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Quenti Lambardillion: : Oilima Markirya: A Ship in Time

Abstract

Considers different versions of the "Ark" poem, "Oilima Markirya," in the essay "A Secret Vice" and its endnotes.

Quenti Lambardillion

A Column on Middle-earth Linguistics

by Paul Nolan Hyde

Oilima Markirya: A Ship in Time

A linguist is continually baffled by his informant, no matter if the native speaker of the language being surveyed is an intelligent, articulate, and witty fellow, or a complete dunderhead. The informant is generally so familiar with the operations of his own tongue that some aspects which seem to be obvious and need no explanation, often turn out to be vital to the linguist's basic understanding of the superstructure of the language. In addition, an informant is, by definition, an idiosyncratic speaker of his language. One of the great horror stories told to budding field linguists is of the surveyor who spent months recording the nuances of one of the Amerindian languages only to discover afterwards that the old man who was his informant had been afflicted with a congenital speech impediment. The result was comparable to having had Gabby Hayes as an English teacher; the linguist knew the language, but spoke it with a disconcerting lisp.

Working with the languages of Middle-earth, one is considerably better off. J.R.R. Tolkien was, after all, a philologist himself. Not only was he a prolific generator of language and dialect, he was a scrupulous recorder of his creations, continually defining and refining, archiving it all in his own meticulous fashion. Some of the difficulties that his son and those of us captivated by his works experience, however, are directly associated with this enormous corpus of material. As each succeeding volume of the *History of Middle-earth* has demonstrated, JRRT produced multiple copies of poems and stories, often with revisions and footnotes on the holographs themselves. One of Christopher Tolkien's herculean tasks as editor of his father's papers has been to determine the precise order in which each of the several variants was produced, and then to establish the relationship between the emendations and the succeeding version of the work in question. I suspect that in some instances the conclusions, of necessity, were speculative. In terms of Tolkien linguistics, the notes attending "A Secret Vice" in *The Monsters and the Critics* will serve as an important example of the extraordinary difficulty associated with establishing an accurate grammatical description of any of the languages of Middle-earth.

The focus of our attention is the poem *Oilima Markirya* (OM-213) which J.R.R. Tolkien used in a 1931 address, originally entitled "A Hobby for the Home", referring to

"home-made or invented languages" (MC, pp. 3-4). The text of the poem in Elvish is printed on pages 213-14 of *The Monsters and the Critics*, after which appears what seems to be the translation in English. However, in footnote #8 on page 220, Christopher informs us:

This version in English is not part of the manuscript text, but a typescript inserted into the essay at this point. As typed, the title was 'The Last Ship'; 'Ship' was changed to 'Ark' later, and at the same time Oilima Markirya was written above the English title.

After the footnote section, Christopher additionally reveals:

Another version of Oilima Markirya, with translation, was placed with this essay. The title of both is 'The Last Ark', not 'The Last Ship'; but a note to the 'Elvish' text calls this the 'first version' of the poem.

Then follows the poem (OM-220), which is extraordinary for its formal rhyme pattern; and the translation (T-221), which is really more of a prose-form translation by stanzas. By comparing the two English translations, several distinct differences become clear. What follows below is the second stanza of 'The Last Ark' on page 214 and the first stanza from the translation on page 221

Translation 214 (T-214.2)

Who shall heed a white ship
vague as a butterfly,
in the flowing sea
on wings like stars,
on the sea surging,
the foam blowing,
the wings shining,
the light fading?

Translation 221 (T-221.1)

A white ship one saw, small like a butterfly,
upon the blue streams of the sea with wings like stars.

Other than the obvious prose-verse dichotomy there are several other elements worthy of note: T-214 is rendered in the future tense, T-221 in the past tense; T-214 is structured as a series of interrogatives, T-221 is in the declarative; T-214 is almost prophetic in nature, T-221 is historical.

