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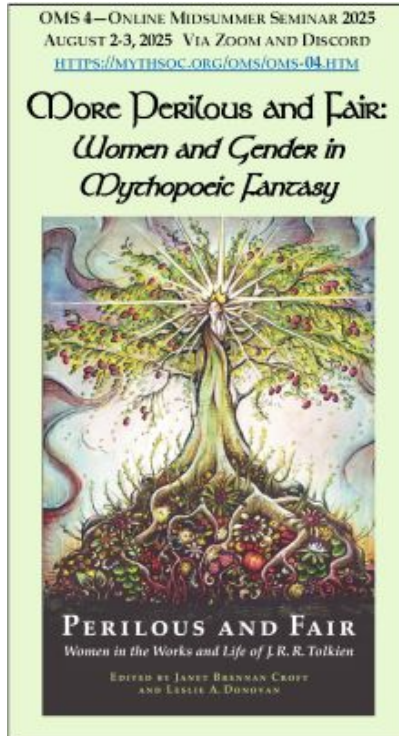
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## All the Comforts: The Image of Home in *The Hobbit* & *The Lord of the Rings*

### Abstract

Examines the importance of home, especially the Shire, as metaphor in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Relates it to the importance of change vs. permanence as a recurring theme in both works.

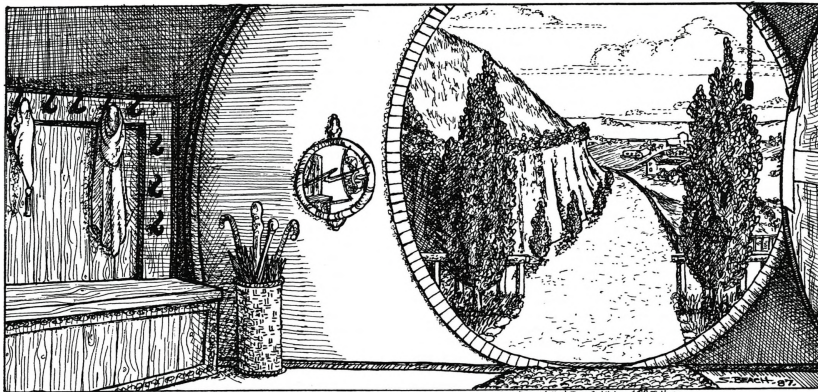
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Change in J.R.R. Tolkien; Home in J.R.R. Tolkien; Permanence in J.R.R. Tolkien; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*; Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*

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## All the Comforts

The Image of Home in *The Hobbit* & *The Lord of the Rings*

Wayne G. Hammond

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" — to be precise, in a tunnel that "wound on and on," opening through "many little round doors" into bedrooms, bathrooms, and sitting-rooms, cellars, pantries ("lots of these"), wardrobes, kitchens, and dining-rooms. The plurals are impressive. "It was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort."<sup>1</sup> Unhappily, though deliberately, Tolkien shows us little inside of Bag End, in word or drawing, leaving its furnishing and other details largely to our imagination and to each reader's notion of "comfort."<sup>2</sup> If we are familiar with the children's literature in whose tradition *The Hobbit* follows, we may picture something akin to Peter Rabbit's "neatest sandiest hole" "underneath the root of a very big fir tree,"<sup>3</sup> though grander, and definitely with something "in it to sit down on [and] to eat."<sup>4</sup> Or other Beatrix Potter dwellings may come to mind, such as Mr. Tod's house on (and in) Bull Banks, or the tidy burrow of Mrs. Tittlemouse with its "yards and yards of sandy passages, leading to storerooms and nut-cellars and seed-cellars."<sup>5</sup> Or, more likely, we will think of "a place where heroes could fitly feast after victory, where weary harvesters could line up in scores along the table and keep their Harvest Home with mirth and song, or where two or three friends of simple tastes could sit about as they pleased and eat and smoke and talk in comfort and contentment."<sup>6</sup> This last is Kenneth Grahame speaking of Badger's home in *The Wind in the Willows*, and the description will serve as well for Bag End — except that Badger's house is fully subterranean while the "best rooms" at Bag End have windows looking out over a garden to the meadows and river beyond (11). For hobbits no less than humans (or the Water Rat, to continue the comparison with Grahame's book?), light and air are as essential for comfort as shelter and warmth and food and drink.

