

The Missing Letters J. R. R. Tolkien Received from Derek J. Price and R. M. Wilson: Addendum to “Further Notes on J. R. R. Tolkien’s Photostats of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.I)”

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(Received 8 February 2023; revised 23 April 2023)

In 2021, Andoni Cossio suggested cataloguing *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.I, c. 1393) under “Section A” in *Tolkien’s Library: An Annotated Checklist*, by Oronzo Cilli. One year later, Cossio unearthed the exact list of MS Peterhouse 75.I folios J. R. R. Tolkien had once owned in the form of photostats (2022). In this second article, Cossio alludes to the existence of correspondence that Tolkien exchanged with Derek J. Price and R. M. Wilson during the preparation phase of Price and Wilson’s edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (1955). New evidence, gathered from Maggs Bros. Ltd.’s private archive (1991b), as well as auction (Phillips 1988; Sotheby’s 1995) and sales (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991a) catalogues, demonstrates the existence of epistles and other material Tolkien received from Price and Wilson, though the brief, and often inaccurate, descriptions of the lots and items do not determine Tolkien’s exact contributions to their edition. However, the catalogues provide additional information about the timeline of Tolkien’s participation in this project, and disclose that Price was the one to approach Tolkien in the first place. This note will elucidate those aspects and complement Cossio’s (2022) article in other ways.¹

Keywords: J. R. R. Tolkien; *The Equatorie of the Planetis*; MS Peterhouse 75.I; Derek J. Price; R. M. Wilson; C. T. Onions; Geoffrey Chaucer; Merton College; Middle English; Latin

In 2021, Andoni Cossio suggested cataloguing *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.I, c. 1393) under “Section A” in *Tolkien’s Library: An Annotated Checklist*, by Oronzo Cilli (2019, 1–326).² One year later, Cossio unearthed the exact list

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Wayne G. Hammond, Christina Scull, Dimitra Fimi, and Julian Reid for their generous assistance. I would also like to thank the Warden and Fellows of Merton College (Oxford) for granting me permission to reproduce the archival material in the Appendix. This note was completed under the auspices of a Next Generation EU Margarita Salas postdoctoral grant (MARSA22/19), financed by the Ministry of Universities (Government of Spain) and the European Union, and by the research group REWEST (IT-1565-22), funded by the Basque Government and UPV/EHU.

² Cilli’s (2019, 1–326) “Section A, Tolkien’s Library, is composed of 2599 items and brings together the books, works [including manuscripts and pamphlets], and offprints the professor read, knew of, owned or bought as presents throughout his lifetime” (Cossio 2020, 197). In the second revised and expanded edition, Cilli has divided the original Section A into “Section A: Primary Sources” (2023, 1–347) with 2681 items “we know with absolute certainty Tolkien read, consulted, bought or borrowed” (2023, xxxvi), and “Section B: Secondary Sources” (2023, 348–84) with 342 items “he read as cited by scholars in some of their works” (2023, xxxvi). *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (MS Peterhouse 75.I) is now catalogued as no. A 2540 (Cilli 2023, 328), and Price and Wilson’s edition of that same work as A 1914 (Cilli 2023, 248).

of MS Peterhouse 75.I folios J. R. R. Tolkien had once owned in the form of photostats (2022, 168–70).³ In this second article, Cossio alludes to the existence of correspondence that Tolkien exchanged with Derek J. Price and R. M. Wilson during the preparation phase of Price and Wilson’s 1955 edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (2022, 170 and 174). In Cossio’s view, these letters are important because they could reveal:

Tolkien’s contribution to Price and Wilson’s edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* and his thoughts on the language of the manuscript, as during Tolkien’s lifetime, Price and Wilson’s claims were never unequivocally disproved and the debate around the manuscript’s authorship was never settled.⁴ (2022, 174)

New evidence, gathered from the private archive of Maggs Bros. Ltd. antiquarian booksellers (1991b) as well as auction (Phillips 1988; Sotheby’s 1995) and sales (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991a) catalogues, demonstrates the existence of epistles and other material Tolkien received from Price and Wilson, though the brief, and often inaccurate, descriptions of the lots and items do not determine Tolkien’s exact contributions to their edition.⁵ However, the catalogues provide additional information about the timeline of Tolkien’s participation in the project, and disclose that Price was the one to approach Tolkien in the first place. This note will elucidate those aspects and complement Cossio’s (2022) article in other ways. Incidentally, it will also call attention to the worth for literary research of auction catalogues, sources crammed with nuggets which tend to be disregarded.

