Elvish. In January of 1966, Joy Hill informed Swann and Tolkien that Caedmon Records was interested in creating a recording of Swann’s cycle paired with readings of Tolkien’s poetry.

Swann and Elvin performed the song cycle on March 23, 1966, for a private party celebrating the Tolkiens’ fiftieth wedding anniversary, to the delight of those in attendance. Swann occasionally included one of the Tolkien songs in his “Hat” tours or in radio interviews, but the public premiere of all six songs took place on May 7, 1966, at the Lakeland Theatre at Rosehill, Cumberland. The program, called _The Lyric Songs of Donald Swann_, also included the composer’s settings of poetry by Shakespeare, Pushkin, Suckling, Sydney Carter, and John Betjeman and enlisted vocal performances by William Elvin, Marion Studholme, and Ian Wallace.

In October of 1966, during his American tour of _At the Drop of Another Hat_, Swann met with William Olney, of Boston publishing company Houghton Mifflin, to discuss the publication

129 Donald Swann, foreword to _The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle_, vi.
and recording of the song cycle.\textsuperscript{130} They agreed that the work needed a “livelier ending,” and Swann began searching from among Tolkien’s poetry for an additional text to set.\textsuperscript{131}

Swann had originally encountered the poem “Errantry” in 1949 as an anonymous work. Although the poem impressed him, he decided against setting it to music at that time because of its length and complexity. Ten years later, Swann discovered that the poem had been written by Tolkien. When he related this story to Tolkien, the professor revealed that there were numerous, often anonymous, versions of “Errantry” circulating in a surprisingly large oral tradition.

Swann spent the latter half of 1966 setting the lengthy, intricate poem to music while on tour in the United States.\textsuperscript{132} Originally envisioning “Errantry” as a duet for himself and Michael Flanders, with the lower voice providing a slow counterpoint to the livelier melody, he eventually decided that a solo arrangement was best.\textsuperscript{133} The author expressed his concern that the length of the poem might present a challenge for setting it to music, but by December, Swann played the completed song for the Tolkiens, to their approval.\textsuperscript{134}

While preparing the song cycle for publication in the latter months of 1966 and into 1967, work was undertaken to expand the contents of the book because of concerns that the song cycle alone would be insufficient. Swann agreed to write a foreword and invited Tolkien to do so as well.\textsuperscript{135} Swann and the publishers also decided to add calligraphy and Elvish text as decoration.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{130} Scull and Hammond, \textit{Chronology}, 675.
\bibitem{131} Donald Swann, foreword to \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}, vii.
\bibitem{132} Ibid.
\bibitem{133} Hammond and Anderson, \textit{J. R. R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography}, 314.
\bibitem{134} Scull and Hammond, \textit{Chronology}, 677, 683.
\end{thebibliography}
and planned for Tolkien to discuss the development of the poetry, especially the complex history of *Errantry*. The author decided instead to provide linguistic and poetic analysis of the Elvish text.

The song cycle was first published in the United States by Houghton Mifflin in 1967, followed in Britain, in 1968, by George Allen & Unwin. The first edition began with Swann’s foreword, discussing his discovery of Tolkien’s poetry, the composition of the songs, and performance suggestions. The song cycle followed: “The Road Goes Ever On,” “Upon the Hearth,” “In the Willow-meads of Tasarinan,” “Namárië,” “I Sit beside the Fire,” and “Errantry.” Songs one, two, four, and six included chord notation above the vocal line for performance with guitar, and the composer noted that the interlude melody of song five could also be performed on guitar.136 The book concluded with Tolkien’s linguistic, poetic, and contextual notes in a “Notes and Translations” section.

While preparing for the publication of the first edition, an agreement was made between Houghton Mifflin and Caedmon Records to produce a recording of Swann and Elvin performing the song cycle alongside readings of Tolkien’s poetry.137 Though the readings were originally intended for Michael Flanders, Tolkien agreed to recite the poems himself. These recordings were sold as *The Poems and Songs of Middle Earth* and were released in 1967 and 1968 in conjunction with the American and British publications of the book.

**Bilbo’s Last Song and the Second Edition**

The song cycle saw no major revisions or changes until years later, after the death of Professor Tolkien in 1973. Joy Hill had received the poem “Bilbo’s Last Song” as a gift from the

---

136 Donald Swann, foreword to *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle*, viii.

professor in 1970, including its copyright. At Professor Tolkien’s funeral, she gave to Swann a copy of the poem, intending for him to set it to music. Swann was moved by the poetry and called the resulting setting his favorite song of the cycle. Originally written as a duet but often heard as a solo, Swann performed the song in conjunction with the rest of the cycle for five years before including it as the eighth song of the second edition, published in 1978. Swann wrote a new foreword for this edition, included more specific tempo markings for each song, and added what he called “choral embroidery,” referring to additional voices providing harmonic support for the soloist, to songs five, six, seven, and eight.

Lúthien Tinúviel and the Third Edition

In 1977, Swann felt inspired to set Beren’s “Song of Parting,” from chapter 19 of *The Silmarillion*, as the song “Lúthien Tinúviel.” It was completed by 1978, but likely too late to be included in the second edition of the song cycle. The composer had hoped to include it in a third edition published in Germany in 1993, but the publishers lacked the facilities to print new songs, and plans to add “Lúthien Tinúviel” to the German edition were canceled. The song remained unpublished during Swann’s lifetime, first seeing print in 1998 in the collection *Songs*

---

139 Leon Berger, email to the author, February 23, 2016.
140 Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 207.
143 Leon Berger, email to the author, February 23, 2016.
144 Ibid.
of Donald Swann: Volume 1, with advice as to how to incorporate it into the other Tolkien settings. In 2002, HarperCollins published the third edition in England, much of which was identical to the second edition, but added “Lúthien Tinúviel” as an appendix, which followed the “Notes and Translations” section. It also included an introduction written by Leon Berger, the foreword to the second edition, the English version of Swann’s foreword to the 1993 German edition, and a CD of Swann’s recordings of the cycle with various collaborators.

Those in possession of the 2002 HarperCollins third edition should note that Swann’s foreword to the third edition states, “Beyond the eight songs already seen there is one more, “Lúthien Tinúviel,” […] This is included here for the first time.” While this statement is true in the 2002 edition, this text was written in reference to the 1993 German edition, which lacks “Lúthien Tinúviel.” In an email to the author, Leon Berger explained that Swann wrote this for the German edition before realizing that publishing the new song as part of that edition would be impossible. Thus, when translating Swann’s original statement for the German foreword, it was altered to reflect the song’s absence: “Ich hoffe, daß meine deutschen Verleger es demnächst als Ergänzung veröffentlichen können,” or “I hope that my German publisher may soon publish a supplement.” When preparing the 2002 edition, Mr. Berger “reproduced exactly what Swann


146 Leon Berger, introduction to The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle, i.

147 Leon Berger, email to the author, February 23, 2016.

148 Typescript PDF of the Foreword to the German Edition; Leon Berger, email to the author, February 23, 2016; translation by the author.
wrote […] rather than silently amend it,” despite the confusion caused by those following the
details of publication history.¹⁴⁹

**Reception and Criticism**

Reception and criticism of the cycle was mixed. The late Professor Tolkien approved of
the songs and enjoyed them, as did the majority of Swann’s fan base. Some of Tolkien’s readers
shared the author’s enthusiasm for the cycle, applauding Swann’s communication of the
emotions and ideas in Tolkien’s text. Others, however, claimed that the music is “too old
fashioned,” or unlike anything that could have been heard in Middle-earth.¹⁵⁰ Opinions among
music critics past and present have been similarly divided: detractors have claimed that the cycle
lacks the proper musical idiom for serious art songs while proponents believe Swann’s songs
effectively combine contemporary and traditional song composition.¹⁵¹

Despite the direct involvement of Tolkien with these songs and the diverse opinions
regarding their merits, little scholarly attention has been directed to the cycle. I believe this is
because of a perception of Swann as a composer of popular music, as well as an opinion scholars
unacquainted with Tolkien studies as a field that musical settings of poetry from *The Lord of the
Rings* may not be worth serious scholarly attention. Thus, this document makes an important
contribution both to the scholarship of the works of Donald Swann, as well as the musical
scholarship of the works of Tolkien.

¹⁴⁹ Leon Berger, email to the author, February 23, 2016.


¹⁵¹ Ibid.
Special Considerations for Recital Programming

During this research project, the question arose as to whether all nine songs being studied and performed were part of the same song cycle or were simply songs by the same composer, published together because of a shared poet and topic. The songs published in the first edition are clearly part of the same whole in spite of the late addition of “Errantry.” “Bilbo’s Last Song” was composed five years later, in a different musical style and without the input of Professor Tolkien. However, Swann’s description of the song as the new ending to the cycle renders such arguments moot.\textsuperscript{152} The composer’s statement given in the foreword to the second edition is strong evidence that “Bilbo’s Last Song” should be considered as much a part of the cycle as any of the first seven songs, and furthermore leaves its position as the closing song unambiguous.

The status of “Lúthien Tinúviel” is less sure. Swann’s description gives fewer indications as to whether he considered it part of the same musical work. The 1998 publication of the song included instructions from the composer “for those wishing to incorporate this song into the sequence already published,” which seems to put the decision in the hands of the performer.\textsuperscript{153} Swann mentions its inclusion in his foreword to the song cycle’s third edition, but without an explicit statement indicating incorporation into the song-cycle proper, as was given for “Bilbo’s Last Song.”\textsuperscript{154} Despite being numbered as song nine in the table of contents, “Lúthien Tinúviel” is included as an appendix after the “Notes and Translations” section.\textsuperscript{155} In a conversation with

\textsuperscript{152} Donald Swann, foreword to second edition of \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}, vi, ix.

\textsuperscript{153} Donald Swann, \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 77.


the researcher, Leon Berger expressed the opinion that Swann considered “Lúthien Tinúviel” a part of the song-cycle proper but never made a firm decision as to where it should be placed in the song order.156 Berger indicated that by the time the song cycle was published, “Lúthien Tinúviel” had a traditional position at the end of the cycle that, nevertheless, was perhaps not ideal for the sake of programming; this is indicated by its number as song nine but its inclusion as an appendix to the cycle. Some performers may choose to exclude “Lúthien Tinúviel” entirely, so as not to break up the more cohesive aesthetic of the first eight songs. In this project, I have included “Lúthien Tinúviel” according to its listing in the third edition as song nine. However, moving “Lúthien Tinúviel” to follow “Errantry,” leaving “Bilbo’s Last Song” as the cycle’s conclusion, was acknowledged by Berger as a viable alternative.157 These seem to be the most straightforward answers to this issue, but other performers may find other solutions more appropriate for their programs.

---

156 Leon Berger, Facebook message to author, February 17, 2016.

CHAPTER 4: ELVISH LYRIC DICTION

Introduction

Donald Swann believed that some composers sacrificed text to music, stating that “often [...] the words were rather too submerged in the [...] music.”¹⁵⁸ He was of the opinion that the meaning of the text was “crucial—the vital thing” and approached the composition of his art songs with the goal of “enhancing meaning through music.”¹⁵⁹ Swann extended this sense of textual responsibility to the performers, calling for a straightforward delivery of the text when performing these songs.¹⁶⁰ Having an education in several modern languages, Swann related to Tolkien as a fellow linguist.¹⁶¹ When preparing The Road Goes Ever On for its first public performance, Swann discussed the proper pronunciation of the Elvish poetry with Tolkien and prompted baritone William Elvin to coach the languages with the professor.¹⁶² The care with which Tolkien created his artificial Elvish languages—and the time and energy that Swann spent in his preparations for the accurate execution of the Elvish song texts—are a testament to the importance of the accurate pronunciation of the Quenya and Sindarin lyrics of The Road Goes Ever On.

The accurate execution of song text is an essential part of any vocal performance. However, although Tolkien’s Elvish languages are among the most extensive artificial languages

¹⁵⁸ Donald Swann, foreword to the third edition of The Road Goes Ever On, x.
¹⁵⁹ Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 107.
¹⁶⁰ Donald Swann, foreword to the third edition of The Road Goes Ever On, x.
¹⁶¹ Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 206.
ever created, they lack the degree of easily accessible information available for any of the
standard languages of classical vocal repertoire. While there are multiple comprehensive
resources available for the pronunciation of Italian, German, French, and other languages, no
such resource has ever been compiled for either Quenya or Sindarin.

Without personal guidance available from Professor Tolkien or Donald Swann, and
because of the lack of any native or fluent speakers of Quenya or Sindarin, the most authoritative
information widely available for the pronunciation of Elvish song texts are the guidelines
published during Professor Tolkien’s lifetime: the Appendices of *The Return of the King* and the
“Notes and Translations” section of *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle*. However, neither
of these sources, which were intended for Tolkien’s general readership, is formatted to facilitate
study by classical vocalists with training in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) or
phonetics.

My intent for this chapter is to create a comprehensive lyric diction guide for Quenya and
Sindarin. It is intended for use primarily by voice students, performers, and teachers of singing
who have experience with the study of lyric diction and the use of the IPA. While knowledge of
Elvish grammar and vocabulary is not necessary, a basic understanding of these can help assure
accuracy in the preparation of Elvish song-texts. See the website of the Elvish Linguistic
Fellowship for a list of suggested resources for linguistic study of Quenya and Sindarin.

Those familiar with the use of the IPA will recognize the use of slashes, / /, and brackets,

---

*Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Blackwelder*, eds. Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull
(Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 233, accessed September 23, 2014,

Within the field of linguistic study, the term *internal history* refers to the “history of changes in the structure of a language.” *External history* refers to the “history of a language as a means of communication within a community” and often involves political or social factors. These terms are used by Tolkienian linguistic scholars as well, but with different denotations. Hostetter describes external history as “the history […] of Tolkien’s conceptual development of his languages” in the real world while internal history refers to “the fictive history […] and development that Tolkien invented for each of his languages within Middle-earth.” This distinction is important to note since the information presented as internal history for Tolkien’s constructed languages often involves the description of historical and social factors that would normally be considered external history when applied elsewhere.

---


Tolkien also created original writing systems for the Elves of his Legendarium. Those used in Middle-earth are called the Tengwar and the Cirth.\textsuperscript{169} Examples of the former can be found lining the pages of \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}, and both Elvish song texts are rendered in Tengwar in the “Notes and Translations” section. Tolkien and subsequent enthusiasts of his works have made use of these writing systems in various artistic ventures. However, the professor rendered the vast majority of Quenya and Sindarin texts in the same Roman orthography used to write English. Prospective performers of Elvish song are thus unlikely to encounter text written only in Tengwar or Cirth. Consequently, I have not included a discussion of IPA transcription of these fictive writing systems in this document but may undertake such a project in the future.

\textbf{Historical Overview of the Elvish Languages}

\textbf{Elvish External History}

Tolkien considered his constructed languages one of his primary forms of aesthetic expression. Tolkien’s Elvish languages have their earliest roots in the professor’s acquaintance with Finnish, which he first encountered while reading the national epic of Finland: the \textit{Kalevala}.\textsuperscript{170} Enchanted by the sounds and form of the Finnish language, he set aside other artificial language projects to construct a new language based heavily on Finnish grammar, vocabulary, and phonology but also included a number of Germanic and Celtic elements.\textsuperscript{171} This Finnish-inspired language would eventually develop into Quenya, the language of the High-Elves of Aman and the Noldorin Exiles in Middle-earth. The poetry, stories, and historical

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{170} Tolkien to Auden, \textit{The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien}, 214.
\item\textsuperscript{171} Tolkien to Auden, \textit{The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien}, 214; Raymond Edwards, \textit{Tolkien}, 82.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
developments that Tolkien devised for early Quenya eventually expanded into a larger body of
myth that would become Tolkien’s Legendarium, which later included many languages with
varied inspirations and unique features. One of these was the Welsh-inspired Sindarin, the
language of the Grey-Elves of Beleriand. Quenya and Sindarin are, by a large margin, the most
extensively developed and well-known of Tolkien’s Elvish languages, and both are represented
among the song-texts included in The Road Goes Ever On.

