'I DWELT THERE ONCE'

Home, Belonging and Dislocation in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings

Roseanna Babashkina
University of Eastern Finland
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Roseanna Babashkina				
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Surrounded by ever-accelerating mobility and interconnectedness of both individuals and collectives, the questions of home, belonging and [cultural-] identity are perhaps more relevant than ever. While theorists have identified the resultant mode of cultural hybridity as transculturalism (Vauclair, 2014), and home is across disciplines accepted as a "multidimensional concept" resulting in a "proliferation of writing on the meaning of home" (Mallet 2004, 1), for a constantly growing population of said transcultural individuals the question of home is far from scholarly. Growing cultural complexity is rapidly becoming the "new normal", as is the predicament of modern homelessness vocalized by Simon Malpas (2006) as having no and yet too many homes.

This thesis pursues understanding and insight into the ways in which both 'home' and 'belonging' may be achieved, regained, and meaningfully maintained – or lost – in an era dominated by dislocation, using J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings as the primary source. The novel offers a diverse range of case-studies: individuals, groups, cultures and their homes/homelands – and with the support of the Appendices and other auxiliary material by Tolkien is optimally suited for the purposes of this study both in scope and subject matter. This being a TCK-reading, the operating premise is that home and belonging are not reduceable to one another. The concepts are parallel: the processes of home-making correlating to and complementing the processes that establish belonging. Neither is dislocation categorically antithetical to either home or belonging. The high-mobility lifestyle characteristic to the TCK experience producing an awareness of endings, goodbyes and leaving as being an inseparable part of the cycle.

In this study the overarching concept of 'home' has been divided into three sub-categories: the 'idea of Home', the 'homeplace' and the feeling of being 'at home'. Representing the culturally transmitted image of home as it should be, the locatable area with defined boundaries identified as home, and the side of home-being characterized by a sense of belonging, respectively. Belonging, in turn, is approached both as an experience, as in the sense of belonging, and as an action: a performed process of commitment and identification.

The first half of this thesis deals with the question of homeplace and belonging from the point of view of a collective identity. This is done through the analysis of three homelands and their corresponding peoples: the Shire, Moria and Rivendell. In the Shire, I recognize a rendering of a nation-state, in which dislocations of the pre-historic past have been all but forgotten in favor of the current localized identity. Hence my analysis of the Shire is largely centered on the politics of identity narrative building: including the streamlining of history into an official narrative, and the systematic separation from the Other as part of strengthening internal cohesiveness. Moria, or Khazad-dûm, functions as the localized anchor of the Dwarven identity, the mythical home of origin, the long-lost homeland for which they long and to which they strive to return to. This portion of the analysis juxtaposes the Legacy of Home with the lived experience it: contrasting Moria as it is remembered by the Dwarves with the available "historical" records, lore and memories, and with the present reality of it, as experienced by the Fellowship of the Ring. The final homeland, Rivendell presents an alternative model to the traditional home – one feels like home and functions like home to many, while neither demanding nor offering a permanent claim on its residents. It is a "third space", neither Elven nor Mortal, one that embraces the flux of change and transience as part of its identity instead of fighting against the increasingly dislocated and/or transcultural reality of its time. The analysis of Rivendell focuses on the inner interplay between its founding purpose, values and their execution, giving recognition to the strengths and weaknesses induced by the aforementioned lack of permanence.

The second half of this thesis analyzes the individual TCK experience through the examples of Frodo and Aragorn. It explores the effects of dislocation during their formative years on their identity, behavior, sense of belonging and relationships. Following their development throughout the novel, Frodo and Aragorn appear as counter-narratives. Frodo's is the cautionary tale of unhealthy coping mechanisms, namely self-sufficiency, and undealt grief: the cycle of trauma and

self-isolation chipping at his already fragmented identity until he essentially fades out from existence. In comparison, Aragorn's is the story of unification: his quest for the throne and a unified of kingdom simultaneously a quest for a unified self, his growing following a tribute to his cross-cultural skills as well as to his ability to belong to multiple people, places, and roles at once.

By formulating and comparing the processes through which the collective ideas of Home and Belonging are constructed: what role location and dislocation play in regards to group identity, how are the geographical and social boundaries drawn, what are the narratives justifying them, and how these compare them to the lived experience of natives and/or visitors; this study hopes to uncover the factors that make home sustainable even in the face of past, present and future dislocation. The character studies explore the significance of individual intent and when it comes to the pursuit home. They map out the steps through which belonging can be cultivated in comparison to the behaviors that disallow it, particularly those stemming from unresolved trauma and underdeveloped emotional skills.

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kiihtyvän muuttoliikkeen, sekä henkilöiden ja yhteisöjen keskinäisen yhteyden keskellä koti, kuuluminen ja (kulttuuri)-identiteetti ovat hyvin ajankohtaisia aiheita. Asiantuntijat ovat nimenneet esille nousevan monikansallisen hybridi-kulttuurin transkulturalismiksi. (Vauclair, 2014) Samalla kodin käsite on monipuolistunut kautta tieteenalojen ja se on ollut suosittu tutkimuksen ja pohdinnan aihe. Lisääntyvälle joukolle transkulttuuri-taustaisia ihmisiä kysymys kodista on kuitenkin hyvin käytännönläheinen. Kasvava kulttuurin ja kulttuuritaustantaustan kompleksisuus on osa nykytodellisuutta. Simon Malpas (2006) kommentoi nykyajan ns. modernin kodittomuuden ongelmaa: liian monta kotia omaavat jäävät hekin kuin kotia vaille. Tutkielman pyrkimyksenä on ymmärtää millä keinoin 'kotia' ja 'kuulumista' voidaan (uudelleen)-tavoittaa ja mielekkäästi ylläpitää, tai ei, etenkin dislokaation vallitsemassa kontekstissa. Aineistona tutkielmassa käytetään J.R.R. Tolkienin *Taru sormusten herrasta* -teosta. Tämä on TCK luenta. [Third Culture Kid, suom. Kolmannen kulttuurin kasvatti.] Sen keskeinen olettamus on etteivät koti ja kuuluminen ole supistettavissa toisiinsa. Ne ovat sen sijaan käsitteinä rinnakkaiset: kodin perustaminen ja kuulumiisen luominen monessa kohden toisiaan vastaavat ja tukevat prosessit. Tähän liittyen dislokaatio ei oletusarvoisesti ole kodin eikä kuulumisen vastakohta. TCK lapsuuteen tyypillisesti kuuluvien muuttojen seurauksena TCK-maailmankuva on erittäin tietoinen lopuista, lähdöistä ja jäähyväisistä. Laaja kodin käsite on tutkielmassa jaettu kolmeen osaan: *Idea of Home* ns. Idea-Koti – viitaten yhteisölliseen ideologisesti värittyneeseen mielikuvaan kodista; *homeplace* ns. kotipaikka – viitaten sen sijaintiin, rajoihin ja fyysiseen tilaan; ja *feeling at home* – kokemus kodista kodikkaana. Kuulumista puolestaan käsitellään sekä kokemuksena [sense of belonging], että toiminnallisena sitoutumisena.

Tutkielman ensimmäinen puoli tarkastelee kuulumista laajemman kollektiivin ja näiden kodin/kotimaan näkökulmasta. Analyysin kohteena ovat Kontu [Shire], Moria, ja Rivendell. Kontu on pitkälti verrattavissa kansallisvaltioon, hobittien esihistoriallinen siirolaisaika pyyhitty pois muistista paikallistetun kotimaapolitiikan toimesta. Kontu-luvun analyysi keskittyy yhtenäisen ryhmäidentiteetin ja sitä tukevan narratiivin rakentamiseen: mm. virallisen historiakirjoituksen, "toiseuden" määrittämisen ja tiukan rajanvedon avulla. Moria on kääpiöiden menetetty kotimaa; sen kaupuu pohja kääpiöiden identiteetille. Tämä osio vertailee kääpiöiden kollektiiviset muistoja Morian kulta-ajasta, historiallisen aineiston antamaan kuvaan, sekä sen nykytilan Sormuksen ritareiden kokemana. Kolmas kotipaikka, Rivendell, tarjoaa vaihtoehtoisen mallin perinteiselle kotikäsitykselle. Se toimii kotina ja tuntuu kodilta, vaatimatta tai tarjoamatta pysyvää sitoutumista asukkaillensa. Rivendell on ns. kolmas tila [third space], jossa muutosalttius ja katoavuus [transience] hyväksytään osana sen identiteettiä. Huomion kohteena on etenkin Rivendelin perustusarvojen ja -tarkoituksen toteutuminen käytännössä, sekä vakinaisuuden puutteen vaikutus yhteisöön.

Tutkielman toinen puoli tarkastelee yksilön TCK-kokemusta Frodon ja Aragornin hahmoanalyysien kautta. Huomion kohteena on kehitysvaiheessa koetun dislokaation vaikutus identiteettiin, toimintatapoihin, kuulumisen kokemukseen ja suhteisiin. Heidän kehityskulkunsa muodostaa vastaparin. Frodo on varoittava esimerkki siitä, miten terveiden tunnekäsittelytaitojen puuttuessa traumatisoitunut henkilö turvautuu suojamekanismeihin, mm. vetäytyminen. Frodon tapauksessa tämä muodostaa lisävahinkoa tuottavan kierteen, hajottaen lopullisesti Frodon jo alumperin pirstaleisen identiteetin. Aragornin kehityskaari on puolestaan yhtenäistyvä. Matka kohti hajonneen valtakunan ydistämistä yhden hallitsijan alaisuuteen on samalla matka kohti Aragornin sisäistä yhdentymistä.

Tarkastelemalla dislokaation roolia suhteessa kodin ja ryhmän identiteettiin, miten kodin fyysinen ja sosiaalinen rajanveto määräytyy, millä narratiivilla näitä perustellaan, ja kuinka tämä kaikki vertautuu sekä asukkaiden että vierailijoiden kokemukseen – voidaan mallintaa niitä prosesseja joiden kautta eri kotipaikkojen ominaislaatuiset kollektiiviset mielikuvat kodista ja kuulumisesta muodostuvat. Näitä vertailemalla on tavoite tunnistaa tekijöitä jotka tekevät kodista kestävän dislokaation uhasta riippumatta. Hahmoanalyyseissä tarkastellaan tietoisen aikomuksen ja toiminnan merkitystä kodin tavoittelussa. Niissä kartoitetaan toimintoja joilla kuulumista voidaan kasvattaa; verrattuna (etenkin traumaan ja alikehittyneiden tunnetaitoihin pohjaavaan) käytökseen joka sitä estää.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It seems rather ironic to be publishing a study on home, belonging and dislocation in the wake of a global pandemic, with government sanctioned curfews, travel restrictions, and rules of social distancing still affecting life in much of the developed world. At the same time, this ongoing situation has given our collective consciousness a jolt of awareness in how we perceive and inhabit our spaces – public and personal – sure to result in an abundance of scholarship ruminating on the topics of home, space, mobility, and (global) interconnectedness in the near future.

That said, this thesis has been five years in the making. Less of an academic brainchild and more of a cathartic rendition at this point, the subject matter has traveled with me from one address to another, across countries and continents. It has matured and de-fragmented alongside me, knocked back by severe burnout and reprised during the resulting stint in therapy The tenet, "Home does not equate Belonging" – not in real life, nor in fiction – has remained unchanged throughout the journey, as has my conviction to apply said reading to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). Beyond that, however, the text has undergone significant revisions following my ever-deepening understanding of the subject, as much due to life experience as to the growing library of complimentary texts, some yet unavailable during the initial proposal. The final product is more retrospective than I had in my early ambition intended, as well as far more gracious towards the imperfections unavoidably found in every instance of home and every experience of belonging. Rather than pursue the combative criticism envisioned by my younger self, I hope to share through my analysis understanding and insight into the ways in which both 'home' and 'belonging' may be pursued, achieved, and meaningfully maintained - or lost - in an era dominated by dislocation.

Ruth Van Reken's proclamation of the growing cultural complexity as the "new normal" – repeated throughout the revised edition of *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*[1] – borders redundant yet, at the same time, cannot be stated enough. Home may not equate

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[1] The different versions of this book are largely interchangeable despite the change of title: from *The Third Culture Kid Experience* (1999) to *Third Culture Kids: [The Experience of] Growing Up Among Worlds* (2nd and 3d eds.)
As it happens, my eBook of *Growing Up Among Worlds* does not have page numbers. Hence, I am using the 1999 physical copy as my primary source of reference, with the few mentions of the later revisions – such as the example above – clearly stated if unmarked in the strictest sense.

belonging but both concepts are undeniably important to the human condition; their continued recognition as relevant topics of study having led to a "proliferation of writing on the meaning of home", with home increasingly understood as a "multidimensional concept" across disciplines (Mallet 2004, 1).

Despite ongoing interdisciplinary discussion surrounding the question of home, Literary Studies has been somewhat lagging in recognizing the presence of the various culturally complex, cross-cultural, transcultural, third-culture, and otherwise plural and hybrid – identities inhabiting not only our "new normal" and whatever texts it produces, but the pages of the older, well-established literary works as well. There being no direct precedent to my Third Culture Kid reading[2] of the LOTR was quite expected. The general lack of scholarship in the way of combining Tolkien with home, belonging or dislocation, however, was rather surprising given that Tolkien was born into a family of British immigrants in Bloemfontein, South Africa in 1892, where he spent his first three years before returning with his mother to England 1895 – a TCK from a contemporary point of view. Recounted by Tolkien's biographer, this left him: "Being in a sense a homeless child – for his journey from South Africa and the wanderings that now began gave him a sense of rootlessness." (Carpenter 2014, 27)

With this in mind, my tongue-in-cheek introduction of this thesis follows as such: a reading of a novel authored by a TCK, about TCKs, by a fledgling TCK scholar with the TCK perspective at the front.

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Finally, a purely technical note. For convenience sake I shall be abbreviating the titles of Tolkien's novels down to their initials LOTR for the *Lord of the Rings*, TH for *The Hobbit* etc. However, when referring to or quoting a particular passage from within the LOTR, I will be using the following markers: P - Prologue, FR - The Fellowship of the Ring, TT – The Two Towers, RK – The Return of the King, AA and AB for Appendices A and B respectively. Although I am using a single-volume copy of the LOTR as my primary source, I find the more compartmentalized system of reference to be helpful in keeping track of the general context of each given quote. Compare (LOTR1001, 1071) and (RK1001, AB1071),

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[2] Hence referred to as the TCK reading.

the two distinct references to the wedding of Samwise Gamgee and Rose Cotton. On that note, I am using a similarly abbreviated format for marking dates – 1 May T.A.3020 [Third Age] or S.R.1020 [Shire Reckoning] – adding Hobbit variant when prudent, such as the case with Sam's wedding.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, READING METHOD AND TERMINOLOGY

Dislocation is by no means a novel phenomenon. However, following the processes of globalization, the scale, speed and scope of dislocation has drastically changed. The ever-accelerating mobility and interconnectedness of both individuals and collectives have made the questions of home, belonging and [cultural-] identity particularly relevant, as well as set a demand for these notions to be updated to fit the current experience. Theorists have identified the rising mode of cultural identification as *transculturalism*: "an understanding of culture that transcends or goes beyond specific cultures by combining elements of more than one culture", producing new cultural forms not found in either/any of the cultures in contact. (Vauclair 2014)

This cultural "mutation" as Arianna Dagnino calls it leads not only to a new kind of literature thanks to a "new breed of writers" but also to a new kind of readership: as the "physically and mentally dislocated" audiences and scholars unlock the "transcultural potential of texts" by drawing on their own multi-cultural backgrounds. (Dagnino 2013, 2, 5) Taking further into account the traumatic nature of dislocation, transcultural writing – both literary and scholarly – can be interpreted to be a form of *working through* the trauma of dislocation.

2.1. Reading Method

My approach to *The Lord of the Rings* falls under the umbrella of transculturalism. However, I have narrowed it down to what I have named a *TCK reading* of the novel. TCK referring to an individual who has "spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' cultures." (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 19); the emphasis on childhood experiences making TCKs and Adult-TCKs a distinguishable subgroup of transcultural identities.

As a second generation TCK[3], I am continuously drawn to the question of Home, particularly, the relationship between the place called home and the experience of belonging there. Building of a premise that being at home does not presuppose feeling at home I have divided my study into two. The first half of this thesis deals with the question of homeplace and belonging from the point of view of a collective identity. This is done through the analysis of three homelands and their corresponding peoples: Rivendell, Moria and the Shire. I will attempt to formulate the processes through which their collective ideas of Home and Belonging are constructed; what role do location and dislocation play in terms of group identity i.e. what are the narratives tying the people to a location, in what ways and how tight are the geographical and social boundaries drawn; and how do these reflect on the lived experience of natives and/or visitors.

The second half of this thesis will analyze the individual TCK experience through the examples of Frodo and Aragorn. I will explore the effects of dislocation during their developmental years on their identity, behavior, sense of belonging and relationship to the community and homeplace, and how/if these change throughout the novel.

The trouble of Tolkien scholarship is the immense amount of source material available. Thanks to the effort put in by Christopher Tolkien and the Tolkien Estate, the *Legendarium* has continued expanding up until recently. Posthumous publications include edited and unedited material left behind by Tolkien Sr., such as drafts, letters, illustrations; as well as commentaries and companion pieces by recognized Tolkienologists. The latest additions being the two novels *Beren and Luthien* (2017) and *The Fall of Gondolin* (2018) edited by Christopher Tolkien.[4]

The corpus of Tolkien studies is similarly vast and ever growing. While this undeniably presents a challenge when it comes to getting familiar and keeping up to date with the existing scholarship, it is also a benefit. I am happy to bypass the study of the written form of the source material in favor of the content, knowing that Tolkien's use of language has been

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[3] My mother - from a Finnish family but raised in Ethiopia and USA; my father – Russian-Ukrainian with a plethora of other bloodlines in the mix.

[4] The passing of Christopher Tolkien earlier this year leaves the future of official Tolkien publications uncertain. Nevertheless, the continued interest in all things Tolkien: including the books, Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* film trilogies, the recent *Tolkien* biopic (2019) and the currently ongoing production of the LOTR - based TV series by Amazon – supervised by Tom Shippey, a recognized Tolkien scholar (Sian Cain, The Guardian) – is a clear indicator that neither the academics nor the general public will be forgetting about the Middle-earth anytime soon.

given due attention by those better qualified. Likewise, I am limiting out the web of (inter)textual and/or real-life influences, inspiration and motives, as well as the more philosophical ruminations on the nature of fiction, myth, and reality etc. – as fascinating as these topics of discussion may be – deeming them unnecessary additions to the subject at hand.

The themes of home, belonging and dislocation permeate all of Tolkien's work. From the lighthearted "there and back again" adventure of Bilbo in *The Hobbit (1937)*, to the tragic consequences of an uprooted life and lost identity of Turin in *The Children of Hurin* (2007)*, to the millenniums of tumultuous Elven history recorded in the *Silmarillion* (1977) and *The Unfinished Tales* (1980).

This being said, I have limited this study to *The Lord of the Rings* and its auxiliaries – the Foreword to the Second Edition, Prologue essay "Concerning Hobbits" and the Appendices – giving but a cursory glance to the direct mentions of the objects of interest [Rivendell, Mordor, Shire, Aragorn and Frodo] in other published works. Focusing my attention on a single work allows for a more in-depth reading. As for my reasons of choosing LOTR above the others, is not because it is Tolkien's signature work, but because it is the most culturally diverse and yet cohesive body of texts, making it the best option for a transcultural reading in both scope and subject matter. Not reducing LOTR to a symptomatic product of the authors childhood experiences; LOTR is nevertheless a novel written by a TCK about TCKs – irrelevant of the term not having existed yet during Tolkien's time.

Concerning the objects of analysis, I have picked three locations and two characters to allow comparison yet avoid this thesis from growing beyond its expected proportions. The three homeplaces, Rivendell, Moria and Shire are by no means the only significant homes/locations described in the novel. (See Hugo Walter's article analyzing the "Magnificent Houses" of Middle-earth.) However, I find these three to be of particular interest. Firstly, due to them being representatives of the three non-human races and their cultures. Secondly, while they are comparable to each other in terms of their significance to their respective group identities, they are markedly different in terms of historical development, current condition, relation to the outside and even landscape. For the two character-studies I have picked Aragorn and Frodo. Both fit the profile of a TCK, however they represent opposite trajectories of development: where one grows internally cohesive and rooted, the other becomes increasingly fragmented and disconnected.

Referring back to Dagnino: "Within this emerging social, cultural, and literary scenario, scholars feel the urge to identify new relevant literary paradigms" (Dagnino 2013, 2). I do not dare claim the established traditions of literary criticism obsolete. There will always be a place for them in the academia as part of the ongoing discussion that is the humanities. However, I do find strict adherence to one school of thought to be rather artificial, if not irrelevant, particularly when faced with topics as multifaceted, convoluted and hybridized as, say, "home". Therefore, instead of attempting to find a niche within the Literary Studies proper, I proudly embrace the label interdisciplinary. After all, given the pluralistic nature of my subject-matter [dis-location, be-longing, third-/trans-culture] it makes sense that the approach should also be neither and more. At the same time, I believe that the borrowing of concepts and paradigms from other fields – in this case, philosophy, psychology and sociology – does not make studies such as mine any less "literary". On the contrary, I find interdisciplinarity to be a natural extension of our discipline's continued quest to discover more (ways) to read.

Finally, I want to clarify that while I refer to and analyze the places and characters of LOTR with the same lexicon I would apply to a physically existing location or person - the LOTR is a work of fiction. It is an epic narrative presented in a form of a novel; its objects, characters, landscapes and plot scenarios figments of imagination recorded and shared in writing. [5] And yet, ultimately, all literature is created and read within the world, and contains depictions of a world; as perceived and as imagined. A text is a manifestation of thoughts which evoke thoughts: what is not specified is supplemented, what is not understandable is explained, associations are made, assumptions confirmed or denied. In the spirit of Hilary Putnam's 'Hegelian metaphor': "the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world". (Putman 1981, xi.) Only in this case the world "out there" includes the fictional worlds we read. This is what allows even the most phantasmic fiction to be relatable, remain significant beyond its time, and gain meanings previously unimaginable.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Before proceeding with the introductions of the terminology used in this thesis, I must give a nod of acknowledgement to several scholars who – while not necessarily mentioned beyond

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[5] The seeming "historicity" of Tolkien's work comes from a combination of stylistic imitation and meticulous worldbuilding, resulting in a massive archive of *fictional non-fiction*: historical records, memoirs, maps, genealogies, lexicons, poetry collections and other documents.

this chapter – have been a major influence; paving the way and providing a backdrop for my interest in studying home, belonging and dislocation. Let the few authors mentioned here stand proxy to the many more whose thoughts and writings have so imbedded into my way of thinking and conceptualizing the world – shaping the paradigms of my "internal realism" - if I were to draw another parallel to Putnam – that I can no longer name the source. To all those un-named influencers: thank you for your words.

LaCapra & Trauma studies

Firstly, this thesis would not exist without Dominic LaCapra's *History in Transit* (2004). The topic of study was initially inspired by seeing the two books side by side and realized that LOTR is packed full of people(s) and histories in transit. On a more serious note, LaCapra served as my introduction to contemporary Trauma Studies as a method applicable beyond the fields of psychology or psychoanalysis. As a trauma historian LaCapra has his focus on the "bearing of a past, which has not passed away, on the present and the future" (LaCapra 2004, 17). Following the psychoanalytical premise that the effects of a trauma are permanent and in a manner of speaking hereditary, LaCapra studies the continued/reoccurring "legacy" (5) of trauma in a community; be it as a symptomatic "acting out" or a more self-reflective "working through" of the memory (2004, 10). Of note is also the concept of a *founding trauma*: "the actual or imagined event (or series of extreme or limit events) that poses in accentuated fashion the very question of identity yet may paradoxically itself become the basis of an individual or collective identity" (2004, 56).

The Introduction chapter of *History in Transit* has since become something of a validity reference both academically and personally. LaCapra stresses the importance of being aware of the "traumatic" history and its effects. (LaCapra 2004, 3-5) Cultural artifacts and forms of representation and, I believe, the scholarship surrounding them, can become a means of working through trauma, on individual as well as communal levels, for the creators and audiences alike. With this in mind, my TCK reading of the *Lord of the Rings* has the potential to be something more than a solitary case of academic fancy. [Which it undeniably is.] Positioned at the periphery of trauma studies I hope this thesis will become a part of the collective working through of the TCK-/dislocation trauma; discussing the questions of home and (not)-belonging in a context previously unused.

