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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Abstract

A somewhat playful look at Tolkien's invented languages, deducing some of the rules for evolution from Proto-Eldarian to Quenya then Sindarin and offering possible derivations for a number of hobbit words and names. Donahue's conclusion is that Tolkien's inventive sense was "puckish" and sprang from "a penchant for drollery." Followed by Comments by Paul Nolan Hyde rebutting a number of Donahue's points, a Reply by Donahue, and a Rejoinder by Hyde.

### Additional Keywords

Hyde, Paul Nolan; Linguistics; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Hobbits—Names—Etymology; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Languages

# A Linguist Looks at Tolkien's Elvish

Thomas S. Donahue

[Editor's note: presented here are a linguistic article followed by comments by Mythlore's Philology Editor; these are followed by a reply by the writer of the article, and a rejoinder by the Philology Editor. In order to clarify the points made in the initial comments, the numbers of the points made are indicated in the margin of the article. Mythlore hopes by presenting this linguistic controversy the readers will be better informed of the several issues and approaches presented. --G. G.]

Once upon a time ... linguists had a particular mission as members of English literature departments. We were asked to tell what was so good about Beowulf, and how deeply does one have to get into it? We were asked to expand upon such outrageous propositions as The Language of Chaucer is Easier to Understand than that of Shakespeare. We were asked to tell why the Revealed Truth about Standard English is visible only to the Few, while the Many are kept in benighted ignorance. Of late, people either are tired of hearing our answers about dialects and about how intellectually rigorous non-standard English is, or they are unwilling to ask us any more questions. Whatever the case, it is a certain sign of the times that literature specialists now prefer to hear about: Elvish.

In Tolkien's scheme of things, elves are the firstborn of all human-like creatures on Earth; they are beautiful and immortal, and as time passes they become quite world-weary, and they are plagued by a cold melancholy. Human beings, the second-born, are venal and suggestible, but together with their curiosity and credulousness, they have the gift of Mortality. Hobbits, who come on the scene later, are a small people who seem to have the gift of staying eternally simple.

1 Before we begin, let me say quite cautiously that it is possible to imperil the basic charm of a work of fantasy by looking at any part of it too severely and intently, and to damage the appeal of such literature by approaching it with gross seriousness.

So, since it really won't hurt anybody, let's do just that.

A hard look at Tolkien's mythic matter in The Silmarillion and The Lord of the Rings reveals his penchant for playing tricks and making jokes with etymology and the principles of word-formation. We are given to understand that Quenya, the proto-language of all those spoken in Middle-earth and the earliest source of Westron, the common language from which Tolkien "translated" his tales, arose first when the elves started to speak and had the collective name of Quendi. Tolkien's pleasantry in this word may revolve

around the fact that it may share and IE root form (\*gwen) that refers not to speech or speaking, but to women (a mild to saucy sexist joke?); with a little strain, one can also see that its ending is an anagram of the Middle English present participle. The early word for "men" is Atani--which appears to be the same word as Adam, but with devoicing, a nasal substitution, and an "i" plural. Tolkien likes to have a bit of fun making up familiar-sounding words through substituting sounds from within the same sound class, or from adjacent points of articulation--much as if we were to have in mind the invitation "Here! You wanna have a good time? Have a smoke!" but to give it instead the articulation, "Yir! Hanna yap a goof dime? Yafa fmoke!"<sup>1</sup>

As the time passes in the first age, the elves are asked to migrate across Middle-earth to the land of the Gods so that their creator and his assistants can have a good look at them. Along the way one group of elves is detained while its leader has a long romantic dalliance, with the result that this group comes in time to speak a modified language called Sindarin. Although Tolkien's announced theory of language change in The Lord of the Rings is that in time words tend to get "worn down" (see The Return of the King, p. 520), the actual complexity of the relationships between Proto-Eldarin and Quenya and Sindarin shows that he spent a lot of time and effort in working out his imaginary languages. In an appendix to The Silmarillion, Christopher Tolkien has supplied a substantial collection from the Elvish vocabulary, and I list the following as examples; the suggested derivational rules are my own.

