

# Mythmoot X: Homeward Bound

Presentation Abstracts and Presenter Bios

Friday Presentations

4:30-6:00 PM (EST)

Bag End - Main Room

## Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts and Palaeography

Through moots, classes, and private study, members of our Signum community encounter and examine a wonderful range of materials new and old, some much more accessible than others. In 2023, hundreds of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts have been digitized and made freely available online, but despite their newfound accessibility to scholars across the globe, many remain difficult to navigate at first glance, perhaps due to language barriers, antiquated handwriting, or both. We propose a workshop that will introduce scholars of Tolkien and modern fantasy to tools and sources useful for research into some of the medieval and Renaissance texts that inspired modern imaginative literature (a literary "home" or origin for many more recent texts, if you will).

In this 90-minute workshop, Drs. Acker and Swain will give readers a brief (~15 minute) overview of archival approaches in person and online and give attendees some tips and techniques for finding, searching, and using online manuscript facsimiles in a few of our favorite online repositories. Then we'll turn to some popular scripts, such as Carolingian minuscule, Insular script, and Anglo-Caroline minuscule from the medieval era and English secretary hand from the 16th and early 17th centuries, overviewing the basic alphabets and a few abbreviations and noting some additional resources and tutorials (~25 minutes). Finally, we'll break attendees into smaller groups and help them work through a few selected passages in a guided interactive session, sharing notes, tips, and tricks along the way (~45 minutes). At the end we'll regroup, answer questions, offer suggestions for further explorations, and discuss some of the ways in which reading texts in manuscript may benefit our scholarship (even if it's hard!). The 90 minutes we are requesting for this session will, we hope, allow attendees time to translate at least one page of text apiece, learning through experience with ample time to ask lots of questions.

Faith Acker predominantly researches obscure Renaissance manuscript poetry, but is also a great fan of novels and epics. She teaches online for Signum University, where she also serves as Curriculum Coordinator.

Larry Swain is a medievalist with training and interests in anything Early Medieval, Classical, and modern medievalisms. He teaches medieval languages and literature at Bemidji State University and lectures and precepts for a variety of courses at Signum University, where he is currently the Faculty Representative to the Board.

## Pemberley - Room 1

### 'He Showed Me its Nature:' The One Word Anchoring the Roots of "The Odyssey"

There may be no more perfect or powerful story of homecoming than 'The Odyssey,' and perhaps no greater literary exploration of what the desire for home, and coming home, ultimately means. A significant part of the depth of this exploration, furthermore, comes from the symbolic weight of the language used in key lines across the text. The originating use of the word φύσις ("nature") found in the story, in particular, introduces a philosophically loaded term that becomes a fascination for Ancient Greek Philosophers and provides an intriguing avenue for interpreting the story. Within the context of 'The Odyssey,' though, it also anchors a recurring theme and motif in the tale as a whole. The repeated return to the idea of roots and growth, of the relationship of "being" to "becoming" and what one's true nature is, is precisely at the core of 'The Odyssey,' and its usage of φύσις offers a way to come to an understanding of how these elements coalesce in the story to give this tale of homecoming its ultimate power and resonance.

Patrick Lyon is a Signum student, SPACE Preceptor, and Feature Article writer for collider.com who also teaches Latin and Literature in a Classical school in the Chicago area. In his spare time he enjoys gardening, Beowulf, juggling, Irish music, more Beowulf, a pipe full of Old Toby, a spot of the Old Winyards, playing the violin, and tilting at windmills of various sizes.

### 'Ab Terra Pannoniae usque ad Occiduas Partes': The Journey Home in the Medieval Latin "Waltharius"

A key plot element in the "Waltharius", a 1453-line Latin epic poem from the Middle Ages, is the journey undertaken by the protagonist, Walther of Aquitaine, from the land of the Huns in Pannonia to his homeland in Western Europe. For Walther, the journey back to Aquitaine is a crucial step for his development as a heroic figure. He transitions from a youth who plays games in the court of the Huns to a mature leader who rules over his people. My paper will analyse Walther's journey by examining three key scenes in the "Waltharius": the feast scene of Attila the Hun; the arming scene, in which Walther departs from Pannonia and arms himself with his

