The Letters of Middle-earth

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1 Introduction

In a 1955 letter to W. H. Auden[1], Tolkien wrote,

...languages and names are for me inextricable from the stories. They are and were so to speak an attempt to give a background or a world in which my expressions of linguistic taste could have a function. The stories were comparatively late in coming.

As we learned in the companion article, *Cent o Hedhellem*, the history of Tolkien's languages is long and complex, and the study of Tolkien's linguistic inventions in their entirety — or even of the Elvish languages as they existed when *The Lord of the Rings* set them into a more or less 'final' form — can literally fill a book.

This article will focus on a single aspect of Tolkien's invention, from a 'practical' rather than theoretical standpoint: the writing systems that appear in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. As we will see, even this relatively narrow area is complex, and a short list of references for further research by the interested reader appears at the end of this article. The vast majority of the information here can be deduced from *The Lord of the Rings*, especially Appendix E, but like the Hobbits, sometimes we like to read articles 'filled with things they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions'.

The writing systems in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* fall into two broad classes: the angular *runes* (MK4), which appear prominently on Thror's map in *The Hobbit* and atop the title pages of *The Lord of the Rings*; and the *Tengwar* (pign), the flowing letters that appear on the bottom of the *Lord of the Rings* title pages and the illustrations of the Ring inscription and the West-gate of Moria. Although Tolkien is careful

to distinguish these two forms of writing, careless people sometimes will use oxymoronic phrases like 'Tengwar Rune' to describe some mysterious glyph. As often as not, the characters being described are simply runes; and it is to the runes that we will first turn our attention.

2 The Runes

The Futhark

In the historical world, the 24-character runic alphabet (known as the *futhark*¹, an acrostic name based on the sounds of its first six letters) appeared in Northern Europe in the 2nd or 3rd century. Its origins are debatable; it may be derived from the Roman, or Greek, or even Etruscan alphabets. Runes were used to make magical inscriptions, to inscribe the owner's name upon a weapon or other article, or as an artisan's signature. For example, a horn dating from ca. 400 bears the inscription MhHMPF XFN↑|Y:HՋ↑↑|≥FY:HՋR+F:↑FP|MՋ "I, Hlegest of Holt, made the horn", quite reminiscent of the inscription on the West-gate of Moria. Most common are memorial or funereal inscriptions, such as might be seen on a tomb.

The futhark spread rapidly throughout the Germanic world, and Anglo-Saxon migration brought it to England, where it was adapted to the sounds of Old English. This form of the runic alphabet remained in use throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

In the introduction to *The Hobbit*, Tolkien writes:

Runes were old letters originally used for cutting or scratching on wood, stone, or metal, and so were thin and angular. ...[the Dwarves'] runes are in this book represented by English runes, which are known now to few people. ...

I and U are used for J and V. There was no rune for Q (use CW); nor for Z (the

dwarf-rune \downarrow may be used if required). It will be found, however, that some single runes stand for two modern letters: *th*, *ng*, *ee*; other runes of the same kind ... were also sometimes used.

Table 1 shows the runic alphabet as adapted by Tolkien. Everyone will remember the appearance of these runes in the inscription on Thror's map:

FINM FXT HIXH PM MFR FIM PRX MFR PFCK FBRMFNT:

"Five feet high the door and three may walk abreast."

Tolkien's use of the runic alphabet is pretty straightforward, but there is some variation between a strictly letter-for-letter transliteration (as in FIM ('five') in which the silent 'e' is preserved) and a more phonetic approach (for example, MFR for 'door' rather than MFR). Also notable in the moon-letters is the use of MFM ('hwen') for 'when', which follows Old English usage.

Exercise 1 (from a letter to Katherine Farrer, 1947/2]):

PE LEURUM | PILL NIX+ BE

Exercise 2 How would you inscribe 'DEATH TO ORCS' on your painting of the (far more forbidding) East-gate of Moria, using the runes from The Hobbit?

Just as the ordinary Roman-alphabet lettering on Thror's map, in English, can be considered to be a representation of the 'real' Middle-earth lettering (presumably Tengwar) in the Common Speech, the Anglo-Saxon runes stand in for 'authentic' Dwarvish lettering, also in the Common Speech. However, it was not until the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* that readers received their first glimpse of these Dwarvish runes, Tolkien's own creation.

