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Editorial

Greetings, all! Welcome to Hilary 2016’s issue of Miruvor. The second (and likely last) issue of my editorship, and the first and only non-“special” one (following the 25th Anniversary issue last year) I’m happy to see it go out to you voracious readers. This closing half of my tenure is taking place while I’m in exile in the Other Place – indeed you are holding an issue primarily composed in that enemy territory! Admittedly, however, my planned (and planned to be very biased, obviously) comparing cross-Varsity Tolkienian practices never materialised, primarily due to my failure to attend our rival Society. I have, however, managed to enter their Facebook group, so if anyone needs any covert operations carried out, I’m your Ranger.

So, we’ve a nice set of articles, with cover drawings from Martha, stories from Morgan, essays from Hebe and I, and a wondrous genre-spanning selection from Joe and Eleanor, reprising their apparent perpetual role as “people-who-write-the-most-for-Miruvor”.

The Miruvor story has a few updates. Since the publication of the 25th Anniversary issue I’ve been gradually posting the issues therein contained to the Miruvor blog. In September I finally finished doing so. The blog got plenty of views, 2,697 in 2015 to be exact, we got a couple of comments, plenty of ‘likes’, and even a detailed (if rather nit-picky) response to Joe’s calendar series on a forum! In Society news, the new Facebook page and group seem to be going strong.

The most momentous occurrence to relate, though, is that, primarily thanks to Matthew’s monumental efforts, every single back issue of Miruvor known to exist is now available to download as a PDF on the Back Issues page of the Miruvor blog, so do have a browse!

If this issue inspires you to write/draw/compose/blabber incoherently, I’m always happy to receive articles – send them in to the society account at taruithorn@gmail.com or the Miruvor
one at miruvor.editor@gmail.com and they should find their way to the current Editor. Do have a look at the blog at http://taruithornmiruvor.wordpress.com, especially the newly filled Back Issue page!

My thanks must go to all our contributors, and I hope you enjoy the issue,
Amrit,
Miruvor Editor

Tolkien and (Neo)Paganism

Martha Buckley
Mornington Crescent Representative, 2013–present

In some lights, Neopaganism could be considered a spirituality with an identity crisis. To many, what seems to be a polytheistic pick and mix appears to be on a search for legitimacy in the wider community. In this article, I hope to explore the thematic links between Tolkien’s work and contemporary Paganism. This isn’t an article about whether Tolkien was a treehugger, but rather how and why Tolkien’s writing has inspired so many Neopagans, and why it feels so comfortably familiar.

I should assert at the outset that I am a practicing Neopagan and a 16th century historian by training. This is intended to be a pretty light-hearted article, but I am happy to discuss its themes in more detail either here or in person. It is impossible to address the multiplicity of modern Pagan traditions here, but I attempt to define/defend my use of common terms and theories in the footnotes; please see the bibliography for more leads. Those readers with previous knowledge of Neopaganism and its current zeitgeist (or who want to get straight to the Tolkien!) may wish to skip to section 2.

1 The quest for identity – an overview.

1.1 A spirituality or religious movement gain validity both within and outside of its own community? This is a pressing concern for Neopaganism, which is still a relative newcomer to the theological scene. The history of Neopaganism is not something that can be discussed here (indeed, it has taken several authors several books!), but a quick sketch (with all the qualifiers it implies) is as follows, taking the example of the Druid movement; 17th century revival Druidy begins as a Christian mystery and charitable organisation (a little like modern Freemasonry), the Romantic movement builds on the awareness of beauty and divinity in nature, and the Victorians borrow meditation methods from Anglican and Buddhist sources, solidifying reverence for nature, personal development, and historically inspired ritual. Follow this with the ‘New Age’ philosophies of the 60s, the deepening ecological crisis, and an increasing yearning for the seeming simplicity of an earlier age, and you’ve got the basis for a historically aware nature-based polytheistic belief system2.

In current Neopagan writing, there is a pervading sense that the spirituality needs to define itself in different ways than simply with reference to ‘the other’; the monotheistic established world religions such as Christianity. “We are us because we are not them” isn’t a strategy that can be sustained long-term, particularly in the face of theological and practical approaches which blend Neopaganism with other major belief systems, giving rise to such titles as Christopaganism; an inclusive path, and Christian Wicca: The Tripartian tradition.3 If the answer to establishing the validity of Neopaganism is numbers, then the picture is heartening. The written responses to the ‘other religion’ option on the 2011 UK census show that 57,000 identified as Pagan, 11,766 Wiccan, and 4,189 Druid.4 Easy access to online material means that increasing numbers of people are finding access to information about alternative spiritualities, and Neopaganism, particularly Wicca, continues to grow in popularity in the US. So much for numbers.

When it comes to history, things are a lot more complicated. It is Neopaganism’s insistence on the need for a longstanding history that has arguably been one of the biggest reasons for its lack of widespread acceptance. In the wake of increasing scholarship on the modern Pagan movement and its antecedents, it has become increasingly futile to protest the ancient origins of the current system. In sum; ‘in the last few decades Pagans have been reasserting their origin myths…the old ‘facts’ included folkloric and early anthropological notions of the survival of the ancient religions in popular practices…much of this is now rejected by academics and Pagans alike’.5 In the words of the ever-direct and tongue in cheek Isaac Bowewits, ‘90 percent of what is available in print about the Paleopagan druids is nonsense…when in doubt, consult your nearest tree’.6

Neopaganism is becoming stronger as a movement as it recognises that ancient origins are not the be all and end all of spiritual legitimacy, and it begins to own its more modern characteristics. However, while Neopagans are largely happy to ‘borrow useful material from sources rejected by mainstream scholarship’ there is one aspect of Neopagan inspiration which even the more relaxed can sometimes be a little embarrassed to raise…

2. Fantasy Literature – Neopaganisms’ worst-kept secret?

A quick straw poll of the eleven books explicitly concerning (Neo)Paganism on my bookshelf, five mention fantasy literature and three mention Tolkien significantly enough that he gains a entry in the index. Considering that many of those are academic history works, it’s not a bad success rate! Fantasy literature is often the elephant in the room when it comes to Neopagan inspirations, and the more advanced Neopagan books become, the less likely they are to mention this awkward relative. One of the great exceptions is Listening People, Speaking Earth, which has a whole section on fantasy literature and paganism. It suggests that ‘Fantasy re-enchants the world for many people, allowing them to talk of elves…talking–trees and magic as well as showing ‘different ways of relating to the world, the use and abuse of power…and issues of race, gender and sexuality.’7 I would argue that this is by far not the only or most

1 My excuse at this point is that while writing this I was moving job, house, and office. I realize that there is much I have skated over, and hope that those looking for something else aren’t too disappointed! This needs a series rather than an article.
2 A potted and rather unforgiving history can be found in Davies, Owen, Paganism: A Very Short Introduction (OUP 2011). I would balance this with the first part of McColman, Carl, The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Paganism (Alpha 2002).
3 For more information on Neopagan syncrasis, see the section on modern Celtic-De movements in chapter 5 of Bonevits, Isaac, Essential Guide to Druidism (Citadel 2006) and Kuresh, Goldie, “From Muslim to Pagan” The Guardian 31-05-10 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/may/13/muslim-pagan-family?CMP=aff, 14328&mwc=5795_144750253_j05bf328d59df2882265078fb7bae
4 http://visual.ons.gov.uk/2011-census-religion/. Wicca and Druidry are the two largest subgroups of the Neopagan movement, with others including Shaminism and Heathenism
6 Bonewits, p.298.
8 Thoughout, I will use ‘paganism’ to refer to the pre-Christian traditions, and ‘Neopaganism’ for their more modern variants. As ‘religion’ suggests a fixed doctrine, I’m using the more nebulous ‘spirituality’ to cover multiple approaches.
9 And yes, sci-fi & speculative fiction too.
10 Harvey, Graham, Listening People, Speaking Earth (Hurst & Co. 1997), p.182.
important aspect of what fantasy literature means to Neopagans.

True, while many seek to find escapism in literature, Neopagans are actually a pretty grounded bunch when it comes to their religion. Many books for the beginner highlight the importance of continuing to engage with daily life, and to find spirituality in ordinary tasks, rather than withdrawing into meditation, escapism and divination, which can provide a skewed view of the spirituality and its purpose. To most Neopagans, the beauty of the world comes from getting out there and engaging with it; they are more likely to be hobbit gardeners than remote Lórien elves, and ritual work (which is by no means universal) usually ends with a drink, food, and a good chat! This aside, (and ignoring the fact that the vast majority of Neopagans don't believe in fairies and elves in the same way that they might believe in nature spirits and deities), the book raises a good point. An Idiot's Guide to Paganism hits closer to the mark in saying that ‘most people who embrace Pagan spirituality find that it's great fun to read books, watch films, and listen to music with pagan or nature-spirituality themes.’

In short, Tolkien's work feels very comfortable and familiar to Neopagans, despite the fact that it 'remained Christian and patriarchal'. Tolkien's use of myth and his attitudes towards nature are two of the main sources of this familiarity. Tolkien's use of mythology in his writing is well documented, and Norse, Finnish, and Anglo-Saxon tales proved a particularly rich vein of inspiration. Indeed, Tolkien himself was crafting the world of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings as a kind of alternative English mythology. Now with mythology, Neopagans feel on safer ground. Those who turn their nose up at fantasy will often be serious devotees of the saga.