arms and armour; and the “Journey to Trial” type-scene, wherein Walther travels through the wilderness of Europe and fights a series of individual combats against his adversaries. In my paper, I will read these scenes by considering the Classical and Germanic intertexts for the poem. To elaborate, I will read these scenes by looking chiefly at their parallels in both Virgil’s Latin epic poem the “Aeneid” and in the Old Norse-Icelandic heroic poem “Atlakviða” (“The Lay of Attila the Hun”). Especially by reading the poem through the lens of Virgil, we are able to see a broader thematic significance for Walther’s return home. His return to Aquitaine is not just a neutral homecoming, but can be read as the pursuit of a greater destiny. For just as Virgil’s hero Aeneas seeks Hespera (“the western land”), so too does Walther seek the occiduas ... partes (“western parts”).

Samuel Lewis has just recently completed his MPhil thesis at the University of Sydney which examined the lord-vassal relationships in the Waltharius. His research interests are Germanic philology, Germanic mythology, and Latin epic poetry.

## Visualizing the Structure of HoMe

Christopher Tolkien’s twelve volumes on the History of Middle-earth (HoMe) give unparalleled insight into the development of J.R.R. Tolkien’s legendarium. They contain early drafts of familiar texts, alternative conceptualizations of well-known stories, and in some cases completely new material. But the books are complex reads. They intersperse transcriptions of different manuscripts with notes and commentary. Distinct versions of a story are spread throughout multiple volumes of the series with extensive cross-referencing.

This talk will explore the possibilities that a digital reading environment might afford to better explore and understand the structure of HoMe and the interrelationship between texts and paratexts. Imagine being able to show Christopher’s notes alongside the text, to read different versions of a text side-by-side with exact changes indicated, or to visualize how parts of one text relate to another. The presentation will demonstrate prototypes of all this being developed as part of the Digital Tolkien Project.

James Tauber is philologist, linguist, and software developer who works with scholars around the world using computers to better understand languages and texts.

## Castle Dracula - Room 2

### There's No Place Like Home: Place, Protection and Belonging in Tolkien’s Legendarium.

Amongst the many and varied definitions of the term, ‘home’ may be understood as being delineated by the bricks, mortar and roof which one inhabits, a dwelling place for a family or a social unit. Or, more widely, it may be comprehended as an environment offering security and

happiness, a valued place regarded as a refuge or place of origin or the place - such as a country or town - where one was born or has lived for a long period. Either definition invokes a sense of 'belonging'; there is usually an emotional attachment to anywhere we call 'Home'. The concept of 'home' is at the heart of Tolkien's writing. In *The Lord of the Rings* in particular, although 'home' may mean different things to different people, it remains at the forefront of the thoughts and desires of the various characters; the defense and protection of home is one of the main motives for the Fellowship's quest to destroy the Ring of Power.

In this paper, I will explore how home plays a central part in the narrative, showing in the process that one must be willing to put home at risk if the defeat of evil is to be achieved. Inevitably, home must undergo irrevocable alteration and the characters themselves cannot remain untouched.

Dr. Sara Brown is Chair of the Language and Literature Faculty at Signum University, where she has taught on courses with Corey Olsen, Verlyn Flieger, Dimitra Fimi, Robin Reid, Doug Anderson, Amy Sturgis, and John Garth. Sara currently serves on the editorial board of *Mallorn*, the academic journal of the Tolkien Society, and is co-presenter on podcasts such as *The Tolkien Experience*, *The Rings of Power Wrap-Up*, and *The Prancing Pony*.

## Striking Out for the Territories: Huck, Frodo, and the Journey Home

What has "Huckleberry Finn" to teach us about the value of leaving home--of leaving behind the comfort of one's ideas and biases, to "strike out for the territories"? Is it necessary if we are ever to mature in any meaningful way--if we are ever to find our true home, or return to, and embrace, what we once left behind? What does the journey itself teach us? Though Huck's fleeing from home seems largely an act of desperation (if a carefully orchestrated one) perhaps what Huck himself will eventually discover is that he is as much fleeing toward something as he is leaving something behind; even, in his case, that what he left behind wasn't home at all, but only a mirage--and that what he is moving toward is precisely that, though he may never actually arrive.

