

'Tolkien in Oxford' (BBC, 1968): A Reconstruction

Dr Stuart D Lee, University of Oxford¹

Introduction

On the 30th March 1968, from 9.50–10.35pm,² BBC2 aired the latest episodes of its TV documentary series *Release* (which aimed to explore “the world of films, plays, books, art, and music”). A colour production, which was strikingly new for its time (BBC2 was in fact the first TV channel globally to broadcast in colour), it consisted of two programmes: the first, titled “Suddenly I know what I have to do ...,” studied the English sculptress Barbara Hepworth, and the second (longer) episode was titled “Tolkien in Oxford.” The latter was described in the *Radio Times* of the 28th March (9) as a film “about *The Lord of the Rings*.” Quoting in full:

In Europe and Asia it's a school set book. In America it's a craze bigger than Batman: one million copies sold in 1967 alone. In Britain, a lot of people have never even heard of it. J. R. R. Tolkien, seventy-six, retired Oxford don, talks about his major work.

Readers in Oxford try to explain the phenomenon of the lord of the hobbits, the orcs, and the elves. A literary masterpiece or a pleasant donnish joke?

¹ I am extremely indebted to Charles Noad for checking through my notes and transcription, and providing corrections and improvements.

² It was repeated on September 3, 1973, the day after Tolkien's death.

Directed by Leslie Megahey

Editor: Lorna Pegram

It is extraordinary to think of a time when the people of any country, especially Britain, could be described as not having heard of J. R. R. Tolkien or at least *The Lord of the Rings* – but such was evidently the case in the Britain of the late 1960s and, as we shall see, the risk of devoting a programme of this standing to someone so relatively unknown as Tolkien was one which was nearly not taken.

This article will explore the making of the programme using archives from the BBC and those of the cast and crew, the show's reception and afterlife, its importance in terms of Tolkien scholarship, and, most importantly, presents a reconstruction of the full interview given by Tolkien during the filming, based on recently discovered documents and recordings.

“Tolkien in Oxford” (1968): A Summary

The importance of the original programme has already been hinted at in the extract from the *Radio Times*. By 1968 Tolkien was aged 76 and nearing the end of his life (he would pass away five years later). Indeed, based on our current information, this was the last recording made of Tolkien (either audio or video) that survives.

For many scholars of Tolkien, access to this film has been through the web. As part of their Modern Writers interviews the BBC released the original

film on its web site,³ noting its length as 26 minutes 32 seconds. It erroneously listed this as the work of one 'John Izzard' (this should read John Ezard, who only assisted on the programme, and credit should go to instead to Leslie Megahey, as noted above in the *Radio Times*). The online version, however, contained no closing credits, no production information, and no captions. Prior to this version appearing on the BBC site illegal copies had also appeared on YouTube.⁴

The programme opened with a drawing of the Eye of Sauron overlaid with Joss Ackland⁵ reciting the 'One Ring to rule them all' poem. Whilst animation was used occasionally in subsequent scenes (notably to present a map of Middle-earth), the vast majority of the programme was live production consisting of interviews with Tolkien (mainly seated in a room in Oxford's Catholic Chaplaincy off St Aldate's, but also walking in Merton College, at a night-time firework display at the Dragon School⁶ and various other settings),

³ "Archive: Modern Writers: Interviews with remarkable authors. Release: J. R. R. Tolkien," 2014, accessed July 26 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/writers/12237.shtml>. Hereafter known as the 'Broadcast version' or 'BV'.

⁴ E.g. a version appeared online in 2013, accessed July 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON_dD-LKICA&t=1140s.

⁵ For a full biography of Joss Ackland see: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000722/>, accessed July 26, 2017. Ackland's role as 'Reader' was mirrored by his subsequent reappearance as a 'Narrator' on the BBC's *Archive on 4* "Tolkien: The Lost Recordings" from 2016, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07mvd5z>.

⁶ The filming of this particular scene was described in Wood (1968). It notes that a few repeat shots had to be taken, and that Tolkien himself missed some of the display due to being caught in traffic. When asked about his reaction to it all Tolkien commented "It was terribly muddy ... The smoke from those wretched

interspersed with commentary from Oxford students and members of staff. There were also general shots of the city and University. The programme famously ended with an aerial helicopter shot pulling away from Tolkien as he stands alone on the walls of Merton College looking out over Christ Church meadow. It is, however, filled with now very familiar scenes in the visual record of Tolkien. For example, there is his description of the writing down of the first line of *The Hobbit* (02:46–03:32⁷), in which he tells, with added humour (describing the marking of examination scripts as “boring”), the famous episode of discovering a blank sheet of paper (“Glorious!”). There are the walks within Merton College gardens with Tolkien’s voice used as a voiceover describing his love of trees (06:49–08:00). There is also his somewhat surprising selection of a quote from Simone de Beauvoir’s *A Very Easy Death*, in which he pulls a newspaper cutting from his pocket, and uses the extract to highlight what he felt was the “key-spring of *The Lord of the Rings*” (22:07–23:15) – the inevitability of death.⁸ When Tolkien is not speaking himself we are treated to film of him sitting lighting his pipe, or eating at the Eastgate Hotel whilst Ackland’s voice-over reads extracts from *The Lord of the Rings* (11:47–12:09). The programme is also notable for its comic moments – the curious ‘tour’ of Merton conducted by the magnesium flares made your throat sore. Whoever heard of putting paraffin on a bonfire?.” The watching pupils noted that Tolkien was “older” than they had expected.

⁷ The time stamps quoted throughout are from the official broadcast version on the BBC web site.

⁸ de Beauvoir’s book was not published until 1964, so could not have been a source for *The Lord of the Rings*, but Tolkien instead, using an in-vogue philosopher, is perhaps attempting to show the universality and contemporary relevance of his work.

College Verger (08:00–08:22), the synopsis of the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* on Magdalen Bridge by a bemused and cold female student, the criticism of Tolkien by a young Oxford academic as traffic roars past, and so on. But, whilst clearly a product of its time in terms of style and available technology, its legacy and importance to Tolkien scholarship have remained timeless.

As noted earlier, the broadcast version lasted just over 26 and a half minutes, yet Tolkien himself only appears on film (either directly being interviewed or speaking as a voiceover) for around 7 minutes and 40 seconds (discounting the still images from the montage of him at lunch in the Eastgate Hotel, 11:47–12:09, or the firework display, 13:02–13:46). However, the film crew were in Oxford for four and a half days, from Monday 5th to Friday 9th February 1968, and on the Monday and Tuesday of that week they interviewed Tolkien (in the Catholic Chaplaincy) for around two hours⁹, all filmed, and all based on a scripted set of questions. In summary then, nearly 1 hour and 50 minutes of extra material was filmed of Professor Tolkien that did not make the final cut.

The BBC Archives: Caversham

In an attempt to piece together the history and fuller record of the film some key collections were used. The primary ones were the BBC archives at Caversham, near Reading (for printed and written documents), and at Perivale in London (where film and audio recordings are stored). In addition to these there are also

⁹ As Megahey remarked at the time “I’ve shot miles and miles of film this week – much more than I can use” (Wood 1968).

the personal recollections and collections of the surviving members of the cast and crew involved in the original production.¹⁰

Beginning with Caversham, in the archives there is a dedicated folder of documents, in two files, related to Tolkien's involvement with the BBC.¹¹ Before considering the items related specifically to the 1968 production it is worth noting some of the other important records contained there.

The earliest items date from 1937 and centre on the correspondences and eventual broadcast (in 1938) of his lecture on Anglo-Saxon poetry for the "Poetry Will Out" series (for which Tolkien received 12 guineas).¹² The next major set of documents centres around Tolkien's talks and translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1953, see *C&G* 424ff¹³) and the dramatization of *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son* (aired 3rd December, 1954).

¹⁰ I am deeply indebted to Leslie Megahey, Patrick O'Sullivan, Jessica Yates, and other contributors who have allowed me access to various documents related to the programme. O'Sullivan has also written two blog postings of relevance <https://fiddlersdog.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/tolkien-in-oxford.html> and <https://fiddlersdog.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/the-rescue-of-tolkien-in-oxford.html>, 2014, accessed July 26, 2017.

¹¹ File 1 "Tolkien, J. R. R. Professor, 1937-1962" and File 2 "Tolkien, J. R. R. Professor, 1963-1967," containing around 100 documents (typed and handwritten).

¹² A copy of the script for the lecture is contained in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and on microfilm at the BBC archives, though Tolkien rewrote and reused it subsequently. Strictly speaking, this was not his first interaction with the BBC – that was a year earlier when part of his translation of *Pearl* was read out (7th August 1936). On the lecture on Anglo-Saxon from 1938 see *C&G* 225-226, Lee (2009), and the notes and extracts that were included as an appendix to *FA*.

¹³ The script for this lecture is available on microfilm at Caversham.

For the *Gawain* production Tolkien had been at pains to point out that the poet “puts nothing in for mere enlargement”, arguing that his translation therefore should not be cut. He did, however, accept that having heard himself recorded on tape, it probably needed “smoothing and easing”.¹⁴

One of the more interesting collections of documents relates to the production files for Terence Tiller’s dramatization of *The Lord of the Rings* (first proposed in January 1955 and eventually appearing later that year with *The Fellowship of the Ring*, followed in 1956 with a single series combining *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*). Contained in the documents are the complete scripts for *The Fellowship of the Ring*.¹⁵ This was broadcast on the BBC Third Programme, starting on 14th November 1955 and running weekly until Christmas. The episodes were titled:

Episode 1: The Meaning of the Ring

Episode 2: Black Riders and Others

Episode 3: Aragorn

Episode 4: Many Meetings

Episode 5: The Moria Gate

Episode 6: The Breaking of the Fellowship

¹⁴ From a note contained in the Caversham file, dated 1954.

¹⁵ No actual recording of the shows survives nor does the script for the second series. However, small selections of the incidental music used do survive in the Radio and Film archive, and these were used in the BBC’s *Archive on 4* programme (2016).

The script shows that heavy use was made of a narrator's voice throughout, beginning with the opening to Episode 1 with an introduction to Hobbits, paraphrasing Tolkien's own description at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings*. The narrator was used to provide explanations, filled in details, and also moved the plot along quickly from location to location (far more than in Brian Sibley and Michael Bakewell's longer dramatization in 1981). Interestingly, a decision was made to include the whole section on Old Man Willow, Tom Bombadil, and the Barrow-wights (all of which was omitted in the radio version of 1981, and both the Ralph Bakshi and Peter Jackson filmed productions). From the documents that survive it is also possible to establish the cast list: Frodo – Oliver Burt, Bilbo – Felix Felton, Gandalf – Norman Shelley, Sam – Victor Platt, Merry – Michael Collins, Pippin – Basil Jones, Bombadil – Michael Shelley, Aragorn – Godfrey Keaton, and the Narrator – Derek Hart.¹⁶ At the beginning of the script for each episode there is also some general production information which includes a series of audience 'reaction' reports, detailing an 'appreciation index'. From these it is clear that the first episode yielded a lower than average score (compared with other dramas) but this had improved by the third episode, and by the last show was on a par with other series (64% against the norm of 65%). The reports also contain a few anonymised quotes from respondents including one listener's complaint that the "full flavour of the original ... had not been successfully conveyed" and another saying, after the last episode, "you just can't leave it at this point."

¹⁶ See also the entries in the *Radio Times*, accessed August 2, 2017, <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/schedules/third/1955-11-14>.

Tolkien's unfavourable reaction to the show is well known.¹⁷ However, sympathy must be extended to the writers and producers of the programme who were, in effect, only given 6 hours to do the entire work, especially when compared to the 1981 production which lasted 13 hours. In 1955-56 each episode was only 30 minutes long with six episodes in series one and two respectively; and, as noted, it included the Tom Bombadil episode.

The files at Caversham reveal that this was not the only dramatization the BBC produced in the 1950s of *The Lord of the Rings*. As part of their 'Scripts for Schools' initiative, a heavily abridged version of *The Lord of the Rings* (adapted by Silvia Goodall) was made for the 1956 spring term's editions of 'Adventures in English' (all the scripts survive on microfilm). This was broadcast on the BBC Home Service at 2.00pm¹⁸ and would have been listened to by children in the classroom. Again, there is heavy use of the narrator, with actors playing the main parts, and after each episode the class were asked to do a follow-up activity (e.g. paint a picture inspired by the events, or write a 'what happened next' story).

Returning to the main topic of this article, however, contained in the material held at Caversham is a separate folder titled *Release*. This is actually an extensive collection of documents, some of which were only deposited into the archives by Leslie Megahey in 2015, which present a more or less complete written record of the filming in 1968. Contained therein are the initial correspondences between the BBC and Allen & Unwin (see below); equipment

¹⁷ See, for example, his letter to Molly Waldron of November 30, 1955 (*Letters* 228).

¹⁸ Accessed July 26, 2017,

<http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/00695fd2a8ef46158c8b64b0e6319a1b>.

orders; licence agreements and fee negotiations; storyboards; Joss Ackland's script; interview scripts and transcriptions of interviews; orders for slides used in the show (e.g. the opening 'Eye of Sauron'); orders for 35mm caption transparencies;¹⁹ publicity material (notably for the *Radio Times*); correspondence with the police (to agree the final helicopter shot²⁰); and contacts for the other shot locations – the Oxford Union, the Dragon School, St Hugh's College, Merton College, and Trinity College. Most importantly this file also contains the complete shooting schedule for the week of 5th to the 9th of February 1968 in Oxford, and equally important a partial transcript by a BBC typist of some of the interview with Tolkien²¹. Both are key documents in terms of the reconstruction of the full interview.