³ Cilli has classified the photostats as no. A 630 (Cilli 2023, 89). John M. Bowers was the first to write about the existence of Tolkien’s photostats (2019, 214), and to give reasons why Tolkien would have been inclined to accept the language of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* as Chaucer’s: “Peterhouse’s mingling of dialects matches Tolkien’s sense of Northern intrusions, and linguistic analysis by R. M. Wilson echoed his own long-held views on Chaucer’s language: ‘If he lived in an area of mixed dialect, such as that of London, he might well be familiar with a variety of forms, any of which he could use when necessary for the sake of rhyme’ (p. 146). The *Equatorie*’s inclusion of [the preposition] *overthwart* [MS f. 73r *ouerthwart* and f. 77v *ou[er]thwart* ‘across’] would certainly have caught Tolkien’s attention as the distinctive Chaucerian word [*overthwart/overthwert*] for which he had supplied an especially long note on its appearance in *The Book of the Duchess* [c. 1370]” (2019, 215; see 108–109 for the long note). See Cossio for other non-linguistic rationale (2022, 172–73). Additional contemporary evidence could have further strengthened Tolkien’s belief; see Price and Wilson for a “number of words which, before their appearance in this text [*The Equatorie of the Planetis*], are recorded elsewhere in Middle English only in the works of Chaucer, and more particularly in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* [c. 1391]” (1955, 137; see also 146–48).

⁴ Kari Anne Rand has attributed *The Equatorie of the Planetis* to John Westwyk (2015, 15–35). Price and Wilson’s claims were contested but never disproved in their lifetimes. See Price for a succinct list of their supporting evidence (1953, 224). See also Price (1952d, 158 and 160–64), and Price and Wilson (1955, 141 and 145–66).

⁵ Price acknowledges the help of “Professor J. R. R. Tolkien,” but Tolkien’s name appears among a long list of scholars thanked for their assistance with a rather generic “For other requests” (1955, xv–xvi). The list is ordered alphabetically, and therefore Tolkien’s position cannot determine the amount of help provided. Unfortunately, the new evidence does not confirm or deny Cossio’s most intriguing conjecture: “What characterizes Tolkien’s scholarly work on Chaucer is the scrupulous attention devoted to specific linguistic points. Thus, he may have been aware, after careful examination of *The Equatorie of the Planetis*, that its attribution to Chaucer rested on inconclusive evidence. This view of course would have challenged Price and Wilson’s assumptions and it may explain why we know so little about Tolkien’s involvement. Given Price and Wilson’s commitment to the hypothesis of Chaucerian authorship, it is reasonable to assume that Tolkien would have preferred to limit his participation in the project” (2022, 173).

It is best to present the bare evidence first, unfettered from conjectures and observations, so that readers can judge objectively the value of the analysis and hypotheses formulated throughout the paper. The following pages present the dates and locations in which the letters and other materials were on sale, together with the sellers' descriptions of the items in chronological order. It is surprising to learn that the epistles first emerged in Oxford, as most major auction activity in the United Kingdom occurs in London. The description of lot 43 of an auction catalogue of Phillips, Oxford, from 20 October 1988 reads (Phillips, unpaginated):

[Tolkien ephemera]: 3-page typed letter signed from Derek Price to T., 1952; and 2pp. typed letter and typed article from R. M. Wilson signed with relative offprints and an ALS from Sir Lionel Whitby, Master of Downing College to Tolkien, 1950; and a number of signed pamphlets, etc. E £20–30⁶