A large part of attaining the rank of Bard, the first step on the road to Druidry, is the memorization of parts of epic myth cycles. The Mabinogion, The Kalevala, The Epic of the Tuatha de Dannan, The Song of Amergin, and mythology from Ancient Greece and Rome; all of these and more are central both to Neopaganism and many of its deities. For example, Brigit, Cernunnos, Lug, Hestia, Odin and Isis are some of the most popular deities of Neopagans, and multiple belief and myth systems can often be blended without qualms. While Fantasy literature is not often an acknowledged form of Neopagan origin, myths and legends have a high level of legitimacy.

As readers will know, it's a short step from myth to Fantasy. Perhaps this is where we can begin to see the clearest links between Tolkien and Neopaganism; shared wells of inspiration. It's clear that Tolkien's works are not Pagan in intention and ethos and their revolution of the “good” and “evil” dualism does not fit easily with Pagan visions of the world. In spite of this, much of Tolkien's inspiration and writing style chimes strongly with Neopaganism, in both context and execution.

3. **In every wood in every spring there is a different green** - A Neopagan mode of expression.

In every wood in every spring there is a different green; sings Bilbo in The Fellowship of the Ring. This celebration of nature and the longing to experience it in all its guises is something that is familiar to many modern Neopagans. Neopaganism, (whatever its many forms), is primarily a nature-venerating spirituality; celebrating the power and beauty of the Earth, the changing of the seasons, and the natural rhythms of life. This is perhaps best encapsulated in the reverence/respect with which many Neopagans view trees; something which, as will be seen below, may not have been unfamiliar to Tolkien. In fact, much of his world-view chimes with (Neo)Pagan views of nature. Parallels can be drawn between Neopagan reverence for the natural world and what I call the ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’ approach to nature, often found in Christianity, which holds that the natural world is a rare and beautiful place and we should therefore honour its creator.

For many of the same reasons that Tolkien's views of nature appeal to ecological activists and Christian thinkers, they hold relevance for Neopaganism. A clear example of this is Tolkien's story of the tree that inspired Leaf by Niggle, 'I awoke with it already in mind. One of its sources was a great-limbed poplar tree that I could see even lying in bed. It was suddenly dropped and mutilated by its owner, I do not know why. It is cut down now, a less barbarous punishment for any crimes it may have been accused of, such as being large and alive. I do not think it had a (and friends, or any mourners, except myself and a pair of vultures). Here, Tolkien uses emotive language, making the tree seem more human, or at least possessed with a spirit of its own; by far not his only use of this device. Tolkien's ultimate expression of trees as living beings comes with the Ents in 'Tolkien's reverence for the spirit of a tree that I've ever read outside of a Neopagan book; Pippin's recollection of Treebeard's eyes,

> "One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface were sparkling with the present; like sun shining on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake."

This chimes so completely with many Neopagan experiences of the sense of trees that it could have frankly been

11 MacColman, p.314.
12 Of course, this applies to many other authors with similar themes and use of mythology. See Neil Gaiman, Susan Cooper, Alan Garner, Terry Pratchett and Ursula Le Guin among others!
13 Harvey, p.182
14 I'm not going into this here, as there are those who are eminently more qualified than I. As a start, see Chance, Jane, Tolkien and the Invention of Myth (University Press of Kentucky 2004).
15 In contrast to this, there are some instances where fantasy novels have directly inspired Neopagan practice; for example, some of the rituals described in Marion Zimmer-Bradley's Mist of Avalon.
16 Harvey, p.182.
21 Carpenter, p.419.
22 Carpenter, p.420.
24 Tolkien, The Two Towers, p.452.
lifted from a modern tree meditation, where there is a sense both of rooted stillness in the past and branching growth on the surface. With this short description, Tolkien has provided a beautiful expression of tree-ishness which serves as a perfect example of how Neopagans feel about the natural world. This is by far not the only example of where Tolkien’s themes and style ring true with Neopagan readers. Here is one of my favourite exchanges in The Lord of the Rings:

“Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?”
“A man may do both,” said Aragorn. “For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time. The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day.”

It’s difficult to explain how much this resonates with me as a Neopagan. This is particularly the case in the treatment of the Earth itself as a matter of legend, the sense of inhabiting a living legend, and the idea of feeling connected to the past, present, future, and mythical landscape simultaneously. It is this sense of place and connectedness to the land that characterises much of Neopaganism: that by walking the land you are doing so aware of its spirit and those who have walked there before. The importance of a sense of place and the idea that the Earth has a memory of its own are two central Neopagan ideals, both of which can be found in Tolkien’s writing. The importance of place is reflected in the fact that each race has a homeland that echoes their own essential characteristics; the pastoral idyll of Hobbiton, the proud fastness of Minas Tirith, the secrecy and subterranean grandeur of the Dwarven kingdom. The most powerful expression of this is in the Elvish lands, where the bond between land and inhabitants is such that there seems to be a physical link between the landscape and those inhabiting it; consider how the trees of Rivendell and Lothlórien change as the Elves reach the end of their time in Middle Earth. In much of Tolkien’s writing, the link between person and place seems to be of such power that the act of leaving one’s landscape and heading into the unfamiliar affects one’s character. Consider how the Hobbits return from their adventures profoundly changed, and how Aragorn’s ability to “walk with kings nor lose the common touch” seems to come partly from his wanderings as Strider the ranger. Again, the Elvish realms seem to have the greatest transformative powers, and it is said that none leave Lothlórien unchanged.

Nature is not the only element of his writing where Tolkien seems to borrow ideas from Paganism. His descriptions of the Valar suggest the broadly thematic deities of polytheistic religious systems, Goldberry, Caradhras and Nímródel are clearly spirits of place, and his descriptions of the Queen in Smith of Wootton Major could have been lifted from Wiccan goddess literature.

“He was guided and guarded, but he had little memory of the ways that he had taken; for often he had been blindfolded by mist or by shadow, until at last he came to a high place under a night-sky of innumerable stars. There he was brought before the Queen herself. She wore no crown and had no throne. She stood there in her majesty and her glory, and all about her was a great host shimmering and glittering like the stars above; but she was taller than the points of their great spars, and upon her head there burned a white flame. She made a sign for him to approach, and trembling he stepped forward. A high clear trumpet sounded, and behold! they were alone.

He stood before her, and he did not kneel in courtesy, for he was dismayed and felt that for one so lowly all gestures were in vain. At length he looked up and beheld her face and her eyes bent gravely upon him; and he was troubled and amazed, for in that moment he knew her again: the fair maid of the Green Vale, the dancer at whose feet the flowers sprang. She smiled seeing his memory, and drew towards him; and they spoke long together, for the most part without words, and he learned many things in her thought, some of which gave him joy, and others filled him with grief.”

Above all, similar to Yeats and other writers who were certainly influenced by (Neo)Pagan thought, Tolkien displays a wonderful simple beauty in his descriptions of the natural world, and it is this reverence for nature which continues to enchant so many Neopagans.

“Suddenly, caught by the level beams, Frodo saw the old king’s head: it was lying rolled away by the roadside. ‘Look, Sam!’ he cried, startled into speech. ‘Look! The king has got a crown again!’

The eyes were hollow and the carven beard was broken, but about the high stern forehead there was a coronal of silver and gold. A trailing plant with flowers like small white stars had bound itself across the brows as if in reverence for the fallen king, and in the crevices of his stony hair yellow stonecrop gleamed.”

4. Conclusion

So there we are. Thirty-thousand odd words later, we have explored the modern Neopagan movement, the often unacknowledged importance of fantasy literature to Neopagans of all kinds, Tolkien’s views on nature, his use of Pagan themes, and why so many Neopagans feel so comfortable with Tolkien’s works. It seems that modern Neopaganism could become stronger from owning its fantasy inspiration. When in doubt, consult your nearest tree, or indeed, your nearest Ent…

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Most of these are available second-hand online. I am happy to lend those I have out to local Tanarth members.

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26 For an exploration of this idea in a different context, have a look at the ‘songlines’ of Australia. For the landscape of myth, see Larrington, Caroline, The Land of the Green Man (I. B. Tauris 2015)
27 Also consider how much of the safety of the house of Tom Bombadil seems to come from the place itself, and its link with Tom and Goldberry.
29 See Yeats, “The Song of Wandering Aengus”. C.S Lewis also admired his work, (but was less keen on his mysticism).
30 Tolkien, The Two Towers, p.687.
31 I hope that people of all religions and none have found something interesting here, and I apologise for any theological or literary errors (and for occasionally going on for too long about trees).
Unacknowledged Inspirations: Bacon’s Folly

Joseph Bartram

Beginnings are tricky things, slippery and hard to pin down. Most elusive of all, perhaps, are the beginnings of ideas. As fans and (occasional) scholars of the Professor’s works, how are we to pin down the origins of the various beloved characters, places and themes that are found within them? Could we pin Túrin Turambar down to any few external inspirations, and how might we tease out the connective threads that tie him to them? In a precious few cases, there exists both a one-to-one correspondence between fiction and fact, and we have documentary evidence supporting the connection. We are privileged to know a few of these – Sarehole Mill for the Hobbiton Mill, the Radcliffe Camera for the Temple of Moria in the Númenor, for example. In most cases, however, it is likely that the sources are too numerous, and the connections too tangled for us ever to discern inspirations with any certainty – and this is presuming, of course, that they were not spun whole-cloth from the Professor’s own fertile imagination. However, this same absence of documentary evidence also gifts us with licence for delicious speculation. Of course, any such speculation likely to be four-fifths reader applicability and one-fifth fact, but in my view this only adds to the fun. So, my fellow archaeologists of ideas, let us speculate!