Elvish Internal History

According to Tolkien in The Silmarillion, shortly after the first Elves appeared in Middle-
earth, they were invited by the Valar to live in great western paradise of Aman. This invitation
entailed a long journey, west across the continent of Middle-earth and then over the Great Ocean.
Those who agreed to undertake the journey became known as the Eldar, who included three
tribes: the Vanyar, the Noldor, and the Teleri. 172 The Vanyar and Noldor moved quickly and
were ferried across the ocean soon after arriving on the western coasts of Middle-earth.173 The
Teleri, however, were a larger tribe that moved much more slowly. While some of the Teleri
eventually made their way to Aman, many others remained in the western-most region Middle-
earth: Beleriand. These Elves were united under the rule of the King Elu Thingol and would later
become known as the Sindar.174

Centuries later, the Dark Lord Morgoth killed the Noldorin King Finwe and stole the
Noldor’s most precious treasures, fleeing Aman for his strongholds in Middle-earth.175 Finwe’s

Mifflin, 2004), 42.
173 Ibid., 47.
174 Ibid., 45-6.
175 Ibid., 72-3.
sons, the Princes Fëanor and Fingolfin, led the majority of the Noldor out of Aman in pursuit of the Dark Lord. The Noldor stole ships from the Teleri, killed those who tried to stop them, and were consequently exiled from Aman for their crimes.\textsuperscript{176}

When the Noldorin Exiles arrived in Middle-earth, they encountered the Telerin Elves who had never left Beleriand those thousands of years earlier; the Noldor referred to them as the Sindar. The languages of the Noldor and the Sindar were so far separated that they could not initially understand one another.\textsuperscript{177} The Noldor learned Sindarin, using it even in some of their own communities.\textsuperscript{178}

However, the Sindarin King Elu Thingol soon learned of Noldorin Exiles’ attack on the Teleri in Aman. In reaction to this violence against his distant kin, Elu Thingol outlawed the use of Quenya within his realm.\textsuperscript{179} The Noldor complied, and Sindarin became the sole vernacular language of both the Noldor and Sindar in Middle-earth.\textsuperscript{180}

Over the following centuries, Quenya became a language of lore, ceremony, and artistic expression rather than daily conversation. Tolkien compared its use to that of Latin in Europe and frequently referred to it as “Elvish-latin.”\textsuperscript{181} Sindarin, on the other hand, flourished among the Elvish communities in Middle-earth and served as the lingua franca of several Elvish and Human cultures in the ages that followed.


\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 101.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 107-110.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 124.

\textsuperscript{180} Tolkien, Appendix F, 405—6.

\textsuperscript{181} Tolkien to Jeffery, \textit{The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien}, 425.
Quenya Lyric Diction

General Features. Owing to their similarity in cultural use and function, Professor Tolkien used spelling conventions in Quenya that gave it visual similarity to Latin, such as <c> in place of <k> and <qu> in place of <kw>. Like French, German, and Italian, Quenya distinguishes between monophthongs and diphthongs. Where diphthongs exist, they are always indicated by two vowels written in succession. Tolkien notes that the pronunciation of single vowels as diphthongs occurred among non-Elvish speakers but was “regarded as incorrect or rustic.” Thus, English speakers should take special care to use diphthongs only where indicated. English speakers should avoid the neutralization of unaccented vowels; the schwa does not exist in Quenya. A change in vowel length also changes the quality of some vowels. Long vowels are indicated with an acute accent. As in Italian, Quenya distinguishes between the length of single and double consonants.

Syllabic stress in Quenya follows regular rules, although there are occasional exceptions, especially in compound words. In two-syllable words, the stress falls on the first syllable “in practically all cases.” In words with three syllables or more, the stress falls on the penultimate syllable if that syllable contains a long vowel, diphthong, or a vowel followed by two or more consonants. If the penultimate syllable has a short vowel followed by one or no consonants, the

---


186 Ibid., 394.
antepenultimate syllable is stressed. Singers should take care to distinguish between digraphs that represent single consonant sounds and those that represent consonant clusters, because this can have a bearing on determining syllabic stress.

Some of the rules for syllabification can be discerned from context. A syllable must contain at least one vowel or a diphthong. Any two adjacent vowels in a word not forming a diphthong are part of separate syllables, in hiatus.¹⁸⁷ As occurs in French, Tolkien often placed a diaeresis over one of a pair of adjacent vowels in hiatus, such as in the word: Êä.¹⁸⁸ A syllable may also contain one, two, or more consonants before or after a vowel. Consonantal digraphs that indicate a single sound count as one consonant while adjacent consonants that form a cluster count as multiple consonants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quenya Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i, í</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e, ë</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁸⁷ Helge Fauskanger, “Quenya Course: Less 1-5,” 10.


¹⁸⁹ International Phonetic Association, Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), ix; Appendix 2 to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, 164.


¹⁹¹ Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.
The <ë> is used at the end of words to remind English speakers, who are used to seeing silent e at the ends of words, that this vowel is pronounced.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>é</td>
<td>[e:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a, á</td>
<td>[a], [a:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ó</td>
<td>[o:]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>192</sup> Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Publication Correspondence, Donald Swann Archive, Battersea, London.

<sup>193</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix; Appendix 2 to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, 183.

<sup>194</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 393.

<sup>195</sup> Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Donald Swann Archive.

<sup>196</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

<sup>197</sup> Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Donald Swann Archive.


<sup>199</sup> Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Donald Swann Archive.

<sup>200</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

<sup>201</sup> Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Donald Swann Archive.

<sup>202</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix; Appendix 2 to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, 183.
Tolkien states that this vowel, when lengthened, was pronounced “tenser and closer” than its short counterpart. He compared its quality to the close o in the first syllable of the Italian word nome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>u, ū</td>
<td>[u], [u:]</td>
<td>close back rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tolkien compares the sound of this vowel to the English word brute.

Table 4.1. Quenya Vowels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>[ai]</td>
<td>Tolkien approximates this as the diphthong in the English word rye. Singers should take care, however, not to drift toward the English diphthong [aɪ] but should instead favor the Italian diphthong [aɪ], making use of the “truly Italian […] vowel [i].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>[aʊ]</td>
<td>Tolkien approximates this as the diphthong found in the English words loud and how. Singers should refer to the Italian diphthong [aʊ] rather than the English [aʊ].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

203 J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, 393.

204 Tolkien to Swann, 1967[?], Donald Swann Archive.

205 Foreword to the Handbook of the International Phonetic Association, ix.

206 J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, 393.

207 J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, 394.


210 Colorni, Singer’s Italian, 113.
Fauskanger notes a similarity to a British pronunciation of the word <sɔ> [səʊ] but replaces the schwa with an [ɛ].

211 The quality of this diphthong can be compared to that of the Italian <eu>, as in neutro: [nɛuترو].

iu [ju]

Although this was originally “stressed on the first element,” Tolkien notes that this diphthong “by the Third Age was usually pronounced as a rising diphthong as yu in English yule.”

212

oi [ɔi]

Tolkien compares this diphthong to the English word boy. The quality of this diphthong can also be compared to the Italian diphthong [oi] found in the word voi: [voi].

215

ui [ui]

Tolkien compares this to the sound of the word ruin. Fauskanger, however, notes that this implies more separation than was intended, and suggests the alternative too young, with emphasis on the final [u] of the word too.

217

I suggest an alternate strategy: begin with the English diphthong [ɔ:ɪ], as in boy, and replace the [ɔ] with [u]. This should create an effect similar to what Tolkien described and functions as a diphthong rather than as two vowels in hiatus.

The sound can be compared to the diphthong used in the Italian words <lui>: [luɨ] and <altrui>: [altrui].

Singers should take care not to turn this diphthong into [wi]. The first vowel of the diphthong should be lengthened.

Table 4.2. Quenya Diphthongs.

---

211 Helge Fauskanger, “Quenya Course: Less 1-5,” 9.


214 Ibid.


216 J. R. R. Tolkien, The Return of the King, 394.

217 Helge Fauskanger, “Quenya Course: Less 1-5,” 10.
### Quenya Semi-consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s)</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>voiced palatal approximant&lt;sup&gt;218&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>[w]</td>
<td>voiced labial-velar approximant&lt;sup&gt;220&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tolkien identified this sound with that of the initial sound in the English word *you* and noted that the Elves saw this sound as the voiced partner of the digraph *<hy>*.<sup>219</sup>

Tolkien identifies this with the *<w>* used in English.<sup>221</sup>

Table 4.3. Quenya Semi-consonants.

### Quenya Unitary Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s)</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>unaspirated voiceless bilabial plosive&lt;sup&gt;222&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>unaspirated voiceless dental plosive&lt;sup&gt;226&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tolkien noted that the voiceless plosives, *<p>*, *<t>*; and *<k>*; had distinct unaspirated and aspirated forms in early Elvish speech.<sup>223</sup> The aspirated forms, represented by *<ph>*; *<th>*; and *<kh>*; eventually developed into voiceless fricatives.<sup>224</sup> The unaspirated plosives remained unchanged.<sup>225</sup>

See the entry for *<p>* regarding unaspirated voiceless plosives in Quenya. I assert that Fauskanger’s argument for a dental *l* also applies to *<t>*.<sup>227</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* ix; Appendix 2 to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, 164.


<sup>220</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

<sup>221</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 392.

<sup>222</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.


<sup>224</sup> Tolkien, *Parma Eldalamberon*, no.19, 71.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>226</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alphabet</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>unaspirated voiceless velar plosive&lt;sup&gt;228&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|          |         | See the entry for <p> regarding unaspirated voiceless plosives in Quenya. Tolkien replaced the letter <k> with <c> in his Roman orthography for Quenya for aesthetic reasons.<sup>229</sup>  
This letter never modifies to another value, such as [s] or [sf], as it does in English and other European languages. |
| f        | [f]     | voiceless labiodental fricative<sup>230</sup> |
| s        | [s]     | voiceless alveolar fricative |
| h        | [h], [x] | voiceless glottal fricative [initially], voiceless velar fricative [medially]<sup>231</sup> |
|          |         | The letter <h> represents a convergence of two separate consonants in Quenya, representing [h] and [x], respectively. Tolkien notes that the pronunciation of the latter consonant in earlier ages was [x] and that unlike German, “it was not markedly fronted by adjacent front vowels,” such as <i> or <e>.<sup>232</sup> By the Third Age, <h> had become [h] initially, when followed by a vowel.<sup>233</sup> When found medially, however, it retains its earlier pronunciation.<sup>234</sup> When <h> is found in combination with a number of consonants, it is treated as a digraph representing unitary consonants. See the digraphs that include <h> for further information. |

<sup>228</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.


<sup>230</sup> Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.


<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 401.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hy</th>
<th>[çʲ], [çȷ̊] or [☐]</th>
<th>palatalized voiceless palatal fricative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you see an empty box, question mark, or other non-IPA symbol above, please note that this is the symbol in question: Ḣ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolkien compared this digraph to the initial consonant of the English words <em>hew</em> and <em>huge</em>, although he also noted that it was “more frictional.” ²³⁵</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A specific description noted its similarity to a voiceless palatal fricative /ç/ combined with a voiceless [j] off-glide. ²³⁶ This consonant is considered part of a voiced/voiceless pair with [j]. ²³⁷ [çʲ] or [çȷ̊] could be used as narrower, more specific transcriptions of this sound, but I have chosen to follow Tolkien’s usage of the symbol [☐], in part to emphasize its status as a unitary consonant rather than a consonant cluster.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hw</th>
<th>[ɸʷ] or [hu]</th>
<th>voiceless rounded bilabial fricative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolkien compared this sound to the initial consonant in the word <em>white</em>, the voiceless labio-velar approximant: [ʍ]. ²³⁸ However, a more specific description of the sound noted that it “was more tense with closer lip-aperture and more friction than the voiceless wh of English.” ²³⁹ [ɸʷ] could be used as a narrower, more specific transcription of this sound, but I have followed Tolkien’s usage of the symbol [hu], in part to emphasize its status as a unitary consonant rather than a consonant cluster.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English speakers should take care not to substitute [w] for [ʍ], as is normal in several English dialects. ²⁴⁰ It is considered part of a voiced/voiceless pair with [w]. ²⁴¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²³⁸ Ibid.
²⁴⁰ LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 161.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>voiced bilabial nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>voiced dental nasal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>voiced labiodental fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>[l]; [[]]</td>
<td>voiced dental lateral; voiced advanced dental lateral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<n>, in most cases, is pronounced as in Italian, with a dental articulation. Similarly to Italian, it also incorporates into following velar consonants: see the consonants clusters <nc>, <ng>, and <nqu>.

Tolkien compared this consonant to “the sound of English initial l, as in let.” 242 He later described the Quenya l as a dental consonant. 243 The dental l occurs in Italian, “made with the tip of the tongue lightly touching the inside of the upper incisors.” 244 English speakers, especially Americans, should be aware of the difference between this and the alveolar l used in a majority of English words.

Tolkien noted that <l> was “to some degree ‘palatalized’” when following a fronting vowel and preceding a consonant, or when following a fronting vowel finally. 245 I interpret this as a slightly advanced, or farther forward, tongue position.

Ex: Eldar [e̞d̢ər], silmaril [si̞lm̢ər̢i̞]

Fauskanger notes that this consonant should be somewhat less palatalized than the [ʎ] used in Italian. 246 This partial palatalization is subtle to English speakers, but Tolkien noted that the difference in quality was important for accurate Quenya pronunciation. 247

r      | [r]           | voiced alveolar trill |

This is a lightly trilled r, as found in Italian and Spanish. No other rhotic consonant is acceptable—neither the voiced alveolar approximant, [ɹ], used in American English nor especially the uvular r, [ʁ], found in French and German, which Tolkien states the Elves found distasteful and was used in some Orkish languages and dialects. 248

---

244 Colorni, Singer’s Italian, 55.
246 Helge Fauskanger, “Quenya Course a,” 13.
248 Ibid.
This digraph once had the value of [l], the voiceless dental lateral fricative, which does not appear in English but is heard in Welsh. By the Third Age, this sound had merged with [l]. See the entry for <l> for further information on the Quenya pronunciation of this phoneme.

The earlier pronunciation should only be used with texts from earlier periods in Middle-earth’s history, such as the First Age. For further information, see the entry for <lh> in Sindarin.

This digraph once had a value of [r], the voiceless alveolar trill, which does not appear in English, but is heard in Welsh. By the Third Age, this sound had merged with [r]. See the entry for <r> for further information on the Quenya pronunciation of this phoneme.

The earlier pronunciation of this digraph should only be used with texts from earlier periods in Middle-earth’s history, such as the First Age. For further information, see the entry for <rh> in Sindarin.

This sound is found only in Pre-Exilic Quenya, and by the beginning of the First Age the [θ] had merged with [s]. The sound was once considered a notable feature of Noldorin Quenya, but by the time the Exiles had reached Middle-earth, it had disappeared.

In Tolkien’s works written before The Lord of the Rings, an obsolete letter from the Anglo-Saxon alphabet called thorn was used to represent [θ]: Þ, þ.

This sound is rarely seen in Quenya, retained only in a few rare or archaic words. In most cases it has merged with <r>.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ps</td>
<td>[ps]</td>
<td>voiceless bilabial plosive + voiceless alveolar fricative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not insert a shadow vowel between these two consonants: [ps], not [p's].


