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# Quettar .~. Words

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In Amon Hen 41 there was an appeal, to those interested, for starting a Linguistic Group within the Society. This appeal also said that Mallorn would have linguistic articles: here, as promised, is one such, by David Masson. In it, he presents his theories on writing English in Tengwar. I hope that this article will be appreciated and enjoyed, and that it will also get the group off to a good start. If anyone wishes to reply to the article — further developments, ideas, criticisms, etc. — they are very welcome to send them in to Mallorn, where they may well be used for the group.

'Quettar': a Quenya plural noun meaning 'words'! This title was suggested by David Masson.

᠕᠒᠙᠘᠑᠖᠕ ᠎᠎ ᠪᠠᠴᠢᠨᠠᠷᠠᠴᠢᠨ ᠕᠒᠙᠘᠑᠖᠕ ᠎᠎ ᠪᠠᠴᠢᠨᠠᠷᠠᠴᠢᠨ

## English in Féanorean

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by David Masson



**T**olkien in Appendix E to *LotR* denies final authority to the quasi-'Gondorean' makeshift inscription on the title-pages, and says a transcription system "adequate phonetically" could be devised using the Féanorian system. The Féanorian script was intended to be used for any language, giving different values as required to the abstract forms, and was applied more or less phonetically in each case.

This article proposes two particular transcription systems for English, labelled A and B. It was composed after consultation with Lester Simons, who kindly corrected me on some points.

English is of all tongues peculiarly difficult to transcribe: its spelling relates its words to each other and to those in other languages past and present, as well as to those in its own past, but it is pronounced in a great variety of ways, none of which corresponds at all well to any common world phonetic values of the letters (including those on Middle-earth, and *Ea* generally, as transcribed by Tolkien into Roman script); and moreover its unstressed vowels are severely modified and reduced. We have in transcribing it to compromise and to avoid ambiguities.

A system made to fit British 'Received Standard' English would be reasonably suitable for most varieties of world English (though very doubtfully for Australian), but *not* for North American English, which in partic-

ular would need different treatment of some vowels. Most British dialectal pronunciations would also have to be ignored. Individual cases are always arguable, but the sound-values given in writing should usually be those when each word-*constituent* (morpheme) — *not* merely the whole word — is given its maximum permissible stressing; otherwise, in such a language, chaos will result. (Exceptions would be 'the', 'a'/'an', 'and', and possibly 'to', 'of', which might anyway be abbreviated or signed.) The values should therefore be only approximately phonemic, or so-called 'morpho-phonemic', with very occasional special indications of the word-stress-accent. Thus in Britain, 'a substantive' could be spelt /ə sʌbstəntɪv/<sup>1</sup> to save us accenting /ə sʌbstəntɪv/; spelling 'the saxifrage' /ðə saksɪfriʒ/ (or /-freyʒ/), 'monotonous' /mɒntənəs/<sup>2</sup>, 'diatoms' /daɪətəmz/, 'scherzo' /skeətsəʊ/<sup>3</sup>, and 'the process processes precessionally' /ðə prəʊses prəʊsésɪz prɪsɛʃənəli/ (but in American, /ðə prásəs prɒsɛsɪz prɪsɛʃənəli/). The consonants are the bones of a word, the vowels are its flesh. Most of Tolkien's modes emphasise the bones, and provided the skeleton bears a recognisable affinity with those of other words and languages, I consider that in view of the greater sonority of vowels we have to reflect their normal phonetic values rather than the peculiarities of English linguistic history, so that to select /iy/ (pronounced 'ee') for the vowel in 'spite', /ay/ (pronounced 'aye', 'I') for that in 'pate', /ow/ (pronounced 'owe') for that in 'pout', and so on, would be a piece of unhelpful parochiality which is *not* "adequate phonetically".