(3) Proto-Eldarin (PE) kal ("shine") becomes 3 alkar ("glory") in Quenya and aglar ("glory") in Sindarin.

	Quenya	P.E. kal	Sindarin
1.	Insert "al" prefix: alkal		1. Insert "al" prefix: alkal
2.	Final "l" becomes "r": alkar		2. Metathesize "l" and "k": aklal
			3. "k" voices to "g": aglal
			4. Final "l" becomes "r"; aglar

(4a) PE ndu ("down") becomes andunë ("west") in Quenya and annun ("west") in Sindarin.

	Quenya	P.E. ndu	Sindarin
1.	Initial "n" drops: du		1. "d" drops: nu
2.	Insert "an" prefix: andu		2. Insert "an" prefix: annu

3. Insert "ne" suffix: andune

3. Insert "ne" suffix: annune  
4. Final "e" drops: annun

(4b) PE ndor ("dry land") becomes dor ("land") in Quenya and ennor ("middle earth") in Sindarin.

P.E. ndor

Quenya

Sindarin

1. Initial "n" drops: dor

1. "d" drops: nor  
2. Insert "en" prefix: ennor

Notice in (4a) that we have a kind of consonant cluster reduction such that the first member of the cluster is retained in Sindarin, while the second member of the cluster is retained in Quenya. But contrast examples (5) and (6), where the first member of the cluster goes to Quenya, and the second to Sindarin.

(5) PE mbando ("prison") becomes mandos ("prison") in Quenya and bando ("prison") in Sindarin.

P.E. mbando

Quenya

Sindarin

1. Delete "b": mando  
2. Add "s" suffix: mandos

1. Delete "m": bando

(6) PE ngol ("lore") becomes nolë in Quenya and gûl ("sorcery") in Sindarin.

P.E. ngol/ŋgol/

Quenya

Sindarin

1. "g" drops, leaving the velar /ŋ/: /ŋol/  
2. The velar /ŋ/ becomes the alveolar /n/: nol  
3. Add the "e" suffix: nole

1. The alveolar /n/ drops: gol  
2. "o" changes to "u" gûl

We learn in Tolkien's biography that making up languages and imaginary derivations was his favorite hobby before his fifteenth year.<sup>2</sup> In much of this, however, there emerges a spirit of playfulness. Consider the following Elvish words (for which Tolkien apparently suggests no Proto-forms), and notice just how sophisticated his wordplay really is:

4 (7) Contrast Quenya formen with Sindarin forn (both mean "north"): one would derive the Sindarin forms from the Quenya version by resorting to the rules for the levelling of inflections in late Old English.

5 (8) Notice the following rule sequences for following a reconstructed PE form \*alta ("tree") into alda ("tree") in Quenya and galadh ("tree") in Sindarin.

Quenya

Sindarin

1. "t" voices to "d": alda

1. "t" becomes the voiceless continuant "th": altha  
2. Metathesize the final sounds: alath  
3. Voice the final consonant: aladh  
4. Insert initial "g": galadh

The informed and tickled observer will see that rules one and three in the Sindarin derivation exemplify Grimm's and Verner's laws, respectively. A similar sequence may be noticed in Quena noldo ("the wise") and Sindarin golodh ("the wise"). Further, with the Quenya aze ("sunlight"), we see a reprise of that portion of Verner's law which describes the derivation of "was" as opposed to "were" in Modern English (this is of course an in-joke allusion, and no strict derivation at all). This is but the briefest possible sample from a vast vocabulary in the Elvish languages; despite, or in addition to, the prevailing sense of fun, we must acknowledge that the scale and the consistency of this creation command our respect.