By contrast with Huck, Frodo first leaves home--with the uncertain goal of the concealment, and later the destruction, of the Ring--with clear reluctance. Though no absolute paradise, the Shire's flaws are minor (and Hobbit-sized), and it is dear to him for all the right reasons. Later--with the wound of the Witch King and the poison of the ring itself lingering in his heart, Frodo will realize he has left a home he loves only to return to a home he has lost. Yet one could argue that given his character and depth, amplified by his collision with circumstances, that loss was inevitable, as he has been drawn by a more distant vision--even before his wounding--toward a home he glimpses beyond the hazy greyness of the sea.

By examining the unlikely parallels along the paths of these two dissimilar wanderers, I hope to elucidate some of what the experience of leaving home brings to each of them, and what they have to teach us.

Elizabeth (Libby) Lyon is a geriatric Masters Degree student and Literary Adventurer with Signum University. Although she self-identifies as a northern Wisconsinite, she has spent most of her life wandering from one beautiful dwelling to another, trying to figure out where home actually is. Her favorite playthings are running shoes, knitting needles, violins, grandchildren, and words of all kinds.

## The Hobbit and Middle Age

There are, understandably, very many fine articles on Tolkien and the Middle Ages, owing to the Professor's sterling reputation as a medievalist. Only one article, however, deals with the topic of age and the works of J.R.R. Tolkien: David B. Hogan and A. Mark Clarfield's very fine piece, "Venerable or Vulnerable: Aging and Old Age in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," now over fifteen years old. Hogan and Clarfield discuss how Tolkien "deal with ageing, longevity, and mortality in his sub-creation of Middle-earth," making clear Tolkien's role as a voice for traditionalist Christian anxieties regarding the artificial extension of human life (5). In this article, I wish to focus more exclusively on a single work in Tolkien's legendarium, "The Hobbit", his landmark children's novel. This text presents young readers with a rich story rooted in the experiences of a protagonist who is solidly in his middle years and yet is experiencing new and fantastic adventures. This story, I contend, challenges modern cultural and even literary assumptions about the nature and value of old age—making "The Hobbit" a profound critique of contemporary agism.

In this presentation, I explore the ways in which Bilbo's behavior reevaluates and recontextualizes the state of middle age, dissolving barriers between old and young and questioning cultural stereotypes about the irrelevance of life's latter years.

Dan Kephart earned his M.A. in British Literature from Texas Tech University, and is in the process of acquiring a Ph.D. in English from the University of Rochester. Dan's previous moot presentations covered grief in "The Silmarillion" and the narratological function of Tom Bombadil.

## Saturday Presentations

9:00-10:30 AM (EST)

Bag End - Main Room

Protect Gondor With the Ring, or From the Ring? The Ethical Dilemma of Boromir and Faramir

Boromir and Faramir are brothers, leaders, and captains of Gondor. Both would protect their home and the people in it even to death. When rumors spread that the one ring has been found, duties and responsibilities separate the brothers, sending Boromir abroad and keeping Faramir at home. Each has a secluded encounter with the ring-bearer in which he faces a choice: send Frodo on his way or take the ring. They are driven by a common desire to honor and protect their home of Gondor. However, Boromir tries to protect Gondor with the ring; Faramir chooses to protect Gondor from the ring. But why? Why do these two sons of Gondor take opposite positions when faced with the ethical dilemma of what to do with the ring? How do their actions and choices compare with other leaders in the story? How do they explain and justify their decisions? What do their encounters reveal about ethical decisions and decision-making to inform today's leaders? I examine key passages through the lens of authentic leadership to gain insights into these questions. Authentic leadership is characterized by the maxim, know thyself. An authentic leader demonstrates internal and external integrity, exercises balanced decision-making, and holds a realistic view of their capabilities and perspectives. I present a cross-case analysis of Faramir and Boromir using their key interactions with Frodo as explanatory cases. Each case is examined through the lens of authentic leadership with a focus on ethical decision-making. Rich insights into the nature of ethical leadership and what it means to be an authentic leader are uncovered through the words and actions of the two sons of Gondor. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

Allen Blocker is a retired naval officer, test pilot, aerospace engineer, and beltway bandit. He's finally discovering what he wants to be when he grows up, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Strategic Leadership program at Regent University.