¹⁹ When the programme was aired it included captions to guide the viewer as to the location, people, and key events in Tolkien's life. However, at the time, these were added to the transmission in the studio, either live or on an assembled tape recorded just prior to broadcast. Subsequent to the broadcast the 16mm copy that was retained had no captions, and it was this version that was distributed worldwide and later appeared online. The records at Caversham include memorandums from Megahey complaining that the version that was being sold (i.e. without the captions) would not be understood by audiences and there are repeated offers by him to help reinstate them but to no avail. In the remastered version of the film (completed in 2014) the captions have now been reinstated but this has, as yet, not found its way online to the BBC site. For more information on the remastering see O'Sullivan's blog post (2014).

²⁰ The hire of the helicopter was £75 – a considerable amount in 1968 for a single shot.

²¹ Hereafter called the 'typist's transcript' or 'TY'.

The Beginning of the Project

Using the material discovered at Caversham, and testimonies from the surviving crew, it is possible to construct the chronology and details of the entire show, beginning with its inception. The initial stages of the commissioning of the programme were not without their difficulties though as we shall see. The earliest record of this process is a memorandum from Alan Sleath to Christopher Burstall (both at the BBC) which is very positive:

I've long thought we [i.e. Arts Features] should do something on Tolkien.

An extraordinary phenomenon & may not be around forever.²²

It is difficult to tell exactly what acted as the catalyst for this but material elsewhere (see below) suggests the original idea may have come from Joy Hill of Allen & Unwin. Lorna Pegram, the subsequent producer of the final programme, is noted as agreeing with Sleath, and identified Leslie Megahey as a possible director. Megahey was at that time relatively new to directing but had been a student at Oxford in the early 1960s.²³ Megahey was asked to produce a longer treatment, which he duly did, that outlined 'a colour film about Professor Tolkien and his work', aimed for inclusion in the *Release* series, but also noting that it could be an independent programme for BBC2. He described it in terms of a

²² All documents cited are from the Caversham files, unless otherwise stated.

²³ Megahey was to go on to have a very distinguished career at the BBC, being editor of its two flagship arts programmes *Arena* and *Omnibus*. He also made the highly influential *Schalcken the Painter* (1979), and conducted a seminal set of interviews with Orson Welles for *Arena* (1982).

“unique celebration of the work of a writer and scholar hitherto dealt with only in press interviews”. For Megahey the “solid core of the film would be Tolkien himself” and the aim would be to “recreate the atmospheres, the warmnesses, the comforts, the coldnesses, of his own style in the shooting”.

What happened next, however, nearly derailed the programme before it got any further. At Caversham a series of letters exists between Pegram and Joy Hill, the aforementioned agent at Allen & Unwin, which indicates the delicate nature of the negotiations. The first correspondence that survives dates from 13th September 1967, in which Pegram sent Hill a copy of the treatment. There is then a letter from Hill to Pegram (13th December 1967) which states that “Professor Tolkien has something of an ingrained hostility against the BBC because of the way various of his books have been serialised”. That said, Hill then moves straight away to the discussion of the fee, noting that Tolkien already commanded “very high fees for the few interviews he grants” and that any “film Professor Tolkien makes will be an obvious money spinner.” The letter concludes with a warning that they recently had to send home a film crew from the Canadian Broadcasting Company “without a shot” – implying this was because an appropriate fee had not been agreed.²⁴ Pegram replied the next day adopting a tone of surprise and pointing out that it was in fact Hill who had first suggested that the BBC might want to make the programme, that no “competitive bargaining” could be entered into, and if the “reasonable fee” the BBC’s contracts

²⁴ In an interview with Megahey in 2014 at Merton College it was noted that this was not actually due to unsuccessful negotiations over a fee but more because Tolkien had been too ill at the time to undertake an interview with CBC. See “‘Tolkien in Oxford, 1968’ Q&A with Leslie Megahey,” 2014, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/tolkien-oxford-bbc-1968>.

department was prepared to offer was not considered acceptable then the project would have to be abandoned.

Thankfully this was not to be and a fee was agreed (Tolkien received two hundred and fifty guineas – £262 10s – for his part in the show) and the contract, signed by a covering letter from Tolkien, survives dated 30th January 1968. On 31st January Hill wrote in return noting that Humphrey Carpenter had offered to help,²⁵ and again on 15th February offering to assist in whatever way she could for the subsequent promotion of the programme.

The surviving material also gives us insight into some of the ideas Megahey originally played with, which did not make it into the final production. First, in the longer treatment, he mentions how he would like to film a conversation between Tolkien and W. H. Auden, and also a short lecture by Tolkien (possibly on the subject of fairy-stories). In the correspondences there is also a letter from Megahey to J. I. M. Stewart (aka Michael Innes) inviting him to be a part of the programme (Stewart was a known novelist at the time and a fellow of Christ Church college). A short note to Merton College further outlines the possibility of filming a meal in Hall (eventually abandoned and replaced with the montage shot of Tolkien lunching in the Eastgate Hotel), and a curious letter to a Heather Cathcart thanking her for “cycling in Oxford”. This is perhaps

²⁵ At Caversham a further letter survives from Humphrey Carpenter (dated 1st February 1968) to Leslie Megahey in which he mentions his adaptation of *The Hobbit* for New College School in December 1967, and again offers to assist in the 1968 show. There is, however, no evidence that Carpenter did provide any help for the eventual TV production.

explained by a post-production interview with Megahey and O'Sullivan²⁶ in *The Isis*, an Oxford University Student magazine, which ran a piece titled "Tolkien Televised" (14th February 1968²⁷). In this it notes that the film was to see Tolkien "through an Oxford perspective", and it was hoped it would include a shot of "undergraduates bicycling with flowing gowns to evoke the Black Riders" (thus presumably explaining the letter to Cathcart). In the same article Megahey observed:

... the main thing is just to capture Tolkien ... he's a real comedian ... He said to me. 'You can tell everybody he's a rather garrulous old man, but willing to play ball'.

The *Isis* article also records the plan to use a shot of "Cowley workers pouring orc-like out of factory gates" and "Fantastical radiophonic music" (which the programme did, from the team that had famously created the music for *Dr. Who*).²⁸ It concluded that "the film will be about Tolkien himself, Tolkien talking, Tolkien on the screen".

²⁶ O'Sullivan was the main researcher on the show and also an alumnus of Oxford, having read English at New College from 1963-66. In addition to assisting the production O'Sullivan was also tasked with locating students, staff, and suggesting venues for the show. He actually makes a cameo appearance as part of the 'tour' of Merton College. O'Sullivan has now gone on to become a published poet and songwriter, and an expert in the field of Irish Diaspora studies.

²⁷ I am greatly indebted to Jessica Yates for supplying me with this material from her own private collection.

²⁸ E.g. 02:06–02:45.

Finally, in the list of ‘what never made it’, there is an intriguing letter from Brocks fireworks in the Caversham archives. Brocks provided the display filmed at the Dragon School but in their correspondence noted that “should you wish to film a set piece of a dragon” this would require additional costs (to the £120 already being charged).

The Production

With all the material available at Caversham it is possible to paint a very detailed picture of the actual production (filming, editing, and eventual broadcast). As noted earlier the shoot took place between 5th and 9th February, 1968, at various sites in Oxford, with the crew basing themselves at the Turf Tavern. The full list of locations used were: Merton College, St Hugh’s College, Trinity College, the Dragon School, the Oxford Union, the Eastgate Hotel, and various streets in Oxford (notably the High and Magdalen Bridge). The interior interviews with Tolkien were conducted on the second floor of the Catholic Chaplaincy at St Aldate’s (aka ‘The Old Palace’), as was a smaller adjoining room for the interview with the priest, Father Morland. Some shots of Tolkien may also have been filmed in his rooms in Merton Street.

The total cost of production was noted as £3,376 15s and 6d (but this included the Hepworth documentary of c. £1,000).²⁹ The records list it as being produced by Pegram, directed by Megahey, and the lead researcher was

²⁹ The students and academics appearing received a fee of £5 5s (just under £40 in modern equivalence). Various other payments were made to the locations used in Oxford. The total amount spent on the Tolkien documentary amounts to about £40,000 today.

O’Sullivan. Megahey was assisted by John Ezard, the local journalist who knew the Tolkiens (Ezard received £41 8s for his part).³⁰ John Wyatt was the cameraman (who also took some still shots), George Cassedy³¹ was on sound, and the Reader was Joss Ackland. Of the other people appearing in the show it is also possible to identify the following:

- J. Cantwell (The Verger, Merton College) appearing in the scenes at Merton College (e.g. 05:00–05:17);
- Fr. David Morland (St Benet’s Hall, e.g. 10:04–10:16);
- Valentine Cunningham – the slightly angry academic giving vent to his dislike of Tolkien (e.g. 14:49–15:30);
- Identifiable students who took part are Lizzie Cotton (e.g. 04:35–04:54), Michael Hebbert (e.g. 09:40–10:03), Jane Catton (e.g. 10:54–11:15), Rufus Miles and David Jenkins (e.g. 13:47–14:42), and members of the Speculative Fiction Society – including Jessica Yates, Alan Pryce Williams, and Ernie Byrom (e.g. 10:21–10:34).³²

³⁰ Ezard worked at the *Oxford Mail* from 1963 and then moved on to *The Guardian* in 1967.

³¹ There is an inconsistency in the spelling of Cassedy’s surname, with it occasionally appearing ‘Cassidy’ on sites such as IMDB.com.

³² It is difficult to trace the subsequent careers of everyone involved.

Cunningham remained at Oxford to eventually become a Professor of English Literature (Corpus Christi College). Hebbert became Professor of Town Planning, at University College, London. Yates worked in schools but continues to publish on Tolkien. Catton married O’Sullivan (above) but died tragically in 1973.

As mentioned earlier the files in Caversham also contain the full shot list for the programme, listing the topics covered in the interviews with Tolkien and others, the footage taken (in terms of minutes and seconds), and the shot numbers. This allows one to reconstruct the week to an extraordinary level of accuracy.

Using this list we know the crew travelled up to Oxford on Monday 5th February, and set up in the morning in the Catholic Chaplaincy. The interview with Tolkien began that afternoon at 2.00 pm.³³ The shot list records:

- 1/1³⁴ Tolkien interview – list of works; academic books
Hobbit, start of Lord of Rings [sic.]
(ran out at end) 10' 30³⁵
- 2/1 T. interview – origin of name; family history;
upbringing; school; Exeter; war. 9' 40
- 3/1 T. interv. – coming back to Oxford after war;
work on English dictionary; elected prof.
Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke, then Prof. of English
At Merton. 10' 30

5/1³⁶ T. reading in English and Elvish from council

³³ O'Sullivan recalls that at the outset the rest of the crew were unaware of who Tolkien was or how important he might be, and he had to point out to them it was akin to interviewing Lewis Carroll.

³⁴ i.e. shot and take (or 'clapperboard') number.

³⁵ i.e. 10 minutes and 30 seconds of footage was taken.

of Elrond, talking about beautiful languages.

Heroism of the hobbit. 10' 30

6/1 Hobbit, how it came to be written, story;

his children's' reaction. 9' 30

7/1 T on Lord of the Rings 10' 00

8/1 Inhabitants of Middle Earth; likes. 10' 00

9/1 Fireworks; dislikes. 10' 00

Filming reconvened on Tuesday 6th in the same room, but the shot list notes the crew also did some external shooting ('street, Oxford Union, etc'). For the interview with Tolkien the shots that were listed were:

10/1 Religion, God; Elvish 7' 00

11/1, 2 Songs; cult 9' 00

12/1 attitude of life and death 9' 00

13/1 process of writing 9' 00

³⁶ Shot 4/1 seems to have been omitted.

Shot 15/1 is noted as being "MUTE" and described as "w/a T. by fire; lights pipe". It lasted for 2 minutes (used in BV for clips such as 11:37–11:46), and may have been filmed in Tolkien's room in Merton Street (see below, fn.39). The remainder of the Tuesday filming took the form of interviews with one of the students, Michael Hebbert (shots 16/1–17/1), "group chatter" of around twelve minutes (18/1–19/1, presumably the interview with the student Speculative Fiction Group), and then interviews with Father Morland (20/1–21/1 – sixteen minutes).

Following the two days in the Catholic Chaplaincy, on Wednesday 7th the crew moved to Merton College in the morning and afternoon including "Verger's chat", "Verger & party walking", and a tracking shot of Tolkien in college (22/1–27/1). The remaining shots (28/1–42/1) were the external shots of Val Cunningham, Lizzie Cotton, etc., culminating at 4.00pm onwards with the "Bonfire and fireworks" at the Dragon School.

Thursday 8th February started with the filming at the Oxford Union (43/1–43/3), then there was a return to Merton for more shots of Tolkien. Intriguingly, shot 50/1 notes "Reading from Tom Bombadil" and then after a couple of miscellaneous shots there is the Verger's tour. Finally, shots 61/1 onwards list "Tolkien writing elvish", "T. going into his house" (62/1), "Sandfields Road" (63/1), and "shots of Oxford and undergrads" (64/1). Filming finished on Friday 9th with the shot of Christ Church meadow from a helicopter (the closing scene of the programme) filmed at 7.30 am, and a few Oxford street shots.

What then happened can only be guessed at, but based on interviews with Megahey about editing practices at the time it is possible to present one possible scenario. It needs to be remembered that in 1968, film and audio were recorded separately in the shoot and only later brought together in the editing suite. Having returned from Oxford, selected reels were sent to a typist for transcription (some reels may have been omitted at this point, if they were felt not to be of use to the final edit). Megahey then looked through all typed transcriptions, marked up and selected the relevant pieces, and then cut extracts from the transcript out and sellotaped them to cards to make a template for the edit, detailing which sections he wanted to use and in what order (either film and sound, or just sound for voice-over). This allowed for a detailed selection then of both film and audio material which was then cut and assembled, to produce the version for broadcast.