 $^{^1}$ or fupark, with 'p' representing the $\it th$ sound in ' $\it th$ in'

A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н
	₿	k	M	M	F	Χ	Н
Ι	J	K	L	M	N	О	P
		h	1	M	+	۴	K
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
		-		_	-		
ΚĎ	R	И	1	Ŋ	Ŋ	P	Ÿ
Ϋ́	R Z	Ŋ TH	↑ NG	FE	FA	ST w	

Table 1: Anglo-Saxon Runes from The Hobbit

The Cirth

In *The Treason of Isengard*, Christopher Tolkien quotes a letter dated 1937 that referred indirectly to the runes of Middle-earth, and adds,

...he was thinking of his own runic alphabets, already at that time highly developed, and not in any way particularly associated with the Dwarves, if associated with them at all. It is conceivable, I think, that it was nonetheless Thror's Map ...that brought that close association into being ...

In Appendix E of *The Lord of the Rings*, we are told that runes were first used for inscribing letters in stone and wood by the Grey Elves of Beleriand during the First Age to represent their Sindarin language. A single carved rune was called a *certh*, from a root word meaning 'to cut'²; the plural form is *Cirth* (Quenya *certa*, plural *certar*).

Daeron, loremaster and minstrel of Doriath, reorganized the primitive Cirth into a more systematic arrangement (under the influence of the Fëanorean letters that we will see later). His alphabet, or *Certhas Daeron* was later extended and somewhat reorganized by the Elves of Eregion, to become the 'long rune-rows', or *Angerthas*. The Dwarves adapted the Angerthas to their own use during the Second Age (mainly due to the friendship of the Dwarves and Elves of Eregion), producing the form of the alphabet known as the

Angerthas Moria. Note the distinction in terminology: the *Cirth* (plural) are the several runes; the *Angerthas* is the runic alphabet.

The development of these runic alphabets, and the phonetic values of each of the Cirth in both the Sindarin and Dwarvish versions, is well summarized in Appendix E of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is interesting to note that in both the 'real world' and the world of Middle-earth, the Dwarves inherited the runes from the Elves for whom they originally were devised. In a late essay[3], Tolkien wrote that by the Third Age, the runes

... were forgotten except by the loremasters of Elves and Men. Indeed it was generally supposed by the unlearned that they had been invented by the Dwarves, and they were widely known as 'dwarfletters'.

In fact, Tolkien himself seems to have used the runes very rarely, if at all, to write Sindarin (nor its predecessor, Noldorin). In one manuscript (apparently dating from just before the writing of *Lord of the Rings*[4]), he wrote that "Owing to the ruin of Beleriand, before the departure of the Noldor to Eressëa, no actual Elvish inscription or book in this script was preserved," perhaps to reflect this fact. However, there are many published examples of Tolkien's use of the Angerthas to write English (representing, in some cases, the Common Speech). In *Lord of the Rings*, the prominent examples are the title-page inscription and Balin's tomb in Mo-

²compare *Calacirya*, the 'light-cleft' of Valinor

Α	В	D	E	F	G	Н	I
IJ	R	7	Н	4	K	人	I
J	K	L	M	N	0	P	R
ľ.	ľ	¥	₿	Ψ	Λ	P	1
S	T	U	V	W	Y	Z	&
<	Ν	\$	Я	Ŷ	И	\mathbf{k}	1
TH	DH	CH	SH	00	ND	NG	Э
1	1	k	J	М	Ж	Χ	} {

Table 2: The Angerthas for English

ria: 內利甲氧甲基酚 甲基酚 — "Balin Son of Fundin Lord of Moria". Tolkien also made illustrations of the pages of the Book of Mazarbul that Gandalf reads, but these were unpublished until they appeared in *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*[5] (now out of print) and *J.R.R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator*[6]. To this we can add other examples, such as a 1948 letter to Hugh Brogan[7].

From these examples and the information in the Appendix, we derive Table 2. Comparing these runes to the Anglo-Saxon runes, we see that many of the shapes are the same, but we see that there are more Cirth — a total of 60 are given in the Appendix, compared to 30 in the Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet. The similarity of shapes is explained as being a result of both alphabets being used primarily for carving into stone or wood. The Cirth are a bit more systematic in their shapes. In a 1963 letter [8], Tolkien wrote that "The signs used in the cirth are nearly all to be extracted from the basic pattern, ⋈..." There can be seen a certain amount of phonetic relationship between similar letters, such as \uparrow (p) and \uparrow (b), or \uparrow (t) and \uparrow (d). This is, as we will see, a result of the influence of the Fëanorean Tengwar on Daeron's organization of the Cirth.