Stuart Hall & Identity theory

Years back, as part of my undergraduate studies I read through a collection of essays by Stuart Hall. While I have long forgotten majority of the contents one key thought has imprinted itself onto me; that " identities are constructed through, not outside, difference (…) through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks" (Hall 1996, 4). Building off Derrida, Laclau and Butler, Hall formulates identities as temporary "points of identification and attachment" continuously re-constructed within and across "different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions", the seeming internal homogeneity "not a natural, but a constructed form of closure". (1996, 2-6) Such discursive construction of identity has influenced not only my understanding of [cultural] identities, but of culture and the processes of signification in general. If identity – that is self and its boundaries – can only be defined via the exclusion of what it is not, it makes sense that any concept or category related to the subjective self (such as ownership or belonging) would have to be defined through a similar often convoluted process of signification. For example, Home both as an idea and as a particular place is at least partially defined through the identity of the person whose home it is, its boundaries drawn and maintained against those deemed to not belong.

Due to my own mixed cultural background I find such a dynamic view of identity to be both understandable and relevant particularly when discussing collective group identity. While "In common sense language" identification is understood as stemming from a recognition of some commonality - be it a shared origin, characteristic or an ideal - that is assumed to naturally evoke a sense of solidarity and allegiance; Hall is clear about there being no "unchanging 'oneness'" at the core of an identity, no inherent "cultural belongingness" (1996, 4). "Us" is, therefore, an incredibly exclusive concept. One that can be extremely uncomfortable when lacking awareness of the uniform belongingness being a culturally generated sham, not an actuality. On a very practical level this has affected the way I read Shire, the construction of Hobbit identity and the conflict with Frodo: his life experiences so different that he has trouble identifying with the community, and the community being rather unable to identify with him.

Transculturalism: Wolfgang Welsch, Melanie Vauclair, Arianna Dagnino et al.

Transcultural and transculturalism are very recent additions to my vocabulary. I happened across the term by chance in the fall of 2019 and out of curiosity ended up browsing through dozens of publications with transcultural or its derivatives included in the title. Described by Dagnino as the latest addition in a continuum of terms attempting to "capture the hybrid realities of diaspora and globalization" (Dagnino 2013, 3). Somewhat surprisingly, transcultural is not in itself new term. It was introduced in the 1940s by social scientists to describe new cultural forms emerging as consequence of increased intercultural contact (Vauclair 2014). Its usage spiked in the seventies and again in the nineties; the number of publications touching on transculturalism having grown drastically in the past decade across disciplines.[6] According to Vauclair the main impact of transculturalism is seen on a personal not societal level: "multiple intercultural contact experiences" affecting the identity development in a way that [optimally] allows transcultural individuals to "autonomously and consciously choose the cultural elements they want to internalize so that they become part of who they are".

My discovery of transculturalism gave me a broader theoretical context for my study of the dislocated/multicultural/TCK experience and its literary representation. With TCK scholarship being sparse and mostly limited to social sciences, the rise of interest and awareness towards the transcultural brings the discussion of the issues and perspectives shared by TCKs, CCKs and other cultural hybrids onto a far larger platform. Making a literary study such as mine not an aberration but part of a current. A current I might not have known existed until recently, but one I can align with without qualms. In words of Wolfgang Welsch: "The old concept of culture misrepresents cultures' actual form, the type of their relations and even the structure of individuals' identities and lifestyles. Every concept of culture intended to pertain to today's reality must face up to the transcultural constitution." (Welsch 1999, 6)

2.3. Terminology

TCK

Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of

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[6] Numbers based on search results given by Google Scholar, and Google Books Ngram Viewer.

the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of the same background. (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 19)

If one is to strictly adhere to the above definition, TCK is a rather narrow category that does not take into account or even excludes a wide array of transcultural individuals. Recognizing this, in 2002 Ruth Van Reken introduced the term CCK [Cross-Cultural Kid]; the concept now constituting a whole separate chapter in the revised editions of her book with David Pollock. CCK is meant to be an umbrella term for individuals whose formative years have been shaped by more than one culture; including but not limited to the children of immigrants, refugees, ethnic, racial or linguistic minorities, international schools, cross-cultural marriages, as well as traditional TCKs - those of military, diplomatic, business or missionary families. A division is also made between TCKs and ATCKs, [Adult Third Culture Kids] – the distinction crucial from the point of view of social sciences, medicine and education.

 In common use TCK remains the primary term of (self-)identification within the community regardless of the person's age.[7] After all, "Being a TCK is a lifetime experience. You don't stop being a TCK when you reach 18." (Knell 2001, 10.) Throughout my study I use this popularized version of the term TCK instead of the more general CCK, or the more academically sound "transcultural individual"; mainly out of personal familiarity with the term, but also to emphasize the influence of *dislocation* on such an identity.

The "TCK profile" by Marion Knell characterizes TCKs as "adaptable, flexible and confident in change" - result of a multicultural and mobile childhood. On the flip side, TCKs may have difficulty forming attachments and settling down; unwilling or unable to make long-term commitments to places or people. (Knell 2001, 18-25)

For TCKs home is always 'elsewhere'. They can fit in anywhere, but belong nowhere. Geographically rootless TCKs find their roots not in places but in people, in relationships. – It is the family relationships which gives them stability. (Knell 2001, 19)

The experience of not belonging is the core of TCK identity and group identity. TCKs are a dislocated community literally and figuratively. Its members are rarely found in one place,

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[7] CCK used by some as an additional reference to cultural heritage when necessary. E.g. In my case I may specify being a Finnish-Russian, Anglophone – CCK.

yet tend to feel strong solidarity towards each other and the group; finding a sense of belonging in the sharing of rootlessness, having no singular home or place of origin, carrying the sense of being something other, neither and more, "third culture".

Trauma

After much deliberation, I have decided that although *trauma* as a word is not included in my research question, it is so tightly interwoven with the subject matter that it requires an entry of its own. My understanding of trauma has developed rather organically out of conversations, lectures, and books shared with me by various mental health professionals, fellow (A)TCKs, and/or people working with them. For my purposes here I have adopted a fairly simplistic working definition: *trauma* is a mental [or emotional] injury caused by a distressing event or situation. As with a physical injury, the long-term effects are influenced by its severity and treatment. Furthermore, like any other memory "traumatic past is not retrievable in a cryogenic state but rather is created and recreated in moments of recollection". (Mambrol 2018) In other words, the memory gains its significance at the moment of recollection; and, therefore, has the potential to undergo change.

The relation between trauma and the subject at hand can be narrowed down to three points. 1) Dislocation is by default traumatic. 2) The trauma of dislocation disrupts the person's ability to form, maintain and experience belonging. Example: Frodo's decreasing ability to connect to his surroundings as the traumatic experiences accumulate. 3) Dislocation trauma often becomes the basis of an individual or group identity. Example: Dwarves are a diasporic community whose identity is largely built on the [violent] exile from Moria.

Dislocation

Dislocation means disturbance or disruption from a proper, original, or usual place or state. It is most used as a medical term describing a joint injury where two bones have been forcibly displaced from their natural position.

In the context of my study, I use dislocation as it is described by Jean Fisher (2009): a "departure from the narratives of ancestral belonging", which includes both the "geographic displacement" and the "cultural dispossession" that comes from the partial assimilation into the alien environment. Simplified, dislocation is a disruptive relocation. As mentioned before, dislocation is traumatic. Categorizing it as such helps understand the behaviors and identity

formation of dislocated individuals and communities, and the continuous effects of dislocation on the following generations.

The above definition of dislocation largely overlaps with the concept of exile. Quoting Melinda Meija: "Technical definition of exile is 'physical dislocation of the individual from some original or "native" place, community, or home'. Metaphorically used as encompassing [all] other states of estrangement, both geographical and spiritual." (Meija 2014, 38)

Despite exile being the term used by Tolkien in LOTR and his other writings, I have chosen to use dislocation. My main reason is the neutrality of dislocation compared to the more established exile. As I see it, exile carries strong connotations of the 'place' from which one was exiled as well as of the 'power' forcing the exile. [Such as the case the Dwarves/Moria/Balrog.] There is also a connotation to victimhood attached to the word exile that I wish to avoid. Furthermore, there is a number of instances and individuals in the LOTR that clearly dislocated but cannot be described as being in exile. Examples include Frodo, Aragorn, Smeagol/Gollum, Gandalf and other Wizards, the Ents and their lost Ent-wives, the Dead Men of Dunharrow etc.

Identity/ Group identity

My working definition of *identity* is the sum total of what makes a person; including but not limited to the sense of self, inner and outer traits, boundaries and position in relation to others. Identity is not unchangeable existence but rather a continuum of un-identical selves defined within and for a particular context. It is in constant transition, "always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong." (Yuval-Davis 2011, 14 [in reference to Probyn, 1996]).

Coherence of identity over time is produced through *identity narratives*, i.e. the stories of self. Quoting Nira Yuval-Davis:

> Identity narratives can be individual or they can be collective, with the later often acting as a resource for the former. (…) These identity narratives can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed to explain the present and probably; above all, they function as a projection of future trajectory. (Yuval-Davis 2011, 14)

Identity narratives are the weave connecting individuals to each other and [in] to groups. They make possible the formation of group identities that exist as mainly intellectual or "imaginary" communities; to appropriate Benedict Anderson's concept – and are spread much wider than groupings based on proximity or familial relations. Such as the TCK community, the body of which will never have met each other yet evokes a strong sense of comradeship based on the shared experience of not having a shared narrative with the majority of the surrounding people.

For TCKs, as well as other dislocated individuals and communities the narrative of dislocation is such a central part of their identity it tends to be held at the front even during times of being stationary. This is not merely a way to differentiate between self and the monocultural locals – albeit transcultural pride and snobbery can definitely be an issue. Without relating at least some of the narrative it is hard for a dislocated individual to experience belonging in the current place/time. In the words of Sara Ahmed, (1994, 343) "The stories of dislocation help to relocate: they give a shape, a contour, a skin to the past itself." [And to the past selves.] "The past becomes presentable through a history of lost homes (unhousings)." The forming of new communities [and new relations] is always "bound up" with the telling of these stories of dislocation.

Belonging

In simplest terms *belonging* means being part of. The connection between the object or person belonging and that to which they belong is not a literal attachment but a matter of signification.

Like home and identity, belonging is such a naturalized concept few question its meaning or existence unless something disturbs the perceived norm. Our ability to group things together, know their place and recognize the odd one out is so intuitive it is easy to overlook the fact that the skill to match and differentiate – i.e. to judge what does or doesn't belong – was actively cultivated in us from an early age: from learning to match the round block to a round hole, to picking out the fruit from vegetables, to choosing clothing suitable for the occasion and season. In this sense belonging is a matter of order; an order that is taught through repetition and confirmation of assigned places and behaviors. As expressed by Yuval-Davis (2011), belonging is performative and constructed through "specific repetitive practices,

relating to specific social and cultural spaces, which link individual and collective behavior."
(Yuval-Davis 2011, 14)

Moving on from belonging in general – the relation between an object and its rightful place –
to the human experience of belonging, the dynamic changes from a one-sided assigning to a
two-way process of identification between the individual and the community. As such
belonging becomes a question of membership and identity. In fact, identity and belonging are
intertwined to the point that separating the two is not only near impossible but also pointless.
Belonging is the line that connects the various internal or external fragments comprising
identity together.

Meanwhile the sense of belonging [to a group] comes from embracing the collective identity
as part of one's own as well as being embraced by the collective as its member. I use embrace
here instead of accept to highlight the emotive aspect of belonging as opposed to a more
bureaucratic membership. When the two sides are in balance the sense of belonging evoked
carries the feelings of loyalty, affinity, comfort, familiarity and being at-home. On this note,
it is no surprise that belonging is often correlated to home. It is easy to fall into a loop of
circular definitions: to belong is to be at-home, to be at-home is to feel belonging, home is the
place one belongs to etc. While none of the statements are wrong - neither are they
conclusive; leaving no space for alternate experiences where the source of belonging is not
the place called home but somewhere, someone, something, or even sometime else, as
Vanessa May points out in her article "Belonging from afar". "Memories of
past belonging can be used to create a sense of belonging *in* the present, if not *to* the present."
(May 2017, 409)

I find such "virtual" sources of belonging as May calls them, particularly relevant in case of
dislocated identities where the "natural" connection between home and belonging has been
broken. Identifying with a remembered [past], awaited [future] or imagined [fictional] space
as a source of belonging removes the factor of real time feedback, practically eliminating the
chances of further disruptions due to outside sources; unlike the surrounding present where
one is always at risk of facing rejection, discomfort and change. This pattern is most obvious
when observing the Homeland-myths of diasporic peoples, in this case Dwarves and their
memory of Moria. However, a virtual source of belonging does not necessitate escapism from
reality but can become a motivation to change one's surroundings to (re-)attain belonging in

the lived environment. Exemplified in LOTR through the transformation of Aragorn, the Scouring of the Shire and – to an extent - the departure of Elves [back] to the West.

Home

> Though our definitions of such spaces [that we occupy] and of the others who inhabit them may be continuously in flux, our impulse to name home, to achieve our belonging, is ever present. (Meija 2014, 5)

What is home? The word is so familiar and common we hardly ever stop to think of how we have come to understand it. We do not need to. It is a concept we all seem to share: intuitively knowing what homes are, how they feel and where they end. "It is almost as if the very word "home" evokes an aura of safety and stability." (George 1996, 21) Home is the place of origin; it is the place one sets out from and where one returns to. Home is the place one misses when away. At home one is safe, surrounded by one's own, where one belongs. Home is the source of one's identity. Vice versa, home is something one has a claim on or owns.

For a dislocated individual such as myself, however, "*home"* is – more often than not – a question. What used to be a sad, yet curious minority experience is rapidly becoming the new normal. "Modern transformation and change continually threatens to foreclose the possibility of home", making scholars and laymen alike grapple with the problem of our current predicament of having no and yet too many homes. (Malpas 2006, 94) At the same time, "to say that home as such does not exist does not change the fact that human beings build homes, have families and organize themselves into communities under some auspice of belonging – so much so that even the most rootless, nomadic or abandoned individual or thinker has an inkling of what home is or should be." (Meija 2014, 6) The remedy for "modern homelessness" – as Simon Malpas formulates in reference to Heidegger – is the "re-description of home not as a "secure ground" or "undisturbed identity" but as something realized through "the encounter between the foreign and 'one's own'". An experience of "coming to be at home" recognizable after making a "passage through the foreign [the not at home]". (Malpas 2006, 94-95)

In short, creating a working definition of 'home' that is neither redundant nor too vague to be of use is extremely difficult. This is well illustrated by Shelley Mallett's article

"Understanding home", in which Mallett irrevocably destroys any hope for a single cohesive definition of "home" by citing the corresponding entry from the Oxford Dictionary. While she limits herself to only ten out of [at least] twenty five definitions included in the dictionary, the range of meanings varies from straightforward equations of home as a "house", "place where one lives" and "birthplace" to more abstract ones such as the feeling of being "familiar or conversational with". The main body of the text further drives the point as it presents and comments on the various ways in which home has been understood in literary scholarship. Home is discussed as "(a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world (…) conflated with or related to house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying. Many authors also consider notions of being-at-home, creating or making home and the ideal home." (Mallett 2004, 65)

For my purposes I have divided the overarching concept of '*home'* into three sub-categories: the 'idea of Home', the 'homeplace' and the feeling of being 'at home'. The first one is an ideological concept. The idea of Home is the culturally transmitted image evoked by the word; home as it should be. Second category is the locatable area identified as the homeplace: a lived space with defined boundaries, an inside and an outside. Third sub-category comprises the experiential side of home-being: mainly the sense of belonging necessary to make one feel at home, and the feelings generated by/ towards the current or prospective locale.

These categories are by no means unambiguous. Ideology permeates all boundary making whether emotional of physical. Likewise, personal experiences influence the way culturally shared values are viewed and reviewed. The feeling of at-homeness – even when experienced outside of place(s) identified as home or accepted as Home – is never fully free of being spatially and/or temporally localized and compared against the ideological "should".

a) **The idea of Home**

Looking back at the statements concerning home listed in the previous segment - all of them ring true. In comparison, our own experiences of home tend to lack some if not most of the attributes described. Most obviously, few people spend their whole lives in one place, not to mention an ancestral home. The apparent conflict is resolved by recognizing the 'idea of Home' not as a reflection of what "home" really is, but as what we – collectively – think it should be.

Our idea of Home is a highly naturalized ideological construct. It is shaped and assigned value by the surrounding world yet perceived as truth - its cultural/ideological ties forgotten. Sara Ahmed illustrates this as follows. "Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she or he does not think."(Ahmed 1999, 339)

This matters because on the other side of the so-called common-sense knowledge of what is Home, is a long list of what is not, cannot and should not be Home. In Rosemary Marangoly George's words: "Homes are not about inclusions and wide-open arms as much as they are about places carved out of closed doors, closed borders and screening apparatuses." (George 1996, 18) Every distinction between home and not-home is an act of exclusion. Whether the resulting boundary is social, emotional or a physical wall does not matter. The very existence of such a boundary indicates the need to keep something "out". This, again, is not a neutral division, but an enactment of the existing values and power structure. The space that is not Home is the "Other" – un-known, un-safe, un-wanted, un-homely, un-equal and inferior.

Rarely, though, does ideologized thinking openly focus on the "Other". Instead it builds up and promotes the idea of "Us". Home becomes the source of group identity. So strong is the idea of Home that even its marked absence holds power. Such is the case of migrant, diasporic and otherwise dislocated peoples where group identity is formed on the shared "memory" of the lost Home-(land). "It is through the very loss of a past (the sharing of the loss, rather than the past as sharing) that the 'we' comes to be written as Home." (Ahmed 1999, 330.) Separated and therefore not hindered by the geographical locale, the diasporic idea of (lost) Home grows ever more phantasmic and mythical. "Home becomes the impossibility and necessity of the subject's future (one never gets there, but is always getting there), rather than the past which binds the self to a given place" (1999, 331)

b) **Homeplace**

Even if the idea of Home is based much more on the cultural ideology than on experienced reality "it is always a localizable idea", a "kind of space". (Douglas 1991, 288-289)

A place is a locatable area or piece of space imbedded with particular meaning that distinguishes it from the surrounding space and/or places. As Mallett building up on Doreen

Massey formulates: "Place is constituted by the particular social relations that occur in a specific location, the social effects that arise in this interaction and its 'positive interrelations with elsewhere' or outside (1992, 13)." (Massey 1992, 13 < Mallett 2004, 70) Importance of boundaries as space/place markers is further established through her discussion on space as viewed by nomadic peoples. "[Nomadic tribes] do not focus on ideas of home as a private place clearly differentiated from the outside world (…) While these spaces are not private, enclosed dwellings, they are possessed spaces or territories with defined, though not always visible, boundaries that must be observed and respected by those who do not belong there." (Mallet 2004, 73)

In my use of homeplace, I have rather misappropriated the term place – outsourcing the social aspect to the other two categories in favor of focusing the spatio-temporal location. As such home-location, home-locale or home-site might have been more exact terms for this aspect of *home*. At the same time, on top pandering to a personal preference - using homeplace serves as a reminder of the relational nature of these concepts; the divisions between place and space, home, homeplace and place called home being arbitrary beyond their functionality.

"By its very nature then the identity of a place is 'provisional' or in flux. The boundaries of place and/or home are permeable and unstable." (Mallett, 2004, 70) As in case of the idea of Home, the boundaries of homeplace are drawn in relation to the outside, the not-home. Depending on the scale of juxtaposition, the boundaries of home can follow the outer borders of one's room, house, property, town, or country. Therefore, even physical markers such as walls, doors and other border markings become articulated differently depending on the context. "It is precisely in part the presence of the outside within which helps to construct the specificity of the local place." (Massey 1992, 13) However, "it must be noted that the two terms "outside" and "inside" (…) are not symmetrical. To make inside concrete and outside vast is the first task, the first problem, it would seem, of an anthropology of the imagination. But between concrete and vast, the opposition is not a true one." (Bachelard 1994, 251)

Finally, considering the existence of multiple locations that are, or could, or have once been considered home – some of them existing simultaneously – it becomes apparent that the question of home is never just a matter of place but also of time. Some of the homeplaces once abandoned lose the status of home and become reduced to a "place one has once lived in". Other locations retain the feeling of being home for longer, memories of them eventually merging into the idea of Home.

c) Feeling at home

The temporality of homes – our ability to feel at home in a place previously considered not-home, and vice versa losing the attachment held for homes of the past, strongly indicates that the sense of at-homeness and belonging is not a visceral reaction to the innate homeliness of a given location but something generated by the person/people dwelling there.

It should be noted that the aforementioned transition between home/not-home does not require or presuppose a change of location, even if "home" and "away" are often represented as each other's opposites. (Mallett 2004, 78). Any changes within the home environment or the person herself cause and require readjustment. Minor changes are adjusted to without conscious notice. Major changes, however – especially those of sudden and/or traumatic nature – create rupture in the home's continuity; its time becoming divided into a 'before' and 'after'. In such cases homeplace can lose its "homeliness". Reclaiming the sense of at-homeness requires re-defining one's view of home, then re-positioning, re-acquainting and re-identifying oneself with and within it.

What then is this feeling of at-homeness? Following is a graphic description given by Edward Relph; as paraphrased by David Seamon and Jacob Sowers in their commentary on Relph's Place and Placelessness:

> The strongest sense of place experience is what Relph calls existential insideness—a situation of deep, unself-conscious immersion in place and the experience most people know when they are at home in their own community and region. The opposite of existential insideness is what he labels existential outsideness—a sense of strangeness and alienation, such as that often felt by newcomers to a place or by people who, having been away from their birth place, return to feel strangers because the place is no longer what it was when they knew it earlier. (Seamon and Sowers 2008, 3)

Not to be confused with Hall's "cultural belongingness" – the [false] belief in some innate/existential trait that binds people together (See Hall 1996) – Relph's "existential insidedness" is an expression of feeling; essentially, a deep "unself-conscious" sense of belonging.

While not reduceable to each other, feeling at home is largely interchangeable with the feeling of belonging. It is the intermingling of the feelings of ownership and acceptance, expressed by the easy use of possessive and collective pronouns 'my', 'we', 'our' and 'Us'. This "claiming" for the lack of better word is applicable to places – as both a location or a community – or persons we identify as the source of our belonging, who make us feel like were home. Meanwhile, commitment to them ensures their continued status as such.

3. HOMELANDS – THE PLACES THEY CALLED HOME

The world of the LOTR is filled with homes as multiple and varied as the characters and creatures inhabiting it. Some of these abodes are cozy, like Bag End and Tom Bombadill's cabin; some, such as the ent-houses or the elven tree-platforms - are curious; some are majestic like Meduseld the golden hall of the King of Rohan. Even the towers of Orthanc and Barad-dûr and the cave housing Shelob's lair are homes of sort, despite coming across as unhomely as can be.

Despite the multitude of options, instead of focusing on individual dwellings I find myself inexplicably drawn to larger lived spaces; places that function as home for a community at large instead of a single individual or family, aka homelands. Homeland as a term is conspicuously absent from Tolkien's writing apart from the story of Hurin's children, allowing me some leeway when assigning it to particular locations within the Middle-earth.

The step from the individual home to the collective homeland is not as great as might seem. As has been discussed before, home – in all of its manifestations – is always localizable, be its target a piece of land, a person, a memory or a feeling. Belonging, on the other hand, has been established as being invariably communal in nature; being produced by, within and in relation to a community. Home and homeland are, in this context largely synonymous; their emotional connotations, as well as the signification processes through which these concepts are formed being the much same.

This been said, my analysis focuses on three homes/homelands: Shire, Rivendell and Moria. Apart from their narrative function, the main similarity between the three is their symbolic value at the time of the novel [the end of the Third Age] - each identified as a "chief dwelling" of their people. The particulars of each location vary greatly. However, the vast differences only enhance the comparative analysis. The contradicting realities of the three homelands allowing for a more complex understanding of the ways in which people make and relate to home in its various stages.

In the Shire, I recognize a rendering of a nation-state, in which dislocations of the pre-historic past have been all but forgotten in favor of the current localized identity. Hence my analysis of the Shire is largely centered on the politics of identity narrative building: including the

streamlining of history into an official narrative, and the systematic separation from the Other as part of strengthening internal cohesiveness.

Moria functions as the localized anchor of the Dwarven identity, the mythical home of origin, the long-lost homeland for which they long and to which they strive to return to. It is also a dark and scary place, its Elvish name translating as "Black Chasm" or "Dark Void" (Tolkien, Carpenter and Tolkien 1981, 297); the common root "mor"[8] creating an associative link to the evil land of Mordor. My analysis juxtaposes the Legacy of Khazad-dûm with the lived experience of it, both in the present –as experienced by the Fellowship of the Ring – and in the past: using the available "historical" records, lore and memories.