With reference to the use of colour this was actually decided during the shoot. After each day, Megahey nominated a roll he wanted printed in colour (a request would accompany that roll as it went back to the processing labs). These requests were kept to a minimum due to the costs of printing colour film (by Kodak) and thus the selection of rolls was made very carefully. Editing was performed primarily using black-and-white footage only (with the director often only seeing the full-colour version at the time of broadcast).

At various stages then during the editing process and subsequently the visual and audio material became fragmented. First, due to the separate recording of audio and film, the two could become disassociated leading to cases where film footage remains but with no audio, and visa versa. Second, some sections of film and audio that were not used in the final broadcast version were

simply thrown away or lost either in the editing suite, or after the typist had made their transcription. That said the BBC did also have a policy, albeit not always strictly applied, of retaining off-cuts in its archives and fortunately this is exactly what happened with the 1968 show as we shall see.

The Broadcast

Very little is known about how the programme was received when it was aired nearly two month's later on 30th March. At Caversham a note survives (dated 3rd April 1968), mentioning that the Head of Arts at the BBC felt the film was "a little bit arty". Megahey recalls that the general reception was positive though, and even Hill noted her admiration. Tolkien was less positive about the experience and in a much-publicised letter (*Letters* 389-90) he criticised the "bogosity" and "world of gimmickry and nonsense".³⁷ Much has been made of this but Megahey and O'Sullivan both recall that this was not the feeling on the set, and that towards the end of the second day of filming (Tuesday 6th) and certainly by the Wednesday, Tolkien was thoroughly relaxed and enjoying himself. Tolkien did praise Megahey also, noting "He knows my books very well ... and during the course of the interviews he asked me more pertinent and intelligent questions than I have ever been asked by an interviewer before" (Wood 1968).

What appears to be the case is that Tolkien, in part, objected to some of the 'staging' necessary for a TV production; notably his being told to use the

³⁷ Megahey also recalls (see the interview at Merton from 2014) that Tolkien described it in a private letter as fragmentary, like a picture all smashed up and pieced loosely together.

room in the Catholic Chaplaincy because it had the right atmosphere for an academic's room (even though it was not his own room).³⁸ He also was not accustomed to the practices of recorded interviews – he found it frustrating to take direction in terms of how to answer a question,³⁹ or having to answer more than once, and found the technical set-up of the lights and microphone off-putting. Moreover, he was undoubtedly concerned about how this would be received at college, especially with his overheard mildly offensive remarks about the college Verger (e.g. “all togged up, I’ve never seen him so tidy” 08:20–08:22).

The Afterlife

Despite a repeat showing in 1973, the programme was never shown again on TV and sat in the BBC archives.⁴⁰ However, with the advent of the Internet eventually a copied version of the full programme appeared on YouTube. Though this was illegal, for many people it was the only means of accessing the show.

³⁸ The room has wooden panelling, stacks of books, etc. Some filming may also have been done at Tolkien's room in Merton Street. In Wood (1968), Tolkien commented “They filmed me at my fireside ... where I don't sit, with a glass of beer at my elbow, which I don't drink.”

³⁹ Megahey adopted the tactic of giving Tolkien cues rather than asking him direct questions, which worked in rehearsal. However, at the time of filming this proved difficult and required repeated prompting from Megahey to try to keep Tolkien on track.

⁴⁰ In Caversham further documents indicate that Megahey had tried to pitch an extended version of the show to the BBC lasting 50 minutes, but this never came to pass. There is also a letter from Ballantine Books (29th March 1968) exploring the use of stills from the show in a proposed book on Tolkien – which Megahey had been invited to write, but declined.

Eventually the BBC did upload a legal copy onto its own site, but this was far from complete, missing any credits and captions. However, this was not the end of the story. A few events over the years began to indicate that more material may have survived from the original interview than had been used in the broadcast programme (to recall, only c. 7'40" of interview with Tolkien appeared in the show but the shot list indicates they interviewed him for around 2 hours). In chronological order these were:

- 1) The release of Brian Sibley's audiobook *J. R. R. Tolkien: An Audio Portrait* in 2001 which included a series of extracts from interviews with Tolkien, some taken from the famous recordings by Denys Geroult in 1964/1965, but with material also from the 1968 interview (some of which was new and had not been in the original broadcast version).
- 2) In 2004 Cromwell Productions produced an 80-minute documentary titled *J. R. R. Tolkien: Master of the Rings – The Definitive Guide to the World of the Rings*.⁴¹ This included a few clips from the 1968 programme that had not been used in the final broadcast version, with the credits citing "BBC Archives". All these clips were subsequently posted on YouTube.

⁴¹ Accessed June 20, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1331057/>. This is now available in three parts on Amazon Prime.

- 3) In 2007 with the release of *The Children of Húrin* the BBC's *Newsnight* showed some clips from the 1968 off-cuts (also broadcast on Australian TV) which had never been seen.⁴²
- 4) The Tolkien Library Wordpress blog contained two extracts, again previously unseen, from the show.⁴³

When added together the new material used in the above from the 1968 programme accounted for around another 5 minutes of new footage recovered that had hitherto been assumed lost. The key question then was could any more missing material be found?

The BBC Archives; Perivale

The answer to this question is 'yes'. Contained in the BBC audio and film archives at Perivale in London are all the surviving off-cuts of the 1968 shoot, which despite being looked at by Sibley and the *Newsnight* team in 2007 remained relatively unknown. The material survives as original film footage (black and white) with separate audio reels, and in total amounts to just over an hour of material. When added to the typist's transcript held at Caversham which also includes a written record of some of the footage that was then lost, around 90 minutes of extra interview can now be recovered. Whilst some of this is either

⁴² Accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFcjBzP7H-E>. I am very grateful to Adam Livingstone, the producer of *Newsnight* in 2007, for providing further details.

⁴³ "1968 BBC interview with J. R. R. Tolkien on YouTube (16.01.08 by Peter Collier) – 2 comments," accessed June 20, 2017, <http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/814-Tolkien-1968-BBC-Interview.php>.

inaudible, or of little relevance (e.g. directions to camera, or interruptions), a substantial amount is discernible and of interest to Tolkien scholarship and is presented here.

The Restored Interview: Editorial Practices

What follows then is an attempt to restore the interview to as full a record as possible, drawing together all the source material found in the off-cuts at the BBC archive in Perivale, the clips used in the broadcast version, and the BBC typist's transcription from 1968. Specifically these are:

- Broadcast Version (BV). Full running time 26'32" with c. 7'40" of interview with Tolkien (using the copy, with all its issues noted above, as available on the BBC's web site);
- Typist's Transcript (TY). 20 A4 pages of transcript made by the BBC typist (preserved in the Caversham files). Each page has about 250 words (recording both the Interviewer's question and Tolkien's answer). The pages are also heavily annotated with Megahey's notes;
- Off-cuts (OC). Unused footage from the interview consisting of 70'31" of material over 18 shots, preserved in the BBC archives at Perivale on separate film and audio tracks.

The full interview itself is often difficult to convey fully in transcription form. Tolkien's experience in recorded interviews was limited, as indeed was Megahey's at the time. Consequently, it often takes the form of a conversation as

opposed to questions and answers, and Tolkien was clearly unprepared for many of the topics. In formulating his responses he often pauses, starts on one subject and then changes mid-sentence, repeats himself, and so on. At times the conversation is also barely audible or trails off into silence. In the BBC typist's transcript (TY) there are also errors arising (understandably) from unfamiliarity with Tolkien's mythology, but also displaying simple mistakes in transcribing (clearly evident where both the transcript and the off-cut survive for the same piece).

In an attempt to make this more readable, the following reconstruction strikes a balance between a fully diplomatic transcription and one that retains the spirit and flow of the interview. Obvious stumbles or pauses ('ers', 'uhms'), and short trailing comments have been removed. Where Tolkien corrects himself mid-sentence (e.g. changing "for the BBC ..." to "on the BBC ...") only the correction has been retained. Obvious mistakes in the BBC typist's transcript have also been corrected.

Wherever the audio is hard to hear or a question arises a '[?]' has been used, and '[]' indicates inserted words to assist with the sense and flow of the interview. In addition, where there is a break in the film or audio (now lost) this has been indicated. Lengthy pauses by Tolkien are noted as '...'.

All material in **bold** survives in the film/audio off-cuts (OC) preserved in Perivale. Material in *italics* survives solely in the typist's transcript (TY).

Material underlined was used as a clip in the broadcast version (BV).

Occasionally material survives in more than one of these but this has not been indicated. Efforts have been made to highlight where there is overlap with the

material used in Sibley's audiobook (2001), the Cromwell Production (2004), *Newsnight* (2007), or online posts.

During the course of the interview it seems that both John Ezard and Leslie Megahey asked questions of Tolkien but it is difficult to discern which voice on the tape belongs to each (they are always off-camera). Therefore, for the purposes of this record they are simply referred to as the 'Interviewer'.

The Restored Interview: Transcript

- I. "1/1 Tolkien interview – list of works; academic books Hobbit, start of Lord of Rings [sic.] 10' 30"

The interview begins with Tolkien being asked to list his main academic books "in order of dates" and his reply, though hurried, is interesting in that it elevates his famous *Beowulf* lecture and work on Chaucer and *Sir Gawain* to the fore. He also mentions *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* (see *Aotrou*) but notes he was not that proud of it.

The main books or things which I've managed to publish in the course of being a professor are much too few. I don't know whether a very few of them really deserve mention. I think, perhaps, what I should regard as the most important are really in the few public lectures I have given. I suppose, perhaps, the most important is the lecture which I gave in the British Academy which was entitled "Beowulf: The

Monsters and the Critics”, which has been many times reprinted, and has I think had an effect on the general attitude towards that poem. I also once gave a paper to the Philological Society which was entitled “Chaucer as a Philologist”, which I think brought into prominence all the things about the fourteenth century and Chaucer as well as, perhaps, being of use in textual criticism, which, it has been recently noted again, although it was some years since I gave it. And last of all, and most recently, I suppose, was my Andrew Lang lecture in St Andrews, which eventually became published as an essay ‘On Fairy-stories’. Those were the three I think, perhaps, things in which I’ve had perhaps the most effect, if any, on the subject which I profess. The last part of my work was actually done,⁴⁴ as I now discover to my great pleasure, because I was always a diffident lecturer, I had never any idea whether I was having any effect or not, and it’s pleasant in later years to discover that I must have had quite a considerable effect through the form of lectures. I was an assiduous lecturer, which was partly why I was not an assiduous writer, I took a great deal of trouble over lectures, lectured a great deal more than my statutes demanded, on lots of different subjects.⁴⁵ I did it together with the help – I’m afraid he did most of the dirty work – of the late Eric Valentine Gordon, who was once a pupil of mine. Together we edited and brought first, I think, into prominence therefore, a remarkable

⁴⁴ This sentence reads oddly as Tolkien seems to shift his line of thought quite abruptly from his work to his impact as a lecturer.

⁴⁵ **“The last part ... of different subjects.”** was used by Sibley (2001).

medieval work, superior, I think, to most of what Chaucer wrote, which is now known as “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, and we published together an edition which has held the field since, and has now been re-edited by another pupil of mine who has followed me, Professor Norman Davis, who now has it in a paperback. It’s a remarkable poem. I propose quite shortly – in fact, I should have done so before – to publish a translation of this poem. I did make a translation, which I have now improved, which was a successful broadcast on the BBC in the early fifties; I think there was a repeat broadcast. I suppose I’ve done other things, but I can’t remember them at the moment. You must remember that, before I actually got an actual job in any university, I was working – owing to the kindness of people who found an unfortunate war-returned officer with nothing much to do – I was working as Professor Bradley’s assistant on the Oxford Dictionary.⁴⁶

Tolkien is then asked to present a summary of *Beowulf* which he resists doing (“No, no, not possible”), but instead states:

Well, if you want, “Beowulf” is one of the very few long poems in Anglo-Saxon which deals with the traditions which the English brought with them from their original location in what we should now call Denmark, and it shows a remarkable amount of tradition about ancient Swedish history. It’s really rather a document of Swedish

⁴⁶ “before I actually ... the Oxford Dictionary.” was used by Sibley (2001).

history than English, but it happens to be entirely English in its literary style.

The Interviewer asks Tolkien to list his academic publications by date but he says he could not do that, and at best could try to list them in order. This is then followed by a discussion of the dates of publication of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* but it is heavily cut in the OC and difficult to reconstruct. When the film and audio resumes Tolkien is recorded as adding, almost as an afterthought, that:

The only other things I've published which might be called narrative things is a thing that I was once proud of but don't think so much of now, a thing called "Lord and Lady" or "Aotrou and Itroun",⁴⁷ which is an attempt on my part – I always believe in practising what you preach – I'd heard so much about this or that story being made of a composition that I thought I'd try and make a story of my own, and see what happens when you try to compound two. This was compounded of two actual modern Breton lays, it was written in the medieval style and was published in the "Welsh Review". [Break]⁴⁸ But that's all I think I can say about published work except that I was

⁴⁷ Tolkien does not use the commonly used title for this – *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun*.

⁴⁸ Whilst the time footage stamp in OC does not indicate a break at this point there clearly is a cut of some duration.

often a contributor to the old “Oxford Magazine” with stray verses, which have since been remodelled or republished.