What is not known at this point is when or exactly why these insertions were included with the text of "A Secret Vice". Christopher Tolkien indicates that "A Secret Vice" was revised later for a subsequent delivery sometime in the early 1950's (see MC p. 3, 203, 220). Were T-214, OM-220, and T-221 put with the original text at the first writing of the address, or during the subsequent revision, or at some later time? What makes the issue even more murky is that there are at least two other versions of *Oilima Markirya* to be found in the Tolkien papers, both of which were combined into the single version found on pages 221-22 of *The Monster and the Critics* (OM-222). Christopher surmises that these latter two, more or less contemporaneous with one another, date to within the last ten years of his father's life (1963-1973). After presenting the accompanying glossary to the poem, CT concludes:

It will be seen that while the vocabulary of this version is radically different from that given in the essay, the meaning is precisely the same (MC, p. 223).

At the risk of seeming impertinent, I would like to make a qualified addendum to Christopher's conclusion about the relationship between the two *Oilima Markirya* poems which I am calling OM-213 (the essay version) and OM-222 (the endnotes version). I am of the opinion that the English translation T-214 is more closely related to OM-222 than it is with OM-213, because of their relative structure, vocabulary, and grammar.

The Poems of "The Last Ark"

By stating that T-214 is more closely related to OM-222, I would not have the reader understand that T-214 has no bearing on OM-213; I am only suggesting that T-214 is a product of a different period in the evolution of the poem, most likely a later period. By examining the two Elvish poems and comparing them to the translation I think this difference and temporal relationship can be seen, at least dimly.

The following material is based on what may be an unfounded premise: that the two poems are written in basically the same Middle-earth language. I think that it is safe to say that if they are not written in exactly the same language, then surely they are given in closely related dialects. The elaborate case system of Quenya and its dialects is apparent in both poems, and various tense elements and declensions appear to be operating in a similar way. If, however, they are from completely separate linguistic traditions, almost all that could be said hereafter would be vacuous.

Structural Evidence

The first piece of evidence is not necessarily linguistic in nature, but it is easy to see. By comparing the number of lines in each stanza of the two poems and that of the translation, one can see the first thing that ought to give

one pause regarding the relationship between the three pieces.

Table 1
Stanza Structure of the "Ark" poems

Stanza	OM-213	T-214	OM-222
1	4	5	5
2	8	8	8
3	9	9	9
4	7	8	9
5	6	6	6
6	2	1	1

While OM-213 differs structurally from T-214 in three stanzas (1, 4, 6), OM-222 differs only in one (4). This is, admittedly slender evidence on its own, but it sets the stage for answering many serious questions that are raised when attempting to match OM-213 with T-214 in conjunction with the published glossaries and etymologies.

Another structural element, equally inconclusive but equally striking, demonstrates another apparent affinity between T-214 and OM-222. The punctuation in the three poems follow distinct patterns as is illustrated in Table 2. Dashes are used to indicate the absence of line punctuation.

Table 2
Punctuation Patterns in the "Ark" Poems

Stanza	1	2	3	4	5	6
OM-213	-,-?	-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-	-,-,-?	?
T-214	-,-?	-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-	-,-,-?	?
OM-222	-,-?	-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-,-	-,-,-,-	-,-,-?	?

The table indicates that generally speaking there seems to be more of a correlation between T-214 and OM-222 in terms of the given punctuation. It also shows that while they do not enjoy as close a relationship, T-214 is not totally dissociated from OM-213. Stanzas 1, 5, and 6 are identical between OM-222 and T-213. Stanza 2 differs by a comma; stanza 3 by a semi-colon; stanza 4 by a comma and an extra line (as indicated above in Table 1). T-214 and OM-213 are identical in stanza 5; but stanza 2 differs by a comma, stanza 3 differs by a comma and a semi-colon, stanza 4 differs by and extra line, and stanza 6 differs by an extra line with a comma.

While these two structural aspects do not clearly demonstrate the thesis suggested above, they do justify pursuing a further investigation of the actual vocabulary and grammar of the two OM poems with that of the translation included with the essay.

