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Abstract
Considers the Runic and Tengwar letters on the title pages of The Lord of the Rings as compared to The Silmarillion and other subsequent titles edited by Christopher Tolkien.

Additional Keywords
Tolkien, Christopher—Editorship; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Languages
Quenti Lambardillion
A Column on Middle-earth Linguistics
Paul Nolan Hyde

The Laborer-Asthete:
Tengwar on the Title Page

When personal acquaintances discover that I have advanced degrees in English language and literature they are impressed; when they discover that both my master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation treat J.R.R. Tolkien’s invented languages, their reactions vary, but almost always accompanied by a smile. I have generally been left to surmise precisely what the smile implies. Being an optimistic sort by nature, impervious to epithets (veiled or otherwise), I assume that the smile means, “Wonderful! Finally I know someone who received a PhD in something that was undoubtedly fun.” In all candor, it was fun. The great delight, however, has been to realize that after more than twenty years of studying Tolkien’s linguistics, it is still fun. There is an exhilaration associated with arriving at an insight about what he created that is aesthetic in nature, a special kind of appreciation of an extraordinary mind at work. Behind every aesthetic experience, however, there is an enormous amount of “horse work”, tedious laboring that seems endless. I have come to believe, as a result, that all things that generate truly satisfying aesthetic pleasure involve meticulous, grueling work. In conjunction with this laborer-aesthete principle is the idea that one can only write powerfully, convincingly, from a position of strength. Simply put, one has to know what one is talking about. This often requires pursuing an idea or task almost ad nauseam. The Title Page inscriptions of the published works of Middle-earth provide such an opportunity.

Deciphering the Runic and Tengwar letters of the Title pages is what I would call “Quick Fun”. Almost every Tolkien fan I know has spent at least a few moments laboring over the inscriptions, if for nothing more than idle curiosity. I will now dismiss the idle curious by giving a transcription for each, thus dispensing with “Quick Fun”.

The Title Page of The Lord of the Rings implements both Certhar runes and Tengwar script. The runic portion is italicized:

*The Lord of the Rings* translated from the *Red Book of West March* 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

The tales of the First Age when Morgoth dwelt in Middle-earth and the Elves made war upon him for the recovery of the Silmarils: to which are appended the Downfall of Numenor and the History of the Rings of Power and the Third Age in which these tales come to their end

The volume *Unfinished Tales* signals Christopher Tolkien’s visible emergence as the editor of his father’s literary treasury. The Title Page is undoubtedly completely his.

In this book of Unfinished Tales by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien which was brought together by Christopher Reuel Tolkien his son are told many things of Men and Elves in Numenor and in Middle-earth from the Elder Days in Beleriand to the War of the Ring and an account is given of the Druedain of Istar and the Palantiri

As one might guess, the two volumes of the Book of Lost Tales have similar Title Page inscriptions. Part One is as follows:

This is the first part of the Book of Lost Tales of Elfinness which Eriol the Mariner learned from the Elves of Tol Eressa the Lonely Isle in the Western Ocean and afterwards wrote in the Golden Book of Tavrobel: herein are told the tales of Valinor from the Music of the Ainur to the Exile of the Noldoli and of (the) Hiding of Valinor.

Part Two continues the original composition:

This is the second part of the Book of Lost Tales of Elfinness which Eriol the Mariner learned from the Elves of Tol Eressa the Lonely Isle in the Western Ocean and afterwards wrote in the Golden Book of Tavrobel: herein are told the tales of Beren and Tinuviel of Turambar of the Fall of Gondolin and of the Necklace of the Dwarves.

The Title Page of The Lays of Beleriand follow in the same vein:

In the first part of this book is given the Lay of the Children of Hurin by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien in which is set forth in part the Tale of Turin: in the second part is the Lay of Lithian which is the Gest of Beren and Luthien as far as the encounter of Beren with Carcharoth at the gate of Angband
The Shaping of Middle-earth Title Page includes Quenya titles of works together with their meanings:

Herein are the Quenta Noldorinwa the History of the Gnomes: the Ambarkanta or Shape of the World by Rumil: the Annals of Valinor and the Annals of Beleriand by Pengolod the Wise of Gondolin: with dates of the world in the Elder Days and translations made by Aelfwine the Mariner of England into the tongue of his own land.

Volume 5 of The History of Middle-earth, The Lost Road is the latest of the series:

Herein are collected the oldest tale of the Downfall of Numenor: the story of the Lost Road into the West: the Annals of Valinor and the Annals of Beleriand in a later form: the Ainulindale or Music of the Ainur: the Lhamraas or Account of Tongues: the Quenta Silmarillion or History of the Silmarils: and the history of many words and names.

