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Laadan

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Laadan

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LÁADAN

Láadan is a **language** that was designed to express women's perceptions. Its grammar and basic vocabulary were constructed by linguist and science fiction writer **Suzette Haden Elgin** in 1982, as part of the preparation for writing the Native Tongue trilogy (*Native Tongue*, 1984; *The Judas Rose*, 1987; *Earthsong*, 1993) in which the language is an important element. The vocabulary of Láadan has been and continues to be expanded by cooperation among Elgin and other interested people.

In *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, Elgin explores the idea that a language created by and for women can change societal structures. In the society of twenty-third century Earth and its colonies, in which women are legally minors and are severely repressed, women linguists secretly create Láadan and attempt to spread the language to all the women of the Earth in the hope that the new language will bring about a new social order.

In creating the language, Elgin addressed the position that English and other languages embody male dominance in society and are not well suited to expressing what women want to say, which may lead to women being perceived as unskillful speakers, specifically as unable to be direct and concise. The grammar and lexicon of Láadan attempt to remedy this situation and also to make it more difficult to dominate conversation by such means as denying the implications of

or the intentions behind an utterance or contradicting a speaker's expressed perception. For example, Láadan sentences begin with one of six words that indicate the speech act undertaken, such as statement, question, or promise; each of these six words can be further modified with one of eight suffixes to indicate the mood or purpose of the speech act, such as, in love, in pain, or for teaching, or left unmodified to indicate the speaker's neutrality toward the utterance. A notable feature of the lexicon is the highly specific nature of many words referring to emotions. For example, the word *anger* in English corresponds to five words in Láadan, the choice of word specifying whether the anger has a reason, projects blame, and/or is futile.

A basic grammar and lexicon of the language has been available in print form since 1988. While Elgin and others have pointed out that Láadan has engendered less interest than other constructed languages such as Klingon, reader response has been sufficient to motivate electronic interaction formats, including a Web tutorial, a LiveJournal discussion forum, and a Web dictionary that is still being updated.

Further Readings

- Elgin, Suzette Haden. *A First Dictionary and Grammar of Láadan*. 2nd ed. Madison, WI: Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction, 1988.
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"Láadan Working Group." Feminist SF Wiki [online], http://wiki.feministsf.net/index.php?title=L%C3%A1adan_Working_Group.

THERESA MCGARRY

LACKEY, MERCEDES (1950–)

Mercedes Lackey is an American fantasy writer and one of the earliest writers of young adult literature to feature a **homosexual** protagonist. Vanyel Ashkevron is the protagonist of the Last Herald-Mage series (*Magic's Pawn*, 1989; *Magic's Promise*, 1990; *Magic's Price*, 1990). While Vanyel's father disapproves, the culture of Valdemar and a number of Lackey's other cultures accept same-sex relationships. Vanyel is first seen as a legend; Talia, the protagonist of the Queen's Own series, is reading the story of Vanyel's heroic last stand when she is chosen by her Companion. Companions, white horses who embody spirits, are a magical sentient species who choose their Heralds.

Born in Chicago, Lackey received a B.S. in biology from Purdue University in Indiana. She worked as an artist's model, then in data processing and computer programming. Lackey began writing for science fiction and fantasy fan magazines and became active as a **filk** writer and singer at science fiction conventions (cons). She met **G. J. Cherryh** at a con, and Cherryh encouraged her to begin writing professionally.

Lackey and her husband, Larry Dixon, are licensed rehabilitators who work with injured birds. Her novels include various magical and sentient, nonhuman races, and several of her protagonists come from cultures where close relationships with companion and working **animals** are valued, such

as the Shin'a'in horses and the Hawk-brothers' bondbirds. A number of Lackey's protagonists are female, including fourteen-year-old Rune, who runs away from home to become a Bard (and is rejected despite her talent because she is female); Kerowyn, who becomes a mercenary captain in *By the Sword* (1991); the Queen of Valdemar; and a priestess who becomes head of a powerful religious institution.

Most of Lackey's stories are coming-of-age tales. Besides a group of interrelated series set in Velgarth, the setting for twenty-seven novels that take place in and around Valdemar, she has written an **urban fantasy** series featuring Diana Tregarde, a spiritual/psychic investigator (*Burning Water*, 1989; *Children of the Night*, 1990; *Jinx High*, 1991). She also has created the Bardic series (*The Lark and the Wren*, 1992; *The Robin and the Kestrel*, 1993) about a group of musicians. More recent novels, such as *Firebird* (1996) and *The Black Swan* (1999), retell **fairy tales** or other alternate-world fantasies; the Dragon Joust series includes *Joust* (2003), *Alta* (2004), and *Sanctuary* (2005).

Lackey has collaborated with a number of writers, including Cherryh, **Andre Norton**, Ellen Guon, Josepha Sherman, **Marion Zimmer Bradley**, and **Anne McCaffrey**. She publishes in Jim Baen's SERRAted Edge series, urban-fantasy novels featuring children and adolescents who run away from home (other writers in the series are Holly Lisle and Mark Shepherd). At the end of each novel is a page with toll-free numbers to agencies that can help missing or abused children.

Further Readings

The World of Mercedes Lackey [online]. [Http://www.mercedeslackey.com](http://www.mercedeslackey.com).

"Mercedes Lackey." *Authors and Artists for Young Adults*, vol. 13. Detroit: Gale, 1994.