Some critics of Tolkien's work, refusing to believe that this vocabulary could be made up out of sheer, impulsive, and high-spirited drollery, have sought Welsh or Finnish sources for the Elvish words; one wrote confidently that indeed the Tolkien Society of America vouches for "many direct resemblances to Welsh"<sup>3</sup>. The critic had quite apparently not spent any time with reference sources, so I did that very thing--with the following results. A few words which occur both in Quenya ("Q") and Welsh ("W") (or Sindarin, given as "S") are glossed in items 9-14; similarities between Quenya and Finnish ("F") are listed in 15-19:

	Q	W
(9)	<u>alcar</u> "glory"	"reindeer"
(10)	<u>amhar</u> "world"	"greensward"
(11)	<u>anar</u> "sun"	"uncultivated"
(12)	<u>certa</u> "rune"	"cart"
(13)	<u>cor</u> "circle"	"dwarf"
	S	W
(14)	<u>ang</u> "iron"	"smoke"
	Q	F
(15)	<u>alcar</u> "glory"	<u>ankar</u> "strict"
(16)	<u>Eru</u> "God"	<u>ero</u> "separation"
(17)	<u>isil</u> "moon"	<u>isilta</u> "from the fathers"
(18)	<u>lambe</u> "tongue"	<u>lama</u> "to be dull"
(19)	<u>rama</u> "wrong"	<u>remu</u> "noise"

We see, of course, that some of the words are 6 Welsh or near-Finnish; they just have wholly dissimilar and unrelated meanings in Elvish. (Note: for those who are itching to ask, I must say that none of the words in an extensive sample is Irish at all.) Plainly, what we see here is the practical joking side of

Tolkien's scholarly humor: he just knew that someday someone would spend a real nerd of an afternoon with Celtic and Finnish dictionaries, proving nothing.

Other clues as to what is going on in Elvish surface when we look at Tolkien's other practices in word-formation elsewhere in The Lord of the Rings. As we start looking at the form of some of his names, it will do well to mind his statement, "To me a name comes first and the story follows" (see the Letters, p. 219).<sup>4</sup>

(20) Hobbit: Tolkien offers the etymology that hobbit comes from hol bytla (The Return of the King, p. 520); this indicates that hobbits are "hole-builders." But consider:  
7 how do you build a hole?

(21) Bilbo: Why does the name of this free and footloose adventurer also refer to fetters on a slave ship?

(22) Gorbudac Brandybuck: It seems that this worthy hobbit (see The Fellowship of the Ring, p. 45) has the same first name as the title of the first blank verse drama in the English language.

(23) Sackville-Baggins: This small-minded and petty hobbit family shares the first portion of their hyphenated name with a certain personage in the Bloomsbury group!

10 (24) Worrying: At times Tolkien's wordplay is guileless and innocent, as he provided a portmanteau word from "fidget" and "worrying" (see The Fellowship of the Ring, p. 139).

11 (25) Boffins, (Sackville)-Baggins, Bag End, Gollum, Smaug: With these names, however, we may be looking at a series of jests (some not too subtle) about sex and female genitalia. "Boff" is a modern British English slang term for having intercourse; and "Baggins" and "Bag End" may have an obvious anatomical reference. "Gollum," however, has a set of diffuse associations ranging around the use of "cul" (from the Latin *culus*, "the rump, backside," as identified by Calvert Watkins under the IE root \*skeu in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (p. 1540)). The impolite meaning of cul in Modern French may be generally known; and if we move back with Tolkien to an age of Early Indeterminate English Etymology (perhaps, shall we say, Anglo-Norman), we can see "gollum" as deriving from *cul-ham*, or "hole-home." Enough said. With the dragon Smaug, Tolkien himself has admitted a try at a "low philological jest": *smaug* comes from "smugaar," which in low German means to "squeeze through a hole" (Carpenter, p. 178). If anyone really wants to indulge some philology on this word, he will see that it comes from an Indo-European root meug that is present in such Modern English usage as *smug*, *muck*, *nuggy*, *mucus*, and *shmuck*.

At all odds, to pursue the various paths in etymologizing among Tolkien's invented languages is very frustrating; it is as if

his sport with literary critics consisted of producing linguistic data which exist in free variation with any theory of literary criticism. For a critic to chase these word forms back and forth through the Lord of the Rings is like wading waist deep in a wet and soggy marsh. In fact there is such a marsh in the story, a bog certain to mire hobbits down waist-deep. The name of the marsh is: Wetwang. (Remember your 50's slang?)