A close inspection of these transcriptions and their sources reveals a transition of character usage and, in some instances, a philosophical shift from J.R.R. Tolkien's implementation of the Tengwar to his son's. A good place to start is with the Tengwar spelling of J.R.R. Tolkien's name which appears in The Lord of the Rings, Unfinished Tales, and The Lays of Beleriand.

The Lord of the Rings

The Lays of Beleriand

Unfinished Tales

As can easily be seen, the Unfinished Tales inscription and The Lays of Beleriand inscription are precisely the same, demonstrating in part what is generally true about JRRT's system and that of CRRT: they are for the most part internally consistent, but not necessarily consistent with each other.

The most dramatic difference are the values of the various superscribed vowel marks, the tehtar. The marks for "a" and "o" are universally the same insofar as simple spelling is concerned. The values for "e" and "i" have been reversed in Christopher's system. I suspect that this was done to afford a spelling consistency with the tehtar, since JRRT generally used a subscribed dot to represent a silent "e". Having the superscripted dot represent "e" as well, unified the overall system in terms of simple spelling. JRRT himself, however, used the superscripted dot for "e" in his personal correspondence to Hugh Brogan (Letters, p. 132, 224), thus justifying Christopher's use (if it needs any justification). Of great interest is Christopher's development of the tehtar for "u". J.R.R. Tolkien's line tehtar ("e", "i", and "u") are strokes that move from lower-left to upper-right, the "o" curving thereafter down-right and the "u" curving up-left. By Unfinished Tales (and thereafter), "u" is a stroke that "moves" from upper-left to lower-right, the curl downward placed on the upper-left. I placed the word moves in quotes because it is difficult to tell which way Christopher makes the stroke, although I suspect that it is from right-to-left rather than the normal left-to-right. I do not have in my possession any holograph that shows J.R.R. Tolkien using this form of "u" and suggest that it has been developed by Christopher to accommodate his own hand, and, perhaps, to avoid the visual confusion that sometimes occurs between the three line tehtar.

There are two other differences in the Tengwar representations of J.R.R. Tolkien's name that bear mentioning in passing. First is the extraordinary spelling of John as Jhon. I have raised this issue before and refer the reader to ML 51, pages 22-23, which I think satisfactorily settles the question. Why would Christopher do it differently? I believe that he chose simple spelling out of deference to his father's wit and whimsy. The original was a wonderful, and masterfully accomplished, set-piece of Tolkienian humor. It was the sort of thing that could only be done once. The second item has to do with Tengwar symbol #25, here transcribed as "r". On the Tengwar table (III, p. 396), this character is drawn with an open bowl. In the Title page inscription of The Lord of the Rings, however, it is apparent that over-extended pen strokes may indeed close the bowl completely. The Silmarillion inscription has all closed bowls. Unfinished Tales has them mixed again, opened and closed. Ever after, save one marginal exception in The Shaping of Middle-earth, the bowls are closed. My personal experience is that, with a nibbed pen, the closed bowl type is easier to draw. Since there is no character that would be confused with Tengwar #25 whether open or closed, Christopher has apparently not concerned himself with the difference.

There are several other spelling differences between The Lord of the Rings Title Page inscription and the inscriptions in some of the other volumes that involve elements other than those discussed above. They are varied and almost defy organization and perhaps they best way they can be presented is character by character, alphabetically.

a: the three-dot superscription is universal except for three instances, two of which are the same word. The word war is spelled "wor", both in The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion inscriptions. In the inscription for Unfinished Tales it is
spelled "war", Christopher apparently giving up the phonetic spelling. In *Unfinished Tales*, Drúedain is spelled "Druedain", but I believe this to be a scribal error, probably arising from a use of the diphthong "ai" (see "Ainur" and "Ainurindale" in *Lost Tales*, Part One and *Lost Road* and then inadvertently adding the stroke for "i" when adding the "n". There is, however, always the outside possibility that this is a special case of indicating vowel lengthening, but I am dubious. It is also interesting to note that Christopher apparently invents the methodology of subscribing full characters as a spelling device for vowel combinations, although it is possible that it came from JRRT himself. In the inscriptions for the word "Middle-earth" in *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*, the "e" is superscripted over a carrier meaning vowel-preceding, and the "a" is subscribed meaning vowel-following. This technique is used in the words "learned", "Eressea", and "Ocean" in *Lost Tales*, and in "road" in the *Lost Road* inscription, superscribing the "o".

b: universally Tengwar #6

c: universally Tengwar #4 when representing "hard c", that is, the sound of "k". In *Lost Tales*, Part One, the "c" of "Ocean" is represented by Tengwar #30, as is the second "c" of "necklace" in *Lost Tales*, Part Two, notwithstanding the fact that phonetically they represent the two separate sounds of "sh" and "s" respectively.