The take concludes with the Interviewer asking about writing a book ‘which was too large for its time’. Tolkien replies “Ah, **“The Lord of the Rings”**” but the footage then abruptly stops.

- II. “2/1 T. interview – origin of name; family history; upbringing; school; Exeter; war. 9’ 40”

No material from this take survives in either OC or TY. It is impossible to say what happened to this, which accounts for over nine minutes of material, but it is possible that it was mined for use in the broadcast programme. Bearing in mind the synopsis suggesting this was about the origin of Tolkien’s name, his early life and time at Oxford and as a student, and then his service during the war, it would appear that the following clips used in BV originate from this take:

- Of two very English and extremely British parents (05:28–05:30)
- I think that there was a kind of double coming-home, which made the effect on the ordinary English meadows, countryside with bricks, immensely important to me (05:38–05:49)
- I was on the whole a rather puny, over-mothered, timid little creature who was not much of a success. I eventually became a fairly ordinary

scholar who turned out to be good at rugby football, of all odd things (05:51–06:07)

However, all told, these account for c. 30 seconds, which means the remaining nine minutes of take '2/1' have subsequently been lost.

III. "3/1 T. interv. – coming back to Oxford after war; work on English dictionary; elected prof. Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke, then Prof. of English at Merton. 10' 30"

OC opens with the clapperboard for "3/1" and the Interviewer prompts Tolkien to talk about coming back from the war to Oxford:

I was invalided at that part of my time of the war. I think the last thing I can remember was being up in Blackpool in a hospital which had once been a hydro.⁴⁹ At any rate, I eventually went, from being a soldier, before a Board – I think it was just after Bulgaria collapsed out of the war,⁵⁰ and everybody thought the end was coming – and I went before a charming medical board, who said 'I think you had better go back to Oxford and finish your education', which, of course, as a proud young man who had already taken his degree, I felt was rather offensive, but I didn't realise my luck. I came back to Oxford

⁴⁹ The Savoy Convalescent Hospital, see Garth (2003, 248).

⁵⁰ September 1918.

with my wife and child, and we lived in lodgings in St John's Street,⁵¹ and I still went about in uniform, receiving a pension, and eventually that dried up and I made my living out of taking freelance pupils,⁵² and ... [BREAK IN AUDIO for 10 seconds]⁵³ ... all kinds of things, partly because I was employed not only as preparing the rough stuff out of which the editor wrote the articles, but I was particularly employed to do etymologies, and I ran into quite a lot of very interesting etymologies at that time: winter, walrus, wampum, various things of that kind. It was through having to do the etymology of wampum that I first made any acquaintance with the Algonquin languages of eastern America and so on. It's a wonderful place, a dictionary, it's like the legal side of philology in which you will get perfectly expert in preparing briefs without really knowing what you're talking about.

Well, then, eventually, a charming man, George Stuart Gordon, G. S. Gordon,⁵⁴ who had been a Prize Fellow at Merton and had become just before the war Professor of English in the University of Leeds, and when the war was over he came back and took up his job and he then began to try and [there?] fill up his department and he, with a great ingenuity, introduced them to the wonderful Oxford term of a

⁵¹ 50 St John's Street.

⁵² "I was invalidated ... freelance pupils" used by Sibley (2001).

⁵³ It is not possible to identify a clip used in BV that was taken from this point.

⁵⁴ G. S. Gordon (1881-1942), Professor of English Literature at Leeds University from 1913-1922, then Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford (1922-1928) before taking over the Presidency of Magdalen College. He was also a member of the Kolbítar club.

'Reader', which simply really meant that you get an assistant to the professor who's paid rather more than the average lecturer. You won't be interested, probably, when the ancient definition was asked [of?] a certain famous Oxford professor who had an impediment in his speech, and, well, one dear lady wanted to know what the difference between a Professor was and a Reader, and he said 'My dear lady a Pwofessor merely pwofesses to read while a Weader weally weads!' Well, I 'weally, weally wead' and I went under George Gordon, which was a very fortunate thing for me. He gave me a free hand, and we built up a remarkable medieval and linguistic side in the University of Leeds, [in] which many of my pupils eventually filled many places. One of the most eminent and famous has recently died, the great Professor A. H. Smith⁵⁵ of University College London, who was a very considerable scholar, [mostly?] his works in the early English Place-name Society. George Gordon was elected to succeed Professor Raleigh⁵⁶ and, I think partly owing to his encouragement, I applied for the Professor of Anglo-Saxonship, which became vacant in Oxford when Professor Craigie went to America⁵⁷. To mine and, I think, nearly everybody else's surprise – I was a young man – I suppose –

⁵⁵ Albert Hugh Smith, who graduated from Leeds in 1924, finishing his PhD in 1926. He died in 1967.

⁵⁶ W. A. Raleigh (1861-1922), the first holder of the Chair of English Literature at Oxford.

⁵⁷ Sir W. A. Craigie (1867-1957). Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford (1916-1925) and then Professor of English at the University of Chicago.

where are we now, 20s? – I was about 34, I suppose, or 33 in the actual election – I actually became elected to the Professorship at Oxford at the age of 33⁵⁸ and I occupied the Chair of a – let me say at once that, owing to the casualties in the war and various other things, there were very few people to elect⁵⁹ – I occupied that Chair for – 20 years? – I suppose, from '45, and the year in which Charles Williams died I removed from Pembroke, where I had been very happy, to Merton as the Merton Professor of English Language and Literature – too big a job for me, really⁶⁰ – on the death of the great scholar Henry Cecil Wyld.⁶¹

The Interviewer then prompts Tolkien to talk about “these language stories” when he was a boy, “the flower names” and the “Ebbw Vale story – the station sign.” Tolkien considers this for a bit in silence but then returns instead to the discussion of his career:

⁵⁸ Sibley (2001) uses the short extracts “**To mine and ... I suppose I** and **I actually became ... age of 33.**”

⁵⁹ The audio is missing from the off-cuts after “**I occupied the Chair**” to “**I occupied that Chair.**” It is probable that some of this was used as the voice over in the broadcast version “Let me say ... to elect” (06:13–06:20).

⁶⁰ There is a break in the audio here between “**and Literature**” and “**on the death**” of four seconds. It is suggested that this originally contained “Too big a job for me, really” used as a voice-over in BV (06:26–06:27).

⁶¹ H. C. K. Wyld (1870-1945), Merton Professor from 1920 until his death.

I retired, which means to say that I was legally removed,⁶² from my Chair in 1959 at the age of 67, after having been for a brief time the senior professor of this university. I have always felt in all these things rather like Ko-Ko,⁶³ the [eminence?], rather, which was more provided by luck than merit. At the same time, one has to, I suppose, look back at oneself and wonder what is [billed?] under this kind of thing. I think a good education, particularly the enormous fortune of being born of parents of a certain kind, and particularly in having an extremely attractive, beautiful and extremely able mother, so that many of the clashes, quarrels⁶⁴ and things have never affected me. It never occurred to me to think that anybody, for instance, shouldn't be able to be a mathematician and admire pictures, and shouldn't be interested in languages and poetry and so on.⁶⁵

I suppose I inherited a certain amount of facility in learning language, which is not very great, much greater by eye and in books than in speaking. I have a fairly good phonetic ear, and I can make phonetic noises of easy languages, like 'ja', and so on, sufficiently good to deceive people. The result is that if I make a tentative remark in

⁶² There is a break in the audio break in OC. It is suggested this was originally the comment "which means to say that I was legally removed" used as a voice-over in BV (06:33-06:36).

⁶³ The Lord High Executioner in *The Mikado*.

⁶⁴ Alluding to the long-standing argument over the two sides of academia – the sciences and the humanities, as famously presented in "The Two Cultures" by C. P. Snow (1959).

⁶⁵ Sibley (2001), uses all of "**which was more provided ... and so on.**"

German, people used to flood me with German [and] I go down all hands, you know, sunk. But I'm not a good linguist, the only language I've ever spoken [with] anything like a colloquial facility, for a short while, is Spanish, but that's getting blank now.⁶⁶

I was bowled over by Gothic because it's an entirely new – though within the Germanic field – entirely new taste, you see. And one of the things that most interfered in my getting a good Classical Degree in Oxford – I did well enough, I ought to have done better – was unfortunately coming across in Exeter College library the Finnish language. Now that's again another entirely different sensation. I've never been very good at Finnish, it's a difficult language, but I know something about it; but its formation, its sound-texture, is very remarkable, it actually makes me quite intoxicated. I just went away and learnt this when I would have been better doing other things, and people couldn't make out why my essays on the Greek Drama were getting worse and worse.⁶⁷ But is that any kind of explanation? I think you have got to really like things and perhaps for what you might say are rational reasons ultimately, otherwise you can't put them across, and I think what people have encouraged me to think of [?] that I usually showed a very intense interest in the lectures I gave.

⁶⁶ There is a slight jump in OC here implying an edit but the timestamp gives no indication of how long.

⁶⁷ Sibley (2001) uses “**One of the things ... worse and worse.**”

Tolkien is then asked to elaborate further on this, especially what it is in language he particularly likes, and come up with a sentence in a foreign language that sounds beautiful. He declines, saying it is impossible to do so without preparation and he could only think of “**pass the mustard**” which he said does not sound nice in any language. However, he then proceeds to muse on how a preference for language could be handed down. He recognises this is trespassing on “**high philological and psychological**” territory but wonders:

... how far, of course, certain linguistic tendencies are handed down with certain racial varieties or types, I don't know, but I think that the correspondence of my tastes to my ancestry and location is very close. From my present knowledge of history in that part of the world, it must be pretty clear I must have had a great deal of – I'm not talking general British blood –but actual Welsh-speaking blood not far back in my ancestry. I have always been fascinated by Welsh, which seems a language whose word-structure and so on gives me extreme pleasure.⁶⁸ Languages have a flavour to me which are – I never understand people saying, for instance, this is awfully dry and dull, because a new language to me is just like tasting a new wine or some new sweetmeat or something.⁶⁹ **I find that intoxicating and aesthetic and nourishing. At**

⁶⁸ Sibley (2001) uses “**From my present ... me extreme pleasure.**” In OC the audio survives for “**I have always been ... extreme pleasure**” but the accompanying film footage is missing.

⁶⁹ There is a break in the audio here of around 10 seconds, which is presumably the extract (“Languages have a ... sweetmeat or something”) used as a voice-over in BV (17:54–18:05).

the same time, I wanted to know – I had botany books and I found myself very soon, quite young, being fascinated by classificatory botany, not so much because of its purely scientific and genetic sides, but because it in many cases, in many large families, it gives you this wonderful impression of the repetition, which even an eye can discern, of an underlying pattern constantly varied, you know. In some of the large classes of flowers the same pattern is varied, and some, of course, just for fun, they're not in particular.

My mother obviously had philological talents which had not been developed by education, and she awoke them to me by pointing out the similarity, and also the systematic similarity, between German and English words. But I think I inherited this, quite apart from comparative philology, because I was always puzzled. When anything was taught to me about how you ought to write, how you should do this and how you should do that,⁷⁰ and why, and I always wanted to know why it was wrong.

The Interviewer then tries to steer the conversation to Tolkien's own language invention, and how he created 'a world to justify it'. He asks what is beautiful in the phrase "Elbereth Gilthoniel," to which Tolkien replies "**You tell me!**". Tolkien muses that "Rivendell" is beautiful-sounding, and on the fact that there are "**hundreds of houses called Rivendell now in the country**". The Interviewer pursues this further by asking Tolkien about when he started to invent

⁷⁰ Sibley (2001) uses "**My mother obviously ... should do that.**"

languages, and why. Tolkien agrees inventiveness is **“rather an important point”** and then after a pause begins:

I first began seriously to invent languages about when I was 13 or 14. I’ve never stopped really.⁷¹ **No, not arrogantly, I was quite humble, but if I was told how a Latin metre works I wanted to write it in English. If I was told when surveying Greek or Latin grammar, I felt I should like to re-write it so as to make it a bit better in certain points. I always want to imitate every language I’ve learnt.**

Tolkien then notes **“the beginnings of inventing language”** went back to when he was a boy knowing a bit of French and German and then coming across the **“totally different Greek taste”**:

... which I first only knew by words like ... ‘Epaminondas’, ‘Leonidas’ and ‘Aristoteles’ and things of that kind. I tried to invent a language which would incorporate a feeling of that. It was quite lame.⁷²

I don’t know why one should, because one likes Finnish, you should try and invent a language that was like Finnish, or, of course, when one [has] learnt a little Welsh and wants to make a – I don’t know why, but I’ve always been like that. And also any story or any legend, I

⁷¹ It is suggested that this is the point where the clip in BV “I first began ... stopped really” (17:47–17:54) was taken from.

⁷² There is a cut here in OC but the time-stamp gives no indication of the duration.

think, I've always wondered how I felt that I could incorporate that and possibly improve it when I put it into a work of my own.

The Interviewer asks Tolkien if he could say something in one of his invented languages (presumably Elvish). Tolkien replies that he couldn't without preparation. There is then a break in the audio of 3 seconds before Tolkien continues:

... But it's had a long history, because it started out by being extremely Finnish, which David Masson,⁷³ who is rather good at these things, detected almost at once by having a bit of it written. It's got some Finnish stuff in it, I mean 'súrinen' and so on would catch the ear of anybody, of course, the use of '-inen' and so on is very Finnish, isn't it? 'Ai! laurië lantar lassi súrinen, yéni únotimë ve rámar aldaron!' Yes, rather beautiful. But it's only good for one line to me. It's, you might say, got a Finnish basis with a certain amount of Greek thrown back, and other languages I've learnt since, but harking back – since this is [its final form?] – to what is really my primary love as a good European, the basic European language, Latin, it's got much more Latinised as I've got older.