#### *British English Consonants and Semivowels*

There are no *phonetically* double consonants in English, such as there are in Italian, Magyar, Finnish, and the Elvish languages. The true phonemic consonants are (using phonetic symbols where necessary, with the more usual spellings in parentheses): p, b, f, v, m; t, d, θ (th as in 'thin'), ð (th['dh'] as in 'this'), s, z, n; č(ch), ʝ (j, soft g), š(sh), ž (s as in 'vision'); k, g (hard), kh (as [correctly] in 'loch')<sup>4</sup>, ŋ (n(g) as in 'ring', 'singer', 'rink'); r (where it *is* pronounced), l; also h; and to these we may add the semivowels and glides: ɱ(wh), w, y (assuming that wh is distinctively pronounced). There is no point in dissecting č, ʝ into their phonetic constituents as tš, dž; or, probably, in dissecting ɱ(wh) into h plus w. Another glide possibly distinguishable from its corresponding vowel ə would be the murmur-glide as in 'theatre', 'real', 'peer', analogous to the glides -y, -w in 'toy', 'tow', ('toil', 'toll').

<sup>1</sup>Using /ə/ here and throughout for any unresolved murmur vowel, and /ʌ/ for the vowel in 'putt'. For further details of the symbols used here, see the following sections on consonant and vowel phonemes. Slashes / / usually indicate phonemic 'spellings'.

<sup>2</sup>It is noted later that a symbol /ɒ/ could be used to represent the short 'o'-sound in 'monotonous', in which case we would have /mɒntənəs/.

<sup>3</sup>The -r- in 'scherzo' is of course not pronounced in British English.

<sup>4</sup>The proper phonetic symbol for this sound is /x/; /kh/ is used here, however, to avoid confusion with 'x', the letter of the alphabet, which of course is phonetically [ks].

### *American Consonants and Semivowels*

The American tendency to weaken *p*, *t*, *k* after the stress but in the middle of a word so that they sound like *b*; *d*, *r* or zero; and *g*, respectively, can be ignored as non-phonemic. The 'thick' *l* more widely used in American English can likewise be treated as normal. The *r* should always be reproduced (ignoring Bostonian, etc.), and the *wh* always be distinguished.

### *British Vowels*

The simplest arrangement of phonemes and phoneme-complexes is to posit simple phonemes /i, e, a, o, u/ as in 'pit', 'pet', 'pat', 'pot', 'put', and perhaps two others, /ʌ/ as in 'putt' and /ə/ as in 'p<sup>o</sup>tato', 'sofa'; but to treat all other vowels as combinations of these phonemes with semi-vowels and similar glides. Thus under /i/ we have /iy/ ('peat') and /iə/ ('theatre', 'real', 'peer', 'pier'); under /e/ we have /ey/ ('pate') and /eə/ ('pair', 'pear', 'pare'); under /u/ we have /uw/ ('boot') and /uə/ ('poor'), to which we could add /yuw/ ('repute') and /yuə/ ('pure'); under /o/ we have /ow/ ('boat' — some would class this as /əw/), /oə/ ('pore', 'pour'), a possibly doubled vowel phoneme /oo/ ('port', 'for', 'paw', 'bought'), /oy/ ('boy'), and perhaps /oiə/ ('coir'); under /a/ we have /ay/ ('bite', 'spite'), /aw/ ('pout'), possibly doubled /aa/ ('pa', 'father', 'part'), /aiə/ ('pyre'), and /auə/ ('power'). Under /ə/ we also have the possibly doubled /əə/ ('pert', 'bird', 'spurt').<sup>1</sup>

### *Dialect Vowels*

It is impossible to cater for dialects; for instance the Irish [pəɪnd] or Australian [peənd]<sup>2</sup> for 'pound' cannot be represented in general orthography. Scots distinguish between *ir*, *er* and *ur* as, roughly, containing the Scottish (pure-vowel) equivalents of /i/, /ey/ and /ʌ/ (the vowel in 'putt'); but to reflect this in transliteration would be very confusing!