Today’s source? Bacon’s Folly, the late-lamented crowning glory and eponym of the old Folly Bridge. If you’re new to Oxford, it is even possible that you haven’t yet made it out to Folly Bridge, straddling the River Isis some 500 yards beyond the confines of the old city walls, and far south of most undergraduates’ stomping grounds. Despite the distance, the landmark is central to the city’s history, occupying the location of the old cattle causeway, whence the city’s moniker derives. It once formed the northernmost extent of the Grandpont, the great Saxon causeway that cut through the marshes south of Oxford, carrying traffic between the Midlands and the South of England. The causeway now lies buried deep beneath the Abingdon Road, but the bridge remains.

The current incarnation of the bridge is a relatively modern piece of architecture by Oxford standards, erected in 1825–1827 after the design of the little-known London architect Ebenezer Perry. It replaced the previous incumbent by an act of parliament, obtained in 1815 due to the dangerously unstable condition of the foundations. Unsurprisingly, since the original stone bridge was then nearly 800 years old, having been constructed in 1085 during the reign of the first Norman lord of Oxford, Robert d’Oilli (D’Oyly). In good Tolkienian fashion, the Norman bridge laboured under many names – the descriptive yet uninspired “South Bridge”, “Friar Bacon’s Bridge”, and, latterly, “Folly Bridge”. These latter two shall make sense in time.

Sometime in the 13th century a defensive tower was built over the south end of the bridge, with portcullis, drawbridge, and heavy gates. The most famous and enigmatic inhabitant of the “New Gate” tower was the 13th century friar and polymath Roger Bacon (~1214-1292), after whom the tower, and thence the bridge, derived its alternative name of Bacon’s Folly. Bacon is a fascinating character, about whose exploits and insights entire books have been written. Over the course of his life he made contributions to domains as varied as linguistics, optics and astronomy. Myth surrounds the man like a cloak. Legend had it that such was Bacon’s intellect, he had devised matters such that the tower would fall upon any man wiser than the friar that passed beneath it. He was said to have constructed a grotesque brazen head imbued with the ability to prophesy, though by satanic possession or mechanical contrivance none could say. His work on optics has led to him being credited as the creator of the magnifying glass; and he was long thought to have been the first European to describe the ingredients and action of gunpowder. Subsequent scholars have disputed this last factoid, but the attribution – and the mystique – remains.

The tower itself persisted long after the old friar was put in the ground, though its original defensive role had lapsed by the 15th century. The tower continued to be used as a toll gate and became increasingly tickety and unsafe, especially after 1611, when its then-resident Thomas Waltham (Welcome) heightened the archway to permit larger carts to pass through it. The old warning to undergraduates of the tower falling on their heads rang increasingly true, and the construction eventually became known as Bacon’s Folly after its most famous inhabitant. Bacon’s Tower was finally torn down in 1779 to permit a widening of the road, an ignominious ending to such a distinguished resident of the city.

So, why am I telling you this? What possible connection could this obscure bit of history have to Tolkien? Well, I would like to present Bacon’s Folly as a strong contender to be the prototype for Orthanc, and Roger Bacon for Saruman. Now, before you all go rushing to debunk the idea, hear me out. All the extant depictions of the tower show a robust tower with a hexagonal cross-section, tapering gently with height. It bostred a great archway which rose above the Grandpont causeway, giving the impression of a figure with legs spread. This latter details seems irrelevant until one considers that in some of Tolkien’s earliest sketches of Orthanc, it sits upon a great arch balanced upon a short pinnacle of rock.

Then there is the semi-mythical figure of Bacon himself. He has been claimed (or perhaps, appropriated) as one of the first rationalists of the early modern era, a nascent scientific mind in a mystical age. He wrote extensively of various “engines” that might be used to propel boats or carts. To me, this echoes Saruman’s “mind of metal and wheels”, and the theme of (maligned) industry and rationalism that ran through his storyline. That this interpretation of Bacon has been largely debunked...
Tolkien and Materialism

Hebe Stanton

"The dwarves looked at him with quite a new respect, when he talked about dodging guards, jumping over Gollum, and squeezing through, as if it was not very difficult or very alarming.

What did I tell you?" said Gandalf laughing. "Mr Baggins has more about him than you guess." He gave Bilbo a queer look from under his busy eyebrows, as he said this, and the hobbit wondered if he guessed at the part of his tale that he had left out.

"Well, it did not skewer me, I am glad to say," said Frodo; "though I feel as if I had been caught between a hammer and an anvil! He said no more. He found breathing painful.

'You take after Bilbo,' said Gandalf. 'There is more about you than meets the eye, as I said of him long ago.' Frodo wondered if the remark meant more than it said.

What does Gandalf mean when he says "There is more about you than meets the eye?"

In context, it's a curiously ambiguous thing for him to say. It is, of course, at least in part a statement of the books' theme: that the small and the weak and the singular are as capable of and as responsible for great deeds of courage and cleverness as are the wise and the powerful. But what's interesting about the wizard's rather cryptic remark is that in both cases we are asked to infer, or at least to suspect, that he knows that an apparently unhobbitlike feat of cleverness or courage has in fact been enabled by the possession of a magical object: Bilbo's Ring, left out from his tale of escape from Gollum and the Misty Mountains; and Frodo's mithril-coat, which prevents him being skewered by a cave-troll. In both cases we're asked to entertain two apparently contradictory surmises: one, that hobbits are intrinsically more worthy than they seem; and two, that hobbits are cleverer, tougher or braver than they seem because they happen to have the right magical talisman about their person. At some point, the possession of material goods seems to have become conflated with the possession of fortitude, or cunning, or the ability to survive. (I don't think, incidentally, that this is the same as saying that the Ring and the coat are symbolic of fortitude or cunning, however. "I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations", as Tolkien is so kind as to inform us.)

The importance of material goods to Tolkien's worldview is immediately obvious when you think about it: his three major fictional works, The Silmarillion, The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings— all revolve around objects of one kind or another: the Silmarils, Smaug's dragon-hoard (and the Arkenstone), the One Ring. All of these objects cause strife, jealousy, tragedy, the breaking of friendship, and it's easy to draw the conclusion that Tolkien's idea is at root anti-capitalist; that the words of Thorin at the end of The Hobbit, "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world", are supposed to exhort us to give up all our treasures immediately and go sit round a campfire cheerfully eating bacon and eggs for the rest of our lives. But this conclusion, I think, is reductive. It's clear that material objects, their creation and possession, aren't in themselves evils: the Silmarils are holy and Beren and Luthien's creation and possession, aren't in themselves evils: the Silmarils are holy and Beren and Luthien are clearly blessed to own them without strife; the Silmarils, Smaug's dragon-hoard (and the Arkenstone), the One Ring. All of these objects cause strife, jealousy, tragedy, the breaking of friendship, and it's easy to draw the conclusion that Tolkien's idea is at root anti-capitalist; that the words of Thorin at the end of The Hobbit, "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world", are supposed to exhort us to give up all our treasures immediately and go sit round a campfire cheerfully eating bacon and eggs for the rest of our lives. But this conclusion, I think, is reductive. It's clear that material objects, their creation and possession, aren't in themselves evils: the Silmarils are holy and Beren and Luthien are clearly blessed to own them without strife; Frodo's mithril-coat is a "kindly gift" which saves his life; the reforging of the legendary sword Narsil signals the renewal of the hope of Men.

Are there beings in Tolkien's work who don't place importance on material goods?

Well – yes.

"Little she knew of or cared for towers, or rings, or anything devised by mind or hand, who only desired death for all others, mind and body, and for herself a glut of life, alone, swollen till the mountains could no longer hold her up and the

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the remarkable website "Where Thames Smooth Waters Glide" (http://thames.me.uk/), which is a gold mine of information on the waterways of Oxford. To the best of my knowledge, the owner John Eade was the first to draw the connection between Bacon's Folly and Isengard, which I have fleshed out here. Full credit goes to him for the original idea. His pages on Bacon's Folly (http://thames.me.uk/s01700.htm#top) and the Folly Bridge (http://thames.me.uk/s01690.htm#top) were a major source in writing this article. My heartfelt thanks!

is largely irrelevant. More straightforwardly, Bacon also had the reputation of a wizard in his own time, while his dabblings in alchemy and the attribution of the discovery of gunpowder to him inevitably recall the "deity of Orthanc."

Finally (and perhaps I am over-reaching here), what else might we call a tower that guards the Thames boundary than Isis-guard? Isengard, anyone?

2 Indeed, it seems that each generation of scholars has coloured the friar with their own concerns and preoccupations.
darkness could not contain her." 

"If he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind."

"But Aule the Maker said: 'Be not hasty! We ask a greater thing than thou knowest.'"

