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The Growth of Grammar in the Elven Tongues

Abstract

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Christopher Gilson and Patrick Wynne

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In J.R.R. Tolkien’s “latest philological writings,” as noted in *Unfinished Tales* (p. 266), he said that in the ancient language of the Elves the word for a stout tree with many spreading branches was **galadā*, literally meaning “great growth”. It is appropriate, then, that in *Leaf by Niggle* Tolkien used the image of a Tree as an allegorical representation of the “great growth” of his mythology of Middle-earth:

It had begun with a leaf caught in the wind, and it became a tree; and the tree grew, sending out innumerable branches, and thrusting out the most fantastic roots. Strange birds came and settled on the twigs and had to be attended to . . .

Tolkien also described the Elven languages themselves in terms of several versions of a “Tree of Tongues” drafted to accompany the *Lhammas* and *Lammasethen*, works describing the development of the languages within the history of Middle-earth. This image of a tree, constantly branching out in increasing complexity, also serves as a suitable metaphor for the process by which Tolkien invented languages. The Elven tongues did not spring into existence fully formed; rather they grew and developed over the course of Tolkien’s entire lifetime. Sometimes their development was as gradual as the slow growth of an oak; at other times there were sudden flowerings of new forms and grammatical features, or even new languages. It is this process of growth in Tolkien’s creation of Elvish, the sending out of its innumerable branches and fantastic roots, that will be our concern today.

Of course, a full account of the creation of the Elven tongues might produce a book rivalling the size of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. For now we must limit ourselves to examining a single branch on the Tree of Tongues: Quenya, the High-elven speech of Valinor. Specifically, we will examine the growth of Quenya grammar, the means by which words in this language relate with one another to form meaningful sentences. There are, admittedly, gaps in our

knowledge of Tolkien’s development of Quenya grammar; not all of the material has been published, and not all of what has is fully understood. But insofar as the grammar of a language can be observed by examining actual sentences in that language, a sufficient number of High-elven sentences have been published from throughout the nearly sixty-year period Tolkien worked on Quenya to enable us to observe with some clarity the general course of its development throughout his life, as well as to understand the grammar as Tolkien might have conceived it at any given period.

In order to fully appreciate Quenya grammar as it appears in the earliest material, from the period of *The Book of Lost Tales*, we should first take a brief look at the grammar in its latest stage of development. In *The Lord of the Rings* and subsequent writings, Quenya is a highly inflected language, meaning that the grammatical relationships in a Quenya sentence are for the most part indicated by different endings added to the words. Nouns in particular are elaborately declined, and they provide our best example of the principle of inflection. Our understanding of the noun is very clear, thanks to a chart Tolkien made in 1966 or 1967 of the complete declensions of two Quenya nouns, *ciryā* “ship” and *lasse* “leaf”, which he sent to Richard Plotz of the Tolkien Society of America along with a page of explanatory notes. This chart of paradigms in “Book Quenya”, the written form of the language, includes seven labelled cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, instrumental, allative, locative and ablative. Tolkien’s notes state that the accusative was lost in “Spoken Quenya”, having merged with the nominative. Each case occurs in four numbers: the singular, *lasse* “a leaf”, two kinds of plural, *lassi* “all leaves” vs. *lasseli* “some leaves”, and the dual, *lasset* “a pair of leaves”.

In *The Lord of the Rings* Galadriel’s Lament illustrates the use of all these cases. There are many examples of the nominative or uninflected case with singulars such as *yulma* “cup”, and plurals *rámar* “wings”, *eleni* “stars”, and so on. There are genitive forms, such as *Vardo* “of Varda” and

aldaron “of trees”; instrumental case forms like *súrinen* “in the wind”; allative *falmalinnar* “on the foaming waves”; a locative pronoun *yassen* “wherein”; and ablatives such as *sinda-nóriello* “out of a grey country”. The dual number occurs in *máryat* “her hands”, and we should also note that in a letter written to Richard Jeffery in 1972 (Tolkien, 1981, p. 427), Tolkien mentions that Quenya also has a dual marked by *-ū*, as in *Aldúya* the week-day named for the Two Trees.

The Book Quenya chart contains one unlabelled case at the end of each declension, as well as a set of shorter forms in parentheses for both the allative and locative cases. The unlabelled case – an example is *ciryava* – we will term *associative* for the sake of convenience. This is represented in Galadriel’s Lament by *lisse-miruvóreva* “of the sweet mead”, “swift draughts” of which Galadriel compares to the passing of her long exile. Finally the alternative forms of the allative case, such as *ciryān* for longer *ciryanna*, seem to have the same suffix as the dative pronoun *nin* “for me” used in the Lament.

When we look back to the earliest Quenya material, that associated with *The Book of Lost Tales*, we see that Quenya grammar, like Niggle’s Tree, also began “with a leaf caught in the wind”:

N·alalmino lalantila

*“Beneath the elms forever fall

Ne·súme lasser pínea . . .

The leaves upon a breeze so small . . .”