### *American Vowels*

These are distinguished from British (etc.) mainly (1) by the substitution of /ə/ for many unstressed /i/'s and some other vowels (as in 'habit', 'missile', 'roses': /habət/, /misəl/, /rowzəz/, rather than the British /habit/, /misayl/, /rowziz/); (2), by the frequent occurrence of ə-glides after simple vowels before a consonant, which is considered phonemic by A.A.Hill, but ignorable in an orthography; (3), by having /a/ for the 'pot' vowel and relegating the 'pat' vowel to a lone category /æ/; (4), by having stressed /ə/ for the 'putt' vowel; and (5) by having /uw/ for /yuw/ in most places. There is also, (6), the American pronunciation of words like 'temporary', with stress on the last syllable but one, and ending /-eəriy/; also, (7), forwarded stress in words like 'detail' (/dæ-

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<sup>1</sup>It is possible, but not convenient, to consider the standard vowel of 'putt' as an /a/ and to relegate that of 'pat' and conceivably that of 'pot' to other, lone phonemes, which we may write as /æ/, /ɒ/, respectively.

<sup>2</sup>Square brackets for actual phones.

téyl/). All such differences, except (2), need reflecting in an orthography. [Note that Australians, etc., also tend to have (1).]



## System A

### TENGWAR WITH VOWEL TEHTAR

Since many English vowels have a following glide or semivowel, it is easiest to make the vowel *tehta* denote the vowel *before* the consonant or semivowel above whose *tengwa* it is written, and to use *yanta* for -y as well as y-, *úr* for -w as well as w-, and something for the ə-glide. To go with *úr* I use *hwesta sindarinwa* for *wh*. Some vowels may need *tehtar* not shown by Tolkien, who avowedly only illustrated the most frequent forms; I have therefore added a short horizontal bar (see below), and for America a Greek single-curved circumflex. The nasal-plus-stop values in Quenya are very useful in English, and I would personally extend them into a complete system with the normal use of single and double bows; but to do so in a regular way consistent with the rest of the structure involves adopting a systematic set of letters distinct from the regular (e.g. Sindarin, Gondorian?) symbols, for the fricatives f, v, θ, ð, (s, z,) ʃ, ʒ, kh which occur in English. We have therefore to bring in the grades with tall-plus-deep stems. (An alternative not illustrated below would be, since English has no double consonants requiring a bar, to use Tolkien's long bar or reversed *tilde* over the stop consonant here to indicate a preceding nasal — as in *Beleriand*.)

We may distinguish the *r* which is dropped in British English ('pair', 'pert', etc.) from the *r* that is never dropped ('rap', 'parent', etc.), by using the two *r*-letters *rómen* and *óre*. Equivalent *tehtar* for the vowels ʌ ('putt') and ə ('potato', 'sofa') must be found, and here I would use the grave accent [ ` ] and the short bar [ - ], respectively. To chime with *hwesta sindarinwa*, I prefer *halla* to *hyarmen* here for *h* (and to avoid confusion with *yanta*), while other simple stem letters are the 'short carrier' to carry *simple* word-end (and certain other) vowels, and the deep stem like an undotted *j* for the post-vocalic ə-glide (to carry the vowel *tehtar*). (An alternative here would be to exchange values for the short stem and deep stem.)

Table of Consonants and Semivowels (A)

t p	θ(th) h	s ʃ	n m	nt ʃ	l ʃ	
d ʃ	ð(dh) h	z ʒ		nd ʃ	r ʒ (r) h	
p p	f k		m w	mp ʃ		ʃ d
b ʃ	v k			mb ʃ		(wh) w o

[Continued...]

[Table of Consonants & Semivowels, cont.]