The 'values', or assignments to English letters and sounds, are basically those of the Angerthas Moria, with some adaptations to English. Note that Gandalf's familiar G-rune (P) belongs to the earlier Elvish angerthas, and was not so used by the Dwarves of Moria. As with the futhark, Tolkien's use is not always consistent, being ba-

sically phonetic, with frequent excursions to follow English spelling. For example, in the Book of the Mazarbul, the word 'bridge' is spelled RALL, 'brija', with being used for a silent *e*, but 'j' being used for the dg sound. In a letter to Hugh Brogan [7], the name 'Hugh' is spelled '从外' even though the rune \mathbb{X} represents an aspirated g sound (which Tolkien normally writes as 'gh' as in ghash, the Orkish word for 'fire'). The symbol for z is sometimes used for the plural when it is so pronounced, but we also see the symbol for s in the word 'rings' $(\uparrow X \land)$ on the title-page inscription. The lesson here is: if you use these runes to write English, don't worry too much about the details; spell the way you think it ought to be spelled, without losing readability.

Some explanation of certain characters may be helpful. Extensive use is made of the runes 3 and 4 for the th sounds in 'the' and 'thin', respectively (Tolkien indicates the former sound as 'dh' throughout his writings). The schwa (a) is the unstressed vowel sound that is so common in spoken English, such as the sound of the letter 'e' in 'spoken'. Tolkien uses the symbol | for this sound in words like 'the' (1) on the title-page, but as we have seen, he also uses it for silent *e*. In one place on the title page, this is reduced to a simple stroke in the word 'translated'. The doubled 'o' rune (M) is used for the double-'o' in words like 'book'; in other contexts it represents a long δ as in names like Lóni. One interesting use is the addition of the half-rune 1 to the rune 1 to produce 1 for the aspirated-K sound in 'Khazad' but also for initial

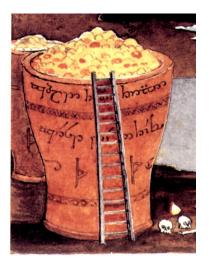


Figure 1: Detail of *Conversation with Smaug*, an illustration by J.R.R. Tolkien for *The Hobbit*. The inscription reads, "Gold Th ... Thrain. Accursed die the thief."

'Ch' in the Christmas letter to Hugh Brogan.

Exercise 3 In an early dust-jacket design for The Fellowship of the Ring [9], Tolkien included the inscription, |Ψ·Ⅎլ·⊀℩Ж·⅄Ⅎ·⅀℩ℾ⅄Ⅎ⟨·Ֆ℩·Ⅎլ·⅀⅄℩ℾ⅄℩

∦ Aside from a couple of unusual uses for some of the runic symbols, what is the major error here?

Exercise 4 'The Dwarves are Upon You!' is a translation of the Khuzdul (i.e., Dwarvish) battle-cry, **Khazâd Aimênu!**. Using \(\bar{n}\) for '\(\hat{a}\)' and \(\bar{n}\) for '\(\hat{e}\)', how would you inscribe this name on the box in which you keep your carefully painted 25mm miniature Dwarf army?

Exercise 5 What does the top half of the Lord of the Rings title-page say?

3 The Tengwar

While the runes can be used to convey some of the (especially Dwarvish) 'flavor' of Tolkien's work, it is the flowing letters of the other Middle-earth writing system, the *Tengwar*, that most people particularly associate with Tolkien's world. The text at the bottom of the *Lord of the Rings* title page, the illustration of the Ring inscription,

and the West-gate of Moria — all in different languages and lettering styles — are for many readers the strongest and most immediate signs of the richness and depth of Tolkien's world of Middle-earth. Yet the first published appearance of the Tengwar was not in *The Lord of the Rings*, but in an easily missed part of an illustration in *The Hobbit*, as seen in Figure 1. As we will see, even in this fairly early example, the usage of the Tengwar was very similar to the forms later used in *The Lord of the Rings* and all the Tengwar writings of Tolkien's later career.

