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Letters

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Letters



LETTERS



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Jorge Quiñonez **San Diego, CA**

Adam Christensen's artwork in *Mythlore* 59 was superb. Joe Abbott did a very thorough comparison of Tolkien's early and later concept of a Balrog in his article. However, I do have a comment or two to add to his discussion.

He used a tremendous amount of Old English in his analysis, but little Elvish. A closer look at the Elvish might have found a couple of interesting things. For example, when he states on p. 22 that "...[Gothmog] is one of *only two* Balrogs ever to be given a name..." [emphasis mine]; the other Balrog he mentions is "Lungorthin" (see *HME* 3:98), which according to Tom Loback in *Vinyar Tengwar* No. 6, p. 9, means "Heavy Horror" or "Heavy Mountain" in "Low Elvish." But Gothmog and Lungorthin are probably not the only two Balrogs mentioned in the corpus; in *The Lost Road*, p. 359, is the name of a third Balrog. "Gothrog = Dread Demon."

Steven Wissler **Ephrata, PA**

By professional training, I'm an advertising art director. I've had occasion to judge calligraphy and penmanship for various projects — sometimes purposely mimicking the style of someone else. So it was with interest I observed the handwriting specimens of the "Dark Tower" and Lewis fragments shown in the Spring 1989 issue of the *Canadian C.S. Lewis Journal*. I noticed:

1. The "Dark Tower" (DT) hand frequently uses a Roman style "s," even in the word "because." The others (O) use a cursive "s" except in the word "whose."

2. When DT end a word "y", the lower stroke is looped. No loop for O. Instead, a direct downstroke.

3. DT renders the word "of" as two separate letters; O attacks the letter group as one unit, rarely closing the letter "o."

4. The "n" and "m" of DT are often rounded for up and downstrokes as well as the connectives; O's connectives are almost always direct diagonals. There are few rounded shoulders, which DT has in abundance.

Both samples present a linear and cribbed appearance

in general. Nevertheless, these considerations are often due to factors external to the style of the writer, e.g., how many words must be fitted on the page, similar training, unskilled imitation, etc.

But in matters related directly to style (use of letter forms, ligatures, connectives, etc.) the samples show that DT and O are two different hands writing in two different ways, calligraphically speaking.

This suggests the same person did not write all the samples shown.

Unless undisputed Lewis manuscripts circa the "Dark Tower" can be produced showing DT style — especially prevalent use of a Roman "s" — that someone than Lewis did in fact write it is almost beyond question.

Peter H. Berube **St. Johnsbury, VT**

Thanks for another great issue! Let me just point out that LVIX does not equal 59, "unless wizards count differently from other people."

Two problems about Tolkien have long bothered me. Perhaps a fellow member with the philosophical background may be able to resolve my difficulties. Welsh and Finnish are about as far apart from each other as two languages can get. They do not even have a common ancestor, unless you believe in Nostralic. Since Tolkien used them as models, one would expect Sindarin and Quenya to be equally remote from one another. In their grammar and phonology this may be the case, for all I can tell. In their vocabulary, even a layman can see that they are as close to another as French is to Spanish. What is the explanation?

Even allowing for "the changefulness of mortals lands," I find it odd that language differentiation should occur at all among a race of immortals. We speak differently from our ancestors because our ancestors are no longer here. Random changes accumulate in the language as fashions change and slang slowly rises to respectability, but no one generation sees much change in its brief lifetime. If our ancestors were still living among us and we were in daily converse with them, we would all still be speaking the language of Adam. Who can imagine Chaucer writing as he did if the Beowulf poet were among his auditors?

I see three solutions. Perhaps I have put my finger on a fundamental inconsistency in Tolkien's plot, one that cannot be explained away. I am reluctant to believe this theory, though Tolkien himself lends it some color by skating very lightly over the issue.

Perhaps Tolkien is telling us something here about the nature of language: whatever force it is that drives languages, it is so powerful that it operates (albeit more slowly) even upon immortals. I would like to know of this mysterious force.

