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Letters

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Letters



LETTERS



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Carl Hostetter

Crofton, MD

It was of course a great thrill for those of us who study Tolkien's invented languages to see Paul Hyde's facsimile presentation and analysis of the Gondolinic Runes (*Mythlore* LXIX, pp. 20-25), which were very kindly made available for publication by Christopher Tolkien. While Paul's analysis of the runes is thorough and instructive, there are nonetheless a few points that require comment and correction.

The Consonants

The first and perhaps most significant correction concerns the rune \mathfrak{L} , whose value Tolkien indicates with \mathfrak{X} . The symbol \mathfrak{X} , the Greek *chi*, presumably represents the same value as the Greek letter, a voiceless velar fricative, which is also the sound of *ch* in Scottish *loch* and German *nach* (this is called the *ach*-laut, the velar *ch* heard in German after the back vowels *u*, *o*, and *a*, as opposed to the *ich*-laut, the palatal *ch* heard in German after the front vowels *i* and *e*, as in *ich*). It is suggested in Paul's analysis that the mark over the \mathfrak{X} is a tilde ~ indicating that the rune represents a nasalized \mathfrak{X} . However, the mark is in fact the *round cap*, \frown , a sign used by Karl Brugmann in his monumental *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen* of 1897-1916 to indicate that a consonant was palatal rather than velar (the Indo-European stop consonants *k*, *kh*, *g*, and *gh* could have both articulations depending on environment, just as in English, where for instance the *k*-sound of *king* is palatal and that of *cool* is velar). A symbol related to the round cap, the *subscript arch* \frown , was used by Brugmann under a vowel to indicate its corresponding semivowel. Tolkien employs this notation for the runes \mathfrak{L} "w (\mathfrak{u})" and \mathfrak{L} \mathfrak{h} "j (\mathfrak{i})" (j is a voiced palatal fricative, as in German *ja*, the same sound as initially in English *yes*). Due to the immense influence of his *Grammatik*, Brugmann's system of phonetic notation, including the round cap and the subscript arch, formed the basis for that of many of the landmark historical grammars of the early part of this century, such as Pedersen's *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen* (1909), Wright's *Grammar of the Gothic Language* (1910) and, most notably, J. Morris Jones's *Welsh Grammar: Historical and Comparative* (1913). On page 18 of his *Grammar* Jones informs us that the Welsh *ch* is equivalent to the "Scotch *ch* in *loch*, German *ch* in *nach* (\mathfrak{X}), but not German *ch* in *ich* (\mathfrak{X}). Thus \mathfrak{L} " \mathfrak{X} " is in fact the *ich*-laut, the voiceless palatal fricative, and its positioning beneath the runes \mathfrak{L} \mathfrak{h} "j (\mathfrak{i})", the voiced palatal fricative, is entirely consistent with the rest of the chart, which for the most part lists consonants in pairs based on the presence or absence of voice.

I say "for the most part" because in fact the identification of \mathfrak{X} as the voiceless palatal fricative implies that the rune \mathfrak{h} " \mathfrak{X} " is not, as Paul classifies it, a voiced velar fricative, but rather a *voiceless* velar fricative, the German *ach*-laut described above, which in turn displaces Paul's identification of \mathfrak{L} " \mathfrak{H} " as the *ach*-laut. This is really not too surprising, since (at least so far as I have been able to determine) no phonetic description system represents the voiced velar fricative as \mathfrak{X} , nor the *ach*-laut as \mathfrak{H} . Rather, the voiced velar fricative (which is not found in modern English, but which does occur in Old English, e.g. *lagu*, and in colloquial German, e.g. *sagen*) is almost universally denoted by either a Greek gamma, γ or \mathfrak{V} , or by a *yogh*, \mathfrak{Z} ; in fact, Tolkien uses \mathfrak{Z} for this sound throughout the *Etymologies*. However, the use of \mathfrak{X} for the *ach*-laut and \mathfrak{h} for its aspirated counterpart is found in various historical grammars of the early part of this century, for instance Wright's *Gothic Grammar* (1910; see p. 78). \mathfrak{H} must therefore represent at least the simple breath-*h* of English, or more likely the more strongly aspirated *h* of the Greek rough breathing.