To return, then, to Elvish. What are we to understand of this vocabulary having pre-<sup>12</sup> dominating sounds which are lateral, bilabial, alveolar, and labiodental? How are we to explain the effect of these languages which spring from the forehead of a philological Zeus? We know we needn't try for too long a time to find real sources for them, for any man who believes as Tolkien did that "cellar door" is the most beautiful phrase in the English language isn't stroking with all his oars in the water.<sup>5</sup> Instead, his sought-after effect here is to haunt us with the meanings that are attached to familiar sounds: the phonemic inventory of Elvish also turns up in English words and phrases like "a euphonius, lilting birdlike melody" and "a luminous, mellifluous warble." By playing upon suggested sounds and their associated meanings, Tolkien shows his true authorial tone behind the construction of the Elvish languages: an attitude that is droll, arch, wry, Puckish ... and in fact the precise word is elfin.

#### AN APPENDIX OF WORDS DISCUSSED

1. Quendi 2. Atani 3. kal/ alkar / aglar  
4a. ndu / andune / annun 4b. ndor / dor / ennor  
5. mbando / mandos / bando 6. ngol / nole / gul  
7. formen / forn 8. alta / alda / galadh  
9. alcar 10. amhar 11. anar  
12. certa 13. cor 14. ang 15. alcar / ankar  
16. eru / ero 17. isil / isilta 18. lambe / lama  
19. rama / remu 20. hobbit  
21. Bilbo 22. Gorbudac / Gorboduc 23. Sackville-Baggins  
24. worrying 25. Boffins, Sackville-Baggins, Bag End, Gollum, Smaug

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>At times, however, the fun is more sophisticated. The singular form of Atani is Edain. Here we may see a singular form derived from a plural by means of the prehistoric old English umlaut--with, indeed, the reflex of that umlaut having proceeded through the front series in the English Great Vowel Shift!

<sup>2</sup>See Carpenter, p. 35; Tolkien was certainly a philological prodigy.

<sup>3</sup>See the discussion in Carter 1969, pp. 182-183.

<sup>4</sup>It is important for us to remember that Tolkien described his processes of inspiration as something that "grows like a seed in the dark out of the leaf-mould of the mind" (!) (Carpenter, p. 125), and that he believed "my mould is evidently made largely of linguistic matters" (Ibid). Tolkien's biographer takes the unfortunate position that "one learns little by raking through a compost

heap to see what plants went into it" (Carpenter, p. 178). Incidentally, Carpenter's critical rigor may be seen to be a bit suspect, particularly in passages like the following about Mr. and Mrs. Tolkien in an evening at home:

In the evenings she played the piano and he recited his poetry or made sketches of her. At this time she conceived a child. (p. 95)

The fact is that most reputable critics (compare T. A. Shippey and D. Parker) are very interested in the composition of the "leaf mould" in Tolkien's "compost." The most responsible critical approach emphasizes that the diversity of allusion in Tolkien's myth-making and language-building enriches the meaning of his work (Parker claims that it deepens, expands, and "furnishes a juncture" in the meaning (p. 606)). There are opposing extremes of trouble with such an approach, however. In the first case, there is a problem with competing referential contexts, so that people can be wholly ignorant of, or wrong about, the subject matter of Tolkien's allusions (one is reminded of the story of the edition of Variety who upon running across the name Mona Lisa, asked "Who's that? Some stripper?" (told by Frank Rose in Esquire, May 1981, p. 62)). At the other extreme, we see that even on the part of the cognoscenti, any and all among varying etymological analyses are acceptable. Thus the name of the wizard Saruman is understood to mean "deceitful man" (by Douglas Parker (p. 605) who derives it from the East Saxon dialect of Old English) or "cunning man" (by T. A. Shippey, who derives it from the West Saxon dialect of Old English (p. 300)). I feel free to suggest that Tolkien intended to pun on the OE "sarig," giving us to understand the character is a "sorrowful man." Is there unity in this diversity? Should we at all try for a unity? In the spirit that etymological enrichment is all to the good, and with all due acknowledgment to the high seriousness of tone in Tolkien's "Guide to the Names in The Lord of the Rings" (see Lobdell 1975, pp. 153-201), I offer the following suggestions (in the main text of the paper.)