d: universally Tengwar #5

e: once Christopher makes the decision to use the superscripted dot as the tehta for "e" it is universally so throughout the rest of the volumes.

f: universally Tengwar #10, including the phonetic combination "ph" in "Christopher" in *Unfinished Tales*.

g: there is a universal distinction made between "soft g" and "hard g" by using Tengwar #7 and #8 respectively. In *The Silmarillion*, the "g"'s "age" and "Morgoth" are so distinguished. In *The Lays of Beleriand*, "Gest" and "given" are examples of the same principle. Tengwar #7 is also used for "j", as in "John", essentially the same sound as "soft g". The combination "ng" is universally represented by Tengwar #20. The rather odd combination "gh" of "brought" in *Unfinished Tales* is represented by Tengwar #8 with an extended telco. Normally, this extension signifies extreme aspiration; here it seems to soften the "g" into non-existence. In the Hugh Brogan letter, J.R.R. Tolkien uses Tengwar #16 for the apparently vacuous "gh" of "Hugh". The character in *Unfinished Tales* appears to be of Christopher's construction.

h: universally Tengwar #33 when standing alone (initially, except in "Lhammas" in *The Lost Road*). When the character is in vacuous combination with another character, as "Ch" in "Christopher" (the sound is "k" not "ch") in *Unfinished Tales*, Christopher's spelling "John" in *Unfinished Tales and The Lays of Beleriand*, then it is spelling represented with an extended telco with no lua.

When it is in contributive combination, distinct characters are used: Tengwar #11 for "sh", Tengwar #34 for "wh", Tengwar #3 for "ch" (except for "Carcharoth" in *The Lays of Beleriand*, a Quenya word using Tengwar #12, indicating a pronunciation that belies the spelling), "gh" and "ph" as mentioned above, and "th" which is phonetically distinguished depending on whether or not the sound is voiced or voiceless (hence, "this" using Tengwar #13 and "things" using Tengwar #9 in *Unfinished Tales*).

i: once the change from superscripted dot to left-to-right ascending stroke is made, the usage is virtually universal except for diphthongs. In these combinations (like "ai" of "Ainur" and "Ainurindale" in *Lost Tales*, Part One and *Lost Road*, and "ei" of "their" in *The Silmarillion*), the "i"-break of the diphthong is represented by Tengwar #35.

j: as indicated above, "j" is universally Tengwar #7.

k: universally Tengwar #4 including the combination "ck" of "necklace" in *Lost Tales*, Part Two.

l: universally Tengwar #27

m: universally Tengwar #18

n: universally Tengwar #17 except when in combination as "ng" as indicated above.

o: universally an ascending left-to-right down curl stroke except for two instances in *The Silmarillion*. The word "to" uses a subscribed curled stroke which may just as well be a "u". This particular usage is unique to *The Silmarillion* and the vowel of the word "to" in other inscriptions is a regular superscripted character over a simple carrier. Double "oo", as in "book" has two distinct representations. In *Unfinished Tales* and in *The Lays of Beleriand*, a single "o" stroke is superscripted over a long carrier; in the two volumes of the *Lost Tales*, the carrier and stroke are doubled as if striving for a spelling rather than a phonetic representation. The combination with "a" was mentioned above.

p: universally Tengwar #2 except in combination with "ph", sounding "f".

q: universally a mirror image of Tengwar #2. To my knowledge this is a unique character appearing in "Quenta" (or "Qenta") in *The Shaping of Middle-earth* and the *Lost Road*.

r: the uses of the two forms of "r" are really quite disconcerting at first blush, the main problem occurring in the Title Page inscription of *Unfinished Tales*. Generally, Tengwar #28 is used preceding vowels; Tengwar #21 is used before consonants or finally. The only exceptions to this (other than *Unfinished Tales*) are Quenya words ("Ainur" in *Lost Tales*, Part One and *Lost Road*; "Carcharoth" in *The Lays of Beleriand*; and "Ambarkanta" in *The Shaping of Middle-earth*), which I suspect reflect pronunciation of the language rather than that of English. In *Unfinished Tales*, Tengwar #25
is used universally for "s" without consideration for position; hence "together", "Christopher", "Numenor", "Elder", "war", and "Middle-earth" all use Tengwar #25, whereas in other Title Pages they would have used (and some indeed did use) Tengwar #31 ("Numenor" in Silmarillion and Lost Road; "Elder" in Shaping of Middle-earth; "war" in Lord of the Rings and Silmarillion; and "Middle-earth" in Silmarillion. One can only speculate as to why Unfinished Tales diverged, but the return to the original system suggests to me a momentary lapse in Unfinished Tales.