The shot finishes with the Interviewer asking Tolkien to recite the Ring verse in English but also in the Black Speech. Tolkien describes it as “**awful**” and asks for

⁷³ David Masson, science fiction writer, student at Merton (1934-1938), and then librarian at Leeds and Liverpool Universities.

a copy of the book as he can't remember it, joking his memory had got bad and very soon he would not be able to remember his middle name. He notes "**It's a hideous language, it's meant to be hideous.**"

IV. "5/1 T. reading in English and Elvish from council of Elrond, talking about beautiful languages. Heroism of the hobbit. 10' 30"

As noted earlier there was no shot slated as '4'1'. Shot '5/1' then is the next section. The beginning of this was heavily cut and edited so one has to rely to initially on the material surviving in TY. This records this shot beginning with Tolkien stating:

Well this is how, if I got a voice suitable, I should imagine Gandalf at the Council of Elrond spoke the chief words of "The Lord of the Rings" which appear on the head of each volume: "One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them." Ominous in English, but in the foul language of which they are composed it runs something like this...

This was then followed by Tolkien's reading of the Ring verse in the Black Speech which was used in BV (20:54–21:03). Having read the poem in the Black Speech Tolkien seems to have followed up with the quip "*The change in the wizard's*

voice was astounding.”⁷⁴ This, it appears, was then followed by the clip in BV (21:17–21:32) of:

I invented that in the bath, I remember, yes I remember inventing that in one of the baths in 20 North[moor], when I was having a bath in 20 Northmoor Road. I still remember kicking the sponge out of the bath when I got to the last line, thinking, ‘That will do it all right’, and jumped out.

We then return to OC for the remainder of the shot. Tolkien is seen taking off his reading glasses and commenting:

Well, I feel that those words are ugly, and I can only offer that as an example of what I find ugly ... I find [that?] on the whole, most people of the same island, of the same general linguistic background and climate, agree. But actually what really is ugly is so close to what is familiar that it’s difficult to ever come across.

On the whole, most people will agree that ‘l’ is on the whole a pleasant sound, and you will find that in many languages, even in the Eastern ones, but after all great languages like Sanskrit hadn’t, in the

⁷⁴ In TY it appears the director was not happy for some reason with this and Tolkien attempts to repeat his point by saying “*This is how I imagine Gandalf speaking these – the key words of “The Lord of the Rings” at the Council Elrond: “One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them”. But in the foul language of Mordor, which he also spoke to their horror, it would have sounded like this.*”

**classical Sanskrit, hadn't got an 'r', hadn't got an 'l' that was connected
[?] with 'r', and the same is generally true of Japanese.⁷⁵**

The Interviewer asks Tolkien to explore this further, especially the unpleasantness of some sounds. Tolkien notes that unfamiliar spirantal sounds can feel unpleasant, especially if the speaker is unfamiliar with them, though he notes that **"no Englishman"** finds **"eth"** unpleasant; but they become less appealing as **"the further they move back in the throat"** (citing **"ach"** as an example). The Interviewer then changes discussion to try to make a link between language and adventure, especially *The Hobbit*, much to Tolkien's bewilderment (**"I don't think there's any link"**). Tolkien notes that although some linguists enjoyed great adventures in the course of their research, most **"like myself"** are **"timid and averse to adventure"** and sees no connection between **"love of language and love of adventure."**

The Interviewer then moves to *The Hobbit* and asks Tolkien about the nature of Hobbits and how he (Tolkien) envied them, being peace-loving and "able to come up to scratch." The reply only survives in TY:

Authors very often tend to describe character - their own character very often, or a character as it appears to them to be. But they also tend to describe characters which are - which, although they mentally and by sympathy can comprehend - they are not really in their own nature. I think I find I often describe timid persons like myself. The only saving grace they

⁷⁵ A lot of this section also survives in TY.

can have is fortitude. Which I don't think I possess myself in [a] very great degree.

The Interviewer asks what Tolkien would have done in Bilbo's position at the beginning of the book had he been approached by a strange wizard. Tolkien replies "**I should run and ask my mother**" and then after direction elaborates:

I'd been very well brought up to avoid conversations with dubious old gentlemen, [and] I should have retired into the house and asked my mother. But at the same time, I should have had no regrets about the necessity of this procedure. Some boys would have either disobeyed or felt that they were being frustrated.

The Interviewer again provides some further prompting, and Tolkien continues:

If a wizard had come to me, of course, as a small boy, then the situation would be totally different than that in "The Hobbit". I was not a free person, nor the organiser of my life, nor the householder, nor anything else, but at the same time I should have found some excuse for not going.

He is asked why this was so, but the reply survives only in TY:

Because I'm neither heroic nor very brave. And because there's a total distinction ... between adventure in literature and adventure in real life.

They're neither the same nor even the same in the after-effects.

When asked to talk about people who in real life had adventures Tolkien, citing Stanley and Livingstone as examples, said he admired them greatly especially when their original intention was not the pursuit of adventure as such. He adds:

But then they were after something else bigger than that, weren't they? It's wonderful what even I think I could endure for some lure like that, yes. I have no desire whatever to place myself in an awkward position just for the sake of adventure like [some alchemists?] do.

The Interviewer then moves to the writing of the stories, and how they connected with Tolkien's life, beginning with *The Hobbit*. All of the audio and filmed recording of this exchange has been lost and what follows then is a taken solely from TY:

Well I wrote "The Hobbit" in 1937. I'd already ... ever since early youth, and certainly since [an] undergraduate had been slowly constructing and altering and fiddling with it and had eventually produced a large legendary cycle of the supposed elder period in this world. "The Hobbit"... I wanted to write a fairly quick story, a bit of humour in it and it was supposed to break away from that world and does to begin with, but it gets drawn back into it, doesn't

it? And that's really the origin of "The Hobbit". But, of course, in the process of writing "The Hobbit" – it's a fairly long book even so, isn't it? It's a goodish narrative, long – in the process of that if you're a writer, an awful lot gets tied up; your own present situation, your past, the things you would like to do, the things you have done, and so that it's simply full, of course, of memories for me.

I don't think, you know, you get anywhere near the centre of "The Hobbit" at all by discovering the ingredients; it's like stopping in the middle of eating a most delectable food and insisting on the chef coming and telling you all the things it's made of. It seems to me the soup's the thing and not the things that go into the cauldron. I always think this is an extraordinary illusion that you get anywhere when nearer the centre ... You can get nearer how the soup can have that flavour; you don't get any nearer the point of why the flavour is pleasant, and why people like it or why people come back for more of that soup. They don't come back because of some asparagus or some corn; they come back because they like the taste, and the mixture. I could go on for hours telling you what things "The Hobbit" is made of, but it won't get you any nearer to where you can say why it amused you. It amused you just as much before you knew that and will go on amusing you I hope even after you do know.

Tolkien then, unprompted, cites an example of this by referring to his trip to Switzerland when he was a boy (August to September, 1911). This material survives in OC:

As a matter of fact, one of the cardinal things in “The Hobbit” is one of the few adventurous periods I ever went through in my lifetime. I went as a member of a party of, I don’t know whether there were 13- or 14-odd people, walking in Switzerland. We walked I suppose most of the way on our plain poor foots [?] to the Interlaken, went through to Brig, we crossed many mountain passes and so on, we were [humping our?] packs on our backs, we slept in the most extraordinary places, we had some narrow escapes from death rather like the one with the rocks from the giants, and so on. And I think that’s why – it really isn’t the basic thing to be – that journey is an actual personal experience; altered of course, we met no goblin! We met a lot of other things, hornets for instance. If you’ve ever jumped in a hornets’ nest when you are looking for a lost [piton?] and had a whole host of hornets looking for you – zzzzzz! – you dive under a blueberry bush! Well, I did do some climbing and walking, you know, slipped in a crevasse and all that kind of thing, when I was in Switzerland. I’m not so completely sissy as I make myself sound.

The shot concludes with the Interviewer asking Tolkien about the ‘exam paper’ story and Tolkien’s voice trails off saying “**the addition**” that started *The Hobbit* “**picked up in the course of its rolling a pretty**”

V. “6/1 Hobbit, how it came to be written, story; his children’s’ reaction. 9’

30”

The new shot continues with discussion of the writing of *The Hobbit*. The beginning material was heavily edited and cut for use in BV, but reconstructing this suggests the shot began with the following (surviving only in TY):

I started writing "The Hobbit" – really I can't remember quite why. Except I suppose that one was ripe for trying to write a longer story than I'd done before.

This is then followed by the famous clip used in BV of (02:46–03:29):

The actual beginning – though it's not really the beginning, but the actual flashpoint – was, I remember very clearly, I can still see the corner in my house in 20 Northmoor Road where it happened. I'd got an enormous pile of exam papers there, and marking school examinations in the summertime is an enormous, was very laborious and, unfortunately, also boring, and I remember picking up a paper and actually finding – I nearly gave an extra mark for it, an extra five marks actually – and one page of this particular paper was left blank. Glorious! Nothing to read, so I scribbled on it – I can't think why – 'In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit.'

TY also records Tolkien as concluding this story with:

I tore the paper out because ... might be something here, before I put it back in the pile. You're not supposed to tear papers out of exam papers! Well that's ... the flashpoint.

Returning to OC (though this material also survives in part in TY) the interview continues with Tolkien discussing the title of the book:

I don't know how "The Hobbit" ... what generated the name. You can think of all kinds of theories, but, of course, it was made up of linguistic things in my mind, but it seemed to fit. I then wrote, I suppose, what was the first chapter. I'm afraid I've lost, but I still preserved for a long time, a page of the spidery scribble in which that was written, before Gandalf even became called 'Gandalf'. I got interested in this and, at odd times – well, I was a busy man you know, university official, conscientious lecturer, teacher – I used to carry on with it from time to time. I can't remember quite how many years it took in completing.⁷⁶

The Interviewer asks what the book is about. Piecing together extracts from the sources is difficult here as it was heavily cut and used for various voice-overs in BV. A suggested reconstructed version is:

⁷⁶ It is hard to place the exact location of the broadcast clip "I think that was eventually published in 1937" but presumably it is from around this section (03:30–03:33).

It's finally the old basic thing which must have occurred often in literature
- the reluctant hero,⁷⁷ **and the stay-at-home man having adventures he**
never expected to and being, not really basically altered in character,
but very much altered in [humour and?] experience by it. That's the
basic thing, isn't it? So what's better than a wizard?

I must say that I think the Dwarves were rather a good invention. I
don't think there's any precedent I can think of, having a party of
these people all coming in uninvited, I thought it was a good
point. And the story, the essence, is for me the adventures of this little
chap.⁷⁸

And then, of course, you move out into the wilder world, where
imagination could be let go.⁷⁹

Dragons I liked. Dragon hoards have always been in the back of my
mind since a child, so obviously the end of the pilgrimage was to lead
some time to a *dragon's lair*.⁸⁰ **The whole thing of a narrative of that**
length, you know, the end is not perfectly clear until you get there,
and it picked up a lot of things on the way.

Prompted by the Interviewer to describe it in "ABC" terms, Tolkien continues:

⁷⁷ "It's finally ... reluctant hero" used in BV a voice-over (01:42-01:47).

⁷⁸ "And the story ... little chap" used in BV as a voice-over (01:48-01:54).

⁷⁹ "Then of course ... be let go" used as a voice-over in the broadcast film (01:55-02:02).

⁸⁰ "*dragon's lair*" is missing from OC but survives in TY.

The story is, a small, fussy little middle-aged chap, man if you like, the bachelor fond of his comforts, suddenly swept away, partly by an inner weakness that says 'Yes', but mostly by the feeling of becoming a party of people who are going on an exploring expedition, their object being to recover their own wealth which is now occupied by the dragon. And the story, in essence, is for me the adventures of this little chap on his way to this dragon and his hoard, which he eventually reaches, the result of the quest and his return home. It's therefore called "There and Back Again". That is the simple outline.

The Interviewer then asks Tolkien if he read *The Hobbit* to his children when they were young. Tolkien confirmed he did but noted "**they were all different ages, you know**" and recalled he "**read it to the two elder ones after it was finished**" and that they were "**interested in it.**" It did not, however, become one of their regular books to replace "**other superior literature.**" After direction Tolkien is asked to repeat this but in so doing elaborates further:

I read it to my children, at any rate the two elder ones, who took a kindly and, on the whole, a favourable interest in it, but they criticised very severely – and first opened my eyes to the whole situation which led to my essay "On Fairy-stories" – criticised very severely all those things in which, owing to bad models, I thought it suitable to put into a children's story. They hated asides, anything like, 'So now I've told you enough'. They loathed anything that made it sound as if you were

talking to an actual audience⁸¹ and any sort of adult facetiousness at their expense.

Asked about publishing the book Tolkien responds:

I'd never even thought about publishers I'm afraid. Have I told you the story before of how it actually became published?⁸² I typed it out, of course, and I think C. S. Lewis read it, and I think Miss Elaine Griffiths, who's now the Chairman of the Faculty of English now, I think, read it, and they liked it, and I think it was from Miss Griffiths that it got in the hands of another young lady, Susan Dagnall, I think her name was – you'd have to verify that – who either then or afterwards became connected with Allen & Unwin; and that's how it got into the hands of the publisher at all. It was read by the Reverend Mother of the Cherwell Edge convent, who had influenza, and amused her. And I think it was through Susan Dagnall that it got in the hands of Stanley Unwin, who then read it to Rayner Unwin, who was then quite a young boy, a small boy. And I remember, in one of the letters from Stanley Unwin, he said that Rayner said, 'Don't read any more because I shall fall off the gate if you do so, because I shall laugh so much!' It was purely accidental. I must say, I was extraordinarily fortunate in

⁸¹ The extract “**I read it to ... an actual audience**” appeared on *Newsnight* in 2007.