A Comparative Interlinear Translation

In the partial interlinear translations given below, I have not tried to be definitive, I have tried to set forth a

probable glossing based on the corpus of linguistic material in print. I have used *A Working Concordance*, *A Working English Lexicon*, *A Working Reverse Index* (two versions), and the newly published *A Working Tolkien Glossary*. There is little extrapolation or speculation, but rather an attempt to begin a likely translation independent of T-214. Each stanza of the two poems is treated in turn. Some reference will be made to OM-220 and T-221 in the commentary. The numbering system follows the pattern (page.stanza.line.word).

OM-213.1

- 1 Man kiluva kirya ninqe
who see-shall ship white
- 2 oilima ailinello lute,
last lake-, shore-from, float
- 3 nive qimari ringa ambar
cold earth, fate
- 4 ve maiwin qaine?
like gulls

OM-222.1

- 1 Men kenuva fane kirya
who see-shall white ship
- 2 metima hrestallo kira,
final beach-from cut, cleave
- 3 [i neka fairi]
the faint phantoms
- 3 i fairi neke
the phantoms faint
- 4 ringa sumaryasse
cold bosom-her-within
- 5 ve maiwi yaimie?
like gulls wailing

T-214.1

- 1 Who shall see a white ship
- 2 leave the last shore,
- 3 the pale phantoms
- 4 in her cold bosom
- 5 like gulls wailing?

Glossing the text in OM-213 is somewhat difficult because many of the forms are found nowhere else in the published works. "nive" (213.1.3.1) may be related to words like "Nivrim" which have reference to the "west", or more likely to words like "nimp" and "nifred" which semantically relate to the concept of "whiteness". "qimari" (213.1.3.2) is probably a plural, but there is no immediate relationship apparent to anything like "phantom". The same is true of "qaine" (213.1.4.3) which, however, may be obliquely related to the root KAY- "lie down". The fascinating thing is, of course, that T-214.1 corresponds almost exactly to OM-222.1 in vocabulary and word order. The odd word "kira"

(222.1.2.3) is undoubtedly semantically related to words like "kirya", having reference to the idea of sailing by cutting through the water. It would be helpful to indicate parenthetically at this point that the lines or words in hard brackets in OM-222 have reference to an earlier manuscript of the poem; the elements in parentheses refer to subsequent emendations to the holograph of OM-222.

OM-213.2

- 1 Man tiruva kirya ninqe
Who heed-shall ship white
- 2 valkane wilwarindon
tortured butterfly-like
- 3 lunelinqe vear
blue-water seas
- 4 tinwelindon talalinen,
star-many-like sails-with
- 5 vea falastane,
sea foamed
- 6 falma pustane,
crested wave ceased
- 7 ramali tine,
wing-many glinted
- 8 kalma histane?
daylight darkened

OM-222.2

- 1 Man tiruva fana kirya,
Who heed-shall white ship
- 2 wilwarin wilwa,
butterfly fluttering to and fro
- 3 ear-kelumessen
sea-flowing (loc.pl.)
- 4 ramainen elvie,
wings-with star-like (pl.)
- 5 ear falastala,
sea foaming
- 6 winga hlapula
foam streaming in the wind
- 7 ramar sisilala,
wings (frequently) shining
- 8 kale fifirula?
the light slowly fading away

T-214.2

- 1 Who shall heed a white ship,
- 2 vague as a butterfly,
- 3 in the flowing sea
- 4 on wings like stars,
- 5 the sea surging,
- 6 the foam blowing,
- 7 the wings shining,
- 8 the light fading?