s : beginning with Unfinished Tales the system for "s" is consistent. If "s" is initial, or follows a consonant, or is so placed as not to have the preceding vowel superscripted over it, Tengwar #29 is used. Thus, "first" and "tales" in Lost Tales, Parts One and Two, "first", "set", and "second" in The Lays of Beleriand; and so forth. If the "s" is to carry a preceding vowel, then a shortened special character, probably related to Tengwar #29, is used. I suspect that this is another of Christopher's inventions. If "s" is final, following a consonant, without a superscripted vowel, it may be attached to the preceding consonant as a horizontal hook. This is universally true throughout all of the inscriptions; hence "Elves", "rings", and "Silmarils" in The Silmarillion, and so forth. The only exception is when the preceding consonant is an "l", "Tales" in The Silmarillion is drawn with the hook, but Christopher does not use it again for "Tales", apparently preferring Tengwar #29. In The Silmarillion, the horizontal hook and the unshortened Tengwar #29 are used, the latter functioning with superscriptions. In The Lord of the Rings inscription, the hook is used in "hobbits", Tengwar #29 is used with phonetic "s" ("history", "west", "set", and "seen"), and Tengwar #31 and #32 are used for phonetic "z" ("is" and "as") one being preferred over the other depending on the ease with which the vowel might be superscripted (see III, 399). Again, the introduction of the shortened form obviated the need for the distinction in spelling.

f : universally Tengwar #1 except when in combination with "h" as noted above.

t : the direction change of the stroke was described above. In addition, "u" as the second element of a diphthong is represented as Tengwar #36, with the superscripted vowel. Thus, "brought" in Unfinished Tales, "encounter" in Lays of Beleriand, and "account" of the Lost Road.

v : universally Tengwar #14

w : universally Tengwar #22 except when in combination with "h".

x : the opportunity for "x" only transpires once in the Title Page inscriptions and that in Lost Tales, Part One as "Exiles". I believe that this is Christopher's invention as well; I cannot recall having seen it before or since in print. "x" is phonetically the sound "kə" and the character reflects that: Tengwar #4 with a modified Tengwar #29 superimposed on the lower left-hand corner. Note that there is no superscripted "e"; the powerful phonetic construction of the character itself is sufficient.

y : in The Lord of the Rings, "y" is represented as a long carrier with a superscripted dot, a "long i" as it were. In The Silmarillion and the two parts of the Lost Tales, the carrier bears the left-to-right ascending stroke, reflecting Christopher's switch of the tehtar for "s" and "i", as indicated above. In Unfinished Tales, Lays of Beleriand, Shaping of Middle-earth, and Lost Road, "y" is indicated by Tengwar #23.

z : is not spelled in any of the inscriptions as a letter.

of : a convention in writing using Tengwar #14 ("v") with a telco extension.

of the : the convention for "of" with a subscribed macron, attached to the telco in The Lord of the Rings and The Silmarillion, gradually being written separately. The subscribed macron generally means to double the letter, but this unusual telco usage in English precludes any real confusion. There is, however, one instance in The Silmarillion where the separate conventions for "of" and "the" are used instead of the combined convention.

the : another convention that modifies Tengwar #13 ("dh", the voiced version of "th") with the extended telco.

and : a convention using Tengwar #5 with a superscripted macron, indicating nasalization (the "n" corresponds to "d" as "m" does to "p"). In The Lord of the Rings, the "and" convention possessed a subscribed dot, probably representing the "mid-central" phonetic value of the vowel. It is not used in any of the other inscriptions.

syllabic consonants : both final "ed" ("unfinished" in Unfinished Tales and "er" throughout the inscriptions from The Silmarillion on, do not have accompanying tehtar. This is most likely a residual phonetic representation. It could be simple scribal error such as is probably the case in Unfinished Tales and Lays of Beleriand where "which" is not provided with its superscripted "i"; in The Silmarillion and Lost Tales the superscription is there. Another such accidental elision may be in "are" in Unfinished Tales where the subscribed dot for "e" appears to be missing. There is no question that the superscripted dot in "second" is missing in Lost Tales, Part Two and is present in the same word in Lays of Beleriand. The syllabic consonants are probably all legitimate, however.

There is at least one other problem with some of the inscriptions, however, that is really frustrating to "ad nauseo-philics". Sometimes in the process of collating the gatherings, and the binding itself, hides portions of the inscriptions on the Title Pages. Fortunately, the opposing page replicates the inscription, so that that which cannot be read because it is tucked into the binding or covered with glue can usually be found on the edge of the page. My copy of Lays of Beleriand, however,