<sup>5</sup>See Carpenter, p. 56, for a strange discussion of this issue.

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#### Comments by Paul Nolan Hyde

First, a few general remarks and then some detail on the philological elements. I found the paper witty, but somewhat irreverent, almost mockingly so in some places. I feel that Mr. Donahue implies that anyone who takes JRRT's linguistics seriously is a little daft because, as he insinuates, Tolkien was more interested in playing games (shades of Edmund Wilson and R. J. Reilly), rather than creating a world linguistically. I realize that I am on the receiving end of that barb and that my reaction is precisely that, a reaction, but I rather suspect that Mr. Donahue's irreverence runs deeper than just linguistics.

My second subjective response has to do with his emphasis on phallicism. I might be justly accused of bruised prudery, but I (like Tolkien) find psychological criticism (even when veiled in linguistic terminology) somewhat boorish. This particular section of Donahue's paper made me think of Randel Helms' "The Hobbit as Swain" in his Tolkien's World. Helms had his tongue in his cheek; Mr. Donahue does not.

The third item has to do with basic literary approach (to which everyone is entitled). I am not one who sides regularly with New Critics and Existentialists, but I find that by viewing a work primarily as a self-contained creation, a critic receives more revelation regarding the author's intent and feelings for his work than by touring all of the possible literary and linguistic fjords that the author may or may not have explored during his lifetime prior to the creative act. Not only is the latter more arduous, but is infinitely easier to go awry.

Point 1: Frankly, I don't know what Donahue is trying to say here in this para-



graph or in the following sentence, unless he is poking fun at the second paragraph of Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories".

Point 2: In a less lugubrious mood, I might entertain the 'quen' and 'atani' folk etymologies, but I think that JRR would roll his eyes. The bit about the "anagram of the Middle English present participle" eludes me. There are basically two forms of the present participle in Middle English (if Fernand Mosse does not lead me wrong). The first: '-and(e)' in the North and Midlands, '-ende' in the Midlands, and '-inde' in the South. The second: 'ing(e)' in the South. I don't understand how one can even "strain" to get '-di' anagrammatically from the Middle English.

Point 3: Although much of the material here follows, the 'al' prefix is not a development from 'kal', but a separate morpheme meaning "brilliance" so that while 'kal' means "shine", 'alkar' means "shine brilliantly". It is also interesting to note that final 'l' does not always change to 'r' (ngol--gul; ndil--dil; ril; tal; thol; til; etc.). There may be other language operations going on here rather than simple phonetic change. This is true of Donahue's (4a), (4b), (5), and (6). Glibly stating that language changes are accomplished by adding and subtracting prefixes and suffixes is not only simplistic, but rather odd in light of the fact that Tolkien's languages are in the process of "wearing down" in terms of their elemental forms. I prefer Jim Allen, Cris Gilson, and Bill Weldon; I sense in their writings real linguists at work.

Point 4: Donahue assumes that '-en' in 'formen' is an inflection of some kind. Actually 'formen' is a compound of 'for-' meaning "right hand" (which, of course, when one faces the West (as Elves are wont to do), is on the north side) and '-men' meaning "region" or "direction". The actual process bringing about the formation of 'forn' is a contraction 'for(me)n' (which explains the 'n' instead of the 'm' that would result under OE inflection leveling rules). This kind of contraction is similar to the sliding together of the OE elements 'hlaef-weard' (loaf-guardian) into "lord."

Point 5: I think that if Mr. Donahue would spend some time with the consonantal shift differences between Latin and Welsh (Letters, p. 219n), he would arrive at a more propitious conclusion than the one that proffered itself at first blush. The 'aze(Q)''-are'(S) argument falls flat when one discovers that there is no 'z' sound in Welsh (and thus none in Sindarin) which has absolutely nothing to do with Verner's Law.

