

The Toponymy of Middle-Earth

JOHN ALGEO

Place-names are more than a device to let us conveniently refer to locations; they are also a technique for binding us and the land together. "The land was ours," said Robert Frost, "before we were the land's." Before we can belong to a place, before we can have the sense of "home" and of fitting in, we must know the place so intimately that we have a "first-name" speaking acquaintance with it. To pass through a place without knowing or using its name is truly to be a stranger in a strange land. Thus the study of place-names, to which Edward Ehrensperger devoted so much of his attention and which he fostered with loving care, is no mere academic exercise nor simply a hobby for underemployed country rectors. It is rather an effort to help us understand how we come to be the land's, how we belong. The bonds of place-names are in space and in time and in the psyches of those who belong to the land.

As places in the real world must be named so that we can be a part of their reality, so must places in fictional worlds. Mainstream fiction characteristically is set in real places to increase the sense of verisimilitude that is the aim of such fiction. And even when the setting is not an actual place, it is intended to fit in as closely as possible with real-world features, in both topography and toponymy. A knowledge of place-names and a detailed vision of the physical features of the place are mutually reinforcing ways of coming to belong to it. Thomas Hardy's Wessex, William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, and Sinclair Lewis's Zenith are not places in the real world, but they certainly might be. We know approximately where they are, and we know exactly what they are like.

Place-Names in Fantasy Worlds

Places in fantasy literature, on the other hand, are less predictable and more variable than places in mainstream fiction. Yet they too need names if we are to enter confidently into their subcreation. If we are not to be strangers in a strange land, we must know where we are in Faërie – we must know the place-names of the fantasy world. Writers of fantasy fiction have increasingly come to a realization of the place-names in their

subcreations. Three examples can serve as typical instances of the growing importance of names in the history of fantasy literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55).

When Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice*, he was little concerned with names for the places in Wonderland. Indeed, even Wonderland itself in the first handwritten version of the story was merely “Under Ground.” Alice finds herself in a good many places – a hall, a pool of tears, the White Rabbit’s house, the Duchess’s house, the March Hare’s lawn, the Queen of Heart’s garden, a courtroom, and so on – but those places are all referred to by generics, not by proper names. There are practically no names of places in *Alice*. Even the geography is vague, flowing, and dreamlike; it would be impossible to draw with confidence a map of Wonderland. By the time Carroll wrote the sequel, *Alice through the Looking-Glass* (1871), he had come to a more fixed geography. The chess-game metaphor of the book assures that we can draw a map of sorts for Looking-Glass Land, even though parts of the territory would defy cartography. How does one map a forest that turns into a little dark shop, then into a boat on a river, then back into the shop, and then again into a forest with a wall at one end? Moreover, genuine place-names are still lacking in the chess-board world.

Place-names and a fixed topography acquire far more prominence and importance in Frank L. Baum’s *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and in the many subsequent volumes of the Oz cycle. At the center of the Land of Oz is the Emerald city; it is surrounded by Munchkin Country, Quadling Country, Gillikin Country, and Winkie Country, which contain many named places. Not only can readers imagine a map of Oz, but in a subsequent volume they are provided one that indicates the scores of places where the stories take place. In the Oz cycle, mapping and naming have become an integral part of the fantasy world, as they were not in the *Alice* books.

Baum wrote his own 14 volumes in the Oz series over a period of 20 years, and the succeeding additional 26 volumes written by others were produced over another 43 years. Thus it is hardly surprising that inconsistencies in geography and in place-names should have crept into the subcreation. Baum himself seems briefly to have forgotten the basic orientation of his fantasy world, for in a map published in 1914, the geography of Oz is unaccountably reversed, with Munchkinland, where Dorothy was first deposited by the cyclone, shown in the west instead of in the east, where it clearly belongs. Other inconsistencies have provided a continuing challenge for Ozzites to fit conflicting descriptions together in order to arrive at authoritative maps of Oz, such as those published by

the International Wizard of Oz Club, Inc. Even the name *Oz* has undergone a change of reference. In the first book, *Oz* is the name of the Wizard, and *the Land of Oz* is a possessive genitive: 'the land belonging to or ruled by Oz'; in later books, *Oz* has become the name of the Land itself, and *the Land of Oz* is an appositional genitive: 'the land named Oz.'

When we come to J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth cycle, we make another quantum leap in the onomastics of fantasy. As in Baum's Land of Oz, there are maps and place-names, but with a difference of scope and detail that makes the toponymy of Middle-earth qualitatively different from that of Oz. Middle-earth has not one, but a series of maps that show various parts of the land in different geological periods. Middle-earth places have not merely names, but names that are a part of the fourteen or so languages spoken in Middle-earth at various times in its history. Its names are like the names of places in the primary world: they are transferred from one place to another; names are borrowed or translated from one language into another; phonetic change over time makes some names semantically opaque; places are renamed as a result of historical events; and names belong to a system of toponymy with generics and specifics and patterns of naming.