The next time the location of the letters was made public, these were housed in London, which takes us to another catalogue. In 1991, Maggs Bros. Ltd. (1991a, unpaginated) advertised the sale of the following lot:

[708] TOLKIEN (J.R.R.) A Collection of **Philiological (sic)** and Literary Offprints from J.R.R. Tolkien's Working Library. Being three hundred and ninety-two items, all with Tolkien's library label,⁷ a large proportion inscribed to him by the respective authors, and a number additionally annotated by Tolkien himself. 1883 to 1972. £5000⁸

The description runs on without any reference to the letters, but such a large number of items required a proper list. Maggs Bros. Ltd. invited any curious inquirer to browse through its contents indeed: "A detailed catalogue of the material is available on request" (1991a, unpaginated). The inventory contained two familiar items disclosed earlier in 1988 plus some additional surprises:

[326] PRICE (Derek J.) Interesting and lengthy Typed Letter Signed to Prof. Tolkien on a possible Chaucer holograph. 3pp. Royston, Herts, 1952.

[327] PRICE (Derek). *The Equatorie of the Planetis*. Reprint from the TLS.⁹ With his calling card attached.¹⁰ Illustrated. See under Wilson for a reply to this article. With the printing of this article in *Bulletin of the British Society for the History of Science*.¹¹ London, The TLS, 1952. (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991b, 23)

⁶ Typos in quotations from catalogues have been silently corrected except for the typo in 'philiological' (sic), which is highlighted in bold (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991a; Sotheby's 1995). All capitalisation, italics, and brackets also in the originals.

⁷ For a scan of the label and a brief explanation on its origin see: <<https://wayneandchristina.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/from-tolkiens-library/>>.

⁸ I do not quote the rest of the description of the lot because a synthesised and equally informative one is included in the excerpt from Sotheby's catalogue (1995) below.

⁹ See Price for the full reference (1952a; 1952b). Tolkien had at least two copies of each (Price 1952a; 1952b) because his clippings remain in Oxford (Cossio 2021, 1–2).

¹⁰ See the Appendix for a reproduction of Price's contact card found clipped to the front of OFFPRINT/MMS/D3/7 at Merton College Library (Oxford). OFFPRINT/MMS/D3/7 is an offprint of Price 1952d that the author presented to Merton College.

¹¹ Price must have forwarded this article a year later (1953) than the two *Times Literary Supplement* contributions (Price 1952a; 1952b) because this piece saw the light of day when the edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* was finished in July 1953. See Price for the full reference (1953).

[383] WILSON (R.M.) TLS to Prof. Tolkien. 2pp. with c. 30pp carbon typescript of his analysis of the prose language of Chaucer's *Equatorie*. See under Price for the article which stimulated this. Sheffield, 1953. (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991b, 27)

It appears that no buyer was interested (£5000 was an excessive price, even considering the great number of items, for the year 1991). Four years elapsed and the lot found its way into a Sotheby's auction on 18 December while still in London. There is no mention of the letters, though it is obvious from the number of items, title, and information that both lots advertised are the exact same undivided bundle which belonged to an identical seller (cf. Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991a and Sotheby's 1995). Further proof of this is the typo in "PHILIOLOGICAL" which is directly (and uncritically) borrowed and reprinted in Sotheby's catalogue in the lot's title but corrected in the description (cf. Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991a and Sotheby's 1995). It is here included in full with the interest of other scholars in mind, in particular for the unproven literary inspirations:

356 TOLKIEN (J.R.R.) A COLLECTION OF **PHILIOLOGICAL (sic)** AND LITERARY OFFPRINTS FROM THE AUTHOR'S WORKING LIBRARY, *all with Tolkien's library label, a large number inscribed to him by respective authors (including A.C. Baugh, A.J. Bliss, Norman Davis, Henry Sweet, C.L. Wrenn and others)*, 56 WORKS ADDITIONALLY ANNOTATED BY TOLKIEN, *a total of 392 offprints, 1883 to 1972 [chiefly 1940s and 1950s]*