Shelob, Tom Bombadil, Yavanna: the characters who don't seem to understand the power of material objects are all Maia or Valar. (I'm assuming Shelob is at least part-Maia, given that she is descended from Ungoliant, who definitely is Maia.) We can go further: none of the Valar are strongly associated with any kind of material object, save perhaps Aule's hammer, which crops up maybe twice. We also never see Aule the Maker actually making anything specific. The first symptom of the ending of the bliss of Valinor is the wholesale forging of swords and shields by the Noldor, and the Silmarils aren't very good for it either – in fact, despite their holiness, none of the Silmarils actually end up in Valinor. My point here is that Tolkien seems to be drawing an important distinction between the immortals, the Valar and the Maia, who couldn't care less about owning stuff, and the races of Middle-earth, who will actually literally die to get their stuff back. (Yes, Feanor, I am looking at you.) Frodo has to give up his home and everything he owns when he leaves Middle-earth for Valinor; more pertinently, the last departure of the Elves from Middle-earth comes about as a result of the destruction of an object (the Ring) and the consequent failure of three more (the Elven-rings). It's important to note that neither of these events is an entirely joyous one: the Elves in particular are jolly sad to be leaving the world. So the importance of material possessions to the people of Middle-earth isn't just a sort of Christian indictment on the flawed nature of the world; it's a trait which is actually basically intrinsic to existing in this Middle-earth.

We've noted that possessions aren't, in Tolkien's worldview, morally evil; nor, I think, are they usually cast as morally good. Instead, I think, we're supposed to take a character's relationships with objects as an index of their relationship with the world; that is, for Tolkien, created objects, midway between external nature and internal personhood, are how people access and understand the world. So the transferral of the Elflstone from Arwen to Aragorn signifies a decision to commit and a choice to become mortal; Frodo's attack on Shelob with the phial of Galadriel is an act of defiance, a choice to believe in something more enduring than despair; Bilbo's trading away of the Arkenstone, as well as showing a canny awareness of what objects mean under this system, performs his understanding of friendship and peace as something greater than dragon-treasure. (We note, however, that he's still perfectly happy to take two chests of gold and silver home with him.) Tolkien is often quite fiercely mocked for his apparent complete lack of interest in the inner lives of his characters, but perhaps this is precisely the point: as mortals and as physical creatures, we can't ever really know anyone else. We have instead to watch for signals: for how characters perform the world of their thought and impose it upon the world in which they actually exist.

I think we can link this with Tolkien's thoughts about art, or, more specifically, about story and song. Arda is made by song; which is only another way of saying that the entire physical world is a performance, an act of creation, an imposing of Ilúvatar's world of thought upon that which actually exists: the void. The novels are full of such acts of narrative creation, in miniature. What happened when the Ents came to Isengard? When Aragorn led the Dead to Pelargir? When Gandalf fell in Moria? It's easy to forget that these are actually gaps in the narrative; it isn't Tolkien who tells us what went on but the characters themselves, imposing the interpretative world of internal experience onto events in the external world in the form of story, of creative art – these experiences aren't told as dialogue or in summary but as extended paragraphs of narrative. Created things – material and immaterial – become intermediaries, between the closed sphere of the skull and the closed sphere of Middle-earth.

Which brings me back to my original question: what does Gandalf mean when he says "there is more to you than meets the eye"? He means, of course, exactly what he says. Bilbo's use of the Ring in the tunnels of the Misty Mountains is not symbolic of his resourcefulness, but a performance of it; Frodo's survival of the blow of the cave-troll isn't symbolic of his fortitude but a way of embodying it forth, of describing it in terms of the physical world. Of course, for this to work, characters have to have control of objects: after all, "he who cannot cast a treasure aside at need is in fetters". This, perhaps, is the key to why the Ring must be destroyed: it begins, invincibly, to master its bearer, to reverse the processes of performance and interaction with the world, to destroy freedom of expression and creation. Though it is Saruman's weapon, it is one which goes beyond his will to develop one of its own; as an object which no longer acts like an object, an object which disturbs subjectivities, its only fitting fate is the fire, and oblivion.

A version of this piece was originally posted on Hebe's blog, at englishmadness.wordpress.com.

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Every Minstrel hath his Song

Eleanor Simmons

Six albums inspired by the Lay of Leithian.

"For every minstrel hath his tune; and some are strong and some are soft, and each would bear his song aloft, and each a little while be heard... though rude the note, and light the word."

Looking through the old Miravor issues so lovingly digitised by Matthew and Amrit, I was struck by a 2002 argument by Anna Vaninskaya on 'Tolkien's place in Western culture', in praise of Ainulindale's The Lay of Leithian's "not remotely dramatic" instrumental treatments of Tolkien's poetry. Several Googling frenzies later, I found myself with many hundreds of words worth of notes about folk, death metal, prog rock and operatic treatments of the story of Beren and Lúthien, in a draft email filled with fragments like "you can really tell what's happening in this one", "not remotely dramatic" and 'Lúthien, my darling!' (A quick disclaimer: I am, as my friends will happily attest, totally musically inept, and have no authority whatsoever to discuss either prog rock or classical symphonic poems. My reviews are accordingly highly biased and driven by personal taste, though I have done my best to give an accurate impression of each album.)

Ainulindale, Lay of Leithian (2003)

Ainulindale's Lay of Leithian is mainly ambient, with nature effects and some spoken word sections overlaying delicate acoustic instrumentation. The music is gentle and evocative, but I was never quite able to enjoy it fully, being too distracted by trying to make out the very quiet spoken dialogue. In my several playthroughs of the album, I vainly tried, with stereo headphones, to hear what on earth the narrator was saying. Result: I could just about make out some of Thingol's speeches.

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Lay of Leithian

"There is more to you than meets the eye"".

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There is one sung piece on the album, which uses the motif of the Music of the Ainur to treat Beren and Lúthien’s journey to Angband and the taking and losing of the Silmaril. This track, unfortunately, exemplifies the album at its most chaotic, with sound effects, narration, sung chants and music all distracting from each other - a real shame, for the music itself is lovely.

Ultimately, I couldn’t even quite tell what Ainulindale’s album was trying to achieve. The music itself is enjoyable as an “inspired by” piece, but couldn’t be said to tell a dramatic and engaging story. That said, Lay of Leithian is an early effort by the French band - listening to their later album, Nevarist, I found the music more self-assured, marrying vocals, harmonies and narration, including sections where the music is halted and it successfully relies on sung narration alone to carry the listener along.

How to listen: Lay of Leithian is available to listen and purchase at https://ainulindale.bandcamp.com/. Other albums are available on Spotify.

_Ainur, Lay of Leithian (2009)_

Ainur’s Leithian, by contrast, capitalises the dramatic potential of the Lay. The album is a triumph of a project - a 2-disc, progressive rock symphony with over ten singers, three narrators, fifteen musicians playing a variety of instruments and a full orchestra on certain tracks! Musically, it ranges from prog and symphonic rock to metal and classical styles - Barbara Bargnami’s soprano on Lúthien’s set-piece arias was particularly excellent, though opera haters may find her cadenzas a chaotic, with sound effects, narration, sung chants and music all distracting from each other - a real shame, for the music itself is lovely.

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How to listen: Lay of Leithian is available to listen and purchase at https://ainulindale.bandcamp.com/. Other albums are available on Spotify.
How to listen: This 22-minute poem can be streamed on Spotify, or purchased through Amazon.

Lind Erebos, Elven Oratory III: The Lay of Leithian

And, finally, we come to my favourite of these six sets of music, described by the composer as “fantasy and instrumental guitar ballad with a symphony orchestra accompanied the Bolskoi Academic Choir”. Slightly rock, slightly neoclassical, with singing in both English and Quenya, Lind Erebos does their best to fit the entire story into 47 minutes, and as such, the pace cracks along, along with time for quiet, contemplative moments and dark foreboding doom both.

Musically, it puts me in mind of Riccardo Cocciante’s superlative Notre-Dame de Paris score. The scope is pleasingly epic and, the worst is perhaps Beren’s reflection: “Now my path lies to the North/ To Dorthonion land and forth/ I feel sad/ My doom lies ahead”

In conclusion: I find this confident, sweeping and epic, the album of all six that most ‘feels’ like Beren and Lúthien even in very abridged form and with some incongruously modern passages or odd expressions. You have to take the lyrics for what they are though.

How to listen: Can be streamed on Spotify or the band’s Youtube, and bought on Amazon/ iTunes/Google Play. Composer’s website: http://www.linderebios.com

Conclusion:

And there you have it, a biased and subjective account of the labours of love of a group of remarkably talented composers, singers and musicians, inspired by Tolkien’s story of an elf, a man and a talking dog to write and compose and perform and record their own expression of what it means to them.

Considering how closely the Lay depends on music, it is not surprising that musical treatments of this particular bit of the Legendarium are so abundant. Not only does the story contain a duel of song, a lament tragic enough to melt the heart of Mandy, a song that literally calls Spring into Doriath, characters of the greatest minstrel ever and one of the most powerful dancers, together with assorted multiple musical spells, death laments and hymns to Lúthien’s beauty (though some of these do overlap), it is itself in-universe a poetic treatment of an elven song-cycle.

Music is always Significant in Tolkien’s works. It is – in the most literal sense – a force that shapes the world, and singing is an assertion of power and of free will. Each singer seeks to “bear his note aloft” and alter, in a small way, the Music of Arda.

Is it any wonder then, that lovers of Tolkien’s works will choose to do the same?

An Attempt at Computational Analysis of Tolkien

Amrit Sidhu-Brar

Miruvor Editor, Treasurer 2014-15, Secretary 2013-14, Society Hero

SOMETIMES SEVERAL TERMS AGO, while I was procrastinating from doing physics, I decided to attempt to make my computer analyse Tolkien.

