

# Saturday

**10:30-11:00 am**

## ***Plenary Session Room***

Constructing the map of Middle-Earth  
Stentor Danielson

Geographer Jan Broek observed that a map cannot highlight its own constructedness in the same way that a text can. Maps are thus prone to being treated as undistorted mirrors of nature. This is evident in the differences between how texts and maps in Tolkien's legendarium are treated, both by the author himself and by fans. Tolkien was very conscious of the constructedness of his texts, highlighting their in-world authorship and thus their partiality, but he treated his maps as guides to objective geography. Likewise, fans have embraced the opportunity to rethink the authority of Tolkien's texts, but have treated his maps as pure repositories of fact. A survey of fan cartography demonstrates the way the map's objectivity is taken for granted.

## ***Breakout Room 1***

The Implicit Theology behind the Manner of the Embodiment of Tolkien's Elves  
Kevin Hensler

The implicit theology behind the embodiment of Tolkien's elves holds enormous significance for the SilmFilm adaptation as well as the understanding of Tolkien's entire legendarium and his worldview. This paper explicitly explores this theology and its implications for a number of Tolkien's published works, most centrally the Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth from *Morgoth's Ring*. We will also take up themes from two previous papers: "Consideration of Gender-Embodiment in the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien" as well as "Soteriology through Tolkien and Lewis," hopefully fostering some interesting conversation among general Tolkien fans, SilmFilm fans, and those interested in theology.

## ***Breakout Room 2***

Borders in Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia*  
Trevor Brierly

Borders are a pervasive theme in Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia*, a utopian fantasy largely set in Islandia, an imaginary country located in the southern hemisphere of our Primary World. Islandia was the work of a lifetime's imagination for Wright, and it is regarded as a world-building masterpiece by many.

*Islandia* tells the story of John Lang, a young man serving as American consul to Islandia. Literal borders are an important part of the story as Lang moves between Islandia and the United States, and between provinces within Islandia. Lang also becomes involved in a border dispute and skirmish which results in him being invited to stay in Islandia. The country itself is in the process of deciding whether to end its near-total isolation from the rest of the world and remove some of the cultural and psychological borders it has set up with the outside world. John Lang is deeply affected by his time in Islandia, and he navigates the borders of culture and psychology between himself and the Islandian men and women he interacts with. He comes to realize that Islandia is his true home, and he settles there along with his American wife Gladys, who has her own "border crossing" to negotiate.

This paper will examine the way borders are used in Islandia to portray places of transition between the familiar and the new. Borders will also be discussed as areas of tension and danger which also hold the potential of heroism. Finally, borders will be examined as places where characters pass into areas in which they discover more about themselves, and perhaps find a true home.

## **11:00-11:30 am**

### ***Plenary Session Room***

Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? *The Lord of the Rings* and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible  
Mattie Gustafson

Wisdom literature is a unique kind of writing that evolved in the ancient world as soon as mankind began to explore the meaning of life and sought understanding and insight. The Hebrew Bible contains three canonical books that scholars consistently identify as Wisdom Literature: Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. This presentation offers the idea that this body of literature and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* have much in common.

We can compare *The Lord of the Rings* to wisdom literature in two ways. First, there are some quick, overall and interesting similarities that can be identified and discussed briefly: did you realize that both *Lord of the Rings* and the book of Job begin and end with a folktale? We can also look at each Wisdom book and compare it separately and directly with elements in the Tolkien saga: Frodo and Job both go on a journey (Frodo's is physical; Job's is psychological, but many parts of their journeys are similar).

The most telling observation however, comes when looking at all three wisdom books together. These three books are separate and offer quite different explorations of meaning and understanding, but they build on each other and taken together, leave us with a nuanced and complex view of the world. *Lord of the Rings* does the same thing and contains many of the views and understandings that are expressed in the three wisdom books.

The biblical canon is closed, but it is my contention that wisdom literature lives and breathes and is being created, even today. Could Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* be the new wisdom literature?

### **Breakout Room 1**

Ye Olde Printing Press  
Alicia Fox-Lenz

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1436 greatly revolutionized the English language through homogenizing the written language. Movable type, and the broader literacy it allowed, necessitated the standardization of English spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and dialectal varieties. This invention, widely in use by 1470, helped to bring an end to Middle English and usher in the age of Early Modern English, much like the 15th century marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. The focus is on the standardization of spelling and the accelerated loss of "special characters," such as þ (thorn) and ȝ (yogh), due to the constraints of technology of movable type.