But Bilbo Baggins' home is not merely comfortable, it is "the most luxurious hobbit-hole... under The Hill or over The Hill or across The Water" (12). **LUXURY** connotes abundance, even excess: in Bilbo's case, the quality is most vividly illustrated in his "whole rooms devoted to clothes" (11) and in his larders, which are stocked better than the average delicatessen (or Ratty's picnic basket in *The Wind in the Willows*), to judge from the (apparently) fulfilled cravings of Thorin and company at the "unexpected party." No wonder that the dwarves think of Bilbo as a grocer (one who deals with food in **large quantities**!) And no wonder that Bilbo hesitates to leave such a comfortable, luxurious, idealized home, of a sudden, for a journey into lands he does not know, with no guarantee he will return, to gain a treasure he does not need. Not to prefer familiar comforts to certain hardship would be, by hobbit or human standards, irrational at the least. In the event, Bilbo has to be persuaded to leave his snug home, by pride and by Gandalf, literally run out of the house and into adventure.

Bag End serves three functions in *The Hobbit*. First, of course, it is the geographical location from which the story begins and at which it ends. By definition, a tale of "there and back again" must have such a place, and the place need be nothing more than a convenience, with no other meaning — the railway station in C.S. Lewis' *Prince Caspian*, for example, or in his *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Aunt Alberta's back bedroom.

Bag End, however, is not merely the start and finish line (as it were) of Bilbo's journey. It is also a "familiar" setting within the "secondary world" of *The Hobbit* — familiar, that is, in the division of Bag End

into rooms such as kitchens and parlors, whose functions we readily understand; in the food that is consumed there, from tea and cakes to cold chicken and pickles; in Bilbo's washing-up, an everyday domestic chore; and even in the architecture of Bag End, if, again, we are mindful of its analogues in English children's literature. Through this image of home the reader enters the fantasy world of *The Hobbit*, and by the recurrence of this image, no less than by Bilbo's frequent expression of an "everyday" point of view, the reader may accept the "reality" of Tolkien's fictional setting, following a thread of familiarity through a web of the fantastic. To apply Douglas Parker's phrase, Bag End is a bridge between the world of the reader and the world of the story that helps to make the distant and sometimes strange matter of the tale "acceptable to someone besides the author."<sup>8</sup> It is a reference model against which the reader, through Bilbo and the narrator, compares the other, "unfamiliar" (or less "familiar") dwellings that Bilbo visits along the way. Paradoxically, those "homes" in *The Hobbit* that are physically most like Bilbo's "hole in the ground" — the trolls' cave, "Goblin-town," Gollum's grotto, the Elvenking's halls, the passageways of Erebor — are settings for danger and discomfort, and are depicted as "dreary," and "dull," and "nasty." On the other hand, Rivendell (particularly as seen from a distance in Tolkien's painting) and Beorn's "great wooden house" (103), which are of more (to us) traditional, above-ground construction, are settings for rest and reflection, and are depicted in positive terms. These under- and over-ground dwellings are also, of course, places of darkness and light — by extension, as the reader will, Evil and Good, Hades and Elysium, nightmare and blissful dream.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, Bag End, like our own world, has elements of both. It is idealized but not ideal. Lit by nature only in its "best rooms," its dark spaces (without windows) may still be brightened by lamp and fire, by effort and invention.

Third and most importantly, Bag End gives Bilbo purpose: it is, in fact, the true object of his quest. For him it is like a sacred place<sup>10</sup>, whose image he evokes no fewer than eleven times in moments of distress, as if he were saying a prayer. Under the stars, with danger "not far away on either side," Bilbo thinks "of his comfortable chair before the fire in his favorite sitting-room in his hobbit-hole and of the kettle singing. Not for the last time!" (46); in Gollum's cave he imagines himself "frying bacon and eggs in his own kitchen at home" (65); in the Elvenking's palace he longs for his "own warm fireside with the lamp shining" (150); in the depths of Erebor he wishes he "could wake up and find this beastly tunnel was [his] own front-hall at home" (183) — to give but four examples. On other occasions, though the word home or its equivalent is not used, the concept comes to mind out of Bilbo's want of amenities: in the eagles' eyrie, for instance, he wishes "in vain for a wash and a brush" (100), and in the halls of the Elvenking he at last understands "what it was to be really hungry, not merely politely interested in the dainties of a well-filled larder" (160).

