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## Letters

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Paul Nolan Hyde

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## Letters



# LETTERS

Johan Schimanski

Sandvika, Norway

First a small quibble in answer to the quibbles in David Doughan's letter in *Mythlore* 36 (somewhat belated). While the evidence of a "revival of Celtic tradition" in mid-5th century Britain is a bit vague, it isn't completely lacking. There seems, for example, to have been a renewed use of Celtic ornament by craftsmen; a reversion to a more rural form of life; and in many regions a reversion to an earlier political and social structure. Instead of regional councils or civitates, we find more and more local princes and despots having the upper hand in regional affairs. However, it is possible that to talk of a "revival" might be somewhat misleading from a larger historical perspective - if anything, such a revival would have taken the form of a very slow process, starting with the Roman withdrawal, and culminating with the so-called "Arthurian" age.

As noted before, this is all a bit vague, and others with better access to material may see things differently.

Now on to *Mythlore* 37, where I read the debate between Thomas S. Donahue and Paul Nolan Hyde on Elvish linguistics with great interest. The former seems to have really got the wrong end of the stick, and Paul does well in refuting his arguments. But he also makes a couple of mistakes.

The most obvious of these was his claim that Sindarin *adan* was the plural of *edain* 'man' instead of the other way around! The correspondence *S.adan* 'man' : *S.edain* 'man (pl.)' is evidenced in so many places in Tolkien's works that I really can't be bothered to quote examples, but see Bilbo's explanation of the name "the Dúnedan" for Strider. Unfortunately, this misunderstanding on Paul's part appears to have made him miss the important generalization that plurals in synchronic Sindarin are formed by vowel-mutation in a regular fashion. And with the help of internal reconstruction, it doesn't take too much thinking to work out that this morphophonological alternation is diachronically explainable by the positing of an earlier plural suffix \*-i- in Sindarin which has later been 'worn away' by a final unstressed vowel deletion rule. All this ties in admirably with a) other plurals in Sindarin, and b) the fact that Quenya (which historically lacks such a vowel deletion rule) has the forms *atan* 'man' and *atani* 'men'. But the point is, that such a vowel mutation caused by assimilation with the vowel in the following syllable could easily be described as umlaut (the use of the word "umlaut" is often limited to Germanic linguistics, but the actual concept - vowel affection - also works well in, for example, Welsh). Perhaps Paul should pay a bit more attention to Jim Allan & Co. in the future.

More difficulties cropped up with Paul's explanation of the relationship of Quenya and Sindarin

with Latin and Welsh. Firstly, Tolkien uses the word "similar" when describing this relationship. This means that we must be careful when using evidence from Latin (or Finnish) and Welsh when studying the Elvish languages. This is what I think Paul actually states, but at the same time he brings in the lack of a *z* phoneme in Welsh as evidence for Sindarin also lacking such a phoneme earlier in the debate. This happens to be true, but it would be well to keep in mind that Sindarin doesn't have the same phoneme inventory as Welsh (and the same applies for Quenya concerning Latin). This is a good hint that the diachronic sound laws operating in Latin and Welsh needn't necessarily be the same as those operating in Elvish.

Thomas S. Donahue doesn't actually claim that the *Q.āze* = *S.are* correspondence is evidence of Verner's Law operating in Elvish. I assume that he is thinking of the Early *Q.āza* = Late *Q.āze* correspondence (since when has sunlight been called *are* in Sindarin?) as *suevidence*. Verner's Law as such is specific to Germanic Linguistics (and the idea of Tolkien 'using' Verner's Law in Elvish is quite ridiculous), but it is not unthinkable that similar or identical processes have happened in other language groups (considering the universal aspects of language). Of course, Verner's Law affects a good many more sounds than are affected in Quenya in a similar way, but the diachronic change *E.Q.ā > L.Q.ā* is paralleled to a large extent in Germanic linguistics (see Allan's *Introduction to Elvish* p. 132-133 for a further discussion of this).

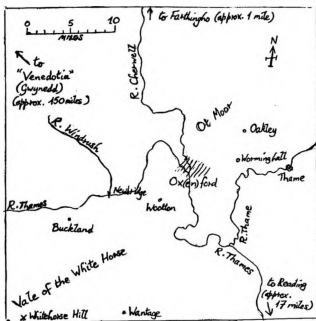
What this boils down to is that diachronic sound changes in the Elvish languages need not be traceable to Latin and Welsh, as Paul implies. Tolkien may have been (or rather, obviously was) inspired by specific non-fictional languages when constructing Quenya & Sindarin, but I feel that a lot of the work was left to his own imagination. What's amazing is that the resulting languages are as natural in every way as the living languages we know today.

