

The following comes from "What Tolkien Officially Said About Elf Sex" article, which in turn very heavily quotes from "Laws and Customs of the Eldar," published in the book Morgoth's Ring, History of Middle-Earth. (aka LACE) "Marriage is chiefly of the body, for it is achieved by bodily union, and its first operation is the begetting of the bodies of children, even though it endures beyond this and has other operations. And the union of bodies in marriage is unique, and no other union resembles it." So yes, Elves reproduce similar to Men (also, Aragorn had a child with Arwen, so the reproduction is biologically compatible) Furthermore, as far as aging/childhood (again sourced from the same) The Facts of Elf Life ... Some more elvish facts of life, all sourced from LACE. Regarding elvish pregnancy, "A year passed between the begetting and the birth of an elf-child, so that the days of both are the same, or nearly so." Elvish childhood and adolescence lasted until the age of approximately 50 years. Elves tended to marry soon after coming of age, with a one-year engagement being standard. Elves did not say they "had a baby," they said "a baby is given to us." The most kids an elf couple ever had were seven, the sons of Fëanor and Nerdanel. Tolkien said absolutely nothing about elf puberty. As far as aging physically, Elven Life cycle - Tolkien Gateway - Later Life has this (not quite sure of original sources for those statements, but the article as a whole references "From The Shibboleth of Feanor" abd "Unfinished Tales, "The History of Galadriel and Celeborn", "Amroth and Nimrodel", p. 320") Apparently, beards were the only sign of further natural physical aging beyond maturity. Elves did not age over their 100th year but they aged in a different sense than Men: they became ever more weary of the world and burdened by its sorrows, sometimes appeared to age under great stress. Cirdan seemed to be aged himself, since he is described as looking old, save for the stars in his eyes; this may be due to all the sorrows he had seen and lived through since the First Age. Also, the people of Nargothrond had trouble recognizing Gwindor after his time as a prisoner of Morgoth. And, for a somewhat less canonical source: (src: Irregular Webcomic No. 123 2003-05-28) When it comes to The Lord of the Rings, it was often the case that the elves were the greatest of all of the non-god beings that exist in Middle-Earth because of all of the different things that they were able to contribute throughout the history of the world. Of course, this is also due to the fact that, unlike dwarves and men, elves are immortal in the sense that they will never die due to old age. That means that they will continue to live for as long as they possibly can. The only way for an elf to die is for them to get killed through wounds and injuries or through illnesses. Other than that, Elves will continue to live. The fact that the elves of LOTR are immortal is the reason why some of the most prominent elves we've seen have been around for thousands of years already. This is also the reason why the elves are the most special beings in Middle-Earth, considering that they will never die due to old age and will only become wiser and stronger as they grow older. Now, let's look at how long elves live. When it comes to the world created by JRR Tolkien in The Lord of the Rings, there are plenty of different creatures that were created by Eru Ilúvatar, the creator god of this fictional world. Of course, the Valar and the Maiar are two of the most powerful entities because they are simply spirits. In that regard, the beings that Eru created that have specific physical forms include elves, men, and dwarves. While men ended up becoming the dominant beings during the Third Age onward, the creations of Eru Ilúvatar considered to be the finest are the elves. That's because they are the wisest and fairest of all of the races on Middle-Earth. This also explains why the strongest and most powerful characters throughout the history of LOTR include the elves. Of course, we've seen a lot of different elves in The Lord of the Rings trilogy movies by Peter Jackson. We know for a fact that they get to live very long lives, as Elrond was there in the battle against Sauron during the end of the Second Age, which was 3,000 years before the end of the Third Age. Meanwhile, in The Hobbit, King Thranduil tells the dwarves that a hundred years is a mere blink of an eye for the elves. So, how long do elves get to live in The Lord of the Rings? Elves in The Lord of the Rin for an elf to die is through injuries or illnesses. In that regard, elves are often considered the best creations of Eru Ilúvatar because of the fact that they can live very long lives without aging or dying. This explains why some of the wisest and strongest characters in the history of LTOR are elves that fought in wars against the dark forces of Sauron or even Morgoth thousands of years before the events of The Lord of the Rings. And this is also why elves are allowed to live in the Undying Lands, as they possibly can as long as they possibly can as long as they possibly can as long as they are basically incapable of dying, just like the Valar and the Maiar that inhabit Valinor. Now that we know that elves are immortal and are capable of dying, just like the Valar and the Maiar that inhabit Valinor. do not die due to injuries or illnesses, let's look at the oldest elves in the history of JRR Tolkien's writings. Thranduil is the king of the Silvan Elves and is the father of our favorite movie elf, Legolas. Although Legolas hasn't been around for a very long time, his father has seen it all throughout his entire lifetime, as there is a possibility that he has been around for at least 4,000 years. We don't know for certain when Thranduil was born because he wasn't featured much during the events of the First and Second Ages. However, we do know that he was already around probably sometime during the late stages of the First Age or probably during the events of the Second Age. That means that he might be older than 6,500 years. Celeborn was the Lord of Lothlórien as he ruled that elven realm together with his wife, Galadriel. In the LOTR movies, he wasn't given enough screen time because of the fact that Galadriel. In the LOTR movies, he wasn't given enough screen time because of the fact that Galadriel. forces. By the time of The Lord of the Rings, Celeborn was at least 6,500 years old because he was already around during the First Age, he would be at least 6,500 years. The Third Age, of course, lasted more than 3,000 years. Considering that we don't know when exactly he was born during the First Age, he would be at least 6,500 years. years old by virtue of the fact that he lived through the events of the Second and Third Ages, which are nearly 6,500 years when combined. While Galadriel is often regarded as one of the greatest elves in the history of Middle-Earth due to her accomplishments, wisdom, beauty, and strength, she isn't the oldest elf in recorded history. Of course, Galadriel is quite old because she was born and raised in Valinor before she came with the Noldor to Middle-Earth to wage war against Morgoth. As such, she was there through all of the three ages of Middle-Earth before she returned to Valinor after Sauron's defeat. Considering that Galadriel lived through all of the three ages of Middle-Earth and was already an adult before she left Valinor, she was right around 8,372 when she left for the Undying Lands. As such, Galadriel is not only incredibly old and wise but is also one of the most experienced characters in the entire storyline. Of course, we are only looking at her age based on when she left Middle-Earth to sail to Valinor. She would have lived indefinitely in Valinor, and that's why she probably went on to become the second-oldest living elf in history if we only knew how long she spent in the Undying Lands after the defeat of Sauron. Objectively speaking, Feanor was the worst of all of the elves because he was the one who did most of the horrible acts that the Noldor did, and that's why they were banned from ever returning to the Undying Lands. Nevertheless, for some reason, JRR Tolkien described him as the greatest of the elves because he was the smartest and most skilled. And his skills were quite apparent when he created the Silmarils, which were the gems that sparked an entire war between the elves and Morgoth during the First Age. As a Noldor that lived in Valinor, Feanor spent thousands of years in the Undying Lands before he went to Middle-Earth to chase after Morgoth. Nevertheless, he actually lived for about 10,000 years before he saw his death at the blade of Gothmog, the mightiest of all of the Balrog. Cirdan the Shipwright wasn't featured a lot in the writings of JRR Tolkien or even in the movies (where he was noticeably absent), but he is actually the oldest elf to have ever lived in the history of the world. That's because he was already guite old when he went to Middle-Earth during the First Age. By the time of the Second Age, he was already the oldest elf in the history of the world. Out of all of the ages because he left during the Fourth Age. In fact, he was one of the final elves that left Middle Earth as he only did so 120 years after Sauron's defeat. As such, he is right around 10,000 years old, in the First Age, by Nicolas Chacin Quendi (Q.), Firstborn, Elder Children of Ilúvatar Created by Ilúvatar, being the first of his Children Cuiviénen, Tirion, Taniquetil, Formenos, Alqualondë, Tol Eressëa, Doriath, Falas, Lothlórien, Rivendell, Mirkwood, and many others Various Elvish languages, notably Quenya and Sindarin; Westron Tall, agile, graceful, wise, fair Taller than average height of Mankind; Males taller than females Black, silver, gold, blonde, auburn (rare among the Noldor), [2]golden (Vanyar), silver (Teleri) Typically swords and bows, occasionally spears,