Point 6: I doubt that JRR really planned the practical joke, but I am sure that he would have been amused at Mr. Donahue's "real nerd of an afternoon". Tolkien responded to sound like most of us respond to music or art or fine wine. It was his "linguistic aesthetic" that caused him to borrow from the languages with which he was familiar. But what he did with those phonetic

elements was governed by his genius for linguistic structure and not by a warped penchant for drollery. It is comparable to what he does with the Old Norse runes or "Hey, Diddle, Diddle" in LR. These are not decoupages, but minute analyses and re-creations.

Point 7: Anyone who has read the first three pages of The Hobbit knows how to "build a hole". Rabbits, moles, gophers, and weasels "dig holes", but Hobbits build them.

Point 8: Donahue makes a good point here, but the etymology traces the word to "Bilbao" referring both to the shackles and to the swords which were made in Spain. In fact, the OED lists the "sword" entry for "Bilbo" as the primary one. I did a little study on the names in the Shire and discovered that (as Tolkien states clearly enough for anyone to understand without my study) that the names in East Farthing are Celtic, those of South Farthing are Frankish and Gothic, those of North Farthing are Old and Middle English, and those of Hobbiton--Spanish. What does this all mean? I don't know, except that Tolkien had a great love for Spanish, perhaps a love central to his early life (see the Biography).

Point 9: Good shot, but Gorbodoc has more to do with Celtic than English blank verse drama.

Point 10: "worrying" is an honest-to-goodness English word, dating to the early 19th century (see "worry" in the Oxford English Dictionary).

Point 11: I have already vented my spleen regarding this section. I think there is a distinct difference between a "low philological jest" and a coarse one. Apparently Mr. Donahue has difficulty discerning between them. Being a clever sort, I have a maxim for the occasion; to wit, "A thief thinks all men steal".

Point 12: Believe it or not, that is precisely the subject of Chapter VI of my dissertation. Hopefully (someday) it will appear in print and lay to rest these ludicrous definitions of "elfin".

Point 13: Donahue is comparing apples and oranges here; 'atani' is Quenya, 'edain' is Sindarin. The plural of 'edain' is 'adan' in Sindarin. Whatever Tolkien's reason for having internal vowel inflexions for Sindarin plurals (Sanskrit has them), no historical linguist (and Tolkien was a good one) in his right mind would ever say that one declined form of a word was phonetically changed by umlaut because of the phonetic arrangement of another declension. The reason that Donahue wants to hang on to 'atani' is apparently because that form gives him the final high-front vowel that could cause his asserted umlaut. What is wrong here is that 'edain' would then have to be the Sindarin plural and not the singular. Tolkien does not mock the rules of language change which are true, he only mocks balderdash.

Point 14: The innuendo here says more about our critic than our author.

Point 15: Actually Donahue has slipped a couple of gears here. When he talks about Parker and Shippey, it is quite obvious that he has not read the articles very closely. Shippey confines himself mainly to the Old English for source studies--a good plan. What Shippey really concludes is that 'Saruman' is Anglican dialect as opposed to West Saxon (see note 27 on page 300 in *Salu*). This makes sense since JRRT was a Midlander.

Point 16: Donahue has felt free to say everything else absurd that has come to his mind, why stop now? Donahue has certainly pegged himself appropriately as a foil for "high seriousness".

I guess you have gathered by now that I have agreed with Mr. Donahue on two of the three accolades that he heaps upon the article: it is amusing (low humoresque) and provocative, but it is not particularly informative. As to linguistic analysis, I would say that Mr. Donahue has amused himself for a while by taking an extremely expensive timepiece apart, has clapped the remains in a gilded box, and has sent it off for us to admire. Frankly, I think not.

## Reply

Before I respond briefly to certain pertinent points raised by Mr. Hyde, I would like to restate two issues emphasized in my essay. First, although this article expresses views which are supposed to inform and amuse people like me (I'm that rare type, the Jovial Academic), there is an important concept here which must be entertained seriously: to have a "penchant for drollery" is not, as Mr. Hyde states it, to be "warped". Even in sport a gifted and well-trained mind like Tolkien's creates prodigies, for, as the essay shows, when Tolkien made up words and philological relationships his mind naturally worked on a level of complexity that is exemplified by the constructive and creative use of Grimm's and Verner's Laws. As for the second issue, I must stress that there is no way of proving the Tolkien had real languages and real philological relationships specifically in mind when he made up the Elvish languages; the evidence points to a contrary conclusion (I suppose quite contrary, in my case). Let us now proceed to a discussion of Mr. Hyde's more salient objections.