These are the opening lines of the earliest poem in Quenya: *Narqelion*, dated November 1915/March 1916, contemporary with the *Lost Tales* and the Quenya Lexicon, Tolkien’s earliest dictionary of the High-elven tongue. The translation just given is our own, since none by Tolkien survives. Still, the meaning of much of the vocabulary is clear, and it is noteworthy that many nouns in this early poem endure without change into *The Lord of the Rings*, for example *alda* “tree”, *Eldamar* “Elvenhome”, and *rāma* “wing”. Even the title, *Narqelion* “Autumn”, reappears in 1962 as the title of the second section of another poem, *The Trees of Kortirion*. A large number of words in the Quenya Lexicon are identical with words in the late writings, and this continuity of conception is also apparent in Quenya names in the *Lost Tales* themselves, Christopher Tolkien noting that “it is remarkable how many of the names of the Valar in the earliest writings were never afterwards displaced or reshaped” (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 79). In general then, Tolkien seems to have arrived at his preferred phonetic style for Quenya words at a very early stage, and nouns in the early material appear to be derived from many of the same roots and formative suffixes seen in the late material.

Narqelion provides us with the only substantial record of grammatical usage in Quenya at its earliest stage, for Christopher Tolkien has said that he does not believe that any other Quenya poems survive from this period (Hyde, 1989, p. 49). Despite our inability to confidently translate every word or phrase in *Narqelion*, in a poem of this length we should still be able to discern evidence of the Quenya case system as it then stood. We saw that this is certainly true of *Namárië*, in which all of the cases laid out in the noun

paradigms occur in some form in the poem, and these poems are of about the same length. This makes it rather surprising that so few cases seem to appear in *Narqelion*. The form *lintuilindova*, which seems to mean “having many swallows”, may be the same associative case as *miruvóreva* “of mead”, and the final *-r* in *pior* could be the same ending seen later in *vear* “in the sea”, though *-r* is also a plural noun ending.

Most nouns in the poem, in fact, appear to be in the nominative, which in Quenya is the uninflected case, and grammatical relationships typically expressed by case inflections in later Quenya are indicated by other means, such as word order – for example, a genitive relationship is apparently expressed by simple apposition in *sinqi Eldamar* * “jewels of Elvenhome”. Prepositions occur, as in *ter i·aldar* * “through the trees”, and instead of the instrumental inflection so common in later writings, *Narqelion* has what looks like an instrumental prefix *ne·* in *ne·súme* * “in the wind”. One word, *nierme* in the final line, appears to contain the plural noun *nier* “tears” plus a suffix *-me*. This suffix might be the same ending seen in *lenéme* “with assent” in *The Notion Club Papers* in 1946, and in *sinome* “in this place” in *The Lord of the Rings*. Thus *nierme* could mean “in tears” or “with tears”. In the later material this suffix is not a case ending for nouns and does not appear on the Plotz chart. It is possible that the case system is so different in *Narqelion* that there are case endings here that we don’t recognize as such. At any rate, suffixes like *-me* in *nierme* are probably the seeds from which the complex system of case-endings in the later grammar grew.

In contrast to the rarity of case endings in the *Lost Tales* material, the plural system as given in the Plotz declensions appears to have dated back to the very beginning. This is in fact one of the earliest grammatical patterns displayed in Tolkien’s invented languages. Many of the names in the *Lost Tales*, especially those of kindreds, are plural nouns in Quenya, and these are listed in the Quenya Lexicon in their singular forms. There are three basic plural markers in early Quenya: an *r*-suffix, an *i*-suffix and a *li*-suffix. The *r*-suffix is used with nouns whose singular ends in a vowel, such as *ainu* “a pagan god”, plural *Ainur* (Tolkien, 1984a, pp. 52, 248), or *fúmella* “poppy”, plural *fumellar* (pp. 74, 253). The *li*-suffix is also added to nouns ending in a vowel, as in *Noldo* “Gnome”, plural *Noldoli* (pp. 48, 262). Beside numerous occurrences of *Noldoli* there is one instance of *Noldor* in the text of the *Lost Tales* (p. 162), showing a degree of interchangeability between the *r*-suffix and *li*-suffix.

The *i*-suffix has a slightly more complex pattern. It is used mostly with nouns whose singular ends in a consonant, such as *nandin* “dryad”, plural *Nandini* (pp. 66, 261), or *Teler*, plural *Teleri*, one of the kindreds of the Elves (pp. 48, 267). The *i*-suffix is also used for some nouns ending in a vowel, with the final vowel of the singular replaced with the *i*-suffix in the plural. Thus *Solosimpe* “shore-piper” has the plural *Solosimpi* (pp. 16, 251), and *Angamandu* has the plural *Angamandi* “Hells of Iron” (p. 249). The noun *Vala* has both forms of plural; as Rúmil the Elvish philologist says to Eriol concerning the Gods, “these are they whom we now call the

Valar (or the *Vali*, it matters not)" (p. 58). This shows that the r-suffix and i-suffix are essentially equivalent in function. The fact that i-suffix plurals can be used with both consonant-stems and vowel-stems leads eventually to variation in the singular. Thus the plural noun *Silmarilli* is given with variant singular forms *Silmaril* and *Silmarille* in the *Etymologies* (Tolkien, 1987, p. 383).