The success of Tolkien's subcreation depends in no small measure on the extent, detail, and consistency of his mapping and place-naming. The ability to create a world and to name it makes of the fantasy author a combination of the divine and the primal human, for while Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, Adam named all things in them. Such heady power, human and divine, has to be wielded with discretion if it is to result in a believable world, one to which readers will want to belong, into which they can enter, and in which they will be at home. Part of Tolkien's genius is that he had that discretion. Because Middle-earth has set the fashion for high fantasy and is the benchmark by which other secondary worlds are judged, an examination of its use of place-names will show how far fantasy has come in integrating place-names into imaginary worlds and will suggest what skill is needed to ape God and Adam.

Place-Names in Middle-Earth

In the Middle-earth cycle, there are more than 400 place-names in languages other than English: names of rivers, springs, waterfalls, mountains, caverns, lakes, seas, forests, plains, fields, areas, kingdoms, cities, towers, fortresses, and other geographical features, both natural and constructed. The names are potentially in any of the fourteen languages of Middle-earth, although in actuality most of the names are in Sindarin, or

Grey Elven. Some of the most important, however, are in Quenya, or High Elven, a closely related language. In the following discussion, unless some other language is indicated, all the names are Sindarin. Non-Elven names are mentioned only briefly.

Place-names in the Middle-earth cycle consist typically of a generic term that indicates the kind of place and a specific term that limits the kind to a particular one. Such names are presented below first – and in greatest detail. Thereafter, other patterns for place-names are discussed briefly.

When a name includes both a generic and a specific term, they may be in either order. If the generic is first, each term is usually written as a separate word; but if the specific is first, the terms are almost always written solid as a single orthographic word. The difference in spelling a name solid or open is significant for pronunciation, since it affects the placement of accent. The rule is that stress falls on the penult in two-syllable words and also in longer words if the penult contains a long vowel, a diphthong, or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants. Otherwise the stress is on the antepenult: *'imlad* 'valley' but *Im'ladris* 'Rivendell' and *'tum* 'laden' 'wide valley' but *Tumladen*, a place-name. (Diacritic marks, which Tolkien used inconsistently to show vowel length and for other purposes, are omitted in the following lists.)

The fact that names with the order GENERIC + SPECIFIC are generally written as two words is appropriate to the grammatical structure of Elven, in which headwords seem to precede their modifiers. On the other hand, the fact that names with the order SPECIFIC + GENERIC are regularly written solid suggests the functioning of those generics as semi-suffixes. Some generics function both ways, as heads and as suffix-like morphemes. It is impressive, however, that within the toponymy of Middle-earth, word order, grammatical function, stress patterns, and orthography are mutually reinforcing.

The following lists of names with generics and specifics are organized according to the type of feature named. When the generic occurs at the end rather than the beginning of a name, it is cited first, to call attention to it. Glosses are given for names to indicate their meaningful parts in the Middle-earth languages (chiefly Sindarin). If Tolkien's books cite an English version of the name that glosses its parts, that is given in double quotation marks; otherwise a literal gloss on the name is given in single quotation marks. For some names, not all parts can be identified.

Mountains and Hills

Judging from the abundance of names for mountains, hills, and related features, Middle-earth must have been a craggy land – a topography that

is appropriate, since the Middle-earth cycle is set at an earlier, and perhaps geologically more primitive, stage in the history of our world, a time before some of our old mountains had yet been eroded down. Two terms are frequent as generics for mountains, and both are used initially:

Amon Amarth “Mount Doom”
 Amon Din ‘silent hill’
 Amon Ereb “Lonely Hill”
 Amon Ethir “Hill of Spies”
 Amon Gwareth ‘—— hill’
 Amon Hen “Hill of Sight”
 Amon Lhaw “Hill of Hearing”
 Amon Obel ‘—— hill’
 Amon Rudh “Bald Hill”
 Amon Sul “Hill of the Wind”
 Amon Uilos ‘ever-snow hill’

The plural of *amon* ‘hill’ is *emyn*, used also as a generic:

Eryn Arnen ‘royal-water hills’ or ‘beside-water hills’
 Eryn Beraid “Tower Hills” (*beraid*, plural of *barad* ‘tower’)
 Eryn Muil ‘—— hills’

The plural *ered* ‘mountains’ also appears as a place-name generic:

Ered Engrin “Iron Mountains”
 Ered Gorgoroth “Mountains of Terror”
 Ered Lindon “Mountains of Lindon [a region of Middle-earth]”
 Ered Lithui “Ashen Mountains”
 Ered Lomin “Echoing Mountains”
 Ered Luin “Blue Mountains”
 Ered Mithrin “Grey Mountains”
 Ered Nimrais ‘white-horn mountains’ (*rais*, plural of *ras* ‘horn’)
 Ered Wethrin “Shadowy Mountains”

The singular of *ered*, *orod* ‘mountain,’ appears in some one-word names:

Orodruin ‘fiery mountain’ (a volcano)
 Oromet ‘last mountain’ (a Quenya name with loss of /d/ perhaps by assimilation)

Orod has an alternative, collective plural in *-rim*, which is used as an end generic in the name for a mountain with three peaks, hence perhaps the use of the collective suffix:

orodrim: Thangorodrim “Mountains of Tyranny” (*thang* ‘oppression’)

A shorter form of the word, *or*, is also used as an end generic:

or: Erebor “Lonely Mountain”
 or: Pelori ‘encircling heights’ (a Quenya name; *ori* perhaps a plural of *or* ‘high [place],’ related to *orod*)

Dol 'head' is used as a generic in names of some hills and also of cities or fortresses, doubtless built upon hills:

Dol Amroth 'Amroth [an Elven king's] hill' (a city)
 Dol Baran 'goldenbrown hill'
 Dol Guldur 'black-magic hill' (a fortress)
 Dolmed "'Wet Head'"

It too has use as an end generic, with the variant *dhol*, perhaps used after vowels:

dhol: Fanuidhol "'Cloudyhead'"
 dol: Mindolluin "'Towering Blue-head'" (*min* related to *minas* 'tower,' *luin* 'blue')
 dol: Nardol 'fire head' (a beacon hill)

Other end generics for mountains also involve metaphorical uses:

dal 'end, foot': Ramdal "'Wall's End'" (foot of a long cliff)
 dil 'point, horn': Celebdil 'silver point'
 dil: Taniquetil 'high white point' (a Quenya name with a phonetic variant of the generic, *til*)
 iath 'fence': Echoriath 'encircling wall'
 ras 'horn': Caradhras 'red horn' (*caradh* assimilated from *caran* 'red')
 ras: (Mount) Taras 'high horn' (*tar* 'high')
 ram 'wall': Andram "'Long Wall'" (a cliff)
 tarma 'pillar': Meneltarma "'Pillar of Heaven'" (a Quenya name)
 tir 'watch': Hyarmentir 'south watch'

The second of those generics also has a different, nonmountainous metaphorical use in referring to a point or angle of land at the confluence of two rivers:

dil: Egladil 'forsaken point'

Some terms for features related to mountains have initial generics. *Cirith* 'pass through mountains, gorge' is from a root *cir-* 'cut, cleave' and a suffix *-ith* that forms deverbal nouns, hence literally 'cutting, cleft':

Cirith Gorgor 'horror pass'
 Cirith Ninniach "'Rainbow Cleft'"
 Cirith Thoronath "'Eagles' Cleft'"
 Cirith Ungol 'spider pass'

A related term, *cirya* 'sharp-prowed ship, cutter' is used metaphorically as an end generic for a mountain pass:

cirya: Calacirya "'Cleft of Light," 'light cutter' (a Quenya name)

Other generics associated with mountains and hills are illustrated by these names:

Cabed Naeramarth "'Leap of Dreadful Doom'"
 Carach Angren "'Iron Jaws'" (*carach* 'fang, jaws' used metaphorically for a mountain pass)

- Caragdûr ‘dark fang’ (*carag*, with the final voiced stop perhaps by assimilation to the /d/ of *dur*, used metaphorically for a precipice)
 Cerin Amroth ‘Amroth [a king’s] mound’ (*cerin* perhaps a plural or Sindarin form of *coron*, cf. next entry)
 Corollaire (a Quenya name assimilated from *Coron Oiolaire* ‘ever-summer mound’; *coron* ‘mound’)
 Henneth Annun ‘‘Window of the Sunset’’ (metaphor for a cave and waterfall; *annun* ‘west, sunset’)
 Pinnath Gelin ‘‘Green Ridges’’ (a range of hills)
 Sammath Naur ‘‘Chambers of Fire’’ (a cavern in a volcano)
 Torech Ungol ‘‘Shelob [a giant spider]’s Lair’’ (a cavern; *ungol* ‘spider’)

Valleys, Plains, and Forests

For a large valley or a vale through which rivers flow, the most frequent generic is *nan*:

- Nan Curunir ‘‘Wizard’s Vale’’ (*curunir* ‘man of skill,’ a term for the wizard Saruman)
 Nanduhirion ‘night river vale’
 Nan Dungortheb ‘‘Valley of Dreadful Death’’
 Nan Elmoth ‘dusk-star valley’ (a forest, either in a valley or metaphorically like a valley)
 Nan-tathren ‘willow vale’
 Nan-tasarion ‘‘Willow Vale’’ (a Quenya name)

The same term is found also as an end generic:

- nan: Laurelindorinan ‘‘Land of the Valley of Singing Gold,’’ ‘gold song land valley’ (a Quenya name)
 nan: Tasarinan ‘willow vale’ (a variant Quenya name for Nan Tasarion)

Imlad ‘narrow valley with steep sides’ (from *im*(*be*) ‘between’ and *lad* ‘plain’) is an initial generic:

- Imlad Morgul ‘black-magic valley’
 Imladris ‘‘Rivendell’’ or ‘cleft valley’

The simplex *lad* ‘plain’ is used as an end generic in several names:

- lad: Dagorlad ‘‘Battle Plain’’
 lad: Himlad ‘‘Cool Plain’’
 lad: Estolad ‘‘the Encampment,’’ ‘—— plain’
 lad: Lithlad ‘‘Plain of Ashes’’

Other terms for a flat valley or plain are these:

- Parth Galen ‘‘Green Sward’’
 Talath Rhunen ‘eastern flatlands’
 Talath Dirnen ‘‘Guarded Plain’’
 Tumladen ‘‘Wide Valley’’ (*laden*, an adjectival form of *lad* ‘plain’)

Dalf ‘meadowland,’ a meaning inferred from Tolkien’s gloss using the obsolete English place-name element *wong* or *wang*, is an end generic:

- dalf: Nindalf ‘‘Wetwang,’’ ‘wet meadowland’ (a marshland)

For forests, the plural *eryn* ‘woods’ may be used:

Eryn Lasgallen ‘green-leaf woods’ (*las* ‘leaf,’ *galen* ‘green’)
Eryn Vorn ‘black woods’

Landforms Next to Water

For an island with sheer sides rising suddenly from the sea or a river, the generic is *tol*:

Tol Brandir ‘Brandir [a chieftain’s] island’
Tol Eressea ‘“Lonely Isle”’ (probably a Quenya term)
Tolfalas ‘coast island’
Tol Galen ‘“Green Isle”’
Tol Sirion ‘Sirion [a river] island’

By metaphor, the term *cair* ‘ship’ is used for an island in a river:

Cair Andros ‘long-spray ship’

For coastlands, the end generics *falas* and *rast* (with an apparent variant *rest*) ‘shore, coast’ are used:

falas: Anfalas ‘“Langstrand,”’ ‘long shore’ (*an[d]* ‘long’)
rast: Andrast ‘long shore’
rast: Haerast ‘“Far Shore”’
rast: Nevrast ‘“Hither Shore”’
rest: Eglarest ‘forsaken shore’

An end generic for ‘harbor, haven’ is *lond*, with a Quenya variant *londe*:

londe: Alqualonde ‘“Haven of the Swans”’ (a Quenya name)
lond: Edhellond ‘elf harbor’
lond: Forlond ‘north harbor’
lond: Harlond ‘south harbor’
lond: Mithlon ‘“Grey Havens”’

The same term is used also as an initial generic:

Lond Daer ‘shadow haven’

Bodies of Water

For bodies of water of various kinds, *nen* ‘water’ is used:

Nen Echui ‘“Water of Awakening”’ (a bay)
Nen Girith ‘“Shuddering Water”’ (a waterfall)
Nen Hithoel ‘mist— water’ (a lake)
Nenning ‘— water’ (a river)
Nenuial ‘twilight water’ (a lake)

Nen also occurs as an end generic:

- nen: Bruinen ‘‘Loudwater’’ (a river)
- nen: Carnen ‘‘Redwater’’ (a river)
- nen: Cuivienen ‘‘Water of Awakening’’ (a Quenya name for a bay)
- nen: Harnen ‘south water’ (a river)
- nen: Nurnen ‘Nurn [an area] water’ (an inland sea)

Names for long rivers often include the end generic *duin*:

- duin: Anduin ‘‘Long River’’
- duin: Baranduin ‘goldenbrown river’ (the Brandywine)
- duin: Celduin ‘‘River Running,’’ ‘flow river’
- duin: Esgalduin ‘‘River under Veil,’’ ‘screen river’
- duin: Glanduin ‘—— river’
- duin: Malduin ‘‘Yellow River,’’ ‘gold river’
- duin: Morgulduin ‘black-magic river’

The terms *lo*, of uncertain meaning, and *rant* ‘stream, course’ are also used as end generics for rivers:

- lo: Gwathlo ‘‘Greyflood’’
- lo: Ringlo ‘cold ——’
- rant: Adurant ‘double stream’
- rant: Celebrant ‘silver stream’

Cel, from a root meaning ‘flow down,’ seems to be used as a generic in two river names:

- Celon ‘great stream’ (with a hypothetical use of *-on* as an augmentative suffix)
- Celos ‘snow stream’ (*los* ‘snow, snow-white’)

Several terms are used as end generics for fording places:

- iach: Arossiach ‘‘Fords of Aros [a river]’’
- iach: Brithiach ‘gravel ford’
- athrad: Sarn Athrad ‘(small) stone ford’ (or perhaps ‘fording stone’ with *Sarn* as the initial generic)
- bad ‘way’: Tharbad (from *thara pata* ‘way across, crossing way’)

The term *gaer* ‘sea’ is used as an end generic:

- gaer: Belegaer ‘‘Great Sea’’ (*beleg* ‘mighty’)
- gaer: Ekkaia ‘‘Outer Sea’’ (probably a Quenya name, by mutual assimilation of *et* ‘out’ and *gaer* and with other differences that disguise the root word)

Other generics for bodies of water are illustrated by these names:

- Aelin-uial ‘twilight lake’
- Eithel Ivrin ‘‘Ivrin [a lake’s] Well’’ (*eithel* ‘wellspring’ from *et* ‘out’ and *cel-* ‘flow down’)
- Eithel Sirion ‘‘Sirion [a river’s] Well’’
- Ethir Anduin ‘Anduin [a river’s] delta’ (*ethir* ‘delta’ from *et* ‘out’ and the root *sir-* ‘flow’)
- Helevorn ‘‘Black Glass’’ (a metaphor for a lake; assimilated from *heledh* ‘glass,’ a loan from Dwarvish *kheled*, and *vorn* ‘black’)

Lanthir Lamath “Waterfall of Echoing Voices” (*lanthir* by assimilation of *lanta* ‘fall’ and *sir* ‘stream’ from *sir*- ‘flow,’ *lom* ‘echo’)

Linawen “Lake of Birds” (*lin* ‘pool, mere,’ *aew* ‘small bird’)

Sirannon “Gate Stream” (*sir* ‘stream,’ *annon* ‘great door or gate’)

Eithel ‘wellspring’ is also used as an end generic in a river name derived from the source of the river:

eithel: Mitheithel “Hoarwell,” ‘grey spring’

The root *carak*- ‘fang, jaw,’ which has several other metaphorical uses in place names under various phonetic modifications, occurs as an end generic:

carak: Helcaraxe ‘ice fangs’ (a Quenya name for an icy strait)

Other Regions or Areas

Several generics are used for regions not characterized by such physical features as mountains, forests, rivers, or the like. *Dor* ‘dry land’ is the most common of those terms:

Dor Caranthir “Land of Caranthir [a king]”

Dor Cuarthol “Land of Bow and Helm” (*cu* ‘bow,’ *ar* ‘and,’ *thol* ‘helm’)

Dor Daedeloth “Land of the Shadow of Horror” (*dae* ‘shadow,’ *deloth* ‘abhorrence’ from *del* ‘horror’)

Dor Dinen “Silent Land”

Dor Firn-i-Guinar “Land of the Dead That Live” (*firn* ‘dead,’ *i* ‘that, who,’ *guinar* ‘live’)

Doriath “Land of the Fence” (*iath* ‘fence’)

Dor-lomin ‘echoing land’

Dorthonion “Land of Pines” (*thon* ‘pine tree’)

It occurs frequently also as an end generic:

dor: Andor “Land of Gift” (perhaps a Quenya name)

dor: Eglador ‘forsaken land’

dor: Endor “Middle-earth” (a Quenya name)

dor: Gondor “Land of Stone”

dor: Mordor “Black Land”

From earlier *ndor*, the term appears occasionally also in the phonetic shape *nor*:

nor: Arnor ‘royal land’

nor: Numenor “Westland” (*numen* ‘west’)

nor: Pelennor ‘encircled land’ (*pel* ‘encircle’)

nor: Valinor ‘Valar land’ (a Quenya name reportedly from earlier *Valandor*, confused with *Valinore* ‘people of the Valar,’ from *nore* ‘people’)

Other end generics have similarly broad meaning:

ardhon: Calenardhon “Green Province” (cf. Quenya *arda* ‘realm,’ a term used for the whole Earth; *calen* ‘green’)

iand: Beleriand ‘Balar country’ (originally the land facing the bay and island of Balar)
 iand: Ossiriand ‘Land of the Seven Rivers’ (*os* from *odo* ‘seven,’ *sir* ‘river’)