Bilbo's homesickness, which at first provides amusement, by the eleventh expression is more tiresome than comical and seems not a little selfish in Tolkien's frequent use of *own* and the possessive *his*. It is, however, an emotion that rings true under the trying circumstances, and Tolkien uses it to point the way to what is most valuable in his philosophy. Contrary to many synopses of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo is not, like Thorin and company, seeking "long-forgotten

gold" except incidentally, on behalf of the dwarves, and when he gets some for himself he at first refuses it or gives it away. Bilbo is driven by neither greed for gold nor revenge on a dragon, but initially by a longing for adventure and by his promise to be "burglar" for the dwarves, and ultimately by a simple desire to return to his "quiet Western Land and the Hill and his hobbit-hole under it" (179). His personal goal is a treasure he already had but did not fully appreciate: his own home, not merely for its material benefits (which he has shown he can do without, if he must), but because it is home and all the good things that that concept embodies (or seems to): order, stability, security. In particular it is Bilbo's home; for the reader it is every home that any of us know or ever knew and loved, and still (in our best memories, even of moments) recall as if it had been Paradise — since the Fall, in fact, the closest any man or woman can come to it, a miniature Eden of our own creation.<sup>11</sup>

Near the end of his journey, Bilbo expresses this feeling in poetry:

Roads go ever ever on  
Under cloud and under star,  
Yet feet that wandering have gone  
Turn at last to home afar.  
Eyes that fire and sword have seen  
And horror in the halls of stone  
Look at last on meadows green  
And trees and hills they long have known.  
(252-53)

Hearing this, Gandalf declares that Bilbo is not the hobbit he once was. By the end of *The Hobbit* Bilbo has lost none of the "homeboddiness" that is characteristic of his race: as we take leave of him in this book, he is handing Gandalf a tobacco jar, with plate and mug one of the chief symbols of comfort in Tolkien's world. On the other hand, Bilbo has done things he once would not have dreamed of doing, and he has seen places that had been but the stuff of legends, so he cannot help but be changed. That he is indeed no longer the same hobbit is most clearly illustrated in the new manner in which he refers to his home.

Earlier, the emphasis was on a personal address — Bag End, Underhill, Hobbiton — with only glimpses of a larger territory: the "Country Round" (that is, around Bag End), "a wide respectable country inhabited by decent folk" (26,34) — the Shire, though it is not yet named. Now Bilbo returns to the country where he "had been born and bred, where the shapes of the land and of the trees were as well known to him as his hands and toes" (252). Because Bilbo has been outside his native land he no longer sees it as a large geographical unit with his hobbit-hole at the center, but as a small unit within a vastly larger geography where roads seem to go on forever. Moreover, with his newfound traveller's perspective he sees that the Shire is a very special place relative to the other lands he has visited — special, because it is a land to which he is forever tied by birth and experience.

This enlightened point of view is explored further in *The Lord of the Rings*. Here at last we see that "wide respectable country," still "long ago in the quiet world, when there was less noise and more green" (*Hobbit*, 13), lovingly detailed in map and prologue and in the first five chapters of Book One. Though T.A. Shippey, in *The Road to Middle-earth*,

laments the wanderings of these chapters (and of the next five chapters also), on the grounds that the "very closely localised landscape" and "the beings attached to it" slow down the pace of the story and "almost eliminate the plot centered on the Ring,"<sup>11</sup> Tolkien has a good reason for taking his time. In Book One, Chapter Two, Frodo decides to leave his home, taking with him the threat of the Ring: "I should like to save the Shire, if I could," he tells Gandalf,

though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again.<sup>12</sup>

If Tolkien had hurried Frodo and his companion into adventure, as dramatists of *The Lord of the Rings* have been wont to do, we would not appreciate so well the arcadia that Frodo is willing to give up for the sake of his people -- and for its own sake. Proceeding at the author's deliberately casual pace, we grow to love the Shire as we never loved Bag End in *The Hobbit* (though we found it a desirable residence), having visited there so briefly before Bilbo was hurried away.

