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## “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”, J. R. R. Tolkien’s 1953 W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture: An Updated Chronology and Related Findings

Andoni Cossio <sup>a,b</sup> and Dimitra Fimi <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of English, German, and Translation and Interpreting, University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain; <sup>b</sup>Centre for Fantasy and the Fantastic, School of Critical Studies, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom

### ABSTRACT

On 15 April 1953, J. R. R. Tolkien was at the University of Glasgow to deliver the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, later published in *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays* (1983). Based on new archival research at Glasgow and Oxford, this article offers new information on Tolkien’s appointment to deliver this lecture, his journey to and stay at Glasgow, and his relationship with Norman Davis (1913–1989), further illuminating the lecture’s significance in the context of Tolkien’s life as both an academic and creative writer, Tolkien’s links to Glasgow, and his academic and literary reputation at the time. The article, therefore, provides additional biographical, intellectual, cultural, and historical details related to the lecture at the time Tolkien was ushering his masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), to print.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### Tolkien and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

On 15 April 1953, J. R. R. Tolkien was at the University of Glasgow to deliver the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (henceforth SGGK).<sup>1</sup> The lecture was edited and published posthumously by his youngest son and literary executor, Christopher, in 1983,<sup>2</sup> and Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond have gathered some of the particulars of Tolkien’s visit to Glasgow and summarised the lecture.<sup>3</sup> However, several details remain unknown hitherto and can illuminate the lecture’s significance in the context of Tolkien’s life as both an academic and creative

**CONTACT** Dimitra Fimi  [dimitra.fimi@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:dimitra.fimi@glasgow.ac.uk)

This article has been republished with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

<sup>1</sup>For synopses of Tolkien’s W. P. Ker Lecture, see Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part II*, 1199–1200; Honegger, “Academic Writings”, 27. See also Drout, “J. R. R. Tolkien’s Medieval Scholarship”, 143–5 for a review of the lecture. See Cossio, “The Forest Haven Episode”, 1306–27 for a summary of SGGK and the influence it had on Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. On 27 April 2023, the Centre for Fantasy and the Fantastic held an academic event which celebrated 70 years since J. R. R. Tolkien’s SGGK Lecture in Glasgow (1953–2023). A recording of the talks is available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4c\\_bKoTM0k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4c_bKoTM0k).

<sup>2</sup>Tolkien, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”, 72–108.

<sup>3</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 404, 418–21; Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part II*, 1132, 1199–200.

writer, Tolkien's links to Glasgow, and his academic and literary reputation at the time. At any rate, it is always enriching to fill the lacunae of Tolkien's biography as it may result in unexpected findings such as his early friendship with Norman Davis (1913–1989), as we shall see below. This article provides additional biographical, intellectual, cultural, and historical details related to the lecture at the time Tolkien was ushering his masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*, to print (written between 1937 and 1949, revised for another half-decade, and published in three parts during 1954–1955).

By 1953, Tolkien had a decades-long engagement with *SGGK*, which made this text a natural choice to present on when he was extended an invitation to lecture in Glasgow. The audience of the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture were therefore fortunate to be offered a treat that was not widely accessible until the lecture was published in 1983. Tolkien's lecture focused on temptation and morality in *SGGK*, discussing in detail the third fit of the poem, in which Gawain is tempted by the wife of Lord Bertilak. It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the impact of Tolkien's lecture on *SGGK* and medieval scholarship,<sup>4</sup> but it is important to understand the context that gave birth to such a scholarly contribution at the time when Tolkien was close to bringing his own medieval-inspired creative work to publication. Before we introduce the new evidence surrounding Tolkien's lecture, it is useful to provide a brief overview of Tolkien's deep familiarity with *SGGK*.<sup>5</sup>

Already in his early years, Tolkien particularly favoured *SGGK*,<sup>6</sup> to the point that he sometimes regaled his school friends with short impromptu recitations of the poem.<sup>7</sup> Tolkien's fondness could be in part explained by his belief that the West Midlands Middle English dialect of *SGGK* was for him the variety spoken by his Suffield side of the family.<sup>8</sup> His affection for *SGGK* then grew as he became aware of the elaborate interplay between *Faërie*,<sup>9</sup> language, and morals, in this unique Arthurian romance.

Tolkien's professional relationship with *SGGK* began in Oxford where, in Trinity term 1920, he taught a course on the poem at 40 Broad Street.<sup>10</sup> It is possible that Tolkien had by then glossed lines 2069–2428 of *SGGK*, "The Testing of Sir Gawayne", for Kenneth Sisam's Middle English anthology in *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922),<sup>11</sup> or perhaps he later finished that work at the University of Leeds (1920–1925), where he also taught the poem.<sup>12</sup> What is certain is that his years at Leeds witnessed the completion of a scholarly edition of *SGGK* (1925) in which Tolkien collaborated with E. V. Gordon.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Drou, "J. R. R. Tolkien's Medieval Scholarship", 145: "Tolkien's view is almost directly opposed to that of the critical mainstream (and is thus perhaps all the more likely to be correct) [for Tolkien the key to the poem is the interaction between the jocular, courtly, and religious moral planes and the observance of their hierarchy]". Tolkien's lecture on *SGGK* has helped to illuminate his fiction, see for example: Ferré, "The Author and the Critic", 165–6; Cossio, "The Forest Haven Episode", 1312, 1318–9.

<sup>5</sup>For a greater understanding of the deep influence the *Gawain*-poet had on Tolkien, see Shippey, "Tolkien and the *Gawain*-poet", 213–9; Shippey, *Author of the Century*, 49, 59, 82–83, 153, 155, 196–200, 236, 289, 294, 315.

<sup>6</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 15.

<sup>7</sup>Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 46.

<sup>8</sup>See Tolkien, *Letters*, 213 #163, 218 #165. Owing to the large number of available editions, references to Tolkien's *Letters* include the letter number (#) after the page(s).

<sup>9</sup>Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories", 32: "the realm or state in which fairies have their being".

<sup>10</sup>Ryan, "Tolkien's Formal Lecturing and Teaching", 46; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 120, 838.

<sup>11</sup>Sisam, *Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose*, 46–56; Tolkien, *A Middle English Vocabulary*. Tolkien's glossary was meant to be published and bound with Sisam's anthology in 1921, but delays resulted in the separate publication of the glossary in May 1922. The one volume edition was first marketed in June 1922, though the volumes continued to be sold individually for a while. For a possible starting date, see Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 116.

<sup>12</sup>*SGGK* was also a set text during those years, see Cossio, "The Forest Haven Episode", 1307.

<sup>13</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 127.