sometimes magic The Elves were the first and eldest Children of Ilúvatar, considered the fairest and wisest of the earthly race of Arda. They called themselves the Quendi (Quenya: "the Speakers"; singular Quendë), referring to how at their creation, they were the only living things they knew of that spoke.[4] They were the third of the Free Peoples of the World. Oromë referred to the Elves that chose to follow him during the Great Journey as Eldar (Q.: "People of the Stars"), because when they awoke the stars were the only lights in the sky. Some, known afterwards as the Calaquendi (Elves of the Light), were brought by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where they mere taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valinor across the Sea, where taught by the Valar from Middle-earth to Valar from Middle-earth Elves were immune to illness and not subject to age after reaching their prime. They could be killed only in violence or by extreme despair. History Creation & awakening "Imin and Iminyë, The First Elves" By Sepide Donne The Firstborn, the Elder Children of Ilúvatar, were conceived by Eru Ilúvatar alone in the third theme of Ainulindalë. They are the eldest and noblest of the speaking races of Middle-earth. They awoke at Cuiviénen, the Water of Awakening, in the far east of Middle-earth, in the starlight of the Long Night, as the Sun and Moon had yet to be created. The first Elves to awake were three pairs: Imin ("First") and his wife Iminyë, Tata ("Second") and Tatië, and Enel ("Third") and Enelyë. [6] Creation of the first Quendi, by David Greset According to legend, Imin, Tata, and Enel, and their wives joined up and walked through the forests. They came across six, nine, and they invented poetry and music in Middleearth. Journeying further, they come across a band of Elves watching the stars, which Tata claimed as his. These were tall and dark-haired, the fathers of most of the Noldor. The ninety-six Elves now invented many new words. Continuing their journey, they found twenty-four pairs of Elves, singing without language, and Enel added them to his people These were the ancestors of most of the Lindar or "singers", later called Teleri. They found no more Elves; Imin's people, the smallest group, were the ancestors of the Vanyar. All in all they numbered 144. Because all Elves had been found in groups of twelve, twelve became their base number and 144 their highest number (for a long time). None of the later Elvish languages had a common name for a greater number.[6] At first the Elves sang with grace and merriment without speech but soon they developed speech and spoke with words, so their first name for themselves was Quendi (The Ones Who Speak With Voices).[7] One of the Galadhrim, in Lothlórien, by Sara Maria Morello Discovery & sundering The Elves were content and dwelt long under the stars in woods near Cuiviénen. However, Melkor, the Dark Lord, became aware of them and their location before the Valar, and sent evil spirits to spy on and afflict them. Many spirits to spy on and afflict them. Vala Oromë, whom Melkor knew would likely be the first Vala to discover them. And so it was that, on one of his many journeys in the wilds of Middle-earth, Oromë came upon the Elves. Due to Melkor's foresight and malice, some Elves were afraid. Hiding and fleeing, some of these early Elves were taken by Melkor or his agents. These Elves were never seen again and were taken to Utumno, and were believed to be twisted and mutilated into the first Orcs. However, the Elves who stayed quickly learned that Oromë was far different from the evils that had been pursuing them. Oromë spent some time with them and then returned to Valinor to tell Manwe of his discovery. He then returned to live with Elves for a time, learning about them. Not long after, the Valar made war upon Melkor and set a guard on Cuiviénen. The Elves knew nothing of the war save that the earth shook and thunderous lightning was seen in the north. After a long, grievous war, the Valar to Aman. However, many of the Elves were afraid, as they felt and had seen rumor of the terrible power of the Valar as they made war against Melkor. As such, the it was decided by the Elves to choose ambassadors one from each kindred to go to Valinor and Fingolfin, and of Finarfin When the three returned, they spoke to their people of the beauty and bliss of what they had seen and urged them to travel to Valinor and abide there. Thus began the Great Journey, also known as the Sundering of the Elves. All of the Elves agreed, save for the Avari, who chose to remain in Middle-earth. Led by Oromë, the Elven kindreds marched out of Cuiviénen but as they moved out of the forest area and saw the black clouds surrounding the north where Melkor had once lived, some grew afraid and turned back to Cuiviénen. The rest continued, albeit slowly, often stopping until Oromë returned, but were curious about what they saw.[9] The Vanyar and the Noldor, who were most eager to reach Valinor pressed on with the greatest speed and were the first to reach the coasts and to be taken to Valinor on an island that the Vala Ulmo guided across the Belegaer. The Teleri were the slowest of the groups as they were drawn to the forests and rivers they across the Belegaer. them to separate into several different groups, such as the Nandor who became Wood-elves of Wilderland and later Beleriand. Some of the Teleri that later became Doriath. The Teleri that were drawn to the sea settled along the western shores later becoming the Falathrim ruled by Círdan, who founded the coastal cities of Eglarest and Brithombar. Eventually, most of the Valar and the bliss of their lands, and the three Elven clans developed their own cultures. The former ambassadors Ingwe of the Valinor, his brother Olwe became kings of the Teleri. The Vanyar were drawn to the Valar and the full light of the Two Trees of Valinor and settled at the foot of Taniquetil with their king Ingwe, who became High King of the Elves, revered by all Elves living in the mountain below Manwe. The Noldor, beloved by Aule the Smith for their love of arts and crafts, built the great city of Tirion on Túna where Finwe, the High King of the Elves and some never left the island ferry of Tol Eressëa until Olwë their lord later built Alqualondë, with the help of the Sword, by Jenny Dolfen They devised writing scripts and developed arts of building, metallurgy, and shipbuilding, and poetry and music became common and lasting practices of all Elven kindreds. For three ages, the Elves lived in total peace and bliss, wandering and enhancing the lands. After these three ages, Melkor completed his sentence. He feigned rehabilitation, and convinced Manwe that he was no longer a threat. However, his stay in prison had only increased his malice, and, remembering that it was for the sake of the Elves that he had been overthrown, he sought to poison the peace of Valinor and bring ruin to the Elves. Adopting a fair and wise form, he began to cultivate the trust of those living in Valinor. Of the three Elven clans, Melkor saw the Teleri as rather useless to him, and the Vanyar would have nothing to do with him, being content in their development. But the Noldor, desiring more knowledge than other clans, were willing to listen to him, and Melkor saw that, due to their creative skill, they were more potentially useful than the Teleri. And so Melkor began to teach them, and for a long while none of his evil was made manifest, for any who sought his aid and counsel benefited greatly from it. But with his genuine teachings came half-truths and disguised lies regarding the intentions of the Valar. Most harmful among these was the knowledge that Men, the Second Children of Illuvatar, would one day appear in Middle-earth. The Valar had brought them to Aman so that Men might inherit Middleearth and usurp the glory that might have belonged to the Elves. Chief amongst these discontented Elves was Fëanor, the firstborn son of Finwe, kill, subtlety, and craftsmanship. It was he who had developed, amongst many other wonders, the system of letters used by the Noldor. But his greatest creation had been the Silmarils, three diamond-like gems in which the intermingled light of the Two Trees of Valinor had been captured. Feanor and his sons swear their Oath beneath the tower of the Mindon Eldaliéva in Tirion However, despite Feanor's capabilities (or perhaps because of them), he was exceedingly arrogant, and his actions were often rashly conducted. He hated and feared Melkor, but unwittingly provided his lies with their most prominent voice. Eventually, Melkor's lies and Feared Melkor, but had simply watched and waited. Now however, with the peace of Valinor violated, they could no longer ignore the issue. Feanor was brought to Mahanaxar and told to explain himself. With this, the lies of Melkor were at last laid bare, and he fled before the Valar could recapture him. However, for his actions, Feanor was brought to Mahanaxar and told to explain himself. years later, Manwe sought to heal the wounds between the Noldor at a festival held in Valmar, but Melkor and the Great Spider Ungoliant destroyed the Two Trees, darkening Valinor, killing Finwe, stealing the three Silmarils of Feanor, and fleeing to Middle-earth.[11] By Kinslaying at Alqualonde, by Ted
