

Winter 1-15-1966

The Meeting

Richard Plotz

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Online Summer Seminar 2023

August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

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The Meeting

In order to express diphthongs, I use the semivowels *n*, *ɲ*, *ɥ* and *ɥ*, to which I give the values 'r', 'w', 'y', and 'h'. 'n' is used, following Tolkien's practice on the title page, at the ends of words and before consonants, while 'ɥ' appears at the start of a syllable. The different combinations occur in the words beer, bear, burr, bar, boor, bore, written *ɲɛr*, *ɲɛr*, *ɲɛr*, *ɲɛr*, *ɲɛr*, *ɲɛr*. 'n' is also the sound in bird, *ɲɛrɲɛr*, and the unstressed suffix '-er': butter, *ɲɛrɲɛr*.

ɲ and *ɥ* are used to express the "long vowels" and diphthongs *iy*, *ey*, *ay*, *uw*, *ow*, *aw*. The words beat, mate, bite, boot, boat, bout, are written *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*. Similarly *oy* in boy, *ɲɛɪ* and *ay* in the Brooklynese pronunciation of bird, *ɲɛɪɲ*.

No diphthong with 'ɥ' is used regularly in my dialect, at any rate. These diphthongs are more properly called "long vowels" than those just discussed, and are found in the words 'bad' and 'pod' as opposed to 'bat' and 'pot'. However, the difference in length results entirely from the change in consonant, and so need not be indicated. I do have a few specified used for 'ɥ'; for instance, I show the distinction of merry, marry, and Mary by writing them *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*, *ɲɛɪɲ*.

I have not yet thought of any brilliant use for the now partially redundant *ɲ*, *ɲ*, *ɲ*, and *o*. I generally write *ɲ* and *ɲ* for 'hy' and 'hw' (huge, *ɲɛɪɲ* and white, *ɲɛɪɲ*) and *ɲ* and *o* for 'y' and 'w' after another consonant (beauty, *ɲɛɪɲ* and queen *ɲɛɪɲ* but youth, *ɲɛɪɲ* and win, *ɲɛɪɲ*).

I hope this explanation has avoided both obscurity and tediousness and will save other Tolkienists from having to become linguists (thereby limiting competition in my chosen profession).

The Meeting

"The Tolkien Society of America will have its giant holiday meeting at 8 PM on 27 December/3 Afteryule at the home of the founder and thain, Dick Plotz.

Hopefully Ian Ballantine and Gimli will be there. There may be mushrooms (a hobbit's favortie food). Entertainment by Hobbits, Uninhobbitated, Ltd., if you can take it. Also a grand disappearance by the hobbit of your choice.

May the Silmarils ever light your paths."

Giant it was but the giants didn't stop coming at 8. They spoke "Friend" and entered for an hour and a half--some 50 or 60 of them. Ian Ballantine was away but W. H. Auden strolled in at about 8:30.

Plenty of everybody's choice hobbits disappeared during the course of the meeting to play pool, do Israeli dances in the dining room, worship the Yule Tree, or play the recorder. After the main body of the meeting (see The New Yorker, January 15) was over, Hobbits, Uninhobbitated gave a command performance, featuring "The Orcs' Marching Song" and a couple of terrible voices.

The mushrooms were delicious.