The earliest letters used by the Elves of Valinor were the *sarati* of Rúmil, the Sage of Tirion [10]. Little is known about this alphabet, although some fragments written by Tolkien in 1919 are known [11]. Fëanor devised a completely new, and far more systematic arrangement of letters which he named the *Tengwar*³. The Tengwar were designed to be useful for writing the sounds of different languages; for this reason, the table displaying the Tengwar in Appendix E of *Lord of the Rings* does not specify particular equivalents for the symbols; their use — also called their phonetic *values* — when writing Quenya, the language of the Noldor of Valinor, is very different from their

³singular *tengwa*, Sindarin *têw* (singular), *tîw*

Amon proyin cych ddylc
Ennyn Durin Aran Moria
papar dagger c dimar
Pedo mellon a minno
ju ncybij dän adeñ
Im Narvi hain echant
carapyiday e ayacqich päheñ j hid din
Celebrimbor o Eregion teithant i thiw hin

Figure 2: The West-Gate of Moria

use in writing Sindarin, the language of the Grey Elves of Beleriand. Still other values apply when the Tengwar are used to write Westron, the Black Speech of Mordor, or English. Complicated as it sounds, it is really not very different from the Roman alphabet, in which the letters 'll' are pronounced very differently in English, Spanish, and Welsh. The *Tengwar Summary Sheet* gives the Quenya, Sindarin, and Westron (English) values, including many vowel symbols and diacriticals.

Looking over the first six rows, the astute reader will observe how Fëanor arranged the Tengwar into phonetic columns. By doubling the 'bow' portion of a basic letter, 'voicing' is added, changing, for example a t to a d. By raising the stem, 'aspiration' is added, changing a p to an f. 'Nasal' consonants are in the rows with no stem. Thus, a whole series of consonant sounds can be generated from a small number of 'basic' sounds.

Besides the varying *values* for each Tengwa, there are also different *modes* or methods of positioning the vowels. Depending on the mode, vowels can appear as either separate letters or as accent-like diacritical marks (known by the Quenya term *tehtar*) that appear over the preceding or following consonant. Tolkien made a great many examples of Tengwar — in English, Sindarin, Quenya, and even Old English — and used all the different vowel modes. In over to avoid overwhelming the reader, we will touch only briefly on Sindarin, Quenya, and the Black Speech inscription on the Ring, and focus on the use of the Tengwar to write English, in various 'modes'.

Full Modes

The simplest 'mode' for using the Tengwar is the 'full mode', in which each vowel is represented by a separate tengwa, rather than by the tehtar that we will see later. This is exemplified by the Sindarin inscription on the West-Gate of Moria, reproduced in Figure 2 and identified in the text as the Mode of Beleriand. Another example of this mode is seen in the *Road Goes Ever On* songbook[12] in a transcription of *A Elbereth Gilthoniel*, and in Elessar's letter to Sam in the omitted Epilogue to *Lord of the Rings*[13].

Because the language is Sindarin, the values in the lower-right corners on the Tengwar Summary Sheet apply. Note that in Sindarin, ch represents the sound in Bach, ng represents the sound in sing (not finger), and y represents the sound of French u. Long vowels are marked with an 'acute accent' mark (e.g., miniel), and a bar over a consanant indicates that the consonant is preceded by the appropriate 'nasal' consonants n or m, as in chospipers(Celebrimbor). Finally, diphthongs are indicated by placing an accent over the vowel: a double-dot for a -y glide (e.g., Nep(hain)) or a tilde for a -w glide in -au (e.g., 5% (lhaw)).

Tolkien often used a related full mode to write English. It can be seen in Figure 1, and in Tolkien's letter to Hugh Brogan [7]. An extensive example appears in the two drafts of Elessar's letter to Sam, and a variant 'Northern' mode is found in Óri's page of the Book of Mazarbul in *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*. While the basic consonant uses are pretty much the same throughout these ex-

amples (using the Westron values in the *Tengwar Summary Sheet*), there were several variations. For example, on Thror's jar, the symbol \circ is used for o, but in the King's letter it represents the consonant w. In the letter to Hugh Brogan, y is used for this w sound, but in the pages of Elvish script that appeared in *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien* (and the 1978 Silmarillion Calendar), the symbol g is used in one sample and an inverted version of g is used in another. The *Tengwar Summary Sheet* reflects the usages in Elessar's letter. Some notes are in order:

The sound ch represents the English sound in church; in Hugh Brogan's letter, the ch of 'Christmas' is represented by a \neg with a vertical mark below. Tolkien's dialect of English distinguishes two r sounds: the 'strong' (normal American) r after a consonant or before a vowel is represented by γ , while the 'weak' sound that sort of disappears when an Englishman speaks a word like car is represented by γ . Again, the sound of th in 'these' is represented by γ , a separate sound from the th in 'thin' (γ).