This edition is still a required reading in numerous higher education courses and has established the poem as a canonical work in medieval studies.<sup>14</sup>

During his tenure of the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professorship of Anglo-Saxon (1925–1945), Tolkien ceased to teach *SGGK*, though Tolkien and Gordon corrected their *SGGK* edition in 1930 and 1936 for the second and third impressions respectively.<sup>15</sup> Tolkien continued lecturing on the poem from 1945 to 1959 while he was the Merton Professor of English Language and Literature.<sup>16</sup> His final years teaching *SGGK* were crowned by the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture in 1953 that is the object of our article, an event in which Tolkien shared a lifetime's insights into the poem.

The year 1953 also saw the completion of Tolkien's translation of *SGGK* which was started sometime between 1922 and 1925,<sup>17</sup> and which would not be published until 1975, two years after Tolkien's death.<sup>18</sup> Tolkien's translation of *SGGK*, which has never been out of print since its publication in 1975, was commercialised in a deluxe edition in 2020. Before all that recent success, Tolkien's translation of *SGGK* was broadcast by the BBC during December 1953 and September 1954,<sup>19</sup> and was introduced by his essay "A Fourteenth-Century Romance" published on 4 December in *Radio Times*.<sup>20</sup> The translation of *SGGK* (and *Pearl*) was sold as an audiobook by Harper Collins in 1997, reissued in 2006 with *Pearl* and *Sir Orfeo*.<sup>21</sup> In August 1959, Tolkien agreed to have his translation of *SGGK*, together with that of *Pearl*, published by Allen & Unwin.<sup>22</sup> This last project on the poem never reached completion because Tolkien failed to deliver a final version of the promised manuscript.<sup>23</sup>

When Tolkien delivered the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture, therefore, he had been teaching and studying *SGGK* for decades, had just completed his translation of the poem, and had submitted to Allen & Unwin the revised typescript of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first part of *The Lord of the Rings*, for publication.<sup>24</sup> William Paton Ker (1855–1923) was a University of Glasgow alumnus and Fellow of All Souls College (Oxford) from 1879 until his death.<sup>25</sup> He was first elected professor at University College of South Wales (Cardiff, 1883–1889), and later while he held the Quain Chair of English Language and Literature in University College, London (1889–1922), he became the Chair of Poetry at Oxford (1920).<sup>26</sup> The legacy of the Glasgow writer, John Brown

<sup>14</sup>Shippey, "Tolkien as Editor", 35. See also Neidorf, "Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur*", 93, 107; Pascual, "English Alliterative Verse", 251. As a curiosity, a royalty statement from the publisher, the Clarendon Press (Oxford), for the year 1950 records that 1521 copies had been sold worldwide and that the lump sum of £32 6s 5d was to be paid to each Tolkien and Ida Gordon, his co-editor's widow (MS Tolkien E 16/45(2), fol. 98, Special Collections, Weston Library, University of Oxford).

<sup>15</sup>Cossio, "The Forest Haven Episode", 1321.

<sup>16</sup>Cilli, *Tolkien's Library*, 438–41; Ryan, "Tolkien's Formal Lecturing and Teaching", 52.

<sup>17</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 423; Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part I*, 69; Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part II*, 1197.

<sup>18</sup>Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 23–108.

<sup>19</sup>See Tolkien, *Letters*, 444 #148; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 440–3, 461. On 3 and 7 January 1954, the BBC Third Programme featured a talk on *SGGK* by Tolkien which complemented his translation. See Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 443–4.

<sup>20</sup>Tolkien, "A Fourteenth-Century Romance", 9.

<sup>21</sup>All were read by the late Terry Jones (Terence Graham Parry Jones, 1942–2020).

<sup>22</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part II*, 976.

<sup>23</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part II*, 977; Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 517 #289b, 532 #296b.

<sup>24</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 416–20.

<sup>25</sup>Chambers, "Ker, William Paton", unpaginated. See source for a short biography of Ker.

<sup>26</sup>Chambers, "Ker, William Paton", unpaginated.

Douglas, provided funds to establish the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture in 1938 in commemoration of William Paton Ker. The patron was the University Court, and “the foundation originally provided for an annual lecture on some branch of literary or linguistic studies”.<sup>27</sup> Earlier speakers had included a number of Tolkien’s tutors, colleagues and friends, such as R. W. Chambers,<sup>28</sup> Lord David Cecil (who was also a fellow Inkling),<sup>29</sup> Sir William Craigie,<sup>30</sup> while W. H. Auden, C. S. Lewis, and Gwyn Jones gave the 1957, 1959, and 1986 lectures, respectively.<sup>31</sup> Tolkien’s decision to speak on *SGGK*, therefore, both satisfied the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture stipulation in terms of topic, and gave him an opportunity to share in a public forum his insights into the poem that had occupied him for a long part of his career.

## A Journey to Glasgow

The timeline of Tolkien’s lecture in Glasgow was gathered by Scull and Hammond in their *Chronology*.<sup>32</sup> Below we offer our new findings from archival research at Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow; School of Chemistry, University of Glasgow; Tolkien family papers, Special Collections, Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; and University Archives, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. We present our findings as addenda and corrigenda to the relevant entries in the Scull and Hammond *Chronology*. All the corrigenda and additional information we have uncovered are inserted in square brackets “[ ]”, conforming to Scull and Hammond’s style and formatting in *Chronology*. The only differences are that (1) while entries are ordered by date in bold in *Chronology*, in this article, each day is additionally introduced by a bulleted point, and (2) single quotation marks are replaced by double quotation marks.

- **[25 October 1951]** The six members of the Committee on the W. P. Ker Lectureship are made public, those being: “The Principal, the Rector, Dr. H. R. Buchanan, Professor A. D. Gibb, Professor C. J. Fordyce, Professor P. Alexander, Professor N [orman] Davis, Professor W. C. Atkinson”.<sup>33</sup>
- **15 January 1952** At the University of Glasgow the committee of the W. P. Ker Lectureship [*sic*] meets to consider the appointment of the W. P. Ker Lecturer for 1952–3, and recommends to the University Court that Tolkien be invited. The Lecture, established in 1938, is to be “on some branch of literary or linguistic studies”.<sup>34</sup> [Five members of the Committee were present, with the absence of

<sup>27</sup>Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 161.

<sup>28</sup>For all speakers including Chambers, see Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 161–2. The full list of W. P. Ker lecturers can also be found in Fimi, “Tolkien and the W. P. Ker Lecture at Glasgow”, unpaginated. For the Tolkien-Chambers relation, see Anderson, “R. W. Chambers and *The Hobbit*”, 137–47; Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part I*, 218–9.

<sup>29</sup>Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 161. For the Tolkien-Cecil relation, see Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part I*, 213–4.

<sup>30</sup>Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 161. For the Tolkien-Craigie relation, see Ryan, “Trolls and Other Themes”, 33–46; Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part I*, 273–4.

<sup>31</sup>The last W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture was given in 1995 by Lee Paterson of Yale University, see Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 162.