Rivendell presents an alternative model of home - one that is functional rather than ideological, embracing the flux of change as part of its identity instead of fighting against the increasingly dislocated and/or transcultural reality of its time. The resulting "third space" – that is neither Elven nor Mortal, nor a simple mix of the two – feels like home and functions like home to many, while neither demanding nor offering a permanent claim on its residents.[9] The resulting lack of a [localized] group identity, sense of ownership and belonging make Rivendell distinctly unlike the traditional image of Home. I tackle the conundrum of Rivendell through external comparison with other known Elven domains as well as the Shire and Moria, and by analyzing its internal workings: its founding purpose, values and their execution, its residents – mortal and immortal – and their dynamics, the interplay between the promise of sanctuary and the lingering awareness of transience, and the strengths and weaknesses induced by the aforementioned lack of permanence.

3.1 The Shire – The Strained Idyll

There is no better place to begin one's foray into the subject of home in LOTR than in Shire, the homeland of Hobbits. (Alternatively called Shire-folk, Halflings or Periannath [singular Perian].) After all, Shire is the reader's point of entry into the Middle Earth. It is the place where the circular "there and back again" narratives of both The Hobbit

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[8] The Elvish word for black [√MOR: *mori 'dark(ness)' = Q. more, S. môr; adj. *mornā = Q. morna, S. morn 'dark'.] has no connection to the English "moor", "maure", or "blackamoor".

[9] Elrond and his immediate family excepted. Although, even they do not seem overly tied to Rivendell at least at the time of the novel: Elrond aware the time of the Elves is over is coordinating their migration West, (Celebrian having left Middle-earth centuries before), the twins, Elladan and Elrohir, are described as leading an actively mobile lifestyle as scouts, and Arwen – after having split her time between Rivendell and Lothlorien – is preparing for her upcoming nuptials and the consequent move to Gondor.

and LOTR begin and end. (Curry 2004, 17) It is the Home to which the rest of the unknown world is contrasted; familiar not only to the Hobbits – the main focalizers of the story – but to the reader, who should recognize in the fanciful Hobbit settlement a likeness of rural England.

What evades some readers' notice is that the description of the Shire as an idyllic pastoral landscape, safe and comfortable, does not make it an ideal home; despite it having gained something of a reputation as one. As Patrick Curry repeatedly points out in "The Shire: Culture Society and Politics", the Shire is neither a vision of Tolkien's pre-industrial nostalgia, nor a nationalist utopia. (Curry 2004, 29ff) Tolkien himself specified that "hobbits are not a Utopian vision, or recommended as an ideal in their own or any age" calling them instead a "historical accident". (Tolkien, Carpenter and Tolkien 1981, 154. Sic.) Even without access to The Letters, an educated reading of LOTR proves such an interpretation as erroneous. To idealize the Shire is to completely disregard the narrator's tone – good natured, slightly patronizing and laced with irony – when discussing Hobbits and their locale. More importantly, it ignores the plainly worded criticism present in both the narrator's and the characters' comments, Frodo, Gandalf and Aragorn in particular. As the most reflective, self-aware and broad-minded characters, the three give voice to Tolkien's not-so-subtle critique of the self-absorbed community whose "lack of imagination and their ignorance of a world apart of their perception of reality becomes their undoing", warning against the dangers of blind adherence to traditions and of the status quo. (Baltasar 2004, 30.)

Said critique does in no way devalue the importance nor the beauty of the Shire. On the contrary, it is because of the special attachment the readers – like the protagonists – have towards the Shire that demands it be treated seriously, faults and all. The Shire is a complex multidimensional space, not a Hobbit-sized variant of the professor's house in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* – a location insignificant beyond hosting the entryway into a magical land. It is but the first in a series of homes/homelands scattered throughout Middle-earth. The elements that make up the various places called home – the location, the Idea and the experience – changing and conflicting from place to place, from person to person, and simply over time. As such the Shire with all its quirks and particulars, makes for a one-of-a-kind setting for the overarching themes [of home and not-home, belonging, dislocation and home-longing, journeying, wandering and home-coming] to manifest and play out.

<u>Locating the Shire</u>

To fully appreciate the cultural construct that the Hobbits call their home, one must be aware of the larger – temporal/historical and geographical – contexts in which it is situated. Unlike the rambling, often contradictory legendarium of Elven history, virtually all information pertaining to the Shire and its people is conveniently recounted in the Prologue to the LOTR. Where the chapter is encyclopedic in nature, giving a detailed account of things and events "Concerning Hobbits"; reading it from the perspective of dislocation reveals a reoccurring pattern when it comes to the Hobbits' interaction with the "Big Folk", aka Other(s).

a) History

Hobbits are described as an ancient race, so unobtrusive and shy that their existence went largely unnoticed by other races in the Elder Days. The earliest stories of Hobbits are of their "Wandering Days" - sometime in the early Third Age - a gradual migration West from the " the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the Misty Mountains" away from the growing population of Men. (P3) The pattern of relocation is repeated until T.A.1601 when the King of Arnor - the North Kingdom of Dúnedain - grants Hobbits the long abandoned but well-maintained lands west of river Baranduin, which they renamed Brandywine. "All that was demanded of them was that they should keep the Great Bridge in repair, and all other bridges and roads, speed the king's messengers, and acknowledge his lordship." (P6)

Although officially vassals to the King, the Hobbit society grew increasingly isolated, insulated and "clannish". (P10.) Their main loyalty was to family, rendering instituted government offices to a mere ceremonial capacity. Meanwhile, "bounders" a hired militia of sorts ensured that "Outsiders of any kind, great or small, did not make themselves a nuisance" (P13), preferably, by staying outside of their claimed borders.

All in all Hobbits ensconced themselves to a degree where even major world events – such as the prolonged wars and subsequent fall of Arnor T.A.1975, and, much later, the War of the Ring – had little to no impact on the daily goings of Shire-folk.

> They heeded less and less the world outside where dark things moved, until they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk. They *forgot or ignored* what little they had ever known of the Guardians, and of

the labours of those that made possible the long peace of the Shire. They were, in fact, sheltered, but they had ceased to remember it. (P7. Emphasis added.)

b) Geography

The land known as Shire during the events of LOTR is located in "the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea" (P3) in the "westlands of Eriador" (…) the expanse between the Misty Mountains and the Blue Mountains, also known as the Mountains of Lune. (P5)

"Tolkien describes Shire as 'a pleasant corner of the world' (…) in which the 'land was rich and kindly'." (Morgan Curtis 2012, 204) It is a land of rolling green hills and airy woods, of quaint little settlements surrounded by gardens and orchards. "A place of natural beauty, serenity, and peacefulness" (Walter 2016, 182); with no extremes of nature - landscape, fauna, or climate - present within its borders.

Shire is a relatively small region with clearly defined borders. "Forty leagues it stretched from the Far Downs to the Brandywine Bridge, and fifty from the northern moors to the marshes in the south." (P6) The original boundaries of Shire are later expanded under the rule of King Elessar [Fo.A.31, or S.R.1452] to include Emyn Beraid - the Tower Hills renamed by Hobbits as Westmarch.[10] (P12)

From a larger geographical perspective, the Shire is situated at a highly strategic location. There is established Elven and Dwarven presence not far West in Mithlond and Blue Mountains respectively. A few days journey to the East lies a town of Bree, one of the oldest human settlements. More importantly, the road running east to west through the Shire is part of the ancient trans-continental highway connecting various Elven and Dwarven strongholds across the continent. Known as the Great Road or the East West Road it runs from the Grey Havens of Mithlond to the Iron Hills, passing Rivendell, the Khazad-dûm, Mirkwood, and Erebor. As such the Shire serves as a throughway for both Elves and Dwarves; particularly in the late Third Age due to the Elves' migration over the Sea. Furthermore, in Bree the Great Road intersects with the North South Road that once connected the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Men - Arnor and Gondor. Although little

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[10] Common interpretation of the ordering of the Shire into "the East and West Marches: the Buckland; and the Westmarch added to the Shire" (12) is that this expansion also included Buckland. However, this assumption is disputed by the fact that there is no record of said event in the Book of Years, nor of Eastmarch - a name often attached to Buckland on the basis of the above quote. Neither J.R.R. or Christopher Tolkien provided a clarification regarding this possible misinterpretation, thus leaving the official fate of Buckland unknown.

used at the time of the novel, to the point of being better known to Bree-folk as Greenway for its unkempt state, the North South Road regains its importance after the reestablishment of the northern Kingdom in the Fourth Age.

Taking into account the lack of physical obstacles at the Shire's borders, its proximity of the two major highways dissecting Eriador, relative closeness of the neighbors, and the availability of usable waterways – the Brandywine and its offshoot The Water being possible methods of transportation if Hobbits were so inclined – it becomes clearly evident that the Hobbits' seclusion from the outside world is a matter of choice rather than circumstance.

Constructing the Idea of the Shire

> Thus began *Shire-reckoning*, for the year of the crossing of the Brandywine (as the Hobbits turned the name) became Year One of the Shire, and all later dates were reckoned from it. (FR6. Sic.)

The Shire, both as a land and as an idea, is inexplicably interwoven with the Hobbit identity; an identity devised and fashioned by the early settlers. To an informed reader, the narrative of "nation-building" that created the said identity as recounted in "Concerning Hobbits" is strongly reminiscent of 19th century nationalist ideology[11]; promoting and romanticizing the union of the land and its people - in this case the Shire and the Hobbits.

Following on the basic concepts of identity theory, identity – be it individual or cultural – is *produced* in relation to the Other/Not I. This process is two-fold: requiring and affecting the belief in a cohesive Self, and its separateness from the Other. In the case of the Shire this dual development is clearly manifest. The implementation of the Shire-reckoning allows (and forces) the Hobbits to have a shared history with a defined point of origin. The three physically and culturally distinct branches of Hobbits – Harfoots, Stoors and Fallohides – are assimilated into a unified identity of Shire-folk; their dislocated past erased. (P4) This demand for internal cohesiveness is paramount and is well reflected in the Hobbits' reading habits, particularly their fascination with genealogies and family trees - documents

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[11] Nationalist rhetoric has so deeply permeated the Western mentality, it has become the normal way of conceptualizing cultural units: as nation-states and ethnic minorities. As a scholar active in the interwar period, Tolkien must have been well aware of the nationalist discourse, both of its early romantic variant and of the radical ultra-nationalism of his time. Public discussion aside, Tolkien's work indicates influences of what I have dubbed the "layman's nationalism": an inherent understanding of what comprises and sets apart a people – their land, language and history. The detailed accounts found in the Appendices follow the same format and having the same function as cotemporary travel-guides – to draw a cohesive and intriguing image of the place/people it describes.

"organically" linking each individual into the established order. "They liked to have books filled with things that they already knew, set out fair and square with no contradictions." (P10.)

Shire-reckoning is, therefore, not just a calendar or a history record, but a physical manifestation of the communal memory and identity.[12] Only the events documented in Shire-reckoning are accepted as *real* history, while anything outside of its temporal or geographical scope – such as the Wandering years – is reduced to the status of story and legend. While some Hobbits, particularly young ones like Sam, enjoy listening to such stories, the overall outlook on things beyond the immediate and mundane reality of Hobbits is disdain. "'Elves and Dragons! I says to him. Cabbages and potatoes are better for me and you." - Ham Gamgee admonishes his son's interest in said tales. (FR31 Sic.)

Old Gaffer's comment on "cabbages and potatoes" is indicative of the down-to-earth mentality of the Hobbits and their literal and figurative connection to the land. The Hobbits are quite literally tethered to the soil of the Shire, due to their strong dislike of being off the ground – be it in the air or on the water – so much so, that the need to be grounded is basically a racial characteristic, alongside their hairy feet and love of food. This demand for rootedness is distinctly reflected in their architecture: the traditional Hobbit dwelling being a hole in the ground. Their other buildings are sturdy and low-storied; "solid, comfortable, on or close to the ground, and long or extended" with distinctly round doors and windows. These dwellings would often be large, as extended families of Hobbits would live together in ancestral mansions such as the Brandy Hall. (Walter 2016, 179) What little industry there is in the Shire, is, likewise, centered around cultivating the land.

The connection to the land is further asserted through identity narratives, maintaining the belief that the Shire belongs to the Hobbits and the Hobbits belong to the Shire. Michaela Baltasar describes the resulting environment as "remarkably suburban and bourgeois, where being 'respectable' means never having any 'adventures' or doing 'anything unexpected'." (Baltasar 2004, 30.) Respectability is indeed a key feature defining the Hobbit society, the opposite of it being the "queer" - anything and everything not befitting the Hobbit standard of living. Seeing as the Hobbits are notably materialistic, community oriented and

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[12] If the Prologue is akin to an encyclopedia entry or a travel-guide, Shire-reckoning is the official "Our country"- brochure by Hobbits for Hobbits.

decidedly anti-intellectual[13], the derogatory moniker is equally assigned to those excessively curious or overly educated, to the solitary and secretive, to the well-travelled, not to mention those travel-worn, or otherwise lacking the creature comforts the Hobbits take great pride in maintaining. The attitude towards the queer ranges from disinterest and distrust to open hostility; the ultimate anathema to the Hobbit sensibilities being the "Outsiders" – with a capital letter. The animosity towards those Outside of the racial and/or geographical borders extends even to other Hobbit communities. Case in point, the tension between the Hobbit communities of Bree and the Shire: Shire-folk consider the town-dwelling Bree-hobbits too Mannish and therefore subpar, while the Breelanders refer to the Shire-hobbits as "colonist". (P11)

An uneasy compromise to the rigid inside-outside division are the Brandybucks of Buckland. Though their settlement is located on the wrong side of the river, Bucklanders are nevertheless counted as Hobbits of the Shire. The Bucks are accepted, even esteemed to a degree, for the sole reason of being descended from the earliest of Shire's settlers, having only moved across the Brandywine well into the Shire-reckoning. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the respectable Hobbits of the central Shire, Bucklanders are distinctively queer. Their outgoing temperament, proficiency with boats, and willingness to live bordering the Old Forest – a wild and hence dangerous piece of land – bars them from ever being considered as fully normal or proper. Interestingly, the same distance that deems the Brandybucks' character questionable allows for certain leniency. Since a certain queerness is assumed and expected from those of Buckland it is also better tolerated; as long as it is confined to their own side of the river; away and out of sight of the proper folk. Thus, Merry and Pippin, being descendants of the queer Took/Brandybuck branches, can volunteer to join Frodo's adventure without much internal turmoil and be accepted back into the fold despite the visible changes they have undergone.

For all its pre-industrial veneer, the Shire – as it seen at the time of the novel – is a product of politics; internal as well as external. The cultural identity of Hobbits is a narrative constructed from the policies and values the early settlers instituted. Maintaining the status quo has, in turn, been possible only due to the unseen presence of the Dúnedain committed to protecting

[13] One of the most revealing characteristics of Hobbit society in this regard being the custom of Mathoms. Mathoms are "anything that Hobbits had no immediate use for, but were unwilling to throw away". These items of purely ceremonial value were hoarded and given as gifts, only to be re-gifted to someone else later on. (FR7.)

the Shire from the outside threats. The resulting bubble resembles in many ways a nationalist utopia: a land where the natives all share the same origin and are thus naturally belonging to the national whole without the pressure or even visible presence of a state system. Like any bubble, however, the Shire reality is fragile, it is insubstantial and unmaintainable. The lived experience is unable to mimic the ideal, as the Idea does not allow for individuality or change.

Varying experiences of the Shire

Unlike Rivendell - which feels revitalizing, welcoming and safe to visitors and residents alike, or Moria - a land equally hostile to all who enter its bounds, the experience of the Shire varies from person to person depending on their "insider-status". The better one can internalize and embody the cultural values – the naturalized code of what Shire is and what a proper denizen, i.e. Hobbit, should be - the more at home one would feel. It is quite safe to assume that for the majority of Hobbits, particularly those of well-established middle-class families dwelling in the central villages like Hobbiton or Bywater, life in the Shire truly is comfortable and easy. At the same time, the rigidity of Hobbit values makes the lived experience of the Shire stifling to anyone not fitting the mold, be it an Outsider or a misbehaving Hobbit.

The "comfortable and easy" experience of the inner circles is the one visible to the outside and to an extent shared by a transient visitor. To those experiencing it at a glance – by passing through or hearing it described – the Shire is rather idyllic, a picturesque and cozy place. The open lands and open borders are inviting, its diminutive people curious and unthreatening. However, an attempt to cross the invisible boundary separating the Hobbits from the Outsiders can and will quickly change the experience to tense and unwelcoming. While as a rule Hobbits will not take action against a visitor, the imposing outsider will be greeted with passive hostility. Case in point: Gandalf - who, regular visits and friendly demeanor notwithstanding, is considered by most a potential threat and nuisance.

Hobbits who (voluntarily) interact with the outside become tainted by its influence in the eyes of the community. Such deviants, be it by choice - like Bilbo, or circumstance - like Frodo, are watched, possibly ostracized. Their participation in the community is always a little strained, as exemplified by Bilbo's birthday party at the beginning of the LOTR. (FR34-40.) Educated and well-traveled, Bilbo's worldview is much broader than of an average Hobbit,

thus enabling him to recognize the social norms and expectations ruling the event. While he does carry through the motions of a good Hobbit host, both his words and actions are laced with irony. Only Frodo and the reader are aware of the game Bilbo is playing at his guests' expense. Meanwhile, the guests are left confused: unable to step out of their limited perspective yet sensing a tension, they are left unsure whether to be offended by Bilbo or not.

Bilbo, like Frodo after him, deals with the society according to its rules, mostly limiting himself to the functions understandable by the community. The amounting frustration from the constant self-censoring, dual awareness of the big and little worlds and a lack of true peers leads the broadminded Hobbits toward increasing isolation and embracing of the queer status in favor of associating with their naïve neighbors.

In contrast, Samwise "Sam" Gamgee, son of Hamfast "The Gaffer" Gamgee, a gardener in service to the Bagginses is firmly imbedded in the Hobbit mentality. Sam is "the representative Hobbit", straight-shooting and lowbrow "whose mulishness is tempered by education and fascination with Elves". (Curry 2004 25) Even far away from home – on a journey he partakes in purely out of loyalty to his master – Sam stays true to the Shire; using it as a standard with which to judge the new surroundings: suspicious and disapproving of the things and peoples unfamiliar. What truly sets Sam apart from dislocated characters such as Frodo is that he never questions the sanctity of the Shire; it's existence, internal order or his place in it. Instead Sam carries his homeland with him all the way to Mount Doom; his behavior growing more flexible over time, but his sense of identity remaining unshaken despite the perilous and/or traumatic circumstances. This in turn allows for a relatively painless re-entry back into the Shire society after the quest is over.

The great little world

The main take-away from the study of the Shire is that idyllic does not equate ideal. Even before the destruction carried out by Sharkey's men, the Hobbit homeland had its fair share of faults brought about by the Hobbits themselves: their hierarchies rigid, their memory selective, their outlook hostile and their isolationist politic unsustainable. The picturesque image of the Shire is just that – an image. Constructed and maintained rigorously from the inside by adhering to tradition and spurning change, non-conformity and anything and everything unfamiliar. The comfortable bubble survives only as long as it is protected from

the outside. Gandalf, Aragorn and generations of Rangers having taken onto themselves to "hold the balance outside the Shire so that the Shire can thrive unmolested" – regardless of the Hobbits being appreciative or even aware. (Morgan Curtis 2012, 203) "'A little people, but of great worth are the Shire-folk,' said Halbarad. 'Little do they know of our long labour for the safekeeping of their borders, and yet I grudge it not.'" (RK762. Sic.)

To an outside eye, which comes to include the reader, the Shire appears almost juvenile. A small corner of the world where little people have their little problems; displaying both a child-like innocence and childish vices: pettiness, selfishness and laziness at the fore. And yet, curiously, those most aware of its faults and limitations, are the ones most committed to keeping the Shire safe. As voiced by Gandalf:

> 'I have been deeply concerned about you, and about all these *charming, absurd, helpless hobbits*. It would be a grievous blow to the world, if the Dark Power overcame the Shire; if all your *kind*, *jolly, stupid* Bolgers, Hornblowers, Boffins, Bracegirdles, and the rest, not to mention the *ridiculous* Bagginses, became enslaved.' (FR48. Emphasis added.)

Much like a child, the Shire and its unsuspecting Hobbits incite an urge to protect and preserve in those who have seen them. The ignorant bumbling of Shire-folk as endearing as it is infuriating. Never more so than when the Hobbits seem to bounce right back into their isolationist ways after the Scouring, forgetting the cataclysm in favor of the bountiful harvests of the following year, S.R.1420 "The Great Year of Plenty".

Even so, there is hope for the community. Despite the borders being closed off, the Shire remains connected to the outside through the relationships the new leaders – Merry, Pippin, and to a lesser degree Frodo and Sam – formed during the War. Merry and Pippin in particular have the potential to affect long-lasting changes in the Shire. Having taken the journey while still young and impressionable they soak up the outside influences, never losing their identity as Hobbits but assimilating new characteristics into it. They come to embody a worldview that is uniquely Hobbit and yet world-savvy and diplomatic; best illustrated in their encounter with Treebeard and the Ents: the cross-cultural dialogue resulting not only in the successful recruiting of the Ents to the war effort, but in the addition of the Hobbits as a race into the Ents' poem of living things. Upon returning home, the two take up positions of authority and – having grown in stature and in character – lead the community according to their newfound understanding. Thus offering the future generations of the Shire an alternative model for being a Hobbit in the Middle-earth.

3.2 Moria – The Promised Land of Old

In Peter Jackson's film adaptation Gimli, the Dwarf, is mainly a comedic figure. Comprised in equal parts of beard, axe and attitude, Gimli son of Gloin is quick to proclaim the superiority of Dwarves while downplaying his obvious handicaps: the stocky build, shorter reach, lack of stamina and fear of horses to name a few. While John Rhys-Davies' performance is a rather exaggerated take on the character, it drives home the disconnect between the grand self-image and cumbersome reality that defines Gimli, and through him the Dwarven race as a whole.

Dwarves[14] of the LOTR are a diasporic people; their identity and culture built on the connection to the lost homeland Khazad-dûm, or Moria as it is commonly called in this age. While little is known of the other houses of Dwarves; those of Durin's Folk wholeheartedly embrace their status as exiles. Their banishment from Moria being as much a part of their present-day identity as it is a recorded event of their past. Despite having settled, lost and re-settled other enclaves, the Dwarven gaze is ever drawn to the Misty Mountains under which their "true" home lies, awaiting the prophesied return of its children. As such, the narrative of the Dwarves much resembles the history of the Jewish diaspora. This connection is acknowledged by Tolkien himself in one of his letters: "I do think of the 'Dwarves' like Jews: at once native and alien in their habitations, speaking the languages of the country, but with an accent due to their own private tongue...." (Tolkien, Carpenter and Tolkien 1981, 176) While I do not intend to pursue the topic beyond brief mention, I believe that drawing the parallel to a well-known and much studied diasporic group can help visualize the constant liminality, the chronic non-belonging that permeates the fictional Dwarven community.

It should be noted at this juncture that in Tolkien's imagination, the Dwarves do eventually return to Moria under the leadership of Durin VII, heralding a new golden age of the Dwarves that lasts until they fade from history. (Peoples of Middle Earth, Durin's Folk.)

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[14] All Dwarves present in the LOTR and TH belong to the line of Durin. Known as Durin's Folk, Longbeards or Sigin-tarâg in Khuzdul, the Dwarven language. For convenience sake I will be using "Dwarf" as the general collective term, with the acknowledgement that the analysis of this particular subgroup does not represent the whole Dwarven race.

The Legacy

> 'Some spoke of Moria: the mighty works of our fathers that are called in our own tongue Khazad-dûm; and they declared that now at last we had the power and numbers to return.'
>
> Gloin sighed. 'Moria! Moria! Wonder of the Northern world! Too deep we delved there, and woke the nameless fear. Long have its vast mansions lain empty since the children of Durin fled.' (FR234)

"Khazad-dûm, the Dwarrowdelf, Hadhodrond in the Elvish tongue, that was afterwards in the days of its darkness called Moria" (S100) was the first and greatest of the halls of the Dwarves. It was founded by Durin I, the Deathless [15], revered as the first one of his people, sometime in the Age of Trees.

While a number of other Dwarven kingdoms rose and fell in the mountainous regions of Middle earth, Khazad-dûm kept growing in riches and status throughout the 1st and 2nd Ages. During the Dark Ages of Sauron's Reign Dwarves stayed safe by retreating behind their Gates; though they did join the Last Alliance in the war against Sauron (S352).