## Tal-elmar, John Ronald, and the Diasporic Children of Empires

Despite Tolkien's self-identification with Faramir and hobbits, Kristine Larsen argues that Elrond Half-elven is the legendarium character most similar to Tolkien himself ("The Problematic Perimeters of Elrond Half-elven and Ronald English-Catholic," 2021). Exploring Tolkien's own words given during various interviews, Dimitra Fimi describes Tolkien as a "diasporic child" when assessing his feeling that England was both home and foreign to him, since he was born a British citizen in a colonial outpost of the British Empire ("I hold the key," 2022). Combining Larsen and Fimi's ideas, I propose another not-Faramir, non-hobbit, diasporic character who bears a strong resemblance to Tolkien's own life experiences, both personal and global: Tal-elmar.

Tal-elmar, the grandson of a Wild Man and captive Númenorean woman, and Tolkien both embody unresolved consequences of imperialism and colonialism. Each displays an affinity – physically, culturally, and linguistically – for their respective colonizing nations and yet cannot be fully integrated into those "home" countries, which creates a sense of homelessness within them. In this way, it is possible to interpret the text of "Tal-elmar" as taking influence from, or at least paralleling, Tolkien's own childhood experience of the British empire of the 19th and 20th centuries, and exploring the harms of imperialism and colonialism on its own diasporic children. While this comparison highlights the ways Tolkien experienced "othering" during his life, and

though he became more critical of the British Empire as he aged, the parallels between Tolkien and Tal-elmar also demonstrate that Tolkien's sense of alterity does not escape or exonerate the structures of imperialism and colonialism – and the implicit ideas, such as racial hierarchy, necessary for the establishment of empires – within his life or fiction.

Clare Moore is an independent scholar whose work focuses on gender and disability in Tolkien's legendarium and other fantasy literature.

## After the Fall: No Way Home

As the Faithful of Númenor prepared for a desperate flight away from their homeland, they had every reason to despair. They were abandoning their homes, saving what they could, and fleeing from danger into the unknown. However, what actually followed next was an unexpected deliverance from evil for them and a civilization-ending cataclysm for the rest of the Númenóreans.

Tolkien vividly described the stages of the process that destroyed Númenor – the chasm that swallowed the fleet, the devouring wave that rolled over the land, and the winds that wildly blew the Faithful's ships to the east on the shoulders of gigantic waves. For the reader, this can raise questions and a desire for details. What did the Faithful experience, and how were they delivered to their new home of Middle-earth? How could the same phenomena be the mechanism of your enemies' destruction and simultaneously that of your deliverance?

This paper will investigate the links between Tolkien's vision of Númenor's downfall and the physical reality that he described. Which portions of the writings must be interpreted as actions of Illúvatar and unexplainable by natural laws, and which portions can be interpreted according to the rules of a natural world? How does the cataclysm that destroyed Númenor compare to natural catastrophes of our primary world that Tolkien was familiar with and those that we today are familiar with? Finally, what exactly were the physical consequences of this cataclysm elsewhere in Middle-earth?

Louis Keiner is a Professor and Director of Honors in the HTC Honors College at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, SC, USA. He teaches courses in Physics, Physical Oceanography, and interdisciplinary Honors seminars, where he helps students explore the connections between the Sciences and the Humanities.

## Pemberley - Room 1

Watercolor 101: Lords of the (Book)Mark

LIMITED TO 15 IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS. Sign-ups will be posted in the Mythmoot Slack when it opens and it is first come, first serve for slots.

Join artist Emily Austin for an introduction to the medium of watercolor. This workshop will center around an approachable and useful project: painting your very own pair of bookmarks. Emily will guide participants through the process, starting with a brief history of watercolor and an overview of its paints, brushes, and paper. After learning a few basic techniques and having some open time for painting experimentation, the group will follow along with a step by step demonstration to create the two planned bookmarks. The first will be a loose abstract design based around each individual's choice of colors, while for the second we will try out a simple landscape scene which can be similarly adapted to user preference. The goal is for participants to come away with first hand experience of basic watercolor techniques, as well as a few fun keepsakes.

List of supplies for MootHub attendees and in-person attendees who wish to participate from their own room(s) forthcoming!

Emily Austin is an illustrator, photographer, and graphic designer born and raised in Hawaii. She currently lives in Indiana with her husband Ryan, and her shoot-the-moon dream would be to see her own illustrated works sitting on their Tolkien bookshelves one day.