<sup>32</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 404, 418–21.

<sup>33</sup>University of Glasgow Court, *Minutes of Court*, 30.

<sup>34</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 404.

Professor A. D. Gibb. Dr. R. T. Hutcheson attended as the Secretary and presumably wrote the report. The report adds: "It was further agreed to recommend to the Court that should Professor Tolkien be unable to accept the invitation, the invitation should be extended to Professor S. Nordal of Reykjavik University,<sup>35</sup> Iceland, failing whom Professor F. Mossé of the Collège de France, Paris".]<sup>36</sup> (Figure 1)

- [24 January 1952 The University of Glasgow Court approves the report forwarded by the Committee on the W. P. Ker Lectureship, which recommends extending an invitation to Tolkien "to deliver the W. P. Ker Lecture for Session 1952–53".]<sup>37</sup>
- ?31 January 1952 Tolkien writes to the Secretary of the University Court, Glasgow, agreeing to be the W. P. Ker Lecturer for 1952–3. He hopes to arrange a date between October 1952 and March 1953, and suggests as a topic for the lecture *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>38</sup> [Tolkien's letter is stamped as "received" on 1 February 1952. Other contemporary correspondence arriving at the Secretary of Court's office reveals that letters were stamped as "received" one to three days after the date on the letter, depending on its origin, the day it was posted, or both. Glasgow letters were often stamped the next day and those coming from further destinations ranged from one to three.]<sup>39</sup>
- [1 February 1952 The Secretary of the University of Glasgow Court receives Tolkien's acceptance letter and replies the same day.]<sup>40</sup> (Figure 2)
- [21 February 1952 The University of Glasgow Court announces that Tolkien "had accepted the Court's invitation to deliver for 1952–53 the W. P. Ker Lecture".]<sup>41</sup>
- [11 March 1953 Tolkien writes to Norman Davis telling him about their (Edith and Tolkien's) move to a new house, and his busy agenda: "However, I had not forgotten Glasgow; and I have contrived to rough out my lecture, as well as to complete and revise my translation of the whole of *Gawain*. I propose to lecture on the Confession of Sir Gawain (1874–1888) and considerations that arise from it, but I don't think that need be specified. I shan't be able to get what I have to say into a reputed "hour"; and whether what I select to say will prove interesting is another matter, and I am afraid dubious. Still I must stay the course—and as long as I do not put you to shame (or myself) the ordeal will be well rewarded by affording me a chance of a break and of seeing you".]<sup>42</sup>
- 30 March 1953 Tolkien and Edith move into 76 Sandfield Road in the Oxford suburb of Headington. Christopher Tolkien and his wife Faith move into the house his parents had occupied in Holywell Street. The move is more disruptive than Tolkien expects, as he will tell Rayner Unwin on 11 April: "In spite of every care the move proved disastrously dislocating, and instead of two days I have spent ten in endless labour; and still cannot lay my hands on many papers and notes that I need (for completion of *The Lord of the Rings*). In addition things have gone wrong with the examination business which

<sup>35</sup>In the event, Sigurður Nordal gave the 1954 lecture, as recorded in Moss, Rankin, and Richmond, *Who, Where and When*, 161.

<sup>36</sup>Committee on W. P. Ker Lectureship, *Report of Committee*, unpaginated.

<sup>37</sup>University of Glasgow Court, *Minutes of Court*, 129.

<sup>38</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 404.

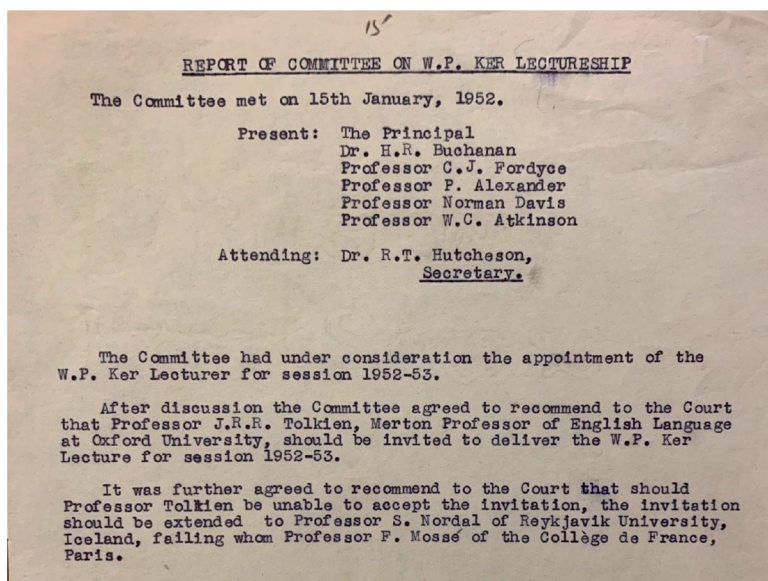
<sup>39</sup>Yan, email communication to authors, 19 June, 2023. See entry for 1 February 1952.

<sup>40</sup>Tolkien, letter to the Secretary, unpaginated.

<sup>41</sup>University of Glasgow Court, *Minutes of Court*, 155.

<sup>42</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 241–2 #135d.





**Figure 1.** Report of Committee on W. P. Ker Lectureship. By permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, ref. GUA 51316 [15].

- is under my unhappy charge; and I leave on Tuesday morning for Glasgow to deliver a W. P. Ker Lecture which is still only half prepared" (*Letters*, p. 167).<sup>43</sup>
- **14 April 1953** Tolkien travels to Glasgow to give the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture.<sup>44</sup> His attention to *The Lord of the Rings* having left him with only a few days to work on his lecture, it is still unfinished, or unpolished, when he leaves Oxford.<sup>45</sup> [In Glasgow, Tolkien stayed with Norman Davis and his spouse, Lena Davis, at their detached house on 2 Turnberry Ave, Glasgow, W1, today at postcode G11 5AQ.<sup>46</sup> Though there are no records, it is probable that Davis owned the house during his tenure at the University of Glasgow (1949–1959). It had previously belonged to a Professor of Italian (whose name is currently unknown). In 1959, Robert Ogilvie MacKenna (1913–2004), University of Glasgow Librarian and Keeper of the Hunterian books and manuscripts (1951–1978), bought the property. It was purchased from Mackenna by the current owners in 1990.]<sup>47</sup>
  - **15 April 1953** Tolkien delivers the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture, on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, to an audience of 300 at the University of Glasgow. When