250 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ty</th>
<th>[cj]</th>
<th>unaspirated voiceless palatal plosive(^{251}) + voiced palatal approximant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolkien compared the pronunciation of this consonant cluster to that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the initial consonant “in English tune.” (^{252})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The voiceless palatal plosive does not appear in English, but it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>produced in Czech by (&lt;\text{tě}&gt;) and in Dutch by (&lt;\text{tj}&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ideal point articulation can be found close to where the narrowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the vocal tract occurs in ([j]) and should be farther forward than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>([k]) but farther back than ([t]).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ny</td>
<td>[nj]</td>
<td>voiced dental nasal + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ly</td>
<td>[lj]</td>
<td>voiced dental lateral approximant + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>[ks]</td>
<td>voiceless velar plosive + voiceless alveolar fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Although the single letter (&lt;\text{x}&gt;) is often used in the Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>orthography of Quenya, it represents a consonant cluster for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>purposes of determining syllabic stress. It should not be confused with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the IPA symbol ([x]), which is represented by (&lt;\text{h}&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu</td>
<td>/kw/</td>
<td>voiceless velar plosive + voiced labial-velar approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nw</td>
<td>/nw/</td>
<td>voiced dental nasal + voiced labial-velar approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This cluster was, in some cases, previously pronounced ([\text{nyw}])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and rendered in such cases as (&lt;\text{ñw}&gt;), when using Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>orthography. This usage had ceased by the end of the Third Age but could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>be used for texts from earlier periods. See the entry for (&lt;\text{ng}&gt;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and (&lt;\text{ngw}&gt;) for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pt</td>
<td>[طف³]</td>
<td>voiceless bilabial fricative + aspirated voiceless dental plosive(^{253})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This cluster has a number of unique features: the initial voiceless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bilabial plosive consonant becomes a fricative consonant ([طف³]), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the voiceless dental plosive becomes slightly aspirated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{251}\) J. R. R. Tolkien, *Parma Eldalamberon*, no. 19, 75. “In ky the \(k\) was fronted and dentalized \([\ldots]\). The resultant sound is here transcribed \(ty\). It was probably closely similar to \(t\) in English *tune.*”

\(^{252}\) Ibid.

\(^{253}\) Ibid., 81.
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>st</td>
<td>[stʰ]</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative + aspirated voiceless dental plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rare combination. The second consonant is only slightly aspirated; see &lt;pt&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ht</td>
<td>[xtʰ]</td>
<td>voiceless velar fricative + aspirated voiceless dental plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The second consonant is only slightly aspirated; see &lt;pt&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sty</td>
<td>[scj]</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative + voiceless palatal plosive + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hty</td>
<td>[çcj]</td>
<td>voiceless palatal fricative + voiceless palatal plosive + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolkien noted that, in this case, the fricative produced by &lt;h&gt; shifted forward from [x] to [ç].(^{254})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sc</td>
<td>[skʰ]</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative + aspirated voiceless velar plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rare combination. The second consonant is only slightly aspirated; see &lt;pt&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squ</td>
<td>[skw]</td>
<td>voiceless alveolar fricative + voiceless velar plosive + voiced labial-velar approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mp</td>
<td>[mp]</td>
<td>prenasalized voiceless bilabial plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is the same consonant cluster as in the English words <em>amputate</em> or <em>amp</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mb</td>
<td>[mb]</td>
<td>prenasalized voiced bilabial plosive(^{255})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is the same consonant cluster as in the English words <em>ambulance</em> or <em>umbridge</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nt</td>
<td>[nt]</td>
<td>prenasalized unaspirated voiceless dental plosive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{255}\) *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, 151.
This consonant cluster is similar to that found internally in the English word *anteater*, assuming an unaspirated *t*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nd</th>
<th>[nd]</th>
<th>prenasalized voiced dental plosive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nty</td>
<td>[ncj]</td>
<td>voiced dental nasal + voiceless palatal plosive + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndy</td>
<td>[njj]</td>
<td>voiced dental nasal + voiced palatal plosive + voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nc</td>
<td>[ŋk]</td>
<td>prenasalized unaspirated voiceless velar plosive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>[ŋg]</td>
<td>prenasalized voiced velar nasal / voiced velar nasal + voiced velar plosive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was a rare combination, which has no close analogue in English.

This combination was exceedingly rare, or perhaps even absent, in Noldorin Quenya, usually becoming &lt;ny&gt;.

While &lt;ndy&gt; was retained in the Vanyarin Quenya, pronunciation differences between the two dialects resulted in [ndʒ] for &lt;ndy&gt;. Thus, [ŋj] for &lt;ndy&gt; may exist only in theory.

This combination is comparable to the cluster in the English words *sink*, *uncle* and *anchor*.

English speakers should take care neither to voice nor to aspirate the second consonant and create either [ŋg] or [ŋkʰ]

This consonant cluster is comparable to that found in the English word “finger” [fɪŋɡə], not the single consonant of the word “singer” [sɪŋɡə].

The unitary consonant /ŋ/ was once used in Quenya, especially initially, and was rendered in Roman orthography as &lt;ñ&gt; in Tolkien’s texts that predate *The Lord of the Rings*. However, this sound merged with [n]. [ŋ] is now found only in consonant clusters, and Tolkien discarded &lt;ñ&gt;.

Spanish speakers should take care when reading early texts that make use of Quenya &lt;ñ&gt; not to substitute [ɲ], as in the Spanish word *niña*.

---


nqu  |  [ŋkw]  | voiced velar nasal + voiced velar plosive + voiced labial-velar approximant
---|---|---
ngw |  [ŋgw]  | voiced velar nasal + voiced velar plosive + voiced labial-velar approximant

This is comparable to the cluster in the Italian words *dunque* or *dovunque*.

Table 4.5. Quenya Consonant Clusters.

**Sample Transcription with Translation.** The following text is known as the “Oath of Cirion,” sworn by Cirion, a steward of Gondor, calling upon the Valar and naming Eru as witness, which was an act of great solemnity, rarely done. It established the Gondorian fief of Calenardhon as the independent Kingdom of Rohan, in perpetual alliance with Gondor, under the rule of Eorl, lord of the Eotheod and first king of Rohan, and his descendants: “Vanda sina termaruva Elenna-nóreo alcar enyalien ar Elendil Vorondo voronwë. Nai tiruvantes i hárar mahalmar i Númen ar i Eru i or ilyë mahalmar eä tennoio.”  

IPA       | [ˈvanda ˈsina termaruva ɛˈlenna noːrɛ alˈkar]
Quenya    | Vanda sina termaruva Elenna-nóreo alcar
Literal Translation^{259} | oath this through-will-abide starwards-land’s glory
Prose Translation^{260} | “This oath shall stand in the memory of the glory of the Land of the Star…”

IPA       | [ɛnˈjaliɛn ɛrˈɛləndil ɔvˈrɔndə ɔvˈrɔnwɛ]
Quenya    | enyalien ar Elendil Vorondo voronwë.
Literal Translation | for-the-recalling and Elf/Star-friend [the]Steadfast[-one’s] steadfastness


“...and of the faith of Elendil the Faithful,”

Quenya):

IPA: [nai̯ tīruvantes i hārār mahalmassen mi `nu:men]

Quenya:

Nai tīruvantes i hārār mahalmassen mi Nūmen

Literal Translation:

may-it-be-that they-will-guard-it the sitters [on-the]thrones of-the West.

Prose Translation:

“in the keeping of those who sit upon the thrones of the West…”

IPA: [ar i `ēru i ɔr `ilje ma`xalmar ɛa tēnnojo]

Quenya:

ar i Eru i or ilyē mahalmar ēa tennoio.

Literal Translation:

and the One who over all thrones is as-far-as-eternity.

Prose Translation:

“...and of the One who is above all thrones forever.”

Table 4.6. “Oath of Cirion,” IPA Transcription and Translation.

Sindarin Lyric Diction

General Features

Sindarin shares a number of spelling and pronunciation conventions with Quenya, owing to their shared origin and long mutual influence. Sindarin, like Quenya, distinguishes between monophthongs and diphthongs. Sindarin has more vowels than Quenya, and quality changes are more numerous because of length. Sindarin also has multiple degrees of vowel length, although this is not phonemic. Long vowels in polysyllabic words are indicated with an acute accent while a circumflex is used with long vowels in accented monosyllabic words; these are intended to be pronounced slightly longer than vowels with an acute accent.261 Like Quenya, Sindarin also distinguishes consonantal length when doubling. Sindarin words commonly end in consonants, which occurs rarely in Quenya. The syllabification and accentuation rules of the two languages

---

are the same. The charts below will, for the sake of brevity, omit the discussion of consonants identical to those in Quenya.

Sindarin has a complex system of sound changes, in which adjacent vowels and consonants can alter one another. A discussion of this system is beyond the scope of this project, but it is of secondary importance regarding pronunciation, because most of the sound changes are reflected in the spelling of the word. This issue is most important regarding internal consonant clusters, such as in the word Caradhras, which is a compound of the words caran, [karan], meaning “red,” and rhass [r̥ass], meaning “precipice” or “horn.” In this case, the combination of <n> and <rh> results in a change to <dh> and <ɾ>. Adjacent consonants in the same root can function as single phoneme digraphs, as in mhellyn [vɛllyn], while those in separate roots cannot, as in glamhoth [glʌmhɔθ]. Until such a time as a more expansive pronunciation guide is written, the singer is advised to obtain literal translations of song texts and note the divisions in compound words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sindarin Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>í, ī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e, é, ê</td>
<td>[ɛ], [ɛː], [ɛ::] open-mid front unrounded vowel (short, long, extra-long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a, á, â</td>
<td>[a], [aː], [a::] open back unrounded vowel (short, long, extra-long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o, ó, ô</td>
<td>[ɔ], [ɔː], [ɔ::] open-mid back rounded vowel (short, long, extra-long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>œ</td>
<td>[œ], [ø::] open-mid front rounded vowel, OR close-mid front rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>[ʊ] near-close near-back rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ú, ŭ</td>
<td>[uː], [u::] close back rounded vowel (long, extra-long)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y, ý, ſ́</td>
<td>[y], [yː], [y::] close front rounded vowel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This vowel, when lengthened, has the same quality as the vowel in Quenya.

Unlike in Quenya, this vowel does not change quality depending on length.²⁶⁴

Unlike in Quenya, this vowel does not change quality depending on length.²⁶⁵ Tolkien compares it to the word “hot” in English, noting that it is somewhat rounder than commonly pronounced.²⁶⁶

This is an obsolete sound by the Third Age, having merged with [ɛ]. It was used in the First Age, however, as in *Nirnaeth Arnaediad*.²⁶⁷ It may or may not have changed quality because of length.

The short u vowel in Sindarin is open in quality. Tolkien compares it to the vowel in the English word *foot*.²⁶⁸

This vowel has the same quality as the <u> of Quenya.

---


²⁶⁵ Ibid.


This vowel does not exist in Quenya. Tolkien compared it to the vowel in the French word *lune*. Tolkien mentioned no change in quality due to length.

Table 4.7. Sindarin Vowels.

### Sindarin Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s)</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ae        | [aɛ̯] | Tolkien notes that this diphthong has no closely corresponding sound in English, but describes it as similar to <ai>.  
270       |
| ai        | [ai]  | This diphthong is identical to that found in Quenya.                         |
| ei        | [ɛi̯] | Tolkien compares this diphthong to that in the English word *grey*.          |
| oe        | [ɔɛ̯] | Tolkien notes that this diphthong has no closely corresponding sound in English, but describes it as similar to <oi>.  
271       |
| ui        | [ui̯] | This diphthong is identical to that found in Quenya.                         |
| au, aw    | [au̯] | Tolkien compares this diphthong to that in the English words *loud* and *how*.  
272       |

The spelling <au> is used internally, and <aw> finally.

Table 4.8. Sindarin Diphthongs.

### Sindarin Semi-consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s)</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>voiced palatal approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Initially, when preceding a vowel. Ex: Ioreth [jɔrɛθ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>[w]</td>
<td>voiced labio-velar approximant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This semi-vowel has the same quality as in Quenya.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9. Sindarin Semi-consonants.

### Sindarin Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter(s)</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ch        | [x], [ɛ] | voiceless velar fricative OR voiceless palatal fricative  
274       |


270 Ibid., 394.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid., 391.

274 Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.
Tolkien compares this sound to the final consonant in the German word *Bach*.\(^{275}\) It is never pronounced as in English: [tʃ].

I share Fauskanger’s opinion that this consonant, in Sindarin, fronts or backs when adjacent to fronting or backing vowels, respectively.\(^{276}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>voiced dental plosive(^{277})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dh</td>
<td>[ð]</td>
<td>voiced dental fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>[f], [v]</td>
<td>voiceless labiodental fricative, or voiced labiodental fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>voiced velar plosive(^{280})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lh</td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>voiceless dental lateral fricative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mh</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>voiced labiodental fricative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the sound of *<th>* in the English words *these clothes*.\(^{278}\) The letter *<f>* is voiced when found finally.\(^{279}\) Otherwise it is identical to that in Quenya.

Tolkien compares this consonant to the sound in the words *give* and *get*.\(^{281}\) This letter never modifies to another value, such as [ʒ] or [dʒ], as it does in English and other European languages.

Unlike Quenya, this sound has been retained in Sindarin into the Third Age, although it is spelled differently (Quenya’s *<hl>* versus Sindarin’s *<lh>*).

It can be created by pronouncing *l* without voice, and allowing the turbulence around the sides of the tongue to create a hissing sound.


\(^{276}\) Helge Fauskanger, “Quenya Course: Less 1-5,” 11-13.

\(^{277}\) Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

\(^{278}\) J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 394.

\(^{279}\) Ibid., 391.

\(^{280}\) Foreword to the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, ix.

This digraph once produced the voiced labiodental nasal, [ɱ], but this is now an obsolete sound, which merged with <v> at least during the First Age, perhaps earlier. It should only be used when dealing with archaic texts.

[ɱ] is found in the Italian word *invece* [im Tếtɛ] or in some pronunciations of the English words *invent* [im颌t] or *invisible* [imzǐvəl].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ng</th>
<th>[ŋg]; [ŋ]</th>
<th>prenasalized voiced velar nasal / voiced velar nasal + voiced velar plosive / voiced velar nasal [when final]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|    |            | When found internally, <ng> represents the consonant cluster [ŋg], as in the English word “finger” [fɪŋɡə], not the single consonant of the word “singer” [sɪŋɡə].
|    |            | When found finally, this digraph forms the voiced velar nasal, unitary consonant, [ŋ], as in the English words “ring” [rɪŋ] and “sing” [sɪŋ]. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ph</th>
<th>[f], [fː]</th>
<th>voiceless labiodental fricative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;ph&gt; in Sindarin represents a modification of &lt;pp&gt;, owing to Sindarin’s complex mutational system, not discussed here. When found medially, it represents a lengthened voiceless labiodental fricative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rh</th>
<th>[ɾ]</th>
<th>voiceless alveolar trill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unlike Quenya, this sound has been retained in Sindarin into the Third Age, although it is spelled differently (Quenya’s &lt;hr&gt; versus Sindarin’s &lt;rh&gt;). It can be created by “whispering” a trilled r.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>th</th>
<th>[θ]</th>
<th>voiceless dental fricative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unlike Quenya, this sound has been retained in Sindarin into the Third Age.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10. Sindarin Consonants.