### **Breakout Room 2**

The Unreliable Future in Two William Gibson Novels  
Joe Hoffman

William Gibson in the 1980s wrote a series of works that established cyberpunk fiction as a slick, stylish view of a bleak, dystopian future, but by the turn of the century much of what he'd written about had recognizably come to pass. Actuality is a border between the world-that-is and future worlds-that-could-be. Science-fiction stories look across the border, into the frontiers of "the future". For Gibson, adapting to his involuntary change of genre began by returning to one of his old books. *Pattern Recognition* (2003) is essentially the same book as *Count Zero* (1986), but aimed sideways along the frontier, instead of across it. This paper will explore the relationships between the two novels, showing how their common theme—the relationship of art to society—turns from a quasi-religious respect to a cynical quest for commercial exploitation. In our new dystopian present, the old past-future frontier is destroyed, and a new frontier emerges within the text to replace it.

## **11:30-12:00 noon**

### **Plenary Session Room**

"This Place is Different. It's Special.": Mythical Geography in *Lost* and *The Leftovers*  
Katherine Sas

This presentation will explore the role of mythical geography and sacred places in two television series created and written by Damon Lindelof: ABC's *Lost* and HBO's *The Leftovers*. Starting with a brief survey of these motifs in folklore to build context for their literary precedents and

significance in the modern imagination, the talk will focus primarily on a comparison of the Island in Lost and Jarden, TX (aka “Miracle”) in *The Leftovers*, I will track the importance of these locations as sites of magic, sacredness, and community.

### **Breakout Room 1**

Souls and Concealment: The Fidelius Charm as an Inverse Horcrux in the *Harry Potter* Series  
Emily Austin

In J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* septology, the concept of the soul runs centrally through both the plot and the fantasy world’s workings. To Rowling, the soul functions as an individual’s spiritual and moral center, and a healthy soul depends symbiotically upon good relationships with others. Horcruxes—dark objects created by splitting one’s soul through an act of murder—epitomize the opposite of this, and become an avenue through which Rowling explores, in reverse, the soul’s relationship to essential humanity. In the Potterverse, a normal human soul can survive beyond its body, but any soul fragment encased in a Horcrux cannot exist if its container is fatally compromised.

While this contrast between Horcruxes and human beings certainly forms an illuminating dichotomy, we might also place Horcruxes in opposition to other magical processes shown within the series. One particular spell, the Fidelius Charm, is equally concerned with concealment, but it acts by placing information inside a person—indeed, we learn that the charm hides information within a living individual’s soul. Unlike a Horcrux, the Fidelius Charm does not require damaging the involved soul; one might even suggest that an undamaged soul would be more effective than a split one in carrying out the spell’s aims.

Because of the different ways these two spells use human souls, we can view the Fidelius Charm as an inverse Horcrux. The former is presented as inherently relational, while the latter represents extreme self-determination, to the detriment of all others. Comparing these spells leads us to key insights about the moral framework of Rowling’s universe, highlighting the importance of human relationships based on love and self-sacrifice.

### **Breakout Room 2**

The Alienness Between Them: *Planet of Exile* and Frontiers of the Human  
Alyssa House-Thomas

The late Ursula K. Le Guin is best remembered for her body of groundbreakingly anthropological imaginative literature, with its distinctive ethnographic lens which from first publication pushed science fiction to new frontiers of humanism, and which continues to inspire seekers after human connection today. In this the year of Le Guin’s decease, a year when the world seems more fragmented by tribes, ideologies, and borders than ever before, it is an opportune time to revisit Le Guin’s classic *Planet of Exile*.

While part of a larger story cycle, when considered in isolation this novel is an elegantly self-contained exploration of Le Guin’s frequent theme of common understanding reached, of

the spark of recognition and connection that may come when human souls reach out to each other across the chasms of their difference and ignorance. A simple romance between protagonists becomes so much more, set against a backdrop of physical and cultural dissimilarities. At the same time, the territorial aggression of an adventurous foe leaves little room for identification or appreciation, demonstrating that some frontiers are harder to cross than others, and fear of the alien and the interloper is too an enduring part of the human experience. Both a philosophical narrative of cross-cultural triumph and a traditional conflict-adventure story tracing a bright border between “us” and “them”, *Planet of Exile* has much to say to us about the frontiers we have already crossed, and those we may yet conquer.