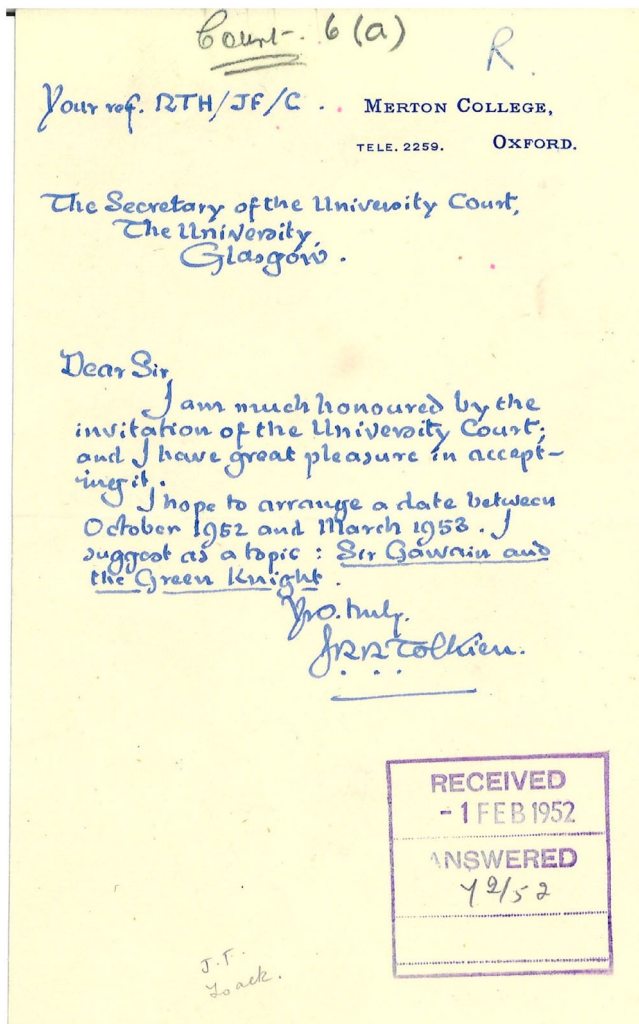
<sup>43</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 418–9. See Tolkien, *Letters*, 167 #131, for the source of the quoted material.

<sup>44</sup>Since the extracurricular W. P. Ker lecture took place during the Easter Vacation of 1953, there are no extant records at Merton of Tolkien leaving for Glasgow, asking for permission to do so, or rearranging his college duties during his trip.

<sup>45</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 420.

<sup>46</sup>McIlwaine, email communication to authors, 11 January 2023; Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246–7 #137a; Tolkien, letter to Norman Davis (Tolkien family papers), unpaginated. Tolkien family papers © The Tolkien Estate Limited 2024. Cited and paraphrased with permission. For a short biography of Davis, mostly in relation to Tolkien, see Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part 1*, 296. For other short biographies, see University of Otago Library, "1934: Norman Davis 1913–1989", unpaginated; Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 261–73. Additional details can be found in "Davis, Prof. Norman", unpaginated.

<sup>47</sup>The current owners of the house provided the information of the last three sentences in a private communication.



**Figure 2.** Tolkien's 1952 letter to the Secretary of the University of Glasgow Court. By permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, ref. GUA 51317 Court. 6(a). © The Tolkien Estate Limited 2024.

quoting the text of the poem he uses his own recently completed Modern English translation, which is well received. He will think the lecture less good than it might have been because he had not given it enough attention in writing, though it might be improved when prepared for publication.<sup>48</sup> [However, according to Norman Davis in his obituary of Tolkien, this was only Tolkien's own perception: "though the audience found it admirable, he was not satisfied with it and never handed in the text for publication in the series in which it was due to appear".<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 420. Part of the information contained in this entry was, in all likelihood, extracted from a 21 April 1953 letter to Norman Davis and Lena Davis, and a 22 June 1953 letter from Tolkien to P. H. Newby. See Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a, 248 #137e.

<sup>49</sup>Davis, "J. R. R. Tolkien", 11. In that same obituary of Tolkien, Davis voiced a common lament of some medievalists: "We grieve also that his concern to publish nothing less than the finest has meant that much of what most of us would



A poster found among Tolkien's papers announces a lecture from "J. R. R. Tolkien, M.A., Merton Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Oxford" on "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*". The lecture was programmed to be held in the Lecture Theatre of the New Chemistry Building at 15.00 on Wednesday 15 April 1953. There were no admission charges, but it is specified that written requests for tickets should be directed to the University Registrar enclosing "a stamped addressed envelope".<sup>50</sup> Tolkien signs the School of Chemistry seminar signature book, which includes the signature of T. S. Eliot on its first page.<sup>51</sup>

- **?16 or 17 April 1953** [sic, **18 April 1953**]<sup>52</sup> Tolkien returns to Oxford from Glasgow by train. En route,

I travelled all the way from Motherwell to Wolverhampton with a Scotch mother and a wee lassie, whom I rescued from standing in the corridor of a packed train, and they were allowed to go 'first' without payment since I told the inspector I welcomed their company. My reward was to be informed ere we parted that (while I was at lunch) the wee lassie had declared: "I like him but I canna understand a word he says." To which I could only lamely reply that the latter was universal but the former was not so usual. (quoted in *Biography*, p. 127).<sup>53</sup>

- **[21 April 1953** Tolkien writes to Norman and Lena Davis thanking them for their hospitality. He alludes to Sir Gawain's courtesy to apologise for not having sent a gift sooner.]<sup>54</sup>
- **28 April 1953** Tolkien writes to George Sayer. He tells of his lecture in Glasgow and his work on *The Lord of the Rings* with Allen & Unwin.<sup>55</sup>

The new material we have presented above expands our knowledge of the process of appointing Tolkien as the 1952–1953 W. P. Ker lecturer, the reception of his lecture, Tolkien's visit to Glasgow, and his relationship with Norman Davis. Below we offer further reflection on this material as well as further important discoveries in the process of our research.

## Related Discoveries

Tolkien's W. P. Ker lecture was held in a lecture theatre that no longer exists, as it was converted into separate laboratories in 2009.<sup>56</sup> This discovery was prompted by the

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think excellent has not been handed on" (Davis, "J. R. R. Tolkien", 12). In the main text's earlier quotation, Davis is referring to the W. P. Ker Lecture series published by the University of Glasgow Press, a collection of pamphlets containing a single lecture in each. By the year after Tolkien's death (1974), the series had reached number twenty-five, but only twenty lectures had been published. Although the remaining volumes were scheduled and numbered according to the order in which the lectures were delivered, they only exist as absences at the end of the collection's list. Tolkien's was meant to be the fourteenth. See Donoghue, *Imagination*, 38–40 and title page.

<sup>50</sup>Poster of Tolkien's W. P. Ker Lecture (Tolkien family papers), unpaginated (see Figure 4).

<sup>51</sup>School of Chemistry seminar signature book, 26.