“He’s mad”, I hear you say. Indeed, I am. But here I think I’m being at least not too far outside the realms of reasonable. So I sat down with MATLAB, found some slightly dodgy text files of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit on the internet (it’s okay if I own the books, right?) and had a go at a few things. Due to my personal sloth, this article is not a deep or structured investigation in any way, nor do I really draw any conclusions – perhaps because what I am doing is actually fairly useless. It ends up more as a kind of “oh, a computer can do that, so here are some pretty graphs”, rather than “wow, that’s an interesting new thing I now know about Tolkien”. But hey, it’s better than nothing, and quite fun. Also, did I mention the graphs were pretty?

Attempt 1: Fourier analysis

After spending a while getting them into a state where I could analyse them (I had to make them into very long columns of words), the first thing I decided to do was try some Fourier analysis. A Fourier transform is a mathematical process which transforms (indeed) a data series over time into one over frequency – this might seem a little impenetrable, so let me have a go at clarifying it: loosely speaking, it identifies the period over which patterns repeat. If you put in the data from a newspaper article about moons more often close to full moon, I thought that was mildly interesting, and wondered what would come up in Tolkien: is there anything that happens typically over a certain period (of number of words) in the works? I would expect, for example, that the word “chapter” would have a spike over a scale that’s typical of chapter length. Maybe there are more interesting ones? Maybe Tolkien uses the word “little” only when he hasn’t for a while? I don’t know. It seemed a good idea at the time.

Well, I had a go, did a little programming, and failed spectacularly. In fact, I wasn’t even able to get the “chapter” example above to work. The problem I faced is one that I’m sure could be overcome with a little more technical knowledge1, but I think I’m not that confident that there’s all that much to be found by the Fourier method. I abandoned it in favour of trying something else.

Attempt 2: Word-occurrence graphs

Next I tried something simpler. I’d already written a word-searching-out algorithm for the Fourier stuff, so I applied it somewhat more over a long period, then Fourier transformed it, what you’d get would probably be a graph with two big spikes: one corresponding to a period of 24 hours, and the other to a period of 365 days. Temperature varies daily and yearly. Understand?

The reason I got this idea was because I’d read somewhere on the internet (I’ve just utterly failed at finding the article) that someone had analysed the distribution of the word “moon” in newspaper articles over several decades, and come up with a spike at a period of a month: people write about moons more often close to full moon. I thought that was mildly interesting, and wondered what would come up in Tolkien: is there anything that happens typically over a certain period (of number of words) in the works? I would expect, for example, that the word “chapter” would have a spike over a scale that’s typical of chapter length. Maybe there are more interesting ones? Maybe Tolkien uses the word “little” only when he hasn’t for a while? I don’t know. It seemed a good idea at the time.

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straightforwardly to just produce graphs of where in the book the words I was looking for occurred. To choose a somewhat obvious example, "Legolas" and "Gimli" appear in *The Fellowship of the Ring* only once their characters are introduced (see Figure 1). This seemed to work perfectly.

The problem that I encountered was that it turned out that the only things I could think of trying out that gave clear results were all obvious examples. "Strider", it would appear, is used almost exclusively in a lump between about 40% and 60% of the way through *Fellowship*, after which "Aragorn" begins to be used (see Figure 2). Looking at the graph of "Gandalf" over *The Lord of the Rings*, one can see his absences during the Hobbits' travelling to Rivendell (see Figure 3). Well, I suppose those are mildly interesting.

I then had what I thought was a wonderful idea, which was to have a go at something that I later found out was called *sentiment analysis* (after my later discovery I treated it again by another method, see Attempt 4 below). My idea was that I'd plot words like "good" "light" "pleasant" "fair" against words like "bad" "evil" "loss" "despair" "vile" "dark", and see if I could see any pattern of happy bits against sad bits. The results were not entirely inconclusive, as can be seen in Figure 4, but neither were they all that clear, especially compared to those obtained below.

**Figure 1:** Occurrence of "Legolas" and "Gimli" over *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Clearly they only appear in the story after their appearance in Rivendell.

**Figure 2:** Occurrence of "Strider" and "Aragorn" in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Entering the book only once the Hobbits reach Bree, we near-exclusively refer to the noble and rather attractive Ranger as "Strider" until Rivendell, after which "Aragorn" is used.

**Figure 3:** Occurrence of "Gandalf" in the whole of *The Lord of the Rings*. Visible are the gaps from about 30–70k words, where the Hobbits journey to Rivendell sans wise old wizard; from 140–220k, the period after Grey but before White; and 270–330k and 400–430k, Frodo and Sam's stints alone in Books IV and VI.

**Figure 4:** My early attempt at sentiment analysis of *The Hobbit* using my own program. The blue bars (below) are the negative set, comprising the set {dark, bad, evil, loss, despair, fear, vile}, while the yellow bars (above) are positive, comprising {good, fair, joy, light, pleasant}. Note that only the relative size of the blue to the yellow at any point is relevant, not the absolute sizes of the bars. So we can see areas where the negative signal is relatively strong compared to the light, namely around 21k words – the company's stint with the goblins and Gollum, and the region around 40k words – Mirkwood. But largely speaking, it's fairly unclear, especially when compared to the later results seen using *syuzhet* (see below). The equivalent graph for *The Lord of the Rings* is appended as Figure 7.

**Figure 5:** Covariance table for *The Hobbit*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frodo</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Merry</th>
<th>Pippin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frodo</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pippin</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The figure of 0.18 indicates that, if in a certain 500-word fragment of *The Lord of the
Rings, Frodo appears, then it is more likely than not that Sam does, too. The signals of fragments where Frodo appear and where Sam tend to co-vary. However, the -0.05 in the Frodo-Merry box means that it is more likely that Merry will not occur in a fragment containing Frodo. So, what have we found? Sam and Frodo appear together frequently, but not as frequently as do Merry and Pippin. Furthermore, these two pairs tend to keep separate: they contra-vary. This broadly makes sense: Merry and Pippin are together during a lot of the story, as are Frodo and Sam, while significant parts of the story contain only one of the two sets of Hobbits, e.g. the whole of Books III and IV. What I found interesting is that Frodo and Sam’s co-variation is so much less than Merry and Pippin’s, a fact that changing the scale from 500 did little to affect. My theory (for which I have absolutely no evidence) is that Frodo is often mentioned in isolation by other characters, while Sam appears more frequently when he’s actually in the action.

At this point, I abandoned the project for a few months while finals happened and, later, because I just forgot to continue it.

**Attempt 4: Sentiment analysis**

I picked up my digital-Tolkien-analysis again when I discovered on the internet that digital literary studies are an actual thing. Reading the blog of Prof. Matthew Jockers (http://www.matthewjockers.net/), and later his book, *Macroanalysis*, among various other parts of the internet, I learnt about the academic community that’s been working on the use of computers for the study of literature. While computation has been used in the field of linguistics for a long time – speech recognition, corpus linguistics and the like, as well as for things like authorship attribution (I was dimly aware of these things) – there are people out there using computers to understand the literary qualities of works. A lot of the most exciting work I read about related to large corpora of novels, a “distant reading” to correspond to conventional academic literary studies’ “close” variety. There are some really truly fascinating things that can be done, it seems, and I’d certainly recommend a perusal of the book I mentioned – but naturally such studies were a little beyond my ability. The relevant factor to this essay is that I learnt on the mentioned blog about *sentiment analysis*.

The idea is somewhat like what I had a go at above: stories have “shapes”, signals of how positive their sentiment is over time: in *The Hobbit* we’re at a low when we’re captured by the trolls, but at a high once we escape. Jockers was, broadly, interested in these signals for use with large corpora (the “macro” in “macroanalysis”), in attempting to identify similarities in the shapes of stories, in trying to find archetypes which most stories conform to1. In order to do this, he assembled a code package named *syuzhet* to do the analysis rapidly for any digital book – put in a book and it will attempt to give out this “sentiment signal” over the book’s length. Various criticisms of it have emerged2; the algorithm most certainly isn’t perfect and does make mistakes, but broadly, it seems to work.

Where this becomes of relevance to us is that the lovely Professor Jockers then made the package freely available online. After acquainting myself with the environment for which it was written, a statistics one snappily called R, I availed myself of the professor’s kind offer, and set the package to work, naturally, on *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. I was rather pleased with the results, if I may say so myself. Figures 5 and 6 show the sentiment signals for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* as produced by *syuzhet*. For *The Hobbit* I’ve identified the major events of the book on the graph, and you can see how it roughly corresponds to what we’d expect. I’ve left the *Lord of the Rings* graphs blank, due mostly to laziness, and partly so that you can see what you can make of them. What do you think?

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1 *Macroanalysis*, Matthew Jockers, 2013. I wasn’t as enthused about the book as I might have been, primarily because it draws its examples exclusively from Professors Jockers’ specialism, namely 19th-century Irish and Irish-American literature, a field about which I know precisely nothing. However, it did present some truly astounding ideas about some insights that computers can bring to literature, and I’d certainly recommend it. For example, analysis of his corpus of tens of thousands of novels, specifically of the hundreds occurrence of common, theme-insensitive words that make up the large majority of any text, allowed the creation, loosely speaking, of a kind of map (in many more dimensions than two) of a stylistic landscape upon which individual works may be pinpointed. It turned out that on the ‘map’ there were fairly significant areas corresponding to things like nationality, gender, time of writing, age, social status. One can then find the works which don’t fit in where they ‘should’ – and see what makes them different. Analysis of similarity only forwards in time allowed an analysis of influence in style. There was a lot to be interested in. Professor Jockers has also written a textbook, *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature*, published 2014, which I intend to try to get my hands on at some point.

