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## Quenti Lambardillion

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### Quenti Lambardillion

#### Abstract

Describes new linguistic information included in the recently published *The Book of Lost Tales* and *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, as well as other topics.

# Quenti Lambardillion

## A Column on Middle-earth Linguistics

### Paul Nolan Hyde

Inasmuch as there have been two major publications released since the first of the year in the United States that impinge directly on Mythopoeic Philology, and inasmuch as there has been a significant amount of correspondence regarding past columns and articles, we have determined to devote this quarter's QL to a variety of items rather than a single topic. As this was the initial intent of the column, we feel gratified to be able to digress from the norm into the essence.

Both "The Book of Lost Tales" and "The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays" (Houghton-Mifflin: 1984) contribute considerably to the corpus of morphological elements, to our understanding of the syntactic structures of the Middle-earth languages, and to our appreciation of the aesthetic act of language creation. The Appendix and text of *LT* produces over 1600 separate elements together with their etymologies, an increase of twenty-five percent over what had been published before. The challenge involved here has to be the integration of what has been given in previous publications with the new material in *LT*. I believe that it can be accepted as a given that the same kind of consistency extant in the past continues. Of special interest is the emphasis on the historical relationships between words. I sense in those relationships a questing on the part of Tolkien's art; a search for the believably satisfying in concert with the historically beautiful. While it may seem odd that history and beauty might be synthesized, yet it is apparent that something of that nature is in operation beneath the surface of the story line. In conjunction with that synthesis is a fine sense of unflinching humor; neither mocking nor sordid, but one filled with calculated spontaneity, punch lines of "philological jests". Our delight is in discovering the story to which the line pertains. "A Secret Vice" in *MC* provides a multitude of new elements, primarily in textual translations. Although there are glossing footnotes at the end of the essay, much work needs to be done in order to properly analyze the morphological semantics involved. The various poems and their translations allow us to pursue the grammatical aspects of the Elvish dialects in a manner which has been somewhat limited by the scant number of pieces published in the languages. To all of this proposed study must be added the caution that both books are compilations of material developed throughout Tolkien's literary career. While we presume consistent linguistic material, yet we may be forced to accept narrative variations. I suspect, however, that we will discover less in the former than in the latter.

Correspondence has been brisk, especially since *Mythlore XXXVII*! Several questions, however, were raised before and since that issue that ought to be aired, notwithstanding the timeliness of the controversy initiated by Mr. Donahue and myself. First and foremost is the concern for the name of this column. David Doughan suggested some time ago (Pat Wynne more recently) that QL was a misnomer, that it ought to be something along the lines of "Quentar

Lambendillion" because the morphology of Quenya would not allow some of the syntax that the original implied. While I admit that the phrase is one of my own invention and means (briefly) "Those things which pertain to the histories of the friends of speech," yet it is good Elvish. There is an enormous amount of Quenya element-telescoping involved, perhaps more than any self-respecting Elf would indulge in outside of poetic form. I would point out, however, that the "Lost Tales" has an interesting word, "Tilka!", the etymology of which causes my heavy-handed liberties to pale by comparison. Most objectionable seemed to be my use of "Quenti" instead of "Quentar," the latter apparently employing the standard pluralizer, "-r," for nouns ending in "-a." "-i," it was argued, is to be used with nouns ending in consonants. Without going into all of the implications involved by my choice, I simply refer the reader to *LT* where the plural of "vala" is given both as "vale" and "valar." As we have discussed before from time to time, Quenya is highly polysynthetic. Although I had a multitude of choices in saying what I wished to say in two words, "Quenti Lambardillion" was more "linguistically aesthetic" to me. I believe that JRRT would smile at my little coup-de-grace and let it go at that. Frankly, the fuss that the phrase caused is metonymous of the spirit of what we are attempting by discussing Tolkien linguistics at all.

Pat Wynne and J.C. Bradfield raised questions about "-iva" being a dual in "omentielvo" (in *ML*-36). In the Tolkien papers at Marquette University is material which definitely indicates that Tolkien conceived of the dual in nouns; the issue here has to do with their manifestation in pronouns. Old English and other Germanic languages employ the dual pronoun generally not with the "inclusive" and "exclusive" aspects which Jim Allen has identified in Quenya. In Old English, the dual is strictly inclusive in the first person, strictly exclusive in the second person, an non-existent in the third person. I freely confess that at the time I wrote the article, I chose not to make an issue of the inclusive and exclusive aspects. I reasoned (and correctly so) that the existence of the dual itself is enough of a problematical concept without introducing all of the finerities. Along with the dual (a plural of two), there are two other kinds of plurals, roughly termed "count" and "mass". A count plural would correspond to the common plural in English (i.e. dog-dogs), simply more than one (or two, if the dual is considered). The mass plural (somewhat akin to the neuter plural in Old English) refers to all individuals of a single group, again a kind of metonymy in morphological form. There is also evidence that there are elements which intensify the plurality of a count. The system appears to be quite complex and as yet (to my knowledge) no one has taken in hand to work the entire structure out. The effect, in Quenya, of attaching a dual pronoun particle to a dual declined noun (or some other part of speech) seems to intensify the quality much the same way that the double negative functioned in Old and Middle English.