Typically, hobbits do not think about wandering except within their own land. Though they are not cut off from it,<sup>13</sup> they look upon the world outside the Shire in the same provincial manner that Ratty adopts in *The Wind in the Willows*. The Wide World "doesn't matter, either to you or to me," he tells the Mole. "I've never been there, and I'm never going, nor you either, if you've got any sense at all."<sup>14</sup> Frodo, however, is not a typical hobbit. "Strange visions of mountains that he had never seen" come into his dreams, and he looks at maps and wonders what lies in the blank spaces beyond the borders of his country (I, 52). Even as he vows to save the Shire "a great desire to follow Bilbo," who has left Bag End for good, flares up in his heart. "[He] could almost have run out there and then down the road without his hat, as Bilbo had done on a similar morning long ago" (I, 72). Frodo has inherited the "wandering-madness" (as Tolkien calls it elsewhere<sup>15</sup>), or it was awakened in him by Bilbo's frequent mention of the Road. "You step into the Road," he has told Frodo, "and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to" -- to Mirkwood, or the Lonely Mountain, or "worse places." Of course, Bilbo "used to say that on the path outside the front door at Bag End, especially after he had been out for a long walk" (I, 83) -- in other words, after he had come safely home. Frodo loves the Shire, but he loves Bilbo as much if not more, and clearly he is enamored with the idea of the Road going "ever on and on" (I, 44, 82). It competes inside of him with the idea of Home, with staying in one place, a notion of which hobbits as a race (and still many humans) approve. Under different circumstances Frodo probably would have followed hobbit custom and remain "rooted" to the Shire to the end of his days; but the Ring leads him to a darker fate.

This struggle within Frodo between Home and Road is related to a larger theme in *The Lord of the Rings*, that of permanence. The Home symbolizes stability, "rootedness," while the Road is a symbol of

movement and change. As Verlyn Flieger has observed, "Tolkien's philosophical and religious outlook was that change is necessary, although his psychological and emotional yearning was for much of his world that had vanished or was vanishing."<sup>16</sup> So many of us yearn, and to live sanely and honorably defy the "ancient theme" that Tolkien describes in his essay on *Beowulf*: "that man, and all men, and all their works shall die."<sup>17</sup> Tolkien's elves embody this defiance, an immortal race with the desire, and sometimes the power, to preserve "things as they are... to arrest change, and keep things always fresh and fair."<sup>18</sup> Change is arrested, or at least slowed, in Rivendell and Lorien until the One Ring is destroyed ("they are falling rather behind the world" in Lorien, Treebeard notes ironically, (II, 70)). Hobbits too defy change, after their fashion. Fangorn Forest reminds Pippin

of the old room in the Great Place of the Took's away back in the Smials at Tuckborough: a huge place, where the furniture has never been moved or changed for generations. They say the Old Took lived in it year after year, while he and the room got older and shabbier together -- and it has never been changed since he died, a century ago. (II, 64)

One thinks of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, sitting corpse-like before her wedding feast as it declines into rotteness.

Such images of decay are raised throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Moria, once "full of light and splendour" is now "darksome" (I, 329); Osgiliath is ruined; Minas Ithil has become Minas Morgul, city of dread and death; and in Minas Tirith, Legolas laments, "the houses are dead, and there is too little... that grows and is glad" (III, 148). Gondor brought about its own decay, says Faramir, when its kings "hungered after endless life unchanging" (II, 286). Without change there is no growth, without growth no life. Still, it is a very human desire -- faulted, maybe, but forgivable -- to try to keep what is deemed best from passing away. Therefore Frodo understandably wishes to save the Shire, an island of life and beauty in contrast with the dead or fading places of men and elves that Tolkien describes. Frodo will not or cannot acknowledge (at first) the inevitable loss of everything good (and bad), the triumph of Chaos over Order (even if followed by a new Order), but must defend as he is able the land and people he loves best.

He is soon reminded that the Shire and its inhabitants have changed more than he has cared to think, and that they will ever change despite any efforts to the contrary. For short-lived mortals change can be imperceptible: the landscape especially is altered by nature over such long years that it may appear everlasting. Intellectually, however, a hobbit may know, as in Gollum's riddle, that time "beats high mountain down" (Hobbit, 72). And as the elf Gildor explains, others dwell in the Shire "before hobbits were," and others will dwell there again "when hobbits are no more" (I, 93).

Nevertheless, Frodo perseveres, leaving behind a succession of homes -- Bag End, Crickhollow, the house of Tom Bombadil, the inn at Bree, each with its tempting comforts -- until he stands looking back from Weathertop, where the world appears "wild and wide."