The varied subject matter chiefly concerns philological problems of Early and Middle English, with many references to the extant texts, many (including *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, etc) re-edited and re-translated by Tolkien himself. Pamphlets such as H.E. Allen's *Influence of Superstition on Vocabulary* (1935) and R.G. Haliburton's *Survival of Dwarf Races in the New World* (1894) can be seen to relate not only to Tolkien's academic work, but also to his popular fiction.¹² £1,000–1,500 (Sotheby's 1995, unpaginated)

The price was more reasonable this time, but no sales records are available, provided that the lot sold, and the letters are since that sale hidden to this day from the public eye.¹³

There is no more information available about the letters, and it is now time to turn our attention to the importance of the quotations above. Maggs Bros. Ltd. dates the letter from Price to 1952 and Wilson's to 1953 (1991b, 23 and 27), and the reprint of the *Times Literary Supplement* with the calling card and the "article in Bulletin of the British Society for the History of Science" are said to be from 1952 (1991b, 23). The article from the *Bulletin*, as indicated in footnote no. 7, is from July 1953, and this suggests that Price wrote to Tolkien at least twice during the collaboration period, an assistance which for reasons provided below can be restricted to the following interval: January 1952–July 1953. In light of the new evidence, it becomes apparent that Cossio overlooked minor, though essential, bits of information which made him adopt a conservative stance about

¹² Both Allen's and Haliburton's were missing in Cilli's (2019) first edition. These have been included Cilli's second edition, Allen as no. A 20 (2023, 8), Haliburton as A 906 (2023, 122), though the latter is out of alphabetical order, it should be renumbered A 897 (2023, 121).

¹³ Nothing is known about Tolkien's replies either, and these are not among the almost 10000 catalogued items of the largest collection of Price's papers, preserved at CAPHÉS: Centre d'Archives en Philosophie, Histoire et Édition des Sciences (Paris). There are no replies from Tolkien either at Christ's College (Cambridge), Needham Research Institute (University of Cambridge), Parker Library (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge), Perne Library (Peterhouse College, Cambridge), R. M. Wilson Memorial Collection (Special Collections, University of Sheffield), and Whipple Museum of the History of Science (University of Cambridge).

the dates: “Tolkien offered his assistance [to Price and Wilson] between c. 1951–1955” (2021, 1). The discovery of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* and Price’s work on the manuscript already narrows down the dates. Price found *The Equatorie of the Planetis* in his own words “at the beginning of December 1951,” and shortly after at some unspecified time sought permission from Peterhouse College to unbind it to read some of its hidden content (1955, xiv).¹⁴ Price notes that “The detailed study of the manuscript has been made much easier for me by the kindness of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, who provided a set of photographs taken while the quires of the volume lay detached from their former tight binding” (1955, xvi). The photostats Price sent to Tolkien are copies of those original photographs. The manuscript was rebound before 22 May 1952 (see Falk 2014, 121), and therefore it was photographed between late December 1951 and early May 1952. Price may have ordered or sent the photostats later than 22 May 1952, though quite earlier than July 1953, the date when he signed the preface of the by then completed edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (1955, xvi).¹⁵

An informed guess would assume that most correspondence occurred during 1952. This can be explained by several factors. By late December/early January, Cambridge University Press had accepted Price’s proposal of an edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* and its connection to Geoffrey Chaucer (Falk 2014, 116–117 and 131), and Price was allowed to change the topic of his PhD on 9 May 1952, abandoning the history of crafting scientific instruments, and embracing his wish to edit *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (Falk 2014, 122 and 132). Given that Price was a living embodiment of determination,¹⁶ he would not have waited long to have the photographs taken and copies made, and to duly begin contacting experts in various fields, including Chaucerians of course, and sending them the reproductions with queries. This probably happened before 22 May 1952, the day on which he shared his findings and a similar instrument to the one described in *The Equatorie of the Planetis* with the scientific community at a Royal Society event.¹⁷ This takes us to Oxford and therefore to Tolkien once again. Price borrowed an equatorium from Merton College, Oxford, to illustrate his presentation at the Royal Society *Conversazione* in London. The Merton College Governing Body approved the loan of the item on 17 March 1952 (Falk 2014, 132): “9. That an astrolabe [with an equatorium on its back] (*circa* 1350) in the College Library be loaned to the Royal Society for a *Conversazione* in May 1952, the instrument to be insured for £500” (Merton College Governing Body 1952, unpaginated). Tolkien was present during that