č(ch) ɟ	š(sh) ʃ		nč/nš ɟ		
ǰ(j) ɟ	ž(zh) ʃ		nǰ(-nge) ɟ	y λ	-(ə) ɟ
k ɟ	kh ʃ ['loch']	ŋ ɟ (n[ɟ])	ŋk ɟ		[or ɟ]
g ɟ			ŋg ɟ [ngg]	h l	

Table of British Vowels (A)

[illustrated in sample words]

<u>(Dot:)</u>						
pit	ɟɟ	peat	ɟɟɟ	{peer pier}	ɟɟɟ	
happy	ɟɟɟ					real ɟɟɟ
<u>(Acute:)</u>						
pet	ɟɟ́	pate	ɟɟ́ɟ	{pair pare pear}	ɟɟ́ɟ	
<u>(Left hook:)</u>						
put	ɟɟ̂	boot	ɟɟ̂ɟ	poor	ɟɟ̂ɟ	" pew ɟɟ̂ɟ pure ɟɟ̂ɟɟ
<u>(Right hook:)</u>						
pot	ɟɟ̃	boat	ɟɟ̃ɟ	{pore pour}	ɟɟ̃ɟ	{ paw ɟ̃ɟ } boy ɟ̃ɟ
						{ bought ɟ̃ɟɟ } coir ɟ̃ɟɟɟ
						{ port ɟ̃ɟɟɟ }

[Continued...]

[Table of British Vowels (A), cont.]

<u>(Circumflex or 3 dots:)</u>																									
pat	pã	pout	põp	power	põjɪn	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pa</td> <td>pã</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2">spite</td> <td>sp̃ãɪp</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>part</td> <td>pãɪnp</td> <td>}</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pãɪjɪn</td> </tr> </table>	{	pa	pã	}	spite	sp̃ãɪp	{	part	pãɪnp	}	pyre	pãɪjɪn							
{	pa	pã	}	spite	sp̃ãɪp																				
{	part	pãɪnp	}		pyre	pãɪjɪn																			
<u>(Grave:)</u>																									
putt	pũt																								
<u>(Short bar:)</u>																									
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>potato</td> <td>pãpãto</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2"> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pert</td> <td>pẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>bird</td> <td>bẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>spurt</td> <td>spẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>sofa</td> <td>sõfa</td> <td>}</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	{	potato	pãpãto	}	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pert</td> <td>pẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>bird</td> <td>bẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>spurt</td> <td>spẽɪnp</td> <td>}</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	{	pert	pẽɪnp	}	{	bird	bẽɪnp	}	{	spurt	spẽɪnp	}			{	sofa	sõfa	}		
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{	sofa	sõfa	}																						

Alternatives: (a) Exchange the values of ɹ and ɹ̃; or (b) leave ɹ as it is, but double it [ɹɹ] for the ə-glide and substitute ɹ̃, ɹ̃̃, ɹ̃̃̃ for the doubled *tehtar* over ɹ. (Three dots will do for the circumflex, but are harder to write quickly.)

American Variants (A)\*

peer	pẽr	pair, etc.	pãr	poor	põr	pore, etc.	põr	port	põɹp																						
real	rẽal																														
		coir	kõr	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pert, etc.</td> <td>pẽɹp</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2"> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>spite</td> <td>spẽɹp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pẽɹ</td> <td>}</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>[ap]p̃ɹt[enance]</td> <td>-pẽɹ-</td> <td>}</td> <td>{</td> <td>(if stress ac-</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>cent necessary)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	{	pert, etc.	pẽɹp	}	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>spite</td> <td>spẽɹp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pẽɹ</td> <td>}</td> </tr> </table>	{	spite	spẽɹp	}	{	pyre	pẽɹ	}	{	[ap]p̃ɹt[enance]	-pẽɹ-	}	{	(if stress ac-	}						cent necessary)	
{	pert, etc.	pẽɹp	}		<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>spite</td> <td>spẽɹp</td> <td>}</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pẽɹ</td> <td>}</td> </tr> </table>	{	spite	spẽɹp		}	{	pyre	pẽɹ	}																	
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{	[ap]p̃ɹt[enance]	-pẽɹ-	}	{	(if stress ac-	}																									
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<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pot</td> <td>põt</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2"> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pa</td> <td>pã</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2">spite</td> <td>spẽɹp</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>paw</td> <td>pãw</td> <td>}</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pẽɹ</td> </tr> </table> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>part</td> <td>pãɹp</td> <td>}</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	{	pot	põt	}	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>pa</td> <td>pã</td> <td>}</td> <td rowspan="2">spite</td> <td>spẽɹp</td> </tr> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>paw</td> <td>pãw</td> <td>}</td> <td>pyre</td> <td>pẽɹ</td> </tr> </table>	{	pa	pã	}	spite	spẽɹp	{	paw	pãw	}	pyre	pẽɹ	{	part	pãɹp	}										
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{	paw	pãw	}		pyre	pẽɹ																									
{	part	pãɹp	}																												
pout	põt	power	põr																												