The vowels used in this mode are \neg , \wedge , \neg , \neg , ω , and \neg for a, e, i, o, and u respectively; a consonant w is represented by o. There is no example in the Letter of consonantal 'y'; in Hugh Brogan's letter, \neg is used for this.

Tolkien used several 'abbreviated' forms for English words, notably $\begin{picture}(100,0)\put(0,0)\put$

Other diacriticals are: a bar below to double a consonant (as in pjpjn, 'Pippin'); a dot below for a silent or unstressed 'e' (as in λζμόρινη, 'Elfstone'); the double-dot for diphthongal y (as in καμρ' eighth'); a tilde-like mark for a diphthongal w (as in pradicipe, 'daughter'); and a final hook or flourish for a final 's' (as in ολόρζος, 'westlands').

As with the runes, Tolkien sometimes uses phonetic spelling (as in $1\sqrt{\xi}$ for 'is' in the Hugh Brogan letter) but at other times conforms more closely

to standard English spelling (writing 'his' as $\lambda_1 \delta$ in the King's letter). Most people follow suit, using standard English spellings where this is most clear or convenient, but using the available Tengwar like λ_2 and Tolkien's English-word abbreviations where appropriate.

Exercise 7 At the end of the Book of Mazarbul is written, in the Common Speech, the final entry, "They are coming," using much the same mode. What does it look like?

Exercise 8 The Sindarin word for 'and' in the West-Gate inscription is 'a*. As a finishing touch for your portrait of Elrond's sons, write "Elladan a Elrohir" in the Mode of Beleriand.

Tehta Modes

It seems likely that, to most people, the most familiar Tengwar modes are the ones that use diacritical or accent-like marks, known as *tehtar*⁵. It is an accented mode that we see in the Ring inscription (which appears on the cover of some editions of *Lord of the Rings*), and another such mode on the bottom half of the title page of *Lord of the Rings* and (by Christopher Tolkien's hand) on the title pages of *The Silmarillion, Unfinished Tales*, and all twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*. All Quenya inscriptions using the Tengwar use tehtar for the vowels, and a considerable portion of Tolkien's English-language calligraphy and doodling in the Tengwar uses tehta modes.

The basic vowel 'accents' are shown on the *Tengwar Summary Sheet*, placed over a long vertical stroke known as a *carrier*. Depending on the language being represented (which, as we have seen, also affects the symbols used for consonants), the

⁴but is *ar* in Elessar's letter, reflecting either an uncorrected draft or perhaps an influence from Quenya.

⁵Singular *tehta*, Sindarin *taith*, possible plural **tîth*

🕹 ငိုကာဒီများကြီး ငိုကာဒီများကြီး ငိုကာဒီများကြီး ငိုကာဒီများကြီး ငြေး ငိုကာဒီများကြီး ငြေးများကြီး ငြေးများကြီး

Figure 3: "The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode . . . "

tehta can be placed over the *preceding* vowel (as in languages like Quenya, in which many words end in vowels) or over the *following* vowel (as in Sindarin, the Black Speech, and Westron/English). When no consonant is available, a carrier can be used. Thus, the Quenya word *malta*, meaning 'gold' (the metal), is written as $\mathring{m}_{0}\mathring{p}$, with the three-dot mark for a written over the preceding consonants; a word beginning with a vowel, like *anga* ($\mathring{p}\mathring{c}p$) starts with a 'short carrier' to bear the vowel mark. The letters $\mathcal{L}(s)$ and $\mathcal{L}(s)$ (s) or s, depending on the language) could be inverted to facilitate vowel placement.

The Ring inscription, reproduced in Figure 3, shows a very different tehta mode, this time representing Black Speech phrase:

Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, Ash nazg thrakatulûk, agh burzum-ishi krimpatul

Aside from a very different calligraphic style, we see here that the right-hand curl is used for u and not o (because the sound o was rare in the Black

Speech), and is doubled for the long \hat{u} . We also see here that in the Black Speech, the vowels are placed over the following consonant, rather than the preceding one as in Quenya. We also see here the use of the inverted g to make the vowel placement easier in g (nazg).

Vowels are also placed over the following letter when writing Sindarin. The third version of Elessar's letter to Sam in Sauron Defeated is the only published example of Sindarin written in a tehta mode. This mode differs from the Mode of Beleriand in several respects; generally the use of consonants is the same as the Westron version of the letter, with q and not q for k, p representing r instead of n, and so on. We may conjecture that Aragorn or his scribe, as men of Gondor, used the letters in the way most familiar to them, rather than as the Elves of Beleriand or Eregion had. The vowel symbols used here are the same as in Quenya. As an example, the phrase i-cherdir Perhael (Master Samwise) is written as למכק לי ριλίζ.