DavidDoughan

Surrey, England

Some words of correction to R.C. Walker's article on the Little Kingdom in *Mythlore* XXXVII, together with another map (please excuse its crudity).

From my sketch-map, you can see that Worminghall and Oakley are actually roughly between Oxford and Thame; Farthingho is far to the north, and Wantage, slightly to the south, of their positions on R.C. Walker's map. The Vale of the White Horse is so called because of the white horse carved out of the grass on a prominent chalk hillside. The only place I know at the confluence of the Windrush and the Thames is Newbridge, the site of the oldest surviving bridge over the Thames; there may be an old parish called "Ham" somewhere in the area, but if so, it's well hidden ("Hammo" in *Farmer Giles* is just a Latinized



D. Doughan fecit (pessime)

ablative form). In any case, Tolkien leaves us in no doubt that Thame is meant (p. 76 of the 1949 edition). The "real-world" Thame almost certainly draws its name from a Brittonic element \*tam-, which also occurs in the river-names Taff and Thames, as well as various rivers Tame around England, including that which flows through Tamworth, ancient capital of Mercia, a strong candidate for the residence of Augustus Bonifacius etc. So even a "real-world" modern English Thame is a very close follow-up to the "real-world" Thame. Tourist hint: the Thame area is about 50 miles from the center of London - it is unspectacular but pleasant in a very English way, and the pubs are good.

Names from Farmer Giles, the Shire and elsewhere crop up not only in Oxfordshire, but all over England – and even Wales: 'Venedotia' is the ancient name for – what is now called Gwynedd, i.e. North-west Wales (I have never seen a giant there, and the only dragons visible are the red ones of Welsh nationalism, but the mountains are as advertised). There is even (pace Mr. Donahue) a village called Wetwang in what used to be the East Riding of Yorkshire, about 40 miles from where Edith Tolkien once danced in a hemlock grove. None of this is accidental; for a fuller account, see Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), especially Chapter 4 'A cartographic plot!'; and *The Book of Lost Tales*.

As for the philologists [in *Mythlore* 37]: I am at a loss for words. It's not so much that I don't know where to begin - I just wouldn't know where to end. I'll confine myself to saying that if "boff" is a modern British slang equivalent of [sexual intercourse], I've never heard it.

Paul Nolan Hyde

Simi Valley, CA

Although I find myself at odds with Christine Barkley's thesis that Stephen Donaldson is heir to Tolkien's literary crown, I am appalled at Darrell Schweitzer's assertion that Donaldson's prose is no better than "low-level pulp" (notwithstanding the British Cletcher Society).

J.R.R. Tolkien resurrected heroic fantasy for a generation raised in an atmosphere of cynicism and despair. His prose is clear, bright, and vivid; the perfect companion to his personal world view. The product is both readable and enjoyable, but it is primarily hopeful. Tolkien's art is style specific. Whether by choice or craft, he creates Middle-earth in a narrow genre, the Traditional Fairy Tale. His prose style, whether by design or intuition, fits that genre like a glove. In defining, however, the Traditional Fairy Tale does not treat Good nor Evil explicitly, they are simple givens. Seldom is there a depiction of Good becoming Evil or of Evil repenting in an analog fashion. If they are of a certain persuasion in one part of the narrative and are portrayed differently later, the process of change is not shown graphically. If I understand it correctly, showing the change is what Realism is all about. Tolkien is true to his genre. We never see Saruman good, although he once was, and there is no suggestion of Gollum, Denethor, Sauron, and the others being anything other than the Trolls nor the Elvishness of the Orcs. We cannot fault Tolkien for not giving us this sort of description; he could have. I am sure, but he was telling a Fairy Tale.

Donaldson, on the other hand, has not constrained himself with Form. He is, like Tolkien, a story teller and, like Tolkien, he is a good one. But Donaldson did something for Fantasy that Tolkien chose not to do: he imbued it with verbal grandure. He is also concerned about the growth of his characters, or their decline. His story is process-oriented as opposed to stasis-oriented. His style, of necessity, adapts itself to the nature of the story. Donaldson's talent is most apparent in that adaptation. Whether Donaldson spent as much time and effort groping for preciseness as did Tolkien is not the issue. What is the issue is that they were about two different things stylistically and, thus, are really incomparable. Donaldson's is "meaty" prose; Tolkien's is pure spring water. Anyone who has read Donaldson expecting Tolkien's prose is attempting to drink Dinky Doo from a lead crystal. Stylistically, Donaldson differs from J.R.R. Tolkien much the same way that William Morris does. Morris is a better writer of grandure, but Donaldson is more readable. Denigrating the prose of a word-smith the caliber Stephen Donaldson says more about the auditory acumen of the denigrator than that of those who savor it.