¹⁴ This enabled Price to confirm that an inscription reads “chaucer” on f. 5v of the MS (1952a, 164; 1952d, 160; 1955, xiv). Reproductions of the inscription can be found on page 12 of the digitised MS and in the accompanying article on University of Cambridge Digital Library website: <cul.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-PETERHOUSE-00075-00001/1>.

¹⁵ Two letters from Price to the Perne Librarian (Peterhouse College), dated 15 February 1954 and 6 April 1954, confirm that he revised the edition’s proofs during those dates. In the 15 February 1954 letter, Price announced that the edition was scheduled to be published in Autumn of that year, though no reason for the delay has been found among his papers. The letters are stored at the Perne Library, Peterhouse College, Cambridge (Perne Library MSS enquiries. MSS 1–100). It is possible, though unlikely, that Price contacted Tolkien again during those months.

¹⁶ See Seb Falk for illustrative examples of Price’s personality (2014, 114–17). See also Silvio A. Bedini (1984, 95–100) and Eri Yagi, Lawrence Badash, and Donald de B. Beaver (1996, 65–74).

¹⁷ See Falk for the importance of this scientific gathering and the coverage Price’s discovery received (2014, 111, 120–22 and 127).

meeting (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 405), which means that the request was placed before and that Tolkien was aware of Price's dealings with the college at an earlier point.¹⁸

The question remains whether it was Price's idea to contact Tolkien or if this thought was prompted by someone else. Cossio points at Wilson's referral (Cossio 2022, 170), but is it possible that the liaison was part of Tolkien's social circle? This enquiry directs us to the history of the discovery once more. Until the manuscript was disbound, Price was not quite convinced that *The Equatorie of the Planetis* could be Chaucer's or even Chaucer's holograph. The quires were removed from their binding at best by late December 1951 after permission was granted by Peterhouse College (Price 1955, xiv). However, it was not until the end of January 1952, after comparing his finding with other manuscripts, that Price felt confident and began to advertise his discovery (1955, xiv–xv; Falk 2014, 116 and 131).¹⁹ On 7 March 1952, C. T. Onions published a letter in response to a fragment of the beginning of the Middle English treatise in *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (f. 71v) that had appeared a week earlier in *The Times* (173).²⁰ In this letter, Onions provided philological evidence from the fragment to argue that regardless of the authorship of the manuscript, the south-eastern Middle English *enches* (variant of *inches*, which replaces the Old English 'y' for 'e') and "such south-eastern forms are found in Chaucer's canonical works" (1952, 173).²¹ This kind of expertise was invaluable to Price, and Onions was in turn consulted and thanked (Price 1955, xvi). Onions takes us back to Tolkien through another route, since a file among Tolkien's papers (Tolkien VC 277) contains a newspaper clipping of Onions's letter (Cossio 2021, 1).²² It is plausible that Tolkien discussed this enticing philological observation with his friend Onions shortly after,²³ and this may have prompted Onions to direct Price to Tolkien.

The "calling card" Price attached to the "Reprint from the TLS" (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991b, 23) mostly overrules the possibility that Tolkien contacted him first. Either Price knew about Tolkien's expertise,²⁴ or Tolkien was recommended by "the Librarian and [/or other members of] the Society of Merton College" (Price 1955, xv), Onions, or Wilson. Price partnered with Wilson at an unspecified date, but this happened soon

¹⁸ However, that had to be after the 17 January and 13 February monthly meetings of the Governing Body in which Price's request was not discussed (Merton College Governing Body 1952, unpaginated).