---


**Sample transcription with translation.** This text is known as the “King’s Letter,” sent from Aragorn to Samwise Gamgee to inform him of an impending visit in a discarded epilogue to *The Lord of the Rings*:


A Pherhael ar am Merîl suîlad uin aran o Minas Tirith nelchaenênen uin Echuir.$^{284}$

The first two words are Aragorn’s regnal name, in Quenya. *Elessar* [elessar] means “Elfstone,” referring to an ancient jewel brooch that Galadriel gave to Aragorn in Lorien, which was said to have healing powers.$^{285}$ *Telcontar* [telˈkɔntar] means “Strider,” and is the name Aragorn chose for his royal house.$^{286}$ Literal and general translations of the Sindarin text are provided with the IPA transcription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Sindarin Text</th>
<th>Literal Translation</th>
<th>General Translation$^{287}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>['aragɔrn araˈθɔmiɔn ɛˈðelharn ˈaran ˈgɔndɔr]</td>
<td>Aragorn Arathornion Edhelharn, aran Gondor</td>
<td>Aragorn Arathorn-son Elfstone king Gondor</td>
<td>“Aragorn, son of Arathorn, the Elfstone, king of Gondor…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


$^{286}$ Ibid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Sindarin Text</th>
<th>Literal Translation</th>
<th>General Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ar hir i mbair annui aŋ’glennaθa i]</td>
<td>ar Hîr i Mbar Annui, anglennatha i</td>
<td>and Lord [of]-the lands western, will-approach the</td>
<td>“… and Lord of the Westlands, will approach the…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[varan’duijniant ’ërin ’doloθen ’εθoijl ’εgor ben]</td>
<td>Varanduiniant erin dolothen Ethuil, egor ben</td>
<td>Brandywine-bridge on-the eighth Spring, or in-the</td>
<td>“… bridge of Baranduin on the eighth day of Spring, or in the…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ge’nediad ’drannail ’ërin ’gwirθ ’edwen ar ε ani:ra]</td>
<td>genediad Drannail erin Gwirth edwen. Ar e anira</td>
<td>calendar of-the-Shire on-the April second. And he desires</td>
<td>“… Shire-reckoning the second day of April. And he desires…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[’ennas sui̯l’annad ’vellyn i::n fajn ’εdregol</td>
<td>ennas suilannad mhellyn în phain: edregol</td>
<td>there greetings friends his all especially</td>
<td>“… to greet there all his friends: in especial…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ε a’ni:ra ’ti:rad i ’çerdir ’pherhael]</td>
<td>e anira tirad i Cherdir Perhael</td>
<td>he desires the-seeing [of]-the master half-wise</td>
<td>“… he desires to see Master Samwise…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i ’sennui ’panthael ’estaθar aen]</td>
<td>(i sennui Panthael estathar aen)</td>
<td>who rather full-wise to-be-called ---</td>
<td>“… (who ought to be called Fullwise)…”^288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.11. “The King’s Letter,” IPA Translation and Transcription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Sindarin Text</th>
<th>Literal Translation</th>
<th>General Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>['kɔndir i drann ar 'mɛrl bəss di:n]</td>
<td>Condir i Drann, ar Meril bess din,</td>
<td>mayor [of-]the Shire, and rose wife his-own</td>
<td>“… Mayor of the Shire, and <em>Rose</em> his wife,…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ar 'ɛlanɔr 'mɛrl glɔ'rənniəl ar ejɾiən]</td>
<td>ar Elanor, Meril, Gorfinniel, ar Eirien</td>
<td>and pimpernel, rose, gold-hair-daughter, and daisy</td>
<td>“… and <em>Elanor</em>, <em>Rose</em>, Goldilocks, and <em>Daisy</em>, his daughters;…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>['sellath di:n ar jɔrhaɬ 'ɡɛlɬ 'kɔrdɔv]</td>
<td>sellath din; ar Iorhæl, Gelir, Cordof</td>
<td>daughters[[-all]] his-own; and old-wise, happy-one, [small apple],</td>
<td>“… his daughters; and <em>Frodo</em>, <em>Merry</em>, <em>Pippin</em>,…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ar 'baravɔrn 'jɔnnaθ də:n]</td>
<td>ar Baravorn, ionnath din.</td>
<td>and home-stay, sons[[-all]] his-own</td>
<td>“… and <em>Hamfast</em>, his sons…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a 'fɛrhaɬ ar am 'mɛrl 'suɬlad uin 'aran]</td>
<td>A Pherhæl ar am Meril suilad uin aran</td>
<td>to half-wise and to rose greeting of-the king</td>
<td>“… to Samwise and Rose, the King’s greetings…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ 'minas 'tirθ nel'xæɲeñe uin 'eqəɾuɾ]</td>
<td>o Minas Tîrith nelchaenè uin Echuir</td>
<td>from [the] Tower [of the] Guard thirty-first of-the Stirring.</td>
<td>“… from Minas Tîrith, the thirty-first day of the Stirring…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Swann described *The Road Goes Ever On* as a “Lieder song-cycle,” one among the many he composed in his lifetime. He thought that many song composers sacrificed the text they set for the sake of their music, and sought to do otherwise in his own creative process. Swann felt that the essential goal of song writing was “putting music to ideas.” He internalized the emotional content of his song texts, and let the idea of the poetry and his own memories and feelings combine the words with music.

Swann described songs one through six as similar to the [art songs] of Franz Schubert. Swann’s tuneful melodies and use of the piano as a character to highlight features of text or to establish a mood or scene are characteristic of Schubert’s Lieder. The harmonic language of *The Road Goes Ever On* is consistently tonal, with a few notable exceptions.

The composer occasionally makes use of extended chromaticism in harmonic sequences or to blur the tonal center as an affect. While standard major/minor tonality dominates the harmonic language of the cycle, Joanna Kokot makes note of brief moments of modality in songs one and six. Song five has no real harmony to speak of, as it is a monodic chant, but makes use of the tonal system in its melodic organization.

The cycle employs the “quasi-classical, quasi-folk” idiom of Swann’s revue compositional style, with each member of the cycle leaning more toward one end of this

---

289 Donald Swann, foreword to the third edition of *The Road Goes Ever On*, x.

290 Donald Swann, *Swann’s Way*, 50.


Some features of this idiom include an emphasis on text and vocal melody, added major sixth chords, “marchlike ‘oompah’” rhythms in the accompaniment, or an accompaniment consisting of chordal harmony with simple harmonic function and octave reinforcement of the vocal line.  

Swann sought out “evocative poems of mood and atmosphere,” to set to music, noting that the “expressiveness, clarity, and concision” of the short poems in *The Lord of the Rings* suited them well for use as song texts. He chose a collection of verse united by a common theme of movement, of being “on the road.” “The Road” appeared frequently as a literary motif in Tolkien’s writings, representing the freedom of adventure at the risk of danger, contrasting with the safety of home. Within the context of Tolkien’s Legendarium it also served as a metaphor for life, and associating human life with the idea of a journey: roads are independent, yet connected to all other roads and part of a larger “Road,” in the same way that each person’s life is independent, and yet connected to all others and part of a larger shared history. Each road, like each life, has a beginning, middle, and end, with destinations and stops along the way, but the connections among roads mean that each contributes to something larger than any one component.

---

294 Phemister, “Fantasy Set to Music,” 76.
295 Donald Swann, foreword to *The Road Goes Ever On*, vi.
296 Ibid.
Swann advised performers of the cycle “to give maximum clarity to the words, not too much bel canto: sing as if to explain.”298 The author suggests that this can be achieved by avoiding excessive focus on tone production at the expense of text clarity, and also by the use of English consonants and vowels, rather than a “singerese” pronunciation of English text with sounds foreign to English speakers.299 Singers should observe the “innate accents of inflection” in the text, leading to clear communication and “expressive delivery of the language.”300 Good vocal technique should, of course, be maintained, but proper use of vowel modification and legato are compatible with clear articulation of text. Remember that many of Swann’s collaborators, including the first singer to perform and record the cycle, were performers of opera.

Swann noted that “if the song cycle is performed exactly as written, there should be no interruptions for applause, since the key and mood relationships are built in.”301 However, the composer performed these songs in various keys over the course of his life, both in and out of sequence, and noted that the cycle was “written for Middle-voice and I have evidence that a transposition does not harm them.”302 Swann’s preference for performance of the full cycle would be in the original key, with the exception of “Lúthien Tinúviel,” for which the composer suggested a transposition to the key of D to incorporate it into the earlier compositions, or in

298 Donald Swann, foreword to the third edition of The Road Goes Ever On, x.

299 LaBouff, Singing and Communicating in English, 4-5.

300 Ibid., 6.

301 Donald Swann, foreword to The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle, viii.

302 Donald Swann, foreword to the third edition of The Road Goes Ever On, x.
transposition that maintains the original key relationships.\textsuperscript{303} However, Leon Berger, archivist of the Donald Swann archive, and friend and collaborator of the composer, noted to the author that the above statements regarding transposition described an “ideal performance.”\textsuperscript{304} Berger recalled that “Swann cut his teeth in musical revue, where you adjust the song to the performer and not vice-versa,” and conjectured that the composer “[would] have been pragmatic and would rather the cycle be performed than not performed!!”\textsuperscript{305} Thus, any performer should try first to perform these songs with the original key relationships intact, but transpose if and when necessary.

The poems were recited by several different characters in widely varying settings, within the context of Tolkien’s Legendarium.\textsuperscript{306} Kokot asserts a dual interpretive context within The Road Goes Ever On: performers can enact the individual characters of the novel within each song-text, or can portray the songs as if part of a more unified, distinct from the original texts.\textsuperscript{307} Thus, a performer can choose to dramatize the shift of perspective within the original source texts, or follow Swann’s later conception of the soloist as portraying Bilbo Baggins, relating accounts of his and his friends’ journeys, before coming to the end of his own Road.\textsuperscript{308}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{303} Donald Swann, The Road Goes Ever On, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed, 77.
\textsuperscript{304} Leon Berger, facebook message to the author, March 3, 2016.
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Donald Swann, foreword to The Road Goes Ever On, viii.
\textsuperscript{307} Joanna Kokot, “Dynamics in Correlation,” 331—2.
\textsuperscript{308} Donald Swann, foreword to the second edition of The Road Goes Ever On, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., ix.
\end{flushright}
Performers should note that the composer left such questions of characterization and interpretation “entirely to the discretion of each singer.”

The following performance analyses address musical accuracy and vocal technique only occasionally, as these are within the auspices of the singer to prepare. Rather, performance advice from the author primarily concerns the relationship between the text and music, and how the performers can express that relationship effectively and beautifully.

**The Road Goes Ever On**

Donald Swann mistakenly identified Bilbo Baggins as the speaker of the poem set in the first song of the cycle. Although this text has its origins in Bilbo’s poetry, and at least two iterations were recited by Bilbo in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the version set to music here was recited, and possibly adapted, by Frodo Baggins. Frodo, Sam, and Pippin have just stopped for lunch on their second day out of the Shire, on their way to Buckland. Frodo, staring into the east, sings to himself:

The Road goes ever on and on
   Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the road has gone,
   And I must follow, if I can.
Pursuing it with weary feet,
   Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
   And whither then? I cannot say.

---

309 Donald Swann, foreword to *The Road Goes Ever On*, viii.
310 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
Sam asks Frodo if the poem was Bilbo’s, to which Frodo replies he cannot remember, and that it may be a poem that Bilbo wrote, or an adaptation of one. Frodo goes on to describe Bilbo’s belief that all roads were part of one Road, which could lead an unsuspecting traveler anywhere.\footnote{J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Fellowship of the Ring}, 83.} Frodo later recalls that Bilbo had described roads as having a sort of will, and that all roads were part of one greater Road.

Shippey notes that the Road becomes a metaphor for life as a journey, and that each iteration of the poem reflects the opinions and attitudes of the person reciting it: how they feel about the road travelled thus far, and the road to come.\footnote{Shippey, \textit{J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century}, 190.} The importance of the idea of the road gives unity not only to the travelling theme of the cycle, but also identifies the first melodic theme, as seen in Figure 5.1.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.1.png}
\caption{\textit{The Road Goes Ever On},” mm. 1—3.}
\end{figure}

This “road theme” is described by Kokot as being tonally ambiguous, and can be seen as either a use of the B-flat mixolydian mode, or as a melodic theme in the dominant tonal area within E-flat Major.\footnote{Joanna Kokot, “Dynamics in Correlation,” 323.} The ambiguity of this theme as being either something whole and
independent or causally linked to a larger, less immediately obvious whole, is reminiscent of the ambiguity of the road. Each is both independent and whole in and of itself, but also part of something larger. Furthermore, this theme returns in songs six and seven, bringing a thematic unity on both musical and contextual levels.

This first theme, present in measures 1 through 4, are indicated to be sung piano, and could even be sung in half-voice, as if the performer, like Frodo, is speaking to themselves and has not yet taken notice of the audience. The words, “And I must follow,” communicate a necessity to take action, and begin a swell in both the voice and piano, as indicated by Swann, building to poco f on the words “Pursuing it with weary feet.”

Swann makes use of extended chromaticism in the piano and ascending chromatic half-steps in the vocal line to give an impression of confusion, as if the road has become difficult to find, as seen in Figure 5.2.

![Figure 5.2. “The Road Goes Ever On,” mm. 12—15.](image)

This lack of surety is communicated in part by the soft dynamic called for by Swann, and a slightly aspirate tone can give the impression of a whisper, as if the performer is afraid to give their thoughts full voice. The return of the road theme in measure 17 signals a return of surety of the path, and the performer should give noticeable evidence of relief via a fuller vocal tone and
slightly louder dynamic level. Swann describes the final half cadence as a “question mark,” and Kokot notes that it is meant to drive the performer onward, indicating a journey incomplete.

**Upon the Hearth the Fire is Red**

The text for song two comes from the third chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The hobbits Frodo, Sam, and Pippin, while traveling east to Buckland had narrowly avoided an encounter with a Ringwraith, one of the “most terrible servants” of the Dark Lord Sauron. This distressed the hobbits for hours after the Ringwraith failed to find them and moved on. As their anxiety subsided, they began to sing a hobbit folk tune set to words written by Bilbo Baggins.

Upon the hearth the fire is red,
Beneath the roof there is a bed,
But not yet weary are our feet,
Still round the corner we may meet
A sudden tree or standing stone
That none have seen but we alone.
          Tree and flower and leaf and grass,
          Let them pass! Let them pass!
          Hill and water under sky,
          Pass them by! Pass them by!

Still round the corner there may wait
A new road or a secret gate
And though we pass them by today
Tomorrow we may come this way
And take the hidden paths that run
Toward the Moon or to the Sun
          Apple, thorn, and nut and sloe,
          Let them go! Let them go!
          Sand and stone and pool and dell,
          Fare you well! Fare you well!

Home is behind, the world ahead,
And there are many paths to tread
Through shadows to the edge of night,
Until the stars are all alight.
Then world behind and home ahead,
We’ll wander back to home and bed.
          Mist and twilight, cloud and shade,
          Away shall fade! Away shall fade!
Fire and lamp, and meat and bread! 
And then to bed! And then to bed.\textsuperscript{317}

Swann directs “Upon the Hearth…” to be sung “Lively,” giving a tempo of 116 for the half note.\textsuperscript{318} The original key is G major, briefly modulating to b minor in the third verse, with occasional tonal wandering through secondary tonal levels. Among the songs of \textit{The Road Goes Ever On}, “Upon the Hearth” is the most reminiscent of the popular and folk genres with which Swann was so familiar. Phemister describes the presence of an “almost continuous march-like oompah” rhythm in the accompaniment as a noteworthy popular music element, as shown in Figure 5.3.\textsuperscript{319}

![Figure 5.3. “Upon the Hearth the Fire is Red,” mm. 1—4.](image)

By the time the hobbits had begun singing this song, “the feeling of disquiet [had] left them.”\textsuperscript{320} Thus, there should be no obvious element of anxiety or fear in a performance of this piece. Time for breaths can be difficult to find in this song; the vocalist should avoid the


\textsuperscript{318} Donald Swann, \textit{The Road Goes Ever On}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 4.

\textsuperscript{319} William Phemister, “Fantasy Set to Music,” 76.

\textsuperscript{320} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Fellowship of the Ring}, 86.
temptation to clip the ends of phrases in an attempt to catch a breath while maintaining a strict tempo. If a breath is needed in measure 4 after the word “bed” (seen in the example above), I advise the pianist to add just enough time to beat 4 for the singer to breathe. Mr. Elvin, of the Swann/Elvin recording of this cycle, instead changes the value of measure 6, beat 4, on the word “Still” from a quarter note to an eighth note, which I believe slightly changes the character of the onset of the phrase.

The first sixteen measures should establish a relaxed sense of excitement, and enjoyment of travel on the road, with a full, open timbre, perhaps even slightly more open than usual in order to give the sense of a folk singer, in keeping with Swann’s suggestion to sing “not too bel canto.” The dynamic, as well, can be slightly louder than the mf called for by Swann, in order to contrast with the next section.