Nasmith Revolt of the Noldor When the tragic death of his father became known, the wrath of Feanor could no longer be contained. He gathered all the Noldor in Tirion and beneath the Mindon Eldaliéva he urged the Noldor to return to Middle-earth in pursuit of Melkor, now known as Morgoth. After being banned by the Valar for the rebellion and the violent deeds of the House of Feanor, the Noldor returned to Middle-earth as exiles to battle Morgoth, and to establish and rule realms of their own.[5] War of the Jewels The crimes of Middle-earth as well as other races, directly or indirectly. During this time, five great battles were fought against Morgoth and although many were victorious for the Elves and their allies, the ultimate result was disastrous. Additionally, the doom that followed the Noldor as a result of the Kinslaying at Alqualondë was discovered by Thingol, the King of Doriath. This discovery all but destroyed the relationship between the Sindar and the Noldor. There were also other Elves and races such as the Petty-dwarves that resented the exiled Noldor for usurping their rightful place in Middle-earth. Though for hundreds of years, the Noldor Elves fought and endured the forces of Morgoth with little military aid from the other Elven kindreds, a common fear and a common foe allowed for the Elves (especially the Noldor) to mingle with mortal Men, who had recently come into Beleriand from the east. The first, only the Noldor had dealings with Men, as the other Elves feared them, but over the generations, Men served the Noldor and gained their respect. After the Quest for the Silmaril, the blood of the Eldar and then through Tuor and Idril.[13] This union would create a bond that would enrich and ennoble both kindreds from then to later ages. Elves, by Firat Solhan, fighting in the War of Wrath The terrible Oath of Feanor created strife between the Silmaril recovered by Beren and Lúthien. The two brothers Celegorm and Curufin attempted to usurp the throne of Nargothrond after the loss of Finrod in the Quest for the Silmaril, but were thwarted by the hound Huan and Orodreth and expelled. It was because of this deed that the Norder of Nargothrond lent little aid to the Union of Maedhros during the Nírnaeth Arnoediad.[14] Twice in the latter half of the First Age, the Sons tried to take the Silmaril from those who inherited it These acts of cruelty and violence against their Elven kin caused great loss of life and resulted in the deaths of all of them except Maglor, who forever wanders the coasts of Middle-earth singing about the suffering of the Noldor.[15] Thranduil, a Sindar Elf, as a king during the Third Age, by Soni Alcorn-Hender Later days and decline After the destruction of Beleriand in the War of Wrath, the remaining Noldor repented of their rebellion and many returned to Eldamar along with some of the Sindar. The Elves that chose to remain in Middle-earth founded new realms. Most of the Noldor lived in Lindon with Gil-galad, the High King of the Noldor. Hundreds of years later Celebrimbor, the last of the House of Feanor, founded a new Noldorin realm called Eregion. The Sindar joined also with Gil-galad in Lindon and few went beyond the Misty Mountains into Wilderland, becoming leaders of the Silvan Elves in places such as Lothlórien and Greenwood the Great.[16] The Elven realms flourished for over one thousand years until SA 1200 when Sauron, under the guise of a messenger from the Valar named Annatar, appeared out of the east to offer knowledge to the Elves. Gil-galad mistrusted him and barred him from his kingdom. Sauron then approached Celebrimbor and the Elves. with the Three Rings of Power, as portrayed in film With Annatar's help, Celebrimbor forged the Rings of Power, but Three Rings alone were made in secret by Celebrimbor and were not directly touched by Sauron's plan and took off their rings. Celebrimbor sent the ring Nenya to Galadriel and sent Vilya and Narya to Gil-galad in Lindon. Elrond at the Siege of Barad-dûr with elite Noldorin soldiers Furious that the Elves had foiled his plans for domination, Sauron demanded the return of the rings and when they refused he prepared for war. For eight years, Sauron laid waste to Middle-earth in his war against the Elves, destroying Eregion and killing Celebrimbor. Eventually, with help of the Númenóreans, Gil-galad then decided to abandon Eregion in favor of the new refuge of Rivendell and his representative in Eriador. Lindon survived still as the greatest kingdom of Elves in Middle-earth who survived either moved to Lindon, sailed for the Second Age, Men continued to spread and grow in Middle-earth. The Faithful from the Downfall of Númenór founded the great kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor. Though Men were set to supplant them in Middle-earth, the Elves were powerful and numerous enough to join with Men one last time to defeat Sauron. Gil-galad led the second greatest host of Elves ever seen in Arda and formed the Last Alliance of Elves and Men with Elendil, High King of all Dúnedain, and vanquished Sauron in SA 3441. Elrond, Celeborn, and Galadriel at the Grey Havens prior to departing to Valinor With the dominion of Men at hand, the Elves became less numerous and more secluded with many becoming wearier of the now mortal lands. Only the realms of Lindor Lothlórien, and Rivendell survived as havens of Elven bliss. High Elves continued to live in Lindon but most sailed into the Rings: The Return of the Rings: The Return of the Ring [17] Elves leaving Middle-earth in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the Rings: The Return of the Ring [17] Elves leaving Middle-earth in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the Ring [17] Elves leaving Middle-earth after the final defeat of Sauron in the War of the Rings: The Return of the Rings: The Return of the Ring [17] Elves leaving Middle-earth after the final defeat of Sauron in the War of the Rings: The Return of the Rings: The Return of the Rings [17] Elves leaving Middle-earth after the final defeat of Sauron in the War of the Rings: The Return of the Rings [17] Elves leaving [17] Elves leaving [17] Elves leaving [17] Elves King (2003) Elves living in Aman, including those who returned from Middle-earth in the Third and Fourth Ages, lived in a state of blissful happiness as they did before the Revolt of the Noldor. Elves that never chose to sail into the Utter West, instead choosing to remain in Middle-earth in places such as the Woodland Realm in the former Mirkwood. would probably become more and more secretive, less numerous, and hidden. Eventually, these lingerers would fade away entirely as their bodies were first summoned to Aman by the Valar, they became divided into two groups - the Eldar, who accepted the summons of the Valar and undertook the Great Journey, and the Avari, who refused the summons. During the journey some groups of the Teleri remained behind and never reached Valinor and for this reason they (along with the Avari) became known as Moriquendi, the 'Elves of Darkness'. The Elves flourished in the First Age, but the Eldarin realms of Beleriand were destroyed by Morgoth, and in later ages their power waned. In the Second and Third Ages some Elves still lived in wandering companies, traveling through the broad lands they loved, but many were gathered in Elven-realms and refuges such as Lindon, Rivendell, the Woodland Realm, and Lórien, where Sindar and Noldor lords ruled over Silvan populations. By the end of the Third Age the Dominion of Men was at hand, and the Eldar live nigh to the Valar until the End of the World.[19] Vanyarin Elves, by Jenny Dolfen Elves riding to Rivendell, by Raoul Vitale Characteristics Elves, like Men, were Children of Eru Ilúvatar, and thus had many inner and exterior resemblances. Unlike Men, they could die from physical injury or from wasting away if, after long eons of life, they lost the will to live [citation needed] Some Elves in the First Age living near Angband died from a wasting disease, which was presumably issuing from Thangorodrim, Morgoth's fortress. The Elves came into existence before Men, and when Elves died, they would pass to the Halls of Mandos in Valinor. Elves came into existence before Men, and generally marry around this age. Elves who marry late or never are said to have strange fates. Elves can tell in the eyes and voice of another 's spouse by force; one so forced would reject bodily life and die. Because of the union of souls that occurs when Elves marry, and because of the eternal nature of Elven souls, they do not divorce or have multiple marriages. Elves have a taboo against incest, but marriage among second cousins was seen as acceptable.[20] It is untold whether this had genetic danger. A section of the Elven city of Gondolin, in Beleriand, imagined by Nicolas Chacin Generally, Elves were unusually beautiful in face and body. There was little physical difference between males and females, except for means of reproduction.[20] They had far better vision and hearing than Men, and posseed skills and abilities beyond what is possible for mankind. Many could craft seemingly magical objects. In The Silmarillion, it is mentioned that the Elves were indeed closest in kin to the Ainur, given that Elves possess ethereal grace and various powers. Elves were light of foot, can travel long distances without leaving tracks, and often can walk lightly across snow where the boots of Men would sink.[21] They required sleep, but could to enter a waking meditative state to regain their strength which means they can be exhausted and tire.[22] Although the Elves were more resistant to adverse environments and lack of food than Men, they could succumb to them, and therefore required sustenance. Galadriel playing a harp, by Stephen Hickman In communication, Elves put great attention to detail. Part of their bodily expression was called mátengwië or hwermë, meaning "language of the hands" and "gesture-code". When interacting amongst