The fall of Moria T.A.1980-1981 is undeniably the most far-reaching event in the Dwarven history. The Dwarves' numbers had started to dwindle during their time of isolation – leaving many of the halls in Khazad-dûm unoccupied; the remainder applying themselves to the search of the prized *mithril.* In their greed they dug "too deep" awakening "the nameless fear" (FR234), the Balrog of Morgoth, an ancient monster of fire and darkness, later known to Dwarves as Durin's Bane. After a year of struggle King Durin VI was slain and the "glory of Moria passed, its people destroyed or fled far away." (AA1046, AB1059)

The tumultuous history of the Dwarven exile reduced them to a mere remnant both in numbers and in skill. "One by one their ancient treasures [and treasuries] were plundered and they became a wandering people." (AB1059) In this case "wandering" describes not only their outward lifestyle but their mentality as a people. Dwarven group identity is built on dislocation; not just the physical/temporal dislocation from where they believe they should be dwelling, but their emotional dislocation from their current surroundings. This double bind of non-belonging is maintained through the diasporic narrative: passed on through stories,

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[15] Durin was believed to have re-incarnated in the great leaders of his line, thus earing them the name Durin [+numeral]. At the time of LOTR the Dwarves were expecting the seventh and final incarnation of their ancestor-king to come and reinstate them to their former glory.

songs, sayings and prayers, it tells the story of the Homeland – the place where Dwarves truly belong. With the passage of time and the passing of all those who had first-hand experience of Moria before the fall the source of communal identity shifts. While on an intellectual level the object of attachment and identification remains the place – Khazad-dûm, or as it happened in TH Erebor – the sense of belonging stems from the *shared longing* for a home. This "home", however, "is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination (…) a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'." (Brah 1996, 192) Nevertheless, the Dwarves maintain hope of their return to their ancestral land. Much like the Jewish sentiment "next year in Jerusalem", the Dwarven fascination with Moria is almost religious in intensity; the return of Durin to his birthplace/tomb a prophesy passed on through generations.

The admiration and the longing are clear in the following extract of Gimli's Song of Durin (FR308-309).

> *A king he was on carven throne*
> *In many-pillared halls of stone*
> *With golden roof and silver floor,*
> *And runes of power upon the door.*
> *The light of sun and star and moon*
> *In shining lamps of crystal hewn*
> *Undimmed by cloud or shade of night*
> *There shone for ever fair and bright.*
>
> *There hammer on the anvil smote,*
> *There chisel clove, and graver wrote;*
> *There forged was blade, and bound was hilt;*
> *The delver mined, the mason built.*
> *There beryl, pearl, and opal pale,*
> *And metal wrought like fishes' mail,*
> *Buckler and corslet, axe and sword,*
> *And shining spears were laid in hoard.*
>
> *Unwearied then were Durin's folk;*
> *Beneath the mountains music woke:*
> *The harpers harped, the minstrels sang,*
> *And at the gates the trumpets rang.*
>
> *The world is grey, the mountains old,*
> *The forge's fire is ashen-cold;*
> *No harp is wrung, no hammer falls:*
> *The darkness dwells in Durin's halls;*

The shadow lies upon his tomb
In Moria, in Khazad-dûm.

But still the sunken stars appear
In dark and windless Mirrormere;
There lies his crown in water deep,
Till Durin wakes again from sleep.

I find it appropriate that the one giving voice to the diasporic memory is Gimli - a Dwarf far too young to have any first-hand experience of the lost kingdom, nor of the wars that followed. Before entering Moria, Gimli represents a naïve believer of the homeland myth. He owns the "memories" – stories glossed over by time – and through his belonging to the group considers himself as belonging to a home he has never seen. Gimli is an adult, yet his attitude is unburdened by the experience of war and tragedy; the very experiences that may have given those of the older generation, such as his father Gloin, a more realistic view on what the conquest of the homeland might entail - balancing their expectations if never diminishing the longing.

Compared to the countless centuries that the Dwarves spent in Moria, the single millennium of exile at the time of the LOTR may appear insignificant. So focused are the Dwarves on the ghost of their homeland they lack the experience and even the discourse of home(s) in the present. Unable to return to or to let go of the past the Dwarves are stuck in a chronic state of restlessness, never at-home. Where alternate strongholds of Durin-folk are established, none can ever compare to the grandeur or cultural significance to Khazad-dûm.

This ever-present longing [for the glory days] is made apparent in how quickly the Dwarves turned their backs on Erebor, the Dwarf-kingdom "under the Mountain" founded T.A.1909 by Durin VI's heir, Thrain I. The first time, after it was overtaken by the Dragon Smaug [16] (T.A.2770 – 2941) the Dwarves interpreted their forceful eviction as an opportunity to retake Moria, eventually leading to the grueling War of the Dwarves and Orcs (T.A.2793-2799).[17] Then again two centuries later – Erebor having been successfully retaken – nearly half of the Dwarves left to follow Balin's expedition into Moria; the colony lasting five

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[16] The 'Quest of Erebor' is described in detail in *The Hobbit,* but recounted briefly by multiple characters in the LOTR.

[17] Immediately after the winning battle at the East Gate, Thrain II the heir of the House of Durin wishes to claim back Khazad-dûm, disregarding the heavy losses suffered or the previous foray inside being the very cause of the war. The venture is stopped by other Dwarves who refuse the risk of facing the Durin's Bane. (AA 1049-50.)

years (T.A.2989-2994) before being overrun by the orcs. Even in the midst of the culminating event of TH, the Battle of the Five Armies, the Dwarves of the Iron Hills use "Moria!" as their battle cry, thus declaring their ever-present commitment to the memory of the ancestral home, even as the they are actively claiming a different location for their own. (TH 258)

Not only Dwarves are affected by the legacy of Moria. Elves of Lothlórien close their borders and cut off all ties with the Dwarves to safeguard from the "evil of Moria" (FR347). Gandalf faces the consequences of the fall even more directly through his dealings with the dwarves and culminating in his stand-off with the Balrog. Interesting enough, despite being intimately acquainted with the terror that befell Moria, Galadriel and Gandalf are the ones to most contribute to the reader's image of Khazad-dûm in its prime. Among the general population on the other hand – those with no ties to Moria of old - the legacy of the dwarven halls is straightforwardly negative. "The name of Moria is black", Faramir voices the common attitude. (FR287-288) It is a legend of darkness and vague fear, the very mention of the name causing dread.

State of the realm

'There is the land where our fathers worked of old, and we have wrought the image of those mountains into many works of metal and of stone, and into many songs and tales. They stand tall in our dreams: Baraz, Zirak, Shathûr.

'Only once before have I seen them from afar in waking life, but I know them and their names, for under them lies Khazad-dûm, the Dwarrowdelf, that is now called the Black Pit, Moria in the Elvish tongue. Yonder stands Barazinbar, the Redhorn, cruel Caradhras; and beyond him are Silvertine and Cloudyhead: Celebdil the White, and Fanuidhol the Grey, that we call Zirakzigil and Bundushathûr.

'There the Misty Mountains divide, and between their arms lies the deep-shadowed valley which we cannot forget: Azanulbizar, the Dimrill Dale, which the Elves call Nanduhirion.' (Gimli. FR276)

The passage of the Fellowship through Moria brings into stark relief the memory of the place with its current reality: emphasizing just how disconnected the diasporic imagining of the homeland is from the place itself. In this case, the memories being challenged are not just Dwarven lore as recited by Gimli. Gandalf's recollections from his earlier visit/visits[18] to Moria – far-off yet more recent than any others' – play an important role, keeping the

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[18] While Gandalf speaks of only one instance of entering Moria post-fall, his knowledge of the underground city implies a possibility of other visits in the centuries prior.

fellowship from getting helplessly lost in the dark maze. At the same time, they bring to attention the continuous deterioration of the abandoned realm; as opposed to the static image preserved by Dwarves in art and song.

The ramifications of time passing become blatantly obvious upon the very approach. Instead of following the old road described by Gandalf as looping past the signature waterfalls, the Step Falls of Sirannon, up the foothills and to the Gate - the company cannot even locate the said Gate-Stream. When they do eventually find the right way, the travelers are greeted by a dry riverbed, a dark stagnant lake cutting off the crumbling road and, eventually, a locked door – the password long forgotten by the Dwarves and the Wizards alike. (FR292-293) The Eastern Gate is likewise dilapidated, although less so. Instead of laying hidden in ruins like its Western counterpart, the entrance into Dimrill Dale stands wide open, signaling that the danger within is more than enough to keep people at bay.

The inside of Moria – thanks to being mostly sealed off from the elements – retains the shape given to it by its builders. It is a mazelike structure, consisting of a multitude of passages and halls, stairways and bridges, rooms, chambers and caverns, all spread out on multiple intersecting levels like a giant anthill.

The Mines of Moria, through which the companions first enter, are "vast and intricate beyond the imagination of [even] Gimli, Glóin's son, dwarf of the mountain-race though he was." There passages are twisting and winding, sloping up, or running steeply down, with countless dark side-tunnels opening up on both sides; "there were also in many places holes and pitfalls, (…) dark wells beside the path, (…) fissures and chasms in the walls and floor." (FR302-303) The city of Dwarrodelf on the other hand – the "habitable part" of what Gandalf calls the Old Moria (FR307) – is almost algorithmic: its notable feature a series of public halls, numbered according to their distance and elevation in relation to the Dimrill Gate.[19]

Despite their apparent intentionality – or maybe because of it – the inner passages of Moria feel uncanny, haunted. The impression is similar to that given by the Paths of the Dead[20] – repulsing all visitors with an intuitive sense of dread. Only Gimli holds no apprehension of

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[19] The First Hall is located directly beyond the Gate. Second Hall of First Deep, "the level immediately below the gates" - is down a stairway and across a bridge from the First Hall. Twentyfirst Hall of Seventh Level of the North-end – is located six levels above the Gates, a mile or so up and north of the Second Hall. Etc. (FR315, 320-321.)

[20] The mountain pass where the ghosts of Oathbreakers, or the Dead Men of Dunharrow, stay awaiting redemption.

entering Moria, gazing in its direction with "strange gleam" in his eyes. (FR276) However, even his excitement at the prospect of witnessing the mythical homeland for himself ebbs away over the course of the "journey in the dark". There is no instinctive connection, no feeling of homecoming to be found. The realm is equally alien and inhospitable to all who venture inside; something recognized by the Dwarf halfway through their passage: "I have looked on Moria, and it is very great, but it has become dark and dreadful." (FR310.)

The further East the fellowship travels the more structured the space becomes allowing them glimpses of the architectural artistry that had once made Moria the "wonder of the Northern world" (FR234). Instead of easing the travelers' uneasiness, however, awareness of past inhabitants makes the deserted realm seem even more morbid and uninviting. In Sam's words: "it makes the darkness seem heavier, thinking of all those lamps." (FR309)

Somewhat ironically, the greatest danger in Moria dwells in this civilized part of the complex. If their initial discomfort stemmed from being trapped in the disorienting darkness of the Mines – the door behind them blocked by the monstrous Watcher in the lake – having reached the tomb of Balin the travelers realize that as difficult as entering and navigating the caves may have been, the true challenge lies in finding a way to leave unharmed.

During the sequence in the tomb atmosphere changes from haunted to hellish as the companions find themselves reenacting the final moments of Balin's expedition: trapped in a room with the dead Dwarves, surrounded by the same host of orcs. "We cannot get out." – those in the Fellowship echo the last words in the dwarven record: "they are coming". (FR314-315)

The nightmarish quality only escalates during the rushed escape. They flee down seemingly endless staircases, through enormous halls - no longer empty but teeming with the enemy, past giant fissures alight with the glow of molten rock… All the while chased by the horrifying Balrog. That the freedom of the company comes at the cost of Gandalf's life further cements the image of Moria as a giant tomb, a place where only the dead and the monsters may dwell, a pit that will swallow all living that brave it.

Beyond closed doors

Witnessing and barely escaping Moria leaves Gimli disillusioned and shaken, his idea of the ancestral homeland shattered. The experience makes painfully clear how insubstantial the

Dwarven image of Moria truly is, how fragile the identity based on it. Removed by space and time from the original, the communal "memory" of Khazad-dûm reproduced by the generations of Dwarves is decidedly incomplete - a copy of a copy of a copy.

In an elegant twist, Gimli finds closure to his grief in his encounter with Galadriel:

> She looked upon Gimli, who sat glowering and sad, and she smiled. And the Dwarf, hearing the names given in his own ancient tongue, looked up and met her eyes; and it seemed to him that he looked suddenly into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding. (FR347)

They share a moment of sadness over the loss; not so much the loss of what was but of the lost potential - the way Moria could have been and become. Instead of giving in to the disappointment and casting Moria as something evil, Gimli becomes the first Dwarf in millennia to carry a living memory of Moria, multidimensional and conflicting as it is. Moria is both great and dark (FR310), awe-inspiring and dangerous, a source of pride and a mark of shame, the pinnacle of Dwarven mastery, and a standing reminder of their greed, defeat and exile.

Alongside the brutal reality check delivered by the plot, Tolkien's text includes another subtler challenge of the Dwarve's vision of the past. Focused on their former glory – when Durin's Folk were strong and unchallenged in their kingdom, their artisans and craftsmen were unrivalled, each Dwarf privy to the common greatness – the Dwarves have effectively erased the presence and influence of Others. Completely absent from this image are the friends, neighbors, merchants, travelers and political allies that helped shape the realm and kept it relevant and thriving.

This interconnectedness with the other folk of Middle-earth is first hinted at by an unwitting Gimli. In his excitement to see the three Dwarven mountains – the outward symbol of Moria – he recites their full titles, oblivious to the irony of so naturally including the Elvish and Common names alongside the Khuzdul. (FR276) Further proof can be found in the landscape surrounding the two Gates. Western side in particular holds signs of the partnership with the Elves of Hollin, "for the West-door was made chiefly for their use in their traffic with the Lords of Moria." (FR295) The remnants of the "Elven-way", the two massive holly trees "token of their people" flanking the Gate, even the design and name of the Gate itself stand tribute to the "happier days, when there was still close friendship at times between folk of

different race", when the road was well kept and the Doors of Durin stood unlocked. (FR295, FR300.) Finally, the reactions of the Galadhrim and their leaders: the shock, hostility and resignation of Celeborn, as well as the kind words of Galadriel honoring the places and language of the Dwarves – are a reminder of them having witnessed firsthand the events of the Elder Days.

In short, Moria was never meant to be isolated and in its heyday it was not. Their reclusive ways stem, therefore, not from an actual "golden age" but from the centuries of seclusion during and following the Dark Years. Somehow a policy implemented as a precautionary measure in times of war ended up being maintained indefinitely. As cataclysmic as the awakened Balrog was, it was the "dwindling" (mentioned earlier in the recount of Dwarven history) that was the root of their downfall. The fate of the Dwarves comes to be reflected in the state of Sirannon – cut off its natural course, dark, stagnating, and festering with hidden danger.

Yet even in exile, the Dwarves maintain their separation from the folk among whom they dwell as a misguided way of honoring their past. Their attempt at preserving their culture via isolation is surprisingly similar to the Hobbits. Except where the Hobbits created an identity narrative in order to solidify their claim on to the land they practically entrenched themselves into, the Dwarves are so committed to the memory of the lost homeland they fail to build attachments to the here and now - despite already occupying a number of suitable locations, and more being available. One could, of course, suppose that the two races are exhibits of different stages in the curve of an isolationist society's development: the Hobbit nation still relatively young and therefore salvageable with a little help from the outside, whereas the Dwarves are living in the aftermath of the eventual self-inflicted fallout. In any case, it is not wrong to consider Dwarves as being a wandering people by choice. Or more accurately, by refusing to make a choice to settle. By tying their identity to a place not available, enshrining their dislocation and basing their sense of belonging as a group on their shared non-belonging, Durin's Folk not only deny themselves and their descendants the experience of a home, but they inadvertently end up repeating the cycle of eviction and exile time and again.

As I see it, Gimli's experience in Moria, traumatic though it was, could be the key to dealing with the communal trauma of the Dwarves. Having made peace with the current state of the realm Gimli moves on forging new relationships and viewing new places with an eye for potential. As a result, he becomes a representative of change among the Dwarves. It is Gimli

whose undevised exchange with Lady Galadriel reestablishes diplomatic relations with the Elves of Lórien. It is Gimli who brings a delegation of Dwarves to help rebuild Minas Tirith. It is Gimli who establishes a new Dwarven colony in the caves of Aglarond behind Helm's Deep - not out of necessity but because of the beauty of the Glittering Caves. Finally, Gimli the Elf-friend joins his friend Legolas on a ship to the West, a culmination of a life uncharacteristic for a Dwarf of his time.

Some final thoughts before closing the chapter. Having picked at the Dwarves' homeland myth, it would be easy to pronounce Moria as forever lost. However – even ignoring the metatextual information of the Dwarves' return – the unique underground space encourages thoughts of resettlement; be it by Dwarves or someone else. Unlike the various ruins of lost kingdoms spread around the Middle-earth Khazad-dûm remains structurally sound, deserted and uninhabitable though it may be at the present. With the threat of Sauron's creatures diminished by the destruction of the Ring its infrastructure should be salvageable given enough resources and effort. This in mind, while Gimli does not [presumably] take direct part in the eventual restoration of Moria, his friendships with Men and Elves create channels that bring vitality to a people stuck in their own ways. By closing off from the outside the Dwarves had ultimately confined and hurt themselves. Only by embracing change, letting go of the mindset centered around the ghost of the past and of an identity based on rootlessness can the Dwarves hope to survive and thrive as a people; maybe even grow enough to fill anew the ancient halls of Khazad-dûm.

3.3 Rivendell – The Homely Halfway House

Rivendell, Imladris in Elvish, literally the 'Deep Dale of the Cleft' was founded in S.A.1697 by Elrond the Half-Elven. (AB1058, UT308) A "stronghold and refuge" (S345) - Imladris grew from an outpost in the war against Sauron into "the Chief dwelling of the high Elves in the Third Age" (S347), Elrond and his family among them.

> And he gathered there many Elves and other folk of wisdom and power from among all the kindreds of Middle-earth, and he preserved through many lives of Men all that had had been fair; and the house of Elrond was a refuge for the weary and the oppressed, and a treasury of good counsel and wise lore. (S357)

Two of the most notable artifacts kept in Rivendell were the "Elven Ring of Air, *Vilya*,
wielded by Elrond" – the power of which enabled Elrond to preserve lore – (Ruane and
James 2012, 22), and *Narsil*, the Sword That Was Broken –heirloom of the house of Elendil.
Along with the broken sword, in the House of Elrond "were harboured Heirs of Isildur, in
childhood and old age, because of the kinship of their blood with Elrond himself" (S357);
them being descendants of Elrond's twin brother Elros, Tar-Minyatur, the first king of
Númenor. (AA1011)

The Promise of Sanctuary

> To enter Rivendell is to leave, for a time, the uplands' bleak, mountainous, northerly
> terrain. First comes the steep descent; pines are replaced by beech and oak; the air grows
> warmer; the first Elves greet them with laughter and song, and then comes the inevitable
> water crossing that divides the rest of the Middle-earth from the inner core of every
> Elven realm. Over the valley's fast-flowing stream curves a bridge, 'the only path across
> the water' (TH48). It is a slightly troubling bridge, narrow and lacking parapet; (…) on
> the other side lies the Last Homely House. (Burns 2005, 61)

> That house was, as Bilbo had long ago reported, 'a perfect house, whether you like food
> or sleep or story-telling or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture
> of them all'. Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness. (FR219)

Rivendell – the valley and the namesake house – is a secret oasis located high up in the
foothills of the Misty Mountains. Well hidden among the craggy wastelands, Rivendell is
visible only from its very brim: the wilderness suddenly giving way to the view of the valley.
(TH47, RK963) With only two paths leading in or out[21]– its natural borders enhanced by
Elven patrols and Elrond's magic – it is impossible for any trespasser or invader to enter the
realm; making Rivendell one of the most secure locations on the whole continent.

> And here in Rivendell there live still some of his [Saruman] chief foes: the Elven-wise,
> lords of the Eldar from beyond the furthest seas. (…) Indeed there is a power in
> Rivendell to withstand the might of Mordor, for a while... (FR216-217)

Sequestered though it is, Rivendell is a place of exceptional natural beauty. (Walter 2016
192) In "the fair valley of Rivendell, upon whose house the stars of heaven most brightly
shone" (S358), terraces and stairways twine trough the gardens. Buildings are nestled among

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[21] At the Southern end a "steep zig-zag path" leading up from the Ford of Bruinen and the East
Road; and to the north, a hard, crooked and dangerous path leading up to Andrath, [literally, "long
climb"] the High Pass over the mountains. (TH50, UT360.)

the woods, light glimmering off the yellow leaves. The air is warm, filled with sounds of water and faint scents of trees and flowers. The whole place seems luminescent, the visuals complementing the restorative magic of the valley. (FR220-222)

For all that the shimmery ambience of the valley might paint it as a magical otherworld, a Tolkienish version of the Fae Underhill, Rivendell is at its core a functional space: its purpose to guard and preserve all that is good and beautiful – be it knowledge, artifacts, or people – not unlike the preservation done by Medieval monasteries. This purpose becomes more pronounced in Tolkien's writing as his legendarium matures; hence the shift from the visually descriptive representation of Rivendell in TH, to the atmospheric imagery of LOTR, to the simple summary of its function found in the *Silmarillion*. Even ignoring the metatexts, the vague portrait of the Homely House found in LOTR: "It's a big house this, and very peculiar. Always a bit more to discover, and no knowing what you'll find round a corner." (FR210.) - signals the low priority of structural details compared to the feelings the place evokes and the help/healing it provides.

> Such was the virtue of the land of Rivendell that soon all fear and anxiety was lifted from their minds. The future, good or ill, was not forgotten, but ceased to have any power over the present. Health and hope grew strong in them, and they were content with each good day as it came, taking pleasure in every meal, and in every word and song. (FR267)

Rivendell is so completely permeated with "a sumptuous peacefulness and serenity as a complement to its aura of timelessness" (Walter 2016, 195), that everyone within its borders is affected by it. Even the pony is invigorated: "The stay in Rivendell had worked a great wonder of change on him: he was glossy and seemed to have the vigour of youth." (FR273)

The air of sanctuary found in Rivendell – the unshakeable sense of security experienced by visitor and resident alike – is something greater than assurance of physical safety. As important as the impregnable borders protecting Rivendell from the outside are, it is the knowledge that no harm will come from within that makes it feel so safe, ergo, homelike and homely. This, in turn, is guaranteed by the very culture of Rivendell, cultivated by Elrond to fulfill and reflect the purpose of Imladris; to protect and preserve and to know. Some of the feeling is simply magical; tied to the power of the Elven guardians and "sustained by the beautiful resonances of the Elven words and music." (Walter 2016, 192) All in all, the promise of sanctuary – of safety, acceptance and hospitality – is an immutable part of what makes Rivendell Rivendell; tied into its identity, values, and the experience of being there.

<u>The Homeliest of Realms</u>

The unique grace of Rivendell grows more apparent when compared to the other realms of the Middle-earth. Particularly drastic is the juxtaposition between Rivendell and Moria – as closely located as they are within the novel's narrative. It is only upon approaching the desolated Dwarven realm, that the reader – along with Frodo – truly appreciates the fairness of the valley left behind, the encroaching darkness making the memory of it grow even brighter. The contrast between Rivendell and Moria stems back to its very founding in S.A.1697 – it being the same year when the Gates of Moria were shut. From there the two developed in near opposite trajectories. While the community living in Rivendell starts growing in numbers and diversity, the Dwarves under the mountains dwindle in number and become increasingly secluded. Rivendell gains the reputation as The Last Homely House - a guesthouse and refuge open for anyone in need; whereas Moria – as its very name suggests – comes to be feared by most, its locked away passages hostile and dangerous to anyone daring a venture inside.

As diametrically opposed as Rivendell may appear to Moria, it is no less dissimilar to the Shire. Both are places of natural beauty and homely dwellings, inhabited by a somewhat fantastical people. However, hidden under the veneer of Hobbitly homeliness runs the same isolationist ideology that had governed the Dwarves before and during their exile. Albeit, instead of relying on stone walls and locked gates, the Hobbits protect the sanctity of their homeland through means passive-aggressive: greeting strangers with aloof silence, keeping each other in check with whispered gossip, ostracizing those not fitting their idealized racial/cultural standard. The shortcomings of the rigid Hobbit society – their judgmental nature, culture of anti-intellectualism and materialistic tendencies – seem all the more jarring when compared to Rivendell's "devotion to culture, lore, and history" (Walter 2016, 194), and to the welcome that visitors, including Hobbits, receive there.