The potential for such variability allowed Tolkien great leeway for changing the forms of names actually used in the *Lost Tales*, while still building an enduring grammatical structure within which the names fit. We find similar variation in word-formation, with numerous alternatives listed in the *Qenya Lexicon*, such as *koi* or *koire* "life", *taran* or *tarambo* "buffet", and so on. How far grammatical variation extends was determined by Tolkien in the process of inventing the forms that display it. In the case of plurals, it seems that while writing the *Lost Tales* Tolkien was still attempting to determine the extent to which the plural suffixes would be applied. Or so we might infer from the fact that in the very earliest layer of the texts of "The Cottage of Lost Play" and "The Music of the Ainur" there are examples of the singular noun *Ainu* used as a plural, instead of the usual form *Ainur* (see pp. 53, 60 n. 3), and singular forms *Telette* and *Solosimpe* also appear in these earliest texts as plurals, only subsequently emended to the typical plural forms *Telelli* and *Solosimpi*. Alongside these singular forms with a plural sense, the familiar plural forms *Eldar* and *Noldoli* and *Teleri* already occur in the earliest drafts. So the suffixes had been established, but their full scope of application had not, nor whether all nouns would have or always employ distinct plural forms. When Tolkien set aside the *Tales*, the pattern of i-plural nouns like *lasse*, plural *lassi*, was firmly established, and the range of the r-plural type like *ciryā*, plural *ciryar*, was further defined, with such examples as *Ainur*, *Noldor* and *Valar* all added to the grammatical picture.

Concurrent with the development of plural nouns, we can trace the emerging grammar of plural adjectives both in *Narqelion* and in another document associated with the *Lost Tales*, a drawing entitled *I Vene Kemen* "the Vessel of Earth", which depicts the land mass of the World as a great ship floating on the Outer Sea (Tolkien, 1984a, pp. 84-5). Many of the geographical names on this "World-Ship" drawing have the typical *Quenya* phrase structure of a noun followed by an adjective, for example *Tol Eressea* "the Lonely Isle". In several names on the drawing the noun is plural, and the adjective is also pluralized by the addition of an r-suffix, as in *I Nori Landar* "The Great Lands", *I-Tolli Kuruvar* "The Magic Isles", and *Neni Erūmeār* "Outermost Waters". The contrast between singular names like *Tol Eressea* and plurals like *Neni Erūmeār* demonstrates that *Quenya* has a rule of number agreement, meaning the adjective in a phrase is marked with a plural suffix if the noun is plural.

Further examples of r-plural adjectives appear only much later, in the story "The Lost Road", c. 1937. There in the *Quenya* song sung by *Fíriel*, a singular adjective *írīma* "lovely" occurs in *Írīma ye Númenor* "Lovely is Númenor",

and the plural form appears in *Toi írimar* "which are beautiful", referring to the Sun and Moon (Tolkien, 1987, p. 72). These are *predicate adjective* constructions, where the adjective is equated with the subject of the sentence by means of the verb "to be".

A natural outgrowth of these equations of adjective with noun is the *substantive* use of the adjective, that is, where the adjective takes the place of a noun in the sentence. Thus Treebeard addresses Celeborn and Galadriel, *A vanimar, vanimálion nostari!* (Tolkien, 1969c, p. 259), which Tolkien translated in a letter, "O beautiful ones, parents of beautiful children" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 308). *Vanimar* "beautiful ones" is the plural form of the adjective *vanima* "beautiful, fair" (see Tolkien, 1987, p. 351) used with a generic noun understood. This usage is closely connected with the derivation of various names from adjectives. For example the adjective *sinda* "grey", as in *Sindacollo* "Grey-cloak" (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 348, 365), is also used as a noun meaning "a Grey-elf", so in effect *sinda* has the substantive plural *Sindar* "the Grey-elves". Other examples are *Frimar* "Mortals" from the adjective *firima* "mortal"; and *Vanyar* "the Fair Elves" from the adjective *vanya* "fair" (Tolkien, 1977, pp. 103, 53).

All of these scattered examples of r-plural adjectives have two things in common. Firstly, the singular of each one ends in *-a*. Secondly, all of the various ways in which they are used – that is, to modify or stand in for a noun mentioned in isolation, or used in direct address, or used as a predicate after the verb "to be" – all these are functions expressed by the nominative case in languages that distinguish between nominative and accusative. As we have said, the *Plotz* declension makes a distinction between nominative and accusative forms in *Book Quenya*, and for the noun *ciryā*, which ends in *-a*, the nominative plural is *ciryar* while the accusative plural is *ciryai*. The implication may be that while the distinction between nominative and accusative nouns was lost in *Spoken Quenya*, with a nominative form like *ciryar* serving both functions, the distinction between nominative and accusative adjectives was retained, with forms like *erūmeār* and *vanimar* functioning only as nominative forms.

If this is so, then we might expect to find distinctive accusative forms of adjectives. It seems rather remarkable, then, that alongside the early evidence of plural adjectives like *erūmeār* and *landar* we can place five words in the poem *Narqelion* that end in the same diphthong *ai* that accusative *ciryai* does: *úmeai*, *malinai*, *kuluvai*, *sildai*, and *karneambarai*. The form and context of these words suggests that they are all adjectives. With *malinai* and *sildai* this is virtually certain, for an adjective *malina* "yellow" is given in the *Etymologies* (Tolkien, 1987, p. 386), and an adjective *silda* "gleaming" occurs in one of the "Secret Vice" poems in the phrase *silda-rānar* "in the moon gleaming" (Tolkien, 1984c, p. 213). The grammatical suffix *-i* added to these adjectives in *Narqelion* appears to be the same plural marker *-i* we have seen in certain nouns, but added to the vowel-stem instead of replacing it. In other words, *malinai* derives from *malina* in the same way that accusative *ciryai* derives from nominative *ciryā*.