A variant of the first of those generics is also used initially:

Ard-galen ‘green realm’ (*ard*, *arth* ‘region,’ *galen*, *calen* ‘green’)
 Arthedain ‘realm of men’ (*edain*, plural of *adan* ‘man’)

For settled places, the end generic *mar* ‘homeland’ is used:

mar: Angmar ‘iron home’
 mar: Eglamar ‘forsaken home’
 mar: Eldamar ‘Elvenhome’ (a Quenya name)
 mar: Valmar or Valimar ‘power home’ (a Quenya name for the land of Valar or Powers, angel-like beings)
 mar: Vinyamar ‘new home’ (probably)

From earlier *mbar*, the term *mar* appears phonetically as *bar* after nasals:

bar: Brithombar ‘Brithon home’ (a harbor at the mouth of the river Brithon; assimilation of /n/ to /m/ before /b/)
 bar: Dimbar ‘gloomy home’

Constructed Places

Prominent among constructed places are towers and fortresses, for which there are two important generics used initially:

Barad-dur ‘Dark Tower’
 Barad Eithel ‘Tower of the Well’
 Barad Nimras ‘White-Horn Tower’
 Minas Anor ‘Tower of the Sun’
 Minas Ithil ‘Tower of the Moon’
 Minas Morgul ‘Tower of Sorcery’ or ‘black-magic tower’
 Minas Tirith ‘Tower of Watch’ (*tir* ‘watch’ and *-ith*, a deverbal noun suffix)

The second of those elements is used also as an end generic:

Minas: Annuminas ‘Tower of the West’ (a city; *annun* ‘west’)

Ost (Quenya *os*) ‘fortress’ occurs in several names as an end generic for fortified places, cities, or towers:

ost: Angrenost ‘Isengard,’ ‘iron fortress’
 ost: Belegost ‘Mickleburg,’ ‘mighty fortress’
 ost: Carchost ‘Fang Fort’
 ost: Fornost ‘Northern Fortress’ (also called *Fornost Erain* ‘Norbury of the Kings,’ *erain* plural of *aran* ‘king’)
 os: Armenelos ‘royal heaven fortress’ (Quenya)
 os: Formenos (a Quenya name for Fornost)
 os: Mandos ‘prison fortress’ (Quenya; *mand* ‘prison’ from *mbando*, appearing in Sindarin as *band*, cf. below)

The term *os(t)* is found also as an initial generic:

Osgiliath ‘Fortress of the Stars’ (*giliath* ‘host of stars’)

The specific in *Mandos*, above, occurs also in its Sindarin phonetic form as an end generic:

band: Angband ‘Iron Prison’

A good many dwellings in Middle-earth are underground; hence there are a number of end generics for caverns – natural, artificial, or artificially enlarged. The most frequent is *rond* ‘cavern, dome, vaulted or arched roof, large hall or chamber’:

rond: Aglarond ‘glory cavern’

rond: Hadhodrond (*hadhod*, a Sindarin interpretation of the sounds of the first element in the Dwarvish name *Khazad-dum*, which it translates, *dum* being probably ‘excavated hall’)

rond: Merethrond ‘Hall of Feasts’

rond: Nargothrond (from *Narog-ost-rond* ‘Narog [a river] fortress cavern,’ an underground fortress by the river Narog)

An alternative name for Hadhodrond shows a metaphorical use of the end generic:

ia ‘void, abyss’: Moria ‘Black Chasm’

Another end generic for ‘delving, underground dwelling,’ (*g*)*rod* is used in a name remodeled by folk etymology:

rod: *Novrod* ‘hollow delving’ (an underground city of the Dwarves)

rod: *Nogrod* (from the preceding, remodeled by association with *naug* ‘dwarf’)

The generic *ephel* ‘outer encirclement, fence’ (from *et* ‘out’ and *pel-* ‘encircle’) is used for both constructed places and natural ones:

Ephel Brandir ‘Brandir [a chieftain’s] fence’ (a stockade, stronghold)

Ephel Duath ‘night-shadow fence’ (a mountain range; *duath* assimilated from *du* ‘night, darkness’ and *wath* ‘shadow’)

The root *pel-* also occurs as a term for ‘enclosure’ in a name for a port city:

Pelargir ‘Garth of Royal Ships’ (*ar* ‘royal,’ *gir* or *cir* ‘ship’)

Other constructed places with initial generics are these:

Fen Hollen ‘closed door’ (a cemetery gate)

Iant Iaur ‘Old Bridge’

Rammas Echor ‘circle wall——’ (a great wall)

Rath Celerdain ‘Lampwright Street’