In his point two, Mr. Hyde persists in his belief that Elvish may derive from some real historical source. For an anagram of the Middle English participle, '-ind(e)', I suggest the reader look at the last four sounds of Quendi. Remember that this is a word in a made-up language, and it doesn't have to have an Indo-European grammar or syllable structure. In point three, Mr. Hyde and I are at serious procedural odds. I assure the reader that there is nothing "simplistic" about the sound changes described in the moves from Proto-Eldarin to Quenya and Sindarin. Instead, real linguists find the

concept of "wearing down" itself simplistic, or mystical and undemonstrable, or all three. Linguists work with logical explanations, actual data, and systematic rules of the sort you see in the article. Incidentally, I am delighted by Mr. Hyde's implications that real linguists work on fantasy languages.

In point four, we must remember that the emphasis here is that what was real was Tolkien's mind, not Elvish; who is to forbid him from constructing paired forms which contrast with a sound change similar to one which occurred in late Old English? We have the same difficulty in point five: Mr. Hyde assumes that because the languages show similarity to Welsh (a non-Germanic language), then they can show nothing of Grimm's Law (which operates only in Germanic languages). But my argument is precisely that the languages are not Welsh, and there is no benefit in assuming that they need be. In regard to point nine: if Tolkien was in love with the sound of words, "Gorbadoc" is as delectably phonaesthetic as any. Why must it have anything to do with Celtic? I'm reminded of a literature professor of mine who long ago cautioned (with some subtle cynicism) that "If you seriously look for sources, you'll find them."

I would like to deal with the rest of Mr. Hyde's points as succinctly as possible. In point 10, I am pleased to be directed to the OED legitimizing of "worrit". I'll still bet it is a portmanteau word. In point 11, we have some etymological resemblances that are undeniable, be they low, coarse, or outright smutty. And I pray that everyone takes it all with the following (lifted) maxim: "He who laughs, lasts." With point 13, Mr. Hyde presumes that Quenya and Sindarin behave precisely like real-world languages, and that a plural in one cannot be related to a plural in another. Well, in Elvish they can, through umlaut and a form of the Great Vowel Shift. Incidentally, although we are not dealing with different declensions here, it is indeed factually true that in real languages sound changes in one declension can be generalized to another declension; that is what happened in the levelling of inflections in late Old English. With point 14, I must insist that I did read the Parker and Shippey articles carefully; however, I reserve the right to disagree with them.

In all, I stand by the method and the approach in this essay. However, I hope that in these added remarks that I have not consistently come across as a destructive and incorrigible academic jokester, but instead as a dispassionate, reasonable, and healing Dr. Jekyll.

## Rejoinder

Since Thomas Donahue responded to my critique in candor and a degree of sobriety, I suppose that it is requisite that I return in kind. After all that was my guiding maxim for the first review; I ought to be consistent in the second.



I think that it would be of no value to really defend my epithets except to say (and by so doing leap to the defense of my epithets) that in my own idiolect I distinguish between modified and unmodified phrases. Adjectives play a dynamic role in expression and I use them as often as occasion permits. Therefore, "penchant for drollery" differs somewhat from the admittedly "knee-jerk" phrase which I chose to use. I apologize if I created an ambiguity as to what I meant.

With regard to his counter-evidence: I don't recall having ever said that the Elvish "derives from some real historical source", except to the degree that Tolkien himself says they do. Since I have not done so in the past nor intend to do so in the future, I find it somewhat disconcerting that I am now "persisting" in it. In Freshman Composition, this kind of counter-argument that Thomas uses is called the "strawman Argument" and he has given us a fine example of one.