⁸² Indications like this suggest an earlier conversation has taken place.

Presumably this means that at this point Tolkien is talking directly to Ezard whom he had met previously, and not Megahey.

having been well-connected with such a publishing house by such an accidental means.

The shot concludes with broken questioning about the introduction of Middle-earth (no replies survive) and then Tolkien being asked to summarise *The Lord of the Rings*, to which he replies it would be impossible as **“the simplest thing would take about a quarter of an hour.”**

Vi. “7/1 T on Lord of the Rings 10’ 00”

This shot has been heavily edited and begins with a series of questions from the Interviewer to which no response survives. It is suggested that some of this material was used in BV for the following:

I now wanted to try my hand at writing a really stupendously long narrative and to see whether I had sufficient art, cunning, or material to make a really long narrative which would hold the average reader right through. (03:33-03:52)

One of the best forms for a long narrative is the – as was found in “The Hobbit”, only it’s in a much more elaborate form – the pilgrimage, [the] long journey with an object, so that was inevitably the form I adopted. (03:53-04:06)

It's impossible to give the story, any story that's worthwhile, in a couple of sentences. (19:22-19:25).

The Interviewer asks Tolkien to say something about the history of Middle-earth, which goes back “thousands of years.” Tolkien’s answer survives in OC but is missing a few seconds of audio at the beginning:

... was a mythology which I had been in process, and still am in process, of constructing. There's a passage, I think, in “The Hobbit” itself, which speaks about the origin of the Elves. I think it's in the chapter about ‘Flies and Spiders’. But with “The Lord of the Rings” it's no longer just a casual reference to something that's in the mind, it's basic.

He notes he started writing *The Lord of the Rings* in “**about 1937 or 1938. I just concluded round about '48 [or] '49.**” After a few missing clips the Interviewer asks Tolkien to describe the races he has invented and the forces of Good and Evil. Somewhat confused, Tolkien replies “**What's the point of it?,**” and when explained it is to help those viewers who may not have read *The Lord of the Rings* he retorts, “**Well, you must read the book! I mean, I can't give any better ideas than the book.**” The shot concludes with a brief digression by Tolkien on Orcs:

I don't use the term ‘goblins’ in “The Lord of the Rings” – I use ‘orcs’ once in “The Hobbit”, I think – because ‘goblins’ is too tied up with

medieval history and so on, it simply means a grotesque, of course.

But as 'orc' is a good word – I ought to spell [it] o-r-k, of course – but still ...

VII. “8/1 Inhabitants of Middle Earth; likes. 10’ 00”

Shot 8 begins with the Interviewer moving to a general discussion of Middle-earth. The opening material is only preserved in TY. Tolkien, somewhat bemused, notes that “*Middle-earth has become a thing*” citing a “*Middle-earth café.*” He continues:

In spite of everything I write, people still go on thinking that Middle-earth is some unknown planet. Middle-earth is simply an ordinary expression for that part of the globe which men inhabit: ‘oikoumenē’. They don’t know their literature very well, because it’s used by Scott. It is a perversion of the older ‘middel-erd’. It means the inhabited parts [in] which human beings exist ... Middle-earth extends right outside. Middle-earth is the whole of the inhabitable parts of the world: this world.⁸³

I used it because in your putting over mythological stuff of that kind it’s desirable if you can, necessary if you can, to use words that are already in existence – which have a certain sense and are laden with a certain sense. And therefore I use ‘Dwarves’, and ‘Middle-earth’, and ‘Elves’ and so on. You can’t have everything absolutely strange at the outright. That’s why I used

⁸³ TY is particularly difficult to use at this point with the typist struggling to understand the flow of conversation.

'Middle-earth'. What do these people think Middle-earth is between, between reality and lunacy?

After a confused exchange Tolkien then begins to describe the creation myth behind Middle-earth. This material survives in OC but it is difficult to follow:

... the thing to His design, but which He's had the existence of first-created minds and spirits, the demiurgic angelic spirits.

Those of them who became enamoured of this particular quarter, a part of Eä – partly because it was set for a particular drama in its own history, in the history of the universe – were permitted by Him to take up their residence in our part of the solar system – it's called the Kingdom of Arda, the 'Realm' – where they appear as the Valar, or Powers. They're not gods, but, of course, you must have, I think, in this kind of narrative something that has a same emotive [situation?] as the Olympic gods, and other gods in narrative. They do, of course, occupy a position like the gods in ancient myth, but they are created beings, appointed guardians of this world, and their chief was called in Elvish 'Manwë'. He is referred to as the Elder King, his wife was Varda, who's apostrophised in the other language, 'Elbereth'. They're there, you see, as a kind of background. They don't appear very much in the stories of the Third Age, of course, but the intervening mythological work consists of the coming of the two – they were not

incarnate, the Valar,⁸⁴ they were spirits, but they could incarnate themselves at will, and they very often took human form in my mythology simply because of the intense love they had of the promised Children of God who were to come, who were outside [of] any design they were allowed to interfere with – at certain periods, the two rational, but incarnate, but related, kindred of the Elves and Men were to come. And they knew enough about them, and what they looked like, but didn't know when they were to come precisely. The Elves came first, and on them the Creator tried the experiment of serial longevity; on Men, brevity.

Everybody, including the divine spirits under God, makes mistakes in this mythology, and, of course, the gods made a primary error: instead of leaving the Elves and Men to find out their way under the guidance of God, they invited the Elves – because the rebel amongst them, the wicked god Melkor, was alive, and devastated a large part of the world – they took them back into their paradise in the West, to protect them; and so the whole machinery starts from the rebellion of the Elves and their Fall in rebellion, and the evil they did in their bursting out from paradise.

So what you've got in our period is two lots of Elves, ones that never started, just didn't want to be bothered to be anything higher than they were, the ordinary Woodland-elves of the far east, and those who started to go to the divine paradise and never got there, which are the Grey-elves of the west, and those who got [there] and came back as

⁸⁴ Tolkien uses the unfamiliar plural here of "Valars."

exiled. The High-elves who sing this song to Elbereth in the beginning of “The Lord of the Rings” are exiled Elves, who’d once known what it was to see the demiurgic gods in person.

Now Dwarves create a difficulty, don’t they, in this particular thing. They have certain grievances against Men and against Elves. They are incarnate in bodies rather like ourselves. We don’t know much about them, but they apparently are mortal, though they are longeval. But where do they come into the scheme? Well, of course, I gave a great deal of thought to find their origin. I won’t say anything about it at the moment, but they have a rational origin related to that theme, but they are not part of the Children of God.⁸⁵

That’s all I can really say about this, and Men are just men!⁸⁶

The Interviewer then moves to Tolkien’s likes, exploring topics such as food and the comforts and pleasures of Middle-earth and especially those enjoyed by the Hobbits. It would appear that this part was heavily cut and edited for the following broadcast clips:

Food? I’ve never been a trencherman. I admire trenchermen, therefore I make ... but I like, since England produces the best basic food in Europe – on the whole entirely does. (11:19-11:33)

⁸⁵ There is a missing piece at this point.

⁸⁶ The extract “**Everybody, including the ... are just men**” appeared on the Tolkien Blog, accessed June 20, 2017, <http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/814-Tolkien-1968-BBC-Interview.php>.

Yes, yes, I would think so. I like, of course, feeling elevated, but I'm very fond of beer. (11:37-11:44)

I've always smoked. I sometimes smoke beyond the point when you enjoy it, which is silly but I do smoke and enjoy it, and as a matter of fact it's now so tied to writing that I can't write without it (12:11-12:25)

Of the material not used that survives in the off-cuts Tolkien comments that he likes meat (“**Almost anything, I think**”) and jokes that the pig had a “**divine destiny**” as bacon. On drink, he notes:

I dislike the sensation of being inebriated intensely. I mean the actual sensation, quite apart from a hangover. I've always fought against gas, since I dislike having my wits scattered or being irrational. I won't take gas, never have taken [it], since I was able to exert my will. I will not be anaesthetised.

The shot concludes with a curious question from the Interviewer about Tolkien's like for “ritual, ceremonial.” Tolkien's reply is:

Love it, oh yes. I think most of the objection to it is because people know so little about language. Of course it's very current in my Church

at the present time.⁸⁷ So many people seem to be quite ignorant of the fact that 'l-l-l-l' and that kind of noise is only one of the many signs, it's only one form of language. You can attach meanings to other actions than wagging your tongue. For instance, to genuflect is much terser, sometimes much more expressive, than a word expressing homage. It's no good telling me that you can get used to genuflecting, you can get used to saying 'Milord' or 'I honour you' just as well. To light a candle becomes a beautiful thing, to light a candle and then go away and leave it as a model of your aspiration.⁸⁸

VIII. "9/1 Fireworks; dislikes. 10' 00"

The shot opens mid-conversation with Tolkien asking "**Fireworks you want? I like fireworks. Well, do you like fireworks?**" When prompted to elaborate on what types of fireworks he liked Tolkien replies:

Any kinds that I've ever had the chance to see, which is not enough. I used to, when I was a small child, live near the reservoir in Edgbaston, where they used to have fairly frequent displays of fireworks. I could climb up into our little house and push the skylight up and see them.

⁸⁷ A reference to the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (or 'Vatican II'), which concluded in 1965.

⁸⁸ In the latter part only the audio survives and the film footage has been lost.

The Interviewer then attempts to move the discussion to Tolkien's dislikes in an attempt to link this to the concept of evil, but Tolkien is fairly dismissive and notes that his dislikes are all entirely "**personal**" and often "**erroneous.**"

Presumably pursuing the concept that Tolkien was anti-modern the Interviewer asks him what he thinks of 'Industry' to which Tolkien replies "**I've no objection to that as such,**" and then what he thought of Factories:

They might be better than they are. It depends on what you mean by a factory, I mean a factory may be a very big or a very large, or very small thing.

The Interviewer then asks about 'motor cars' and Tolkien replies "**Love them. Love riding them, like driving them.**" Somewhat puzzled by this reply the Interviewer tries to pursue this and Tolkien elaborates on what the real problem is:

There's too many of them, yes, yes, quite a bit. But the evil of all things must be judged as part of the multiplication table, because the multiplication table makes evil out of practically everything. Anything that's good in one and two is nearly always bad at 5,000. Don't you think so?

By making motor cars more and more numerous, more and more cheap, the actual user of motor cars is no longer able to do the things for which motor cars were made. All the advertisements for motor cars still, on the whole, appeal to most people's desire to get away,

and you see a motor and a picnic hamper by the side of an untrammelled brook. But nowadays, before you can get to the brooks, the state road-makers have smashed the brook and cut the trees down so that you can get there. I should have thought it's the road-makers more than the motor car which I dislike, they really are ruthless and foolish.

The Interviewer asks then about the noise associated with cars, especially in Oxford, and, although Tolkien recognises it is now much noisier than the favourable quieter period when he first came up, due to the cars and railways, he also points out that in the Middle Ages Oxford was an “**extraordinarily deafeningly noisy place**” due to the “**enormous wains**” with steel wheels on the setts of the High Street. He notes that you can still get an idea of this level of noise in places like Leeds, and also that the present-day vibrations due to the weight of the modern vehicles was particularly concerning in Oxford.

IX. “10/1 Religion, God; Elvish 7' 00”

Shot 10 was taken on the following day (6th February) and the Interviewer begins by questioning the lack of religion in Tolkien's books, specifically the lack of reference to God. Tolkien replies:

Well, I suppose in a sense it's true, because I didn't put much of it in. It isn't quite true as, of course, as a matter of fact, there are references to

God, either direct, in which he is called ‘the One’ in one place, or by implication, as in the conversation between Gandalf and Bilbo and Frodo and what it was that was directing the finding of the Ring, or in the Númenórean Grace, which is said by Faramir.

But, of course, if you mean religious practices, you don’t get much, except perhaps, say, the Elvish hymn to Elbereth. And that’s partly, of course, a deliberate device.⁸⁹

There are some things said, for instance, quite obviously. The Númenórean people of Minas Tirith of Gondor, for instance, obviously had no organised religion like our own, with a sort of Sunday set apart, that kind [of thing]. They had become largely not so much necromantic, as in the way in which Egyptian culture had developed, which was necrological, there were sacred places, the tombs of the ancestors and so on. But that, of course, was because of the terrible events and actions in their own past, which are outside the story, which is reserved really for “The Downfall of Númenor”, which is one of the things I have written but shall publish.

The Interviewer then returns to the subject of language, especially Elvish, and asks Tolkien if he had wanted to include more of that in the book. Tolkien replies:

I would, but I think there’s enough, isn’t there really, wouldn’t you say? [It’s about primers on language?], [there’s] quite enough to give

⁸⁹ There is a cut here of unknown length with both the audio and film missing.

the air of a fully organised world: not only the geology is attended to, certainly, though actual geologists have found some faults in it, but the fact that they could take it reasonably at all means there's been some thought put into it.