Rath Dinen ‘silent street’

Tur Haretha ‘Ladybarrow’ (a burial mound; *hareth* ‘lady’)

Miscellaneous end generics include the following:

annon 'gate': Morannon "Black Gate"

gon 'stone': Argonath "King-stones" (pillars used as border markers; *ar* 'royal,' *-ath* collective plural)

habar 'excavation': Anghabar "Iron-delvings" (a mine; *ang* 'iron')

Other Grammatical Patterns

Although most place-names in the Middle-earth cycle consist of a generic and a specific juxtaposed without other formal signal of their relationship, there are some exceptions. A few names contain a preposition relating an initial generic to a following specific term. Prepositions so used are *en* 'of (in various senses)'; *im* (from *imbe*) 'between'; *in* 'of, occupied by, possessed by'; *na* 'of, consisting of'; and *nu* 'under':

- e: Taur-e-Ndaedelos "Forest of the Great Fear" (*e* is perhaps a variant of or an error for *en*)
- en: Bar-en-Danwedh "House of Ransom"
- en: Cabed-en-Aras 'leap (?), gorge (?) of ——'
- en: Dor-en-Ermil "Land of the Prince"
- en: Haudh-en-Arwen "Ladybarrow," 'burial mound of Arwen [a princess]'
- en: Haudh-en-Elleth "Mound of the Elf Maid"
- en: Haudh-en-Ndengin "Mound of the Slain"
- en: Haudh-en-Nirnaeth "Mound of Tears"
- en: Taur-en-Faroth "Hills of the Hunters," 'forest of ——' (a wooded highland)
- im: Taur-im-Duinath "Forest between Rivers"
- in: Annon-in-Gelydh "Gate of the Noldor" (a cavern; *Gelydh*, one of the three main groups of elves, singular *Golodh*, Quenya *Noldor*)
- in: Haudh in Gwanur 'burial mound of ——'
- in: Ost-in-Edhil 'fortress of elves' (*edhil*, plural of *edhel* 'elf')
- in: Tol-in-Gaurhoth "Isle of Werewolves"
- na: Orod-na-Thon 'mountain of pinetrees' (a pine-covered highland)
- na: Taur-na-Neldor 'forest of beech'
- nu: Dor-nu-Fauglith "Land under Choking Ash"
- nu: Mar-nu-Falmer "Land under the Waves" (a sunken land)
- nu: Taur-nu-Fuin "Forest under Night"

A few place-names consist of a directional term followed by a place-name:

- Araman 'beyond Aman' (a Quenya name)
- Forlindon 'north Lindon'
- Harlindon 'south Lindon'
- Harondor 'south Gondor'
- Thargelion 'across Gelion [a river]'

Two names are words ending in a directional suffix, *na* 'towards':

- Elenna 'starwards' (a Quenya name)
- Romenna 'eastwards' (a Quenya name)

Several names are common words adapted as place-names:

- Arda 'realm' (a Quenya name for the whole Earth)
- Avathar "The Shadows" (A Quenya name for a forsaken region)
- Brethil 'silver birch' (used for a forest of such trees)
- Brithon 'gravel' (a river)
- Ea 'it is, let it be' (the World; the creative word spoken to bring the universe into being, hence glossed as "The World That Is")
- Falas 'coast, shore' (used for a region of Middle-earth)
- Rhun 'east' (used for the eastern lands of Middle-earth)
- Sirith 'a flowing' (a river)

Some names have the dominant pattern of a headword and a modifier, but the headword is not a generic term for place-names. Instead the expression is a phrase somehow descriptive of the place it names. A relatively large group can be glossed as meaning 'the place has —':

- Aldalome 'tree shadow' (a forest; *alda* 'tree,' *lome* 'shadow')
- Anfauglith "Gaspig Dust" (a plain; *an* 'long,' *fang* 'gape,' *lith* 'ash')
- Celebros "Silver Foam" (a stream; *celeb* 'silver,' *ros* 'foam, spray')
- Cormallen "Golden Circle" (a field in which golden red trees grow; *cor* 'ring, round,' *mal* 'gold')
- Gondolin "Hidden Rock" (a city; *gond* 'stone,' *lin* 'sing' misinterpreted as *dolen* 'hidden'; the Sindarin name for Ondolinde, cf. below)
- Hisilome 'shadow mist' (Quenya for an area; *hisie* 'mist,' *lome* 'shadow')
- Hithlum 'shadow mist' (Sindarin equivalent; *hith* 'mist,' *lum* 'shadow')
- Morthond "Blackroot" (a river with a frightening source; *mor* 'dark, black,' *thond* 'root')
- Nimbrethil 'white birch' (a forest; *nim* 'white,' *brethil* 'silver birch')
- Ondolinde 'singing stone' (a Quenya name for a city built upon a hill with bubbling fountains; *ondo* 'stone,' *linde* 'singing, song')
- Rauros "Roaring Spray" (a waterfall; *ros* 'foam, spindrift, spray')