## Castle Dracula - Room 2

### Haunted Houses, Haunted Minds: The Ghosts of Memory in *Drifting Home* and *When Marnie Was There*

Home can mean different things to different people. Home can be a place where good memories live; a home can be family or the people that make you happy. Other times, the places we think of as our homes are haunted, haunted not by ghosts—though that may also be true—but by the ghosts of memory, trauma, anger, guilt, or grief. For Kosuke and Natsume, in the movie “*Drifting Home*”, their abandoned apartment building where they once lived signifies and elicits distinct meanings and responses. Each is haunted by ghosts of the past, represented as their trauma, and the “ghost” that resides in the rundown apartment complex. Adding to the fantastical element of this movie, Kosuke, Natsume, and their friends, as well as the apartment, are transported into the middle of the ocean, drifting along as a ship. There, they must find healing from their ghosts, and the ghost of the apartment must let go of what keeps him there if they are to find their way back home. In the movie “*When Marnie Was There*”, Anna has lost her sense of home because she is an orphan and lives with her foster parents. Anna is haunted by her own trauma that she must come face-to-face with when she meets Marnie, who is a ghost of Anna's past that “haunts” her as a memory, but through Marnie, Anna discovers who she is and her sense of belonging and home. However, to get there, Marnie needs to reconcile with Anna and the ghosts of her past for Anna to heal from the generational trauma that haunts her. In the



analysis of both movies, we discover different characters' responses to trauma and that the places they see as home are not haunted by ghosts, but by their memories, and that to heal from trauma, they must face it head-on.

Jacob Schreiner is a Signum University alum from Houston, TX. Along with the works of J.R.R. Tolkien he also enjoys anime, Star Wars, and cats.

## Home Is Where the Heart Piece Is

The word "home" can mean many things, depending on who is asked. Some may say it's an origin, while others may think of it as their base of operations, and still others may view it as a peaceful retirement destination. This is true of characters in different stories, different characters in the same story, or even the same character at different points in the story. But what of the reader, viewer, player, etc.? A story may affect them too, and leave a very different impression of where home is.

Video games, by their very nature, require interaction from a player and often allow a player to become, at least in part, another character within the story. In this discussion, we will look at the story of "The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening" and see how the concept of home plays a factor in our understanding of the narrative. We will also examine the question of what "home" means for Link, versus what it means for the player and discover that, while the two views may be very similar, they are not quite the same.

Stephen Cover is a computer engineer with a passion for stories, both real and fantastic. In his spare time, he enjoys reading books, watching movies, playing games, and poking fun at all of them.

## "Nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, nowhere to be free": A Settler's Reflections on Indigenous Spaces and "Negotiated Symbiosis" in Octavia Butler's Literature

What happens when you cannot be homeward bound because there is no "home" to return to? What if you are bound to a new, shared home?

In Octavia E. Butler's short story "Amnesty," a decades-long global depression accompanies the occupation of Earth's deserts by frighteningly intelligent and powerful beings radically different from humans. Local populations seethe, fueled by a generation of joblessness and stories of the "Communities" human experiments. A human interpreter explains to resentful, desperate Americans why the "Weeds" cannot just leave: "They're here to stay ... There's no 'away' for them" (Bloodchild 167). Similarly, in Butler's post-apocalyptic Xenogenesis trilogy, Lilith captures a haunting sentiment: There is "nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, nowhere to be free" (Dawn III.3, "Nursery").

Jens Hieber's Signum Thesis analyzes what he calls "Negotiated Symbiosis" in Butler—the hybridized communities developed through forced interrelationships. I want to press in on the implications of Butler's interspecies symbiosis by considering my own situation as a Canadian settler in Mi'kmaq territory. 203 years ago, my Scottish family began farming in beautiful Prince Edward Island—known earlier as Epekwitk, the "cradle on the waves." While Canada's First Nations had nowhere to be free, I have nowhere to go. I am bound to this homeland of the dispossessed.

Butler is profitably read as a Black American woman science fiction writer, but the question of settler-indigenous "negotiated symbiosis" remains unexplored. Butler's postcolonial perspective provides a thoughtful and troubling speculative framework for reconsidering indigenous displacement, hybrid identity, and shared spaces—including the trans-Atlantic colonial project of using indigenous Africans to help displace the people who first called these lands home. Rather than a final solution to a social problem, with Butler, I offer reflections as an alien bound to this strange new land I have always called home.

