

# DANGWETH PENGOLÐ

v This work, example and record of the instruction of Ælfwine the Mariner by Pengoloð the Wise of Gondolin, exists in two forms: the first ('A') a good clear text with (apart from one major exception, see note 6) very few changes made either in the act of writing or subsequently, and the second ('B') a superb illuminated manuscript of which the first page is reproduced as the frontispiece of this book. This latter, together with the brief text *Of Lembas*, was enclosed in a newspaper of 5 January 1960, on which my father wrote: 'Two items from the lore of Pengoloð', and also 'Danbeth to question. How/Why did Elvish language change? Origin of *Lembas*.' On a cardboard folder enclosing the newspaper he wrote: 'Pengoloð items. §*Manen lambë Quendion ahyanë* How did the language of Elves change? §*Mana i-coimas Eldaron* What is the "coimas" of the Eldar?'

xv Above the *gw* of *Dangweth* on the illuminated manuscript he lightly pencilled *b*; but on an isolated scrap of paper found with the two texts are some jottings of which the following are clear: 'Keep *Dangweth* "answer" separate from *-beth* = *peth* "word" '√*gweth* "report, give account of, inform of things unknown or wished to be known"; and 'Ndangwetha S[indarin] *Dangweth*'.

xx The *Dangweth Pengoloð* cannot be earlier than 1951, while from the date of the newspaper (on which the two texts are referred to) it cannot be later than the end of 1959. I would be inclined to place it earlier rather than later in the decade; possibly the second manuscript B is to be associated with the fine manuscript pages of the Tale of Years of the First Age (see X.49), one of which is reproduced as the frontispiece to *Morgoth's Ring*.

xxv Version B follows A very closely indeed for the most part (which is probably an indication of their closeness in time): a scattering of very minor changes (small shifts in word-order and occasional alterations in vocabulary), with a very few more significant differences (see the notes at the end of the text). That it was a work of importance to my father is evident from his writing it again in a manuscript of such elegance; and an aspect of his thought here, in respect of the conscious introduction of change by the Eldar on the basis of an understanding of the phonological structure of their language in its entirety, would reappear years later in *The Shibboleth of Fëanor* (see p. 332 and note 3 to the present essay).

xxxv The text that follows is of course that of Version B, with alteration of a few points of punctuation for greater clarity.

## Dangweth Pengoloð: the Answer of Pengolod to Aelfwine who asked him how came it that the tongues of the Elves changed and were sun-dered

I Now you question me, *Ælfwine*, concerning the tongues of the Elves, saying that you wonder much to discover that they are many, akin indeed and yet unlike; for seeing that they die not and their memories reach back into ages long past, you understand not why all the race of the Quendi have not maintained the language that they had of old  
5 in common still one and the same in all their kindreds. But behold! *Ælfwine*, within *Eä* all things change, even the Valar; for in *Eä* we perceive the unfolding of a History in the unfolding: as a man may read a great book, and when it is full-read it is rounded and complete in his mind, according to his measure. Then at last he perceives that some fair thing that long endured: as some mountain or river of renown, some realm, or some great  
10 city; or else some mighty being, as a king, or maker, or a woman of beauty and majesty, or even one, maybe, of the Lords of the West: that each of these is, if at all, all that is said of them from the beginning even to the end. From the spring in the mountains to the mouths of the sea, all is *Sirion*; and from its first upwelling even to its passing away when the land was broken in the great battle, that also is *Sirion*, and nothing less. Though we, who are  
15 set to behold the great History, reading line by line, may speak of the river changing as it flows and grows broad, or dying as it is spilled or devoured by the sea. Yea, even from his first coming into *Eä* from the side of *Ilúvatar*, and from the young lord of the Valar in the white wrath of his battle with *Melkor* unto the silent king of years uncounted that sits upon the vanished heights of *Oiolosse* and watches but speaks no more: all that is he  
20 whom we call *Manwë*.