\*To distinguish word-pairs like 'ferry'/'fairy', the ə-glide letter may have to be retained in American English to carry the vowel-*tehta* wherever it comes in British English.

pat p̄p̄ [as before]

potential p̄p̄t̄

[putt p̄p̄ʔ]

N.B.: A Greek curved circumflex is here used for American /a/, leaving the angular circumflex or three dots for /æ/. Alternatively, a grave accent could be used for /æ/, since it is no longer needed for /ʌ/, the 'putt' vowel; so that the American /a/ can be represented in the same way as the British.

Note on syllabic l, m, n, r (A)

All British or American instances of unaccented non-diphthongal pronunciations of -al, -il, -ile, -ol, -ule, -ul, -el, -le, whether they seem to carry a phonetic vowel before the l or not, are best treated phonemically as /-əl/ (ē) [e.g. /batəl/ ('battle')], except when it is essential to record the morpheme-vowel as if it were fully stressed. Similarly with syllabic -en/-an/-on, -er/-or/-ar, and -om/-em/-um ('battling' is analogous to 'battening', 'battering', 'bottoming').

Note on grammatical -s suffixes (A)

I would suggest using the down-hooked s-sign attached to the previous letter but restricting its use to plurals (where it would of course represent both /-s/ and /-z/), including genitive plurals, but *not* for genitive *singulars*: i.e. 'the pens/pots, pens', pots' (but *not* 'pen's', 'pot's', 'pence'). I would allow it however in words like 'blitz', or 'schmalz' (this probably written dm̄t̄z in both British and American).

Note on rare stress-accents (A)

To distinguish the noun 'prōcess' from the verb 'procēss', and in other cases where all else fails, I would concede indicating the accent by underlining the operative *tengwar*, in this case ̄ and ̄ or ̄.



## System B

'FULL' WRITING AS IN THE MODE OF BELERIAND  
WITH VOWEL TENGWAR (MODIFIED)

Not all the consonantal values are given in Tolkien's examples, so we have to extrapolate and invent. Since both the *ch*-series and *k*-series need inclusion, unlike Sindarin, we have to use the series with open bows for the first, and take up that with closed bows for the second. Tolkien used *silmē nuquerna* for the vowel *y* in *ennyn*, and I have shortened this to a reversed a-letter for the murmur-vowel *ə*, using a grave accent to differentiate from it the British (and American?) vowel *ʌ*, as in 'putt', and also to differentiate American *æ*; I have also echoed the reversed a-letter in a *taith* for the murmur-glide, analogous to those for -*y* and -*w*. The *teith* for -*w* and prior nasal are both Tolkienian (see Appendix E to *LotR*, not the rendering of *thiw* on Moria West-Gate). The simple nasals have in this mode single bows; and all *r*'s, whether pronounced