Not only is Rivendell juxtaposed with the homelands of other Folk, but with other Elven realms as well - the Woodland Realm of Mirkwood[22] and the Golden Wood of Lothlórien. The two share similar lifestyles and attitudes: they are monocultural Elven communities, largely disinterested in the matters of the mortal world, their lands enclosed behind natural barriers and rather aggressively guarded against all visitors, towards whom they are

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[22] Portrayed in mainly TH with cursory mentions in LOTR.

distrustful and combative. In comparison, Rivendel – despite being equally well-protected – is welcoming to all who are let within its borders. This difference is best illustrated by the respective realms' treatment of the Dwarves. In Rivendell, during TH, the Dwarves are offered hospitality and assistance despite their churlish manners and deep-rooted suspiciousness towards the Elves. On the other hand, both the Mirkwood Elves and the Galadhrim initially react with open distrust and barely veiled hostility – their long memories keeping alive grudges from generations past.

Despite re-establishing relations with other races during the final decades of the Third Age, the two Elven courts are just that -Elven. Once the Elves leave for the West, the land they had inhabited is left void; whatever magic or meaning the Elder Folk imbued their homes with gone along with them. The change is particularly striking in Lorien, the once otherworldly land regressing to but an abandoned wood, even the signature flowers – *elanor* and *niphredil* – gone without the Magic of their Lord and Lady to sustain them.

Not so in Rivendell. Although geographically secluded, Rivendell is actively involved in the goings of the world at large: not only by keeping those within its sanctuary safe, but by taking part in the battles fought outside of its borders, acting as scouts, hunters and messengers alongside the Dúnedain.[23] As a result, the legacy of Imladris continues indefinitely among the mortal peoples. Rivendell and its library remain open long after Elrond's departure T.A.3021. Even a century later, when the last of the Elves have left and supposedly "in the garden of Elrond (…) none now walk" (AA1037) - its purpose remains in many ways unchanged. It is still a repository of knowledge and a sanctuary; different – with Elves no longer inhabiting it – but containing their knowledge as well as knowledge of them; a museum and an archive keeping their memory alive.

House of Elrond

'It is not easy for us to tell the difference between two mortals,' said the Elf. 'Nonsense, Lindir,' snorted Bilbo. 'If you can't distinguish between a Man and a Hobbit, your judgement is poorer than I imagined. They're as different as peas and apples.' 'Maybe. To sheep other sheep no doubt appear different,' laughed Lindir. 'Or to shepherds. But Mortals have not been our study. We have other business.' (FR230-231)

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[23] This aspect of Rivendell is embodied by the figures of Elladan and Elrohir, Elrond's sons. *Peredhil*, or Half-elven, like their father and sister, they stayed in Rivendell for an indeterminate period of time into the Fo.A., (AB1069) their later fate unknown.

I find the tableau of an evening meal in "Many meetings" one of the most descriptive scenes of Rivendell, despite it being one bypassed by the film adaptations. In the Dining hall of Rivendell Elrond, his household and the visitors all share the common table; the Elven majority interspersed with "guests of other sorts". (FR220.) This image well matches the words of Paul Kocher: "Rivendell stands for the horizontal capacities of elf society to reach our, touch, and influence the other intelligent peoples of Middle-earth." (Walter 2016, 191) Rivendell's investedness in other Folk is featured in both TH and the LOTR: first, when Elrond helps decode the Dwarven map of the Lonely Mountain; and even more so during the "Council of Elrond" – when emissaries of the Free Peoples gather in Rivendell seeking wisdom and a common solution to the threat of Mordor. "The might of Elrond is in wisdom not in weapons, it is said. I come to ask for counsel and the unravelling of hard words." (FR239)

Nevertheless, one should not presume Rivendell to be some type of an inter-racial democracy with the mortal and immortal populations equally represented. Despite Elrond's vested interest in preserving the lore and beauty of all peoples and the notably diverse array of residents and visitors to have graced his halls Imladris remained, throughout its existing record, a predominantly Elven domain. And while the Elves of Rivendell seem genuinely welcoming of the mortals in their midst far more so than any other Elven enclave; the conversation between Bilbo and Lindir in the Hall of Fire reveals a major disconnect between – at least some of – the Elves and the mortal minority.

Before assuming the dismissive tone of the above exchange to be indicative of the overall dynamic between the Elven and mortal populations, one must remember that the Elves of Rivendell are not a homogenous group. Sam observes this during his first few days in Rivendell: "And Elves, sir! Elves here, and Elves there! Some like kings, terrible and splendid; and some as merry as children." (FR219) It therefore stands to reason that their interest and level of involvement with different subjects – including other people – would vary substantially, from complete disinterest to open curiosity. In fact, it is pointed out by Abigail Ruane and Patrick James in "Order, Justice, and Middle-earth" that, "the preservative power of the elven rings suggests that the organization of Elvish society is similarly collaborative rather than dominating" to such an extent that, except for their few "clearly defined leaders", Elves have "difficulty directing or advising others". (Ruane and James

2012, 21-22) In such case Lindir's seeming disregard of the mortal races can exist within Elrond's realm without undermining his grand vision.

Upon closer inspection, I find it likely that despite sharing the space the Elven and Mortal populations rarely intermix; their contact limited to those residing within the house proper – be it short-term or long-term. When interaction does happen, I imagine the Elves' attitude to fall along the lines of their response to Bilbo's attempt at Elvish poetry: good natured yet patronizing; a somewhat unavoidable side-effect of such vastly differing lifespans. No matter how comfortable and/or settled the mortals dwelling in the Homely House may feel, it is doubtful they would be considered as peers by their Elven neighbors[24]. Aragorn's standing as a member of Elrond's inner household being the notable exception. After all, from the Elven perspective a mortal life is so brief it little differs from the presence of passing visitors'. Furthermore – though direct discrimination against the "lesser" races is unlikely under Elrond's rule – the Elves' immortality does create a tangible disbalance: allowing them to amass skills, knowledge, and experience beyond the capabilities of a mortal existence. Hence the rarity and the grudging acceptance of inter-racial romances like that of Aragorn and Arwen.

Home for a while

Rivendell is an exceptional realm of emotional and spiritual vitality and cultural refinement, not only for the Elves but also for other special individuals such as Bilbo and Frodo [and Aragorn] (…) who feel instinctively at home in and suited to Rivendell. (Walter 2016, 195)

'Well Mr. Frodo, we've been far and seen a deal, and yet I don't think we've found a better place than this. There's something of everything here, if you understand me: the Shire and the Golden Wood and Gondor and kings' houses and inns and meadows and mountains all mixed. (RK964)

The endorsement given by Samwise, the most "genuine hobbit" (Tolkien, Carpenter and Tolkien 1981, 93), following a year of traveling the continent ascertains my reading of Rivendell as the homeliest of realms at the time. For all that Lothlórien "was a fair place, and it had become like home to them" (FR361), its comfort is otherworldly. The Golden Wood is a sliver of the *Faerie*, a bubble of Valinor maintained within the mortal coil by Elven magic:

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[24] Vice versa, the title Elf-friend – bestowed upon mortal individuals who have earned the Elves' trust and favor – is not location- or community-specific.

"they could not count the days and nights that they had passed there" (Ibid.) – which in itself makes it incomparable to the other homelands in this study. Circumventing the supernatural, Galadhrim – as I have mentioned earlier in this chapter – are a closely guarded people, their behavior revealing some of the less amicable qualities of Elven nature and society. Without the tempering presence of Galadriel or her prophetic gift, the Fellowship would not have found their stay in Lórien nearly pleasant, if they had, indeed, been allowed entrance in the first place.

Rivendell, on the other hand, is firmly grounded in Middle-earth; the all-embracing feeling of welcome stemming from the values ingrained into its cultural fabric upon its founding. Rivendell is a "crossroads" and "meeting place" (Stanton 2002, 41); a point of convergence for individual people as well as peoples, cultures, and worlds.

> Rivendell is a dreamlike threshold between Middle-earth and the Elves' original home, though it functions not as a literal gateway but as a place where the two worlds overlap. The land contains characteristic essences of both the Elfin home and Middle-earth. (Morgan Curtis 2012, 182)

One could even argue that in Rivendell one finds the combined best of both worlds: the farsighted wisdom of the Elves seasoned by the "Gift of Men" – the appreciation of life in face of mortality. The blending of perspectives having resulted in, what I have come to call, a profound understanding of transience.

Caricaturizing a bit, all of Rivendell's inhabitants, Elf and Mortal, are merely passing by, making Rivendell but a glorified halfway house. Whether in the sense of functioning as a stop-over location for travelers, or in the light of the imminent departure of the Elves – time in Rivendell is finite. (The question of mortality adding a whole extra layer to the subject.) On one hand, the years spent by the Elves in Rivendell pale in comparison to the ages before and the eternity ahead. On the other hand, five millennia of history is a notable chunk of time even by Elven standards. Hence Rivendell is perceived as a constant not only by the visiting/resident Mortals, but by the younger generation of Elves as well. To them, it is an existence separate of themselves, presumed to remain intact even after they have ultimately passed, whether to the West or into the veil.

Compared to the other homelands in this study, transience in Rivendell is not only accepted but embraced. Both the Dwarves' fixation with the past – their religious espousing of

dislocation and enshrining of Moria – and the Hobbits' effort of discounting anything past or present that may challenge their chosen status quo – are attempts to fight the natural procession of time and the changes brought by it. Furthermore, though Tolkien's worldbuilding is ever biased in the Elves' favor, the examples of Mirkwood, Lothlórien and the older Elven narratives found in S and UT, demonstrate them being equally prone to the pitfalls faced by other societies; their pride, stubbornness, and misguided sense of racial superiority having resulted in armed conflicts, cultural stagnation, and dwindling population. In other words, though awareness of transience – incarnate in this Age as the "sea-longing" – is a characteristic shared by all Elves, their response to change is not nearly consistent, nor is it always constructive.

Returning to Rivendell, there the past is organically present – manifest as much in the Elves themselves as it is contained in their archives – while the future of the realm and its residents is left open. Rivendell is so secure in itself it allows for easy mobility across its borders, inbound and outbound. The fear of losing its identity to outside influences that governs both Hobbit and Dwarf societies is practically nonexistent, since influx and exchange of spiritual wealth is the founding premise of Rivendellian culture.

Rivendell is, for lack of better wording, a compact cosmopolitan hub: geographically small and remote, yet its network of influence spread wide across the known realms. "Admiration is the basic reaction across the board from other Free Peoples when they encounter Rivendell." (Ruane and James 2012, 21) Its "exceptional" quality, the easy welcome of things foreign and other – provided they are deemed "good" by the powers guarding the valley – make TCKs and other transcultural or "special" individuals, as Walter calls them in the earlier quote, feel instinctively at ease. (Walter 2016, 195) There is no demand of conforming nor committing to the localized identity to feel accepted. On the contrary, I see Rivendell operating on the assumption of plural sources of belonging. For one, Elves are so long-lived their identity narratives are naturally spread over distance – geographical and temporal – including people, events, and locations far beyond their present accommodations. Second, equally important, factor is Rivendell's founder, Elrond - a scholar of mixed heritage. Although Elrond does not fit the TCK profile, he does, as the name Half-elven suggests[25], belong to the broader category of CCKs. Thereupon, it makes sense that the homeplace established and governed

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[25] Further biographical information is not found in LOTR and is, therefore, not included in this study.

by him would feel particularly welcoming to individuals with similar cross-cultural and/or dislocated backgrounds.

Rivendell offers the freedom of belonging concurrently here and elsewhere. The low threshold for entering and dwelling in the Homely House – with or without an end date in sight – makes it an optimal location for TCKs: safe to adopt as [one of] their home(s). Yet another dynamic exemplified by Aragorn, for whom Rivendell continued to serve as a home-base throughout his decades of wandering. Something that is both indicated by the familiarity he exhibits during his visit, and directly stated: "I dwelt there once, and still I return when I may." (FR196)

Such ease of access is not, however, without a flip side. While Elrond's lordship is unquestioned by people and nature alike, the residents themselves lack cohesion: the free flow of visitors combined with the Elven penchant of being egalitarian to a fault resulting in a community that is constantly disjointed. There are no "Rivendellians" per se, no sense of a unified group identity, just a coalition of individuals living within the guidelines set by the Peredhil Lord – something that has the potential of becoming a major weakness.

It is in this context that the fact that Rivendell is only ever referred to as "home" twice in the whole of LOTR becomes something requiring attention. In both instances it is an outside observation: first one made by Haldir, one of the Galadhrim, in reference to some of "the messengers of Elrond [who had] passed by Lórien on their way home up the Dimrill Stair" (FR334); the second belonging to the narrator upon Elrond's return from Aragorn's coronation: "all the house was filled with light and song for joy at Elrond's homecoming." (RK963) This raises a question. If Rivendell is never referred to as home by those living there, if it makes no claim on its residents, offers no narrative of belonging, includes little to no personal history, grants no "Rivendellian" identity to adopt or adapt to – does it still count as 'home'?

The answer, in all of its simplicity, is yes. Though Rivendell may not identify itself as a Home, id it easily recognizable as such. Referring back to the "Terminology" chapter, each given home rarely if ever fulfills all the qualities associated with the word. This is made apparent when applying my purposed trifecta of sub-categories of 'home' to the three homelands I have analyzed. The Shire as a homeplace is a perfect fit to the Hobbit Idea of Home, seeing as the latter was constructed with the former in mind. However, while the cozy

pastoral echoes many a reader's Idea of homeliness, the lived experience of the Shire varies highly depending on social ranking and insider-status - from comfortable belonging, to uneasy tolerance, to mutual dislike and ostracizing. The case of Moria is even more disparate. While the Idea of the Homeland lives strong in the Dwarven community, the homeplace itself is a desolate ruin, terrifying and deadly to all; whatever connection the Dwarves used to have with the mountains they carved their halls into faded out or warped.

Finally, although Rivendell does not technically present itself as Home to anyone but Elrond and his family, it both *feels* like a home and *functions* as a home to many; the actualization of Elrond's vision of Rivendell as a sanctuary featuring many of the characteristics ascribed to an ideal Home. I would even go so far as to argue that it is the lack of a localized grand narrative that makes Rivendell so approachable, harmonious and homely. The prioritizing of security and wellbeing of its residents – short-term and long-term, people and artefacts, physical and immaterial – over arbitrary line-drawing between us and them, belonging and non-belonging, or attempts to validate their presence in the valley on some existential level make it the healthiest of the three societies analyzed. In fact, the seeming paradox of Rivendell – it being simultaneously long-term and temporary – is the very feature that keeps it relevant. It is an example of a home sustainable and flourishing in the age of high mobility, dislocation, and transculturality; of a mindset where 'home' is a matter of settling, of making an effort to belong here and now, for however long the while may last.

4. HOME AND DISLOCATED SELF

> "Here, where I am today, is temporary. But as soon as (…) I'll settle down." Somehow
> the settling down never happens. (Pollock & Van Reken 1999, 125)

As a rule, the established communities of Middle-earth are unanimously leery of strangers. And yet, throughout the entirety of Tolkien's legendarium, the fate of the world is shaped by those traversing the space between these communities. Charles Tedder goes as far as to identify homeless wanderers as the main contributors to the global wellbeing: Gandalf - "the homeless wizard, master and servant of no one"; Aragorn - "ruler and servant of the people" (Tedder 2005, 37); and, I must add, Frodo - the diminutive martyr sacrificing himself for the world. None of the three have a "true home in Middle Earth" at the time of the novel (Curry 2004, 51), engaging the mobile lifestyle for the good of others.

My analysis, however, only includes two character-studies - those of Frodo and Aragorn. Unlike the other two protagonists, Gandalf's rootlessness is not a matter of dislocation but of incarnation. He is metaphysically different: an immortal *Maiar* made flesh and sent to the Middle-earth with the sole purpose of protecting it. (AB1059) Once his work as the guardian angel/prophet guiding the world into saving itself is complete he departs Middle-earth; possibly returning to his original form of existence. In comparison, both Frodo and Aragorn have a very human, if undeniably complex, relationship with home. They are products of their environment - their worldview, personality, and sense of identity molded by the dislocation that is part of their personal and family histories. They are TCKs, at ease everywhere, belonging nowhere, their home definitely somewhere else than here. They long to belong, because –despite their external and internal dislocation – their familial ties establish them as part of this world, no matter how alien they may feel.

The TCK experience is by no means uniform, nor do all individuals react the same way to a mobile and multi-cultural childhood. There are, however, commonalities and both Frodo and Aragorn display a number of these characteristics and habits. That being said, Frodo and Aragorn represent counter-narratives psychologically, thematically and plot-wise. Frodo's is the cautionary tale of self-sufficiency: he leaves behind the comfort of his house in the Shire on a journey that leaves him increasingly isolated and internally fragmented, essentially fading out from existence – his own as well as others'. In comparison, Aragorn's is the story

of unification: from the obscurity of the Wilds, he leads his growing number of followers towards the unification of kingdoms, settling into his own [home/family/identity] in the end.

4.1. The Fading of Frodo

'A stout little fellow with red cheeks,' 'But this one is taller than some and fairer than most, and he has a cleft in his chin: perky chap with a bright eye.' (FR163)

'You take after Bilbo,' said Gandalf. 'There is more about you than meets the eye, as I said of him long ago.' (FR319)

Frodo Baggins is perhaps the most famous Hobbit of all; surpassing his cousin and mentor Bilbo Baggins – the first Hobbit to gain international renown – both within the world of the Middle-earth and among the Tolkien's readers. Frodo's role as the Ringbearer marks him as a rather solitary character: his journey to Mordor is removed from the major events of the War, his experience unique due to the corrupting influence of the Ring. Finally, in Frodo is personified the pain of a world-weary traveler, a veteran, a child of an expat, returning home only to find oneself so changed it does not feel like home anymore.

The narrative of being changed by the Road is, of course, not limited to Frodo. However, in Frodo's case the challenge of re-entry is considerably more complex than that of his peers, his experience of non-belonging stemming further back.

Cracks in the roots

'If only that dratted wizard will leave young Frodo alone, perhaps he'll settle down and grow some hobbit-sense,' they said. And to all appearance the wizard did leave Frodo alone, and he did settle down, but the growth of hobbit-sense was not very noticeable. (FR41)

Growing up in the Shire Frodo was considered peculiar, from an early age. Partially this was due to his parentage: an offspring of a rare cross-river marriage, Frodo had lost both of his parents – Drogo Baggins and Primula Brandybuck – in a boating accident. In a culture of large extended families and longevity, a young orphan is an anomaly. (Never mind the scandalous circumstances of the parents' death.) Frodo was fostered for a time

in Brandyhall – a questionable locale from the viewpoint of most of the Shire-folk – before being adopted by Bilbo, the known deviant, in his tweens.[26] (FR21-23)

Although Bilbo's adventures in *The Hobbit* are only briefly recounted in the LOTR, they have a notable effect on the events and characters of the larger novel. Bilbo's worldly experiences had shaped him into an individual known for his unconventional lifestyle, reoccurring wanderlust and a penchant for disappearing – as proven by his dramatic exit and departure at the beginning of LOTR – and serve as the foundation stones of the worldview inherited by Frodo, his protegee.

Under Bilbo, Bag End becomes the one place within the Shire where the Big and Little worlds are welcome to meet and mix. Paraphrasing Hugo Walter, Bag End has the feel of a sanctuary, peacefulness, continuity and tranquility not only for the Hobbits living there but also for visitors, including Gandalf. (Walter 2016, 181-183) It is a "third culture" space, "filled with people who continually come and go." (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 60) Raised in such an environment Frodo is inherently aware of the larger world. Through his extensive education and personal interaction with Bilbo's guests Frodo develops connections to the world beyond the Shire before ever having left its borders. Meanwhile, the events of Frodo's developmental years – loss of parents and consequent dislocation(s) – set him apart from the typical Hobbit, leaving him disconnected from his community and his roots. All in all, though not the most traditional TCK, Frodo is very much a representative of the "third culture"; shaped by high mobility and cultural plurality of his surroundings; belonging, in part, to both/all, the worlds, without full ownership of either. (see Pollock and Van Reken 1999) He is a Hobbit but somehow Elfin, a Baggins and a Brandybuck.

Typically for TCKs, Frodo's sense of belonging is tied to individuals rather than to a place: Bilbo and, increasingly, Gandalf – both of whom are wanderers and cosmopolitan world-citizens in their own right. (Knell, 19. Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 131) They provide Frodo with a sense of continuity and belonging, even with them both being (in-)consistently absent from his life physically. The fluidity of these relationships is what allows Frodo to stay behind when others leave. It is also what makes him prepared to pack up and head out when the time comes. This is not to say Frodo does not feel attached to the Shire. On the contrary,

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[26] Hobbits have longer lifespans than Men, considered to become "of age" at 33 years old. A Hobbit in their "irresponsible" twenties, would therefore still be considered an adolescent – hence the moniker "tween".

Frodo is perhaps even more in love with "our own Shire" (FR82) than an average Hobbit; being able to recognize it for the unique existence that it is in the global historical context, spending days at a time roaming and exploring the land first-hand. Frodo's evident attachment to the land, its "woods and fields and little rivers" influences Bilbo's decision to leave Frodo behind in Bag End, stating: "He would come with me, of course, if I asked him. In fact he offered to once, just before the party. But he does not really want to, *yet*." (FR32. Emphasis added.)

Frodo's inability to feel rooted and at home in Hobbiton stems from his strained relationship with is the Hobbit society at large. "If most of Frodo's neighbors have a less than positive opinion about him, his attitude toward them is no much different." (Brown 2006, 165) He does not identify with the typical monocultural Hobbits, displaying typical TCK arrogance in his dismissal of them as "too stupid and dull for words, and (…) an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them". (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 103-104, FR61) His notably small circle of close friends consists mainly of younger cousins, "descendants of the Old Took[27]" who had spent time in Bag End as children – thus subjected to the influence of Bilbo – and would join Frodo in "tramping over the Shire" (FR41) As a result, Frodo never fully invests himself into the community, before or after the Ring, preferring solitude to the available company.

Devin Brown discusses Frodo's isolation and "characteristic lack of relationship" in detail. (See Brown 2006, 163-166) Frodo's frustration does mellow with age, but the tension remains. It is said that "he did settle down" (FR41), but he does so mostly by withdrawing from the (stifling) society. "During the seventeen years that Frodo has the Ring – the years between Bilbo's farewell feast and Frodo's small farewell dinner – his life becomes more reclusive, not more connected." (Brown 2006, 166) While he remains physically among the Hobbits, he is indifferent to their comings and goings, adopting instead the increasingly reclusive lifestyle of Bilbo. With, however, the significant difference of not even having a protégé to share the spacious manor with.

> Frodo began to feel restless, and the old paths seemed too well-trodden. He looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges: maps made in the Shire showed mostly white spaces beyond its borders. He took to wandering further afield and more

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[27] "A legend was in the existence that one of the Took ancestors had taken a fairy wife – this was given as the explanation for the occasional inclination among the Tooks to leave the area and have an adventure." (Walter 2016, 180.)

often by himself; and Merry and his other friends watched him anxiously. Often he was seen walking and talking with the strange wayfarers that began at this time to appear in the Shire. (FR42. Sic.)

Frodo's uncomfortable existence in the Shire is noted by the quibblers and gossips: "Frodo is cracking." (FR44) However, only Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, a relative in line to inherit Bag End, dares express the sentiment directly: "Why didn't you go too? You don't belong here" (FR38). As contrary as unlikeable as Lobelia is, her parting words at the reading of Bilbo's will ring true. For as Brown surmises: "Frodo does not really belong at Bag End, or in Hobbiton, or in Buckland, for he does not really "belong" any*where*. (Brown 2006, 164. Emphasis added.)

In the first place, Bag End is only "home" because of Bilbo. It *feels* like home because of the relationship the two shared and is legally allocated as Frodo's home first through the adoption, then as inheritance - both at the elder Hobbit's initiative. Fact is, until the time Frodo takes on the quest to deliver the Ring to Rivendell, all choices pertaining to home have been made for him. I find it telling that his first real action in this regard is to sell the house he has lived in for most of his life; sacrificing the home as he has known it for the chance of others retaining theirs. Frodo's growing appreciation for the comforts of home is enhanced by his awareness of their temporality; living with the ever-present premonition of having to, eventually and inevitably, leave the home behind.