Tolkien often used tehtar for writing English. The most prominent example is on the title-page of *The Lord of the Rings*, reproduced in Figure 4. In Appendix E, Tolkien describes this as

... what a man of Gondor might have produced, hesitating between the values of the letters familiar in his 'mode' and the traditional spelling of English.

The vowels in this example are the same as those in the Sindarin and Quenya examples seen earlier; the symbol \mathbf{p} is used for w. Aside from the use of the tehtar for vowels, the semi-phonetic nature of the writing resembles the full-mode English examples seen earlier: the use of abbreviations, the distinction of the weak and strong r sounds, and so

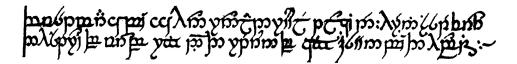


Figure 4: Title page inscription from The Lord of the Rings

on. Note the use of the letter z in the word \mathring{z} 'as'. Also note that an inverted circumflex (\tilde{i}) seems to be used to represent the 'y' in 'by'. The bottom half of the title page reads, phonetically,

V westmar[ch] by jhon Ronald Reuel tolkien . heR(e)in iz set for[th] [DH] histoRi [V+] wor [V+] Ri[ng] (a)[nd] [DH] Return [V+] ki[ng] az seen by [DH] ho[bb]i[ts]

(using 'R' to represent the 'strong *r*') In plain English,

of Westmarch by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. Herein is set forth the history of the War of the Ring and the return of the King as seen by the Hobbits.

Another example of a tehta mode for English appears in the Hugh Brogan letter, in which the acute accent (j) is used for i and the dot (j) is used for e. In the title pages for The Silmarillion and the History of Middle-earth volumes, Christopher Tolkien also uses the accent for e and the dot for i; he also adopts a much more fully orthographic mode, in conformance to English spelling, rather than the semi-phonetic usage we see in J.R.R. Tolkien's work. For example, the word 'dwarves' is rendered as paratic (using c for a vowel-bearing s) with no silent-e dot below, and using an s rather than a z or following-s hook.

Once again, the application of Tengwar to English is as much art as science; it is not simply an alphabetic cipher. Pick a convention based on the several examples available — either a 'full' mode or a tehta mode — then adhere to that convention consistently.

Exercise 9 In the transcription of Namarië, there appears the sub-title ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວາ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວ່າ ເປັນຕໍ່ວນ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ວາ ເປັນຕໍ່ວາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ວນ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ນ ເປັນຕໍ່ປາ ເ

Exercise 10 You discover (in the chapter, 'The Field of Cormallen') that the Quenya word for 'ring-bearers' is 'cormacolindor'. The perfect name for your new gaming club! How do you embroider this name on your club T-shirts?

Exercise 11 In 1960, Tolkien doodled a Tengwar transcription of a newspaper headline on the newspaper. He wrote: က်ာပုံကွဲငံမှာ ကိုထုပ် မက ယျို ကျွန်ုင်

Exercise 12 You decide to put up a banner at a gaming convention, announcing 'Lord of the Rings Tournament Today' in ordinary letters and Tengwar (using tehtar). How does the Tengwar portion look?

Numerals and Punctuation

No numerals for Cirth nor Tengwar were published in J.R.R. Tolkien's lifetime. Three possible Cirth numerals are in the Book of Mazarbul drawing that appeared in *Pictures by J.R.R. Tolkien*, but while there are very reliable rumors that a complete list of Dwarvish numerals exists in unpublished form, none have yet been seen.

In 1981, Christopher Tolkien presented J.R.R. Tolkien's numerals for use with the Tengwar to the British Tolkien Society; they have been widely circulated and used among enthusiasts since then. These numerals are shown in the *Tengwar Summary Sheet*. There are some important notes on usage:

- a. Unlike Arabic numerals, numbers are written with the units digit on the left. So the number 123 would be written $\pi\pi$ π .
- b. To help distinguish the numerals from the letters, a dot could be written above each digit, or a line drawn above the entire number. For example, 32767 could be written as
- c. For lists, series, and the like, the letter Tengwar, numbers 1–24 (see the *Tengwar Summary Sheet*), could be used, just as we use (a), (b), and so on. In this case, a dot or bar above could be used to mark this usage.
- d. There are also symbols for 11 and 12 (\$\infty\$ and \$\infty\$) for use in a duodecimal system, which was sometimes used by the Elves.