Beginning in beat 2 of measure 10, with the words “A sudden tree or standing stone,” a subtle element of mystery should be introduced, perhaps with a slightly aspirate tone, an increase in cover to darken the vocal timbre, or a slight reduction in the dynamic level, suggesting the newness and mystery of a tree or stone that no one but the singer has seen. This change in character is reflected by a change from broken chords to a more sostenuto texture in the piano accompaniment, as shown in Figure 5.4. The original tempo, melodic theme, and harmonic character return in measure 19, and continue through the end of the first verse. This tertiary pattern of the excitement of adventure, mystery, and return home is repeated in the second verse, in measures 31 through 57.
The third verse introduces transitional harmonies leading to a new tonal section. This new tonal area expresses a sense of mystery and fear of the unknown. Swann appropriately suggests that the vocalist sings much more quietly at “Through shadows to the edge of night, / Until the stars are all alight.”

The vocalist can use similar techniques as those suggested above to further accentuate the character of this section. By measure 73, the “relaxed/excited” tone returns, and continues throughout the end of the song.

**In the Willow-meads of Tasarinan**

The text for this song is a chant delivered by the Ent, Treebeard, to the two young Hobbits, Merry and Pippin. Those unfamiliar with Ents should think of Treebeard as an exceedingly long-lived, ambulatory tree, resembling an old man covered in bark and moss. On their way to Treebeard’s home in Fangorn forest, the Hobbits and he discussed changes in the world, especially in its forests, that he had seen in his lifetime. Treebeard expressed regret at the

---


loss of the wide woods: “there was all one wood once upon a time from here to the mountains of
Lune, and this was just the East End.” 323

Treebeard fell silent, striding along, and yet making hardly a sound with his great feet. Then he began to hum again, and passed into a murmuring chant. Gradually the hobbits became aware that he was chanting to them:

*In the willow-meats of Tasarinan I walked in the Spring.*
*Ah! The sight and the smell of the Spring in Nan-Tasarion!*
*And I said that was good.*
*I wandered in Summer in the elm-woods of Ossiriand.*
*Ah! the light and the music in the summer by the seven rivers of Ossir!*
*And I thought that was best.*
*To the beeches of Neldoreth I came in the Autumn.*
*Ah! the gold and the red and the sighing of leaves in the Autumn of Taur-na-neldor!*
*It was more than my desire.*
*To the pine-trees upon the highland of Dorthonion I climbed in the Winter.*
*Ah! the wind and the whiteness and the black branches of Winter upon Orod-na-Thôn!*
*My voice went up and sang in the sky!*
*And now all those lands lie under the wave.*
*And I walk in Ambarôna, in Tauremorna, in Aldalômê,*
*In my own land, in the country of Fangorn,*
*Where the roots are long,*
*And the years lie thicker than the leaves*  
*In Tauremoralômê.* 324

The prose text has two thematic sections. The first is made up of four stanzas of three lines each. Treebeard describes his journey in ages past, through various lands in a different season, and then gives an expression of satisfaction or joy. In the second section, the prose text that makes up the remainder of the song, he abruptly recalls that those lands are all gone, and returns to the present time and place.

323 Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 72.

324 Ibid.
The text expresses sorrow for loss and change, which is a common theme in Tolkien’s
Legendarium, but also for Treebeard in particular. However, he is less melancholy in his
memory of ages past than are the Elves, who “tended to regret rather than joy.”\textsuperscript{325} He still takes
pleasure in the present and adapts to changing times more easily than the Elves.\textsuperscript{326} This aspect of
Treebeard’s personality is important for the singer to remember, when performing “In the
Willow-meads…” There is sadness at the passing of what came before, but not to the point of
despair.

Originally in the key of d minor, this song has the lowest tessitura and range in the cycle,
reaching down to A3 in the vocal line. Swann’s comfort with the transposition of this cycle
notwithstanding, I feel that this song is uniquely well suited to a low voice. The depth of the
vocal line and parallel octaves in the lower extremes of the piano’s range conjure the rumbling
voice of a fourteen foot tall tree-man. The language of the Ents is described as “slow, sonorous,
[… ] repetitive and long-winded.”\textsuperscript{327} A darkened vocal color, within the limits of good vocal
production, and long, legato phrases should evoke such qualities.

Swann suggests the song be performed “Resolutely, not fast,” giving a tempo of quarter
note equals 120. The piano enters softly, with a rhythmic theme in the left hand that persists
throughout much of song, shown in Figure 5.5.

In a song cycle devoted to movement and ‘the road,’ calling this a “walking theme” may
be overly simplistic, especially since it is never heard again in a set full of walking songs.

“Treebeard’s theme” may be more appropriate: its winding melodic contour and persistent

\textsuperscript{325} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The History of Middle-earth}, vol. 10, \textit{Morgoth’s Ring}, ed. Christopher

\textsuperscript{326} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Two Towers}, 71.

\textsuperscript{327} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Return of the King}, 409.
rhythmic drive seem an appropriate reference to Treebeard’s account of his countless years wandering across Middle-earth.

Figure 5.5. “In the Willow-meads of Tasarinan,” mm. 1—4.

The singer should enter softly, and crescendo slowly throughout the first verse, as if Treebeard’s murmuring chant is becoming slowly clearer to the audience. “In the willow-meads of Tasarinan, I walked in the Spring./Ah! the sights and the smells of the Spring in Nan-Tasarion!/And I said that was good.”328 The singer should give a slight swell on the word “Tasarinan,” as if saying the name, for what may be the first time in centuries, brings Treebeard joy. “Tasarinan” [ta'sarinăn] and “Nan-Tasarion” [nan ta'sarion] were the Quenya names for a willow filled valley in First Age Beleriand, and literally mean “Willow-vale” and “Valley [of the]-Willows,” respectively.329 The singer should bring out the repeated initial “s” in the second line, calling attention to the alliteration and illustrating Treebeard’s pleasure in the memory of the long-gone spring. By the end of this first verse, the singer should have reached a dynamic level of $mp$ or just a bit more.


329 Christopher Tolkien, index to *The Silmarillion*, 359.
The tessitura and range are higher in the second verse, and Swann suggests a slight increase in both tempo and volume. The “Treebeard theme” disappears, and the chordal accompaniment of this verse provides more color, and less defined motion than in the first. Treebeard has forgotten himself for a moment, lost in his memories of the past. “I wandered in Summer in the elm-woods of Ossiriand. / Ah! the light and the music in the Summer by the Seven Rivers of Ossir! / And I thought that was best.” “Ossiriand” [ɒs'ɪrɪənd] was the Sindarin name of a land in eastern Beleriand, and means “Seven-River-Land.” This brighter, more energetic character should persist through both this verse and the next, expressing Treebeard’s mental departure from the present and its problems, into the nostalgia of his youth.

In mm. 22-3, seen in Figure 5.6, the eighth note groupings should be seen as leading toward the quarter note that follows, noting that Swann provided rhythmic momentum leading to the most evocative words in the phrase: light and summer. Care must be taken to provide proper accentuation in m. 25, on the first syllable of the word “Seven,” and not overemphasizing the second because of its higher pitch and open vowel quality.

Figure 5.6. “In the Willow-meads of the Tasarinan,” mm. 23—6.


The Treebeard theme returns in mm. 28-9: “To the Beeches of Neldoreth I came in the Autumn. / Ah! the gold and the red and the sighing of leaves in the Autumn of Taur-na-Neldor.” “Neldoreth” ['nɛldɔːrɛθ] and “Taur-na-Neldor” ['təːur na 'nɛldɔr] were Sindarin names for a beech forest in northern Doriath during the First Age, and meant “Beeches- [place]” and “Forest of Beeches,” respectively.333 Beginning in measure 32, as seen in Figure 5.7, Swann includes a sextuplet melodic gesture in the piano accompaniment, illustrating leaves blowing in the wind. While still maintaining the increased energy of the previous verse and continuing to deliver the text clearly, the singer should allow for the importance of the piano in mm. 32-4, so as not to cover up the text painting device.

Both singer and pianist diminuendo in m. 37, as the return of the Treebeard theme signals the transition into a new verse. This time, however, the theme persists. I believe this indicates a stronger association with the present, and its troubles. This is partially supported by the location Treebeard recalls in this verse.

![Figure 5.7. “In the Willow-meads of Tasarinan,” mm. 31—33.](image)

“To the pine-trees upon the high-land of Dorthonion I climbed in the Winter. Ah! the wind and the whiteness and the black branches of Winter upon Orod-na-Thôn! My voice went up

333 Tolkien, The Silmarillion, 343.
and sang in the sky.” The terms “Dorthonion” [dɔrθɒnɪən] and “Orod-na-Thôn” [ɔrɔd na θɔːn] are both Sindarin, meaning “Land [of the]-Pines” and “Mountain of Pines” respectively.334 This land was surrounded by mountains, and the dense pine forests eventually became full of a dark, mysterious presence so powerful that not even Orcs would enter. Swann gives an indication of \textit{mp} and \textit{misterioso} to both performers. This direction could be used to communicate that Treebeard had braved the dark enchantments of that forest, seeking to cure the evil there in his capacity as a Shepherd of the Trees. This may not have been Swann’s original intention, as the direction is present even in the first edition of the song cycle, which was published years before that information became available with the publication of \textit{The Silmarillion}. However, Tolkien could have given Swann such information before the cycle’s publication. Ultimately, it is impossible to know for sure. If this causes a performer to disagree with the above motivation, it could alternatively signify the quiet of the forested highlands in winter. In m. 43, Swann introduced a low tremolo in the piano’s bass line, suggesting wind driven flurries of snow, as seen in Figure 5.8.

The penultimate line of this section ends with a caesura, setting apart Treebeard’s final exclamation: “My voice went up and sang in the sky.” This is marked \textit{forte}, is separated from the rest of the song temporally, and contains the highest note in the vocal line; Swann could not have highlighted the climax of the song more clearly. Singers should take care to communicate Treebeard’s exhilaration at conquering the darkness of those woods, or perhaps his sense of adventure that the northern wilderness afforded in ages past.

The Treebeard theme returns, bringing with it the somber statement that all of the lands of which he has spoken have been destroyed. Swann indicates this phrase to be sung piano, and it should be the emotional nadir of the song. The music softens to pianissimo as Treebeard returns to the modern day, using poetic Quenya names to describe Fangorn forest: Ambaróna [amba'ro:na] meaning approximately “[forest or land of the] Sunrise,” Tauremorna [ta:ure'mɔrna], meaning “forest-black,” and Aldalómë [alda'lo:me], meaning “tree-twilight.” 335

Singers should note that the word “Ambaróna” is misspelled “Ambarona” in the song-cycle, lacking the acute accent on the letter <ó>. This would be less important if the word were Sindarin, but indicates a quality change from open to close in Quenya.

Swann indicates a slightly louder delivery beginning in m. 61, beat 3, bringing Treebeard out of his sad reminiscence, remembering the good in both what came before and in what he has now. The ending of the vocal line can be either bittersweet or quietly happy, but should have a sense of ambiguity. The piano postlude continues on with the “Treebeard theme,” for the last seven measures, noting that Treebeard’s journey continues on through the ages.

In Western Lands

Samwise Gamgee, searching for Frodo in the Orc fortress of Cirith Ungol, has reached what he believes to be a dead-end and is lost without a light in the darkness. Surprising even himself, he begins to sing folk tunes of the Shire, keeping up his courage in the midst of his enemies. “And then suddenly new strength rose in him, and his voice rang out, while words of his own came unbidden to fit the simple tune.”336

In western lands beneath the Sun
the flowers may rise in Spring,
The trees may bud, the waters run,
the merry finches sing.
Or there maybe ‘tis cloudless night
and swaying beeches bear
the Elven-stars as jewels white
amid their branching hair.

Though here at journey’s end I lie
in darkness buried deep,
beyond all towers strong and high,
beyond all mountains steep,
above all shadows rides the Sun
and Stars forever dwell:

I will not say the day is done,
nor bid the stars farewell.337

Sam experiences multiple spontaneous vocalizations in the face of danger throughout The Lord of the Rings. In one of these, the young hobbit cries out to Varda for protection in Sindarin, which he did not speak; Tolkien compares this spontaneous invocation of the divine for protection to speaking in tongues.338 Though not identical, this spontaneous outpouring of song

336 Tolkien, The Return of the King, 185.
337 Ibid.
could be seen as similar: a vocal manifestation of strength against the fear of death or defeat. I interpret Swann’s suggestion to sing “Steadily” as not just a tempo indication, but also as an indication of a steady rhythm and careful, even application of tone, as if the singer is taking extra care to appear strong despite inner anxiety. The mp dynamic at the beginning should still have an element of quiet intensity, which can be accomplished with a fully supported, legato line, and a slightly exaggerated pronunciation of consonants. The text describes beautiful, familiar lands far away, as if to dispel the ugliness and danger surrounding Samwise. This idea can be emphasized with a slightly headier tone and a slight increase of the legato connection between vowels at the words “the Elven-stars as jewels white,” highlighting the beauty of the starry sky.

Swann notes that the transitional material between the first and second verses should be played “a little detached,” and a slightly marcato articulation of the line could be introduced into the vocal entrance at the words “Though here at journey’s end I lie in darkness buried deep.” This, combined with a slightly louder dynamic level, should convey a sense of defiance against the forces of darkness, assuring both oneself and any who here, that beauty resides beyond all the reach of any evil.

The defiant climax arrives in measure 32, with a swell to forte in the vocal line and a call for “smoothness,” from the composer, which I interpret for the vocalist as a full, open timbre and supported legato line. This musical moment calls for a more bel canto sound than might be used elsewhere in this cycle.
Before the end of the song, the line “I will not say the day is done, nor bid the stars farewell,” is repeated three times. A change in dynamics and tone quality are preferred as a means of creating interpretative contrast between the first statement of this text and the second. The performers should take care to maintain a steady tempo through measures 35 and 38, otherwise the *poco ritardando* called for in the third iteration of this text, seen in Figure 5.10, will seem redundant and have less impact.

After having escaped from the horrors of the fallen underground kingdom of Moria, the Fellowship rested and recuperated in the nearby forest realm of Lorien. Galadriel, a Noldorin
princess and one of the rulers of Lórien, offered the Namárië text as a farewell to the Fellowship as they departed her forest.

_Ai! laurië lantar lassi súrinen,
Yéni únótime ve rámar aldaron!
Yéni ve lintë yuldar avánier
mi oromardi lisse-miruvóreva
Andúnë pella, Vardo tellumar
nu luini yassen tintilar i eleni
ómaryo airetári-lírinen._

_Sí man i yulma nin enchantuva?_

_An si Tintallë Varda Oiolossëo
ve fanyar máryat Elentári ortanë,
ar ilyë tier undulávé lumbulë;
ar sindanóriello caita mornië
i falmalinnar imbë met, ar hisië
untúpa Calaciryo miri oialë.
Sí vanwa ná, Rómello vanwa, Valimar!_

_Namárië! Nai hirevalyë Valimar!
Nai elyë hireva. Namárië!_339

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Swann’s first arrangement of the poem “Namárië” no longer exists. The composer replaced it with a plainsong setting based on a chant supplied by Professor Tolkien, which was published in the song-cycle.340 Swann believed that Tolkien’s chant-like theme “expressed the words ideally, not only the sadness of the word ‘Namarie,’ and the interjection of ‘Ai!’ but equally the ritual mood of the Elves.”341

“Namárië” stands out from the rest of the cycle in a number of ways. Its monophonic style distinguishes it from the rest of the cycle’s homophonic idiom. Unlike the _bel canto_ or


341 Donald Swann, foreword to the second edition of _The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle_, vi.
“quasi-folk” vocal style of expected of the vocalist elsewhere, “Namárië” calls for a declamatory intonation of a lengthy, entirely Elvish text, performed without piano accompaniment.

