

Race and Culture in ConLangs

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We explore how ideologies of race and culture are developed within the features and lexicons of constructed languages for creative or artistic purposes; we also explore the creative choice to use natural languages in place of a conlang. We focus on three fictional settings and the linguistic choices made by their respective creators: Tolkien's Middle Earth, Herbert's Arrakis and related universe, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe. In all cases, there is an illustration of default whiteness, exoticization and racialization and othering of races, especially those meant to be villainous.

Questions of Tolkien linguistics construction and the underlying ideology are not unique to our enterprise (Brackmann, Vink, many others). For consideration of Tolkien, the key point is to consider languages which are naturalistic (and very European in character) from languages that diverge in nature in various ways: Khuzdûl, the language of the Dwarves which has Semitic linguistic characteristics and does not undergo natural change and Black Speech which is a distorted language used by evil beings.

In the Marvel Cinematic Universe there is a stark difference between the treatment of the language of the Dark Elves (Shiväisith) in *Thor 2: The Dark World* (2013) and the later treatment of Wakandan in *Black Panther* (2018). Shiväisith is modeled on European languages, namely Finnish and its vowel harmony system. Marvel commissioned David J. Peterson, a linguist and known ConLanger, specifically for the purpose of creating this language, which has only appeared in this one film.