Dr. Brenton Dickieson (PhD, University of Chester) is a teacher, writer, and podcaster from Prince Edward Island, Canada. He is a part of the Signum University faculty, and is the curator of the literature and culture blog, [www.aPilgrimInNarnia.com](http://www.aPilgrimInNarnia.com).

## Sunday Presentations

9:00-10:30 AM (EST)

### Bag End

#### The Ranger and the Gardener (Home is Where the Heart Is)

It's hard to imagine two members of the Fellowship with less in common than the Heir of Elendil and the Heir of Hamfast: one has been to lands where "the stars are strange;" the other has never been more than twenty miles from Bagshot Row. Aragorn is consistently described as one who 'travels light' — taking the minimum needed for the journey. Sam's pack, on the other hand, is "rather large and heavy," filled not only with his beloved cooking gear, but also with homely items that Frodo forgot but would eventually want. One seems to be comfortably homeless, the other would have carried Bag End with him were it possible. And yet each ends his journey in a surprisingly similar place: happily married in a new home, looking forward to helping their communities recover from war and prosper in the Fourth Age. This paper will follow the path each character takes, tracing the differences and similarities in how (and under what circumstances) each thinks or speaks about home. In doing so, I hope to shed light on what Tolkien has to say about the value of 'home' not only for an individual, but also for the world writ

large. While I will draw primarily on *The Lord of the Rings* proper, my paper will touch also on material found in the Appendix and in “Sauron Defeated”. Tolkien (‘a hobbit in all but size’) provides greater detail about hobbit home life, but he gives ample proof that we all, like Aragorn (who lives ‘on the heights’) yearn just as much as a hobbit for “fire and lamp, and meat and bread” — and, of course, a home and bed.

Kate Neville received her M.A. from Signum University in 2017 with a thesis studying the development of the character of Lúthien Tinúviel from 1917 to 1931. She has since presented at multiple conferences and is a regular contributor to “The Year’s Work in Tolkien Studies ” for Tolkien Studies.

## Abhorsen’s House: A Refuge of Life

Garth Nix’s Old Kingdom Series follows the adventures and struggles of a family of good necromancers who fight the Dead raised to life and the evil necromancers who raise them. In each of the novels, the Abhorsen Sabriel and her immediate family as well as her ancestors, visit a special place known as the Abhorsen’s House. Its location on an island at the very edge of a mighty waterfall proves to be breathtakingly beautiful and awesome. In contrast to the surrounding lands, which are dark and infested with the Dead, the House is characterized by light and life. It protects the Abhorsen and her family with both natural defenses as well as ancient magical ones. This allows them to view the House as a safe haven in an unsafe land where they can rest, resupply, and gain knowledge to help them continue their fight against the Dead once they leave the House. In many ways, the House proves to be a servant for the Abhorsen family as their stalwart guardian and place of rest. In a land characterized by death, the Abhorsen’s House proves to be the ultimate life-giving, safe, and comforting place for all Abhorsens who travel there as they themselves fight the Dead.

Taylor Johnson Guinan is a high school English teacher from Florence, Arizona who loves science fiction and fantasy. She graduated last year from Signum University with her masters degree.

## “Why the Hell Doesn’t Orfeiu Come Back?”: Finding a Home for Orpheus in the “The Dark Tower” and “The Silver Chair”

C. S. Lewis’s infamously unfinished work “The Dark Tower” tells of a nefarious Otherworld that harrows Cambridge home life, that is, before Cambridge home life harrows the Otherworld. If one exchanges Narnia for Cambridge, the same could be said of “The Silver Chair” - and the similarities do not stop there. Both stories are plotted on a hellish there-and-back-again timeline and both stories, by contrast, bring into focus the idea of home. Both stories are, in fact, consecutive and moving reworkings of the Orpheus myth. In this paper presentation, Jenn Rogers first studies the similarity in scholarly context between the two stories using letters among the Inklings and overviews of their relevant works. Second, she explores the imaginative context in which “The Dark Tower” and “The Silver Chair” are both situated, teasing out the telling ways in which Lewis plays with the Orpheus myth in each story. Finally, Rogers highlights textual similarities between the two stories and posits what a home for Orfeiu may have looked

like. The paper highlights how neatly “The Dark Tower” fits into Lewis’s imaginative world; it is not the anomaly some have proposed. Progressivism, transposition, home-seeking, and home-finding abound in this paper presentation as Jenn Rogers unpacks the many parallels between Lewis’s “adult” thriller and his beloved children’s classic.