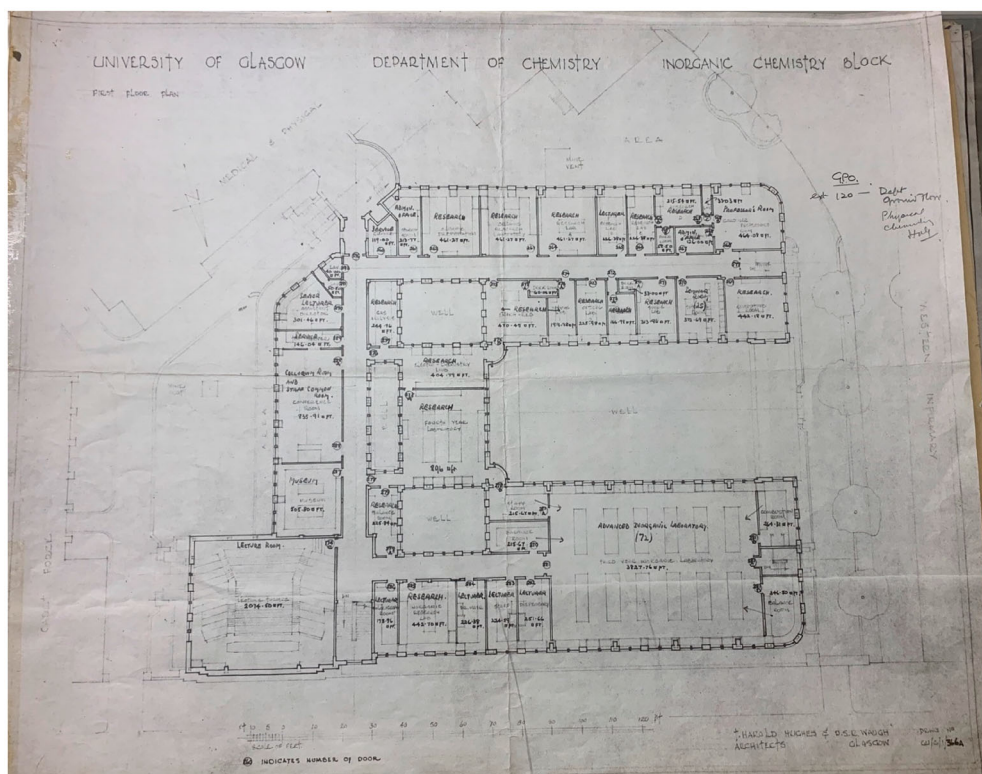
<sup>52</sup>McIlwaine, email communication to authors, 11 January, 2023; Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a.

<sup>53</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 420; See Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 127; Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246–7 #137a, for the source of the quoted material. It is interesting how Tolkien is rendering the little girl's Scots here, but also how he is adopting, perhaps unconsciously, terms such as "wee lassie" after his visit to Glasgow.

<sup>54</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a.

<sup>55</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 421.

<sup>56</sup>Pictures of the old Main Lecture Theatre are available at: [https://www.chem.gla.ac.uk/~gbarr/chem\\_lt/index.html](https://www.chem.gla.ac.uk/~gbarr/chem_lt/index.html).



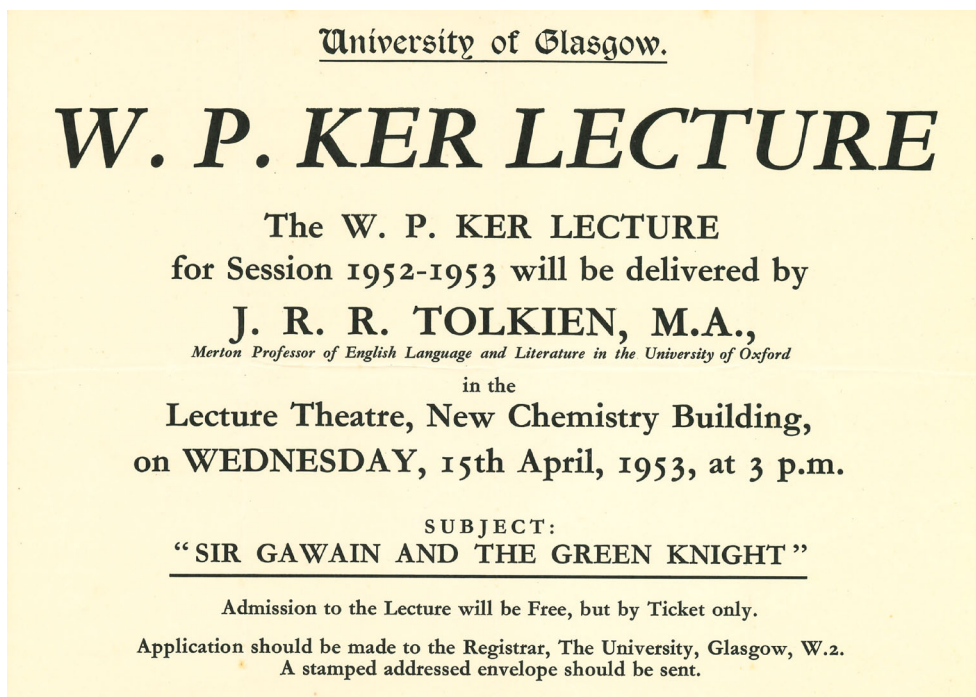
**Figure 3.** Building plan of Joseph Black. By permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, ref. BUL 6/19/29.

building plan of the New Inorganic Chemistry building (renamed Joseph Black building in 1997), which points towards a single location. It is most likely that Tolkien's W. P. Ker lecture was delivered in the large staged lecture room with a capacity for 400 individuals,<sup>57</sup> and 2074 × 500 ft. in size (see number 174, bottom left corner of Figure 3).

If Tolkien's own impression about the number of people in the Lecture Theatre is roughly accurate (three hundred), the lecture was well attended. However, only six printed announcements have emerged after a thorough search, one of them ironically preserved by Tolkien himself (see Figure 4).<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Information on the building and the lecture theatre can be found at: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/chemistry/abouttheschool/history/chemistrybuildings/>.

<sup>58</sup>"Glasgow University Finances", *The Glasgow Herald*, 25 October, 1952, 4; "W. P. Ker Lecture", *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 April, 1953, 1; "W. P. Ker Lecture", *The Glasgow Herald*, 9 April, 1953, 1; "W. P. Ker Lecture", *Evening Times*, 14 April, 1953, 14; "W. P. Ker Lecture", *The Glasgow Herald*, 15 April, 1953, 1; Poster of Tolkien's W. P. Ker Lecture (Tolkien family papers), unpaginated. All announcements, with the exception of the shorter 25 October 1952 piece, contain the exact same information. All other searches in archives and online repositories yielded no results. The archival search comprised the following repositories: Archives & Special Collections (University of Glasgow Library), Marion E. Wade Center (Wheaton College, Illinois), Merton College Library (Merton College, Oxford), Special Collections (Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford), Special Collections & Galleries (Leeds University Library), Special Collections and University Archives (Raynor Memorial Libraries, University of Marquette). See Appendix 1 for all the sources consulted.