The problem of goodbyes

'Good-bye!' said Frodo, looking at the dark blank windows. He waved his hand, and then turned and (following Bilbo, if he had known it) hurried after Peregrin down the garden-path. (FR69)

Frodo's departure from the Shire is simultaneously abrupt and well expected, rushed and dragging. On some level, all his years in Bad End count as an ongoing preparation for the journey. Frodo grows in knowledge and maturity, simply waiting for the right time to - literally and figuratively - follow in Bilbo's footsteps. What is not expected is the urgent reason for his departure – the discovery of the One Ring by the enemy. Instead of a trip, "a kind of holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's" that Frodo had envisioned, he resigns himself to a life of exile; drawing the danger away from the place(s) he holds dear. (FR61)

Despite taking the very same garden path out of Bag End, Frodo's departure is remarkably different from Bilbo. Where Bilbo's exit is gleeful and swift – never looking back – Frodo's preparation is drawn out and somber as he gradually detaches and finally bids goodbye to the house. Quoting Walter: "There is a "profound sense of melancholy" as Frodo prepares to depart Bag End. "The house is described as being 'sad and gloomy', qualities which apply to Frodo as well – there is the sense that the aura of sanctuary which has prevailed at Bag End is on the verge of being undermined." (Walter 2016, 186) A feeling of permanence sets in following the sale of Bag End to Sackville-Bagginses. While the public sale of Bag End is meant as a distraction - a legitimate reason for Frodo to move to a less monitored location from where he can commence his journey, it is also a symbolic burning of bridges - a concrete reminder that Frodo no longer has a home to return to. This, together with Frodo's conviction that he alone is responsible for the removal of the Ring – despite both Gandalf and Gildor having strongly urged Frodo not to act alone (Brown 2006, 167) – combine into anxiety and depression that go beyond simple grief. "I suppose I must go alone, if I am to do that and save the Shire. But I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well – desperate." (FR61)

Frodo's internal turmoil is given voice by Merry during the Hobbits' brief layover in Crickhollow.

> 'Just this, my dear old Frodo: you are miserable, because you don't know how to say good-bye. You meant to leave the Shire, of course. But danger has come on you sooner than you expected, and now you are making up your mind to go at once. And you don't want to. We are very sorry for you.' (Merry. FR101)

This insightful passage touches on one of the fundamental characteristics of the TCK experience: the paradox of goodbyes, the simultaneous feelings of wanting and not wanting, needing and hating to go.

That Frodo has trouble with goodbyes comes as no surprise considering his role models: Bilbo's wanderlust and final disappearance, Gandalf's infrequent and unscheduled visits, even his parents' sudden death. Instead of learning to say goodbye and grieve, Frodo has been largely desensitized to separation. Further complicating the matter is Frodo's underdeveloped sense of belonging and "place identity". Like so many TCKs, Frodo has spent a lifetime with one foot out of the metaphorical door; his modus operandi to indraw and escape, cutting off that which would cause him more emotional turmoil. He does not put

down roots, makes no attempt to connect or carve a place for himself among the Hobbits. In fact, the only contact initiated by Frodo seems to be with the travelers passing through the Shire, such as Gildor and his Elves[28]. In all his other relations he is the passive party – the one adopted, the one mentored, the one served, the one followed, the one gossiped about etc.

Therefore, when circumstances force the time as well as the manner of Frodo's departure, he finds himself in a situation for which he has no outside model. Instead of sneaking off into the night like Bilbo – cutting the pain of separation short – leaving turns into a prolonged and somewhat public process. The trek to the border becomes a tangle of complex, often conflicting emotions: novelty tempered by practicality, excitement warring with fear, conviction shadowed by doubt and grief. Frodo and his companions occasionally burst into song (FR72, 76, 104) then switch moods and bemoan the realities of camping: the heavy bags and sleeping on the ground (FR69, 71).

The one attachment to the Shire Frodo is comfortable with – his love for the homeplace itself – he grieves; bidding goodbye to Bag End and to his favorite spots of nature-scape as he passes (FR69-70). The social aspect of goodbyes, however, leaves Frodo stumped. He is trapped in a bind of his own making: unable to stay, unable to admit he is leaving, unable to acknowledge, express or deal with the feelings caused by the looming separation. Tribute to Frodo's lack of emotional know how, it takes outside intervention to disentangle the situation. The younger Hobbits' insistence on joining Frodo on the quest re-establishes some of his lost sense of belonging. As his closest relations – by blood and by choice – Merry and Pippin represent "home" in a way Sam does yet not. Their presence beyond the physical borders of the Shire offers Frodo continuity, helping him along in the grieving process. This allows Frodo to turn more of his sight outwards, on the path ahead. Marking the shift, Frodo dreams of the Sea and of Valinor, signaling a budding awareness of the existential (be)longing somewhere else/beyond. That being said, the confrontation at Crickhollow is not enough to fix the underlying issue of Frodo being blind to his own significance to others – that his presence, absence or wellbeing would matter to anyone. As a result, when under duress Frodo falls back into the behavior of physically and emotionally withdrawing, thoughtless of his choices' effect on others.

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[28] The encounter with Gildor's group of Elves confirms Frodo's status as Elf-friend for the reader as well as his companions. The outside point of view solidifies the danger and urgency of the quest. (FR81-83.)

Growing and fading away

> He [Bilbo] used often to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary. ''It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door,'' he used to say. ''You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to…''
> (FR72)

Frodo's physical journey away from the Shire is intertwined with his gradual detachment from it. Reached locations become milestones marking not just the distance traveled but Frodo's internal processes as well. By the time Frodo reaches Rivendell the emotional tether to the Shire has been loosened freeing him to form new allegiances: namely, volunteer for the job of the Ringbearer and keep travelling further away from the Shire. In part this is the result of Frodo's inner growth, represented in a series of encounters. The meeting with Tom Bombadil and Goldberry in the Old Forest changes his perspective of the world and, therefore, of the quest – there being things much older and stronger than the Ring or its Master. (FR130-131) In the Barrow Frodo finds his courage; enough to fight for his own survival and for his friends, calling for help instead of falling into timidity or despair. (FR138) In Bree Frodo is faced with a choice of putting his trust, his quest and the lives of his friends in the hands of a stranger, further stretching his comfort zone. (FR160-.) These milestones mark natural changes in Frodo as he adapts to better face the big world.

A different kind of development is, what I call, the fading: the deterioration of Frodo's character caused by the corrosive effect of the Ring, advanced by the traumatic events he is subjected to. It chips away at Frodo's already fractured identity and somewhat stunted social skills, making it increasingly hard to connect and, therefore, to experience belonging – the process culminating in his departure from Middle-earth altogether. The fading process is jumpstarted by the instance at the Weathertop, where Frodo is wounded and poisoned with the knife of the Wrath King. The near-death experience irrevocably changes Frodo, severing him from his former life – psychologically, symbolically, and (meta-)physically. The taint of the knife wound "becomes systemic, and even Elrond cannot purge it completely. For the remainder of his time in Middle-earth, Frodo continues to have pain and a reminder of his difference and otherness." (Morgan Curtis 2012, 185)

The lingering effects of the wound (and the Ring) are already manifest in Rivendell. Despite the healing administered by the elves, there is a "hint of transparency" to Frodo (FR217).

Frodo's physical frailty is contrasted by the weight of his emotions in the quiet moments: feeling lonely "and rather forlorn" (FR227), a "dead darkness in his heart" (FR260), weariness and dread (FR262). As a result, Frodo seems disconnected from his surroundings. He is able to appreciate the outward qualities and the invigorating magic of the "perfect house" but forms no attachment to the place - despite it seemingly matching his needs for what Home should be, including the presence of Bilbo. There is no mention of him interacting with "the folk of Rivendell", choosing instead to spend his days in the company of Bilbo and other Hobbits. (FR227) Even his "overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo's side in Rivendell" (FR262), has little to do with the place itself - indicating instead Frodo's weariness of the quest despite the months of rest. Similar is the moment of reflection in Moria: "his thoughts had been carried away from the dark Mines, to Rivendell, to Bilbo, and to Bag End in the days while Bilbo was still there" wishing "with all his heart that he was back there". (FR310) The "there" Frodo longs for is not a place but a memory of time when he felt safe and at peace, when Bilbo – home personified – was still around.

As the journey progresses, Frodo undergoes a shift of priorities – the Quest of the Ring now at the forefront and growing in urgency the further he travels. His personal wants and wellbeing come second to the commitment, any thoughts of settling down postponed until a time the quest be finished. Under its weight Frodo becomes increasingly withdrawn and detached. "Because he knows he is involved in something seemingly too big for him, and because of the nature of the One Ring he becomes introspective and pondering, pensive." (Morgan Curtis 2012, 177)

The critical juncture for this development comes at Amon Hen. Until then Frodo had in fact been growing closer to the members of the Fellowship instead of away; forming strong ties and finding a camaraderie he never had in the Shire. As previously mentioned, a TCK's sense of belonging is tied to people rather than places. (See Knell 2001, 19) Therefore, the loss of Gandalf – one of his main two anchors of belonging – to Moria leaves Frodo unbalanced and emotionally raw. So much so, that when confronted by Boromir, twisted and mad by the lust for the Ring, Frodo falls back on his old coping mechanism - isolation. Relying on the Ring instead of calling for help Frodo escapes first the confrontation then the Fellowship altogether. As it had in the Shire, Frodo's decision to leave the Fellowship is spurred by his attachment to it. On a conscious level Frodo's actions are motivated by the wish to protect his friends. On a deeper level, however, Frodo's choice to leave is self-serving: a way to seek

control by cutting off the relationships that leave him vulnerable to [further] pain and loss. The fact that Boromir is killed and Merry and Pippin are captured immediately after Frodo's departure, verifies that his reasoning is emotion-based rather than tactically sound.

Despite Frodo's attempt to go alone being thwarted by Sam, the consequences of Amon Hen remain. By making the choice to leave Frodo cuts himself off from any ties of belonging, falling back into the mode of self-sufficiency - a response typical for TCKs when facing loss. That Frodo choses to abandon Merry and Pippin, his family, his home away from home, is especially significant. It conveys his certainty that there will be no surviving the quest. "It would be death for you to come with me". (FR397) Convinced as he is of his fate, Frodo casts himself adrift, denying himself even the possibility of a home. Without the hope of finding a place of belonging in the present nor in the future, he throws himself into the quest, the sole purpose of his existence to destroy the Ring before he dies. This changes the way Frodo relates to new locations and people – no longer seeing them as possible objects of attachment but as sources for a temporary reprieve [Lorien[29]], resources to further the quest [Gollum/Smeagol], or hindrances [Faramir and his men]. Furthermore, Frodo's prolonged use of the Ring at Amon Hen and the growing proximity to the Black Land accelerate the fading; the compounding side effect including the loss of sight (TT593), fatigue, muddled senses, patchy memory (TT897, 916), paranoia, dual personality, and weight loss (TT919-920). The physical and mental breakdown leaves Frodo with very little energy to spare, forcing him to draw inward. Even the memory of – and along it the attachment to – the Shire fades, leaving behind but a vague recollection of having once wished to save it. Quoting Lisa Morgan Curtis (2012, 184): "Frodo grows out of focus, not simply wandering now but lost to society and even to himself. He forgets the feel and taste of the world, going further into the unconscious and getting out of balance."

The main reason Frodo does not die or deteriorate into an existence akin Gollum or the Ringwraiths during this final leg of the journey is the steadfast presence of Sam. "Sent with Frodo by Gandalf as a personal traveling (…) tie to home", Sam refuses to be left behind. He "never loses sight of the good things in the world, of home, or the basics of being alive." It

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[29] Frodo's experience of Lothlorien is much similar to his time in Rivendel: a period of recuperation and rest outside of the general flow of time. "Frodo felt that he was in a timeless land that did not fade or change or fall into forgetfulness. When he had gone and passed again into the outer world, still Frodo the wanderer from the Shire would walk there, upon the grass among elanor and niphredil in fair Lothlórien." (FR342.) The magic of the Elven forest resonates with Frodo, but the experience is spiritual rather than emotional or physical: giving him a whiff of immortality, a glimpse of an existence beyond the mortal life.

therefore falls to Sam to take charge of the practicalities of the journey, as well as initiate and maintain contact with Frodo, who, having made the decision to go alone remains withdrawn – unwilling and/or unable to reconnect. Sam's presence is "the thread that keeps Frodo connected to consciousness and to society's tapestry", counterbalancing the effects of the fading, reminding Frodo of "happier times" before and after the quest. (Morgan Curtis 2012, 194) Nevertheless, "Frodo turns inward, following only his own counsel and that of Gollum" - someone familiar with the pressure of the Ring. "Though not alone, Frodo is isolated and lonely – even with Sam present." (Morgan Curtis 2012, 189) Only "at the end of all things" (RK926) surrounded by the apocalyptic aftermath caused by the destruction of the Ring does Frodo come back to himself enough to appreciate Sam's presence. "And there was Frodo, pale and worn, and yet himself again; and in his eyes there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear. His burden was taken away. There was the dear master of the sweet days in the Shire." (RK926)

After or Re-entry

'Alas! there are some wounds that cannot be wholly cured,' said Gandalf.
'I fear it may be so with mine,' said Frodo. "There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same. I am wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden. Where shall I find rest?' (RK967)

Unfortunately for Frodo "the end of all things" as he called it was not, in fact, the end. Instead dying, as he was prepared to do, Frodo is literally snatched from his resting place and deposited back among the living. Initially this does not seem to pose a problem. The strain of physical recuperation, the excitement of the many reunions – particularly the resurrected Gandalf – and the sheer relief of being rid of the Ring distract Frodo from the potential awkwardness of re-entering society. In fact, his whole stay in Minas Tirith is liminal, not just for Frodo but to the society at large. Dealing with the aftermath of the war: counting its losses and rebuilding; the coronation and wedding of the new King, and the presence of delegations from other races in the human capital - all mark the end of an era and the start of a new Age.

Frodo is not properly faced with "normal" until well after his return to the Shire, offset first by the months of travel and farewells then by the devastation caused by Sharkey/Saruman in their absence. As glimpsed by Sam in the Mirror of Galadriel almost a year prior (FR353), the Shire had been invaded and violated: trees cut down, gardens upturned and unsuspecting Hobbits subjected to the rule of violence and terror. The four world-wise

Hobbits naturally step up to deal with the crisis. Even Frodo – weary of conflict and responsibility – reluctantly accepts the post of Deputy Mayor, contributing his experience and wisdom to the effort of rebuilding. (RK998)

Only when the dust has settled after the scouring does Frodo face the true challenge of re-entry: the return to normal, the settling in into the mundane. Quoting Marion Knell:

> Re-entry is often accompanied by a strong sense of alienation and isolation. The returning TCK looks as though he ought to fit but doesn't feel as though he fits. – The TCK then feels increasingly isolated by his situation; he finds it hard to be part of the peer group, his sense of values is very different and his history is too. (Knell 2001, 144)

The clash of values becomes apparent in the Hobbits' reception of the four travelers. Whereas the other three become homeland heroes, "associated with the victory in the battle and the successful scouring of the Shire", Frodo's "pacifism and restraint" are unappreciated. (Tedder 2005, 95) More distressing, however, is the yawning disparity between Frodo's his friends' experience of re-entry. Despite all that they went through during the journey, Merry Pippin and Sam are still Hobbits to the core. They are "essentially unchanged" and therefore able to "return to the community, grown from their journey away from the Shire but still of that land and home." (Morgan Curtis 2012, 180) They "still belong there" – in both their own eyes and that of the community. Therefore, returning to the Shire feels to them like waking up – "ending the "dream" of the quest – in order to return to the reality and the present needs of the shire." (Tedder 2005, 94) For Frodo, on the other hand, entering Shire feels like falling asleep; submerged again in a world not quite real, not quite there. (RK 974)

As pointed out by Knell (2001), coping with transition is tiring and stressful in itself; it takes time, energy and effort, and – more often than not – help. "At the time of re-entry there is a sense of loss in all spheres of life – physical, emotional, material and spiritual." (Knell 2001, 143) While out in the big world, Frodo – for all his issues with belonging – knew where his allegiances lie: his duty to the Ring, loyalty to the Fellowship, affection for Bilbo and Gandalf, and the memory of the Shire as a reminder of a world untouched by Sauron. Back in the Shire, however, Frodo is faced not only with the old tension of not fitting among the Hobbits, but he is hit by the loss of intimacy shared by his companions on the road; having been tied together by friendship and family ties, shared history and experiences, and simply by by being categorically different from the surrounding Big Folk. His friends' seemingly

effortless transition back into fold of normal Hobbits only aggravates Frodo's already pronounced sense of otherness.

Frodo reacts to re-entry in a manner typical to TCKs, by withdrawing. (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 251) As soon as the crisis is over, he leaves the position of authority, quietly dropping out of "all the doings of the Shire" (RK1002) The ease with which Frodo slips out of the awareness of the reshuffled Hobbit society is a glaring reminder of his lack of significant relationships within the community. Frodo's experience or re-entry – as happens to a "great number" of TCKs – resembles more an entry. (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 245) With no established network of belonging to return to, any attempt to make a home among the Hobbits would require an effort akin to or even harder than starting from scratch. As far as the Hobbits are concerned Frodo's withdrawal is merely a sign of the return to status quo. Disinterested as they are in his "deeds and adventures" outside (RK1002), they are happy to allocate to him his old role as the odd and distant master of Bag End [30], someone belonging to the periphery. And yet, Frodo is not the same. (Neither is the Shire, for that matter, however much the Hobbits refuse to admit it.)

Despite his initial willingness to return to the Shire – even referring to it as "home" while still in Gondor (RK949) – Frodo finds himself irreversibly changed; wishing to but unable to go back to his former existence.

> 'But,' said Sam, and tears started in his eyes, 'I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years, after all you have done.'
> 'So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them.' (RK1006)

All TCKs struggle with re-entry; their expectations and fears clashing with the reality of the homeland, their experiences of dislocation making them wary of putting down roots, the sense of loss leading to "an inability to function in normal everyday life." (Knell 2001, 143) Nevertheless, many TCKs manage to work through the trauma. Instead of being subject to the "TCK-syndrome" – acting out the trauma-based behavior – they heal; their experiences accepted and incorporated into a positive TCK identity. Such TCKs develop a cohesive sense

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[30] Having been imprisoned for opposing Sharkey, Lobelia Sackville-Baggins refuses to return to Bag End after the scouring. "She gave it back to Frodo, and went to her own people." (RK998.)

of self, and, as is the case of Aragorn, are able to build meaningful relationships, utilize their transculturality, and learn how to make themselves a home and be at home.

Frodo, unfortunately, represents the opposite trajectory of development. Not only is he unable to move past his own sense of otherness, his already "cracked" self is further damaged during the quest. Although the corrupting influence of the Ring is gone, the effects of the fading wiped away, the mental and physical scars received on the journey remain. Frodo manifests clear symptoms of PTSD; suffering though reoccurring 'fits' of phantom pain, fever, zoning out, and depression – matching the anniversaries of his wounds: October 6th for Weathertop and March 13th - the date of being stung by Shelob.

This is not to say that all changes in Frodo are due to hurt or that pain need be a negative influence. Over the course of the novel Frodo grows from "a young hobbit characterized by curiosity, cheerfulness, sophistication, but also restlessness, a tint of arrogance, and a tendency to judgmentalism" to an "immensely empathetic, enduring, merciful, understanding, and responsible world-citizen". (Tedder 2005, 100) Factors such as Frodo's TCK background, alleged PTSD – or any other condition for that matter – do not in themselves prohibit Frodo from settling down, merely complicate the process. It is Frodo's own belief in being irreparably damaged (RK967) – the sentiment heightened during each flare-up: "I am wounded, (…) wounded; it will never really heal." (RK1002) – that prevents Frodo from even attempting to find a constructive solution to his non-belonging. For example, Frodo could have left the Shire in search of a new "home" – be it in Rivendell with Bilbo or in Gondor with Aragorn – or chosen the life of a nomad, as so many TCKs do – belonging everywhere and nowhere. Instead Frodo spends two years in a limbo, alive but not living, hiding his pain from those who might help him.

All in all, Frodo comes to fit the profile of an at-risk TCK: those who "for all their external adaptation, something inside still doesn't fit, and they believe this something will never change". Their "ongoing struggle to fit" leading to despair and possible self-harm. (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 251) From this perspective Frodo's journey to the West takes on an air of intervention, offered and arranged for him by the Elves:

> But in my stead you shall go, Ring-bearer, when the time comes, and if you then desire it. If your hurts grieve you still and the memory of your burden is heavy, then you may pass into the West, until all your wounds and weariness are healed. (RK952)

Notable, at this point, is the near constant presence of Sam following the quest. In what Brown considers a display of Frodo's newfound wisdom and maturity, "rather than returning to living all alone as he did before" Frodo asks Sam to move to Bag End "and to bring Rosie with him". (Brown 2006, 171) I agree that opening up Bag End is a sign of progress in terms of Frodo's awareness and appreciation of the bond he shares with Sam. However, I also see it as something enabling Frodo's withdrawal from living his own life; Sam's marriage, family life and standing among the Hobbits effectively masking Frodo's lonesome existence. In the span of two years Frodo essentially replaces himself with Sam: bequeathing him the house – and with it the status as the master of Bag End – and the book of Bilbo - the two heirlooms that connect Frodo to the Middle-earth. Even Sam's position as the Mayor seems as indirectly influenced by Frodo's tutelage and retirement. This dynamic continues up until the companions reach the Grey Havens. "It is significant that the final line of dialogue that Tolkien gives Frodo in the story is the invitation to Sam, "Come now, ride with me!"." (Brown 2006, 172. FR1006) Where Brown sees this as a step forward in Frodo's "internal quest for community" (Brown 2006, 173), I see it more as an act of closure; for himself and even more so for Sam. By bringing Sam along to witness his departure from the Middle-earth Frodo brings an official end to their relationship, freeing Sam from his split allegiances. "You were meant to be solid and whole, and you will be." (FR1003) While Frodo takes on one last journey in hopes that he may find a place of healing and rest and belonging on the other side of the Sea, Sam goes home.

> And he went on, and there was yellow light, and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was *expected*. And Rose drew him in, and set him in *his* chair, and put little Elanor upon his lap.
> He drew a deep breath. 'Well, *I'm back*,' he said. (RK1008. Emphasis added.)

Sam's return to where he – finally independent of his master – most longs to be marks the end of his personal journey as well as that of the novel. The ending in both cases is far from finite. It is more of a transition into the next, unnarrated, chapter of the story: the Tale of the Years Appendices conveying in broad stokes Sam leading a rich satisfying life, until a time he took his own final journey – allegedly to the West. (AB1072)

4.2. The Return of the Wanderer-King

Aragorn, the greatest traveler and huntsman of this age and of the world. (FR57)

Aragorn, son of Arathorn, heir of the line of Isildur, Dúnadan, crowned Elessar Telcontar, the High King of Gondor and Arnor – as the litany of titles suggests – is a man of many identities. He is the titular protagonist of the third volume, *The Return of the King,* whose journey from the wilds to the throne is one of the central plotlines of the novel. As such, even to a casual reader Aragorn's character is one defined by change, his transformation from one role into another. Upon closer inspection this process goes beyond mere character growth or a shift from one literary archetype, that of a Wanderer, into another - the Hero/King. (See Morgan Curtis 2012) Aragorn's journey is inseparably tied to the rise of the Fourth Age: the time "of the Dominion of Men, [when] the Elder Kindred shall fade or depart" (RK949-950) - a more "modern" era characterized by change and mortality that dominate human reality.[31]

Although fictional, Aragorn fits the profile of a TCK rather seamlessly: from childhood experiences to the behavioral patterns he exhibits as an adult. Being the most central Human character in the LOTR, as well as the leader and forerunner of the FA, Aragorn presents an optimal case study for Tolkien's depiction of the human condition; particularly in relation to home, homelessness and wandering.