Swann’s indicated that Namárië be sung “Freely,” and set the text without consistent measure lines.342 The author interprets this as a suggestion to treat the written rhythmic values as malleable, and to use correct accentuation and syllabic length of the Quenya text to dictate the vocal rhythm. The text should be intoned with a diminished use of vibrato in a free, speech-like rhythm.

Namárië is one of the few examples of ‘sacred’ text found within Tolkien’s Legendarium. The Elves of Middle-earth had no organized religious institutions or dogma, but they did hold certain beliefs and customs that could be considered religious in nature, including the undertaking of pilgrimages to solemn or holy sites, the singing of hymns to various members of the Valar, and a respect for the name of Eru Ilúvatar, who is an analogue in Tolkien’s Legendarium for the Judeo-Christian God.343 Tolkien compared the Valar to angels, and although some human cultures worshipped them as gods, the Elves better understood their true nature and regarded them in a fashion comparable to saints of Roman Catholic tradition.344

Thus, the performer should seek to evoke an atmosphere of solemnness, without becoming overly animated, even in emotionally heightened moments of the text, but rather


344 Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide*, 832—3; “Saint Worship?” Catholic Answers, accessed February 14, 2016, [http://www.catholic.com/tracts/saint-worship](http://www.catholic.com/tracts/saint-worship). Catholics do not accord the Saints the same adoration and worship due to God alone, which is referred to by the Greek term *latria*. Instead, they are honored in a qualitatively lesser fashion, called *dulia*, and prayers to intercede on behalf of the supplicant are offered to them.
maintain the ritualized reverence suggested by the use of plainchant style of the Catholic tradition.

Ah! like gold fall the leaves in the wind, long years numberless as the wings of trees! The long years have passed like swift draughts of the sweet mead in lofty halls beyond the West, beneath the blue vaults of Varda wherein the stars tremble in the song of her voice, holy and queenly. Who now shall refill the cup for me? For now the Kindler, Varda, the Queen of the Stars, from Mount Everwhite has uplifted her hands like clouds, and all paths are drowned deep in shadow; and out of a grey country darkness lies on the foaming waves between us, and mist covers the jewels of Calaciryà for ever. Now lost, lost to those from the East is Valimar! Farewell! Maybe even thou shalt find it. Farewell!345

The names Tintalle and Elentari are epithets of Varda, Queen of the Valar, who created the stars in Tolkien’s Legendarim, and for whom the Elves had a special respect.

“Of all the Great Ones who dwell in this world, the Elves hold Varda the most in reverence and love. Elbereth they name her, and they call her name out of the shadows of Middle-earth, and uplift it in song and at the rising of the waters.”346

The vocalist can establish these names as uniquely solemn by adding a slightly lift before each, as if separating a direct address to Varda from the surrounding text.

An explanation of each sacred term and their full connotations is beyond the scope of this document, but Professor Tolkien provided a useful summary that can be found in the “Notes and Translations” section of The Road Goes Ever On.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[aɪˈlauriəˈlantarˈlassiˈsuːrinen]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>Ai! lauríë lantar lassi sürinen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>Ah/Alas golden fall leaves wind-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>Ah! like gold fall the leaves in the wind,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Quenya</th>
<th>Literal Trans.</th>
<th>General Trans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPA [:jɛnᵯi u̯ː'noːtime  ve  'raːmar  'aldaron]</td>
<td>Yéni  únótime  ve  rámar  aldaron!</td>
<td>years not-count-able as wings trees-of</td>
<td>long years numberless as the wings of trees!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [:jɛnᵯi ve  'lintɛ  'juldar  a'vaːniɛr]</td>
<td>Yéni  ve  lintɛ  yuldar  avánier</td>
<td>years as swift draughts have-passed away</td>
<td>The long years have passed like swift draughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [mi  œɾ'mardi  lisse miru'voːɾeva]</td>
<td>mi  oromardi  lisse -miruvóreva</td>
<td>in-the high-halls sweet-nectar-of</td>
<td>of the sweet mead in the lofty halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [an'duːne  pella  vardɔ  'tɛllumar]</td>
<td>Andûne  pella  Vardo  tellumar</td>
<td>West beyond (the borders of) Varda’s domes</td>
<td>beyond the West, beneath the blue vaults of Varda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [nu  'lujni  jassen  'tintilar  i  'êlêni]</td>
<td>nu  luini, yassen  tintilar  i  eleni</td>
<td>under blue which-in twinkle the stars</td>
<td>wherein the stars tremble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [:oːmarjo  'aïɾe  'taːri  'liːrinen]</td>
<td>ómaryo  aire-tári-lírinen.</td>
<td>voice-hers holy-queen’s song-in.</td>
<td>in the song of her voice, holy and queenly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA [si:  man  i  'julma  nin  en'kwantuva]</td>
<td>Sí  man  i  yulma  nin  enquantuva?</td>
<td>Now who the cup me-for  re-fill-will?</td>
<td>Who now shall refill the cup for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>[an  si:  tin'talle  'varda ojɔ'lɔssɛɔ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>An sí Tintalle Varda Oiolossëo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>For now Star-Kindler Varda Ever-white-from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>For now the Kindler, Varda, the Queen of the Stars, from Mount Everwhite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[ve  'fanjar  'ma:rjat  elɛn'ta:ri  'ɔrtane]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>ve fanyar máryat Elentári ortane,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>like (white) clouds hands-her-(two) Star-queen lifted up,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>has lifted her hands like clouds,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[ar  'ilje  'tir  undu'la:ve  'ludele]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>ar ilye tiër unduláve lumbule;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>and all roads down-licked (heavy) shadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>and all paths are drowned deep in shadow;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[ar  'sindanoriello  'kaita  'mɔrnië]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>ar sindanoriello caita mornië</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>and grey-country-from lies darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>and out of a grey country darkness lies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[i falma'linnar  'imbe  met,  ar  'hi:sic]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>i falmalinnar imbe met, ar hisië</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>the foaming-waves-many-upon between us-(two), and mist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>on the foaming waves between us,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[un'tu:pa  kalakirjo  'mi:ri  'ojale]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>untúpa Calaciryo míri oiale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>down-roofs Kalakirya’s jewels everlastingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>covers the jewels of Calaciryara for ever.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[si:  'vanwa na  'ro:mello  'vanwa  'valimar]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>Sí  vanwa na, Rómello vanwa, Valimar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>Now lost is, [to one]-from-the-East lost, Valimar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>Now lost, lost to those from the East is Valimar!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[nama:rië  naj  xiru'valje  'valimar]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quenya</td>
<td>Namárië! Nai hiruvalye Valimar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1. IPA transcription and translation of the Quenya poem “Namárië.”

I Sit beside the Fire

“I Sit beside the Fire” was originally the final song of *The Road Goes Ever On*. The first section, mm. 1-44, is a three verse strophic arrangement of the poem in English, while the second section, mm. 45-70, is a reprise of song 1, set to a Sindarin hymn sung to Varda. The differing musical material, key, text, and have led some to list or perform these sections separately. However, the published editions of the cycle have consistently listed this song with one title, and Swann mentions that the melody of the first song returns in the sixth.347 This project discusses the sections individually, but advises no artificial separation of the two in performance or recording.

The text of the first section is found in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, book II, chapter 3. The nine members of the Fellowship prepare for the onset of their journey to destroy the One Ring. Bilbo has just given Frodo his mail shirt and short sword, Sting, in anticipation of the dangers to come. Bilbo asks that Frodo take care on his journey, and to bring back all the news and tales he can gather, while suggesting that they could be turned into a book. He then begins to sing softly to himself:

---

I sit beside the fire and think
of all that I have seen
of meadow-flowers and butterflies
in summers that have been;

Of yellow leaves and gossamer
in autumns that there were,
with morning mist and silver sun
and wind upon my hair.

I sit beside the fire and think
of how the world will be
when winter comes without a spring
that I shall ever see.

For still there are so many things
that I have never seen:
in every wood in every spring
there is a different green.

I sit beside the fire and think
of people long ago,
and people who will see a world
that I will never know.

But all the while I sit and think
of times there were before,
I listen for returning feet
and voices at the door.\textsuperscript{348}

This poem is constructed of six quatrains, each of which consists of alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and trimeter, with a rhyme scheme of ABCB; quatrains are paired thematically. Quatrains one, three, and five each begin with the line \textit{I sit beside the fire and think} and then expand into a new train of thought. The poem explores Bilbo’s thoughts on his place in life, time, old age, mortality, and of his hope that absent friends will return to him.

The first, strophic section of song six begins with a short prelude in the piano, seen in Figure 5.11, which also serves as an interlude between verses. This establishes an animated

mood with a gently arching, lyrical melody line in the piano’s treble line features syncopated harmony.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 5.11. “I Sit beside the Fire,” mm. 1—4.**

The accompaniment during the verses has a sparser texture and slower harmonic rhythm, consisting mostly of broken chords in the treble line, while the bass line alternates between paralleling the vocal line or reinforcing individual chord members.

As mentioned, though the opening of the piano prelude is played at an energetic *forte*, the singer should take note of the *diminuendo* in the piano as the vocal entrance approaches. The first verse is sung *sempre piano*, taking care to maintain this dynamic even through the upper register. The initial eight measures of the wandering vocal line call for a light, legato production conveying a wistful nostalgia, as Bilbo thinks back on the beauty he has seen in the summers of his long life.

“Meadow-flowers” should be pronounced clearly and carefully, as the second word could be lost to the audience, and the combination is not often heard in modern speech. In some dialects of English, the words “seen” and “been” do not rhyme, but they must in this case: [siːn] and [biːn], avoiding the pronunciations [bɪn] or [bɛn].

The singer may slightly raise the dynamic as the phrase leads to “Of yellow leaves,” as the extended dominant prolongation of the second vocal phrase gives more tension and energy, but should take care to control the dynamic in m. 17, at the leap into a higher tessitura on the
word “that.” Emphasis should be given to the alliterations in “morning mist and silver sun,” to assure intelligibility. The singer should then swell to forte with fuller vocal production as “and wind upon my hair” is sung.

The second verse should be sung with more urgency, as Bilbo contemplates the sights in the world that he will miss. By “For still there are so many things” the singer should communicate a restlessness, pushing the tempo slightly, as if the thought of setting out to new places is taking over. The last line of the second verse should swell with excitement at the idea of finding new sights.

The third verse starts more quietly than the first two, Swann calling for pp. This verse meditates on the idea that no one perceives all that is in the world and that those who have gone before and those who will come after have distinct experiences that we cannot share. A crescendo begins in m. 37, building steadily through “But all the while I sit and think of times there were before.” The constant broken chords in the piano stop at m. 41, suspending the previous forward momentum. The singer, however, should maintain the tempo and dynamic until the caesura in m. 42. The following line expresses Bilbo’s contentment to wait for the return of Frodo and the others he cares for, and should be sung with a softer dynamic and slightly slower tempo.

The second section of song six is a reprise of song one, and begins with a statement of the “road theme” in the right hand of the piano in D major. This modulation can be difficult if the singer is unprepared, as the vocal line begins on B-flat, scale degree five of the new key of E-flat Major, as seen in Figure 5.12.
The text of the second section is found in The Fellowship of the Ring, book II, chapter 1. After an evening of tales and songs in Rivendell’s Hall of Fire, Bilbo and Frodo made their way elsewhere to catch up after 17 years apart. As they left the room, they heard a voice sing:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A Elbereth Gilthoniel} \\
\text{silivren penna miriel} \\
o \text{menel aglar elenath!} \\
\text{Na-chaered palan-diriel} \\
o \text{galadhremmin ennorath} \\
\text{Fanuilos, le linnathon} \\
\text{nef aear, si nef aearon!}^{349}
\end{align*}
\]

The poem is in iambic tetrameter, and has an unusual rhyme scheme of AABABCC, set by Swann to a quotation of song 1. The text is a hymn directed to Varda, and would be sung by the Elves after the completion of a pilgrimage to the Tower Hills, where they would use magical seeing stones called *palantiri* to look into the True West and see the Undying Lands.\(^{350}\) The text addresses Varda as “Elbereth,” meaning “Star-Queen,” “Gilthoniel,” meaning “Star-kindler,” and “Fanuilos.” This last title is idiomatic, and is translated a number of ways. “Snow-White” is

---


used sometimes, though Tolkien calls this inadequate.\textsuperscript{351} The term describes Varda, “as a majestic figure, shining white, standing upon the mountain Oiolosse.”\textsuperscript{352} It is in this way that she would sometimes appear to the Elves when they looked into the West. The adjective “silivren” is reminiscent of the Silmarils, comparing the stars to crystalline, holy lights.

Swann provides a direction of \textit{misterioso} for this section; I believe this suggestion of “mysterious,” extends into the mystical, spiritual aspects of the Elves’ lives. “A Elbereth Gilthoniel,” addresses this angelic, saintly figure directly as the maker of the stars. “Silivren pennà míriel o menel aglar elenath” describes the glory of all the stars pouring down from heaven like light from the Silmarils, and should be sung without a breath, if possible. If a breath is needed to prepare the crescendo in m. 51, it should be taken after the word “miriel,” by cutting the quarter note on beat three short.

By the next phrase, “Na-chaered palan-diriel…” both singer and pianist should be building toward \textit{forte}, with a climax at “o galadhremmin ennorath, Fanuilos.” This is a statement of devotion, “having gazed afar to distance lands, bright spirit clothed in ever-white.” The last words of this phrase, “le linnathon” are a reverential way of saying, “I will sing to you.” When following Swann’s direction to slow, the word “linnathon” should be sung with a smooth, pulsing articulation, giving extra weight to the consonants.

The singer returns with the words “nef aear, sí nef aearon,” quietly and mysteriously, repeating and emphasizing the statement of distance. The last restatement of “nef aearon” ends with a chromatic step preparing for the modulation back into D Major, uniting the musical key of the first section with the musical material of the second, thus bringing together elements from the


\textsuperscript{352} Ibid.
first and last songs of the cycle together in synthesis. The song ends with the last line from Bilbo’s poem, sung as quietly as good breath support will allow: “I listen for returning feet, and voices at the door.” Swann notes that, if so desired, the last note of song 6 can be held for an attacca transition to song 7, “Errantry.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[a 'elbeθø gilθɔmirɛl]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindarin</td>
<td>A Elbereth Gilthoniel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>o Star-Queen Star-kindler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>Oh! Elbereth who lit the stars,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[sɪlɪvɛn ˈpɛnna ˈmiːrɛl]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindarin</td>
<td>silivren penna mīriel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>(white) glittering slants-down sparkling like jewels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>from glittering crystal slanting falls with light like jewels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[ɔ ˈmɛnɛl ˈaɡlar ˈɛlɛnaθ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindarin</td>
<td>o menel aglar elenath!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>from firmament glory [of] the star-host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Tran.</td>
<td>from heaven on high the glory of the starry host.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[nəˈxɡɾed ˈpalan ˈdɪrɛl]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindarin</td>
<td>Na-chaered palan- diriel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>to-remote distance after-having- gazed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>To lands remote I have looked afar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>[ɔ ˈgalað ˈrɛmmin ˈɛnɔnaθ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sindarin</td>
<td>o galadh-remmin ennorath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal Trans.</td>
<td>from tree-tangled Middle-lands (^{353})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Trans.</td>
<td>from tree-tangled Middle-earth (^{354})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


\(^{354}\) Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, 202
Table 5.2. IPA Transcription and Translation of Sindarin poem “A Elbereth Gilthoniel.”

**Errantry**

The poem “Errantry” was originally published in *Oxford Magazine* in 1933, and later republished with minor revisions in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962.\(^\text{355}\) The poem itself is of such a length that it would disrupt the easy reading of this text; those wishing to reference the poem in its entirety should see Appendix B.