**Figure 4.** Poster of Tolkien's W. P. Ker Lecture. By permission of the Bodleian Libraries (University of Oxford), ref. Tolkien family papers. © The Tolkien Estate Limited 2024.

Does this testify to Tolkien's popularity as a scholar and literary creator, whose fame did not require much publicity to fill a large room? More so considering that though the lecture was free, attendants had to cover the cost of purchasing stamps, paper, and two envelopes. Though there was only a single article reporting the event,<sup>59</sup> Tolkien's lecture seemed a success in terms of numbers, which is in agreement with the fact that he was relatively well-known by 1953. Tolkien was the lecturer of first choice, as the entry of 15 January 1952 above highlights, probably owing to the academic prestige he had consolidated with *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922), his collaborative edition with E. V. Gordon of *SGGK* (1925), "Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeves Tale*" (1934), "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" (1937), and "On Fairy-Stories" (1947), among other contributions. With regard to his literary merits, paper rationing (1940–1949) curbed the growing popularity of *The Hobbit* by limiting the number of copies printed, but "In the 1950s sales of *The Hobbit* picked up considerably, climbing even more dramatically after the publication of its long-awaited sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*".<sup>60</sup> One of our incidental discoveries further testifies to Tolkien's popularity in the early 1950s. We have uncovered that in the evening of 19 July 1952, the students of Sunny Hill School (later Bruton School for Girls, Somerset, England) performed a play which adapted Tolkien's *The Hobbit* for parents.<sup>61</sup> The reporter only praises the

<sup>59</sup>The 78-word report contains factual information only, see "W. P. Ker Lecture", *The Glasgow Herald*, 16 April, 1953, 3. See note 58.

<sup>60</sup>Anderson, *The Annotated Hobbit*, 22–23.

<sup>61</sup>"Cambridge Lecturer Stresses Value of Hobbies", *Somerset Standard*, 25 July, 1952, 4.

participants and performance, and names the cast and the producer, without any allusion to the plot, which hints at the general public's familiarity with the source novel. There was another school adaptation one month before Tolkien's W. P. Ker lecture that takes us closer to Glasgow. St. Margaret's School in Edinburgh (also an all-girls school) staged the first play of *The Hobbit* which had Tolkien's permission in March 1953.<sup>62</sup> These two examples attest to Tolkien's popularity among general readers, and combined with the large amount of fan mail received, the expectations for the sequel to *The Hobbit*, his established scholarly reputation, and his academic standing as the Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford, make obvious that Tolkien was at least moderately famous.

Nevertheless, fame or prestige do not seem to be the only reasons for extending an invitation to Tolkien. While one of the members of the Committee on the W. P. Ker Lectureship, Norman Davis, must have held Tolkien as an authority, the available evidence also points towards a close relationship between Tolkien and Davis by then. Biographical sources make it obvious that Tolkien and Davis became great friends after the latter succeeded the former as Merton chair in 1959. Davis wrote about their propinquity in 1967: "J. R. R. Tolkien, long ago my teacher and now my much honoured friend",<sup>63</sup> though their earlier relationship has remained a mystery until now.<sup>64</sup>

On 11 June 1937, in a letter of recommendation Tolkien wrote for Davis,<sup>65</sup> which helped the latter secure his first appointment as Lecturer in English at Kaunas, Lithuania,<sup>66</sup> Tolkien states that Davis is "a first class scholar" and "the best student of recent years".<sup>67</sup> This statement may cast some light on Davis's appointment for the Lectureship in Medieval English at the English faculty in 1948. After many years away (1937–1946) since he had received a second BA from the University of Oxford in 1936 and continued with a Diploma in Comparative Philology (1936–1937),<sup>68</sup> Davis returned to teach for two Colleges, Oriel and Brasenose, in 1947.<sup>69</sup> In the middle of 1948, a Lecturer position in Medieval English opened at the English Faculty.<sup>70</sup> Tolkien was an English Faculty Board Member, and he was also appointed to the committee that was to recommend a candidate for such a Lectureship.<sup>71</sup> On 18 June 1948, there was no consensus on the committee's recommendation, and the decision was postponed.<sup>72</sup> The committee's report issued for the special Board

<sup>62</sup>Anderson, *The Annotated Hobbit*, 23; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 416–7.

<sup>63</sup>Davis, "Preface to the Second Edition", v. See also Tolkien, *Letters*, 323 #243, 269 #288; Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 238–9, 250; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 440, 454, 591, 594, 610, 632–3, 660, 810; Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part I*, 297.

<sup>64</sup>It seems that the only known information is to be found in Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 264: "Tolkien in particular proved to be a sympathetic and inspiring mentor, and later a lifelong friend".

<sup>65</sup>Tolkien, letter of recommendation for Norman Davis, unpaginated.

<sup>66</sup>Davis, Prof. Norman", unpaginated; Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 265.

<sup>67</sup>University of Otago Library, "1934: Norman Davis 1913–1989", unpaginated.

<sup>68</sup>Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 264; University of Oxford, card register of students, unpaginated. An Oxford Diploma was awarded to candidates who passed a final examination after completing a postgraduate study programme at the University of Oxford, see University of Oxford, *The Examination Statutes*, 383–6. Davis was during that time supervised by Tolkien, Davis, "J. R. R. Tolkien", 10. Before his time at Oxford, Davis had received a BA (1933) and MA (1934) from the University of Otago, Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 263.

<sup>69</sup>Davis, Prof. Norman", unpaginated; Gray, "Davis, Norman, 1913–1989", 271.

<sup>70</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fol. 42v; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 354.

<sup>71</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fol. 43r; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 354.

<sup>72</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fol. 42v, 45r; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 354. A candidate was proposed but its name will remain undisclosed in accordance with the new Oxford University Archives sensitivity review policy until the record is over 80 years old.

meeting to appoint a Lecturer on 25 June 1948 was referred back for further consideration.<sup>73</sup> A decision was not reached until 12 July 1948, when Davis was officially elected to the post:<sup>74</sup> "It was resolved to appoint N[orman] Davis, Oriel College, as University Lecturer in Mediaeval English at a stipend of £700 per annum from 1 October 1948 till 30 September 1953".<sup>75</sup> One may easily imagine Tolkien making a case for one of his most deserving students by employing his argumentative tide against opposers.<sup>76</sup> By May the following year, Davis had resigned from the job for a more senior position as Professor at the University of Glasgow, though it was clear from a jocose description of the matter in one of Tolkien's letters to Douglas Veale, Registrar of the University of Oxford, that he bore no resentment about "the pillaging of the linguistic staff to supply the universities of Scotland".<sup>77</sup>