Jennifer Rogers is a wife, mom, farmer, and lover of all things medieval, philological, and Inklings. She earned her M.A. at Signum University and now resides at the northern edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her family and 40-odd head of cattle.

## Pemberley

### “I Was The Son My Father Wanted, But I Wasn’t Me” - The Pursuit of Home in “Avatar the Last Airbender”

Who are you when you have been banished from your home? How do we cope when what was our home has been taken away from us by a war or other traumatic event? What does it mean to come home when what most people think of as “home” is an unhealthy place, or a place that doesn’t even exist anymore?

The 100 Year War in “Avatar the Last Airbender” causes a lot of character’s homes to have to change. Aang is the last of his kind after his people were wiped out at the beginning of the 100 Year War. Sokka and Katara have had to grow up without their parents. Toph has never been accepted at home for who she wants to be.

We will focus on Zuko for this talk. Zuko is the crown prince of the Fire Nation, who has been banished by his father for speaking out of turn. His home is not healthy, but it takes a very long time for Zuko to understand this. He understandably wants to go back but discovers this isn’t as easy as he once assumed.

During this presentation, we will look at what going home means when you realize one way or another that the home you wanted to be a part of is gone. How do you create a home when you realize the place you once longed for is actively harmful?

Brandon Minich is a computer programmer who has a great interest in all kinds of fictional works, including Tolkien, Brandon Sanderson, Avatar the Last Airbender, and Legend of Zelda. He lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where the rest of his family lives.

### We’re Off the Map! The Depiction of Home in Jeff Smith's Graphic Novel Bone

Sentimentalists may say “home is where the heart is” while pragmatists may say “home is where the address is.” In the epic graphic novel “Bone” by Jeff Smith, every main character or group is

displaced: the Bone cousins, the royal family, the dragons, and the Lord of the Locusts. Even the permanent residents of the Valley relocate during the war between those who want to reclaim the Valley and those who wish to destroy it. Which platitude applies when only the absence or destruction of home is depicted in a story? Is home your place of origin? Is it the community to which you belong? Or is it something else entirely?

In this presentation, we will explore how the absence of a physical home re-orientates the characters towards identity and community. As the Bone cousins navigate alliances and spiritual epiphanies at the end of the world, they realize that they need to plot a new course if they are to survive and return to Boneville. Faced with this reality, the Bone cousins may need a bigger map – or even a new one altogether – in order to discover the true meaning of home.

Kerra Fletcher is a chemist who has recently become a student at Signum, much to her enjoyment and edification. She resides in the DC metro area with her collaborator-spouse and two young collaborators-in-training.

## “My Home, Such As I Have”: Home and Belonging in The Lord of the Rings

Some say that “home is where the heart is”, but platitudes are no substitute for clear definitions. Homes grant shelter, security, and refreshment, but on a more fundamental level they provide personal grounding, an anchor amid the comings and goings of our daily lives. Neither simple sentimentality nor rules of inheritance should determine something so significant as a person’s domicile. But by what method should home be defined and chosen?

Steve Rogers and Jean Luc Picard agree that home isn’t where you’re from, as much as it’s the place where you belong. The Avengers Compound and the USS Enterprise are where these heroes deem that they belong. But what constitutes belonging? Aragorn claims to belong to “both Gondor and the North”, and even more confusingly, he links this bifurcated belonging to his Strider and Dúnadan personas, muddling matters even further.

In this talk, we will take a close look at Aragorn’s homes, as described in “The Lord of the Rings”, and consider the strange apparent connections between home, belonging, and identity. It might turn out that you cannot know where you belong, until you figure out who you are in the first place.

Jason Troutman is an Air Force officer and an aspiring amateur scholar interested in the thematic elements in “The Lord of the Rings” and other works of fiction. He resides in Northern Virginia with his collaborator-wife and their two young children who are just beginning their own delvings into Middle-earth.