In that lonely place Frodo for the first time fully realized his homelessness and dan-

ger. He wished bitterly that his fortune had left him in the quiet and beloved Shire. He stared down at the hateful Road, leading back westward -- to his home. (I, 200)

After the interlude at Rivendell -- yet another image of light in the darkness<sup>30</sup> -- Frodo only rarely thinks of the Shire, or is able to. In Moria his thoughts are carried back "to Rivendell, to Bilbo, and to Bag End in the days when Bilbo was still there. He wished with all his heart that he was back there and in those days, mowing the lawn, or pottering among the flowers" (I, 331-32). In Lorien, Frodo and Sam gaze separately into Galadriel's Mirror: Sam looks back to the Shire, his greatest love, and sees instead his greatest horror, that his home has changed radically and much for the worse; but Frodo looks ahead, to war and chaos to come, and into the Eye of Sauron. Though the Shire remains in Frodo's subconscious, informing many of his actions and emotions -- for instance, he is uncomfortable sleeping on an unhobbit-like flet high off the ground -- when he tries, near the end of his quest, to picture "the Brandywine, and Woody End, and The Water running through the mill at Hobbiton" (III, 195), he cannot. Though he knows that these places exist or once existed, their images are gone from his memory, or are hidden behind the "wheel of fire" that is the Ring. In mind and body, Frodo is now truly "rootless" and will remain so.

From Lorien it is up to Merry and Pippin, and especially Sam, to carry the image of their home before us. If not for their love of Frodo, Merry and Pippin would likely have stayed behind with Fatty Bolger, who "had no desire to leave the Shire, nor to see what lay outside it" (I, 118). This sentiment is echoed in Merry's statement in Lorien: he had never been out of his own land before, "and if I had known what the world outside was like," he declares, "I don't think I should have had the heart to leave it" (I, 363). Accustomed to enclosed spaces -- the Shire, or a hobbit-hole or house -- Merry feels "borne down" by the "insupportable weight" of Middle-earth and longs "to shut out the immensity in a quiet room by a fire" (III, 64). "We Tookes and Brandybucks can't live long on the heights," Pippin remarks later, speaking both literally (he is in a tower of Minas Tirith) and metaphorically. Merry agrees:

No, I can't. Not yet, at any rate. But at least... we can now see them, and honour them. It is best to love first what you are fitted to love, I suppose: you must start somewhere and have some roots, and the soil of the Shire is deep. Still there are things deeper and higher; and not a gaffer could tend his garden in what he calls peace but for them, whether he knows about them or not. (III, 279)

Like Bilbo by the end of *The Hobbit*, Merry has been enlightened, his point of view enlarged through hardship, his sense of value directed toward things more elemental than mere creature comforts. Pippin takes a little longer to achieve this state of mind, incessantly asking or thinking about food (again, like Bilbo in *The Hobbit*), until he too goes into what seems will be a hopeless battle and wishes instead for a last glimpse of "cool sunlight and green grass" (III, 168). By the time he returns, weary, to a devastated Shire, he is content with a "room to lie in," "bare and ugly" but "better than many places" he has been (III, 279).

Sam, travelling with Frodo through Mordor's desolation, does double duty. Like Bilbo before him, and like Merry and Pippin though more so,<sup>31</sup> he represents the Common Reader. In his wishing for "a bit of plain bread, and a mug --aye, half a mug -- of beer" (II, 210) or "a supper, or a breakfast, by the fire in the old kitchen at Bagshot Row" (II, 260) he indicates that his desires are basic ones with which we can empathize. More importantly, Sam's visions of home remind us of what Frodo has vowed to save, and which against the darkness of Mordor seems most worth fighting for: Hungry, Sam longs for "simple bread and meats" (III, 213); thirsty, he remembers

every brook or stream or fount that he had ever seen, under green willow shades or tumbling in the sun.... He felt the cool mud about his toes as he paddled in the Pool of Bywater with Jolly Cotton and Tom and Nibs, and their sister Rosie. (III, 216)

For Sam it is a sustaining vision, especially at the end of the quest, when Frodo's faith is broken. "I's like things are in the world," Frodo concludes at last. "Hopes fail. An end comes" (III, 228).

Yet *The Lord of the Rings* ends with hope, with the Shire "scoured" and the former bachelor quarters at Bag End fated to burst with Gamgee children. At the last, Tolkien denies Frodo's conclusion of despair. Change is inevitable, growth is necessary, much that is fair and wonderful will appear and pass away. But though we travel a neverending Road, the image of Home will be carried in our hearts and minds and will find expression, and in that expression will survive all that we hold of greatest value, that is most worth denying to the darkness.