Asked if he was going to do any more work on Elvish, Tolkien confirms he would like to “**eventually**,” and when prompted further he notes:

What people really want to know is a grammar. But I can give them more easily than a grammar the origins and process of the development of the phonetic structure. Yes, yes, I could recite a declension now, if you really wanted one.⁹⁰

OC record Tolkien being prompted to recite some Elvish and he chooses ‘ship’ or ‘cirya/kirya’. The clip is difficult to hear as it is drowned out in part by a noise off-camera of a loud knocking. A suggested transcription is:

⁹⁰ It is suggested that at some point here was the following clip in BV:

No, no, no. I want other people ... I wouldn't mind other people knowing it and enjoying it, but I didn't really want to make other people – like some people who have been equally inventive in language – I didn't want to make cults and have people all speaking it together. No, I don't desire to go and have afternoon's talking Elvish to chaps. One thing, of course, Elvish is too complicated. I'd never finished making it. (18:58-1916).

... this is in the later languages you see ... it would be 'ciryá'; 'ciryá' which is allative meaning 'to', which might be used as the dative; 'ciryór' is the genitive; then there's the three allative ... the three motion thing, 'ciryanna' 'to a ship', 'ciryasse' 'in by or on the ship', 'ciryallo' 'from a ship', and the plural is 'ciryar', 'ciryaron' the genitive, 'ciryas', 'ciryassen', 'ciryannar', 'ciryannor'.⁹¹ The instrumental is 'ciryanen' in the singular, 'ciryainen' in the plural. That's enough to go on with? For instance in the song ['rómen?'], the east, 'rómello', 'from the East', and so on.

X. "11/1, 2 Songs; cult 9' 00"

The shot opens with the Interviewer asking Tolkien about the songs in *The Lord of the Rings* but the answer has been lost. Presumably, this contained a mention of Galadriel's lament ('Namárië') as, when the footage resumes in OC, Tolkien is already discussing this:

Apart from that, it may be seen that it gives you an insight into the way in which "The Lord of the Rings" has grown up in, and takes in a large part of, earlier and unpublished literature, because the exact purport and tragedy and sorrow of the lament can't be understood unless one understood Galadriel's part in the far past. She had been one of the chief people of the Elves and had joined the rebellious party

⁹¹ See also the declension of 'ciryar' given in the 'Plotz Declension' – see Gilson and Wynne (1995).

that had departed from paradise forever, and was therefore under a ban that she could never return. And at the end she wishes that Frodo may at any rate find a short visit to paradise as a rest after his labours, and she says farewell. She had then nothing to expect, except to go on living in a world that was steadily fading. Those who have read the book will find she did eventually go back in the ship with Frodo. That was because of the special remission, because she was one of the chief leaders whose work had led to the downfall of Sauron, also, she passed the great temptation when the Ring was actually offered to her by Sauron – by, by Frodo. She rejected it, and for that she was released.

The Interviewer brings up the cult-following Tolkien has attracted in the United States. The responses are presumably the following in BV:

I don't live in America: surely they should tell me. I should like to ask them some questions, how such things arise? I observe in general that America has, North America has always been much more easily kindled than England or indeed any country in Europe. And, for instance, the Dickens cult and the extraordinary excitement about Dickens, so that, how many people then came down to the quay to watch the mail-ship coming over, what they wanted to know is what happens in the next chapter, they weren't worried about goods! (16:09-16:40)

Of the vast numbers that I can judge from my very considerable fan-mail, I should say that only a small proportion possess, and even of those not very many, who have really read the books with any attention. (16:54-17:05)

The Interviewer follows this up by asking whether Tolkien's fiction is escapist to which he replies "**Well, it's meant to be.**" A break in OC here probably was for the clip in BV of "Well, it is meant to be escapist, because I use escapism in its proper sense, as a man getting out of prison" (19:30-19:38). The Interviewer asks if it was an enjoyable experience actually writing *The Lord of the Rings*. OC records Tolkien's response:

Yes, I enjoyed doing the work. I've built more than one garden in concrete and everything else, but give me composing a thing like "The Lord of the Rings" for really exhausting labouring. I'd rather work, even when I was younger, six hours on concreting the lawn than writing a chapter.

The shot concludes with the Interviewer asking for some more information on *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien replies:

Well, that's a title I hastily invented long, long ago, I think before "The Lord of the Rings" was published, in writing a letter to "The Observer", I think, to answer to one of Mr Garvin's⁹² notes. I said, "All of this is

⁹² *Letters* 31, published on the 20th February 1938. In response to a letter signed "Habit."

told in “The Silmarillion”. There are in existence a very large collection, now collected and practically written, the legends about the world of the past, particularly after the exiled Elves came back and conducted their war against the devil in the north-western part of this world we live in, and the connection of the Men who joined in with them.⁹³ And that takes you through its ...⁹⁴ but he managed to capture them and took them off into his great northern fortress of Thangorodrim. And then comes the great saga of how, a kind of Orpheus saga reverted, how a mortal man and the Elf, Lúthien, managed to get into Thangorodrim and managed to get hold of one of them, and the whole of the rest is the story of the fight and the fate of the Silmarils.

The Interviewer asks how much of *The Silmarillion* has been written to which the reply is “All of it.”

XI. “12/1 attitude of life and death 9’ 00”

The opening to shot 12 begins in OC with the Interviewer probing on the darkness in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* and asking how much this reflects Tolkien’s own view of life. Tolkien’s answers are fragmented due to the editing so again one needs to reconstruct these from all the sources. The first part of Tolkien’s reply survives only in TY:

⁹³ “**There are in ... in with them**” appeared in *Newsnight* 2007.

⁹⁴ There is a cut here of unknown length in OC in both the audio and video.

Well, if I have any attitude to life it must reflect the world I should have thought. All attitudes of life reflect the situation we find ourselves in. I don't know whether – branching from that, if we could – if one could go into another point and that is many people [have] tried either to allegorise or make various applications of the story. And, of course, as I've said, I think quite explicitly, I think ...

This is then followed by the footage used in BV (19:41-20:15):

...people do not fully understand the difference between an allegory and an application. You can go to a Shakespeare play and you can apply it to things in your mind, if you like, but they're not allegories, at least most of them aren't. There's more allegoric elements for instance in "The Tempest" than most ... but certainly many people apply it to nuclear, the Ring particularly, to the nuclear bomb, don't they? They think [?] what was in my mind, is that the whole thing is an allegory of it. But it isn't.⁹⁵

TY then records Tolkien trying to express his thoughts on what "*the springs of the story are*" and concludes that "*the Ring is simply an example of, if you like, externalising the lust for power.*" He continues:

⁹⁵ All of this is also contained in TY. In the latter, though, it is noted that this began "*And of course, as I've said I think quite explicitly, I think people do not fully ...*"

But that doesn't really work, you know. Power in a narrative is very ... is only the thing that starts the wheels working isn't it? What you want is a story. You aren't really interested in so-and-so's lust for power, but his lust for power starts a whole lot of events and heroisms and oppositions. It's a mechanism which starts a story.

The next few lines were used in BV (21:48-22:06), but also survive in TY:

If you really come down to any large story that interests people, that can hold their attention for a considerable time or make them start it, practically always [they?] are human stories, like they're always about one thing, aren't they? Death: the inevitability of death.

This next part survives in TY only:

Now, what made the Ring work? Its corrupting power very largely by its attempt to escape that by a back door. And really the whole constant interweaving opposition of Men and Elves you see is really a very long story, a very long story based most particularly on the differences in eternal life and unlimited serial life and death.

Following comes the BV clip (22:06-23:15):

I don't know if would you agree with that, but, anyway, that is what – there was a quotation from Simone [de] Beauvoir that I read in the paper only

the other day, which seems to me to put it in a nutshell. May I? I think I'll read it to you. This is apropos of the untimely death of a musical composer of whom I've always been extremely fond, Carl Maria [von] Weber, who died at 39 of tuberculosis, and the man who has written his biography actually quotes these words of Simone: "There is no such thing as a natural death. Nothing that happens to man is ever natural, since his presence calls the whole world into question. All men must die, but for every man [whose?] death is an accident, and even if he knows it to give sense to it, an unjustifiable violation." Well you may agree with those words or not, but those are the key-spring of "The Lord of the Rings".

TY records that this section then concluded with:

You mention power. Is power evil? In one thing ... creating the works of ... well power is a pure abstract. You either have the power to do it or you don't have the power to do it. In itself it isn't evil.

The remainder of shot 12 is preserved both in OC and TY. The Interviewer continues with the line of questioning, eliciting from Tolkien that a "**famous quotation**" (presumably 'power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely') is "**true in a way, I suppose.**" The Interviewer asks whether the works of Goblins and Orcs are responsible for the misery of mankind, but Tolkien replies they are just "**street-fighters**" who do not direct anything. Tolkien uses this as an opportunity to reflect on Edmund Wilson's famous criticism of *The Lord of the Rings*, "Oo, those Awful Orcs!," published in *Nation* in 1956:

No, usually the Orcs tend to be laughed at, like Edmund⁹⁶ Wilson's famous review, which must have sold more copies than most of the good reviews. I've always been very pleased by the really bad reviews, particularly if they are excessively bad – 'Oo, the 'orrible Orcs'.

It isn't quite true, you do get some close-ups actually, which give you a bit more insight, but I should have thought on the whole they⁹⁷ tended to be just not interesting, like a rather haughty gentleman's view of the 'vulgar'. 'No'.

It is suggested that around here was the clip used in BV (20:21-20:28) of:

One reviewer once said, this is a jolly, jolly book, all the right boys come home and there's always a happy and various ... It isn't true of course. He can't have read the story.

The Interviewer then focuses on Gollum, and Tolkien agrees he is “**an example of corruption**” and an “**interesting character.**” When asked if he found him interesting to write Tolkien says no, but more “**the part he got to play in the story.**” Tolkien does suggest though that Gollum is “**a fairly coherent character... fairly coherent in the line of development.**” The Interviewer then raises Gollum's possible redemption and Tolkien intervenes:

⁹⁶ Tolkien appears to say 'Edward Wilson' in the recording.

⁹⁷ It's hard to tell whether the “they” here are the Orcs or reviews like Wilson's.

Oh, I'm glad you mentioned that, because I've always myself ... when people have often asked me, 'What moves you most?' What moves you most, I think, the most tragic point in the whole story, is the terrible irony that good often does evil. The most tragic moment is when Sam, in his protectiveness, says "Take your hands off!," and therefore defeats Gollum's repentance, because that's, you see, very true to life, and in this rather large background of stories I've taken, this is tragic, I think. I don't know if you'll agree: always the thing that moves me most.

The shot finishes with the Interviewer again focusing on Good and Evil. Tolkien suggests that whilst his books have been criticised for taking a simplistic stance on this, it is inaccurate. He explains:

I mean, you see evil on the good side, I mean it isn't just blacks against whites, or the goodies against baddies or whatever they call it in modern parlance. No, I mean Denethor is a complex character, and Boromir obviously is not, he's a sort of good fighting [chartrier?] type of chap but he has his ... Faramir is again ... But Denethor is a very good example of what is going to come along in the dominion of Men when the good and evil will be mixed in, not separated by mythology, but work this way or that way simply through human agents.

XII. "13/1 process of writing 9' 00"

The Interviewer asks Tolkien to say a bit more on the actual process of writing. Again, this has been heavily edited and can only be reconstructed through a combination of material in all the sources. Beginning with TY:

Well it's awfully easy to be sort of critical and semi-philosophical and whatnot about writing after you've written it but you don't, at least I don't, write under these circumstances. I don't think anybody can write according to their theories. At least if they do it doesn't produce anything like "The Lord of the Rings". Which I must say for me, it's so long ago since I wrote it, that I can now read it really as almost [as if] it was written by somebody else. I must admit it's damned exciting in places, and I often sometimes look back for a quotation [and] find myself still reading on. So that I – you will forgive the apparent vanity of saying this – but I don't think works of that kind come out of literary theory really. They come out of what you might call the heart, the emotional side, and what I should call the leaf-mould of the mind, and say all the things you think you've forgotten. You have got to have known something to be able to forget it; it's not a negative.

Most minds at a certain point in their career are in a way rather a rich soil, because they read and thought a good deal about things and forgotten ...

Tolkien picks up the theme of forgetting, and both OC and TY contain his development of this. He begins by noting a key example of not remembering:

I haven't the slightest recollection whatsoever – I normally preserve a very bright visual recollection of where I was, where I am and things that are associated with what I'm looking at. I shall always remember, for instance, this chap dangling the green lights ...⁹⁸ – but I haven't the slightest recollection of anything, the position, where the window was, myself, or the thoughts, anything that came out of the whole of the Ent chapter. That came straight out of the leaf-mould. There was no difficulty and no sense of trouble of composition, but it must have been sort of burgeoning there. I don't know if that's a good example.

The next section survives solely in TY. Tolkien considers the actual technical practice of writing, the “*taking a pen in hand.*” He notes as “*a hen'd be forlorn without his beak and I should be forlorn without a pen.*” He continues:

I can't work overmuch in the head. I admire people who can – who say they can go down and think out long chapters of either music or verse. I never have been able to work without a pen. Scribble, scribble, scribble. And although I [have] some calligraphical leanings rather than accomplishments, my writing becomes more and more illegible until finally only my son Christopher can read it and edit [it], it comes beyond him. Well, when I'm in the process of writing, I have written very quickly, getting worse and worse and worse and worse and worse, and then if I'm wise I go over it in ink before it becomes unintelligible, leaving out those things, those words, which I can no longer interpret. In fact there's one piece of manuscript that I've got

⁹⁸ Tolkien makes a gesture to one of the film crew who is off-camera.

somewhere where even now, after many years, I've never discovered what the word could possibly be. Then I discovered, much though I actually like handwriting, that the typewriter was a great boon to me. I think rather quickly in very elaborate long sentences, my digression. Sentences by me very largely consist of stuff in brackets.