It is clear Tolkien had deep professional respect for Davis and had gently pushed his career in the past. Davis's reciprocal admiration for Tolkien and Tolkien's former support are sufficient reasons for Davis to have proposed Tolkien for the W. P. Ker Lecture. However, those facts combined cannot account for Davis extending an invitation to his former teacher and colleague to stay at his own home; if their relationship was strictly professional, the University of Glasgow would have offered to cover the costs of accommodation. Tolkien stayed at the Davis household during 14–18 April,<sup>78</sup> which is quite a lengthy period to host a guest one may not be comfortable or at ease with, especially one that would need to be entertained for so many days. This clearly points towards a meaningful friendship by this date, that must have developed since Davis's student days and specially when he and Tolkien worked together at the University of Oxford's English Faculty, as a letter thanking the Davises for their hospitality corroborates:

My dear People, I do not really know what to call you but after knowing you so long, and now after eating your 'bread' (and a great many other things) and drinking your wine (etc.), and being generally so entertained by you en prince, it really seems bleak to come back to Davis.<sup>79</sup>

It may be worth pointing out that the location of the Davis' house was convenient, as it takes approximately fifteen minutes to walk from 2 Turnberry Ave to the building where the lecture theatre once stood. As Tolkien's jovial letter dated 21 April 1953 hints, the good company and location boosted Tolkien's spirits and offered him some necessary rest at a time he was trying to settle so many matters at once.<sup>80</sup>

Tolkien had been working on his translation of *SGGK* for some thirty years,<sup>81</sup> and it seems the Glasgow lecture turned out to be the final push towards finishing it. Tolkien

<sup>73</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fols. 46v, 47r; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 354.

<sup>74</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fols. 47v, 48r; University of Oxford, reports (i.e. agenda papers) of the Board, 201; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 354.

<sup>75</sup>University of Oxford, *Minutes of Meetings*, fol. 48r. Davis was allowed to keep teaching at Oriel and Brasenose Colleges.

<sup>76</sup>Tolkien endorsed Davis's later election to the Merton Chair and trusted him with correcting part of the proofs of his edition of *Ancrene Wisse* (1962) and the revision of *SGGK* (1967), Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 567, 589–90, 684–5.

<sup>77</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 370.

<sup>78</sup>The original plan was for Tolkien to stay until 20 April (21st at the latest) and his wife Edith Tolkien had been invited as well, though she was unable to travel owing to her failing health, see Tolkien, letter to Norman Davis (Tolkien family papers), unpaginated.

<sup>79</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a.

<sup>80</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a: "I enjoyed myself very much indeed". Tolkien also added he hoped to see them in June during their visit to Oxford.

<sup>81</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part I*, 69; Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide, Part II*, 1197.



had apparently translated lines 2000–2200 by 15 November 1923,<sup>82</sup> had drafted a partial translation before 23 January 1947 that was lent to Gwyn Jones,<sup>83</sup> and on 17 August 1950, he had replied “to [Harman] Grisewood [Controller of the BBC Third Programme] that his translation of *Sir Gawain* is far advanced and he is willing that the BBC consider it”.<sup>84</sup> Tolkien negotiated a broadcast of the still unfinished translation in 1950,<sup>85</sup> but it was not until he was preparing the Glasgow lecture that he finished it in earnest and shared it with an audience. In fact, it is hardly a coincidence that Tolkien completed and revised the translation before 11 March 1953,<sup>86</sup> a month prior to his talk. However, owing to Tolkien’s obsessive tendency to revise and rewrite, he kept on polishing his rendition until the end of his life.<sup>87</sup> Fols. 1–42 of MS Tolkien 23 (Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford) contain a fair typescript of Tolkien’s SGGK lecture, but this version is at odds in several aspects if compared to the published one in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (1983).<sup>88</sup> As Christopher Tolkien explains in the foreword to *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, he implemented a series of editorial changes in the published version which are summarised in the following paragraph:

There are some minor matters concerning its presentation which must be mentioned. Despite my father’s statement (p. 74) that ‘where quotation is essential I will use a translation which I have just completed’, he did not in fact do so throughout, several substantial quotations being given in the original. There does not seem to be any significance in this, however, and I have therefore substituted the translation in such cases. Moreover the translation at that time differed in many details of wording from the revised form published in 1975; and in all such differences I have substituted the latter.<sup>89</sup> I have not inserted the ‘temptation scenes’ at the point where my father recited them when delivering the lecture, because if these are given in full they run to some 350 lines, and there is no indication in the text of how he reduced them. And lastly, since some readers may wish to refer to the translation rather than to the original poem (edited by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, second edition revised by N[orman] Davis, Oxford 1967), but the former gives only stanza-numbers and the latter only line-numbers, I have given both: thus 40.970 means that line 970 is found in the 40th stanza.<sup>90</sup>

This means that the published lecture has mainly undergone editing regarding Tolkien’s translation, but in all other aspects it is quite close to the typescript (MS Tolkien 23, fols. 1–42),<sup>91</sup> which remains unpublished.

<sup>82</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 132.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 333.

<sup>84</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 386. According to Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part II*, 201: “it was through an acquaintance of [John Norman] Bryson that the BBC in 1950 expressed an interest in broadcasting Tolkien’s Modern English translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”. For the Tolkien-Bryson relation see Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part II*, 200–1.

<sup>85</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 386–7, 389–92.

<sup>86</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 241 #135d; Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 416.

<sup>87</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Reader’s Guide, Part II*, 976–7. Tangible proof of this is, for example, the variant of stanza 32 of the posthumously published translation of SGGK (1975), which was quoted in a monograph in 1961: Reeves, *Short History of English Poetry*, 7; cf. Tolkien, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 49–50.

<sup>88</sup>Tolkien, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”, 72–108.

<sup>89</sup>It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the differences, but a long paper on this matter would be a welcome addition to the scholarship.

<sup>90</sup>Christopher Tolkien, foreword to *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, 2–3.

<sup>91</sup>The typescript could be an improved version of the lecture delivered. See Appendix 2 for the surviving manuscript history, and additional differences between the typescript and the published version.



Tolkien had not enjoyed much free time in 1952, but this lack of time only got worse in 1953.<sup>92</sup> On 11 April 1953, four days before the lecture, in a letter to Rayner Unwin, Tolkien complained that “I am horribly trammelled this year. I shall have a little elbow-room until about the 20th of June; after that no time at all for anything but exam-scripts until about August 1. I shall then be tired, but my time will be free (more or less) during August and September”.<sup>93</sup> However, he did find the time to write again to the Controller of the BBC Third Programme on 22 June 1953 to enquire whether the BBC was still interested in his SGGK translation.<sup>94</sup> He also managed to send a typescript of the translation, on 8 July 1953,<sup>95</sup> after P. H. Newby requested the work for consideration by the BBC on 30 June 1953.<sup>96</sup> It is probable that Tolkien prepared the typescript during those nine days and that he also took the time to type his W. P. Ker Lecture, since the two are obviously related, and also because this would give Tolkien some material for the introductory remarks that were to precede the translation. It is remarkable that Tolkien found the time to deal with these matters when he was swamped with work and dealing with the production of his beloved *The Lord of the Rings*, which testifies to the importance Tolkien gave to SGGK and his academic output on it.