The third possibility is that Tolkien is telling us something here about the nature of elves: Unlike humans, elves regard language as artistic creations, consciously to be reshaped for aesthetic reasons. It is difficult to visualize how such an attitude would work itself out in practice. Does a rare genius compose a new language, as Tolkien did himself? Or is it a more gradual process — the occasional minstrel, stuck for a rhyme, petitions the Elvenking to promulgate a neologism? Were the famous eleven revels devoted as much to philology as to song and feast and dance?

Whoever has thought this thicket through, or who has personal knowledge of Tolkien's intentions, please enlighten me.

Turning to another subject, I am enclosing a list of source annotations to Eddison's *Ouroboros*. This merely transcribes my marginalia. If any other member is maintaining such a list, I would love to swap with him. Eddison abounds in unattributed quotations, "In his simplicity he evidently regarded such things as virtues or graces."

Source-hunting is notoriously the lowest form of criticism, but those who have no other expertise may perhaps be allowed to assist the professionals. Would that such an one were to give us an annotated *Ouroboros*!

Some source annotations to Eric Rucker
Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros*

Chapter 1 "... as one who fleeth... some fearful thing." Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, part vi: "Like one that on a lonesome road / doth walk in fear and dread / ... Because he knows a fearsome fiend / doth close behind him tread."

2 "Witchland from thy hand, O King!" Snorri Sturluson, *Helmskringla*, Saga of Olaf Trygvasson, chap. 108. "What was that that broke just now? [it was the bow of his chief defender] 'The kingdom of Norway from thy hand, O King!'"

2 "A true dream, sent through the gate of horn," *Odyssey*, XIX.

2 "Bare is back without brother behind." *Njal's Saga*, chap. 152.

3 "... stars opened like flowers in the illimitable fields of the night sky." Longfellow, *Evangeline*, part I, iii: "Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven / blossomed the lovely stars, ..."

7 "enterprises of such pitch and moment." *Hamlet*, act iii, scene 1

7 "birds of the air ... at the bottom of lakes and rivers." Dr. Johnson [somewhere]. I cannot lay my hand on the exact quote, but am confirmed in my recollection by my abridged O.E.D., s.v. "conglobulate."

9 Zeldornius' words before Salapanis: "I was ever a fighter; so, one fight more." I could swear I heard these words at a Presbyterian funeral, but afterwards the minister could not enlighten me. They are not in the Bible. Anybody recognize them?

10 The Lady of Ishnain Nemarts. The tale of waking the

sparrow hawk is from the *Travels* of 'Sir John Mandeville', Chap. 16.

11 The quarrel of Corund and Gro. There are no exact verbal parallels, but the whole scene reminds me forcibly of the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar*.

12 "Bhavinan ... down to an unknown sea." Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*, opening lines: "... where Alph the sacred river ran / through caverns measureless to man / down to a sunless sea."

12 "of wind and of fire all compact." *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act v, scene i.

12 "Now when it was April ... entering into Taurus." Chaucer, prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, opening lines.

12 Branchon Daha's parable of the sparrow-camel. Charles Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserts*, Vol. 2, chap. v. Sparrow-camel = ostrich.

14 Mivarr's crocodile is surely akin to the one that ate Captain Hook! James Barrie, *Peter Pan*.

19 "beware of Threnmir's Heugh!" *Julius Caesar*, act i, scene ii, "Beware the ideas of March."

26 "Long may the Witchland ladies ... come sailing home again." Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens.

27 "A man becometh hoarse and dumb ... if a wolf ... eye him." Dr. Browne, *Pseudodoxies Epidemics*, book II, chap. viii. Almost verbatim.

29 The three phantoms that tempted Juss. Malory, *Morte d'Arthur*, book XVI. The three temptations of Sir Bors.

30 "It is as great pity to see a woman weep as a goose to go barefoot." William Baldwin, *Beware the Cat* [1553]. Not seen; quoted from a review of a recent republication. New York Times, 5 Feb. 1989. I suspect a treasure trove here.

32 Prezmyra's last words, "I was given to Corund young." *Njal's Saga*, chap. 129. Same as Berghthors's last words at the Burtling.

32 "... among the mighty nation of the dead." Dr. Brown, *Hydriotaphia*, chap vi "... entered the famous Nations of the dead" (translating Homer).

32 "funeral bake-meats." *Hamlet*, act i, scene ii.

33 "... filled with a wild surmise." Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

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