themselves, Elves would pay attention to this first. Even finger movement could determine meaning.[23][24][25] Other writings elves appear in some of Tolkien's writings outside the legendarium. For example, in Letters From Father Christmas, among the friends of Father Christmas are the Red Gnomes, the Green Elves, and Snow Elves. Trivia Considering how much J.R.R. Tolkien's classic Middle-earth saga influenced countless for their Keeper, Dragon's Dogma 2 and many more. Though not as angelic as Tolkien's version, said portrayals nonetheless share admirable traits such as fairer and wiser than humans in addition of superior senses and perception; affinity with magic, art, nature, archery, and song; and longevity, if not outright immortality. Translations Foreign Language Translated name Albanian Kukudhët Afrikaans Elwe Arabic الأوالف Armenian Elfor Basque Elfoak Belarusian Cyrillic Эльфы Bengali [][][] Bosnian Patuljak Bulgarian Cyrillic Эльфы Bengali [][][] Bosnian Patuljak Bulgarian Cyrillic Эльфы Bengali [][][] Haltiat French Elfes Galician Elfos Georgian בשמטא German Elben Greek בשזואג Gujarati [] || Hebrew אלפים Hindi || Hebrew אלפים אלפים Hindi || Hebrew אלפים Hindi || Hebrew אלפים Hindi || Hebrew | Norwegian Alver Persian الف ها Polish Elfy Romanian Elfii Russian Эльфы Serbian Вилењаци (Cyrillic) Vilenjaci (Latin) Sinhalese []]]] Ukrainian Cyrillic Ельфи Urdu الف ها Polish Elfor Thai []]]] Ukrainian Cyrillic Элвф Tamil []]]] Ukrainian Cyrillic Элвф Tamil []]]] earth, Vol. XI: The War of the Jewels, Part Four: Quendi and Eldar 1 The History of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The Peoples of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter III: "Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Middle-earth, 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History of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The War of the Soldor 1 Cuivienyarna) 1 The History of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The War of the Soldor 1 Cuivienyarna) 1 The History of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The War of the Soldor 1 Cuivienyarna) 1 The History of Middle-earth, Vol. XI: The War of the Soldor 1 Cuivienyarna 1 History of Middle-earth, Vol. I: The Book of Lost Tales Part One, chapter II: "Of the Commentary 1 9.0 9.1 9.2 9.3 The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter II: "Of Eldamar and the Princes of the Eldalië" 1 The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter XIX: "Of the Darkening of Valinor" 1 The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter XXIII: "Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin" 1 The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter XXIII: "Of the Fall of Gondolin" 1 The Silmarillion, Chapter XX: "Of the Fall of Gondolin" 1 The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion, Chapter XX: "Of the Fall of Gondolin" 1 The Silmarillion, 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VII: "The Mirror of Galadriel" Elvish Translation & Calligraphy Commissions are OPEN! Home > Tolkien Musings > Life, Death, and Aging of Elves One thing I cover with relative frequency in my online content is Elves' ages, calculating the objective ages for various prominent Elves in The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion according to information gleaned from Tolkien's notes. Here's a general overview of those notes as outlined in The Nature of Middle-Earth (compiled and edited by Carl Hostetter). Detailed breakdowns for a few Elves I get frequent questions about will be in a separate blog post. Warning: there's a lot of math here! You can also scroll to the bottom for a tl;dr conversion list. to note when approaching this topic in Tolkien's world is the difference between objective (quantifiable) age and subjective (perceived) age. Objective Age is relatively straightforward, since it's simply a matter of counting Mortal Years and then converting them over to Elvish yéni (great-years). Subjective Age is relatively straightforward, since it's simply a matter of counting Mortal Years and then converting them over to Elvish yéni (great-years). Elves age differently than Mortal Men in several ways. Let's cover the former so we can quickly move on to the more interesting latter! '-., Objective Elven Age: Tolkien set up the Elves to commonly use what is called the duodecimal system. This means Elves like to count things in 12s instead of multiples of 10 (aka the decimal system or Base-10 we commonly use in our world). This affinity toward multiples of 12 is apparent in the conversion ratio used for Mortal Years (coranari/löar - Quenya for "great-years"). We see these terms used in the Calendar of Imladris in Appendix D of The Lord of the Rings. 1 Yén = 144 Coranari/Löar (Mortal Years) So if an Elf is 6,192 MY old, that converts to 43 yeni. That does not mean they are the equivalent of a 43-year-old Mortal; it's just the unit in which they measure time as a long-lived race. This ratio of 1:144 carries across units as well, so 1 Elvish Day = 144 Mortal Days, for example. This is how I calculated the hilarious factoid that the entirety of the plot of Lord of the Rings for Legolas took place in the equivalent of an "Elvish Weekend". (Gollum escapes Mirkwood June 20th, TA 3018; the Ring is destroyed March 25th, TA 3019; total time 278 days. 2 "Elvish Days" would be 288 days. Ta-da!)
...'` Subjective Elven Age: This is where things get sticky. Even in the confines of The Nature of Middle-Earth's notes, we see that Tolkien hardcore STRUGGLED with the numbers, massaging them several different ways to try to backward manufacture a system that would work for the Elves of the First Age in particular. (The events in the 1st Age all occurred in the relatively short period of just 590 MY, so Elves born in Beleriand complicated things!) To the best of my knowledge, here is what was generally settled upon: Growth Years vs Life Years: Elves split their lives into three main sections: Growth Years vs Life Years. The Quenya terms theorem and Fading. Elves use to distinguish these two measurements are olmen (pl coimendi) and coimen (pl coimendi). Note the multiples of 12. 1 olmen (growth-year) = 12 MY1 coimen (life-year) = 12 MY1 coimen (life-year) = 144 MY = 1 yén The time from conception to birth is 3/4 of a Growth Year. Since 1 Growth Year is 12 MY1 coimen (life-year) = 12 MY1 co of 9 MY. (Yes, that's a long time, but it's far better than Tolkien's original idea of 3/4 of an entire yén, which would have been 108 MY. Fuckin' YIKES. Hard pass, Tolkien.)Another note about conception is that it is a conscious, willful act for the Elves. Pregnancies are never accidental for Elves; they are intentional. Even if both parties haven't formally discussed it prior to conception, the conception itself can only happen when both Elves put their minds and spirits into the act, not just their bodies. We'll revisit this concept in the Fading section. Growth: The Growth period of an Elf's life takes them from birth to maturity. Maturity (or quantolië in Quenya) varies. Because of course it can't be simple. thanks Tolkien. For female Elves, Maturity is generally reached after 18 olmendi (growth-years). For male Elves, it's 24 olmendi = 24 x 12 = 288 löar (MY) 7 in Aman -- 24 olmendi = 18 x 12 = 216 löar (MY) 7 olkien seemed to follow these guidelines for Elves growing up in Valinor. For Elves in Middle-Earth, the numbers are a bit different. Tolkien decided Elves automatically age faster when outside "the domes of Varda", so Elves born in Middle-Earth (and those who leave Valinor before they're fully mature) grow up at a ratio of 1:10 rather than the 1:12 ratio you see above. He also generalized the age of Maturity to 20 for all Elves rather than splitting hairs based on sex. of 9 in Middle-Earth -- 20 guickened olmendi = 20 x 10 = 200 loar (MY) Essentially regardless of location. as 72 coimendi long (after Maturity is reached). This is the period where an Elf has reached full physical maturity and remains in peak condition or full youthful vigor. 