2 See his post about it at http://www.matthewjockers.net/2015/02/25/the-rest-of-the-story/.

3 e.g. those at https://annieswafford.wordpress.com/2015/03/02/syuzhet/ . Note that I didn’t use the Fourier method to smooth the signal, instead the moving average method as Swafford suggests.
Conclusion

So I don’t think this was an utter failure. When I mentioned what I was trying in a meeting last year, Joe called it “the one time he’s seen interdisciplinary stuff actually work”, so I suppose that’s positive. We’ve found some interesting things, and if it hasn’t really told us much about Tolkien, it has told us something about what some time with a computer can get out of a book. I feel the main barrier to this thing being very useful is finding the right questions to ask, rather than having the methods present. I didn’t put a huge amount of work into this little project, but the results have been promising enough for me to want to take it further and, since I learnt it’s not just a crazy thing I made up, to learn more about the work that’s been done on computational literary studies. Also, I note that it doesn’t seem anyone’s applied this to any mediaeval languages yet … perhaps I’ve found my academic niche!

Lembas Recipes

Joseph Bartram

Lembas. We all know that one small bite is enough to fill the stomach of a grown man, but how, when we get right down to it, did it taste? The record will show that the waybread of the elves was originally made by Yavanna from corn, and the knowledge of its making passed into Middle Earth from Aman with the Noldor. By the time of the War of the Ring, the recipe seems to have evolved, and included honey, as well as the fruit of the Mallorn tree (a nut with a silver shale). As the Professor could have used the word, corn could actually refer to any domestic cereal, rather than just maize. The lembas of Lothlórien were further described as being thin and regularly shaped, cream coloured with a light brown crust. Given all these details, the model for lembas seems to have been soldiers’ hardtack, a type of cracker typically involving little more than flour, salt and water. These they resemble in both form and function, though of course being rather more palatable.

To solve the mystery of lembas, we assembled an expert company of tasters, with taste buds fortified and discerning from many years of dining on the excellent provender of our Lembas Reps. This brave company were then subjected to a trio
of lembas recipes, delved from the deepest, darkest corners of the internet. What follows is our report on the experiment.

**Recipe the 1st**

Our first recipe is the simplest. It also leaves the most to the imagination – there were no instructions for baking times, and no indication as to how to shape the dough for baking. In the absence of any guiding information, we divided the dough into small balls, and flattened these out into thick, round disks.

**First impressions:**

The dough itself was very stiff, and rather reminiscent of marzipan. The first batch were baked for about 25 minutes, which as it turned out, was rather too long – they came out rather dry, with a chewy crust. Nothing at all like the description of Lembas as “very heavy bread that does not puff up”. Flavour-wise, orange dominated, though not unpleasantly. Surprisingly, they were not overbearing sweetness, and indeed could probably have done with more in that regard – perhaps a dusting of icing sugar would have completed them.

Recipe the 2

The second batch were made a little smaller, and baked for 20 minutes. These were much nicer, especially once cooled, but the problems afflicting the first batch remained. It was suggested that they might have worked better if the dough had been rolled out into a sheet, and cut using a cookie-cutter to make thinner biscuits.

**The verdict:**

Of all the recipes we tried, this recipe adheres most closely to the description given by the Professor (if one takes almonds as an acceptable substitute for Mallorn fruit). That said, they’re more of a rough orange cram than an elegant Lembas, though personally I thought they were more like chewy almond biscuits than either. Eleanor got to the heart of the problem by describing them as something a poor hobbit might make to entertain guests for afternoon tea, if they didn’t have anything else. Rough, inedible, and far too fruity. 2 elves turning up their noses in disgust out of 5

**The recipe:**

Makes enough biscuits to batter a mountain troll to death

2 cups / 270g bread flour
1 cup / 240ml honey
1 tsp vanilla extract
340g ground almonds
Zest of one orange
2 eggs
Dash of orange juice

Mix ingredients together into a dough, adding flour as needed

Bake at 160°C until golden brown, about 20 minutes (our estimate)

The original recipe called for ¼ tsp of orange extract. I didn’t have any orange extract, so we used the juice from half an orange instead. Even with this concession, the dough was too dry, and so we added about 2 tbsp of whole milk to bind it

**Recipe the 2nd**

The recipe calls for a pixelle or krumkake iron (Italian and Scandinavian variants on thin waffle irons). I didn’t have access to one of these, so we used a plain waffle iron. In retrospect, we were of the opinion hot frying pan might worked better.

**First impressions:**

The batter was very thick and didn’t spread well in the iron, making the resulting pancake come out rather thicker than intended. The semolina flour was also too coarse to sift, so it also came out rather lumpy. Using a finer grade of semolina flour was also too coarse to sift, so it also came out rather lumpy. Using a finer grade of semolina might solve this. The given cooking time (6–10 minutes) was also rather too generous – we only gave ours about 3–4 minutes in the iron, and even then they were rather dark by the time they were removed.

This version of lembas is cooked like a pancake, but somewhat the final product didn’t feel like one. They were surprisingly soft, but paradoxically rather gritty due to the coarse semolina flour. Personally I liked this texture, but the taste buds of the company were against me. They didn’t have anything else. Rough, inedible, and far too fruity. 2 elves turning up their noses in disgust out of 5

**The verdict:**

Easily the most controversial of the three.

While I rather liked the texture, most found it unpalatable. Alone, this might have been forgivable, but the taste was poor and the lembas rapidly became stodgy and unpleasant as they cooled. Whatever this was, it wasn’t lembas.

**1 out of 5 worm-riddled dwarves rejected as troll food**

**The recipe:**

Makes about 8 waffles, or enough to make you never want waffles again

240g ground almonds
2 1/4 cups / 380g semolina flour
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp grated fresh nutmeg
3 eggs
0.25 cup melted butter
2 tbsp orange juice
1 tbsp balsamic oil (we used vegetable oil)
1 cup honey (preferably wild honey)

Mix dry ingredients, then add eggs, melted butter, orange juice and hemp oil
Mix, then add honey
Pour onto griddle, leave 6–10 minutes
We made no alterations to this recipe, beyond the type of cooking iron used.

**Recipe the 3rd**

This recipe holds the singular conceit of claiming to be a facsimile of Tolkien’s own recipe, acquired when perusing the Professor’s own notes in a “secret library” while on a scholarship in Oxford. I’m not even going to bother debunking this particular claim, leaving it to the reader to do so themselves.

The recipe itself was undeniably the most complex of the three, and also the most bread-like. Not something to make when in a hurry! It was also unusual in that is made extensive use of cheese as an ingredient.

**First impressions:**

Personally, I like these. They make quite tolerable cheese rolls, and were a nice contrast to the sweetness of the other two recipes we tried. With a little butter, I would quite happily have nosed on these while waiting for dinner at a posh restaurant. That’s said, we all felt they were rather too dense for proper bread – though they’re certainly filling enough to be lembas!

**The verdict:**

These were also controversial. Evaluated as a cheese roll, it is rather bland, and could do with rather more kick – either more cheese, or a more strongly-flavoured variety, perhaps a strong yellow cheese. Some of the company found the flavour to be subtly “sicky” (probably the parmesan at work), which is never a good sign. Furthermore, having kept a few to try later, I can also confirm that they do not keep for more than a day.**

**3 out of 5 hobbits simply walking into Mordor to find some hot sauce**

**The recipe:**

Makes enough buns to feed an army of hobbits

25g yeast
100ml yoghurt [greek?]
300ml water
1 1/3 cup / 80g butter
50ml olive oil
2 heaped tbsp honey
2 tbsp flax seeds (linseed)
2 tbsp sesame seeds
2 tbsp sunflower seeds,
1 heaped tsp salt
100g parmesan, grated
4 cups / 550g wheat flour
1 egg for glazing

Put yoghurt in a pan, dilute with water.
Heat until lukewarm, then pour into a bowl and add the yeast.
Melt the butter in a separate pan

Meanwhile, mix the olive oil, seeds, honey and parmesan into the bowl with the Yoghurt. Add the melted butter.
Sift in the flour to the mix, and knead until smooth
Leave to rise for 45 min.
Once risen, cut into shapes, place on baking tray. Leave to rise for a further 30 mins, and then glaze with the whisked egg.
Bake for about 25 minutes at 180 degrees Celsius

Conclusions:
While all had their merits and supporters, none of the three recipes met our expectations of what Lembas should be. Both visually and gustatorially, none quite matched our expectations (which ranged from oat biscuits through to shortbread), and we felt none of them quite matched the known facts about real lembas.
Our continuing efforts to find the The One Lembas to Rule Them All shall return in the New Year!

Acknowledgements
Many thanks to the Eleanorian Collective (representatives Simmons and Legg), Paulina Poycka, Lynn Edwards and Martha Buckley for lending their tastebuds and opinions to this enterprise. My thanks also to the respective inventors of the various recipes we crash-tested (links below):
Recipe the 1st: Pabular user else.byskov.7, recipe found at http://www.pabular.com/recipe/79012/lembas-elvish-waybread
Recipe the 2nd: The Geeky Chef blog, recipe found at http://www.geekychef.com/2008/12/elven-lembas-bread.html
Recipe the 3rd: Pabular user else.byskov.7, recipe found at http://www.pabular.com/recipe/79012/lembas-elvish-waybread

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The Not-So-Ruined Party
Morgan Feldman

Frodo awoke to the door rattling. He blinked, dazed by the fact he was lying facedown in broad daylight, fully dressed, until he remembered it was his birthday and that he had fallen asleep. He jolted upright just as the door opened.