II Now, verily, a great tree may outlive many a Man, and may remember the seed from which it came ere all the Men that now walk the earth were yet unborn, but the rind upon which you lay your hand, and the leaves which overshadow you, are not as that seed was, nor as the dry wood shall be that decays into the mould or passes in flame. And  
25 other trees there are that stand about, each different in growth and in shape, according to the chances of their lives, though all be akin, offspring of one yet older tree and sprung therefore from a single seed of long ago.<sup>1</sup> Immortal, within *Eä*, are the Eldar, but since even as Men they dwell in forms that come of *Eä*, they are no more changeless than the great trees, neither in the forms that they inhabit, nor in the things that they desire or  
30 achieve by means of those forms. Wherefore should they not then change in speech, of which one part is made with tongues and received by ears?

III It hath been said by some among our loremasters that, as for Men, their elders teach to their children their speech and then soon depart, so that their voices are heard no more, and the children have no reminder of the tongue of their youth, save their own cloudy  
35 memories: wherefore in each brief generation of Men change may be swift and unrestrained. But this matter seemeth to me less simple. Weak indeed may be the memories of Men, but I say to you, *Ælfwine*, that even were your memory of your own being as clear as that of the wisest of the Eldar, still within the short span of your life your speech would change, and were you to live on with the life of the Elves it would change more,  
40 until looking back you would perceive that in your youth you spake an alien tongue.

IV For Men change both their old words for new, and their former manner of speaking for another manner, in their own lifetimes, and not only in the first learning of speech; and this change comes above all from the very changefulness of Eä; or if you will, from the nature of speech, which is fully living only when it is born, but when the union of the thought  
45 and the sound is fallen into old custom, and the two are no longer perceived apart, then already the word is dying and joyless,<sup>2</sup> the sound awaiting some new thought, and the thought eager for some new-patterned raiment of sound.

V But to the changefulness of Eä, to weariness of the un-changed, to the renewing of the union: to these three, which are one, the Eldar also are subject in their degree. In this,  
50 however, they differ from Men, that they are ever more aware of the words that they speak. As a silversmith may remain more aware than others of the tools and vessels that he uses daily at his table, or a weaver of the texture of his garments. Yet this makes rather for change among the Eldar than for steadfastness; for the Eldar being skilled and eager in art will readily make things new, both for delight to look on, or to hear, or to feel, or for  
55 daily use: be it in vessels or raiment or in speech.

VI A man may indeed change his spoon or his cup at his will, and need ask none to advise him or to follow his choice. It is other indeed with words or the modes and devices of speech. Let him bethink him of a new word, be it to his heart howsoever fresh and fair, it will avail him little in converse, until other men are of like mind or will receive his  
60 invention. But among the Eldar there are many quick ears and subtle minds to hear and appraise such inventions, and though many be the patterns and devices so made that prove in the end only pleasing to a few, or to one alone, many others are welcomed and pass swiftly from mouth to mouth, with laughter or delight or with solemn thought – as maybe a new jest or new-found saying of wisdom will pass among men of brighter wit.  
65 For to the Eldar the making of speech is the oldest of the arts and the most beloved.

VII Wherefore, Ælfwine, I say to you: whereas the change that goes long unperceived, as the growth of a tree, was indeed slow of old in Aman ere the Rising of the Moon, and even in Middle-earth under the Sleep of Yavanna slower far than it is now among Men, yet among the Eldar this steadfastness was offset by the changes that come of will and  
70 design: many of which indeed differ little in outward seeming from those of unwitting growth. Thus the Eldar would alter the sounds of their speech at whiles to other sounds that seemed to them more pleasant, or were at the least unstaled. But this they would not do at hap-hazard. For the Eldar know their tongue, not word by word only, but as a whole: they know even as they speak not only of what sounds is that word woven which  
75 they are uttering, but of what sounds and sound-patterns is their whole speech at one time composed.\*<sup>3</sup> Therefore none among the Eldar would change the sounds of some one word alone, but would rather change some one sound throughout the structure of his speech; nor would he bring into one word only some sound or union of sounds that had not before been present, but would replace some former sound by the new sound in  
80 all words that contained it – or if not in all, then in a number selected according to their