72 coimendi = 72 x 144 = 10,368 löar (MY) In more Elvish terms, the period is defined by the hröa is slowly overtaken by the fea. The time when the fea takes control over the hroa marks the end of Youth and the beginning of Fading. Elves in Aman: In the midst of the valar, Elves in Aman: In the midst of the valar, Elves in Aman: In the midst of the valar, Elves in Aman and never leftlikely appear to be in their mid-to-late-twenties. Forever. They would still count their objective age using yéni like any other Elf, but it would just be a number without much significance because their Youth never truly ends while in Aman. Elves in Middle-Earth age at a quickened pace. While Elves in Aman enjoy the ratio of 1:144, Middle-Earth Elves are quickened to 1:100 during the majority of history in Tolkien's world. (After the Ring is destroyed in The Lord of the Rings, any remaining Elves in Middle-Earth are quickened to 1:72, and then 1:48 at an unspecified later time. This is why Elves are said to fade into mere spirits if they remained in Middle-Earth into the time of the Dominion of Men. Their fear overtake their hröar far faster if they stay instead of sailing West.) Elves' Ages at End of Youth: σ in Aman -- "Age 96" -- 24 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (72 x 144) = 10,584 löar (MY) σ /Q in Aman -- "Age 90" -- 18 olmendi + 72 coimendi = (18 x 12) + (12 x 1 Middle-Earth -- 20 quickened olmendi + 72 quickened coimendi = (20 x 10) + (72 x 100) = 7,400 löar (MY) Fading: As stated before, Fading is a general term for when an Elf's spirit overtakes their body. This doesn't mean they cease to physically exist, but it means their physical bodies begin to weaken and they devote their time to cerebral rather than bodily pursuits. It's exceedingly rare for Elves in their Fading period to have children, but Tolkien states that it's not out of an inability to do so. Elves can enjoy sex throughout their lives, but the desire for physical bearing of children generally wanes with time, so they simply won't devote the necessary power of their mind, body, and spirit to conceive. When Elves reach their Fading phase of life, the pull to leave Middle-Earth for the Undying Lands of Valinor/Aman becomes much stronger. Elves can also be pushed toward this state faster by a few means: Helcaraxë -- Any Elf who had to travel over the Grinding Ice on their way to Beleriand was aged an extra 2 coimendi. Trauma -- Elves like Gwindor--who was captured and tortured by Morgoth/Sauron for more than a decade---are aged faster by their life experiences. The more they age; the more they age; the more they age; the more they age, the faster their bodies relinquish control to their spirits. sailed West to avoid succumbing to this traumatic kind of aging. Children -- A typical child (conception, birth, rearing, etc) ages a male Elf an extra coimen and a female Elf an extra coimen di gave up her body completely. Grief -- The loss of a close family member (or several) or a wedded mate can also push an Elf toward their Fading or death. Again, the level of trauma would vary, thus so would the impact. Death: Elves are not completely immortal. They are slow to age, don't grow physically ill, and are impervious to the elements (otherwise the Elves on the Helcaraxë wouldn't have survived, nor would Maedhros have lasted hanging on the precipice of Thangorodrim). But they, of course, can be killed through most conventional means. Elves do not pass away of old age. BUT... they can willingly give up their bodies under extreme circumstances. Then again, this is what the Númenoreans and their descendants tended to do, Aragorn included! When they reached advanced age, Tolkien notes that they tended to let go of life rather than cling to it and go senile, which Tolkien implies was a logical progression for Mortal minds after aging past a certain point. Likewise, Arwen chose to be counted as a Mortal despite her primarily Elvish blood, and she willfully relinquished her body closely following the death of Aragorn. Some might call this "death by grief", but I personally feel that's an overly romanticized fandom concept. In any case, the final fate of the Elves as the Firstborn Children of Ilúvatar is to last while the world lasts, which means that if their bodies are slain or given up under these extreme circumstances, their spirits do not perish but transfer to the Halls of Mandos, where they are allowed to rest and heal from their traumas under the care of Námo and his Maiar. Eventually, they are reborn into new Elvish bodies in Aman. In this way, their fear are immortal even if their hroar are not. ,,-'``'-., ,,-'` `'-., TL;DR: Overall Objective Elf Age Ratio = 1:144 (1 yén = 144 Mortal Years) Gestation = 9 Mortal Years (MY) Growth is measured in olmendi (growth-years) 1 olmen = 12 MY in Aman? Maturity = 24 olmendi = 216 MY in Aman? Maturity = 20 quickened olmendi = 200 MY in Middle-EarthHalf-Elves are an exception (see Aging of Half-Elves blog post) Youth is measured in coimendi (life-years) 1 coimen = 1 yén (Elvish "long-year") = 144 MYYouth lasts 72 coimendi are also quickened in Middle-Earth. 1:100 instead of the 1:144 ratio used in Aman. Fading can last indefinitely. Spirit takes prevalence over body. Trauma, grief, and children all age Elves faster. Death = Elves can be slain or willfully give up their bodies. Their spirits never die and are reincarnated in Valinor if their bodies. Their spirits never die and are reincarnated in Valinor if their bodies. blends that will wisk away your senses. Don't miss all the fantastic merch! Follow this link to see the
different series, and then explore the links to products on my (Tee)Spring store! We all shine with our unique lights. Order a custom starscape to show off the hues of your own galaxy and light up your accessories! Humanoid race from J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth In J. R. R. Tolkien's writings, Elves are the first fictional race to appear in Middle-earth. Unlike Men and Dwarves, Elves do not die of disease or old age. Should they die in battle or of grief, their souls go to the Halls of Mandos in Aman. After a long life in Middle-earth, Elves do not die of disease or old age. the Grey Havens. They feature in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. Their history is described in detail in The Silmarillion. Tolkien derived Elves from mentions in the ancient poetry and languages of Northern Europe, especially Old English. These suggested to him that Elves were large, dangerous, beautiful, lived in wild natural places, and practised archery. He invented languages for the Elves, including Sindarin and Quenya. Tolkien-style Elves have become a staple of fantasy literature. They have appeared, too, in film and role-playing game adaptations of Tolkien's works. Further information: Elf The framework for J. R. R. Tolkien's conception of his Elves, and many points of detail in his portraval of them, is thought by Haukur Porgeirsson to have come from the survey of folklore and early modern scholarship about elves (alfar) in Icelandic tradition in the introduction to Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri ('Icelandic legends and fairy tales'). It covered stories from the 17th century onwards, noting that elves are the firstborn race;[a] that they could marry humans; and that they lack an immortal soul.[1] The modern English word Elf derives from the Old English word ælf (with cognates in all other Germanic concept appears to have come to differ from the Scandinavian notion in the early Middle Ages, and the Anglo-Saxon concept diverged even further, possibly under Celtic influence.[3] J. R. R. Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves differed from those "of the better known lore"[T 1] of Scandinavian mythology.[4] The Tolkien made it clear in a letter that his Elves diffe South English Legendary from c. 1250, describes elves much as Tolkien does:[5] South English Legendary"St Michael" 253-258 Modern English And ofte in fourme of wommane : In many derne weyegrete compaygnie mon i-seoth of heom : bobe hoppie and pleize, Pat Eluene beoth i-cleopede : and ofte heo comiez to toune, And bi daye muche in wodes heo beoth : and bi nizte ope heize dounes. Dat beoth be wrechche gostes : Dat out of heuene weren i-nome, And manie of heom a-domesday : 3eot schullen to reste come. [6] And often shaped like women: On many secret pathsmen see great numbers of them: dancing and sporting. These are called Elves: and often they come to townand by day they are much in the woods: by night up on the high downs. Those are the wretched spirits: that were taken out of Heaven, And at Doomsday many of them shall come to rest. Some of Tolkien's Elves are in the "undying lands" of Valinor, home of the godlike Valar, while others are in Middle-earth. The Elf-queen Galadriel indeed has been expelled from Valinor, home of the godlike Valar, while others are in Middle-earth. much like the fallen Melkor, though she is clearly good, and much like an angel. Similarly, some of the Legendary's Eluene are on Earth, others in the "Earthly Paradise". So, did they have sould, the answer had to have been yes. In Shippey's view, the Silmarillion resolved the Middle English puzzle, letting Elves go not to Heaven but to the halfway house of the Halls of Mandos on Valinor.[5] Victorian era Fairy painting: Edwin Landseer, Scene from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Titania and Bottom, 1851 By the late 19th century, the term 'fairy' had been taken up as a utopian theme, and was used to critique social and religious values, a tradition which Tolkien and T. H. White continued.[7] One of the last of the Victorian Fairy-paintings, The Piper of Dreams by Estella Canziani, sold 250,000 copies and was well known within the trenches of World War I where Tolkien saw active service. Illustrated posters of Robert Louis Stevenson's poem Land of Nod had been sent out by a philanthropist to brighten servicemen's quarters, and Faery was used in other contexts as an image of "Old England" to inspire patriotism.[8] By 1915, when Tolkien was writing his first elven poems, the words elf, fairy and gnome had many divergent and contradictory associations. Tolkien had been gently warned against the term 'fairy', which John Garth supposes may have been due to its growing association with homosexuality, but Tolkien eventually but hesitantly chose the term elf over fairy. In his 1939 essay On Fairy-Stories, Tolkien words such as elf have long been influenced by French (from which fay and faërie, fairy are derived); but in later times, through their use in translation, fairy and elf have acquired much of the atmosphere of German, Scandinavian, and Celtic tales, and many characteristics of the huldu-folk, the daoine-sithe, and the tylwyth-teg."