Bilbo hurried in. “There you are, Frodo! Haven’t you heard me call—good heavens, lad! What’s wrong? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

Frodo caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He was pale—paler than usual. Dark rings were forming under his eyes. He looked almost as awful as he felt. He shrugged. “I feel asleep.”

“Asleep? At this time of day?” Bilbo frowned. “I’m fine, Bilbo, honestly.” The color returned to Frodo’s cheeks as he smiled.

Bilbo eyed him carefully a moment, then turned back to the door. “Well, try to stay awake through the party, if you can. Otherwise I must be a very dull host indeed, if the birthday lad falls asleep!”

Frodo tried to smile at the remark, but it took too much effort. He started to worry staying awake might prove harder than it sounded. He longed to crawl back into bed and sleep for hours. Yet he had come this far. He would try a little longer. Maybe the party would distract him from his pain.

They straightened his clothes and combed his hair with his fingers as he followed Bilbo down the hall. Soon the guests began to arrive. They greeted Frodo with charming smiles and polite embraces before moving on to Bilbo, who handed them each a carefully wrapped present. Frodo hid his coughs by holding them until he was between guests, then coughing quietly into his hand. The prolonged standing was beginning to make his head spin. He was just about to sit down on the front steps, when he saw Samwise walking up the path at his father’s side.

“Sam!” Frodo forgot his pain for a moment and ran towards his newest friend. “You made it.”

Of course we did,” his Gaffer said. “We wouldn’t turn down no invitation from Bilbo, not when’s come and asked us himself.”

“Well, I’m glad,” Frodo shook hands with his friend, then followed them back up to the stairs on his uncle. He wavered on the porch, clutching the side of the doorframe.

“Are you alright, Mr. Frodo?” Sam asked.

Frodo tried to nod, but found it to painful. He shut his eyes. “I don’t know, Sam. I think I just need to sit a moment.” His vision was beginning to blur. The edge of it darkened. He sank to his knees right there in the doorway and leaned back against the frame.

Instantly, Merry was at his side. The poor hobbit was trying to talk to him, but Frodo couldn’t make out a word he was saying, for there was a loud pounding in his ears, then a high pitched ring, then silence. Blackness descended and he lost consciousness.

“I’m fine, Bilbo, honestly.” The color returned to Frodo’s cheeks as he smiled. “Asleep? At this time of day?” Bilbo frowned. “You will not be going anywhere, my dear lad, until you are better. You’re burning with fever!”

“You most certainly will not!” Bilbo glowered. “You’re not going anywhere today, you hear? We’ve got work into the party and now you’re missing it.” He frowned at the thought. “You can still go back, you know. I’m fine.”

Bilbo shook his head. “Frodo, my lad, you are certainly not fine. I don’t want to hear you say that anymore until it’s true. Drink this.”

He handed Frodo a mug of some vile-smelling concoction that Frodo drained without question. He lay back down grimacing, trying to rid the taste from his mouth.

Bilbo watched him carefully. He brushed Frodo’s bangs from his forehead. The fever was so fierce, it occurred to him the lad must have been suffering for quite sometime in his slumber. His strange behavior that morning suddenly made sense. His silence at breakfast, his pale completion, falling asleep in broad daylight: the signs were all there. He felt a pang of guilt that he hadn’t noticed them. “Listen, Frodo,” he said softly, “my concern for you is nothing to apologize for. I would rather spend today alone with you than attend the most spectacular party with a thousand guests.”

Frodo felt Bilbo take his hand. “I’m sorry, my boy.” His Uncle’s tone had softened, full of affection and pity that made Frodo’s guilt swell.

Bilbo shook his head. “No, Frodo, I mean it. The party, the presents—” he waved a hand dismissively, “—it’s all just fun and games. Half the joy is in planning it, really. But none of it—none of it—compares to spending time with you.”
Though his eyelids were heavy, Frodo looked up to meet Bilbo’s gaze. He saw the sincerity there and couldn’t help but smile in return. Of all his living relations, Bilbo was the only one that ever felt like a father—like his father. He sighed and his eyes flickered shut. “I’m glad you’re here.”

Bilbo held his hand as once more into darkness.

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The second time he woke, more time had passed. His three companions still remained, though they were seated now, whispering to one another. Frodo caught a glimpse of his uncle telling one of his stories and a smile flickered across his face. He would have been perfectly content to lie there listening to the whispers of those he loved most float up to the rafters. But alas, his lungs heaved and he coughed, loudly and deeply, alerting the others he was awake.

Bilbo was instantly at his side. “It’s alright, Frodo. I’m here. Do you need anything?”

Frodo sat up, slowly, shaking his head. The headache had faded to a dull pain, much more tolerable than before. His throat was dry and achy, but the coughing seemed to have subsided. “I think I’m alright, for the moment. My head still hurts, but it’s much better than it was.”

Bilbo breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s wonderful.”

“You can return to the party, if you want,” Frodo said sincerely.

Bilbo shook his head. “Frodo, my lad, if I had wanted to go to the party, I would have done so by now. It’s over.”


“There was a rather, uh, unfortunate incident.”

Frodo’s frown deepened. So the entire party had been cut short because of him! He felt so foolish and ashamed he wanted to melt into the sheets and disappear forever.

“Before you go blaming yourself,” Bilbo said, guessing his mind, “it had nothing to do with you. The Took’s son, Peregrin, got into the molasses and split it all over the dining room floor. It got all over Pearl’s hair and ruined her dress.” Bilbo tried to look serious but he couldn’t help but laugh. Bilbo shook his head as Merry joined in laughing beside him. “I tell you, Merry, you’ll have to watch out for that one. The lad’s not yet five and already he’s caused just as much trouble as you.”

“I’ll have to up my game then,” Merry said, grinning.

“Or recruit him,” Bilbo suggested. “But don’t go telling your parents I said so. Now, since we missed the party—to no one’s fault—what say we have our own, huh? Should I pop into the kitchen and see if there’s any cake left?”

Frodo grinned. “And tea, if you don’t mind.”

“Of course not.” Bilbo leaned down and kissed his nephew’s dark curls before he turned and left the cozy room.

“Oh and Bilbo!” Frodo called. “Have you given Merry and Sam their presents yet?”

“No,” Bilbo said. “I left that for you. I will bring them when I return.”

At the mention of presents, Merry’s eyes lit up. He scrambled to his feet and peered at Frodo curiously. “I’m sorry you’re ill, Frodo.”

“Me too,” Frodo said. “But you heard what Bilbo said, it happens to the best of us.”

“And the worst.”

Sam looked appalled at the jest, but Frodo laughed. His ribs ached from the laughter and he began to cough. He lay back, groaning. “One request. Don’t make me laugh.”

The hobbits found the request harder to fulfill than they thought, for by the time Bilbo returned, they had Frodo laughing half a dozen times, at least. Frodo sat up in bed and the others settled into chairs. Bilbo propped up a tea tray brimming with sweets between them.

“Now,” he said, patting his jacket pocket. “Who would like to go first?”

He pulled out four small boxes and handed them all to Frodo. Frodo picked up the largest and gave it to Merry. “Here you go, Merry. I hope you like it, I picked it out.”

“I’m sure I will then,” Merry said. “And to think, I was beginning to worry you’d forgotten about me!”

Frodo laughed, clutching his side. “I said no laughing, remember? I could never forget about you, even if I wanted to.”

Merry grinned at him, pulling off the lid. He slipped his hand inside and pulled out a thin book. His face fell. He turned it over, inspecting it skeptically as if he couldn’t quite decide what to do with it.

Frodo watched him carefully. “I know you don’t love reading, but this was one of my favorite books. I told you the story once and you asked me to repeat it every time I saw you for nearly a year. Well, now you’re old enough to read it on your own.”

“Is it the one with the elf warrior?” Merry’s voice resumed its previous excitement as he flipped through the book with newfound vigor.

Frodo grinned. “I knew you’d come to appreciate it.”

“I love it, I really do!” Merry pulled his cousin into a hug and sat down to read, right then and there.

“Your turn, Sam.” Frodo held out a smaller wooden box.

Sam eyed it in apprehension. “You didn’t have to get me anything, Mr. Frodo, Sir. Really.”

“I know, Sam, but I wanted to, so I did. Go ahead and open it and see what you think.”

Sam slid the box open far more slowly and carefully than Merry had. When at last it was open, he peered in from a distance as if he expected something to jump out and bite him. Then he reached his hand in and pulled out a feather quill, a roll of parchment, and a jar of ink. His eyes widened. “Three presents!”

“Not three, Sam. One. It’s a writing set. So you can have your own adventures, you might want something to keep them in.”

“Thank you.” Frodo reached out and took his uncle’s hands. “I love it, truly, I do!”

Bilbo returned his smile. “I thought you would.”

“I have a gift for you too, Bilbo,” Frodo said.

“It’s small, and I didn’t have time to wrap it.”