Although there are easy comparisons between OM-213.2, OM-222.2, and T-214.2, yet there are some profound-

ly disconcerting vocabulary usage in OM-213 if T-214 is the translation. As far as I can tell from the existing etymologies, "*valkane*" (213.2.1) has little or nothing to do with "vagueness"; on the other hand "*wilwa*", (222.2.2) means "fluttering to and fro", not exactly a synonym of "vagueness" either. The apparent problem may very well be resolved by an appeal to the OED where an admittedly rare and obsolete definition of "vague" is given as "to wander; to range, roam; to ramble idly or as a vagrant". This definition establishes more of a contextual relationship with "*wilwa*" rather than "*valkane*". Of greater disparity is 213.2.3.1, obviously meaning "blue-water" as opposed to the T-214 translation "flowing"; 222.2.3 is clearly translatable with "flowing" as an integral part of the meaning. A similar observation might be made of "*pustane*" (213.2.6.2) whose cognates are glossed meaning "stop, cease", rather than "blowing" of the translation; OM-222.2.6.2 is clearly glossed as "fly or stream in the wind", considerably closer in meaning. Of greatest import, however, are the inflectional endings of "*valkane*", "*falastane*", "*pustane*", "*tine*", and "*histane*", which, when compared with the other entries with the same ending, should be glossed as being some aspect of the past tense; the comparable lines in OM-222.2 are clearly glossed in the notes at the end of the poem as containing the element "-la", indicating the present participle. If one had a mind to begin to draw some conclusions here, it would seem that OM-213 is probably more closely related to OM-220, inasmuch as the latter in its prose translation is plainly given in the preterite.

OM-213.3

1 Man *tenuva* suru laustane
Who -shall wind roar
2 *taurelasselindon*,
forest-leaf-many-like
3 *ondoli losse karkane*
stone-many white row of teeth
4 *silda-ranar*,
shine-moon
5 *minga-ranar*,
single-moon
6 *lanta-ranar*,
fall-moon
7 *ve kaivo-kalma*;
like corpse-candle
8 *huro ulmula*,
action, vigor not-slave
9 *mandu tuma*?
hell hollow, valley

OM-222.3

1 Man *hlaruva ravea* sure
Who -shall roaring noise wind
2 *ve tauri lillassie*,
like forests having-many-leaves (pl.)

3 [ninqi ondor yarra]
white stones growl, snarl
3 ninqi karkar yarra
white teeth growl, snarl
4 isilme ilkalasse,
moonlight gleaming (white)(loc.sing.)
5 isilme pikalasse,
moonlight dwindling (loc.sing.)
6 isilme lantalasse
moonlight falling (loc.sing.)
7 *ve loikolikuma*;
like corpse-candle
8 raumo nurrula,
(noise of a) storm murmuring
8 (nurrua)
murmur
9 undume rumala?
down- heaving
9 (ruma)
heave

T-214.3

1 Who shall hear the wind roaring
2 like leaves of forests;
3 the white rocks snarling
4 in the moon gleaming,
5 in the moon waning,
6 in the moon falling
7 a corpse-candle;
8 the storm mumbling,
9 the abyss moving?

There are some particularly difficult vocabulary in OM-213.3 because of the lack of definitive glossing. "*Tenuva*", for example, undoubtedly is inflected with the future tense, but the root "*ten-*" is opaque. Most of the possible cognates to "*ten-*" in the etymological corpus have to do with meanings associated with "line, direction" or "straight". "*Minga-*" has no obvious cognate in the published works, although "*min-*" ("single") may have some bearing. Lines 213.3.8 and 213.3.9 are equally difficult to clearly gloss. "*huro*" may be related to "*hur*" ("readiness for action, vigor, fiery spirit"; "*ulmula*" may have the morphemes "*ul*" ("negative"), "streams", or "odor") and "*mul*" ("slave, thrall"); "*mandu*" is probably related to "*mandulomi*" in OM-220 and may refer to "hell", which in turn would have a relationship with "*man*" ("departed spirit"), "*NDU*" ("down"), and "*nu*" ("night, dimness") and thus with "abyss"; "*tuma*" may have direct reference to "*tum*" ("valley", "hollow", "among the hills").

In OM-222.3.1, the word "*hlaruva*" may be related to "*lhathro*" ("listen in, eavesdrop"), "*lhathron*" ("hearer, listener, eavesdropper"), and "*lhau*" ("ears"), among others. "*undume*" in 222.3.11 may very well be related to "*undu*" ("down, under, beneath") and "*undu-lawe*" ("down-licked"),

again referenced to "abyss". The "-sse" (loc.sing.) ending is clearly apparent in T-214; how that aspect would be or is manifested in OM-213 is not easily discerned.