[10] Further information: Philology and Middle-earth and Elf § Proper names Beowulf's eotenas [ond] ylfe [ond] orcneas, "ogres [and] evil-corpses", inspiring Tolkien to create orcs, elves, and other races Tolkien, a philologist, knew of the many seemingly contradictory traditions about elves. The Old English Beowulf's eotenas ond ylfe ond orcnéas, "ettens [giants] and elves and demon-corpses",[2] a grouping which Shippey calls "a very stern view of all non-human and un-Christian species".[5] The Middle English Sir Gawain meets a green axe-wielding giant, an aluisch mon ("elvish man", translated by Shippey as "uncanny creature").[2] Christian sources from Iceland knew and disapproved of the tradition of offering sacrifices to the elves, álfa-blót.[2] Elf-shot, associated with "elf arrows", Neolithic flint arrowheads sometimes used as amulets,[11] was one of the hints Tolkien used to create his Elves.[2] Elves were directly dangerous, too: the medical condition "elf-shot", described in the spell Gif hors of scoten sie, "if a horse is elf-shot", meaning some kind of internal injury,[12] was associated both with Neolithic flint arrowheads and the temptations of the devil. Tolkien takes "elf-shot" as a hint to make his elves skilful in archery,[2] while a third condition was ælfsogoða, "elf-pain",[12] glossed by Shippey as "lunacy".[2] All the same, an Icelandic woman could be frið sem álfkona, "fair as an elf-woman", while the Anglo-Saxons might call a very fair woman ælfscýne, "elf-beautiful".[2] Some aspects can readily be reconciled, Shippey writes, since "Beauty is itself dangerous".[2] But there is more: Tolkien brought in the Old English usage of descriptions like wuduælfen "woodelf, dryad", wæterælfen "water-elf", and sæælfen "sea-elf, naiad", giving his elves strong links with wild nature.[2][13] Yet another strand of legend holds that Elfland, as in Elvehøj ("Elf Hill") and other traditional stories, is dangerous to mortals because time there is distorted, as in Tolkien's Lothlórien. "re-creations", his imagined worlds, that they incorporate all the available evidence to create a many-layered impression of depth, making use of "both good and bad sides of popular story; the sense of inquiry, prejudice, hearsay and conflicting opinion".[2] Shippey suggests that the "fusion or kindling-point" of Tolkien's thinking about elves came from the Middle English lay Sir Orfeo, which transposes the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice into a wild and wooded Elfland, and makes the quest successful. In Tolkien's translation the elves appear and disappear: "the king of Faerie with his rout / came hunting in the woods about / with blowing far and crying dim, and barking hounds that were with him; yet never a beast they took nor slew, and where they went he never knew". Shippey comments that Tolkien took many suggestions from this passage, including the horns and the placing of his elves in Wirkwood; the proud but honourable Elf-king; and the placing of his elves in Wirkwood; the prove that Tolkien took many suggestions from this passage, including the
horns and the placing of his elves in Wirkwood; the prove that Tolkien took many suggestions from this passage. but, Shippey writes, the more one explores how Tolkien used the ancient texts, the more one sees "how easy it was for him to feel that a consistency and a sense lay beneath the chaotic ruin of the old poetry of the North".[2] Tolkien's Sundering of the Elves allowed him to explain the existence of Norse mythology's Light Elves, who live in Alfheim ("Elfhome") and correspond to his Calaquendi, and Dark Elves, who live underground in Svartalfheim ("Black Elfhome") and whom he "rehabilitates" as his Moriquendi, the Elves who never went to see the light of the Two Trees of Valinor.[14] Tolkien's multiple medieval sources for Elves[2] Medieval source Term Idea Beowulf eotenas ond ylfe ond orcnéas: "ettens, elves, and devil-corpses" Elves are strong and dangerous. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an aluisch mon: "elvish man, uncanny creature" Elves are archers. Icelandic andOld English usage frið sem álfkona: "fair as an elf-woman"ælfscýne: "elf-beautiful" Elves are beautiful. Old English usage wuduælfen, wæterælfen, sæælfen: "dryads, water-elves, naiads" Elves are strongly connected to nature. Scandinavian ballad Elvehøj Mortal visitors to Elfland are in danger, as time seems different there. Time is distorted in Elfland. Norse mythology Dökkálfar, Ljósálfar: "dark elves, light elves" The Elvish peoples are sundered into multiple groups.[14] Tolkien developed his conception of elves over the years, from his earliest writings through to The Hobbit, The Silmarillion, and The Lord of the Rings.[15] Traditional Victorian dancing fairies and elves appear in much of Tolkien's early poetry,[T 2] and have influence upon his later works,[16] in part due to the influence of a production of J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan in Birmingham in 1910,[17] and his familiarity with the work of Catholic mystic poet, Francis Thompson[17] which Tolkien had acquired in 1914.[T 2] O! I hear the tiny horns Of enchanted leprechauns And the padded feet of many gnomes a-coming! —J. R. R. Tolkien, Goblin Feet, 1915 In his The Book of Lost Tales, Tolkien develops a theme that the diminutive fairy-like race of Elves had once been a great and mighty people, and that as Men took over the world, these Elves had "diminished" [T 2][T 3][18] themselves. This theme is shared especially by the god-like and human-sized Ljósálfar of Norse mythology, and medieval works such as Sir Orfeo, the Welsh Mabinogion, Arthurian romances and the legends of the Tuatha Dé Danann.[T 4] The name of the god Ingwi-Freyr in Norse mythology, a god who is gifted the elf-world Alfheimr. Terry Gunnell finds the relationship between beautiful ships and the Elves reminiscent of the god Njörðr and the god Freyr's ship Skíðblaðnir. [19] He also retains the usage of the French derived term "fairy" for the same creatures. [20] The larger Elves are inspired by Tolkien's personal Catholic theology, representing the state of Men in Eden who have not yet fallen, like humans but fairer and

wiser, with greater spiritual powers, keener senses, and a closer empathy with nature. Tolkien wrote of them: "They are made by man in his own image and likeness; but freed from those limitations which he feels most to press upon him. They are immortal, and their will is directly effective for the achievement of imagination and desire."[17] In The Book of Lost Tales, Tolkien includes both more serious "medieval" elves such as Feanor and Turgon alongside frivolous, Jacobean elves such as the Solosimpi and Tinúviel. [T 4] Alongside the idea of the greater Elves, Tolkien toyed with the idea of children visiting Valinor, the island-homeland of the Elves in their sleep. Elves would also visit children at night and comfort them if they had been chided or were upset. This was abandoned in Tolkien's later writing.[T 6] Douglas Anderson shows that in The Hobbit, Tolkien again includes both the more serious 'medieval' type of elves, such as Elrond and the wood-elf king, Thranduil, and frivolous elves, such as the elvish guards at Rivendell.[T 4] Further information: Tolkien and the Celtic In 1937, having had his manuscript for The Silmarillion rejected by a publisher who disparaged all the "eye-splitting Celtic origin: [T 7] Needless to say they are not Celtic! Neither are the tales. I do know Celtic things (many in their original languages Irish and Welsh), and feel for them a certain distaste: largely for their fundamental unreason. They have bright colour, but are like a broken stained glass window reassembled without design. They are in fact "mad" as your reader says - but I don't believe I am.[T 7] Dimitra Fimi proposes that these comments are a product of his Anglophilia rather than a commentary on the texts themselves or their actual influence on his writing, and cites evidence to this effect in her essay "Mad' Elves and 'elusive beauty': some Celtic strands of Tolkien's mythology".[18] Fimi proposes that some of the stories Tolkien wrote as elven history are directly influenced by Celtic mythology.[18] For example, "Flight of The Noldoli" she argues, is based on the Tuatha Dé Danann and Lebor Gabála Érenn, and their migratory nature comes from early Irish/Celtic history.[18] John Garth states that with the underground enslavement of the Noldoli to Melkor, Tolkien was essentially rewriting Irish myth regarding the Tuatha Dé Danann into a Christian eschatology. [21] Further information: Guide to the Names in The Lord of the Rings In The Lord of the Rings Tolkien pretends to be merely the translator of Bilbo and Frodo's memoirs, collectively known as the Red Book of Westmarch. He says that those names and terms that appear in English are meant to be his purported translations from the Common Speech.[T 8] According to Shippey, the theme of diminishment from semi-divine Elf to diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave slowly to forget and to be forgotten."[T 9] Writing in 1954, part way through proofreading The Lord of the Rings, Tolkien claimed that the Elvish language Sindarin had a character very like British-Welsh "because it seems to fit the rather 'Celtic' type of legends and stories told of its speakers".[T 10] In the same letter, Tolkien goes on to say that the elves had very little in common with elves or fairies of Europe, and that they really represent men with greater artistic ability, beauty and a longer life span. In his writings, an Elven bloodline was the only real claim to 'nobility' that the Men of Middle-earth could have.