Regarding Ursula Le Guin, I would say that she is a fine writer; my children quite enjoy her (pardon the Edmund Wilson tack). There are times, however, that she is inexplicably hard to follow. I have not had that trouble with Tolkien or Donaldson.

In order to disabuse those readers who have concluded that I am pomposity personified, I did indeed pick up the gauntlet thrown down by the above mentioned Society. Unless the word "clutch" will pass for "clench" (as I understand in some circles it does), I went eleven pages without finding "clench". I suppose that I am, for the time being, the new Anglo-American champion of "clench". The one criticism now of Donaldson's writing is that he has the indefinite article 21,426 times as opposed to his 41,342 uses of the definite article: no one is that sure of himself.

Thomas M. Egan

Woodside, NY

Mythlore 39 has some fine features in its art illustrations (Sarah Beach's "The Meditation of Mordred" is the most original and convincing in the



honor in a twentieth century voice, as the author says: "it is Lewis' obstinate common-sense contention that validity and morality are real and that every rational person acts as if they were, to the extent that he is sane and honorable." (p. 75)

Aeschliman's book provides an interesting example of orthodox writing which expresses itself *contra* the unorthodox. In it we learn of the heresies by hearing of their refutations. This, in an era when that other point of view is dominant, is refreshing! "Modern scientific doctrine holds all fact to be objective and all value to be subjective," he writes. "To call it a 'doctrine' is to draw attention to the fact that its characteristic assumption that only factual statements have validity is itself nonfactual, speculative, and dogmatic; it is, in fact, a diabolically ironic article of faith." (p. 74)

This book, which contains an "Index of Names" with 176 entries, includes one quotation from a woman, Rebecca West, and it is the gem of the collection: "perhaps the sin against the Holy Ghost is to deal with people as though they were things." (p. 54) Amen.

Nancy-Lou Patterson

## A Celtic Night's Entertainment

Joy Chant, *The High Kings: Arthur's Celtic Ancestors*, illustrated by George Sharp, designed by David Larkin (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 240 pp.

Gorgeously illustrated by George Sharp and elegantly designed by David Larkin, this is one coffee-table book whose text can stand on its own, though its visual enhancement makes it a delight to hold and examine. Joy Chant's graceful, compelling study contains three interwoven strands of narrative. First are short passages of exposition which deftly touch upon aspects of ancient Celtic culture. The significance of these becomes clear as the book unfolds. A series of views of Arthur's court and life during various periods of his reign is the second strand. Within this context, as called-for tellings on appropriate occasions, is the third and central element: the splendid recounting of Celtic stories, in all their power and mystery. Soaked in blood and redolent with a musky passion, this, the real "mythology for England," emerges flashing with the metallic exchange of arms, the gleam of gilded ornament and the heft of brocaded garments, in which the people of the other world are even brighter and more beautiful than the gold-torqued princes of this one. This is the rich hinterland out of which the high tales of Arthur grew and flourished. In this world, Rome is a far realm but not too far for an Island king to aspire to its throne. Women are equal in splendor, ferocity and amorous independence with men. Indeed, the ladies of these tales can be read as a series of powerful role models for contemporary life, as perhaps their author intended. They are matched by an equally compelling series of unforgettable men, head-strong, brooding, and frequently doomed.

There is a strong element of originality in this work, as the author makes clear. "The form of the stories is conjectural," she states with disarming frankness; "the aim has been to remove the medieval gloss from those that have survived, and to retell



them in a way in which they might have been told in the last days of Britain." (p. 6) As sources, she cites "John Morris' *The Age of Arthur* and Rachel Bronwich's edition of the Welsh Triads, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*," for her "stories of the Island of the Mighty." As I said, her work is a thorough success, a delight from beginning to end.

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Continued from page 50

*Lost Play* Eriol comes to Tol Eressea in the time after the Fall of Gondolin . . . but before the time of the . . . removal of Tol Eressea to the geographical position of England." (Italics in the original). But on pages 24 and 25 we have been informed that Eriol or Aelfwine was of the Angli or English, and that the Elvish island to which he came was the same one which his people would, not too long afterwards, invade and colonize, and even rename after themselves. Now this island has been where it is at least since 40 BC when Julius Caesar attempted to invade it, and 40 AD, when Claudius succeeded in doing so. Therefore it seems the editor's general interpretation is not correct.