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\*And these are for the most part few in number, for the Eldar being skilled in craft are not wasteful nor prodigal to small purpose, admiring in a tongue rather the skilled and harmonious use of a few well-balanced sounds than profusion ill-ordered.

shapes and other elements, as he is guided by some new pattern that he has in mind. Even as a weaver might change a thread from red to blue, either throughout his web, or in such parts thereof as were suitable to the new pattern, but not randomly here and there nor only in one corner.<sup>4</sup>

VIII 85 And lo! Ælfwine, these changes differ little from like changes that come in the speeches of Men with the passing of time. Now as for the Eldar we know that such things were done of old by choice, full-wittingly, and the names of those who made new words or first moved great changes are yet often remembered. For which reason the Eldar do not believe that in truth the changes in the tongues of Men are wholly unwitting; for how so, 90 say they, comes the order and harmony that oft is seen in such changes? or the skill both in the devices that are replaced and the new that follow them? And some answer that the minds of Men are half asleep: by which they mean not that the part whereof Men are unaware and can give no account slumbers, but the other part. Others perceiving that in nothing do Men, and namely those of the West,<sup>5</sup> so nearly resemble the Eldar as in 95 speech, answer that the teaching which Men had of the Elves in their youth works on still as a seed in the dark. But in all this maybe they err, Ælfwine, for despite all their lore least of all things do they know the minds of Men or understand them.<sup>6</sup>

IX And to speak of memory, Ælfwine: with regard to the Elves – for I know not how it is with Men – that which we call the *coirëa quenya*, the living speech, is the language wherethrough 100 we think and imagine; for it is to our thought as the body to our spirit, growing and changing together in all the days of our being.<sup>7</sup> Into that language therefore we render at once whatsoever we recall out of the past that we heard or said ourselves. If a Man remembers some thing that he said in childhood, doth he recall the accents of childhood that he used in that moment long ago? I know not. But certainly we of the Quendi do 105 not so. We may know indeed how children not yet accomplished in speech, and how the ‘fullspoken’, as we say, spake at times long ago, but that is a thing apart from the images of life-memory, and is a matter of lore. For we have much lore concerning the languages of old, whether stored in the mind or in writings; but we hear not ourselves speak again in the past save with the language that clothes our thought in the present. Verily, it may 110 chance that in the past we spake with strangers in an alien tongue, and remember what was then said, but not the tongue that was used. Out of the past indeed we may recall the sounds of an alien speech as we may other sounds: the song of birds or the murmur of water; but that is but in some cry or brief phrase. For if the speech were long or the matter subtle then we clothe it in the living language of our present thought, and if we 115 would now relate it as it was spoken, we must render it anew, as it were a book, into that other tongue – if it is preserved still in learned lore. And even so, it is the alien voices that we hear using words in our memory, seldom ourselves – or to speak of myself, never. It is true indeed that the Eldar readily learn to use other tongues skilfully, and are slow to forget any that they have learned, but these remain as they were learned, as were they 120 written in the unchanging pages of a book;<sup>\*8</sup> whereas the *coirëa quenya*, the language of

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\*Save only in the strange event of the learning by one whole people of an alien speech, that thereafter they take into living and daily use, which will then change and grow with them, but their own former tongue pass away or become but a matter of lore. This has happened only once in the history of the Eldalië, when the

thought, grows and lives within, and each new stage overlies those that went before, as the acorn and the sapling are hidden in the tree.

