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## Letters

David Bratman

Margaret Carter

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Paul Nolan Hyde

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## Letters



# LETTERS



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Glen GoodKnight, 742 South Garfield Avenue,  
Monterey Park, CA 91754. USA

**David Bratman**

**Menlo Park, CA**

I want to contribute to general recursiveness by commenting on a letter that appeared in [Mythlore 60].

Peter H. Berube asks whence the differences between Quenya and Sindarin if elves are immortal. I am not a philologist and cannot elucidate his other questions (on the relationship between the Elven languages and the mutually unrelated Finnish and Welsh), but on the subject of linguistic change I can assure him that Tolkien was not skating over a fundamental inconsistency. Mr. Berube lacks faith in Tolkien's wisdom. The Professor has often been accused of such charges, but he has usually been demonstrated to have been wiser than his critics.

Linguistic change has been known to occur among mortal humans to a measurable degree during the mere 50 years or so of the normal adult lifespan. You speak differently at 20 and at 70. How much more likely, then, that elves, especially ones living under the entirely different conditions of Middle-earth and Valinor, should develop different speech patterns over a much longer life-span. It is not necessarily to invoke a "mysterious force" to explain this to the philologically-minded, and more than it is necessary to invoke one to explain evolution to the biologically-minded. Or the ways of God to the religiously-minded, if you prefer.

Also, it is probable that the elves were consciously involved in the process of linguistic change, even as many of us invent new words, new speech patterns, and even new language, for utility or for the love of it. Elves considered language to be an art form, even as their sub-creator did.

**Margaret Carter**

**Annapolis, MD**

While I haven't yet finished reading *Mythlore*, Spring 1990, what I have read is a great pleasure. The journal keeps going from strength to strength. It's always delightful to see a new article by Gwyneth Hood. Another favorite for me is Dorothy Lane's article on *That Hideous Strength*. Doyle's essay on Charles Williams, an author who has generally left me cool (except for some passages in *All Hallows Eve*), is so lucid that it makes me want to give the novel another chance.

I especially enjoyed the essay on the anniversary of *Snow White*. In answer to the question of where CSL comments on the movie, its in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, p. 58 of the Oxford U.P. paperback. He talks about the archetypal nature of traditional mythology and folklore figures, and how altering them watoningly is not so much inartistic as "ungrammatical."

How I wish I could attend this year's Mythopoeic Conference, as the Letter column mistakenly reported. We will be moving to San Diego in early 1991, so I hope to see everybody at the Conference that year.

*(I apologize for not having the material before my eyes when typing that parenthetical closing comment, thus causing the error. It will be good to see you again when you do arrive. —GG)*

**J.E.C. Kelson**

**Portmanteaux, WI**

I read with some interest the passing commentary of Peter H. Berube (*Mythlore* 60) regarding the usage of "LVIX" as the whole number marker for *Mythlore* 59. According to L.d.V Malaise, an extraordinary scholar in his own right, the number 59 has been a great curiosity over the centuries beginning with the Nostrales and affecting almost every aspect of human endeavor ever since. The ancient Romans traditions concerning the invention of Roman numerals date back to before the founding of Rome during the second millennium B.C. when the Villanova branch of the Indo-Europeans (a surly assortment of barbarians with a penchant for the cremation of the quick and the dead) spread over the Latin plain and occupied the valleys from Antium on the sea to the Palatine hills on the Tiber River, incinerating almost everything in their respective paths. About this same time, the Sabines (a sickly sort who were perennially running a fever, usually at the hands of the Villanovans) immigrated from the central mountains into the Alban hills and pressed eventually into Veii and Falerii north of the Tiber. Needless to say, the immediate juxtaposition of two such symbiotic cultures would have brought about the complete demise of one of them had it not been for the appearance of one Javich Locdeim Ruich, the last native speaker of Nostralic.

The great deficiency that caused the Sabines to fall continually at the hands of the Villanovans was that they could not count past "one." Without going into the rather obtuse and convoluted history that caused that particular philological aberration, let it be said that a watchman reporting that there was "one" soldier approaching a Sabine village when indeed there were 750,000 Villanovans in full battle gear, was not particularly informative. Being the egalitarian altruist that Javich Locdeim Ruich was, he chose to side with the Sabines and provide

them with an intellectual weapon which proved devastating; he taught them to count (undoubtedly a Nostralic accomplishment of enormous proportions which apparently back-fired on its instigators, inasmuch as the Nostralic populace had been reduced sufficiently so that even the most doltish of the Sabines could enumerate him). Ruich's instruction proved invaluable so that the Sabines overcame their native handicap and succeeded in eliminating their competitors from viable competition for nearly seven centuries. Typical tactics with the new weapon generally followed this pattern: during any impending skirmish, the watchman would call out at the top of his voice (with no attempt at truthfulness) the tally of the opposing brigades, such as "Sabines 100, Villanova 87," at which the Villanovans would hurry home in disgrace, totally disheartened. As a result the Villanovans have the second longest losing streak in history (Northwestern University presently holds the record in five sports).