“That’s quite alright, Frodo.” Bilbo said. “You never need to get me anything. You yourself are the greatest gift I could ever ask for.”

Frodo shook his head, smiling. “You’ll like this one. At least, I hope you will. It’s in the top drawer, there. Merry, will you get it out?”

Merry, eager to see what Bilbo’s present was, ran to the drawer and opened it with ease. He found there a single piece of parchment, thick and pale. At the top was a sketch of Bag End drawn in ink; beneath it was a brief poem. Merry stared at it in awe. “Did you make this, Frodo?” Remembering

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it was for Bilbo, he quickly passed it to the older hobbit.

Bilbo took it gently with a smile. “Of course he did. It’s his handwriting. I’d recognize it anywhere.” He held the paper to the sunlight and his breath caught in his throat. The drawing itself was beautiful beyond words, but that was not what took his breath away. For beneath it, written in his familiar scrawl was a poem:

Home

What makes a home?
Is it wood or stone?
Or fly like bees?

Does it tumble down
Without a sound
From skies above
As quick as a dove?

Can it be bought
Or stolen or wrought
From chiseled hands,
Or ancient sands?

Does it glitter in silver and gold?
What of it when it gets old?
Will it wither and fade?
Oh tell me, please! Of what is it made?

Now, dear child, listen here,
The answer itself is much more clear:
You will not find it in any book,
But it is close to take a look
For Home is simply when you are near.’

“It isn’t very good,” Frodo said, when his uncle had finished reading. “Just a silly little something I came up with, but I quite like it. I hope you do too.”

Bilbo felt tears build in his eyes. He blinked them rapidly away. “No, Frodo. I love it.” He set the drawing down carefully on the counter and reached for his nephew, pulling him into a warm embrace. For though Bilbo may not have been able to give Frodo the party he wanted, he realized now that he had already given him the most valuable gift imaginable: a home.

What of it when it gets old?
From chiseled hands
Or ancient sands?

Is it wood or stone?
What makes a home?

Home

Or ancient sands?

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perhaps a tempting image for a father of four…

An interesting feature of *The Children of Húrin* is the interplay between mythological and realistic childhood. The young Turin does not perform any great deeds prefacing his future heroism, after the manner of Sigfried in the Völsungsaga, but rather has to leave childhood behind too quickly, losing "laughter" through Lalaith’s death and his separation from his mother. In a poignant portrayal of family grief, we see through the young child’s eyes his mother and father trying in their separate ways to come to terms with Lalaith’s death.

In happy contrast, hobbits prolong childhood innocence, and their complexity of characters comes partly from the contrast between the adult burdens they shoulder and their childish characteristics, such as love of song and riddle, interest in food and small, bare-footed gracefulness.

Other talks included *Sauron and Dracula*, an enjoyable look at the influence of horror stories on Tolkien’s creation, and *Verbal Magic*, an illuminating examination of the power of voice to characterise races and individuals. A slideshow of Tolkien illustration through the ages was another highlight. In short, we spent a day among “our people” enjoying the remarkable (or not-so-remarkable, perhaps) sense of community and fun in the Tolkien Society, together with a delightful range of academic, artistic and social interests, all worthy of far more consideration than I’ve given them here. I was only sorry that I missed the Lego Orthanc in the Craft Room - but I shall definitely be back to examine it next year!

Videos of some of the speaker talks can be viewed at: http://www.tolkiensociety.org/blog/2015/11/oxonmoot-2015-in-videos/

Details of how to join the Tolkien Society are also available at their website and Facebook page.

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King Thingol’s Song

Eleanor Simmons

(Tune: *King Herod’s Song, Jesus Christ Superstar*)

**THINGOL:**

Beren, I am underwhelmed to meet you face to face.  
You’ve been getting quite a name all around the place.  
Killing orcs – big deal – making Morgoth pay  
And now you’re squatting in my woods, or so my soldiers say…

And,  
You’re in love with my girl, with my beautiful girl  
You dare to ask me for her hand,  
You scruffy mortal firebrand?  
So your dad got a ring  
From a Noldorin king  
You’ll never marry my girl!

---

Who are you that dares to steal before my gilded throne  
No thief or sneaking beggar will depart my halls of stone  
Beren, what’s your secret? Mortal fool do tell  
What you’ve done to bring my girl so much under your spell

So,  
You’re in love with my girl, with my beautiful girl  
You’re far too young, and rude as well  
Stop calling her "Tinuviel"!  
You’re wasting my time,  
Your request’s out of line  
You’ll never marry my girl.

I have no wish to hear you tell your tale of grief and woe  
I don’t care about dead heroes, my answer is still no.  
Beren, don’t you realise I could kill you here and now?  
(If Luthien had not asked me to make this stupid vow)  
Oh what a pity I swore to set you free  
Still maybe there is still a way to prove yourself to me.

If  
You’re in love with my girl, with my beautiful girl  
Prove to me your strength of will  
Steal for me a Silmaril.  
That’s all you need do  
And I’ll give her to you  
Go and get yourself killed!

So, aren’t you scared of me, boy?  
Oh, you insolent boy  
You might be Morgoth’s spy or thrall  
Perhaps I’ll kill you after all  
Take him away!  
He’s got nothing to say!  
You’ll never marry her  
You’ll never marry her  
Get out, you insolent boy  
(Get out of here!)  
Get out of her life!
Hobbit-hole (apologies)

Amrit Sidhu-Brar  
Miruvor Editor, Treasurer 2014-15, Secretary 2013-14, Society Hero

The requirement for this magazine to have a number of pages divisible by four so that it can be printed logically resulted in your humble Editor sitting at his desk scratching his head, wondering what to fill the remaining two pages with. He then decided to look at previous issues of Miruvor for inspiration.

Finding a nice drawing of a hobbit-hole (on the rear of the Trinity 2001 issue) reminded me of probably the one piece of Tolkien-related crafts (and not a very good one at that) I’ve ever done, which was when in September 2012 (according to the date on the photo), presumably trying to work out what to do in the time left before starting at Oxford (and possibly thinking that I needed to be able to prove my geekery credentials to the wondrous people I’d find there), I decided to build a hobbit hole. Alas! I was not ambitious enough for it to be fully-sized. Anyway, here are some pictures of it. Clearly some part of me foresaw needing to fill the rear pages of this shadowy publication, as I have work-in-progress pictures.

I was going to make this some kind of “how-to-make-your-own-Hobbit-hole” guide, but then I realised that one just needs to look at the pictures really.

So yes, here it is. It’s made of polystyrene packaging cut up with one of those extendable craft knife things, on a cardboard base, with card for the front of the hobbit-hole, and balsa wood for the door and windows.

In the second picture, I’ve stuck sand on to make a path and to texture the front wall, and made the flowerbed and vegetable patch out of tiny rock things that you get for model railways and the like (my excuse being the Lord of the Rings Strategy Battle Game, which is wonderful and you should all play). The edge of the vegetable patch is little bits of wood that look like rock when painted grey, bought for similar purposes. The doorknob and lettuces are tiny bits of polystyrene that fell off the main thing when I was cutting it.

In the third picture, I’ve painted it in (hopefully) appropriate colours. I think I sprayed it with black spray paint first, which unexpectedly somewhat melted the polystyrene, leading the path to become somewhat raised, and to the somewhat eroded texture of the cliff bit and the steps. The grassy bit is green flock, again of the railways-and-battle-games kind. Hobbit-hole:
An Unexpected Meeting
Morgan Feldman

As excited as he was to move into Bag End, Frodo remembers little of the first few weeks. In a way, it was as if he’d always been there: from the day he arrived, he considered it home. Bilbo was an excellent guardian, better than he could ask for. The rooms were comfortable, the kitchen stocked, the library full, and the grounds filled with glorious gardens and fields excellent for roaming. The only thing missing were his old friends.

Frodo didn’t dwell on this, but looking back, he remembers a vague feeling of melancholy that could only be attributed to loneliness that came and went around this time, especially when Bilbo was preoccupied with his writing.

It was on such a day when he was feeling particularly lonely that he saw a young hobbit coming up the road with a wobbly pile of firewood stacked precariously in his arms. The stack was nearly twice the lad’s size and completely hid his face. Frodo, filled with both curiosity and the desire to help, hurried out the door to assist the young lad. He ran down the path, where he reached a gate just as the lad reached the opposite side. Frodo pulled the latch and opened the gate to let the other pass, but through all the firewood, the poor hobbit lad couldn’t see the gate and stumbled right into it, spilling the logs all over the road and a startled Frodo.

The lad looked down at the mess, then stared up at Frodo with wide eyes. “Oh, I’m so sorry, Sir!” he said at once. “I didn’t mean to go spilling firewood all over you, promise!” He then launched into a long-winded ramble about how he sorry he was and how he didn’t expect Frodo to forgive him, though he would be awfully appreciative if he did.

Frodo, meanwhile, began picking up the firewood. As the younger hobbit rambled his apology, Frodo could not help but smile. He would do more than forgive the young hobbit, he decided: he would befriend him. When at last there was a break in the rambling (for the lad had realized Frodo was helping pick up the firewood and was staring at him in awe) Frodo asked simply, “What’s your name?”

“Samwise Gamgee.”

“Well, Samwise Gamgee. I’m Frodo Baggins.” He offered a hand to the younger hobbit and smiled as the lad shook it. Yes, he thought to himself, I have a feeling we’ll be good friends. It wasn’t until many years later that he realized just how true this was.