Although “Errantry,” as set by Swann, did not appear in *The Lord of the Rings*, it was the source of a poem that did. Tolkien wrote “Errantry” using a unique rhyme scheme of his own invention. The author would later comment that this rhyme scheme was so difficult to use that he never did so again.\(^\text{356}\) However, while writing *The Fellowship of the Ring* in the 1940s, Tolkien used “Errantry” as a template for a new poem by adapting its structure, rhyme scheme, and story. The author changed the protagonist from an unnamed, diminutive “elfin sprite” to Eärendil the Mariner, and added other elements from earlier ages of Arda, linking it to the broader Legendarium.\(^\text{357}\) He also altered its comedic tone to one more serious and in line with his later

---


conception of the Elves and their world. This poem was published in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, book II, chapter 1 as “Eärendil was a Mariner,” recited by Bilbo Baggins to the Elves of Rivendell.

Tolkien later attributed both poems to Bilbo within the context of the Legendarium. He added that Bilbo must have been proud of the rhythmic and metrical scheme he invented for the earlier “nonsense rhyme,” and so chose to revise it for the later composition recited in Rivendell.

I suspect that Professor Tolkien was here expressing his own pride in the unique metrical devices employed in “Errantry,” and that his description of Bilbo’s motivations is autobiographical.358 The full text of the poem has been included in Appendix D rather than in the main body of this document, because of its length.

The poem is organized into quatrains of iambic tetrameter, and makes use of an intricate rhyme scheme consisting of three-syllable assonances.359 End rhyme occurs in lines two and four of each quatrain. The first and second pairs of lines within a quatrain have their own internal rhyme, occurring at the end of the first line and near the beginning of the second. Verlyn Flieger describes the poem as “octosyllabic rhymed couplets with feminine endings,” comparing it to the “rapidly moving patter-songs of Gilbert & Sullivan.”360 In point of fact, the text perfectly fits Sullivan’s musical setting of Major-General Stanley’s patter-aria.361 Tolkien used archaic language and nonsense words of his own invention to maintain the poem’s complex rhyme scheme, and to evoke the atmosphere and style of a fairy-tale.

---


361 Dale Nelson “Literary Influences, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in Drout, 368.
The protagonist is a tiny boatman, traveling in a gondola loaded with oranges and porridge and covered in perfumes and spices. His errand is obliquely identified as delivering a message, though to whom or where is never specified. He wanders across rivers, through meadows, and over and under hill. His attempts to woo a butterfly are met with scorn, and he employs magic to capture her. He builds her a home and offers gifts to sway her affection, but his efforts end in failure. Dejected, he departs for the fairy lands across the sea, where he becomes a traveling warrior. He battles fairy knights, dragonflies and bees, winning the ‘golden honeycomb.’ From there he makes his way among deserted islands, before finally heading home with his prize. It is only now that he realizes he has forgotten the message the he first left home to deliver, and must leave again to complete his task. The poem suggests that this will happen over and over, due to the protagonist’s distractible nature, and that he will go on wandering forever.362

The musical idiom of “Errantry” is closely tied to the aesthetic of the poem, which Tolkien described to the composer as “a piece of verbal acrobatics and metrical high-jinks […] intended for recitation with great variations of speed.”363 Swann’s musical interpretation of the author’s vision was a patter song. “Errantry” is through-composed, divided into several sections with unique musical content. The song begins and ends in D major, but Swann includes frequent key changes, the use of sequences that occasionally blur the tonal center, and uses chromaticism in both the accompaniment and vocal line, as seen in Figure 5.13.

Tolkien’s call for a wide variety in recitation speed is left mostly up to the performers, with few tempo changes indicated by the composer. The variation and sense of play suggested by Tolkien are reflected more directly in Swann’s music by frequent changes of texture, articulation, tonality, dynamic level, tessitura, and melodic contour.

The pianist plays a very active role, establishing a wide variety of frequently changing moods and settings. The accompaniment has a denser texture, faster rhythms, more chromaticism, and includes rapid scales, wide leaps, and more complex melodic figures than are encountered elsewhere in the cycle. The vocal line shares many of these features, including frequent chromaticism, wide melodic intervals, and changes in tessitura, but the most unique challenge for the singer lies in the patter.

An effective performance of patter balances clarity of the text with a rapid, steady delivery of the melodic line. Swann calls for a tempo of 72 for the quarter note, but much of the melody is sung on sixteenth notes. Syllabic text setting at that speed can prove challenging in any circumstance, and even more so in a poem that includes so many unusual words. This text relies on the word play inherent in the complex patterns of rhyme as part of its entertainment value, and may require extra attention to ensure clear delivery of the text at speed. Care also
must be taken that long phrases of syllables on even sixteenth notes do not become monotonous, as this can cause a loss of interest in the audience. Proper accentuation of text and occasional interpretive rubato will help ensure an attentive audience.

Both the singer and the pianist should also be aware that breath management can be difficult in patter, especially in long stretches of fast, steady rhythms. Effective performance of patter might require a different legato line and vibrato rate from the singer, resulting in an unfamiliar use of breath.

“Errantry” begins with an eight measure piano introduction, played *pp* and features a bell-like melody high in the piano’s upper range, shown in Figure 5.14. This gesture initiates a descending harmonic sequence, outlined by arpeggiated chords in contrary motion. The chromatic alterations and scales, and the high, sweet tones in the upper line of the piano set up a ‘magical time and place’ in which tiny mariners can sail in gondolas wooing butterflies and fighting honeybees. The sequence descends through the chromatic scale, returning to D Major just in time for the entrance of the singer.

The singer begins the first line “There was a merry passenger,” to introduce the protagonist with the same melody established in the piano, and should continue with the same quiet energy. This soft dynamic continues through m. 10, to the breath after the word “mariner.” The singer should swell the dynamic slightly through “he built a guilded gondola to wander in,”
at which point both singer and pianist should take just enough time for a catch breath. The line should not be interrupted again until m. 14, where Swann suggests a breath at the word “provender.” The word provender is an archaic term for food supplies, referring to the oranges and porridge.

The introductory sequence returns in the piano as transitional material, leading to a new tonal area in G major beginning in m. 23, which also marks the first time that the accompaniment descends into the bass clef. This stanza, beginning with “He called the winds of argosies,” should be sung without breath until the breath mark provided in m. 26, after “tarry him,” if at all possible. The next stanza, which begins on “He landed all in loneliness,” initiates modulation toward A major, as the range of the accompaniment ascends into a higher register once more. These four lines of text should be sung without breath until the end of the phrase at “forever on.” The singer should control the dynamic at the octave leaps, giving appropriate weight to the first syllables of the words “loneliness” and “stonily” while taking care not to lose too much volume in the lower register. The dynamic should swell slightly on the ascending line that follows, and should peak on the word “merrily” in m. 30. M. 29-30 should be sung with emphasis on the legato line through the end of the phrase, to contrast with the staccato restatement that follows in the piano. The word Derrilyn is a nonsense word designed to sound Elvish in style, created as a river name to rhyme with “merrily.”

“He journeyed then…” begins no louder than mp, with the continued application of an even legato, steadily swelling the dynamic level through m. 34-5, slowing slightly through m. 35. With the return to tempo in m. 36, the vocal line changes stylistically, creating a more lyrical melodic contour, with longer, slower rhythmic values. Olsen describes this new section of the

---

poem as the “wooing phase,” referring to the appearance of the butterfly that catches the eye of the protagonist. The section displayed in Figure 5.15, beginning in beat 3 of measure 36, can be sung with a fuller vocal mechanism.

Figure 5.15. “Errantry,” mm. 35—40.

There should be a sharp vocal contrast in the butterfly’s rebuttal of the protagonist’s proposal, placing emphasis on the repeated <s> in “scorned” and “scoffed,” which reinforces the agogic stress, and the friction of the initial consonant conveys the tension of the situation. The singer should push the tempo slightly through “So long he studied…” as if driven by the anger and hurt of the protagonist, by swelling the dynamic until the word “sigaldry,” which brings a

---

slowing of the tempo, and a diminuendo through the end of the phrase. “Sigaldry” is an obscure word that Tolkien found in a 13\textsuperscript{th} century text, and refers to a kind of magical art.\textsuperscript{366}

M. 53 returns to the quiet, high, bell-like broken chords of the introduction and references the preparation of magical power by the protagonist. “He wove a tissue airy thin…” should be sung \textit{pianissimo}, and in a partial head voice mix, with a slight crescendo in m. 59. M. 63 – 70 continues this “enchantment theme.” The protagonist here is attempting to sway the affections of the butterfly using enchantments. This is a surprisingly sinister action for him to take, paralleling him to the later character Eol, the Dark Elf, who used similar methods to wed the Noldorin princess Aredhel, and who was meant to be a character of at least grey morals.

Measure 72 introduces a new tonal area and the full return of the vocal patter style, signaling the end of the brief romance. Olsen, refers to this next phase of the poem as “Bellicose,” or war-like.\textsuperscript{367} The patter style returns with even greater emphasis, and the vocal line employs frequent changes from one dynamic extreme to another, displaying the violence and extreme emotions of the mariner’s battles. The vocalist should take extra care beginning in measure 94 to deliver the patter text only as quickly as possible while still maintaining an even rhythm and clear diction, which will give the effect patter seeks to achieve. Swann even mentions in measure 102 that the performers may slow somewhat, if necessary, to maintain clear delivery of the text.

Swann makes creative use of text painting in measures 110 and 111, shown in Figure 5.16, using thirty-second notes to mimic the buzz of bees, preparing the audience for the

\textsuperscript{366} Humphrey Carpenter, \textit{The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien}, 443; Tolkien to Swann, 14 October 1966, Swann Collection, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

\textsuperscript{367} Corey Olsen, “Poetry,” in Lee, 183.
upcoming text “He battled with the Dumbldors / the Hummerhorns and Honeybees.” The bellicose episode ends with the return of the more lyrical melodic theme in measure 117. The final transition begins in measure 128, with a section of recitative followed by non-rhythmic speech, noting that the mariner has forgotten the entire purpose for his journey, and must start out again to complete his task. The accompaniment begins again at beat 3 of measure 141, with a final return of the “lyric theme,” which transitions to a return of a theme from song 1, beginning at the pick-up to measure 146, as shown in Figure 5.17. The return of this theme emphasizes not only cyclic nature of the mariner’s journeys, but also the unified nature of the song-cycle as a whole, as a commentary on travel and on the idea of life as a journey. In a letter to Donald Swann, Tolkien described an ideal recitation of the poem as a cyclical performance, in which the end of the poem prompts an immediate return to the beginning, until the audience can bear no more and halts the reciter.

This outlook is reflected in the final piano postlude, which begins by restating the opening measures of the song, and references both the cyclical nature of the protagonist’s life.

---

368 Donald Swann, *The Road Goes Ever On*, 47.

and of the poet’s performance intent. The final melodic line continues on up into the upper ranges of the piano, drifting chromatically upward, quieter, and slower, until it disappears.

Bilbo’s Last Song

Swann described this song on more than one occasion as his favorite song of the cycle. Its content, and the circumstances of Swann’s discovery of the text, associate it with life’s end: he received the poem at Tolkien’s funeral; he later performed it at the funeral of his friend and collaborator, Michael Flanders; and it was even performed at his own funeral. The text, though not a part of *The Lord of the Rings*, was given an origin within the events of the novel: Tolkien envisioned it as being written by Bilbo while on his way to the Grey Havens, to leave Middle-earth for the Blessed Lands across the sea, never to return.

Day is ended, dim my eyes
but journey long before me lies.
Farewell, friends! I hear the call.
The ship’s beside the stony wall.

---


371 Leon Berger, introduction to the third edition of *The Road Goes Ever On*, i.

Foam is white and waves are gray;
beyond the sunset leads my way.
Foam is salt, the wind is free;
I hear the rising of the sea.

Farewell, friends! The sails are set,
the wind is east, the moorings fret.
Shadows long before me lie,
beneath the ever bending sky,
But islands lie behind the sun
that I shall raise ere all is done;
Lands there are to west of West,
where night is quiet and sleep is rest.

Guided by the Lonely Star,
beyond the utmost harbour-bar,
I’ll find the havens fair and free,
and beaches of the Starlit Sea.
Ship, my ship, I seek the West,
and fields and mountains ever blest.
Farewell to middle-earth at last,
I see the Star above your mast!373

Scull and Hammond assert that this poem, in its origin, was unrelated to Tolkien’s
Legendarium. It was based on an Old Norse poem Tolkien wrote in the 20s or 30s, called Vestr
um Haf, meaning West over sea.374 The reference to “middle-earth” may seem to contradict this,
however, the term “middle-earth” was inspired by the Old English term “middan-geard,” which
means, literally, “middle-earth,” and referred to Earth’s place in the center of the nine worlds of
Norse mythology.375 However, based on Tolkien’s title, which was added later, the poem took on
an association with his Legendarium in later years.376 Though never an official part of The Lord
of the Rings, it has been associated with the novel in radio dramatizations, and official

373 Tolkien, Bilbo’s Last Song, Rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).
publications of the poem have included illustrations of the final scenes of *The Return of the King*.377

Dr. Johanna Broussard of Louisiana State University notes that the poem makes use of an irregular alliterative tetrameter, owing in part to its Old Norse origin.378 Successive lines are paired as couplets with end rhyme, and have irregular accentuation. Performers should be aware that the frequent alliteration is important to the construction of the poem, and should be given appropriate emphasis in the vocal line.

Bilbo is now near the end of his life, preparing to board a ship at the Grey Havens to sail across the sea into the True West, along with Galadriel, Elrond, Gandalf, and Frodo, after the completion of the quest to destroy the One Ring.379 Many, including the composer, have interpreted sailing across the sea into the West as a metaphor for death.380 While this is not wholly inaccurate, it is left unsaid in the novel exactly what Bilbo’s fate is when he passes over the sea. However, in a letter to Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien described Bilbo’s journey into the West both as a reward for his role in Elvish affairs, and “a healing and redress of suffering” he had undergone because of the One Ring.381 In Aman, Bilbo could finally experience “pure elvishness,” and have “the opportunity of hearing the legends and histories in full the fragments of which had so delighted him.382 There, he could also be healed of the last remnants of the

---

378 Johanna Broussard, facebook message to the author, March 1, 2016.
Ring’s influence on him, manifesting as an unnatural “pride and personal possessiveness” that persisted despite the Ring’s destruction.383

Swann saw the journey as a metaphor for death, and Tolkien noted that the few mortals who went into the west could never return to the mortal lands, and would die there at the end of their natural lifespan.384 Thus, if not synonymous with death, the journey is a separation of Bilbo from those he knows and loves in Middle-earth forever. Swann summarized the text and spirit of the poem thus: “Day is ended,” now says Bilbo, “Journey long before me lies […] But sails are set and we are going to islands behind the sun. Rest is in sight.”385 Bilbo knows that he is going to a place of surpassing beauty and holiness, and that he will live out the rest of his days in bliss and healing. While the separation is bitter, the destination is far sweeter.

The composer revealed that the song was “based on a song from the Isle of Man,” and “also resembles a Cephallonian Greek melody.”386 This folk-song source for the music informed the harmonic and formal structure of the work: it has a relatively simple form, straightforward harmonic function, and uses a compositional idiom that lends itself to a “quasi-classical, quasi-folk” interpretation.387 Swann set the text as three strophic verses, ending with a short coda, each verse setting eight lines of the poem. The key is G Major, and makes no extended excursions into other tonal areas. The accompaniment consists mostly of persistent tremolo, which Alison Smith

385 Donald Swann, foreword to the second edition of The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle, ix.
386 Donald Swann, Swann’s Way, 207.
387 Ibid.
noted was a common device used in Swann’s compositions, and parallel chords reinforcing the vocal melody.\textsuperscript{388}

The piano begins with tremolo in the bass register, described by Swann as \textit{pianissimo, tranquillo e legato}. The composer notes that the poem is “awash with sea-metaphors,” and the author interprets this gesture in the piano as the constantly crashing waves and frothing foam of the ocean.\textsuperscript{389} Meanwhile, an even lower single note drops from scale degree five to one, giving the impression of a repeated cadence, perhaps a bell or horn at the havens, announcing the impending departure of the ships. Immediately before the entrance of the singer, Swann indicates that the pianist should release the sustain pedal with the direction “ôtez” in the accompaniment.\textsuperscript{390}

In the first four measures of the song, both during the piano introduction and in the first line of song-text: “Day is ended, dim my eyes,” the vocalist should convey a sense of world-weariness. This can be accomplished with a heady vocal mix, and slight pauses after the words “ended,” and “eyes,” as if working up the energy to sing is taxing, and takes effort to continue.