¹⁹ An anonymous article was printed in Cambridge University newspaper *Varsity* ("Chaucer Holograph Found in Library," 23 Feb. 1952) and another in *The Times* ("Possible Chaucer Manuscript: Discovery at Cambridge," 28 Feb. 1952, 6). See Price for the articles under his name that ensued (1952a, 1952b, 1952d). The anonymous report in *The Times* summarises in brief Price 1952a and 1952b. See Price for another two pieces he wrote on the *Equatorie of the Planetis* before the edition was published (1952c, 1953). See Bedini for all related works published by Price until 1955 (1984, 102–03). Also in Yagi, Badash, and Beaver (1996, 77).

²⁰ See note 19 for reference. See J. A. W. Bennett for Onions's short biography and philological expertise (2009, unpaginated).

²¹ In fact, the south-eastern form *enche(s)* is used consistently throughout the MS. However, as Price and Wilson admit, Chaucer's "e-forms for OE. *y* seem to be much less frequent in his prose than in his verse" (1955, 146).

²² Tolkien VC 277 is kept at Special Collections, Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

²³ Onions was a Stipendiary Fellow from 1923 until 1965 at Magdalen College, Oxford, and the College Librarian during 1940–1955 (Bennett 2009, unpaginated). Tolkien was then the Merton Professor of English Language and Literature (1945–1959), and Merton is less than 5 minutes away from Magdalen. See Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond for the Onion-Tolkien relation (2017b, 907–08).

²⁴ See Cossio (2022, 171 and 173). In Hilary Term 1952 (Jan.–Mar.), Tolkien was lecturing on Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 404).

enough and earlier than December 1952 (Price 1952d, 155),²⁵ because Price needed a philologist to help him work on the manuscript's language:

It was also fortunate that Mr R. M. Wilson, M.A., consented to act as adviser on the linguistic side. In addition to writing Chapter X and compiling the Glossary, he has also provided the section on Punctuation in Chapter IX, and we have collaborated in the translation of the text. Throughout the preparation of this edition we have had frequent consultations. (Price 1955, xiii)

Wilson could have been the liaison between Price and Tolkien, but, unfortunately, the information in the catalogue does little to clarify such detail. Maggs Bros. Ltd. catalogue errs in suggesting that the *Times Literary Supplement* article “stimulated” a “30pp carbon typescript of his analysis of the prose language of Chaucer’s *Equatorie*” (1991b, 27), since that article in two parts contains scanty linguistic samples to work with (1952a, 1952b). In the letter (Maggs Bros. Ltd. 1991b, 27), Wilson may mean that the article sparked his curiosity instead, and the wordy carbon typescript seems, by the date and length, a draft of the translation, linguistic analysis, and related materials to be submitted to Cambridge University Press. This proves that Tolkien was, at least once, still queried and his opinions taken into consideration in 1953 as well.

At any rate, by 1953, it is certain Tolkien had almost no time to further assist Price and Wilson with their requests. In late 1951, most of 1952, and until July 1953 (and beyond), Tolkien was preoccupied with his legendarium, the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* (written between 1937 and 1949, revised until c. 1955, and published in three parts during 1954–1955) and *The Silmarillion* (1977),²⁶ and endless administrative, academic, and social obligations (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 401–25). In mid 1952, Tolkien’s complaints about the lack of free time were frequent (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 407 and 410), but all leisure was about to vanish. On 10 November 1952, Allen & Unwin accepted *The Lord of the Rings* for publication (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 414). This would leave, from then onwards, no time for Tolkien to spare on anything else that were not official duties and unavoidable social activities, because he then proceeded to create complementary material, rewrite, and revise a work of more than half a million words thoroughly.

It is thus reasonable to expect that Tolkien’s participation in the project was mainly limited to the first half of 1952, when he was, in all likelihood, first contacted by Price. Some biographical details point towards possible further assistance, but these are sparse and far between. Tolkien travelled to Cambridge during 11–18 August 1952 to continue preparing his long-due and delayed 1962 edition of *Ancrene Wisse* (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 409), edited from MS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 402, housed at the Parker Library.²⁷ He stayed at Peterhouse College when alone, and at the Garden House Hotel when Edith and Priscila Tolkien joined him (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 409).²⁸

²⁵ See the publication’s (Price 1952d) cover for the month.