The various long Tengwar samples that have appeared in print show a variety of punctuation. The transcription of *Namarië* uses: a single dot for a comma; a pair of dots (like a colon) for a semicolon; two pairs of dots in a square (:) for a period/full stop; a modified vertical stroke for an exclamation point, and the symbol for a question mark. On the other hand, the title page ends with a colon-like pair of dots and a tilde-like horizontal stroke, and the West-Gate of Moria uses the colon for a period.

The various version of the King's letter to Sam show still other variations, such as two dots for a pause or comma or three dots in a column for a colon; for a period, we see both three dots in a triangle: and four dots in a diamond pattern (*). The different drafts of the King's letter show some variations on and to represent parentheses. Finally, the beautifully calligraphed Tengwar transcription of 'Tom Bombadil' from *Pictures* uses ordinary European punctuation marks.

Lettering Styles

The Cirth and Tengwar are used by Middle-earth enthusiasts, as they were by Tolkien himself, for the purposes of calligraphic decoration, or for communication between kindred spirits. There is thus a certain incentive to make the Tengwar, at least, look as beautiful as possible. Tolkien himself used a variety of styles at different times in different places: the title-page writing looks very different from the Ring inscription; and both look very different from the writing on the West-Gate of Moria — even the runes look somewhat different on Balin's tomb from their appearance on the title-page.

In Elessar's letter to Sam, the name *Perhael* (Samwise) is 'emboldened' by the use of a thicker pen with angular strokes (rather like Dan Smith's 'Tengwar Noldor' font). It is reliably rumored that still other Tolkien experiments in lettering style remain in unpublished form, including a lettering style that one informant described as resembling 'an Elvish computer readout'. Other experiments in style appear in *The Treason of Isengard*, in which a cursive style for the Angerthas is presented.

The point of all this is to encourage the creative reader to experiment with the lettering rather than simply relying on one particular model or computer font for all runic or Tengwar writing. The choice of writing tool — ball-point pen, felt-tip, or calligraphic stylus — and of the exact formation of the letters can create a huge variety in the appearance of the runes or Tengwar.

4 A Final Example

As a final example, we return to our example from *Cent o Hedhellem*: a refrigerator-door inscription reading "Enter, Friends, and Eat Well." First, perhaps inspired by the fact that the door is in fact just five feet high, we use the Futhark to write this name in English: consulting Table 1, we concoct:

MITME FRIMING FIN MET PMP

Remembering that there are special symbols for the unstressed *e* and *nd*, the same English text using the Angerthas Moria appears as:

HANNER ARIHRS DIE HUD SHA

We can also use the Tengwar, either in the adapted Mode of Beleriand or a semi-phonetic Westron tehta mode:

But the truly ambitious Tolkien fan will not settle for mere English text. We will no doubt recall that the Sindarin translation of this phrase is *Minno mellyn a mae mado*. We can render this in the 'traditional' Mode of Beleriand:

or in the tehta mode seen in the King's Letter:

Once we have chosen the letters to use, we would then decide how best to write them. A felt-tip calligraphic pen is an easily obtained tool that requires only a little practice to produce satisfying results. For runes, some possible media include wood carving or burning, or ceramic or stone engraving. But if calligraphic tools and skill fail, there are quite a few resources for computer users that can produce fine lettering.

5 Computer Resources

Fonts

Because the Runes, and especially the Tengwar, do not have a straightforward one-to-one mapping into the Roman alphabet, any computer font will have a certain amount of eccentricity or unexpected behavior when using it with some particular piece of software. The Tengwar font for Donald Knuth's TEX system seen throughout this article uses the ASCII letter d for pp, a bit arbitrarily uses D for $\frac{1}{2}$ ($\frac{dh}{dh}$), and quite idiosyncratically used octal code 004 (sometimes known as Control-D) for $\frac{1}{2}$ Different font authors will have different preferences for which glyph to use for r, and so on. And the treatment of the tehtar — are they accents?

— will vary widely from font to font and software platform to software platform. Thus, whenever obtaining a new Tengwar or runic font for your system, it is *very* important to read any accompanying documentation, print out a keyboard map, or do whatever else is needed so that the keys you type produce the letters on the page that you would put there if you were doing the calligraphy yourself. To simply assume that you can switch into your new font and start typing text is a formula for disaster (and one that has claimed more than one unwary victim)!