The second line of poetry, “but journey long before me lies” should, by contrast, indicate that the thought of the impending journey has invigorated Bilbo, overcoming his fatigue. Here the singer should transition to a fuller vocal mechanism and steadier legato line, while still maintaining the \textit{piano} dynamic. The vocalist can also push the tempo slightly to demonstrate Bilbo’s excitement.


\textsuperscript{389} Donald Swann, foreword to the second edition of \textit{The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle}, ix.

\textsuperscript{390} Donald Swann, \textit{The Road Goes Ever On}, 3rd ed., 54.
This sense quiet eagerness should continue until beat 3 of measure 11, shown in Figure 5.18. The swell to *piu f* at the first description of the ocean should convey a sudden rush of exhilaration, as if Bilbo has been overwhelmed by the prospect of leaving Middle-earth’s shores for Aman. The vocal writing throughout this section, with its louder dynamic and higher tessitura, provides an opportunity for a beautiful, legato phrase in the vocalist’s upper register; care should be taken, however, that the words remain distinct, as the poetry at this point in each verse is especially evocative: “foam is white, and waves are grey, beyond the sunset leads my way”; “but islands lie behind the sun / that I shall raise ere all is done,”; “ship by ship, I seek the west / and fields and mountains ever blest.” By m. 16, this temporary outburst has subsided, returning to the previous feeling of quiet eagerness, through the end of the verse.
The second verse should begin with a fuller vocal mechanism than the first, and perhaps already pushing the tempo slightly by the singer’s entrance. Bilbo’s excitement should be more palpable throughout this section: he is now ready to get underweigh, his weariness cured by the prospect of adventure. By the third verse, Bilbo’s mind has already begun the journey. His imagination follows “the Lonely Star,” Eärendil the Mariner sailing the skies with the Silmaril burning on his brow. He describes the havens on the shores of Aman, with the sea reflecting the stars above and beaches strewn with gems.

I acknowledge multiple valid interpretations of this song-text, referencing either Bilbo’s trip to Valinor where he will live until the end of his days, or interpreting the journey as a metaphor for death, which was the composer’s stated intent. I do not believe the two are mutually exclusive, and remind performers that Swann left characterization to the discretion of the singer. However, the choice of one or another might lead to variations in performance interpretation, which is ultimately the responsibility of the individual performer.

**Lúthien Tinúviel**

This song unites Tolkien and Swann in an odd way: neither one saw his contribution to the work published during his lifetime. Tolkien wrote the text of *The Silmarillion* over the course of his adult life, but died before it saw print. Swann set this poem to music in 1977, but passed away months after it was dropped from a 1993 edition of the cycle. Thus, this is a posthumous work for both the composer and the poet.

This story of this text occurs in First Age Beleriand, thousands of years before the events of *The Lord of the Rings*. Beren was a human man who had fallen in love with the Elven...
princess, Lúthien, whom he called Tinúviel, meaning Nightingale. Lúthien was the only child of
King Elu Thingol and Queen Melian of Doriath.\textsuperscript{393} When Elu Thingol realized that Lúthien
returned Beren’s love, he set the mortal a task to prove himself worthy of his daughter’s hand:
Beren was required to bring him one of the three Silmarils from the crown of the Dark Lord,
Morgoth. Beren swore to deliver the holy jewel to the Elven king, and set out immediately on his
journey. Meanwhile, Elu Thingol placed Lúthien under house arrest, knowing she would follow
Beren, otherwise.

Lúthien escaped from her father’s kingdom, and located Beren with the help of the great
hound, Huan.\textsuperscript{394} Lúthien and Huan saved Beren from capture and near death, and made their way
back to her father’s kingdom. Hoping to keep Lúthien from further danger, Beren left her on the
borders of Doriath, and made his way north to Morgoth’s fortress of Thangorodrim. As he
approached the entrance of Morgoth’s citadel, Beren sang his “Song of Parting,” praising the
beauty of Lúthien, expecting never to see her again.

Farewell sweet earth and northern sky,
Forever blest, since here did lie
And here with lissom limbs did run
beneath the Moon, beneath the Sun,
Lúthien Tinúviel
more fair than mortal tongue can tell.
Though all to ruin fell the world
and were dissolved and backward hurled
unmade into the old abyss,
yet were its making good, for this –

the dusk, the dawn, the earth, the sea –
that Lúthien for a time should be.\textsuperscript{395}

\textsuperscript{393} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Silmarillion}, 162.
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{395} J. R. R. Tolkien, \textit{The Silmarillion}, 176.
Swann set this text as two strophic verses of six lines each, in F Major, suggesting D Major as an alternative key lower voices. The vocal line is set in 3/4, while the treble and bass lines in the piano are set either in 6/8, or in both meters at once, creating a consistent sensation of “2 versus 3” throughout the song.

Figure 5.19. “Lúthien Tinúviel,” mm. 7—10.

The singer should be aware that Swann’s suggested tempo of 120 for the quarter note is much slower than that taken in the recording of the composer and baritone Clive McCrombie, which is approximately 155 for the quarter note. The tempo suggested in the cycle allows for longer legato phrases in the vocal line, and more effectively expresses the rhythmic dissonance between the voice, treble, and bass lines in the piano. In my opinion, the slower tempo is the better choice, giving the song a more lyric quality, whereas the faster tempo creates a rushed, unsettled sensation, and interferes with effective breath management and phrasing.

As Beren approached Thangorodrim, certain he was facing death, he “sang aloud, caring not what ear should overhear him, for he was desperate and looked for no escape.” Swann calls for a poco f at the entrance of the singer, and the vocal melody moves in a steady, waltz-like rhythm. The wide vocal leaps, slower movement in the voice, and full dynamic level, provide the opportunity for a very legato, bel canto vocal line. Though this is not the norm in this cycle, it is appropriate here so long as it contributes to the communication of the text. The singer should take care that the triple meter of the vocal line remains absolutely steady against the duple meter in the piano, so as to maintain the tension between the two.

Performers should note the word “lissom” describes Lúthien’s limbs as thin and graceful. The composer included few dynamic indications in a vocal line that, while generally loud, may employ expressive phrasing and artistic dynamics. However, Beren’s intensity and abandon should be maintained, especially through mm. 20-28.

The vocalist can push the tempo slightly over the next few measures, reflecting the increasing energy in the chromatically ascending melody, swelling steadily toward m. 25. The first mention of the name “Lúthien Tinúviel,” ['luːθɪɛn tɪnuːviɛl], is the climax of the first verse. Swann suggests a poco ritardando on the last two syllables of the “Tinúviel,” in mm. 27-8, as if Beren is taking the time to savor the feel of Lúthien’s name on his lips. I believe that this can be exaggerated somewhat and combined with a diminuendo to mp that coincides with the return to a tempo in m. 30, setting apart Lúthien’s name even more and creating a greater expressive tension relieved by the sudden return to a tempo.

397 Tolkien, The Silmarillion, 176.
The singer should take care to maintain a steady dynamic level and rhythm in m. 34, on the words “fair than.” The high tessitura, as shown in Figure 5.20, can lead to an unintended increase in volume, and if any rubato is taken the rhythmic dissonance may be lost between the voice and treble piano line.

The second verse is set much like the first, so the singer should find ways to differentiate the two. The text describes the destruction of the world, noting that its existence was worthy if only because Lúthien lived therein. Beren’s final statements should be given as if in reckless abandon, as he believes these may be the last words he speaks as a free man; he has chosen to praise the beauty of his beloved, and does so proudly despite the presence of dangerous foes.

The setting of the Lúthien’s name in the second verse differs from that of the first, and could lead to an unintended mispronunciation of the word. While in the first verse, these vowels were set to two different notes, in the second, they are set to one note in a single beat, which could lead to an inappropriate modification from the three syllable word, [luːθiɛn], into two syllables by the use of a j-glide: [luːθjɛn]. The two vowels should remain in hiatus, as two
syllables of equal length. Note the difference of the word-setting between verse one and verse two, as shown in Figures 5.21 and 5.22.

Figure 5.21. “Lúthien Tinúviel,” mm. 68—71.

Figure 5.22. “Lúthien Tinúviel,” mm. 72—76.
CONCLUSION

Swann’s setting of Tolkien’s texts was the work of over a decade, not coming to full fruition until after both men had passed away. However, each left instructions with which informed performance practices for these songs can be prepared, and clues from the statements and artistic processes of each provide further context. Swann’s first and foremost concern was with the authenticity of his text-setting: the low voicing of Treebeard’s chant in “Willow-meads,” Swann’s use of Tolkien’s monophonic setting of “Namárië,” and the care with which he set “Errantry” to the Professor’s intended inflection and style, are a few examples that speak to the importance of the text to Swann’s musical aesthetic. Tolkien’s own love of poetry, and his devotion to language in both his professional and his artistic endeavors, is evidence of his opinion of the importance of text. Accurate execution of the notes, dynamics, and expressive markings, with technical proficiency is not enough; each performer must also investigate the context, emotions, and ideas meant to be expressed by the relationship between the music and text. Knowing not only where to crescendo, but why to crescendo, informs performance elements that go beyond notes, dynamics, and pronunciation, and benefits the experience of both the performers and the audience. Swann left many decisions concerning interpretation and characterization up to the performer, I suggests that performers of this music draw their own conclusions, based on the advice of the composer information and opinions presented here.


Hostetter, Carl, F. “Languages Invented by Tolkien.” In Drout, 332—44.


Olsen, Corey. “Poetry.” In Lee, 177—188.


Donald Swann Archives, Battersea, London.


Unpublished letter from J. R. R. Tolkien to Donald Swann, written presumably in 1967, detailing the pronunciation of Quenya vowels.

These vowel descriptions were not intended for USA (nor for monoglotics anywhere). The references to English of England are useless and confusing in U.S., where (for instance) the sound [a] is that most widely given to written o. If any guidance on vowels is given as should, I think, be addressed to singers, among whom some knowledge of (say) Italian may be expected.

I suggest:—The vowels may be pronounced as in Italian. Long ē and ō should be given the ‘close’ value as in negre, noire; short ē and ō should be open when shared, a in mettre, notte, but ‘close’ when unshared as in the first syllable of.
Vorwort zur deutschen Ausgabe

Ich bin entzückt, daß The Road Goes Ever On nun auch deutschen Lesern und Musikern zugänglich gemacht wird.


Tolkien wie von Swann, zumal der Liederzyklus seine Entstehung unter anderem der Begeisterung Tolkien’s und seiner Frau Edith für Musik verdankt. Ich erwähne das bereits in meinem Originalvorwort.


Bei der Aufführung meiner Musik sollte größter Wert auf die Klarheit der Worte gelegt werden, nicht zu viel bel canto – singen Sie einfach, als wolle Sie Ihren Zuhörern etwas erklären.

Zuhörem etwas erklären.


Die Lieder sind für eine mittlere Stimmlage geschrieben, und ich weiß aus Erfahrung, daß eine Transposition Ihnen nicht schadet. Die Passagen für Chor sind leicht zu finden, nur für den Fall, daß Sie zufällig einen solchen zur Hand haben.

Donald Swann, im September 1993.
The Donald Swann Archive grants Richard G. Leonberger permission to reproduce in his dissertation, without fee, the note it holds from JRR Tolkien to Donald Swann "These vowel descriptions were not intended for USA & etc".

Leon Berger
Administrator of the DONALD SWANN ARCHIVE & ESTATE
pp. Mrs Alison Swann-Smith
13 Albert Bridge Rd
Battersea
London SW11 4PX
APPENDIX C: “ERRANTRY,” BY J. R. R. TOLKIEN

There was a merry passenger,\(^{398}\)
a messenger, a mariner:
He built a gilded gondola
to wander in, and had in her
a load of yellow oranges
and porridge for his provender;
he perfumed her with marjoram
and cardamom and lavender.

He called the winds of argosies
with cargoes in to carry him
across the rivers seventeen
that lay between to tarry him.
He landed all in loneliness
where stonily the pebbles on
the running river Derrilyn
goes merrily for ever on
He journeyed then through meadow-lands
to Shadow-land that dreary lay,
and under hill and over hill
went roving still a weary way.

He sat and sang a melody,
his errantry a-tarrying;
he begged a pretty butterfly
that fluttered by to marry him.
She scorned him and she scoffed at him,
she laughed at him unpitying;
so long he studied wizardry
and sigaldry and smithying.
He wove a tissue airy-thin
to snare her in; to follow her
he made him beetle-leather wing
and feather wing of swallow-hair
He caught her in bewilderment
with filament of spider-thread;
he made her soft pavilions
of lilies, and a bridal bed
of flowers and of thistle-down
to nestle down and rest her in;
and silken webs of filmy white
and silver light he dressed her in.

He threaded gems in necklaces,
but recklessly she squandered them
and fell to bitter quarelling;
then sorrowing he wandered on,
and there he left her withering,
as shivering he fled away;
with windy weather following
on swallow-wing he sped away.

He passed the archipelagoes
where yellow grows the marigold,
where countless silver fountains are,
and mountains are of fairy gold.
He took to war and foraying,
a-harrying beyond the sea,
and roaming over Belmarie
and Thellamie and Fantasie.

He made a shield and morion
of coral and of ivory,
a sword he made of emerald,
and terrible his rivalry
with elven-knights of Aerie
and Faerie, with paladins
that golden-haired and shining-eyed
came riding by and challenged him.

Of crystal was his habergeon,
his scabbard of chalcedony;
with silver tipped at plenilune
his spear was hewn of ebony.
His javelines were of malachite
and stalactite – he brandished them,
and went and fought the dragon-flies
of Paradise, and vanquished them.

He battled with the Dumbledors,
the Hummerhorns, and Honeybees,
and won the Golden Honeycomb;
and running home on sunny seas
in ship of leaves and gossamer
with blossom for a canopy,
he sat and sang, and furbished up
and burnished up his panoply.

He tarried for a little while
in little isles that lonely lay,
and found there nought but blowing grass;
and so at least the only way
he took, and turned, and coming home
with honeycomb, to memory
his message came, and errand too!
In derring-do and glamoury
he had forgot them, journeying
and tourneying, a wanderer.
So now he must depart again
and start again his gondola,
for ever still a messenger,
a passenger, a tarrier,
a-roving as a feather does,
a weather-driven mariner.
VITA

Richard G. Leonberger is a native of Waco, Texas, and began his musical studies there at McLennan Community College in 2004. He transferred to Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Tx, in 2007, receiving the Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance in 2010. He began his graduate studies later that year at Binghamton University, in Binghamton, New York. While in New York, Leonberger performed a number of opera roles with Tri-Cities Opera, some of which include The Servants in Les Contes d’Hoffmann, Edgardo in Lucia di Lammermoor, and Monostatos in Die Zauberflöte. In the summer of 2011, he joined Opera Nova Costa Rica as a voice instructor and guest artist, performing the role of Jason in Medée.

Leonberger earned his Master of Music degree in opera performance from Binghamton University in 2012. He went on to doctoral studies in vocal performance with a minor in vocal pedagogy at Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he performed the roles of Pelleas in Impressions de Pelleas, and Danilo in The Merry Widow. Selected professional performances given during his doctoral studies include Schubert’s song cycle Die Schöne Müllerin at McLennan Community College, the tenor solos in Mozart’s Requiem Mass in D minor with Acadiana Symphony Orchestra, and the creation of the role of Gabriel Lajeunesse in The Return, with the Acadiana Center for the Arts. He has been a visiting member of the voice faculty at Stephen F. Austin State University since August, 2016.