Mr. Donahue's point is well-taken with regard to the anagram of "-ind(e)" and now I confess my eyes are open to his thinking, but being a cranky and a stiff-necked sort, I find myself disagreeing with his conclusion simply because Mr. Donahue "persists in his belief that Elvish may derive from some real historical source." Donahue continues by saying that Quendi "doesn't have to have an Indo-European grammar or syllable structure," but our author asserts this very thing in his first paper. I mildly objected to the etymologies because I thought JRRT would. In Unfinished Tales (388-402), there is a rather long discussion on the Istari and of Gandalf's names in particular. On page 399, his name Incanus is treated in some detail. Jim Allen (and many, many others) concluded before the publishing of The Silmarillion and Unfinished Tales that Incanus came from the Latin "incanus", meaning "grey". Tolkien, in an unpublished note referred to by Christopher Tolkien in UT, makes the same observation, but concludes that note by saying that "the coincidence in form of the Quenya name and the Latin word MUST (my emphasis) be regarded as an 'accident' in the same way that Sindarin "orthanc" 'forked height' happens to coincide with the Anglo-Saxon word "or anc" 'cunning device', which is the translation of the actual name in the language of the Rohirrim" (p. 400). Now, I suppose we are free to believe JRRT or not; I chose and choose to take him at his word. Otherwise the whole thing degenerates into Edmund Wilson's "philological game". To pursue "endless linguistic geneologies" of Elvish roots in the real world lexicon is to engage in an activity for which neither Thomas Donahue nor myself have time enough in the world. If Tolkien does borrow morphological elements and their semantic values for his invented languages, he does so unconsciously and, in addition, denied that borrowing when confronted with them.

In his sweeping denunciation of the "wearing down" theory, Mr. Donahue has effectively eliminated from his list of "real

linguists" the likes of Barbara M. H. Strang, Theodora Bynon, Anthony Arlotto, M. L. Samuels, Winfred Lehmann, Elisabeth Closs Traugott, Dwight Bolinger, Robert D. King, Raimo Antilla, and a host of others. With regard to "simple phonetic changes", I was referring to Mr. Donahue's description, not the historical linguistic development of Middle-earth languages.

Mr. Donahue has not disabused me of point 4. In point 5, I do not assume the phonetic relationship between Quenya and Sindarin as correlary with Latin and Welsh; Tolkien states that that is the fact. While it is true that such a statement does not preclude Tolkien's use of Grimm's and Verner's Laws, I personally have a difficult time imagining the Professor emphatically describing one process operational in language relationships and not mentioning such an extraordinary superimposition of Germanic phonetic principles in the process. There is also a subtle difference between Sindarin being Welsh and Sindarin phonologically resembling Welsh. Mr. Donahue asserts that I affirm the former when in fact Professor Tolkien and I state the latter.

Why "Gorbadoc" has anything to do with Celtic was partially answered in point 8. Most all of the Hobbit names in the Shire are in real languages and a great deal of effort was expended by JRRT to make sure that the names were geographically consistent. Phono-aesthetic? To be sure, but tightly woven into the entire tapestry of the linguistic pattern.

With regard to point 13, Mr. Donahue simply dismisses my contention with an assertion of his own. I realize that this is a two-edged sword (that is, I am guilty of the same), but I believe that the inelegance of Mr. Donahue's explanation of the relationship between "atani" and "edain" would give our list of "unreal linguists" palpitations.

Except for a point or two wherein Mr. Donahue clarifies ambiguity in his original paper, I stand by my original critique.

Mythopoesis, continued from page 26

themselves, and the fact that the story may change shape (sometimes drastically) under his hands. Yet even being aware that this is often how the mythopoeic process works will not save the Sub-Creator from a degree of frustration. His creatures may not have free-will such as we possess, but they do often have an adamant determination to be consistent that can border on the wilful. If the Sub-Creator pays attention to his creatures he may even find the course of the history which he has mapped out being changed by some wilful hero or heroine in one of his stories.

The whole process of creating a history is a slippery one, and should be approached with care. One slip, and the creatures will be leading the (Sub-) Creator-- not necessarily in a bad manner, but certainly in an unexpected one.