X Wherefore, Ælfwine, if thou wilt consider well all that I have said to thee at this time, not only what is plainly expressed, but also what is therein to be discovered by thought, thou  
125 wilt now understand that, albeit more wittingly, albeit more slowly, the tongues of the Quendi change in a manner like to the changes of mortal tongues. And that if one of the Eldar survives maybe the chances of fifty thousand of your years, then the speech of his childhood will be sundered from the speech of his present, as maybe the speech of some city or kingdom of Men will be sundered in the days of its majesty from the tongue of  
130 those that founded it of old.

XI In this last point also our kindreds are alike. Greater as is the skill of the Quendi to mould things to their will and delight, and to overcome the chances of Eä, yet they are not as the Valar, and with regard to the might of the World and its fate, they are but weak and small. Therefore to them also severance is severance, and friends and kin far away are  
135 far away. Not even the Seeing Stones of the craftsmen of old could wholly unite those that were sundered, and they and the masters that could make them were few. Therefore change, witting or unwitting, was not even long ages ago shared, nor did it proceed alike save among those that met often and had converse in labour and in mirth. Thus, swifter or slower, yet ever inescapably, the far-sundered kindreds of the Quendi were sundered  
140 also in speech: the Avari from the Eldar; and the Teleri from the other Eldar; and the Sindar, who abode in Middle-earth, from the Teleri that came at last unto Aman; and the Exiles of the Noldor from those that remained in the land of the Valar. And so still it goes in Middle-earth.

XII Yet long since, Ælfwine, the fashion of the World was changed; and we that dwell now in  
145 the Ancient West are removed from the circles of the World, and in memory is the greater part of our being: so that now we preserve rather than make anew. Wherefore, though even in Aman – beyond the circles of Arda, yet still with Eä – change goes ever on, until the End, be it slow beyond perceiving save in ages of time, nonetheless here at last in Eressëa our tongues are steadfast; and here over a wide sea of years we speak now still  
150 little otherwise than we did – and those also that perished – in the wars of Beleriand, when the Sun was young.

*Sin Quente Quendingoldo  
Elendilenna*

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Exiles took up the speech of Beleriand, the Sindarin tongue, and the Noldorin was preserved among them as a language of lore.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The end of this sentence, from 'offspring of one yet older tree', is not found in version A.

<sup>2</sup>'dying or dead' A.

<sup>3</sup>In the note to The Shibboleth of Fëanor which I have omitted (p. 339) my father wrote:

The Eldar had an instinctive grasp of the structure and sound-system of their speech as a whole, and this was increased by instruction; for in a sense all Eldarin languages were 'invented' languages, art-forms, not only inherited but also material engaging the active interest of their users and challenging awarely their own taste and inventiveness. This aspect was evidently still prominent in Valinor; though in Middle-earth it had waned, and the development of Sindarin had become, long before the arrival of the Ñoldorin exiles, mainly the product of unheeded change like the tongues of Men.

<sup>4</sup>Version A has here a footnote omitted in B:

Thus it was that when the name *Banyai* of old was changed to *Vanyar* this was done only because the sound *b* was changed to *v* throughout the language (save in certain sequences) – and this change, it is recorded, began among the Vanyar; whereas for the showing of many the new device of *r* was brought in and used in all words of a certain shape – and this, it is said, was begun among the Noldor.

<sup>5</sup>*namely* is used here in the original but long lost sense of the word 'especially, above all'. The phrase is absent in A, which reads simply: 'Or some answer that the teaching ...'

<sup>6</sup>Here version A, as originally written, moves at once to the concluding paragraphs of the *Dangweth*, from 'But in this point at least our kindreds are alike ...' (p. 400) to its ending in the words 'we speak now still little otherwise than they did who fought in Beleriand when the Sun was young.' These paragraphs were struck out, and all the intervening matter (from 'And to speak of memory, Ælfwine ...') introduced, before they were reached again, somewhat changed in expression but not in content, and now virtually identical to the form in version B.

<sup>7</sup>This sentence, from 'for it is to our thought ...', is absent in A.

<sup>8</sup>The footnote here is absent in A.