Furthermore, having Tol Eressea in Britain's present location eliminates not one but two contradictions. On page 32 the editor points out that "the diminutiveness of the Cottage"--and of the dwellers therein--"is very strange"--since Eriol is surprised by it, though he finds the Cottage near the center of the island, after he "for many days had wandered its roads, stopping each night at what dwelling of folk he might chance upon" (p. 13)--"But Tol Eressea is an island inhabited by Elves" (p. 32). But not entirely by Elves, if (as it seems) it is the island which is about to be invaded by Angli and Saxons. The people Aelfwine has met have been Britons, ordinary-sized humans. The small folk of Faerie are a minority hidden here and there. When the conception of their small size was rejected by J.R.R. Tolkien (and he rejected it very strongly), then there no longer was

Continued on page 60

D., P. Punch 227 (8 Sept. 1954), 325. [An allegory on the grand scale but "not with Spenser's tiresome complexity." The bits about the hobbits are best. "...I can think of nothing in the book to account for the fact that I find the whole thing absolutely fascinating, despite some of the most infuriating fine writing." Brief.] + FR '54E

Daweddit, Glendy. "Three Novels of Distinction". Washington Post and Times Herald, 14 Nov. 1954, p. B6. [Brief. "A novel of merit but specialized appeal....it is unquestionably the definitive work on Hobbits." + FR '54A

de Camp, L. Sprague. "Book Reviews". Science Fiction Quarterly 3 (Aug. 1955), 36-40. [A kind of survey of major fantasy fiction, ending with FR (pp. 39-40). "This is a big, leisurely, colorful, poetical, sorrowful, adventuresome romance...." The hobbits are "a cross between an English white-collar worker and a rabbit." The characterization is too sweet for the reviewer's drier taste.] + FR '54A

Derrick, Christopher. "Talking of Dragons". Tablet (London) 204 (11 Sept. 1954), 250. [Science in science fiction has mainly been used as a disguise for the imaginary and improbably. But lately the mythical has been treated without disguise. LotR belongs here. It is heroic romance. Tolkien shows amazing fertility in creating his world and almost succeeds in devising an elevated diction. "...one of the most arresting and readable stories of our time." + FR '54E

Dolbier, Maurice. "The Ring of Power and the Shadow of Evil". Providence Sunday Journal, 28 Nov. 1954, Section 6, p. 8. [A sympathetic and descriptive review. "Brilliant in its telling as it is broad in scope, Mr. Tolkien's romance never slackens in pace nor weakens in style." The work is relevant because we "have come into possession of the Great Ring of Power." + FR '54A

"An Essay in Romance". Christian World (London), 7 Oct. 1954, p. 4. [Very brief. There is too much fantasy but the technique and writing are praise-worthy.] + FR '54E

"Fable for To-day". Church Times (London), 10 Oct. 1954, p. 4. [This very favorable review is mainly summary. The book is "heroic romance" for our own time. "A new world, rich and astonishingly coherent, unfolds with the story." "This is a deeply, though never overtly, Christian book...." It is the product of "an entirely Christian imagination." + FR '54E

"A Fairy Tale". The Times of India (Bombay), 27 Feb. 1955, p. 6. [A favorable summary of the book. "The magic ring...quite clearly represents nuclear power." "The reviewer can find no adequate way to praise this beautiful and grand book." + FR '54E

To Be Continued

## Our Speaker Tonight

I fled into a looking glass  
Because I could not stand my face,  
And swam in molten silver there  
And flashed like fire from place to place,  
Until I met a girl of gold  
Who smiled at me and ran away,  
And now I tramp from place to place  
And talk of her to you for pay,  
— Gene Wolfe

Continued from page 55

room enough, of course, for both the Elvish and British peoples on the island. So inevitably Tol Eressea was removed to the distant West, while Britain remained near Europe.



## Mythopoeic Fantasy Award 1985

The Council of Stewards would like to thank last year's selection committee, and to announce that members of the Society who would like to nominate books for the 1984 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award or who wish to serve on the committee please write to Christine Lowentroutr, 115 5th St. #2, Seal Beach, CA 90740 by February 20, 1984. A member can nominate up to five books, and does not have to serve on the selection committee in order to make nominations. Committee members must be willing to read all five of the finalists.

Nominations received by February 20 will be compiled and returned to committee members by March 1. Committee members are then requested to select five books from the nomination list and return them to Christine by May 10th. The five books with the most votes will be the finalists, a winner from which will be returned to Christine by July 15. The four runners-up will be awarded Honorable Mentions, and the winner will be announced at Mythcon 16 in Chicago.

Volunteers for the selection committee who wish to have their names included on the list to be distributed to the committee must indicate willingness when they volunteer. Thank you!



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