Of course, all of this was verbal, the Sabines and the Villanovans having not quite mastered the art of calligraphy. When in the process of time, the Romans expanded their empire and invented writing to keep in touch (that is, Roman writing, the art having been exemplified by many cultures beforehand, including the Egyptians who were not content with one form of writing, but were the purveyors of three — thus demonstrating their connection with the Nostralites). Wishing to honor their great benefactor, Javich Locdeim Ruich, the Sabinean Romans invented a numbering system which utilized the consonants of his name: J, V, CH, L, C, D, and M. The Sabines, not only a brick shoy of a full alphabet, needed to substitute their vowel character "I" for the Nostralic "J," and also borrowed the Greek letter "chi" for the representation for the marker for "ten."

Although the above does not explain the origin of the Roman numeral system and the linguo-cultural reasons why it has endured in the cultural subconscious of the remnants of the Roman Empire when more obvious and efficient systems have come into existence, it still does not reveal the odd Roman numeral form that appeared on the cover of *Mythlore* 59. The truth of the matter is that Javich Locdeim Ruich's last name is a patronymic, which in his case referred to the fact that he was Javich Locdeim the Fifty-ninth (demonstrating once again the inventive, too, have psychological hang-ups which invariably become excessive). Again, without going into the tortuous linguistic apparatus that produced the linguistic changes, suffice it to say that the Sabino-Nostralic compromise for "R" resolved itself into non-reflexive "L"; the Nostralic marker for the high-back vowel "U," was converted into the native Romano-Etruscan "V"; and the digraph "CH" was (as mentioned above) reduced to the Greek "X." Thus, what had been "Ruich" in Nostralic parlance, became "LVIX" in Roman characters, a visual representation of the number "59." While the usage of "LVIX" on *Mythlore* 59 could conceivably be classified as a fortuitous typographical error, a simple accident brought about by bleared eyes and

not enough good nights. I would bring to the skeptic's attention the fact that *Mythlore* 59 was posted on the exact day of the anniversary of Javich Locdeim Ruich's birth. Perhaps the editorial staff is brighter than it seems.

## Paul Nolan Hyde

## Simi Valley, CA

Peter Brube raises an interesting question regarding the relationship between Sindarin and Quenya and the influence of Welsh and Finnish on their development. I am certain there are many of our readers who are perfectly willing to pick up the gauntlet, but there may not be very many who are willing to run it. Being somewhat corridor-torn and permanently insensate, I feel that I could not possibly do myself any personal injury by proffering a response

Peter's question, however, is based on two mistaken assumptions: first, that Sindarin should somehow be equated with Welsh, and similarly that Quenya is in some fashion directly related to Finnish; the second assumption is that the Secondary World relationship between Quenya and Sindarin ought to be an exact reflection of the Primary World relationship between Welsh and Finnish. Tolkien's own comments on the relationship ought to clarify the issue satisfactorily.

Two of the Elvish tongues appear in this book (*The Lord of the Rings*). They have some sort of existence, since I have composed them in some completeness, as well as their history and account of their relationship. They are intended (a) to be definitely of a European kind in style and structure (not in detail); and (b) to be specifically pleasant. The former is not difficult to achieve; but the latter is more difficult, since individuals' personal predilections, especially in the phonetic structure of languages, varies widely, even when modified by the imposed languages (including their so-called 'native' tongue).

I have therefore pleased myself. The archaic language of lore is meant to be a kind of 'Elven-latin', and by transcribing it into a spelling closely resembling that of Latin (except that y is only used as a consonant as y in E. yes) the similarity to Latin has been increased oddly. Actually it might be said to be composed on a Latin basis with two other (main) ingredients that happen to give me 'phonoaesthetic' pleasure: Finnish and Greek. It is however less consonantal than any of the three. This language is High-elven or in its own term *Quenya* (Elvish).