## Conclusion

Tolkien had a negative impression of his performance at the lecture,<sup>97</sup> but this was often so, and it may be wise to disregard his self-assessment and to trust Davis’s account.<sup>98</sup> In any case, the lack of clear influence in scholarship cannot be attributed to a poor delivery but to the fact that the lecture was not published until three decades later. This prevented a wide dissemination of Tolkien’s ideas, which reached the field of medieval studies at a time when the focus of SGGK scholars had shifted to other matters. Regardless of the importance of the content of Tolkien’s lecture for scholarship, the event itself is remarkable for the information we are able to gather about Tolkien’s life, prestige, relationships, and academic work.

Tolkien had a life-long engagement with SGGK. He was drawn to this poem not only for its creative reuse of traditional motifs (Tolkien called it a “rooted” text<sup>99</sup>) and its emphasis on Christian morality, but also because of its language and literary qualities. Tolkien’s lecture at times is framed as a truly strong defence of the *Gawain*-poet’s art;

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<sup>92</sup>For a detailed explanation see Cossio, “Missing Letters J. R. R. Tolkien Received”, 103. See also Tolkien, letter to Norman Davis (Tolkien family papers), unpaginated; Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 241–2 #135d, 246 #137a. However, he found the time for social events such as Alfred Edgar Coppard’s seventy-fifth anniversary party at Lincoln College in which Coppard read a short story, see Beckles, “Talk Around the Town”, 227. Douglas A. Anderson suggest that the event was held at some point between “Sunday the 25th to Saturday the 31st of January” both days included. For the arguments leading to that conclusion and additional details about the party, see Anderson, “Tolkien and A. E. Coppard”, unpaginated. There are no other records of the Tolkien-Coppard relation. For a short biography of Coppard see Moulton, “Coppard, Alfred Edgar (1878–1957)”, unpaginated.

<sup>93</sup>See Tolkien, *Letters*, 168 #137.

<sup>94</sup>Scull and Hammond, *Chronology*, 423.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 424.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>Tolkien, *Letters: Revised and Expanded*, 246 #137a: “I am relieved that I did not in my performance put you to shame, though I am sorry that I did not rise above nerves, unsuitable to an old Greise, and perform a bit better”.

<sup>98</sup>McIlwaine, email communication to authors, 11 January, 2023; Davis, “J. R. R. Tolkien”, 11.

<sup>99</sup>Tolkien, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*”, 72.

he had a high opinion of the poem's figures of speech, poetic language, alliteration, etc., and also of its structure and intellectual argument. At other times, the lecture is a self-reflective look at his own art, during the process of revising the completed *The Lord of the Rings* in order to get it ready for publication, since the time of Tolkien's visit to Glasgow was ripe for this kind of reflection.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, the evidence points out that Tolkien's translation of *SGGK* partly reached completion thanks to the external pressure of the W. P. Ker lecture, which offered him the chance to share parts of it with an audience to test their reactions live.

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## ORCID

Andoni Cossio  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2745-5104>

Dimitra Fimi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5018-3074>

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<sup>100</sup>A precedent for this was Tolkien's "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" British Academy lecture (1936) in relation to the publication of *The Hobbit* (1937). See Shippey, "Appendix: Tolkien and *Beowulf*", 354–5.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Sources Consulted in Search of Advertisements of or Articles on Tolkien's Lecture**

Physical sources (no sources have been found at the archives of Marquette University, the Marion E. Wade Center [Wheaton College], or the University of Leeds):

- *The Glasgow Herald*. October 1952–June 1953.
- *Glasgow Times* (*The Evening Times* from 1876, rebranded *Glasgow Times* in 2019). October 1952–June 1953.
- Glasgow University Alexandrian Society (student society, Glasgow, Scotland), 1922–1978 (GB 248 UGC 116), Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- Glasgow University Dialectic Society (student society, Glasgow, Scotland), c. 1877–1983 (GB 248 DC 038), Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- *The Glasgow University Magazine*, vol. 63, no. 4–7, January–May 1952, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- *The Glasgow University Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 1–8, October 1952–May 1953, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- *The Glasgow University Magazine*, vol. 65, no. 1–3, October–December 1953, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- Merton College. *Postmaster*, 1953 (6/POS), Merton College Library, Merton College, Oxford.
- *Minutes of the Governing Body: 1947–1955*, October 1952–April 1953 (MCR 1.5D), Merton College Library, Merton College, Oxford.<sup>101</sup>
- Papers of Glasgow University Dialectic Society, 1873–1978 (GB 247 MS Gen 1307–1310), Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library.
- *The Scotsman*. October 1952–June 1953.

Digital sources:

- *The Times Literary Supplement*. October 1952–June 1953.

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- Financial Times (London, England).
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- The British Newspaper Archive.
- British Periodicals Collection, ProQuest.
- The Economist Historical Archive, 1843–2014.
- The Times Digital Archive, 1785–2014.
- The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842–2003.
- The Times of India, 1952–1953.

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<sup>101</sup>See note 44.

## **Appendix 2: W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture Manuscripts**

- Earliest draft: MS Tolkien A 35, fols. 58–61 (Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford). A draft opening of the “SGGK” lecture which offers no additions to the published version. It is handwritten on both sides of folios 58–59 and on one side of folios 60–61. It also includes rough notes, but Tolkien did not develop some of the ideas contained in this MS in the typescript.
- Later draft: MS Tolkien A 12/4, fol. 41 (Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford). A single-page draft opening of the “SGGK” lecture which offers no additions to the published version either. The folio is handwritten on both sides.
- Typescript: MS. Tolkien 23, fols. 1–42 (Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford). Folio 1 is in Christopher Tolkien’s hand and simply contains details about the lecture that he extracted from the poster advertising the lecture his father had kept (see [Figure 4](#)). The rest is a fair typescript of the lecture which differs in some regards from the published version. Aside from the differences noted by Christopher Tolkien and reproduced in this article (see page 13), this is a list of variances: paragraph division, insertion of brackets, replacement of pronouns for nouns, correction of typos, additional italics, word separations, different punctuation, corrected numbers, replacement of some words and phrases without changing the meaning or scholarly content, and addition and deletion of explanatory footnotes, which are converted into endnotes. Footnotes 1 and 2 are marked in the text of the typescript but the corresponding explanations are not included, perhaps Tolkien shared them with the audience out loud, speaking from memory.