

Talbots' Tirade

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Did you really come to the event in a **dragon**? Do you actually believe that the music you are playing is coming from an **elven box** rather than a tape recorder? Do you think that a medieval person would be any less disturbed by using **Pascal's demon** rather than a computer?

The following questions were raised after reading an article in a recent Tournaments Illuminated entitled "SCA Slang for Modern Conveniences." This article made me cringe. We are not a fantasy and science fiction group. We are trying to selectively recreate the middle ages and the renaissance, not a fantasy novel. While fantasy and science fiction may be fun they are not what the SCA is (or should be) about.

The question must be raised: What is the point of this slang? Is it to make the language of the SCA sound more medieval to non-members? Is it designed to be a representation of true medieval speech? Is its purpose to turn the modern conveniences of technology into objects of magic and mystery? or is its purpose to make modern technology blend into the speech of the middle ages? Whatever the reason the practice is flawed and it defeats the purpose of the SCA.

If the purpose of the slang is to make the language of the SCA sound more medieval to non-members then it fails miserably. People who are not in the SCA are not stupid. Most of them do not believe in dragons, elves and wizards. This kind of talk mis-represents us to the public as a fantasy group rather than a group whose goal is to recreate the middle ages.

If the goal of this language is to be a representation of true medieval speech then it also fails. Leaving aside the fact that we should be therefore be speaking in the medieval form of our language such as Middle English or Old high German this sort of slang cannot be justified. Talk of wizards, demons, elves and dragons as facts of everyday life belongs in a fantasy novel, not in a representation of the middle ages. While it may be true that many people in the middle ages believed in dragons, wizards, elves, and demons, it must be emphatically stated that they did not come into contact with them on a daily basis. They did not ride dragons to tournaments, they did not cast magic spells on boxes to make them play music, nor did they write letters with the help of demons, or listen to the music of elves and they most definitely did not go out to a restaurant to eat "**Kentucky Fried Dragon!**" (did somebody prove that chicken wasn't period while I wasn't paying attention?) It is this type of language that marks us as a "second class living history group." Furthermore, we must ask: just how stupid do we think people in the middle ages and renaissance were? So you think that the concept of a wristwatch would have been so foreign as to be looked on as a **wristgod**? According to the book The Secular Spirit, "the concept of time as we know it today was developed in the period between 1300 and 1600." (190) Mentions of clocks or "horologium" proliferate in literature from about 1280 onwards and there are many clocks which survive in working order from as early as about 1386. Therefore the concept of a wrist sized clock would have been a technical wonder but not a **wristgod!**

If the purpose is to turn the modern conveniences of technology into objects of magic and mystery then I guess we have succeeded. But to what end? Why should we want to do this? As we have seen it does not help our reputation with the outside world (except perhaps with the world of fantasy and science fiction fans.) As previously mentioned the technology we are discussing is in many cases not that foreign to the medieval mind. And that which may be, calls more attention to itself by making it an object of magic than it would by simply stating its name

and moving on!

Ultimately it comes down to this: if calling your car by a different name makes you happy then keep on doing it. We are here, after all, to have a good time! But simply think about what you are doing when you use these terms. Most people believe that the purpose of SCA slang is to make modern technology blend into the speech of the middle ages. If this is the case with you and you feel that you want to use alternate terms for "the conveniences of the modern world" then try out some of these. Many of the terms have been drawn from the same sources as the previously mentioned ones. They are "more medieval" in flavor (several being period terms) and do not call as much attention to themselves.

Alternate Terms

Answering machine: Servant. "leave a message with my servant" (instead of a mechanical squire)

Car: Cart. "We rode in our cart" (instead of a fire chariot)

Computer: Philosopher's engine. "I used my philosophers engine to help me write the letter" (not pascal's demon)

Dome tent: (or any style) **Pavilion.** "come visit our pavilion" (instead of a mushroom)

Motor cycle: Horse. "I rode to the tourney on my horse" (instead of an Iron Horse)

Photo copier: Scribe. "I'll have my scribe copy it" (instead of a wizard scribe)

Pickup or van: Wagon. "I hauled the table in my wagon" (instead of a dragon)

Toilet or port-a-john: Guarderobe. "I'm going to the Guarderobe" (instead of a euphemism or port a castle)

Wristwatch: Horologium. "I'll check my horologium" (instead of a wristgod)