So the pairing of the runes \mathfrak{h} " \mathfrak{X} " and \mathfrak{L} " \mathfrak{H} " in the third column of the chart does not indicate that they vary in the presence or absence of voice, but rather in the presence or absence of *aspiration*. And in fact, this is also what the pairings in the rest of the third column indicate. For while \mathfrak{h} , \mathfrak{L} , and \mathfrak{r} are the voiceless counterparts of \mathfrak{g} , \mathfrak{l} , and \mathfrak{r} respectively, they are so only by the addition of a strong aspirate *h* (the same is true of *m* and *n* in the second column, and of *b* and *d* in the first column): as J. Morris Jones notes in his *Welsh Grammar* (p. 19), nasals can only be made voiceless by the strong emission of breath, and the same is true of the liquids *l* and *r* and of the approximate *w*.

The Vowels

The first thing I will note of the vowels is that I find it curious that Paul has included the runes \mathfrak{L} \mathfrak{h} "j (\mathfrak{i})" in his articulation chart of the Gondolinic vowels as a mid central vowel, which indicates a *schwa*, \mathfrak{a} , the neutral vowel sound heard for instance in English *but*. Although *j* (\mathfrak{i}) is indeed known as a semivowel, it is in fact a consonant (a voiced palatal fricative), as clearly indicated by the subscript arch. Paul has omitted the other semivowels (*w* and \mathfrak{u}) from his articulation charts altogether.

Paul states that the rune \mathfrak{M} "E" (a mid front round vowel = German \mathfrak{o}), does not have a fronting marker, and accordingly places the rune in his articulation chart as a back vowel. However, when we compare \mathfrak{D} "A" (low front unround = English short *a*) with \mathfrak{D} "A" (low back unround), and \mathfrak{O} "y" (high front round = German \mathfrak{i}) with \mathfrak{O} "U" (high back round), it is clear that fronting could be indicated either by a dot or by a vertical stroke. Comparing \mathfrak{M} "E" with \mathfrak{N} "O" clearly demonstrates the addition of a vertical stroke, and therefore fronting.

More confusion results from Paul's failure to include

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Interdental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar
Voiced Stop	B W V			D T			G	
Voicless Stop	P V			T			K (C)	
Voiced Fricative		v	ð	z	ʒ	j (j) h		
Voiceless Fricative		F	p	s	ʃ	ç	x	
Voiced Affricate				DZ (J)				
Voiceless Affricate				Tʃ (CH)				
Aspirate (Voiceless)							H	
Voiced Nasal	M			N			ŋ	
Aspirate (Voiceless) Nasal	MH						ŋh	
Voiced Approximant				L				w (u)
Aspirate (Voiceless) Approximant				LH				lv
Voiced Trill				R				
Aspirate (Voiceless) Trill				RH				

Table I: The Gondolinic Consonants

		Front		Central		Back	
		Unround	Round	Unround	Round	Unround	Round
High	Tense	ī	ȳ				ū
	Lax	i	y				u
Mid	Tense	ē	ē				ō
	Lax	e	e				o
Low	Tense	æ				ā	
	Lax	æ				A	

Table II: The Gondolinic Vowels

columns for distinguishing between round and unround vowels. This causes him to place "y" and "ȳ" as central vowels, when they are in fact front round vowels.

These observations and distinctions require a major restructuring of Paul's articulation charts for the Gondolinic runes. Tables I and II therefore present a complete reanalysis of the articulation of the consonants and vowels respectively. (Note that I place "A" and "ā" as back vowels only because there are no other central vowels in the system. These could indeed be central vowels.)

Pauline Baynes

Dockenfield, England

Dear Glen,

Just to say a Big Thank You to you. I can't tell you how moved and grateful I was at your unexpected and kind gesture in awarding me that splendid Aslan trophy on behalf of The Mythopoeic Society — and the Scroll — all so undeserved by me! I really was amazed and overwhelmed — nothing has given me so much pleasure since I received the Kate Evenway Medal. At this last working stage of my life, your gift has inspired me to carry on — and try to do better — a much needed encouragement. Thank you so very much.

It was so good of you to give up your day to come down here — and I was so pleased to meet you again. I enjoyed our day together so much.

I do hope the Conference and all the Celebrations, talks, Banquet etc. went well, and that you enjoyed your trip to England — but I'm afraid the weather took a definite turn for the worse... I hope it didn't spoil things too much. Thank you again, so much for your generous praise, and kindness.