Origins

Aragorn II was born to parents Gilrael and Arathorn II, the 15th chief of the Dúnedain, in T.A.2931. He was fostered in Rivendell at the age of two following his father's death, his true name and heritage hidden from all, including himself, for his protection. Until the age of twenty he lived among the elves under the identity of Estel – a name used by his closest family members [Gilrael, Elrond and, later, Arwen] – in private conversation throughout his life. Upon learning his true identity T.A.2952 Aragorn returned to the Dúnedain, taking on the hereditary role of the chief. In the decades preceding the War of the Ring, Aragorn roamed the continent "in many guises, and won renown under many names". (AA1035) Two of these identities are given special mention: Thorongil, as he was known to the soldiers of Rohan and Gondor; and Strider, or Longshanks – as the people of Bree named him – the

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[31] Modern as opposed to mythical.

name Frodo and his companions were offered during Aragorn's first appearance in the novel. (AA1030, FR153)

 Aragorn's time as Thorongil, despite its brief mention, deserves attention as it encapsulates the dynamic of his interaction with the [Mannish] society: a mysterious stranger enters the service to the local ruler, offers council, and leads their men into victory in their confrontation against the forces of Mordor, only to disappear after the danger is past. The key feature of this dynamic is force. To the Free Men[32] of the Middle-earth Aragorn is but a passerby; helpful, or potentially threatening. To Aragorn they are merely stopovers within his lifelong quest to defeat Sauron. The "easy come easy go" – lifestyle and the ease with which Aragorn juggles his plural identities is a common pattern of TCK behavior.[33] From *Growing Up among Worlds:* "many TCKs develop a *migratory instinct* that controls their lives. Along with their chronic rootlessness is an (…) inner restlessness that keeps the TCK always moving." (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 125)

This brings us to yet another major factor contributing to the disconnect between Aragorn and other Men – his age. Descended from the Númenorians, the Dúnedain have lifespans significantly longer than those of "lesser men". Aragorn, in whom "the dignity of the kings of old was renewed" (AA1020) lived for a total of 210 years before choosing to pass away, as was the "grace" of his heritage (AA1037). Although this fact is not stated directly in the novel-proper, Aragorn does refer to his older-than-appearances-suggests age during his first meetings with Frodo (FR162) and later with Eomer of Rohan. "You I have not seen before, for you are young, but I have spoken with Éomund your father, and with Théoden son of Thengel." (TT428) Referring to the Appendices, Thorongil was active circa T.A. 2980 - four decades prior the events of the novel. Those of his own generation have passed and new generation has been born and reached adulthood; meanwhile Aragorn – aged 87 at the time – is still in his prime, his hair merely "flecked with grey" (FR153). This age disparity is fascinating since it effectively illustrates yet another feature of the TCK experience: not seeming their age. "There are many ways TCKs seem advanced for their age", feeling older due to a vast scope of life experiences, but also "many ways they seem to lag behind"

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[32] The groups of humans not under Sauron's rule.
[33] The other extreme, hunkering down and refusing any kind of change or mobility being the other typical response to childhood dislocation.

because their experiences are so fragmented. Either way, "they are definitely out of sync with their peers but can't figure out why" (Pollock and Van Reken 1999, 150)

The question of age gains extra significance due to Aragorn's relationship with Arwen Undomiel, the youngest daughter of Elrond. Like all the Elves Arwen is for all intents and purposes immortal [34]; whereas Aragorn and his kin are undeniably mortal, even short-lived in comparison – despite being given "a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth". As descendant of the *Peredhil,* the Half-Elven, Arwen has the choice of picking a mortal life instead of the eternal one.[35] She would become "like a mortal woman" (AA1037), her soul's connection to Arda severed. The time in which they live, the end of the Age, makes her decision truly final. Even if she were to regret her choice, as she momentarily does at Aragorn's deathbed [Fo.A.120] the passage to the West is no more. "There is now no ship that would bear me hence, and I must indeed abide the Doom of Men, whether I will or I nill: the loss and the silence." (AA1037)

Faced with the threat of eternal separation from his daughter Elrond set a condition to their marriage:

> "'My son, (…) a shadow lies between us. Maybe, it has been appointed so, that by my loss the kingship of Men may be restored. Therefore, though I love you, I say to you: Arwen Undómiel shall not diminish her life's grace for less cause. She shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor. To me then even our victory can bring only sorrow and parting - but to you hope of joy for a while. Alas, my son! I fear that to Arwen the Doom of Men may seem hard at the ending." (AA1036. Sic.)

The conflict of interests stemming from their shared love for Arwen becomes the driving force behind Aragorn's quest of reclaiming the throne. In order to be together with the woman he wishes to make a home with, Aragorn first must provide a home befitting her by reclaiming his long-lost ancestral homeland(s). To do so he must defeat Sauron – the manifest evil – whose mere existence poses an active threat to the safety and continued existence of their future home. (And all the other homes of their world, for that matter.)

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[34] The technicalities of Elven (im-)mortality are not relevant to this study. Summarily, Elven souls are tied to Arda and will live on for as long as it exists; re-manifesting in Valinor if the physical body were destroyed. In contrast Mortal souls have their own [race-specific] afterlife on a different plain.

[35] Such choice had not been made since Elros, Elrond's twin, chose to "be of Man-kind and remain with the Edain" (AA1011) founding the line of Númenorians.

Belonging as Commitment and Choices

> 'Little do I resemble the figures of Elendil and Isildur as they stand carven in their majesty in the halls of Denethor. I am but the heir of Isildur, not Isildur himself. I have had a hard life and a long; and the leagues that lie between here and Gondor are a small part in the count of my journeys. I have crossed many mountains and many rivers, and trodden many plains, even into the far countries of Rhûn and Harad where the stars are strange.

> 'But *my home, such as I have[36], is in the North.* For here the heirs of Valandil have ever dwelt in long line unbroken from father unto son for many generations. (FR241-242. Emphasis added.)

Aragorn's self-introduction to the Council of Elrond reveals some of the complex network of (non-)belonging he is laid claim by. I say claimed *by*, because none of these ties are ones he chose or built himself; resulting in a detectable emotional distance between these hereditary points of origin and Aragorn's own experience at the present. The forefathers Elendil and Isildur are distant historical figures towards whom Aragorn feels little to no kinship if not for the accident of birth. Likewise, he calls to the seat of power in Minas Tirith the "hall of Denethor". Despite the throne having been ceremonially left empty, the line of stewards have been the de facto rulers inhabiting the royal residence for nearly a millennium.

The attitude towards the Dúnedain settlements in Northern Eriador is noticeably differen,t although it too is seemingly based on an inherited connection: "in long line unbroken from father unto son". Aragorn calls the land of his ancestors in the North a "home". The difference I believe lies not the location nor the historical proximity but in Aragorn's relationship with the living members of the Dúnedain clan. As a group the Dúnedain are an exiled people, a travel worn remnant of a fallen kingdom. "At length naught was left of them but a strange people wandering secretly in the wild, and other men knew not their homes nor their purpose of their journeys, and save in Imladris, (…) their ancestry was forgotten." (S355) There is, therefore, a natural affinity between Aragorn and the community: their heritage and [consequent] experiences of dislocation being alike. From this standpoint the address of "home" becomes an expression of commitment. No matter that he never lived in the settlements extensively, choosing instead to wander the continent - as the Chieftain, the Dúnadan, his home is where his people are, even if he is not there.

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[36] A very TCK statement indicating awareness of the complexities between self and a place called home. Contemporary equivalent to "such as I have" would be adding quotation marks to the word. "Home"

Interestingly, like his connection with the Dúnedain, the two other identity-defining commitments in Aragorn's life also contribute to his wandering lifestyle. One being his commitment to Arwen, the other his crusade against Sauron. The two become tied together by Elrond's edict concerning the lovers. As discussed above, in order to settle down with Arwen Aragorn first needs to settle the matters of the kingdom, and for that he has to keep moving. On a lighter note, Arwen appears to have had an impact even before the two committed to the relationship. Following their first meeting the young barely past his teens Aragorn declared he would bitterly "walk in the wilds alone" rather than settle to a life without Arwen. His mother's response: "That will indeed be your fate." – is a foresight referring simultaneously to his unlikely romance and to the heritage of exile (AA1034). The sentiment is later echoed by Aragorn himself in what I consider one of the most provoking lines in the novel; the implied dilemma of multiple allegiances touching the very core of the TCK experience.

> 'I dwelt there [in Rivendell] once, and still I return when I may. *There my heart is; but it is not my fate to sit in peace*, even in the fair house of Elrond.' (FR196-197. Emphasis added.)

Heritage and fate are ever intertwined in Tolkien's work. Even within the Fellowship, most of the members follow paths forshadowed by those of their ancestors: Frodo, obviously, emulates Bilbo; Boromir inherits Denethor's desperation for power – both driven to madness and death by it; Gimli and Legolas' unlikely friendship continues the trajectory set by their fathers' – Gloin and Tharanduil having been players in the Quest of Erebor – the factions moving from open hostility to tentative allies by the end of the Hobbit. There is, therefore, no denying the significance of Aragorn's muddled ancestry, dislocation seemingly the main common feature of his heritage. In words of Morgan Curtis:

> Strider/Aragorn is trapped in his Wanderer role by the unfulfilled promise of his ancestor, Isildur. The inherited dishonor and shame have cast him outside of not only the castle but also community as a whole. (…) Displaced even from his own name, Strider lives with the unfathomable error of his ancestor, but also he is of mixed blood [numenorian, elfkin, exile] and spends his life knowing who he could be but is not. (Morgan Curtis 2012, 207. Sic.)

Poignant as the description is, I must disagree with Morgan Curtis' word choice. For although Aragorn indeed cannot escape the circumstances of his birth/birthright - he does not let himself be *trapped* by it. In fact, he does the very opposite. Instead of passively accepting

exile as his lot in life, Aragorn takes charge of it: purposefully "striding" to the farthest reaches of Middle-earth, using his Ranger skills to journey the wilds, using his TCK knowledge to enter and navigate various cultural groups, building connections, taking up causes, leaving when he is needed elsewhere. Having turned his predisposition to wandering, his TCK-ness, into a skill rather than a symptom Aragorn is able to utilize it in service of his chosen quest; not only the quest of freedom, but the quest for belonging. As a result, when the time comes, the shift from the vagrant Strider to kingly Elessar is rather swift - a lifetime of widespread efforts for the first time channeled directly towards the final goal.

Unlike the instantaneous ascension of Gandalf the Grey into Gandalf the White, or the gradual fading of Frodo, Aragorn's transformation has little to none to do with magic. It is instead a visible manifestation of inner repositioning: shifting of priorities, re-committing to the cause, and adjusting to the new role and responsibility. The more Aragorn embraces his royal identity, the more kingly he appears to those around him; his interaction with others serving as a way to track the process, despite the text itself containing very little of Aragorn's innermost thoughts.

In Rivendell there is but a hint of nobility about Aragorn. His neat and well-mannered appearance is a far cry from the travelworn persona he initially displays, his name and heritage made public during the "council of Elrond" – but the throne is not yet an immediate concern. Therefore, he easily tucks away his lordly side upon departure, taking with him Anduril – reforged from the shards of Narsil, the sword of Elendil (FR269) – but "clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness." (FR272)

It is only in Lothlórien that Aragorn receives what is essentially a call to action in the form of the Elfstone.

> Aragorn took the stone and pinned the brooch upon his breast, and those who saw him wondered; for they had not marked before how tall and kingly he stood, and it seemed to them that many years of toil had fallen from his shoulders. (FR366)

A family heirloom passed down from Galadriel to Celebrian to Arwen – the jewel doubles as a token of acceptance of his courtship and as a [prophetic] sign greenlighting his pursuit of the throne. "In this hour take the name that was foretold for you: Elessar the Elfstone of the house of Elendil". (FR366. See also UT325) The encounter is one of the many times Aragorn

receives affirmation from his elders – Celeborn, Galadriel, Elrond – encouraging him and confirming the rightness of his path.

From there on Aragorn visibly settles into his identity as Isildur's heir, declaring himself first to his allies – his companions, the Rohirrim and the Men of Dunharrow – and eventually to the enemy: confronting Sauron through the Palanthir.

> 'Fear not!' said a strange voice behind him. Frodo turned and saw Strider, and yet not Strider; for the weatherworn Ranger was no longer there. In the stern sat Aragorn son of Arathorn, proud and erect, guiding the boat with skillful strokes; his hood was cast back, and his dark hair was blowing in the wind, a light was in his eyes: a king returning from exile to his own land.
>
> 'Fear not!' he said. 'Long have I desired to look upon the likenesses of Isildur and Anárion, my sires of old. Under their shadow Elessar, the Elfstone son of Arathorn of the House of Valandil Isildur's son, heir of Elendil, has naught to dread!' (FR384)

This culminates in his welcome in Minas Tirith, where he is recognized by the people as the prophesied king: "Hands of the King are the hands of a healer" (842); "I see you are a lore-master, not merely a captain of war." (846-847); "My lord, you called me I come. What does the king command?" (RK848)

> And word went through the City: 'The King is come again indeed.' And they called him Elfstone, because of the green stone that he wore, and so the name which it was foretold at his birth that he should bear was chosen for him by his people. (RK853)

It is significant that Aragorn does not lay claim to the throne upon first entering the city, "though he spends the night healing the sick and wounded of the city and is even recognized as King by some". (Morgan Curtis 2012, 198) Aragorn does not come as a conqueror arrogantly demanding his birthright, but neither does he "steal into Gondor like a thief" as Morgan Curtis suggests. Instead he approaches Minas Tirith like he did so many other communities before this: as an equal offering his help and knowledge where they are most needed. The time spent in the Houses of Healing is, therefore, absolutely crucial as it allows Aragorn to develop a personal bond with the citizens. By letting them observe and get to know him, he earns their trust – something equally, if not more important than being recognized as the healer-king of the prophesy. Aragorn's humble attitude and his wish to honor the citizens and the current leadership – ie. the steward, Faramir, incapacitated though

he may be – bears fruit. Once the war over the steward of the city voluntarily transfers the official power to him with the full support of the people.

The coronation scene at the gates of Minas Tirith (RK945-946) is the ultimate expression of Aragorn being recognized by the citizens as the returning king, as well as the culmination of Aragorn's personal quest for belonging. Instead of inheriting an empty ancestral palace, Aragorn is invited into the fold of the living community. Instead of a titular ascent to power he is embraced as a leader and as a person by what are now *his* people.

> "our Elfstone (…) not too soft in his speech but with a golden heart, as the saying is; and he has the healing hands. (RK945)
>
> "For all those who come to know him come to love him after his own fashion." (RK856)

Settling in

> Then Aragorn took the crown and held it up and said:
> *Et Eärello Endorenna utúlien. Sinome maruvan ar Hildinyar tenn' Ambar-metta!*
> And those were the words that Elendil spoke when he came up out of the Sea on the wings of the wind: 'Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place will I abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world.' (…)
> Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. (RK947)

In the course of the novel Aragorn transforms from a homeless vagabond into a central figure of the both local and international communities. His "return" to Gondor, like any re-entry – and re-entry it is, though exaggerated by a thousand years it may be – is a merging point of history and new beginning. Though he may not have lived in Minas Tirith before, at least not in proper capacity, Aragorn establishes himself there: making a home for himself and making himself at home. He chooses to identify, commit, and settle – into the place, and its community but also into his own identity defined as it is by this new circumstance. And as the home reciprocates in kind: submitting to and embracing him as one of theirs – the sense of belonging grows beyond a mere idea of into a solid experience of feeling at home.[37]

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[37] In this case, the King is offered a welcome not only by the people but by the land itself in the form of a sapling of the long dead White Tree of Gondor – the somewhat magical tree a symbol of kings of Gondor and their ties to Númenor.

While being accepted by his subjects is important, what truly makes this new location home is the congregated presence of close and supportive relationships. During his wandering days Aragorn maintained his network of belonging over distance, occasionally visiting the people he associated with home. Once tied down by the throne, the most significant people in Aragorn's life – Arwen - his heart, and Dúnedain - his kin – choose to follow him to the city. The display of loyalty from this formerly spread-out group of individuals, wonderfully demonstrates the reciprocal nature of belonging. It also outwardly manifests the unification of Aragorn's identity – his dislocated histories incorporated into a "cosmopolitan" whole; something that will "have direct bearing on his identity as king", despite his wandering days being over. (Tedder 2005, 34)

The same message is contained in the royal name adopted by Aragorn:

> I am *Elessar*, the Elfstone, and *Envinyatar*, the Renewer': and he lifted from his breast the green stone that lay there. 'But Strider shall be the name of my house, if that be ever established. In the high tongue it will not sound so ill, and *Telcontar* I will be and all the heirs of my body.' (RK845)

These names are a homage to his history as well as his vision for the future: *Elessar* – the name of the prophesy that ties him to the grand narratives of Elves as well as Men; *Envinyatar* - his pledge to re-establish the Kingdoms of the Dúnedain, renewing the hope of Men; and *Telcontar,* "literally *far-stepper*", identifying him "as a traveler or man of the world – in other words, a cosmopolitan". (Tedder 2005, 34)

It is important to remember that the period of Aragorn settling into his rule brings drastic changes to more than just Aragorn and his associates.[38] Just like Aragorn has to make concessions in his lifestyle and even appearance to fit his new role, so does the community have to accept the changes brough about by him; among them the presence of an Elven queen, dignitaries and laymen of other races, and Aragorn's lenient policy towards other nations, including those formerly considered as enemies. Aragorn brings an abrupt end to Gondor's misanthropic existence, redirecting the inertia that had propelled him across the continent into expanding and shaping the kingdom according to his cosmopolitan worldview - his new home transformed to reflect him.

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[38] Eomer inherits the throne of Rohan, Arwen is made mortal, Faramir is made prince, the Hobbits are knighted etc.

Aragorn's life post novel, as well as the legacy he leaves behind – a loving family, a competent heir, and a flourishing kingdom – is an antithesis to the uncertain fate of Frodo – wounded, tired and shipped away in hope of healing. The period of settling in, the aftermath, is where the stark differences between the two characters are most pronounced. However, their opposing trajectories are mapped out by the series of choices they made throughout the novel. Frodo systematically chooses self-sufficiency and detachment; withdrawing rather than facing or knowingly causing hurt; functioning under the premise of being expendable. (With the notable exception of including Sam on his final journey.) Aragorn, on the other hand, is aware that his actions have an increasing effect on others and makes every decision with that in mind. He discusses his plans, listens to advice and – as his role changes from scout to a leader – rarely ventures anywhere without backup.

As I see it, the root of this divergence can be traced back to the presence/absence of a safe family environment during the developmental years and the emotional intelligence it cultivates. Aragorn, messy heritage notwithstanding, grew up with the constant presence of his mother and foster-father Elrond. Even as his network of belonging expands to include new people [Elrond's sons, Arwen, Galadriel, Gandalf and the Dúnedain] and is reprioritized – Arwen taking on the central role, the tension this causes with Elrond and his mother eventually passing – it does not undermine the security instilled by those core relationships.

This is vastly different from Frodo's childhood: less mobile yet far less secure. Little is known about his living circumstances before Bag End, beyond having been left in his relatives' care after losing his parents – a traumatic event by itself. One can, however, speculate based on the absence of names that Frodo did not have a sole guardian until being adopted by Bilbo; raised instead by the commune within Brandy Hall. Whether or not so, it is clear, that between his parents' death and the esoteric guidance provided by Bilbo Frodo grew up lacking fundamental emotional and social skills. Bilbo may have offered the young Hobbit a comfortable, intellectually stimulating environment, a broad education and even affection - but never stability; the joy of his company and the security of their relationship ever undermined by Bilbo's sporadically flaring wanderlust. Frodo's relationship with Gandalf is much similar: a dear elder providing wisdom and company *when* he happens to be present. Under the circumstances Frodo developing a pathological habit of self-sufficiency and emotional detachment is understandable yet no less harmful in the long run.

Looking at Aragorn, or at any of the other younger generation characters hailing from dislocated family lines – Gimli, Legolas, Arwen – it becomes apparent that dislocation is not an insurmountable issue. It is but one experience among others; quite manageable if the person has been instilled the necessary emotional skills - which Frodo does not have. Without an internal sense of security, functional support network, or the ability to deal with the more difficult emotions, particularly loss - Frodo keeps accumulating grief to a degree where it begins gradually destroying him from the inside. Frodo is lost to Middle-earth in the end, not because he was irreversibly hurt as he himself believed, but because he did not have anyone convince him otherwise, guiding him through the pain.

If Frodo is a cautionary tale of unresolved grief, Aragorn is a success story of a TCK finding himself home.[39] While he might not have had one localizable home – the strong attachment he shared with a number of people –spread all over the Middle-earth though they might have been – provided him with a sense of belonging and continuity; homes if temporary ones. The experience of maintaining those relationships throughout his wandering years combined with his vast cultural knowledge equipped him to be successful in his role as king. In short, Aragorn turns his TCK background into his biggest strength.

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[39] Lack of an article intentional.

LOCATING HOME - REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

The *Lord of the Rings* ends with a homecoming. This ending is not, however, an unequivocally closed one. The story of Middle-earth continues beyond the pages of the novel proper, relayed through the Appendices – included within the covers of the LOTR – and the plethora of later publications. The transition between the "Grey Heavens" and "Appendix A" adds to the overall continuity despite the notable shift in style from narrative to documentative and, I would argue, in part because of it. The encyclopedic entries chronicling details and events outside of the LOTR narrative and timeframe evoke the sense of "historicity" (see page 7), ultimately contributing to the illusion of Middle-earth existing in truth, independent of the novel.[40] In fact, I theorize that it is the blend of said "historicity" and the fantastic – the abundance of detail ripe for analysis safely contained within a secondary world – that sustains the continued interest in Tolkien-studies, particularly of applied and/or interdisciplinary readings such as attempted here. But I digress.

Nothing, I believe, demystifies claims of ownership, origin, and exclusive belonging quite like the presence of a larger historical continuum. Indeed, the more distant the vantage point, the more tenuous the connection between people(s) and place(s) – little more than an intersection of personal and geographical timelines [41]. The Hobbits' foothold in the Shire, for example, can be easily pared down to availability. They manage to establish themselves as the sole rightful denizens of the Shire because of the significant geographical and temporal distance separating them from those who might contest their claim; the surviving remnants of the past, [Elven infrastructure, Arnorian government protocols, mathoms], having been eroded by time and disinterest to empty ruins and symbols. The Hobbits' willful ignorance and outright denial of things outside the Shire Reckoning does not, however, guarantee them an endless hold of the land. When they eventually fade from history, "their Shire" merges into its surroundings without fanfare or notice; becoming but a patch of hill country somewhere in the "west-lands of Eriador" (P3) until a time it is claimed by somebody else.

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[40] One could of course argue that Middle-earth has indeed reached a level of autonomy in the decades following its introduction to readers; becoming a cultural entity that has outgrown its early manifestation through the continued expansion of the official legendarium; the ongoing production of adaptations, translations and republications of the existing material; and the ever-growing audience.

[41] Though simplistic, this visual of home/habitation as points of intersection can be useful especially when studying larger socio-cultural units and their movements; particularly if imagined not as a junction of two straight lines, but as a segment of a larger network comprised of multiple strands that twist, cross and overlap, sometimes repeatedly.

'But it is not your own Shire,' said Gildor. 'Others dwelt here before hobbits were; and others will dwell here again when hobbits are no more. The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot for ever (sic.) fence it out.' (FR82)

Gildor's pronouncement touches upon several core issues discussed in this study: transience being part of the natural order, impermeable borders being unsustainable, possibly foolish. The argument is valid and important, yet it does not change the fact that for over two millennia the Shire is the home of the Hobbits. It functions as their home, is bilaterally recognized as their home, and feels like their home. Of course, not everyone's experience is equally pleasant - Frodo being the most drastic example of a queer misfit of a Hobbit, not to mention the prejudice faced by members of other races. For a significant number of Hobbits, however, the Shire is exactly what they need and believe home should be. Even Frodo – rootless, emotionally stunted social outlier that he is – feels connected to the land. His reply to Gildor: "'I know – and yet it has always seemed so safe and familiar.'" (FR82) - indicating a bond that is beyond merely intellectual.

As this project draws to an end – after years spent on research, compiling an extensive multi-disciplinary bibliography, conducting my case-studies, and the often-times painstaking process of translating the acquired thoughts into texts – this seemingly offhand comment by Frodo has become a vital point of focus. It is a humbling reminder that *the true significance of home lies in the lived experience of it.* No matter the exact definition of "home", or how naïve or faulty or incomplete said definitions may be, or how precisely they relate to other concepts [settling, inhabiting, dwelling, belonging, family, identity etc.], what shape they may take, or how short-lived they may be – home is above all a lived space. It is the experiential aspect of it: the social, emotional, tactile, spiritual, and other sensations - from which we derive the sense of belonging, and that make "home" something more than an empty idea or a dwelling.

Now, I must admit that my initial proposal gave little thought to this side of the matter; determined to identify and present the various dislocation narratives and other discrepancies between home and belonging in LOTR as evidence of the traditional image of home being invalid, even in such an escapist and fantastic piece of fiction. [42] Truth of the matter is, that

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[42] My preoccupation with the "problematics of home" driven, undoubtedly, by my own experiences of dislocation, and non-belonging. Of course, in retrospect it is quite clear that pursuing such a closed-ended hypothesis was bound to lead to a stand-still; enough to produce a topical report – a LOTR specific variant of

for each instance when one no longer feels at home while at home, there is a bigger number of variations – times, places, and people – in which it does. Paraphrasing Melinda Meija (2014, 6), the faults and imperfections of "home" do not negate the fact that people keep making homes and making themselves at home.