[T 10] Tolkien wrote that the elves are primarily to blame for many of the ills of Middle-earth in The Lord of the Rings, having independently created the Three Rings to stop their domains in mortal-lands from 'fading' and attempting to prevent inevitable change and new growth.[23] Main article: The Silmarillion Arda in the First Age, with the sundering of the Elves. The Elves awoke at Cuiviénen, on the Sea of Helcar (right) in Middle-earth, and many of them migrated westwards to Valinor in Aman, though some stopped in Beleriand (top), and others returned to Beleriand later. The first Elves were awakened by Eru Ilúvatar near the bay of Cuiviénen during the Years of the Trees. This event marked the beginning of the First Age. They awoke under the starlit sky, as the Sun and Moon had yet to be created. The first Elves to awaken were three pairs: Imin ("First") and his wife Iminyë, Tata ("Second") and Enelyë. They walked through the forests, finding other pairs of Elves, who became their folk. They lived by the rivers, and invented poetry and music in Middle-earth. Journeying further, they came across tall and dark-haired elves, the fathers of most of the Noldor. They invented many new words. Continuing their journey, they found elves were discovered by the Vala Oromë, who brought the news of their awakening to Valinor. [T 12] Main article: Sundering of the Elves The Valar decided to summon the Elves to Valinor rather than leaving them where they were first awakened, near the Cuiviénen lake in the eastern extremity of Middle-earth. They sent Oromë, who took Ingwë, Finwë and Elwë to take the Great Journey (also called the Great March) to Valinor. Those who did not accept the summons became known as the Avari, The Unwilling. The others were called Eldar, the People of the Stars by Oromë, and they took Ingwë, Finwë and Elwë as their leaders, and became respectively the Vanyari, Noldor and Teleri (who spoke Vanyarin Quenya, Noldorin Quenya, and Telerin, respectively). On their journey, some of the Anduin, and, led by Lenwe, became the Mandor, who spoke Nandorin. Orome led the others over the Misty Mountains and Ered Lindon into Beleriand. There Elwe became lost, and the Teleri stayed behind looking for him. The Vanyar and the Noldor moved onto a floating island, Tol Eressëa, that was moved by Ulmo to Valinor. Some Teleri stayed behind though, still looking for Elwë, and others stayed on the shores, being called by Ossë. They took Círdan as their leader and became the Falathrim. The Teleri who stayed in Beleriand later became known as the Sindar.[24] Matthew Dickerson notes the "very complicated changes, with shifting meanings assigned to the same names" as Tolkien worked or his conception of the elves and their divisions and migrations. He states that the sundaring of the elves allowed Tolkien, a professional philologist, to develop two languages, distinct but related, Quenya for the Eldar and Sindarin for the Sindar, citing Tolkien's own statement that the stories were made to create a world for the languages, not the reverse Dickerson cites the Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey's suggestion that the "real root" of The Silmarillion lay in the linguistic relationship, complete with sound-changes and differences of semantics, between these two languages of the divided elves. history, including their migrations.[24][25][26] In Valinor, Feanor, son of Finwe, and the greatest of the Elves, created the Silmarils in which he stored a part of the light of the Two Trees that were lighting Valinor.[T 13] After three ages in the Halls of Mandos, Melkor was released, feigning reform. He however spread his evil and started to poison the minds of the Elves against the Valar. Eventually he killed Finwe and stole the Silmarils. Feanor then named him Morgoth (Sindarin: The Black Enemy). Feanor then named him Morgoth (Sindarin: The Black Enemy). the overlord of Beleriand, naming himself Thingol (Sindarin: Grey-cloak). After the First Battle of Beleriand, during the first rising of the Moon, the Noldor arrived in Beleriand. [T 14] They laid a siege around Morgoth's fortress of Angband, but were eventually defeated. [T 15] The Elves never regained the upper hand, finally losing the hidden kingdoms Nargothrond, Doriath, and Gondolin near the culmination of the war.[T 16][T 17] When the Elves had been forced to the furthest southern reaches of Beleriand, Earendil the War of Wrath, finally defeating Morgoth.[T 18] After the War of Wrath, the Valar tried to summon the Elves back to Valinor. Many complied, but some stayed. During the Second Age they founded the Realms of Lindon (Mirkwood). Sauron, Morgoth's former servant, made war upon them, but with the aid of the Númenóreans they defeated him, though both the king of the Noldorin Elves, Gil-galad, and Elendil, king of the Númenóreans, were killed. During the Second and Third Ages, they held some protected realms with the aid of the Three Rings of Power: Lothlorien, ruled by Galadriel and Celeborn; Rivendell, ruled by Elrond and home to the Elf-lord Glorfindel; and the Grey Havens, ruled by Círdan the shipwright. Círdan and his Elves built the ships on which Elves departed for Valinor.[T 19] After the destruction of the Bower of the Elves ended and the Fourth Age, the Age of Men, began. Most Elves left for Valinor; those that remained in Middle-earth were doomed to a slow decline until, in the words of Galadriel, they faded and became a "rustic folk of dell and cave". The fading played out over thousands of years, until in the modern world, occasional glimpses of rustic Elves would fuel folktales and fantasies. Elladan and Elrohir, the sons of Elrond, did not accompany their father when the White Ship bearing the Ring-bearer and the chief Noldorin leaders sailed from the Grey Havens to Valinor; they remained in Lindon. Celeborn and other elves of the Grey Havens remained for a while before leaving for Valinor. Legolas founded an elf colony in Ithilien during King Elessar's reign; the elves there helped to rebuild Gondor, living mainly in southern Ithilien, along the shores of the Anduin. After Elessar's death, Legolas built a ship and sailed to Valinor and, eventually, all the elves in Ithilien followed him.[T 20] In "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" in Appendix A, most Elves have already left, barring some in Mirkwood and a few in Lindon; the garden of Elrond in Rivendell is empty. Arwen flees to an abandoned Lothlórien, where she dies.[T 21] Tolkien describes elves as "tall, fair of skin and grey-eyed, though their locks were dark, save in the golden hair. [T 23] The Vanyar were called "The Fair" for their golden hair. [T 24] Túrin, a Man, was called Elf-man due to his appearance and speech, and described as "dark-haired and pale-skinned, with grey eyes." [T 25] Further information: Elfland and Women in The Lord of the Rings Elves, at least the Eldar, have a pregnancy that lasts about a year. By the age of 1, Elves can speak, walk and dance. Puberty and full height are attained at around their fiftieth to one hundredth year, when they stop aging physically.[T 26] Elves marry freely, monogamously, only once, and for love early in life; adultery is unthinkable.[T 26] Betrothal, with the exchange of rings, lasts at least a year, and is revocable by the return of the rings, but is rarely broken.[T 26] Marriage is by words exchanged by the bride and groom (including the speaking of the name of Eru Ilúvatar) and consummation; it is celebrated with a feast. Wedding rings are worn on the index fingers. The bride's mother gives the groom a jewel to wear. [T 26] Elves view the sexual act as special and intimate, for it leads to the birth of children. Elves who are married cannot be forced by other Elves to have sex; before that they will lose the will to endure and go to Mandos.[T 26] Elves have few children,[b] and there are long intervals between each child. They are soon preoccupied with other pleasures; their libido wanes and they focus their time on smithwork, sculpture, music and other arts, and on preparing food. Males and females are equal, but females often specialize in the ability to preserve life. However, females can defend themselves at need as well as males, and many males such as Elrond are skilled healers. [T 26] Elves are skilful horse-riders, riding without saddle or bridle, though Tolkien was inconsistent on this point.[27] Main article: Elvish languages (Middle-earth) Tolkien created many languages for his Elves. His interest was primarily philological, and he said his stories grew out of his languages. Indeed, the languages were the first thing Tolkien ever created for his mythos, starting with what he originally called "Elfin" or "Qenya" [sic]. This was later spelled Quenya (High-elven); it and Sindarin (Grey-elven) are the most complete of Tolkien's constructed languages. Elves are also credited with creating the Tengwar (by Feanor) and Cirth (Daeron) scripts. [28] Main article: Death and immortality in Middle-earth Elves are immortal, and remain unwearied with age. They can recover from wounds which would be fatal to a Man, but can be killed in battle. Spirits of dead Elves go to the Halls of Mandos in Valinor. After a certain period of time and rest that serves as "cleansing", their spirits are clothed in bodies identical to their old ones. [T 28] If they do not die in battle or accident,[c] Elves eventually grow weary of Middle-earth and desire to go to Valinor;[T 29] they often sail from the Grey Havens, where Círdan the Shipwright dwells with his folk.