This leaves us with a question: Do these adjectives in *Narqelion* have plurals formed with an *i*-suffix because they are accusative? The syntax of *Narqelion* may supply an answer. The third line of the poem contains our first plural adjective: *Ve sangar voro úmeai*. We know *ve* is “like” or “as” (OM2¹, ll. 4, 19, *Namárië* ll. 3, 10), and *sangar* “throngs” and *voro* “ever” (Tolkien, 1984b, p. 342, Tolkien, 1984a, p. 250). The adjective *úmea* may be related to the superlative ending of *erúmëa* “outermost” (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 262), and to *úvea* “abundant, in very great number, very large” (Tolkien, 1987, p. 396). If there is a comparison between the nouns *lasser* “leaves” and *sangar* “throngs” then the meaning is comparable to “leaves falling in the wind like ever numerous throngs”. So *úmeai* may be accusative here, to agree with the function of the noun *sangar*, if Quenya puts the object of a comparison into the accusative case.

A second instance of *úmeai* occurs later in the poem in *Tukalia sangar úmeai* which we suggest means “luring the numerous throngs” with *sangar* the direct object of the verbal form *tukalia*, possibly from the root *tuk-* “draw, bring”. The adjective *úmeai* may have an accusative form to reflect the function of the phrase *sangar úmeai* “numerous throngs” as the direct object of the verb. The other examples of plural adjectives in *-ai* are even more difficult to interpret. But given the hypothesis that the Quenya adjective agrees in both number and case with the noun it modifies, or the noun it stands for, it seems quite plausible that the contrast between the plural adjectives in final *-i* in *Narqelion* and the plural adjectives in final *-r* on the “World-Ship” drawing is based on grammatical function. While we cannot recover all the details, it seems clear that in these two early documents we have the first budding of adjective syntax.

In the late material the adjective plural in *-ai* has undergone change in form, which is best exemplified in the final version of the poem *The Last Ark*, written in the last decade of Tolkien’s life. This poem contains many plural adjectives whose singular forms are given in the accompanying “glossarial commentary”, and there is a consistent pattern of plural adjectives formed by a shift in the final vowel. For example, singular *néka* “vague” in the glossary occurs in the poem in the plural form *néke* (l. 3), with a shift of final *-a* to *-e*. Similarly, the adjective *morna* “dark” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 382) appears in the poem in the plural form *morne* (l. 33). It is probable that this vowel shift was caused by addition of an original plural marker *-i*; that is, the original plurals of *néka* and *morna* were probably **nékai* and **mornai*, with the final diphthong *-ai* eventually reduced to *-e*. This is supported by Tolkien’s notes to the Plotz declensions, in which he specifically mentions that reduction of final *ai* to short *e* was an historical phonetic development in Quenya.

Other forms in the poem and glossary demonstrate the pattern of plural formation in adjectives ending in *-e* and *-ea*. Thus singulars ending in *-e* shift to *-i* in the plural, as in *ninque* “white”, plural *ninquí*, which is identical to the pattern of nouns like *lasse* “leaf” pl. *lassi*. Singulars ending in

-ea shift to *-ie* in the plural, as in *elvea* “starlike”, plural *elvie*; and *atalantea* “downfallen”, plural *atalantie*, in effect a combination of the other two patterns. This bears out the impression we have begun to feel that the adjective is closely related to the noun in syntax, and that the Book Quenya declensions are the underlying source for the forms of both noun and adjective.

This brings us to the second dimension in the grammatical pattern of the noun and adjective, the growth of case-endings, which have only begun to emerge in the *Lost Tales* period. The simplest structure for combining two nouns into a single name is to treat one as though it were an adjective, and place it before the other noun, as in *Olóre Malle* “the Path of Dreams” (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 18), literally “Dream Path”, or place it after, as in *Kópas Alqalunte* “Haven of the Swanships” (p. 164), literally “Haven Swanship”. This structure is very versatile but also ambiguous, and becomes even more so if an adjective modifies one of the nouns. Within this grammatical context it seems quite natural that there should evolve a way to indicate which of two nouns is the modifier. In the name *Mar Vanwa Tyaliéva* “the Cottage of Lost Play” (p. 14), a suffix *-va* has been added to the noun *tyalie* “play” (p. 260) to indicate that it modifies the noun *mar* “dwelling” (p. 251).

This is the case we have termed associative, but which Tolkien himself leaves unlabelled in the Book Quenya declension. The Qenya Lexicon has several adjectives that end in *-va*, such as *kanuva* “leaden” or *tereava* “piercing” (pp. 268, 255). Since *tyaliéva* serves as an adjectival equivalent to the noun *tyalie* “play”, it seems probable that the case-suffix *-va* grew out of the adjective ending. This would explain why the case has no label in the chart, since it does not correspond to any traditional case category, though usually it is translated by the English preposition “of”.