One reader pointed out to me that I seldom make clear the distinction between historical telescoping of elements and telescoping that transpires as the result of the syntax of the language itself. For that lapse I apologize profusely. That confusion became most apparent in a discussion of "aure". "aure", as a combination of "au(t)" and "ure", should be viewed historically. There was some question about the plausibility of the "r" and "t" collapsing together. It should be remembered that the articulatory points for both consonants, in Quenya, are precisely the same: at the back of the teeth. The "r" here is not a retroflex like it is in American Englisher pronunciation. If Quenya pronunciation follows real word articulatory rules (which I believe that it does to some measure), the intervocalic "r" is actually a flap rather than the expected trill. Flapped "r" and "t" are extremely close phonetically, the only difference (I say this guardedly) being the difference in voicing (in fact, some phonetic alphabets make the flapped "r" into a kind of "d"). Intervocalically, the "t" would pick up that voicing under real world articulatory rules. What we have then are two overlapping morphological elements, "aut" and "ure", easily coalescing into "aure". Some objected to the telescoping because they thought it unlikely that the Elves would refer to "day" as "departing heat". That they could and most likely did accept that understanding is for me the clincher. The Eldar were, after all, the "Children of the Stars", those who came into being before the sun arose in the heavens for the first time. "Passing heat" or "departing heat", under these circumstances becomes informative culturally, the essential function of the languages in any event.

At this point, I readily accept a second criticism of my explications: I generally deal in the "not-quite-so-obvious" rather than the "accepted" translation or even Tolkien's given interpretations. I so confessing, I hasten to add that this has been purposeful. We wanted those who were familiar with the languages to perceive what we believe to be the intended richness of the languages, particularly that of Quenya. Unfortunately, by not stating the "obvious" as well, some have been led to believe that my given interpretation was the only one possible. For that I apologize, but will undoubtedly continue in the same vein. Tolkien's conception of beauty compels us to view his languages from as many perspectives as possible. His is a multi-dimensional world, it can be walked about in and around and through; it must be to be believed. His languages demand no more...nor less.

Ben Urrutia wrote concerning my comment in ML-37 that the names of Hobbiton are Spanish; he felt that I may have overstated the point. Ben suggested that the term "hispanicized" would be more accurate. I agree. He also quoted from the Appendix F or LR (p. 516) drawing to my attention again that male Hobbit names generally ended in "-a" while the female endings were predominantly "-o" and "-e". I found it particularly interesting that Tolkien would make an issue of the endings and then almost immediately provide us with counter-evidence like "Frodo", "Bungo", "Bibbo", etc. It makes one wonder whether Tolkien was speaking of the endings in "Westron-English", "Elvish", or "Hobbitish". I believe that the last is the case. Frodo's name in Elvish is, by the way, "Daur".

At the expense of delving once more into the phallically arcane, I approach the world "Wetwang" with some trepidation. There were a number of readers concerned about Mr. Donahue's assertion that "Wetwang" was somehow evidence that Tolkien did indeed dabble in

the coarse. "Wang", according to the OED, is a variety of "wong" which has to do with plowable fields. "Wetwang", then, is just what you would expect it to be: a field that is too water-logged to be cultivated.

One last question raised, this from Nancy Martech who attended my presentation at Mythcon XIII. The issue involved the use of calligraphy to depict character in the classic Fairy Tale fashion; that is, that the preferred writing mode, either Tengwar or Angerthas, somehow conveyed the basic nature of the character who used it. The point Nancy raised had to do with the use of the word "practicality" as it applied to one or the other of the forms of writing. The "practicality" of one mode over another has little to do with OUR perception of practicality, but that of the character, which is in turn a reflection of his basic nature. What is fascinating is that the "practicality" of the Elves embraces the "aesthetically pleasing", while the "practicality" of the dwarves embraces the "utilitarian." This is not to say that they are mutually exclusive, but to aver that a particular group emphasizes one over the other. I believe that Tolkien sets up an "aesthetic-utilitarian" dichotomy and fills in the spectrum with the other characters and races in Middle-earth. Interestingly enough, at the center of the spectrum are the Hobbits. Their "decorated verse hand" and their "pointed style" show the "bi-partisan" rift in their culture. I suspect that if all were known, it would be true that the more aesthetically inclined Hobbits prefer the "decorated verse hand". There is no question that the Tengwar is more practical on paper and the Angerthas on stone, but why does one race choose one medium over another? Perhaps a more important question would be, what it is that the Elves write as contrasted with the Dwarves? Poetry versus History, I would say, at least that is true with what is extant. Again, the Hobbits fall in middle ground. Poetry certainly suffices as the aesthetic quality and history as the utilitarian. Also, I think that it is safe to say that the general human perception of the aesthetic does not usually include a noisy hammer and chisel. Oddly enough, Gimli thinks that it does, but that is, of course, a Dwarf's perception. That in and of itself shapes our view of Dwarves in general and places them in their part of the spectrum.

Every aspect of Middle-earth affords opportunities for insight into Tolkien's art, but the magic of his languages is at the heart of the matter.



A MYTH RETOLD continued from page 12

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