or not, must therefore have the tailed *rómen* letter; for the same reason I have had to abandon *wilya* even for pre-vowel *w-* (as well as *úr*, which is a vowel here), and have used instead *esse nuquerna*, which is I hope in the spirit of Tolkien's vowel use of *silme nuquerna* in this mode. (But I retain his *anna* for *o*, since there is no special English nasal corresponding to the *ch*-series.) The fricative /*m*/ (*wh*) has to be dissected as *h*-plus-*w*. In line with its corresponding vowel letter — the short stem for *i*, — I have used the deep stem (undotted *j*) for *y*-. As *yanta* is not used here for *y*, it seems best to use *hyarmen* rather than *halla* for *h* in this curvaceous mode, to avoid any confusion with its symbols for *i* and *y*-. An *andaith* is required for certain 'lengthened' simple vowels. Tolkien uses the single dot in this mode solely to pick out a simple vowel letter *a* or *i* occasionally from a letter-part which it resembles, and this would also apply to the deep stem now used for *y*-. A down-hooked *-s/z* sign, if permitted, should follow the same rules as for System A.

Table of Consonants and Semivowels (B)

t	p	$\left. \begin{matrix} \theta \\ (th) \end{matrix} \right\} h$	s	ʒ		nt	ɸ	ns	ʒ	l	ʃ			
d	ɸ	$\left. \begin{matrix} \delta \\ (dh) \end{matrix} \right\} m$	z	ɛ	n	n	nd	ɸ	nz	ɛ	r	ɣ		
p	p	f	k			mp	ɸ	mf	k			$\left. \begin{matrix} m \\ (wh) \end{matrix} \right\} \lambda_2$		
b	ɸ	v	k		m	m	mb	ɸ				w-	ɣ	
$\left. \begin{matrix} \check{c} \\ (ch) \end{matrix} \right\} q$		$\left. \begin{matrix} \check{s} \\ (sh) \end{matrix} \right\} d$				nč	q	nš	d			y-		
$\left. \begin{matrix} \check{j} \\ (j) \end{matrix} \right\} q$		$\left. \begin{matrix} \check{z} \\ (zh) \end{matrix} \right\} cd$				nč	q	nž	cd					
k	q	kh	d			ŋk	q						h	λ
g	q	['loch']			ŋ	(n[gl])	a	ŋg	q	(ngg)				

Table of British Vowels (B)

[illustrated in sample words]

happy, pit	;	peat	ï	$\left. \begin{matrix} *peer \\ real^\dagger \\ theatre^\dagger \end{matrix} \right\} \overset{\cdot}{i}$
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\*Add *ɣ* — but not in the words marked †.



[Table of British Vowels (B), cont.]

pet	λ	pate	λ̄	{*pair *pear *pare}	λ̄		
put	o	boot	ō	*poor	ō		
		[pew	jō	*pure	jō]		
pot	ɑ	boat	ɑ̄	{*pore *pour}	ɑ̄	{paw *port}	ɑ̄
boy	ä	*coir	ǟ				
pat	c	pout	ɔ̄	*power	ɔ̄	{pa *part}	ɔ̄
spite	ɛ̄	*pyre	ɛ̄				
putt	ɔ̄						
{p <u>o</u> tato sof <u>a</u> }	ɔ̄			{*p <u>e</u> rt *b <u>i</u> rd *s <u>p</u> urt}	ɔ̄		

\*[See footnote on previous page]

American Variants (B)

{p <u>o</u> tential pr <u>o</u> cess}	ɑ		
{pot pr <u>o</u> cess}	c	{paw pa}	ɛ
pat	ɔ̄ or λ̄		
putt	ɔ̄ [underline to mark stress.]	{*p <u>e</u> rt *b <u>i</u> rd *s <u>p</u> urt}	ɔ̄ [underline to mark stress.]

Omit ə-glide *taith* before an *r*, but retain if such pairs as 'ferry'/'fairy' need distinguishing; however, write such words as 'power', 'coir', 'pyre' with *two* syllables ending in *ɔ̄y*.

Special stress-marking (American or British) (B)

As with System A, where stress has to be marked and all else fails, underline the operative *tengwar* (for 'process', ɔ̄ or λ̄).

Syllabic l, m, n, r (B)

As for System A, treat as /əl/, /əm/, etc., unless the morpheme vowel has to be recorded as though stressed.