²⁶ The *Silmarillion* never reached a final form in Tolkien’s lifetime, and it was published posthumously by his son, Christopher Tolkien, with the assistance of Guy Gavriel Kay.

²⁷ On 12–14, 16 and 18 August 1952, in order to gain access to MS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 402, Tolkien signed the Visitors Book for the Parker Library, stored at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (ref. Q-1-20).

²⁸ The Garden House Hotel burnt down on 23 April 1972. The Graduate Cambridge hotel, with the ‘Garden House’ restaurant within, stands on the same location: Granta Place, Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RT.

Tolkien returned to Cambridge to resume his study of the manuscript between late October and early November 1952 (Scull and Hammond 2017a, 413).²⁹ It is not unlikely that he met Price briefly during his stays, perhaps even at Peterhouse, but then the exchange would have occurred, perforce, without a written record.

Despite Tolkien's interest, it also seems, owing to his duties and literary endeavours, that he lacked spare hours to prioritise an external project in which he was only an advisor. This note has provided a few new certainties and fresh hypotheses concerning academic interconnections and Tolkien's contribution to Price and Wilson's edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis*, and has highlighted the value of often neglected auction catalogues for literary research. That is not comparable, of course, to the facts that the emergence of the actual letters, carbon typescript, reprints and related material would uncover, but with no better substitutes, the information that Tolkien was involved in earnest both in 1952 and 1953 is still valuable. At any rate, there is a large body of items in the Tolkien family papers at the Weston Library (Oxford) not accessible to researchers, there are still scores of Tolkien's personal documents in France, which Christopher kept at hand while he was working on his books, and, then, there are many letters in private hands; time will tell but we may learn more about the exchange between Tolkien, and Price and Wilson before long.

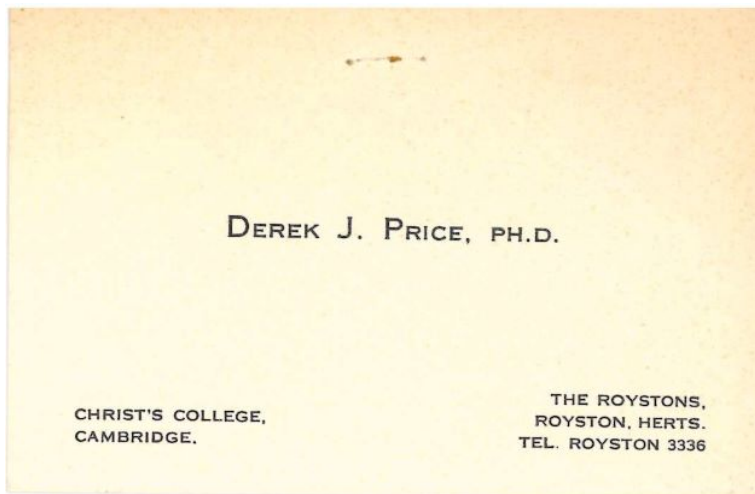
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<https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2021.1932406>.

²⁹ Tolkien did not sign the Visitors Book for the Parker Library in either October or November 1952. It is therefore possible he had MS Cambridge Corpus Christi College 402 sent to Cambridge University Library for consultation. Such minutiae are beyond the scope of this paper, but the records, if extant, might be found in two sources stored at Special Collections, Cambridge University Library: "Registers, completed by staff, of readers of manuscripts and 'select' books, 1929–1957" (volumes 44–45, UA ULIB 8/1/8), and "Name index to the Librarian's correspondence" (box 20, UA ULIB 6/6/3).

³⁰ The correct dates are 1922–1983 and the correct spelling is "de Solla."

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Appendix. Derek J. Price's Business Card.

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