OM-213.4

- 1 Man kiluva lomi sangane,
Who see-shall clouds crowded
- 2 telume lungane
dome of heaven weighted
- 3 tollalimta ruste,
island-, hill-many-high endure
- 4 vea qalume,
sea death-cloud
- 5 mandu yame,
hell
- 6 aira more ala tinwi
eternal dark after stars
- 7 lante no lanta-mindon?
fall upon fall-tower

OM-222.4

- 1 Man kenuva lumbar na-hosta
Who see-shall dark clouds to-gather
1 (ahosta)
complete-gather
- 2 Menel na-kuna
heavens to-bend
2 (akuna)
complete-bend
- 3 ruxal' ambonnar,
shattering hills-upon
- 4 ear amortal, sea
- 5 undume hakala,
down-
- 6 enwina lume
time
- 7 elenillor pella
stars-(abl.pl.) beyond
- 8 talta-taltala
collapsing
- 9 [atalantea]
downfallen (sing.)
- 9 atalantie mindoninnar?
downfallen (pl.) towers-upon
- 9 (atalantea mindonnar)
downfallen (sing.) tower-upon

T-214.4

- 1 Who shall see the clouds gather,
- 2 the heavens bending
- 3 upon crumbling hills,
- 4 the sea heaving,
- 5 the abyss yawning,
- 6 the old darkness
- 7 beyond the stars falling
- 8 upon fallen towers?

OM-213.4 has interesting, yet sometimes difficult vocabulary. Both "*sangane*" (213.4.1.4) and "*lungane*" (213.4.2.2) are probably, as was suggested elsewhere, in a preterite or past participle form. "*lungane*" probably means "weighted", implying "bend" but not explicitly so. "*tollalimta*" (213.4.3.1) may be a compound as indicated in the interlinear translation; in addition, the inflection "-lla" may be present as well. "*qalume*" (213.4.4.2) is not glossed elsewhere, but "*qalme*" ("death") and "*lume*" ("cloud") may have bearing here. "*yame*" (213.4.5.2) is undoubtedly related to the root "YAG" ("yawn, gape"), but probably not as a present participle. An argument might be made for "*ala*" ("after") meaning "beyond" based on the various semantic values that have been attributed to "after" historically in the English language. The clearly important element to the thesis is, however, "*lanta-mindon*" (213.4.7.3) which is structurally singular as "fallen-tower" rather than plural as it is in T-214 and in versions of OM-222.

OM-222.4 is not much easier in places because of unglossed elements. "*ruxal*" (222.4.5.1) is undoubtedly a clipped form of "*ruxala*" which demonstrates the present participle ending. It may be related to "*rakina*" (222.5.1.3) and "*rukina*" (222.5.3.3) suggesting "broken" or "confused". "*ambonnar*" utilizes the full phonetic value of "*amon*" ("hill"). "*amortal*" (222.4.6.2) and "*hakala*" (222.4.7.2) are opaque except for the present participle inflection. "*enwina*" (222.4.8.1) could very well be related to the root "EN-" ("over there, yonder") with a reference to time. It is interesting to note that the singular-plural problem mentioned in OM-213.4.7.3 is accentuated in the fluctuation between singular and plural in the various manuscripts and emendations (222.4.11-13).

OM-213.5 *

- 1 Man tiruva rusta kirya
Who guard-shall endure ship
- 2 laiqa ondolissen
green stone-many-(loc.pl.)
- 3 nu karne vaiya,
under red outer-sea
- 4 uri nienait hise
sun tear- mist
- 5 pike assari silde
small bones shine
- 6 oresse oilima?
dawn-(loc.sing.) last

OM-222.5

- 1 Man tiruva rakina kirya
Who guard-shall broken ship
- 2 ondolissee morne
stone-many-(loc.sing.) dark
- 3 nu fanyare rukina,
under skies disordered
- 4 anar purea tihta
sun smeared blink

5 axor ilkalannar
bones gleaming-towards
6 [metima amauseasse]
final dawn-(loc.sing.)
6 metim' auresse?
final day-(loc.sing.)