[T 30][T 31] Eventually, any Elves that remain in Middle-earth undergo a process of "fading", in which their immortal spirits overwhelm and "consume" their bodies. This renders their bodily forms invisible to mortal eyes, except to those to whom they wish to manifest themselves. [T 26][T 32] Fates of Elves and Men in Tolkien's legendarium. Elves are immortal but can be killed in battle, in which case they go to the Halls of Mandos in Aman. They may be restored by the Will of the Valar, and then go to live with the Valar in Valinor, like an Earthly Paradise, though just being in the place does not confer immortality, as Men supposed. Men are mortal, and when they die they go beyond the circles of the world, even the Elves not knowing like those in any other adaptation.[31] The 1977 Rankin-Bass version of The Hobbit depicts the wood-elves in what Austin Gilkeson calls a weird way, quite unlike the elves in any other adaptation, not even resembling the film's depiction of Elrond. Gilkeson calls a weird way, quite unlike the elves in any other adaptation, not even resembling the film's depiction of Elrond. from The Emperor's New Groove. They have gray skin, pug faces, and blond hair. It's frankly bizarre".[31] Elf soldiers in Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings film series (2001-2003), Elves are shown as physically superior to Men in eyesight balance, and aim, but their superiority in other ways is "never really made clear".[32] Jackson's Elves resemble those of the 19th-20th century Celtic Revival, as in John Duncan's 1911 painting The Riders of the Sidhe, rather than Tolkien's reconstruction of medieval Elves, according to Dimitra Fimi.[33] Fimi compared Jackson's handling of Elves with Tolkien's. Tolkien's Elves are rooted as firmly as possible in Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, and Norse tradition, but influenced also by Celtic fairies in the romanticised sense of the Celtic Revival.[33][34] She compares Jackson's representation of Gildor Inglorion's party of Elves riding through the Shire "moving slowly and gracefully towards the West, accompanied by ethereal music" with John Duncan's 1911 painting in the fantasy genre from the 1960s and afterwards. Elves speaking an elvish language similar to those in Tolkien's novels became staple non-human characters in high fantasy works and in fantasy role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons. They are often portrayed as being mentally sharp and lovers of nature, art, and song, as well as wiser and more beautiful than humans. They usually fit the stereotype of being skilled archers and gifted in magic.[35] ^ In its case, the other two races are the sea elves (mermen) and the Jüflings (of rocks and hills).[1] ^ An exception was Feanor, who had seven sons.[T 27] ^ Míriel however is so exhausted by the birth of her fiery and creative son Feanor, that she wilfully gives up her spirit.[29] ^ Carpenter 2023, #25, to the editor of The Observer, printed 20 February 1938 ^ a b c Tolkien 1984, p. 31, The Book of Lost Tales. Vol. 2. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN 0-395-36614-3. ^ a b c Tolkien 1937, p. 120 ^ Tolkien 1987, p. 171, The Lhammas ^ Tolkien 1984, p. 31, The Cottage of Lost Play ^ a b Carpenter 2023, #26 to Stanley Unwin, 4 March 1938 ^ Tolkien 1955, Appendix F ^ Tolkien 1954 a book 2, ch. 7 "The Mirror of Galadriel" ^ a b Carpenter 2023, #144 to Naomi Mitchison, 25 April 1954 ^ Tolkien 1954, "Quendi and Eldar" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 3 "Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 7, "Of the Silmarils and the Unrest of the Noldor" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 24, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 23, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 24, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 23, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 24, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 23, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 24, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 23, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, ch. 24, "Of the Ruin of Doriath" ^ Tolkien 1977, c Wrath ^ Tolkien 1977, "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age" ^ Tolkien 1955, Appendix B: "Later Events Concerning the Members of the Fellowship of the Rings of Power and the Third Age" ^ Tolkien 1955, Appendix A, 1. v. 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Although elves existed in mythology around the world long before J.R.R. Tolkien published his epic The Lord of the Rings in 1954, his elves have specific attributes of their own. They're known for being largely slender and fair of face, but physical characteristics can differ from realm to realm. They are one of the oldest races in Middle-earth, gifted with the power of speech. Not all living beings talk, of course, especially in Tolkien. In the Third Age, when The Lord of the Rings takes place, a great deal of elves are leaving Middle-earth is their lifespan. Elves are immortal. This is not to say they cannot be killed or die, but unhindered -- elves can live for an eternity. However, their immortal lives are somewhat complex. Elves in Lord of the Rings Have Three Major Stages of Life While Tolkien didn't write a handbook specifically related to the main events of The Lord of the Rings. It's loosely established that elves have three periods of development: childhood and adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Elf children actually don't make any standout appearances in Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy. But Amazon's Rings of Power does open with the future elf queen Galadriel as a child At a year old, elves are already speaking and walking. By the age of 50, they have technically reached puberty. Still, it's not until the age of 100 that they are considered a full-fledged adult. This is where they enter the endless stage of life, that is, their adulthood. Their physical appearance is generally set henceforward. This would explain why the jaded Elrond is seen at the beginning of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, and then later when the One Ring is rediscovered and brought to Rivendell by Frodo. The final cycle of an elf's life is not specified by a particular age, but it's usually at this stage when some elves begin to grow weary of their everlasting existence. And though they're not generally known for an elf to grow a beard in their elderly years. In The Lord of the Rings, Cirdan is the only elf recorded to have accomplished this feat. An elf who lived for over 10,000 years. Elrond himself was well over 6,000 years old during the events of The Fellowship of the Ring. Although elves are technically immune to the illnesses of men and other races of Middle-earth, they can die. Although it's not exactly canon to the books, Haldir (the leader of the elf army at Helm's Deep in Jackson's The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers) dies in battle at the hands of an orc. In the behind-the-scenes features on the DVD set, Orlando Bloom talks about how he tried to convey Legolas' unfamiliarity with dying upon the deaths of Gandalf and Boromir. Unless he's been exposed to dangerous situations, a "young" elf like Legolas would not have had much opportunity among his own people to experience it naturally. But it's not only by mortal means that elves can meet an end. By the time the War of the Ring is raging, Arwen -- daughter of Elrond -- begins to fade from life. Her fate becomes inextricably tied to the One Ring. So, as Sauron grows in power, her life force begins to dwindle. Despite the victory of the people of Middle-earth over Sauron in the Third Age, Arwen does choose a mortal life to be with her beloved Aragorn. He goes on to live a long life, dying at the age of 210. A year later, she's recorded as dying from a broken heart. If they do not die of weariness or by mortal hands, elves might pass onto Valinor -- also known as the Undying Lands. Its origins are steeped in Tolkien's extended lore. Valinor lies in a continent just west of Middle-earth called Aman across the ocean. Although elves are not the original inhabitants of this land (the name literally means "Land of the Valor"), it has become a place of respite for them when they've grown tired of life in Middle-earth. The Valor -- eternal beings in a similar vein as Istari -- inhabited Valor long before the awakening of the elves. For the most part, only immortals are permitted to enter this paradise. Exceptions to this would be Bilbo, Frodo, and eventually join their friends in Valinor in the Fourth Age, too. The final scene in The Return of the King also includes Gandalf in the party leaving for the Undying Lands at the Gray Havens. As an immortal Istari and not even a being of Middle-earth, Gandalf is technically one of many noble spirits known as Maiar, who requires no exceptions to pass into Valinor. Despite living for such a long period of time allows them the liberty to grow wise and become incredibly skilled craftsmen. But it also leaves them with difficult situations that mortal beings would not need to consider in their own kind. This might be why they're typically stoic in their deportment. Tolkien created such rich and deep lore for his own version of these mythical creatures that the titular Lord of the Rings trilogy barely even begins to touch upon their origins. And, despite its mixed reviews and tweaking of lore, Amazon's Rings of Power is attempting to tackle some of this unwieldy mythos in ways lackson was not able to in his own popular adaptation. Tolkien's writings can be about as complex to decipher as they are to adapt for the screen. The depth of the lives of his elves lives up to his prowess in fantasy literature.