## Castle Dracula

### Implementation of Hobbit Architecture design principles in Contemporary Practice

Many of us have seen in the news and media examples of Tolkien enthusiasts building their hobbit homes or some type of hobbit-inspired architecture or construction. But outside these extreme examples...can we incorporate some principles of Hobbit Architecture in contemporary everyday Architectural design? If so, what are these principles and how can we implement them? There are challenges and opportunities.

We can divide them two general categories:

#### 1) Elements of Design:

a. These are the design principles, or guidelines, that we can find in a Hobbit Hole or other examples of architecture described in Tolkien’s writings: Things like feeling of “coziness”; a close contact and intermingling with nature (using natural materials like stone or wood, burying homes, etc.), a sense of “protection” and the opportunity for exploration and the creation of hobbit-scale spaces.

#### 2) Elements of Architecture:

a. These are the actual physical objects or manifestations, the stylistic choices: Circular doors & windows, some traditional and XIX century style elements like a mantelpiece, a central fireplace, etc. and beyond the hobbit hole proper, we find the party tree as an element to signal gathering and merry community reunion.

b. Other architectural examples described in the Hobbit, such as the Anglosaxon inspired house of Beorn, or the elven “Homely Home” of Elrond, which seems to inherit many elements of XIX century “Art Nouveau” style.

With these elements and ideas in mind, I will show three examples of how these principles were applied in my own practice on three different levels or typologies:

- A place for Learning: An Elementary School.
- A place for Dwelling: A single-family home.
- A place for Amusement: Interior design of a man-cave.

Exploration of different types, styles and elements of architecture has been a recurrent theme in many Signum-related activities, as well as a subject of careful description in many of Tolkien’s writings.

Tomas Delgado is an architect born in Argentina, currently living in Upstate New York. His specialty is sustainable and environmentally conscious design; a Tolkien fan and long-time follower of all types of Signum Activities.

## The “Noldolantë” Reimagined

Would you choose to leave your home forever? What if you believed you were leaving on a righteous quest? What if you felt your real home was somewhere else? What if your home was invaded, would you defend it? J.R.R. Tolkien explored these, and many more questions regarding a people’s relationship with their home in his epic tale “The Flight of the Noldor”. A tragedy at its heart, Tolkien wrote many versions of this tale but never completed his poetic Noldolantë, “The Fall of the Noldor,” which he fictionally credited Maglor, Fëanor’s second son, with having written as the sorrowful lament of the exiled Elves. While I cannot claim the pen of Tolkien nor the voice of Maglor, I have still dared to attempt a poetic version of this tale from the perspective of Fëanor’s grandson, Celebrimbor. For this presentation I will be reading one section of this work, the Kinslaying at Alqualondë, for open comment and critique.

Dave Heinitz is a retired fighter pilot, working ops research analyst, and novice writer who lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and two teenage children. In addition to myth, stories, and his family, he is passionate about automotive and aerospace technology, especially the places where myth, story, and technology intersect.

## Freydis the Drengr

Life in an Old Norse home centered around the fire in the main room. The fire provided heat, a means to cook food and a place for household members to gather. Around the fire on long winter nights the men would work with leather, wood or metal projects while women spun wool, wove textiles and sewed clothing. Children would be learning these skills from the adults. While they worked, a family member or visiting entertainer may play music, sing or tell the stories of their ancestors and gods. These stories were passed along from person to person, place to place and down the generations. Each teller would tell the tale his own way, so even familiar stories could have quite different versions. Eventually, many of these stories were collected and written down from this oral tradition, becoming the sagas we can read today.

I will perform my version of a story taken from the Grænlingdga saga. My original narrative poem “Freydis the Drengr: Bold, Courageous, and Fair Minded” is written in a style and meter based on Old Norse Fornyrðislag Eddic poetry. In my tale, Freydís behaves not in a vile, cruel manner, as portrayed in Grænlingdga saga, but as a true drengr. A drengr is bold and never backs down from a fight, while displaying a strong sense of fair play. This piece was my Creative Capstone project, done in Fall of 2022 under the guidance of Sparrow Alden. Freydis the Drengr is targeted to older children (8 to12) but all ages can enjoy it.

**Carol Sharp** recently completed a Signum University Graduate Diploma and Creative Capstone with a concentration in Germanic Philology. She has retired to L'Anse aux Meadows NL where she is the "wise woman" at Norstead Viking Village.