Incidentally, those who are interested in techie matters may be interested to learn that there are proposals for the assignment of Unicode code points to the Tengwar, so some day there will be an international standard for the use of the Tengwar on computers. But not yet.

Here are a few sources for Cirth and Tengwar typefaces that can be found on the World-Wide Web.

- Dan Smith's Fantasy Fonts for Windows⁶ contains three Tengwar fonts and a Cirth font, all of very high quality, as well as a good futhark font. However, the keyboard assignments for the characters mimic their placements on their respective tables, and have no relationship to their Roman-letter equivalents, so be sure to read the accompanying Help file. Mr. Smith also provides Tengwar support macros for Microsoft Word and other software. This page also has good links to other Tolkien font resources and information.
- For the Macintosh, **The Yamada Center Tolkien Fonts**⁷ has an assortment of Tolkien fonts, some quite old. The 'Tengwar Gandalf' font is the better Tengwar font, but has the 5 backwards! At this stage of the game, Macintosh owners might do better to convert Windows TrueType fonts through a utility like FontMonger.

 $^{^{6}}$ http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/4948/index.html

⁷http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/fonts/tolkien.html

• CTAN Font Archive⁸ The Combined T_FX Archive Network; this is one of many mirrors. The subdirectory tengwar contains META-FONT source for the Tengwar font used here; the subdirectory elvish contains an alternative font by Julian Bradfield. There is a cirth font that was, with modfications, used in this article; Julian Bradfield's elvish directory has a superior alternative. There is also a futhark font. TEX users may also be interested in Ivan Derzhanski's TgTEX macro package, which greatly facilitates the typesetting of text in either of the Tengwar fonts. A new version of TgTFX will soon be available; it includes a new Tengwar font similar to Computer Modern in style.

Some of the general Tolkien linguistics sites have particular Tengwar resources that may be of interest:

- **Mellonath Daeron**⁹ The page for the language interest group of the Stockholm Tolkien Society. Has a fine Q&A section, and a very complete index of all the Tengwar and Cirth writings by Tolkien that have so far appeared in print.
- **Amanye Tencele**¹⁰ is a page dedicated to Tolkien's writing systems.

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⁸ftp://ftp.duke.edu/tex-archive/fonts/

⁹http://www.forodrim.org/daeron/md_home.html

¹⁰http://user.tninet.se/ xof995c/

Answers to the Exercises

1 OF COVRSE I WILL SIGN YOUR COPY OF PE HOBIT. ('Of course I will sign your copy of The Hobbit'). Note the use of English-spelling 'OF' rather than phonetic 'OV' here.

2 How about:



- **3** It basically reads, 'In the land of shadows where the Mordor lie', which exchanges the words 'shadows' and 'Mordor'. Hey, it was a rough draft.
- **4** ዘበXበና በያዝሃል, using the same symbol for 'kh' as on Balin's tomb.
- **5** "The Lord of the Rings translated from the Red Book". The sentence is completed in the Tengwar section on the bottom half.
- **6** "I hope you won't find them too complicated," referring to his enclosed explanations of the various writings.
- 7 אָרָא ; the actual illustration shows an initial 'capitalization' using אין with a doubled vertical bar.
- **8** ATTCPCD C ATYCHY. Did you remember to use the Sindarin values instead of the Westron? It is worth mentioning that the Sindarin version of the King's letter uses D for non-final occurrences of r rather than the y seen in the inscription on the West-Gate, perhaps reflecting a late Third Age usage.
- **9** Altariello nainië Lóriendesse: 'Galadriel's lament in Lórien'
- **10** Remembering that there is no c character (use k instead): புறற்பு நூற்ற

- **11** "Nationalist Backing for 'New Deal'". The first *a* is written 'inverted', with two dots above one. The placement of the dot over the following consonant in 'backing' is inconsistent with the rest of the doodle. The word 'new' is written with the unusual *ny* character, reflecting Tolkien's pronunciation of that word; he started to write the word with the expected 172, but did not complete it.
- 12 I would write אוֹם שַל פּלְם שׁבָּע בּשׁ אינים אוֹם אַבָּשׁ בּשְׁם אַבָּע בּשִׁ אינים אַניים אַניים אַניים אַניים אַניים אָניים אַניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אַניים אַניים אַניים אַניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אָניים אַניים אַניים אַניים אָניים אָניים אַניים אַנ