The change of perspective from the so called "problem of home", to the study of its continued existence, i.e. the *process of home* – turned my caustic theory heavy draft into something exploratory, each chapter taking on a shape and direction of its own. While I continued to pay close attention to the discrepancies between the multiple facets constituting both home [as an Idea, as a place and as a feeling] and belonging, the main focus of the analysis shifted towards uncovering the 'whys' and 'hows' of it. In the process of identifying the underlying issues causing the said disconnect, I uncovered not only possible solutions with which the sense home and belonging could be achieved/regained and, more importantly, sustained even in the face of past, present and future dislocation, but also the underlying principles of a healthy home.

Complexity – "Home such as I have"

The trouble with wrapping up a holistic reading – as I have discovered much to my chagrin – is the lack of concrete quantifiable results at the end of the endeavor. There is no clear formula delineating the relationship of home/belonging, no exhaustive definition of home, not even a comprehensive summary of the manifestations of home, belonging and dislocation in LOTR. [43] What I have instead attained is a deeper understanding of an infinitely convoluted subject. This is true of both the theoretical and applied sides of the research, starting with the matter of home and belonging.

My initial paradigm [home ≠ belonging] held up to scrutiny, verified by both the scholarly review and the close reading of Tolkien's work. The terms are not, however, fully autonomous. On the contrary, the longer I have worked with these concepts the more (inter)-connected, cross-defined and dis-/similar they appear; my attempts to categorically separate one from the other almost inevitably regressing into an exercise of chicken and egg. Their existence is strongly symbiotic: the processes of home-making correlating to and

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Shelley Mallet's "Understanding Home", if you may – with few pages and little analysis leading to a predetermined end.

[43] Something I have repeatedly despaired over, despite being convinced that any semblance of a schematic would come at the cost of willfully "dumbing down" the subject.

complementing the processes that establish belonging. That said, there has been a definite flip in my perceived hierarchy of the concepts. Instead of pondering whether or not and to what degree is home a source of belonging, I have come to view homes and home-making as a response to the inherent *need to belong*. On that note, neither is dislocation categorically antithetical to either home or belonging. (While this final point is one I had not properly formulated until the later chapters, it has definitely been present as a rudimentary concept from the very beginning, particularly in light of the nomadic side of the TCK experience.) Comparison between chosen subjects clearly indicates that it is the response to dislocation, not dislocation itself, that determines the outcome: whether the narrative continues or breaks. A major factor in this case, one I will revisit several times, being the concept of home.

The complexity of homes extends far beyond the dichotomy of [home/not-home ≠ belonging/non-belonging]. There is the simple matter of having multiple homes, both one after another and at once. Neither is the boundary between home and not-home necessarily clear-cut due to the multiplicity of functions homes fulfil: as habitable spaces, anchors of belonging and cultural units etc. The different facets of home follow their own rules of signification and trajectories of development resulting in them potentially becoming out-of-sync, simultaneously home and not home. Moria being the prime example where the Idea, the memory of the Home, is divorced from the physical reality of the crumbling kingdom and of the lived experience of the Dwarves while exile. There is also the communal side of homes to consider: be it the sharing of a home, or the merging of multiple homes into a larger unit - a hometown or homeland. Related to this is the tendency of TCKs and other transcultural or highly mobile individuals to associate "home" with people rather than place.

When home is viewed fluid, as a lived space that is just as malleable and fluctuating as its residents - said complexity and idiosyncrasy is par for the course. If, however, home is defined mainly via omission and exclusion – be it in theory or policy – it invariably leads to situations where the prevailing concept of home is far narrower than the lived reality of it. The Shire belongs to the Hobbits and only to Hobbits, the Dwarves belong in Moria and only in Moria. The more rigid the belief the more fragile it is. Any and all inconsistency a risk to its integrity, which is why such narrow-view communities are more likely to be strictly monitored internally and externally.[44] Hobbits' naivete is only feasible within their own

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[44] The upholding of the rigid boundaries making them even more limited, which in turn makes them more fragile, which again requires stricter boundaries etc.

bubble, and the Dwarves nostalgia is sustainable only away from the reality of Moria. When such a construct of home hits a crisis, such as dislocation, it is difficult to salvage a sense of continuity without a major shift in worldview. The Dwarves manage to hold on to their belief of how Home [Moria in its golden age] should be but as a price never achieve home or belonging in the present. The Hobbits' do seem to (re-)establish continuity. However, they do so by virtually erasing the traumatic event [the vilification of the Shire] from their collective memory as they finish repairing the physical damages; the ramifications of their choice potentially hazardous given the Dwarven precedent.[45]

All in all, the more traditional concept of home is fraught with loss, especially in an age of high mobility of rapid change. If home is one particular place and you have to move – home is lost. If home is one particular community and they disperse – home is lost. If home is a point in the past or in the future but upon revisiting/reaching does not match the imagined – it still feels like home is lost. Diametrically opposed to it is the transcultural/cosmopolitan/hybrid concept of "home such as I have", to borrow Aragorn's expression.[46] Home, when approached from the point of view belonging, is a matter of almost unlimited possibility. It is a place, in that is a localized point, or an anchor as I have called it, in the stream of processes through which we define and express our belonging. Rather than a location or a group this version of home is grounded in a network of meaningful reciprocal relationships; much like the TCK notion of "home is where family is" but expanded beyond the nuclear family and/or their singular location. This model of home is dynamic, performative and accommodating, focused more on the ongoing practice of home-making and being at home rather than on the form it may take. In other words, once one learns to cultivate belonging – any place can become home.

Transience – "Home for now"

> Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells. (Brah 1996, 192)

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[45] Of course the further development and final outcome of both groups remain unknown, and as pointed out in the analysis chapters both the Dwarves and Hobbits do have the means to turn both their outlook and their way of life into something healthier and more sustainable.

[46] Alternatively, it could be called "home in process", or "healthy TCK home", or "nomadic home" - each moniker incorporating the sense of motion.

From the outset I have framed "home" and "belonging" as temporal phenomena, not only a matter of 'what' and 'where', but 'when'. The temporal aspect becomes particularly prominent in the wake of dislocation: when the ongoing narrative of self is forcefully split from the narrative of former home, when the memory of Home no longer matches the reality of it. That said, all homes have their own lifecycle – their beginning, prime, decline, and expiration – related but not reduceable to that of their residents. This constant motion of history aptly surmised by the earlier quote from Gildor. (FR82)

The temporality of home manifests as more than just its boundaries and particular placement in the chronology of the surrounding world. As previously mentioned, "home" is not a solid, monolithic entity but a lived space. The inner space, the experience of home is equally part of and affected by the currents of time. I.e. though home may seem unaffected, "safe and familiar" (FR82), it is intrinsically given to change and self-adjustment. This is most noticeable after some time away which is why re-entry is often more jarring an experience than the act of leaving itself. Home as it was left, home as it is remembered and home as it is re-entered - are never quite the same, making it place of "no return".

The word I find best describes this way of "being in time" is *transience*. In the simplest sense transience and its derivatives – transient and being in transit – conveys not having reached the (final) destination (yet). There is an inbuilt awareness of the upcoming end, of the current state being temporary. Unlike *temporary,* however, transience also carries strong connotations of continuity, potential and new beginnings. The difference in tone is similar to that between the phrases "ending soon" and "for now" – where one focuses on the limits dictated by the inevitable ending, the other maintains agency in the present moment while acknowledging the presence of change in the future. From the perspective of transience endings and closures appear not as anathema to the existing continuum but as part of it - transition points between one leg of the journey and the next.

LOTR is filled with lore – records, stories, memoirs, poetry, artifacts, landmarks – recounting the rise and fall of kingdoms and races, buildings and individuals; that together with the nuanced care with which Tolkien tracks the passage of seasons in nature establishes transience as an irrefutable, tangible, even mundane aspect of life. Not even the simplest and most solid manifestations of home – such as the Dwarven halls carved into the very bedrock of the mountains – are exempt from the effect of time. Nor, as it happens, is Valinor. The broader work of Tolkien makes it clear that while removed from the mortal realm by the great

sundering, Valinor is still part of creation and therefore subject to the rule of time, though much more lenient. It may be, in Keith Kelly's words (2009), an "asterisk-Eden (…) a place of origin still somehow strangely caught up within it [the world]", and thus serve as a counterpoint to the mundane mortal existence of Middle Earth, but it is nevertheless not the Christian Heaven. That said, the Elves and their tie to Valinor do represent the more existential/spiritual[47] side of transience. Their dual existence – a deep-rooted attachment to Middle-earth in a constant tug-of-war with the call of the promised but [at times] unreachable Valinor – is a notable echo of Christian tradition. (Albeit Tolkien's imagery is rather more naturalistic than theological.)

All in all Tolkien's work is so saturated with the awareness of transience that even the grandest moments of the narrative echo bittersweet.

> "The dominant motif of Tolkien's work is sadness: much that was once fair and beautiful is lost forever. That loss happened deep in the past, (…) and it continues to the last pages of *The lord of the rings* and even through the appendices." (Drout 2013, 178)

Yet, as both Drout and Tolkien himself point out: it is a "sadness that was yet blessed and without bitterness". (Drout 2013, 185. RK1006) Tolkien's loving attention to detail, from the colors and scents of the surrounding nature to the faithful chronicling of long past events and family trees, showcases his appreciation of finite and, ultimately, mortal things. The presence of the end does not diminish their value. On the contrary, awareness of transience makes the fragile beauty of the 'now' all the more precious. The present is to be celebrated and protected, even actively restored[48] in cases such as the Shire and the Orthanc, where the natural order has been broken and change superimposed in what essentially constitutes a traumatic event.

While the existential transience of Tolkien is a bit of a detour from my main theme, it does in its own way confirm my observation: when it comes to the matter of transience and the continued existence and prosperity of home, attitude is key. Comparative analysis of

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[47] *Langoth* – the longing for the lost Paradise, or in Tolkien's case "the straight path to Valinor" – and *heimweh* [German. home pain, suffering for home] – the feeling of being continuously and permanently separated from the past caught "in the irreversible stream of time", (Drout 2013, 178.) as well as "heaven longing", a promise of a place of true belonging, a life unfettered by the limitations of the mortal existence.

[48] Something Michael Stanton identifies as the "paradoxical theme running through LOTR" (Stanton 2002, 92-93), but I myself have come to view more as a question of discernment: recognizing when change is necessary and when it is harmful and what response, acceptance or action, is necessary.

Rivendell and Khazad-dûm identifies their differing awareness and acceptance of transience as a major factor behind their opposite trajectories of development. The Dwarves' inability and/or refusal to adapt with the times leads to significant even disastrous long-term consequences: their detrimental attitude contributing to their dwindling numbers, the self-inflicted catastrophe of waking the Balrog, and consequent exile. Indeed, the Dwarven example – their self-destruction by greed, pride and cultural stagnation – becomes a cautionary tale among the peoples of Middle-earth. The Dwarves, however, maintain their inflexibility even in diaspora, resulting in centuries of mostly liminal existence and the continued decline of their race. Instead of adjusting to their new reality – changing trajectory, (re-)settling and investing in a new future – the Dwarves dismiss their present circumstances as temporary, clinging to the memory of Moria with a religious fervor. In their case Home truly becomes an impossibility (see Ahmed 1999, 331), one they are ever chasing but never reach.

Rivendell, on the other hand, is the ultimate expression of my concept of "home for now". It models the more dynamic understanding of belonging and home-being; where transience, along with other intricacies of life, is embraced as part of "home as it is" rather than feared. As the result, while not without its own share of internal tension, Rivendell is by far experienced as the most approachable and indiscriminatingly homely place in Middle-earth.

A mix of residents and visitors, Elves and mortals - the community of Rivendell is uniquely aware of transience; the Elves' immortality making mortal lifespan seem even more fleeting while marking them as metaphysically other, unable to remain in Middle-earth as they are. What truly makes Rivendell impressive is the successful incorporation of said awareness into a culture that is positive, sustainable and has potential for growth, even as it strives to preserve the past for the sake of the future that the current residents will not be part of. The knowledge of the Elves' imminent departure does not detract from Rivendell's role as their home in the present, nor does it prevent Rivendell from becoming a home for others.

It is crucial to remember that the environment of Rivendell is not happenstance nor a guaranteed byproduct of Elven presence, despite transience being a fundamental facet of the Elven experience. There is extensive record of the Elves' inability to deal with their duality, "having as it were one foot in the glades of Middle Earth and one foot in their ancient home over the Sea"; the conflict of belonging having resulted in "tragic consequences for them in the various conflicts it caused." (Curry 2004, 51) While the matter is mostly glossed over in

LOTR – internal crisis lessened by the presence of an outside ultimatum for the Elder Folk to either leave or fade at the end of the Third Age (FR356, RK1006) – the tension is there in the text. It might be fascinating to pursue a more thorough study of *Silmarillion* and UT from the perspective of conflicting allegiances of belonging experienced by the Elves. That, however, is thought for later. For now, it suffices to say that Rivendell is the way it is because it was established and maintained to be a welcoming sanctuary for all, leading me my main finding: the intentionality of home.

Intentionality - "In this place will I abide"

"All we have to decide is what to do with the time given us." Gandalf (FR50)

One thing connecting each and every instance of home in LOTR is that they are intentionally constructed[49]. Even the tree-like Ents have their own cordoned off pieces of the forest, modified according to their likes and needs. The shape and form of the dwelling – if it even recognizable as such – is secondary to the commitment expressed in the act of settling and the continuous process of home-making. Quickbeam's ent-house, for example, is: "nothing more than a mossy stone set upon turves under a green bank. Rowan-trees grew in a circle about it, and there was water (as in all ent-houses), a spring bubbling out from the bank." (TT472. Sic.) Neither is it his original house – his previous home having been destroyed by the Orcs. Instead of clinging to the dead roots of the trees he had grown up with, Quickbeam moves to a safer location, plants himself a new circle of trees, and when opportunity arises brings the party responsible for the destruction to justice. It is truly ironic that a member of an ancient race literally rooted in their ways, is one of the best examples of intentional home-making in LOTR alongside Aragorn and Elrond – two notably transcultural individuals.

Home – whether a physical location or a figurative place of belonging – does not simply happen by itself. More importantly, belonging does not just happen. This is true on both individual and collective levels. Belonging requires mutual commitment. It is intentional. Not only does belonging need intention to be established but it is necessary for belonging to be maintained. Intentionally cultivating belonging is the make-or-break portion of home-making. A healthy, fluid concept of home: aware and accepting of its inevitable complexities and transience – makes it better sustainable in face of change; be internal or contextual,

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[49] Lairs of wild animals and monsters being different in this regard, although they too have been claimed for dwelling.

personal or global. Without initiative to implement said concept, however, even the greatest, healthiest, most inclusive vision of Home will remain but an idea, an incorporeal notion that not only does not answer the need to experience belonging, but in worst case scenario becomes a source of tension and anxiety due to the disconnect with the lived experience. Let me recapitulate, insight and understanding of home are only as good as their application. The opposite is also true. No home or community, no matter how rigid or stagnated, is a lost case by default. Quickbeam's example proves that even the Ents with their magically symbiotic relationship to the trees they shepherd are capable of re-establishing belonging after a loss, given they be roused enough to take initiative.

Maintaining the status quo does not require much effort. The example of the Shire demonstrates both the ease and the hazard of falling into complacency. Having lost their drive long before the time of the novel, the Hobbits not only lack any interest in implementing changes, they are completely unaware that change might be necessary or that their society might need revitalizing. The status quo essentially maintains itself through the unquestioned and largely subconscious reenacting of behaviors implemented as part of their nation-building effort – now viewed as tradition. This leaves no room whatsoever for any form of diversity. Individuals not fitting the static self-image having no hope of achieving belonging in the Shire.

The crucial importance of intent – of agency, initiative, personal responsibility – is revealed in the wake of a trauma, such as dislocation. It is the key factor distinguishing the two main patterns of post-traumatic behavior, the "working-through" and the "acting-out". (LaCapra, 2004:10.) Intention is largely what differentiates 'learning from' a traumatic event from being 'defined by' it. Granted, the reality of trauma is much less clear-cut than the either/or binary suggests. The variables include the severity and type of the trauma, available resources, cultural and family background, individual temperament, receptivity to treatment etc. Each of these affect the healing process. That said, I am convinced that the willingness to engage the trauma, to take part in the "critical and transformative work or play" (LaCapra: 2004: 10) is significant in and by itself – whether or not there is guarantee of a successful resolution. To borrow the titular phrase of trauma psychiatrist Bessel Van der Kolk (2014): "The body keeps the score". The "record" of the trauma is impossible to erase. [50] Therefore, whatever shape

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[50] Even in the classic Freudian sense, the trauma – repressed, frozen and unreachable – is nevertheless conspicuously present in its absence. (See Mambrol, 2018.)

the working-through may take – whether it leads to full recovery from the symptoms of trauma, or if it means accepting certain limitations and developing skills to best cope and mitigate their effect – what matters is the constructive response.

I have repeatedly referred to the Dwarves as a warning example of the wrong way of dealing, or more accurately – not dealing with their collective trauma. They are a textbook case of acting-out: reliving the pain of exile – quite literally in the case of Erebor – but even more so by repeatedly denying themselves the experience of belonging in the present out of misplaced loyalty to the lost ancestral Home; the loss of Moria rather than Moria itself the foundation of their group identity. (See *founding trauma* p.8, or LaCapra, 2004: 56.) The Dwarves' lack of agency is never more apparent than when contrasted with another group with a prominent foundation trauma – the Northern Dúnedain.

Where the Dwarves remain entrenched in their trauma, the Dúnedain use is as a catalyst to evolve. Though they stay in the geographical vicinity to their ancestral kingdom and maintain knowledge of their past, the Dúnedain Rangers develop into a distinct cultural group. Their experience of dislocation has had a significant impact of their both lifestyle and group identity. Unlike the Dwarves they do not remain dislocated: they are nomadic but not homeless, a remnant of a people but carry no sense of victimhood.

A marked difference between the largely symptomatic and liminal existence of the Dwarves and the living community of the Dúnedain is their ability to relate to others. The Dwarves as a rule are interested only in their own Legacy; forming no ties outside of the parameters set by their founding trauma. In comparison the Dúnedain, though little known as a group, are actively involved in the affairs of Middle-earth at large. They understand that if they are to restore Arnor in the future, they need to be invested in the present: maintaining the wellbeing of not just their own community but of the whole region, its people, and the land itself. This, in my view, indicates not just an awareness of the bigger picture, including an awareness of transience, but also communicates a deep sense of security that many other communities seem to lack. Individual Dúnedain, such as Aragorn, are free to travel away from the main encampment and mingle with other people without losing their place in the community. Likewise, at the end of the novel the Dúnedain make a choice to follow Aragorn to Gondor. Their willingness to change their home-environment, their lifestyle and to adopt a new identity as subjects of the unified kingdom a clear statement of their priorities. Their

collective sense of belonging and group identity based on inter-personal loyalty, on belonging to each other rather than on outside trappings.

Overall, the Dúnedain represent the type of fluid/dynamic home-being and belonging that I have been modeling in the previous sections. It is therefore no wonder that Aragorn – raised in a joint effort between Elrond and the Dúnedain – is a choice example of intentional home-making on an individual level. Aragorn consciously cultivates belonging, both locally and over distance. Whatever space he inhabits, he establishes relationships and invests in the surrounding community. His time with the Fellowship is no exception, which is why the remaining members of the fellowship gravitate towards Aragorn even after the end of the novel. Simultaneously he maintains a network of relationships that provide him with a sense of belonging, continuity, and security no matter his actual location. These are the relationships he can count on when he graduates from a wandering protector of the realm to king, who supported his quest for the throne and later help him make Gondor home.

The counter-example of this is, of course, Frodo. Unlike Aragorn's forward-facing trajectory, Frodo exists in a deepening cycle of post-traumatic isolation: dealing with the sense of non-belonging by withdrawing into self-sufficiency, which only feeds the trauma further. Another textbook example of acting-out. The dynamic is manageable while in the Shire: a personal take on the predominant status quo. However, when several new traumas are added on top of the unresolved one their lingering effect eventually becomes too much for Frodo to handle.

Long before reaching the stage of believing himself too wounded to heal – even his longing to belong gradually snuffed out – there is a notable deficit of intention in Frodo's life. As demonstrated in the analysis chapter, Frodo displays little to no initiative other than the quest of the Ring. For a majority of his life Frodo is content to remain within his own comfort zone in Bag End, lonely and dysfunctional though his life appears from the outside.

Engaging in a game of what-if, there were numerous opportunities throughout Frodo's adult life for him to make choices that would have steered him towards belonging. He could have left the Shire and found a place like Rivendell – and later, Gondor – where the culture is geared towards transnationals like himself. Even Bree, with its mixed population of Men and Hobbits, might have offered a fertile environment for Frodo to settle. Then again, having never truly experienced belonging, Frodo has no concept that he could actively seek it out let alone learn to generate it. In this regard home for Frodo is an impossibility. Double so in the

context of the Shire: its rigid culture unwilling to accommodate his otherness, Frodo too dispassionate to make an effort.

What both Frodo's and Aragorn's narratives convey is that the success of a TCK story does not hinge on the individual TCK alone. Outside input is absolutely vital: throughout their developmental years and later in life, before, during and after trauma.

Frodo, as we know, received very little in terms of parental support and guidance, which is why he developed such strong coping mechanisms to begin with. Even as I appreciate the poetics of a fundamentally flawed hero from a literary perspective; from the standpoint of my study – of finding solutions for sustainable home and belonging particularly in the context of the dislocated (and) TCK experience – the fading of Frodo appears as a loss. More so, it is in my view a loss that could have been avoided given outside intervention. Sam's support during the quest and after re-entry, while helpful, was not nearly enough. Nor would he have been the right person to challenge Frodo into recovery – lacking the position of authority, and, in all honesty, the awareness and wits for it.

Compared to Frodo Aragorn is so well-adjusted it is as if his personal history completely lacked the presence of trauma – something we know to be untrue.[51] This, in my surmise, is due to Aragorn's elders along with the heritage of exile passing on to him the skills necessary for prospering within their lived context. Indeed, it is not remiss to say that the majority things that allowed for Aragorn's smooth transition from one stage of his life to the next: his worldview, social skills, emotional intelligence, a sizeable chunk of the knowledge he possesses as well as the wisdom of applying it – is know-how invested into him by others.

Final summary

Home is a locatable expression, an "anchor" of belonging. It is a complex multifaceted space; one of these facets being transience – meaning that home is intrinsically prone to change and self-adjustment. Following a traumatic event, such as dislocation, both the experience off home and the concept of home are challenged. The more flexible the concept of home, the easier it is to retain to retain/reestablish a sense of continuity within the home post change

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[51] I have met a few TCKs like this Not many, and even among them there is a number who are likely to have repressed or dissociated from the less-easily-adjusted-to experiences. That being said I sincerely hope that with the increase of awareness among parents and educators well-adjusted TCKs will one day become the norm rather than the exception.

and between homes. Same applies to belonging. The more dynamic the concept, the easier it is to initiate and maintain.

This thesis proposes a notion of belonging – and through it home, or home-being – as performative: an ongoing process of commitment. As such, is a skill that can be learned, taught, and cultivated. The sense of belonging in this case is generated by having said commitment reciprocated. This model places main emphasis on intention: the actions and attitude of individuals and collectives being the make-or-break factor of home. Focusing on intention effectively demystifies Home and brings agency – and through that an infinite number of solutions – to the question of home. The role of intention becomes especially pronounced following trauma [such as dislocation]; often indicating the boundary between the constructive working-through and the symptomatic acting-out of trauma. The trauma is never fully erased, but the long-term impact of it varies greatly depending on the type of response.

Finally, it is not only the individual's own intent that matters. Emotional intelligence – the ability to recognize, express and process complex emotions – communication skills, rules of social conduct and cultural norms – these are all imparted onto a person by the surrounding culture during their formative years. The support of adults invested in teaching such life skills to is essential, especially to those of us who grew up in a highly mobile "third culture" environment, with no chance to absorb them "organically" as our monocultural peers would.

With the TCK and CCK experiences becoming more predominant, raising awareness of the "new normal" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010) and offering a vision of home and belonging that fits this transcultural reality – one that is dynamic and achievable instead of solid and easily lost, or worst case, impossible – can make a huge difference. By sharing the tools to deal with the potentially traumatic situations of the TCK experience: leaving, entry, re-entry, otherness – it is possible to mitigate, if not fully prevent their adverse effect. In short, make these experiences conquerable. This combined with the realization that home-making can be learned and belonging can be cultivated – and the "problem of home" is no longer all that problematic. Home becomes a place of potential. An open ended "here and…"

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