The living language of the Western Elves (*Sindarin* or Grey-elven) is the one usually met, especially in names. This is derived from an origin common to it and Quenya; but the changes have been deliberately devised to give it a linguistic character very like (though not identical with British-Welsh: because that character is one that I find, in some linguistic moods, very attractive; and because it seems to fit the rather 'Celtic' type of legends and stories told of its speakers. (*Letters*, pp. 175-76.)

This quote, together with many more in the *Letters* of J.R.R. Tolkien, give us to understand that the relationship between the Primary World languages and the languages of Middle-earth has more to do with the "phonoaesthetic" (continued on page 65)

divided into (1) "ordinary" plants, identifiable as present-day European flora, associated with Hobbits, Bree-landers, and other "ordinary" folk, (2) plants of Númenórean, Erressëan, or Valinórean origin, with no present day variety, associated with the Elves and higher Men of Gondor and Rohan, and (3) *athelas* alone, associated with Aragorn.

Sculp is concerned in part with errors in plant names in the Dutch translations of *The Lord of the Rings* by Schuchart.

With a summary in German. [WGH]

**Spina, Giorgio.** "The Inklings in Italy." *Inklings-Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* 7 (1989): 83-91. [Lewis 83-86; Tolkien 83, 86-88; Williams 85-86]

Overview of works by C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, and George MacDonald, and of works about these authors, published in Italian.

With a summary in German. [WGH]

**Tolkien, J.R.R.** *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1990. vi + 463 pp. First paperback edition of the selected letters, photographically reprinted (reduced) from the 1981 hardcover edition. [WGH]

**Yates, Jessica.** "J.R.R. Tolkien." *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. Ed. Tracy Chevalier. 3rd ed. Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1989. 965-68.

Revised version of a biographical and critical essay and bibliography first published in 1978. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are summarized, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *Smith of Wootton Major*, *The Father Christmas Letters*, *Mr. Bliss*, and *The History of Middle-earth* noted, Tolkien's influence on adult fantasy authors briefly discussed. The Bibliography includes Tolkien's fiction and many of his scholarly works. [WGH]

**Zgorzelski, Andrzej.** "The Lyrical in J.R.R. Tolkien's Trilogy." *Inklings-Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* 4 (1986): 87-106.

The prose of *The Lord of the Rings* is often poetic. Tolkien used "lyrical implication" to give his text expression beyond its meaning on the surface. Zgorzelski finds parallels to the later parts of *The Lord of the Rings* (though not sources) in "The Waste Land" and "Marina" by T.S. Eliot. Tolkien's lyrical expression "is rooted in imagist and symbolist poetic choices and techniques" (p. 105).

With a summary in German. [WGH]

## Editorial Note

The traditional use of seasonal colors in the coverstock of *Mythlore* has changed to a permanent celestial blue.

This will better reproduce and display the very fine artwork we offer on the covers. — GG

## LETTERS,

(continued from page 33)

predilections of J.R.R. Tolkien than with the real world development of Welsh and Finnish. He chose and embodied the sounds (and in some cases, the grammatical structure) of Finnish and Welsh in his own created languages, and then provided a Secondary World rationale as to why they were related. He did not use any real world linguistic scheme to relate his Middle-earth languages, except where his rationale involved general philological rules.

With regard to the phonological and grammatical divergence between Quenya and Sindarin within Tolkien's creation, I can only say that the separation between the two dialects follow consistent linguistic patterns. A perusal of the extant volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* reveals that Sindarin is the Elven language of the Great Lands, Middle-earth as we say; Quenya is preserved in Westemesse, Tol Eressea and environs. The vast amounts of time and great distances separating the two languages, together with the differing cultural developments, give credence to Tolkien's historical development. The Elves are immortal, yes, but they are not immutable. Considering the language changes in England during the 300 year period following the Norman Conquest in 1066, we ought to be awestruck that there is such a residual similarity between Quenya and Sindarin at all after thousands of years of divergence. That in and of itself is illustrative of the basic difference between Men and Elves as far as their respective longevities are concerned, in Tolkien's cosmology.

There is no question that language to the Elves was an art. In fact, Tolkien conceives the Elves as a racial personification of Art (see *Letters*, pp. 176, 236). I postulated years ago in *Mythlore* that one of the primary differences between Quenya and Sindarin was that the former was significantly more polysemous than the latter. Native Quenya speakers enjoyed an ease in Westemesse that is difficult for us to comprehend; it was almost Millennial. The Grey-elves, however, were in a constant battle for survival (by comparison) against the onslaughts of Morgo and his minions; there wasn't a great deal of time (again, by comparison) for musing on the intricacies of linguistic innuendo. I think that is reflected in the languages, in conception and in development. ♦

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