Another group of descriptive names are adjectival, so that the name might be glossed as meaning 'the place is —':

- Ascar 'rushing, impetuous' (a river)
- Atalante "The Downfallen" (a Quenya name for a sunken island kingdom; presumably our *Atlantis* is a derivative)
- Helcar 'icy cold' (a Quenya name for a northern sea)
- Himring "Ever-cold" (a hill; *him* 'cool,' *ring* 'cold, chill')
- Oiolosse "Ever-snow-white" (Quenya name for a mountain; *oio* 'ever,' *losse* 'snow, snow-white')
- Serni or Sernui 'stony' (a river)
- Uilos "Ever-snow-white" (Sindarin equivalent of *Oiolosse*; *ui* 'ever,' *los* 'snow-white')

A few place-names are actually the names of peoples who lived there and thus might be glossed as meaning 'the place inhabited by —':

- Druwaith Iaur 'old Wose-folk' (a region inhabited by the Dru 'Woses,' a primitive wild people; *waith* 'people, folk,' *iaur* 'old')
- Enedwaith 'middle folk' (a region; *ened* 'middle')
- Haradwaith 'south folk' (a region; *harad* 'south')
- Mithrim 'grey host' (a region, home of the Grey elves; *mith* 'grey,' *-rim* 'collective plural ending, host')

A small group of descriptive names might be glossed as meaning ‘the place makes one feel ——’:

Delduwath ‘‘Horror of Night Shadow’’ (an enchanted highland; *del* ‘horror,’ *du* ‘night, darkness,’ *wath* ‘shadow’)

Durthang ‘dark oppression’ (a castle; *dur* ‘dark,’ *thang* ‘oppression’)

Gorgoroth ‘horror and dread’ (a plateau; *gor*, *goroth* ‘horror, dread’)

One descriptive name denotes an activity associated with the place:

Tirith Aear ‘ocean watching’ (a castle and port city; *tirith* ‘watching,’ *aeear* ‘ocean’)

Middle-earth names are far from being completely analyzable. A number denoting regions end in the suffix *-ien*, which is otherwise obscure: *Avernien*, *Anorien* (*anor* ‘sun’), *Hildorien*, *Ithilien* (*ithil* ‘moon’), *Lorien*, *Lothlorien*. Other place-names ending in the even more obscure suffix *-ion* denote a variety of features, such as areas: *Eregion* (*ereg* ‘thorn, holly’), *Dorthonion*, *Nan-tasarion*, *Rhovanion*; rivers: *Gelion*, *Sirion*; towers: *Elostirion* (*el* ‘star,’ *ost* ‘fortress,’ *tir* ‘watch’), *Tirion*; a forest: *Region*; and a valley: *Nanduhirion*.

There are a good many Elven names whose analysis is wholly or in large part uncertain. More than a hundred such names have not been treated here. And there are also a score or so of non-Elven names, such as *Suza* ‘the Shire’ in Hobbitish, *Phurunargian* ‘Dwarf hall’ in Westron, *Lugburz* ‘Dark Tower’ in the Black Speech, *Kheled-zaram* ‘Mirror lake’ in Dwarvish, and *Akallabeth* ‘the sunken land’ in Numenorean. But there are not enough of any of the latter to make possible their analysis. The purely English names, like *Brandywine* river, *Hobbiton* village, and *Mirkwood* forest, have not been considered at all.

Conclusion

What should be clear from even the foregoing superficial look at the place-names of J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle-earth cycle is that he did not make his names randomly. Instead he invented a system of naming that fit into the complexities of his subcreation in many dimensions. The place-names are part of the languages of the land, as can be seen from an examination of their parts and the patterns for combining those parts. The place-names are part of the history of the peoples who inhabited the land, as might be surmised from the meanings of their parts. Behind every name, there lies a story.

Most important, the place-names help to create a sense of reality and immediacy for the reader of *The Lord of the Rings* and other stories in the cycle. They help the reader to belong to the land. Whether the intense interest that has been shown in Tolkien and his Middle-earth cycle of

stories will endure is problematical. Fantasy requires a special taste; not all readers have it. And Tolkien is an acquired taste even among the enthusiasts of fantasy.

However, Tolkien's world has captured the imagination and interest of many readers. That popularity is surely due in significant part to the fact that, through Tolkien's carefully delineated topography and complex toponymy, the reader comes to belong to Middle-earth.

University of Georgia

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