[Because she was not able to attend the Tolkien Centenary Conference, I visited Miss Baynes in her home the day before the Conference began to present her with The Mythopoetic Life-Time Achievement Award. She lives about an hour and fifteen minutes by train from London in Surrey. It is a rural area, sparsely populated in comparison to the bustle and congestion of London, which she avoids. She lives in a beautiful large cottage with immaculate grounds, decorated most charmingly inside. Her work desk is in the far end of the living room, looking out over the grounds and green countryside beyond. The weather she speaks of seemed as if autumn has arrived in late August in England. Miss Baynes is currently working on another large project, which will be announced probably next year. Her art is *sui generis* and much appreciated and loved. —GG]



Nancy Martsch

Sherman Oaks, CA

Re: Paula DiSante's unfavorable review of the Alan Lee illustrations to the Centenary Edition of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*:

I recently had a chance to view an unsealed copy of the Centenary *The Lord of the Rings* with Alan Lee's illustrations. I was surprised that they were all so purple. They seemed to be done in shades of purple, grey, and ochre. Perhaps this was a defective copy? (I know that an improperly exposed photograph can come out purple.) I have Lee's *Castles*. It is very nice, and not purple. However, the Lee illustrations on the individual volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* were purple also. I would not care for an expensive book of purple pictures.

But the drawing *itself* is very good. I suspect that DiSante's antipathy may stem from the fact that her own art focuses almost exclusively on faces, while Lee's is predominantly landscape. DiSante does not draw landscapes. But to condemn Lee for inattention to the text, from the artist who gave us a black-haired Níniel! (*Mythlore* 63)—this is the pot calling the kettle black.

[Paula DiSante, who has helped in the production of this and the last issue, saw Nancy's letter when it arrived and wrote this response. —GG]

Touché, Nancy. You are right about the Níniel (a mistake I've made twice). I admit it: I blew it. But I blew it because of a decision I made long ago. When I first started illustrating for *Mythlore* in 1984, I told myself that I would not go looking for material farther afield than *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*. To me, the reason for this was obvious. Certainly most of the members of the Society had read the first two books — usually numerous times. But I found that many

members had read *The Silmarillion* only once (and some not at all), and were thus often quite unfamiliar with particular tales within that book.

Noting this, I knew that if I started delving into Tolkien's more obscure works (the category in which I considered *Unfinished Tales*), the viewers of the artwork would be pretty much at a loss trying to figure out what I was illustrating (regardless of whether or not the picture was given a title). So, in effect, I put *Unfinished Tales* out of my mind. I truly did not remember the references to Níniel. I figured that *The Silmarillion* was good enough as a source (seeing as the tales in it were the ones originally selected by Christopher Tolkien to be the representatives of each story), and if specific details weren't there, then they were to be guessed at. Sure enough, there is no reference to the color of Níniel's hair in this book. But, as it turns out, your letter proves that the limits I set upon myself have indeed come back to haunt me because there was an attentive reader out there to catch the error.

I have tried to be as accurate as possible over the years, but, much to my chagrin, sometimes mistakes happen. When they do occur, I correct them (my dark-haired Eärendil of *ML* 40 became blond in *ML* 67 thanks to Margaret Purdy Dean's astute observations of what the characters' parents looked like. Yet the only reference to him in this regard is the appellation "Bright Eärendil" in *The Silmarillion*.) It was only quite recently that I was reminded of the references to the blond Níniel of *Unfinished Tales* because of a paper that Sarah Beach wrote for *Mythlore* ("Fire and Ice: The Traditional Heroine in *The Silmarillion*," *Mythlore* 67).

Although I acknowledge this mistake, I still think Alan Lee's missteps are more unfortunate because he didn't have to search other books in order to find references to characters—he had *The Lord of the Rings* right in front of him! It continues to be my opinion that he should have been more accurate and artistically more inventive.

I freely admit to my errors. Perhaps because I do illustrate for *Mythlore*, that makes me an easy target. But if I had never done a single pencil-, pen-, or brush-stroke for the pages of this journal, I would still be qualified, I believe, to comment as I did on Lee's illustrations. My undergraduate degree is in English Literature and Art History, and I am currently employed as a professional critic. So I felt at the time (and still do) more than qualified to write the review. I stand by it, and I do not recant a single word.

I don't get paid for my artwork in *Mythlore*, and am not a professional artist. I do it for fun. But Alan Lee is a professional who is paid a lot of money to do these paintings. And in my opinion, when an artist is paid to be great (and moving, and convincing, and accurate), he/she better put up or shut up. This is not Lee's best work. His work in *Castles* blows *The Lord of the Rings* illustrations out of the water. To put it simply, Tolkien's fans deserved better. That was my point all along.

I have to say, as an aside, that now, many years after reading *Unfinished Tales*, I regret ever having made the decision to not illustrate from it, because much of the material is absolutely fascinating. I am tempted to lift the self-imposed restrictions so that I can have a go at the tales, if something catches my fancy.

— Paula DiSante