One other rudimentary case-ending can be found in the *Lost Tales*, in connection with this same pattern of nouns modifying nouns. A variation on *Kópas Alqalunte* appears in the episode title “The Battle of *Kópas Alqalunten*”. The suffix *-n* in *alqalunten* “of the swan-ships” is the same as the ending of the dative pronoun *nin* “for me” in Galadriel’s Lament, and we can see that “haven for a swanship” is an apt translation of *Kópas Alqalunten*. The suffix also appears in the elements of a few compound names, such as *Harwalin* “near the Valar”. This contains the word *har(e)* “near” (p. 253) and refers to the region just outside of Valinor. The name was later changed in the *Lost Tales* to *Arvalin* (p. 22) with similar form and equivalent meaning. These names each contain a form of the word *Vali* “Gods”, found also in *Valinor* “Land of the Gods”. So *Harwalin* and *Arvalin* seem to show our dative *-n* suffix added to the plural form of a noun, and indicating location, in conjunction with the adverbial prefix.

The next stage in the development of Elven grammar is displayed in the poems Tolkien presented as examples of the “Secret Vice” of language invention in his essay on the

¹ For convenience references to *Oilima Markirya* 1 (Tolkien, 1984c, p. 220-221) are given as OM1 and to *Oilima Markirya* 2 (Tolkien, 1984c, pp. 213-215) are given as OM2.

subject, which he read in 1931 about 15 years after composing *Narqelion* and compiling the Qenya Lexicon and related stories. We can point to a good deal of grammar here that is “newer” than the *Lost Tales*. First we can point to concepts that are clearly outgrowths of what has come before.

We find examples of the familiar plural *i*-suffix and *li*-suffix in the poem *Oilima Markirya* “The Last Ark” (Tolkien, 1984c, pp. 213-15), such as *tinwi* “stars” (l. 27) or *rámali* “wings” (l. 11). Parallel to these plural nouns we find new developments of plural adjectives. For example, in the phrase *laiqali linqi falmari* “the green wet waves” in the poem *Earendel* (l. 3), the adjective *laiqa* “green” (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 267) forms its plural *laiqali* using the same *li*-suffix seen in plural nouns such as *Noldoli*. Another way in which the adjective develops in parallel with the noun is in the use of certain case markers, such as the *n*-suffix. Thus in *Earendel* there also occurs the phrase *tyulmin talalinen aiqalin kautáron*, translated “the tall masts bent with the sails”. The form *tyulmin* is a dative plural form of *tyulma* “mast” (Tolkien, 1987, p. 395), in the same way that the second element of *Arvalin* is the dative plural of *Vala*. The adjective *aiqalin* “tall” has the same plural suffix as *laiqali* “green”, with the addition of the *n*-suffix. So it agrees in plurality with *tyulmin* and also in case. Notwithstanding the poetic word order separating *aiqalin* from *tyulmin*, there is probably a close association here of noun and modifier, as in the translation “tall masts”, and parallel to the construction *laiqali linqi falmari* “green wet waves”.

There are also two examples in an earlier version of *Oilima Markirya* of adjectives that have the plural ending *-ai* in combination with the *n*-suffix, *oilimain* “last” (l. 25) and *alkarain* “shining”. The latter occurs at the very end of the poem: *ala fuin oilimaite / ailinisse alkarain* “after the last night upon the shining shore” (ll. 26-7). If *alkarain* is plural then it does not directly modify *ailinisse* “upon the shore” which is singular, but means something like “for the shining things”, where a plural noun is understood but not expressed. The overall theme of the poem is the ultimate extinguishment of light in its passage westward, with the moon setting like “a corpse into the grave” and the “white ship . . . with wings like stars” finally foundered on the rocks that were once “white shining in the silver moon”. It is these lights and white objects that make the shore shine, so in this context *ailinisse alkarain* means “upon the shore of the shining things”, and metaphorically it is the foundering-place for the ship and the setting-place for the moon, in much the same way that the *Kópas Alqalunten* is a haven for ships.

While this explanation of *alkarain* as a dative form of the plural adjective remains tentative, the direction of the growth of this branch of the grammar is later confirmed. The first line of Fíriel’s Song in “The Lost Road” (Tolkien, 1987, p. 63) contains the phrase *eldain a fírimoin* “for elves and mortals”, clearly containing two dative plural nouns. *Eldain* “for elves” has the very same ending as *alkarain*, while *fírimoin* “for mortals” shows an equivalent formation presumably based on an *o*-stem noun **fírimo*. The latest recorded examples of dative nouns or adjectives predate *The*

Lord of the Rings, which illustrates only the dative pronoun. But comparable to datives like *eldain*, *alkarain*, *aiqalin*, and *tyulmin*, we do have in the Book Quenya declension, shorter allatives *ciryain* and *lassen*, whose plurals *ciryain* and *ciryalin*, *lassin* and *lasselin*, surely constitute a late continuation of this same growth.

Several new case-forms of the noun appear in the “Secret Vice” poems. In fact the basic pattern of the cases familiar from late examples of Quenya begins to appear here in its essentials. Though some details are slightly different or lacking, we can point to examples of the genitive, instrumental, allative, locative and ablative cases. And there are many examples displaying various features of form and function.