## NOTES

- J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), p. 11.
- As Jared Lobdell has remarked in *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 44-47, Tolkien's "is not a miniaturist's world," he "is not always describing so much as 'connoting.'" Cf. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 80.
- The quotations are from Beatrix Potter, respectively, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904; rpt. New York: Frederick Warne, n.d.), p. 13, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901; rpt. New York: Frederick Warne, n.d.), p. 9.
- The Hobbit*, p. 11. Subsequent references to *The Hobbit* will appear in the text.
- Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Mr. Tod* (1912; rpt. New York: Frederick Warne, n.d.), pp. 30ff., and *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910; rpt. New York: Frederick Warne, n.d.), p. 10.
- Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961; first published London, 1908), p. 65.
- Mole, "being naturally an underground animal by birth and breeding," "felt at home in Badger's subterranean house," "while the Bat, who slept every night in a bedroom the windows of which opened on a breezy river, naturally felt the atmosphere still and oppressive" (*The Wind in the Willows*, p. 69).
- Douglas Parker, "Hwaet We Holbytla...." *Hudson Review*, 9, No. 4 (Winter 1956-57), p. 600.
- Rivendell is a "perfect" house "whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or thinking best, or a

pleasant mixture of them all" (*Hobbit*, p. 51). The company's stay at Beorn's house is an extended dream of bread and butter and honey and clopped cream. The buildings of Lake-town are also of above-ground (above-water) construction, but are described by Tolkien without judgement, a place of neither peril nor joy (at least while Thorin and company are present); nor does the home of the eagles, because unenclosed, lend itself to this comparison. In *The Lord of the Rings* underground dwellings vary widely in their association with light and dark, good and evil, etc.; see Hugh T. Keenan's comments in "The Appeal of The Lord of the Rings: A struggle for Life," in *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings"*, ed. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbaro (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 74.

- 10 See Micrea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), concerning the religious significance of the dwelling-place.
- 11 "The House is not an object...; it is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods" (Eliade, pp. 56-57).
- 12 T.A. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), p. 83.
- 13 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, rev. 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [1987]), I, 71. Subsequent references to *The Lord of the Rings* will be to this corrected printing and will be given in the text.
- 14 Dwarves had always used the East-West Road "on their way to their mines in the Blue Mountains" (I, 52); Brandybucks go into the Old Forest "occasionally when the fit takes them" (I, 118); Tom Bombadil is evidently an acquaintance of Farmer Maggot (I, 143); occasionally the hobbits of Bree travelled "as far as Buckland, or the Eastfarthing," and it is still remembered that once there had been "much coming and going between the Shire and Bree. There was Bree-blood in the Brandybucks by all accounts" (I, 162).
- 15 Grabame, pp. 11-12.
- 16 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 9.
- 17 Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 154.
- 18 J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), p. 23.
- 19 J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, sel. and ed. Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 236.
- 20 As the Fellowship prepares to depart, standing before Rivendell, "a gleam of firelight came from the open doors, and soft lights were glowing in many windows." "Tolkien claims in one letter (*Letters*, p. 365) that Bilbo, and Frodo and his hobbit companions in the Quest of the Ring, were "especially graced and gifted individuals." "Only about one per mil" among hobbits had any trace of "spark" or latent desire for adventure. In another letter (*Letters*, p. 329) he notes that Sam is "a more representative hobbit than any of the others that we have to see much of," though even he has special qualities: "his education by Bilbo and his fascination with things Elvish." Of Tolkien's principal characters in *The Lord of the*

*Rings*, however, only Sam works for a living, which makes him (in my opinion), if not wholly "typical" among hobbits, at least more "ordinary" from the "ordinary" reader's point of view.

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Wardrobe, from page 27

Aslan; Aslan functions as a two-way door; entry through the doors is unplanned; and all who enter are called but not compelled to stay. In his sermon "The Weight of Glory" Lewis employs this same metaphor, and it is appropriate to conclude by quoting him:

The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory meant good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last... Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. (11-12)

### Notes

- 1 For a thoughtful discussion of Lewis' use of metaphor in his fiction, see Kath Filmer's "The Polemic Image: The Role of Metaphor and Symbol in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis," in *Seven: An Anglo-American Review*, VII (Longmont, Colorado: Book-makers Guild, Inc., 1986), pp. 61-76.
- 2 Chad Walsh has some helpful general comments on Lewis' use of Metaphor in his *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), pp. 203-205.
- 3 Michael Murrin offers an indepth analysis of the Platonic nature of the doors into Narnia in "The Dialectic of Multiple Worlds: An Analysis of C.S. Lewis' Narnia Stories," in *Seven: An Anglo-American Review*, III (Wheaton, Ill.: Heffers, 1982), pp. 93-112.

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- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.