T-214.5

1 Who shall heed a broken ship
2 on the green rocks
2 (dark)
3 under red skies,
3 (ruined)
4 a bleared sun blinking
5 on bones gleaming
6 in the last morning?

The fifth stanzas do as much as any parts of the poems to establish a possible sequence of events with regard to the production of OM-213, OM-222, and T-214. It is clear from "laiga" (213.5.2.1) and "karne" (213.5.3.2) that the original conception of the scene was color oriented as the original text of T-214 shows. At some point "green" and "red" are changed to read "dark" and "ruined", respectively. OM-222 retains that semantic shift without emendation. However, in the fifth line of OM-213 the "shining bones" of T-214 and OM-222 are "tiny", "small", or "dwindling" (see "PIK", "pikina", "pika", etc.); this conception does not appear in T-214 or OM-222. In addition, the sun is definitely "smeared" and "blinking" in OM-222.5.3.2-3, but is "teary" and "misted" in OM-213.5.4.2-3. Admittedly one could make a case against this kind of niggling, but the process demonstrates how difficult it is to establish relationships between documents that have been written over a long period of time, but have ended up together in the same folder or box.

OM-213.6

1 Hui oilima man kiluva,
night last who see-shall
2 hui oilimaite?
night last-

OM-222.6

1 [andunie]
sunset
1 Man kenuva metim' andune?
who see-shall last sunset

T-214.6

1 Who shall see the last evening?

Although the sentiment of these final lines is essentially

the same, yet the structure of OM-213.6 is obviously different from the last lines of T-214 and OM-222. It is just as clear that in terms of a straight-forward translation, the relationship between T-214.6 and OM-222.6 is basically word for word.

In conclusion, the stanza structure and punctuation of the three poems point to an advised hesitancy in equating them as linguistic cognates. The vocabulary differences between OM-213 and OM-222 are more substantive than mere synonymy and T-214 systematically favors OM-222. The most difficult issue is grammatical. Past participle inflections are not present participle inflections any more than "-ed" suffixes are to be equated with "-ing" endings. In conjunction with this latter, OM-213 appears to have been written with a future-completion tone in mind, while OM-222 suggests a kind of future-progressive tense. T-214 is more grammatically compatible with OM-222.

Needless to say, this has been a rather tedious slogging through the Marshes of a linguistic Dagorlad. One can not help but question the value of such an exercise, unless one is into aerobic reading. The peculiar problem with these three documents is that if we accept the thesis that T-214 is a precise translation of OM-213, we are burdened with an overwhelming and disconcerting confusion of morphological and grammatical elements which up to this point have been fairly clearly identified. On the other hand, by asserting that T-214 is more closely related to OM-222, and that OM-213 is a much earlier version of "The Last Ship" that has affinities with OM-220, the resultant problem is that we are left with a number of unidentified vocabulary words in OM-213 which have few if any cognates in the corpus. In other words, we have more of the same thing we have been plagued with all along for the past 25 years. We are hamstrung a little because there is no functional, authoritative dictionary in print, and our native informant has gone off to the mountains. The mildly disheartening thing about all of this is, of course, that there may be more to do now than we had previously thought.

Now does this in any way question the validity of Christopher Tolkien's footnote on page 223 of *The Monsters and the Critics*? No, it simply emphasizes the enormity of the task involved in working with the vast corpus of material left by Christopher's father. I believe that it is clear that the manuscript juxtaposition of OM-213 and T-214 in the papers gave every editorial reason to believe that they were directly related to one another. When OM-222 was discovered, its relationship to T-214 (and, by association, to OM-213) was plainly obvious. Hence, I believe, the wording of the footnote that the meaning of OM-222 "is precisely the same" to that of the original poem. As more morphological material is made available, a clearer evaluation of the thesis of this column can be made. ☞

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