Perhaps most fully represented at this stage is the locative case. In the earlier version of *Oilima Markirya* the phrase *veasse lúnelinqe* “upon the blue streams of the sea” (l. 3) exhibits the basic structure of the locative singular. It consists of the stem of the noun as seen in the nominative singular, here *vea* “sea” (OM2, l. 9), plus the suffix *-sse*. Similarly in the second version of the poem there is *óresse oilima* “in the last morning” (l. 34), with *óresse* from *óre* “the dawn” (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 264), which shows by the way that location in time as well as space can be expressed this way. The poem *Earendel* has *kiryasse* “upon a ship” (l. 2), with the precise form of the much later Book Quenya declension already achieved.

The locative plural has three forms, partly reflecting the nominative plural in two of its three endings. The form *alkarissen* “in the rays of light” (OM1, l. 25) corresponds to a nominative **alkari* “light-rays”, plural of *alkar* or *alkare* “radiance” (Tolkien, 1987, p. 348). In the second version of *Oilima Markirya*, *ondolissen* “on the rocks” (l. 30) is based on the nominative plural *ondoli* “rocks” found in the earlier poem (l. 15). These two examples share the same pattern, the locative plural consisting of the nominative plural plus the suffix *-ssen*. The third type of locative plural is actually the first to occur. In the earlier version of the poem the form is *ondoisen* “on the rocks” (l. 19). This ends with the same syllable *-sen* as the other forms, but differs in lacking the double *s*. This is probably more striking in print than it is in speech, and may be due to euphonic reduction of **ondoissen* with its exceptionally long middle syllable.

The other example of this ending is in the same earlier version of the poem, in the phrase *ailissen oilimaisen* “upon the last beaches”, where *oilimaisen* is the locative plural of adjective *oilima* “last”, here closely associated with locative noun *ailissen* and therefore agreeing with it in case and number. The structure of this ending *-isen* seems to derive from the final *i* in adjective plurals like *malinai*, combined with a reduced form of the locative plural ending *-sen*. There is an obvious parallel between dative plural *oilimain* with its structure, adjective stem + *i* + case suffix, and locative plural *oilimaisen*, with stem + *i* + case marker *-sen*. Remarkably, if we follow the same lead that took us from dative adjective *alkarain* to dative noun *eldain* to shorter allative *ciryain* in the Plotz declension, we find no later forms just like *oilimaisen*, but in the declension chart we do find the shorter locative

plural *ciryais*, and within the corpus of Quenya the form *ciryais* is closer to *oilimaisen* than to anything else.

The "Secret Vice" poems also feature a somewhat different form of the locative singular, its parallel function most clear in the rephrasing of *veasse lúnelinqe* "in the flowing sea" in the earlier *Oilima Markirya* as *lúnelinqe vear* in the second version (OM2, l. 7). This *-r* locative also occurs in *ringa ambar* "in her cold bosom" (l. 3), and the lines *silda-ránar*, *minga-ránar*, *lanta-ránar* "in the moon gleaming, in the moon waning, in the moon falling" (ll. 16-18). The last three parallel examples contain the word *Rána* "Moon", and the locative *ránar* is used figuratively to mean "in the light of the moon". The ending is found in no other nouns outside of this poem, but in the poem *Nieninque* we do have *yar i vilya anta miqilis* "to whom the air gives kisses" (l. 4). The pronoun *yar* "to whom" is locative in a dynamic rather than static sense, and its relation to other locatives can be understood by a paraphrase, "upon whom the wind places kisses". The image of the line is metaphorical, and Tolkien seems to be exploring the potentials of Quenya idiom. The pronominal use of this locative ending *-r* takes on a life of its own, and shows up in the *Etymologies* in *tar* "thither" (Tolkien, 1987, p. 389), and *mir* "into" (p. 373). The *r*-locative can be associated with the *s*-locatives on the phonetic level, because *s* sometimes shifts to *r* in the history of Quenya. In the Quenya Lexicon, for example, there are variant noun-forms *solor*, *solosse* "surf" (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 266).

Another case that emerges in the "Secret Vice" poems is the instrumental, with suffix *-nen*. The examples at this stage are all plural. There is *lótiefalmarínen* "with waves crowned with flowers" (OM1, l. 6), which derives from the *i*-plural form *falmari* "waves". There are also *li*-plural forms, such as *kulukalmalínen* "with golden lights" (l. 8), from **kalmali* pl. of *kalma* "light" (cf. *kalma* "daylight", Tolkien, 1984a, p. 254, *calma* "lamp", Tolkien, 1969c, p. 401). The latter shows why this case is labelled instrumental. The full phrase is *kiryá kallière kulukalmalínen* "the ship shone with golden lights", that is the lights are the means or instrument by which the ship was shining. In a somewhat looser sense this is true of the "waves" in *lótiefalmarínen* "with waves crowned with flowers", if we relate them to the preceding verb *falastanéro* "was loud with surf", since the waves produce the noise of the sea. The third type, the *ai*-plural, is represented for the same noun *kalma* "light" in the phrase *úrio kalmainen* "in the lights of the sun" (*Earendel* ll. 6-7).

There is no hint of any singular forms, and in their absence we might be tempted to speculate on a connection with locative plural *oilimaisen*, with the same diphthong *ai* and final *en*. But from this point of surface similarity these forms grew apart from each other in their later associations. As we saw, the final *en* in *oilimaisen* is treated as a redundancy, in the sense that when an archaic Book Quenya form of the *ai*-plural locative is devised, namely *ciryais*, it lacks this final *en*. On the other hand, these instrumental plurals have achieved their ultimate formation already, as can be seen from *ciryainen*, *ciryalínen* and *lassínen*, *lasselínen* on the declension chart. The singulars, when they emerge, contain the same form of the case ending *-nen* with its final

consonant, as seen from *ciryainen* and *lassenen*, and also *súrinen* "in the wind" and *lírinen* "in the song", in the poem *Namárië*.

One example of the ablative case appears already in the "Secret Vice" poems, the phrase *oilima ailinello lúte* "leave the last shore" (OM2, l. 2), where the ablative singular *ailinello* derived from *ailin* indicates that the motion of the ship is away from the shore. We can compare Elendil's words repeated by Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, *Et Earello Endoreenna utúlien* "Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come" (Tolkien, 1969c, pp. 245-6), where *Earello* is "from the Great Sea". This case also develops a sense of direction without motion, as in *Rómello vanwa* "lost to those from the East" in *Namárië*.

The allative case, both singular and plural, appears in the first and second versions of *Oilima Markirya*, but with a slightly different form than it later acquires. The examples are singular in *Kaivo i sapsanta* "As a corpse into the grave" (OM1, l. 13), and plural in *tollalinta ruste* "upon crumbling hills" (OM2, l. 24). The latter is accompanied by the verb *lungane* "bending", and alludes to the sky touching the hilltops on the horizon. Whether referring to motion or extension, the allative means "towards" as opposed to the ablative "away from". The endings of *sapsanta* and *tollalinta* are parallel to the Book Quenya forms *ciryanna* and *ciryalinna*, except for the difference in consonant cluster, *nt* vs. *nn*. This change of the suffix *-nta* to *-nna*, whereby it acquires a double consonant parallel to locative *-sse* and ablative *-llo*, first emerges a few years later in the story "The Lost Road". There Alboin's dream-fragments of "Eressean" include such Quenya forms as *kilyanna* "into-Chasm" and *númenna* "westward" (Tolkien, 1987, p. 56).

A final case to mention is the genitive. The history of this case is complicated by the diversity of its functions. In broadest terms a construction is genitive if one noun defines the *genus* or subgroup to which another noun belongs. Its particular uses may vary from language to language. We have already seen that in *Mar Vanwa Tyaliéva* "Cottage of Lost Play", *Kópas Alqalunten* "Haven of the Swanships", and *úrio kalmainen* "in the lights of the sun", the same English preposition *of* is equivalent to three different case-endings in Quenya: *-va*, *-n*, and *-o*. We also saw *miruvóreva* "of sweet mead" and *aldaron* "of trees" in Galadriel's Lament, where this lack of a one-to-one correspondence between English prepositions and Quenya suffixes continues.

Since the purpose of the *Kópas* is to harbour ships, we suggested that *Alqalunten* in the sense "for swan-ships" ultimately connects with datives like *eldain* "for elves". But in the function of describing the kind of haven in terms of an attribute, we might compare *úri kilde hísen níe nienaité* "the Sun with wet eyes dropped tears of mist" in *Oilima Markirya* (OM1, ll. 21-2). Here *hísen* "of mist" describes the kind of weeping (cf. *híse* s.v. KHIS- "mist, fog", Tolkien, 1987, p. 364). In both these examples the suffix *-n* is added to final *e* of the nominatives, *alqalunte* and *híse*. But the *Etymologies* lists several consonant-stem nouns that have their genitive singular ("g.sg.") formed with suffix *-en*, such as *Valatar* "Vala-king", genitive *Valatáren* (Tolkien, 1987, p. 350). This

genitive singular suffix *-en* seems to have developed by analogy from the final *-en* in genitives like *hísen*. For as we have mentioned, some Quenya nouns have alternative singular forms, and one such noun is *ambaron* "uprising, Orient" (p. 348). This is given in the *Etymologies* with g.sg. *ambarónen* and also with longer nominative *Ambaróne* whose final *e* is apparently the source for the *e* in *ambarónen*. The suffix has presumably spread from such nouns to other consonant-stems, like *Ilúvatāren*, genitive of *Ilúvatar* (Tolkien, 1987, p. 72) where the *e* has no etymological basis.

Meanwhile the o-genitive has developed alongside this n-genitive. They occur side by side for the same name in the *Etymologies*, where *Tulkas* is listed with genitives *Tulkatho*, *Tulkassen*. We saw the o-suffix in *úrio* "of the sun", derived from nominative *úri*. The earliest example seems to be *Silmeráno tindon* "shining in the silver moon" (OM1, l. 12), where genitive *-ráno* shows that the suffix replaces the final *a* of *Rána* "the moon" (l. 14). In both of these examples the kind of light is expressed in terms of its source, the Sun or the Moon. This genitive form also describes the relation of the whole object to one of its parts, as in *langon veakiryō* "the throat of the sea-ship" in the poem *Earendel* (l. 4). Here *-kiryō* achieves the same form as the genitive singular *ciryō* in the Plotz declension.

These functions are also seen in Galadriel's Lament, for example *rāmar aldaron* "wings of trees", and also the related function of possession, as in *Vardo tellumar* "the domes of Varda". The genitive *aldaron* illustrates one of the plural forms of the genitive, the only case with a plural based on the nominative r-form, probably because it is the only case-suffix that begins with a vowel. There are also li-plural and i-plural genitives, such as *Valion* "of the Lords" in Fíriel's Song, derived from i-plural *Vali*. The genitive plural forms all post-date the "Secret Vice" poems, although remarkably enough their phonetic shapes occur in very early derivatives, like *Narqelion* "Autumn". The form *Aldaron* occurs in the *Lost Tales* as the name of a Vala interpreted as "king of forests" (Tolkien, 1984a, p. 66), which, granted the element of personification, is not so very far in meaning from *aldaron* "of trees". This word *alda* would in its plural *aldar* include the idea of a few trees or a very large number, even a forest. And this brings us back to where we began, for *alda* is the word whose primitive form is **galadā* "great growth", and this meaning encompasses vast forests as well as individual trees.

* * *

Although Quenya is but a single branch on the Tree of Tongues, we have not been able to examine more than a few of its leaves in an hour's time. We have looked briefly at three representative periods of its growth: in the earliest stage, that of the *Lost Tales*, the phonetic shape of Quenya words and the ways of forming plurals were already close to their final form, but the case system appears to have been rudimentary. Some 15 years later in the "Secret Vice" poems, the basic pattern of cases familiar from the late material began to appear in its essentials, though some cases had not achieved their final shapes. By the time of *The Lord of the Rings*, the case system had reached its full flower,

culminating in the carefully arranged complexity of the Book Quenya declensions, with a paradigm of interrelated endings, and even indications of their development within the history of Quenya as a written and spoken language of Elves and Men.

In looking at the full sweep of Quenya's development as an invention, it is remarkable that Tolkien seemed to work mainly by a process of augmentation rather than replacement. The earliest cases in the *Lost Tales* material, such as the dative in final *-n* and the associative in *-va*, were not replaced by the new cases that arose later; rather the old cases continued to coexist alongside the new, developing increasingly complex functions and interrelationships. Thus the early Quenya material remains largely in accord with the very latest material. The sixty-year development of the grammar of the Quenya noun and adjective seems to have been a long process by which Tolkien slowly filled in the blanks of a grammatical paradigm, leading ultimately to the full Plotz declensions. It is interesting to note what Tolkien said about this process of invention, at a time that may not have seemed, but turned out to be, the middle of that process:

Of course, if you construct your art-language on chosen principles, and in so far as you fix it, and courageously abide by your own rules, resisting the temptation of the supreme despot to alter them for the assistance of this or that technical object on any given occasion, so far you may write poetry of a sort. Of a sort, I would maintain, no further, or very little further, removed from real poetry in full, than is your appreciation of ancient poetry (especially of a fragmentarily recorded poetry such as that of Iceland or ancient England), or your writing of "verse" in such a foreign idiom.

(Tolkien, 1984c, pp. 218-9)

This courage to "abide by your own rules" is another way of looking at what we perceive as filling in the paradigm, for each rule that Tolkien continues to abide by ends up as a piece of the final pattern. It is significant that the criterion of success is that "you may write poetry of a sort." From the very beginning, with *Narqelion*, Quenya found its most vital means of grammatical development through poetry. The poems cited by Tolkien as examples of his favourite invented language have been our richest source for describing the growth of its grammar. In his conclusion to "A Secret Vice", Tolkien wrote of the power of poetry to free the creative mind of one devising an "art-language":

But, none the less, as soon as you have fixed even a vague general sense for your words, many of the less subtle but most moving and permanently important of the strokes of poetry are open to you. For you are the heir of the ages. You have not to grope after the dazzling brilliance of invention of the free adjective, to which all human language has not yet fully attained. You may say

green sun
or dead life

and set the imagination leaping.

Chart of the declensions of Book Quenya nouns;
sent by J.R.R. Tolkien to Richard Plotz c. 1966-67

		S	Pl 1	2	Dual
(a)	N	cirya	ciryar	ciryali	ciryat
	A	ciryā	ciryai	"	"
	G	ciryō	-aron	-alion	ciryato
	I	ciryānen	-ainen	-alīnen	ciryānten
(b)	All	ciryanna	-annar	-alīnna(r)	ciryanta
		(ciryān)	(-ain)	(-alīn)	(ciryānt)
	Loc	ciryasse	-assen	-alisse(n)	ciryatse
		(ciryas)	(-ais)	(-alīs)	
	Abl	ciryallo	-allon	-alillo(n)	ciryalto
(c)		ciryava	-	-alīva	
(a)		lasse	lassī	lasseli	lasset
		-ē	"	as for	as for
		lasseo	lassion	kiryali	kiryat
		-enen	-īnen		
(b)		-enna	-ennar		
		(-en)	(-in)		
		-esse	-essen		
		(-es)	(-is)		
		-ello	-ellon		
(c)		-eva	-		

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