TY struggles to record Tolkien's comments here, but notes that he felt that whilst he was never an "expert typist" it had had the beneficial effect of slowing him down. The Interviewer then picks up on the earlier comment about the Ents, and is reminded by Tolkien that he has no recollection of when or where that was written. OC has a series of questions but the responses by Tolkien have been lost. However, using TY and material in BV it is possible to reconstruct some of this.

TY records Tolkien reflecting again on the Ents:

Ent is an interesting name. It's one of the many Old English words for giant. Particularly in Old English. They call for instance an ancient ruin of the past [of] which they didn't know the origin 'enta', the work of the old, old construction of the Ents. So it's a giant name and it seems in Old English logic it connects with stone. I don't know why I used that though, because they – the Ents – are able to conquer stone, they can tear it up and so on. But they're trees.

The next section began with short phrase taken for BV (07:14-7:47) and then continues in TY:

I have always for some reason – I don't know why – been enormously attracted by trees, feel a real kinship to them. I'm not happy without trees. Birch is my favourite, and perhaps the beech too. I planted, I remember, one beautiful one that I planted myself. [It] is now fifteen years, thirty feet high and absolutely straight because it's been planted in the right place. Yes I love trees, I don't know why. All my work is full of trees. They're just a natural – I suppose I have actually, in some simple-minded form of longing, I should have liked to have been able to make contact with a tree and find out what it feels about things. And the old Ent says a few things, doesn't he, about feeling the sap run up and [they open?] to the sun.

The Interviewer asks Tolkien about his particular dislike of the destruction of trees. TY records Tolkien's reply:

Yes, that's a sad thing. It's rather apropos to something we were thinking about before, it's a sad thing, tragic, but that's only one of the tragic necessities of the world. That's cutting timber. But where he⁹⁹ goes really angry is cutting down trees ... and leaving them to rot on the floor.

Tolkien then remarks that what really upsets him is “*the recklessness and ruthlessness ... [the] thought of the destruction of the forests of the world to make paper for the people to throw in the gutter.*” He is asked about the “spoliation of

⁹⁹ Either Treebeard or Bilbo, as TY also records the curious aside that “*his furniture was stolen.*”

the Shire” which he says was “*on purpose*” and then repeats his distaste of “**dendrophobia**” (a small fragment of this survives in OC) which he notes is not uncommon, and the way people “*knock them [trees] down without any further thought, often totally unnecessarily. Yes, there’s a good deal of that in the world, alas.*”

The shot concludes with the Interviewer pressing Tolkien further on his views on modernisation and “progress, building roads, pylons and so on,” suggesting the conversation had continued off-camera the previous day.

Tolkien’s balanced reply survives only in the typist’s transcript:

Well, one regrets and laments various things. I can lament getting old, and I lament the particular fact that having been born into a country which has developed and changed very quickly and the population which has doubled since I was young that – that I practically can’t go back to any site which is even visibly similar. Mr. Lewis can go back to Northern Ireland and see the tree that was the first tree he ever called a tree. But I think that’s all isn’t it?

I’m sensible enough to realise that a lot of this is essential at any rate; it’s not peculiar to our time. It’s only that the multiplication table has come in now. It’s faster because there are more people required. Dash it, nobody in ancient England thought anything about oaks, trees, I mean they’d devastated the whole of the south-eastern country for smelting, for building ships and so on; no, it’s not a new thing.

XIII. “14/1 more interview 10’ 00”

The final shot begins with the Interviewer asking about places in Tolkien's fiction that are linked to Oxford. Tolkien's replies are in OC, beginning with him noting that there was "**nothing which is highly derivative**" but adding:

... mostly places fairly remote from here. Like a little place on the extreme Yorkshire east coast called Roos, r-double o-s, various places of that kind, but, of course, since I'm always very conscious of my position, as I say, I can remember the position where the window was when I was writing ... A lot of places I have lived in, of course, are connected very firmly in my mind with the story, emotions of the time.¹⁰⁰ I don't think those are of any interest, are they?

Of course, I lived first in a little house which, again, was the first house I ever had, and I think it's now just been destroyed. I was in what is now called Pusey Street. Then, when I came back to Oxford, I lived in two houses in Northmoor Road. They are both associated with my writing, particularly the second one, number 20, which now belongs to Trinity College, and originally was built by Basil Blackwell.

And then, when the war was over, and most of what property I had had been destroyed, I had to move back and go into a little house in Manor Road, which is now opposite the English Library. That's where "The Lord of the Rings", amongst other things, was actually finished or

¹⁰⁰ The extract "**mostly places fairly... of the time.**" was used in Cromwell Productions (2004) and appeared on YouTube, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdBmYu4LmfY>.

'finalised', as they would say. A lot of the writing and revision took place at an interesting place, a house, I think which once belonged to the Lytton family – I think belonged to Bulwer-Lytton, actually – which now, since then, has become a school, the Oratory school, which moved from Edgbaston in Birmingham and then moved there in the wartime. The headmaster was a friend of mine. I stayed a whole large part of one long vacation there. I was given one of the master's rooms, where I had perfect peace and quiet, banging away on a typewriter, and I did most of the revision of "The Lord of the Rings".¹⁰¹

Manor Road – of course, everything is destroyed – I mean, Manor Road, which I lived in, has now been completely destroyed and there's an enormous combined English and law library built there, which isn't bad, I think, at all. At any rate, there's a lot of it inside is very good, anyway. In there, amongst other things, which is connected, I suppose, with me, is a bronze bust of myself, which has an interesting history. It was done by my daughter-in-law, Faith Faulconbridge Tolkien, and it was exhibited in the British Academy. There I was, staring down the ... It was eventually presented to me by the English Faculty, but it was only a plaster cast, and so I used some

¹⁰¹ **"Of course, I ... of the Rings"** again appeared in Cromwell Productions (2004) and on YouTube, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37mbwe6GezE&list=PLB3740099A5CD4069&index=31>.

of the ill-gotten gains of “The Lord of the Rings” to have it cast in bronze.¹⁰²

The Interviewer then asks Tolkien about Sarehole. Tolkien replies that it’s still there and so is the house in which he lived, or at least it was a “**year or two**” ago when he went past, “**looking remarkably modern for the period.**” The Interviewer asks him if he was aware of any Hobbits there to which Tolkien replies:

Hobbits? Well, you meet them, you know. There’s Hobbits by nature, Hobbits by stature, and there’s Hobbits who happen to be both, yes.¹⁰³

He is then asked if there are any Hobbits around Oxford, and Tolkien’s reply survives solely in TY:

They’re not a very common type in universities. Though I do know, I won’t mention his name in public, I know a most perfect example of a University Hobbit, both in size, appearance, and general sentiments. So they occur here and there in many contexts. But they were fairly common in villages that are

¹⁰² “**Manor Road – of ... cast in bronze.**” was also Cromwell Productions (2004) and on YouTube, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQ03k6FbY4A>.

¹⁰³ All in Cromwell Productions (2004) and on YouTube, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPNu75FpJ0Y&index=32&list=PLB3740099A5CD4069>.

either agricultural or mainly agricultural and they're pretty common in England surely. They're not only agricultural though, you know. When I was [a] sort of growing schoolboy and then [an] undergraduate, I used to love coming up in the local trains when the people were coming back from the works in Birmingham or getting further out towards Evesham there. It's delightful.¹⁰⁴

Well that, as I told you, that is a childhood. There's nothing in "The Lord of the Rings" except that it's a foundation of one's feeling for trees, flowers and England generally.

The Interviewer asks Tolkien about the people he met in his childhood:

Oh yes, very Hobbit of course, some of the sagacious remarks and aphorisms come from the people I knew of course, yes. I'm rather dressed in the fashion of the day, rather like little Lord Fauntleroy, very unsuitable really. We used to hobnob with the farm children, the cowman's children and so on. They were very contemptuous. I can still remember they burnt a hole in me when I was young and I didn't hardly understand it. One little boy looked up at me and says 'you're na but a wench'. Yes I always had a great delight in people like that, yes. Excellent people. Oh yes.

¹⁰⁴ The transcript at this point is rather disjointed. Mark-up on the page indicates that this section of the interview was cut up and moved around so the transcript as it stands seems confused. Above, then, is an attempt to reconstruct the original flow of the conversation.

It was a dear old toothless Hobbit you see at the sweet shop there. And [he] also made all the simples, you know, dandelion wine, and all those sort of things. Yes, it was still sufficiently far away from all the – the great suburb Moseley was right on it.

The Interviewer asks about other characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. This time Tolkien's reply survives in OC:

What? Bad hats? You get those in the country, don't you? I mean, a thing like Bill Ferny, who's a pretty well-known character.

The Interviewer comments on the "magnificent characters" and this leads Tolkien to the theme of power and evil (only surviving in TY):

There isn't such a thing as magnificence in badness. It's a delusion. Milton really knew that, and he failed, really, to make it.

The Interviewer picks this up with reference to Sauron. Tolkien replies:

You never see him. Everything you know about him is pretty caddish and low in the extreme – mean. It's your imagination of this great dark shadow that makes it seem magnificent ...¹⁰⁵ terrible but impotent.

¹⁰⁵ The typist has '...' here which usually indicates a term or name they are unfamiliar with. It is possible this originally read "The Nazgûl are terrible but

No, Satan's just the toad, isn't he, the toad in Paradise Lost listening behind the keyhole. That's about the psychological stature of an evil leader.

The Interviewer notes the power of Mordor, which Tolkien acknowledges, and then continues (surviving partly in OC but mainly in TY):

Of course, there's another thing, yes, yes, that is a power, yes, yes.

People who've met some of the great characters [get] a sense of something which is nothing to do with them or their intellectual power. Yes. I wouldn't have liked to meet Sauron when his Ring had been destroyed, very little exist[ed?]. [But] one does meet people like that. Fortunately the people I've met with this extraordinary will-power, which is quite unrelated to [any?] ideas, have nothing. Fortunately when I've met them they were fortunately not people with any particular desires, ambition or even sufficient intellect [?].

This curious thing, will-power – that as soon as you come into a room makes you unwilling to disagree, or offend or in any way oppose whatever they do – is a terrifying thing. Because it's extremely exhausting to resist it. But fortunately I haven't met a person with sufficient intellect and will, knowledge, to know what he wanted to use the will-power for.

The conclusion of this piece survives in OC with Tolkien noting you get “**that**” (presumably dominant will-power) in “**the big works.**” He then adds:

impotent' as the typist always recorded the name 'Sauron' as 'S...' which is missing.

Certainly, in the university, you get a lot of people with very strong will-power, and unfortunately they nearly always seem to be dissipated in puerile objects, merely stopping so-and-so having his say, that kind of thing.

The shot concludes with the Interviewer asking Tolkien if there is anything of Mordor “around here,” but Tolkien refuses to comment, even when reminded of an aside from the previous day when he apparently suggested St Anne’s College was like Mordor. Tolkien notes that this was a “**jocular**” remark and usually his dislike of something was just down to his unfamiliarity with it.

Finally, there is the exterior shot (61/1) taken of Tolkien writing Elvish in the book cover used in BV (18:06-18:50). However, this can now be supplemented with material in TY:

Well, what I’m doing now is to try and write in Elvish what I’m saying – my writing is very inferior to the Elves’ – a standard greeting when meeting: ‘A star shines upon our meeting’. Oh lord, I’ve made a mistake, haven’t I? Oh, wait. [?] And that stands for ‘Elen síla lúmenn omentielvo’ or in full [?] – that is the colloquial pronunciation, cutting out the endings – it stands for ‘elen’... ‘elen’ – ‘star’, ‘síla’ is ‘shining’, ‘lúmenn’ – ‘upon the hour’, ‘omentielvo’ – ‘of our meeting’. Oh, I think it’s rather beautiful when [...] [?]. Only the Elves distinguish between ‘our’ meaning ‘you and me’, and ‘our’ meaning ‘me and my pals and not you’. So you’re having the pronoun that ensures that it’s between ‘you and me’.

Works Cited

[Podcast] "Tolkien in Oxford, 1968: Q&A with Leslie Megahey." 2014. Accessed July 27, 2017. <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/tolkien-oxford-bbc-1968>.

Anon. "Release: Play Programme." *Radio Times* 2316, March 28, 1968: 9.

Accessed August 2, 2017,

<http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/174496eb0513404b918ee5121ffbd45f>.

Anon. "Tolkien Televised." *The Isis* 1551, February 14, 1968: 12-15.

BBC. [Radio Programme] "Tolkien: The Lost Recordings," *Archive on 4* (2016).

Accessed July 26, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07mvd5z>.

Collier, Peter. [Blog Post]. "1968 BBC interview with J. R. R. Tolkien on YouTube

(16.01.08 by Peter Collier) – 2 comments." January 16, 2008. Accessed June 20,

2017, [http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/814-Tolkien-1968-BBC-](http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/814-Tolkien-1968-BBC-Interview.php)

[Interview.php](http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/press/814-Tolkien-1968-BBC-Interview.php).

Cromwell Productions. [TV Programme]. "J. R. R. Tolkien: Master of the Rings –

The Definitive Guide to the World of the Rings." 2004.

Garth, John. *Tolkien and the Great War* London: HarperCollins, 2003.

Gilson, Christopher, and Patrick Wynne. "The Growth and Grammar in the Elven Tongues." In Reynolds, Patricia and Glen Goodknight (eds.). *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*. Mythopoeic Press, 1995. 194.

Lee, Stuart. D. "J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Wanderer*: From Edition to Application." *Tolkien Studies* 6 (2009): 189-211.

Megahey, Leslie, dir. [TV Programme] "Archive: Modern Writers: Interviews with remarkable authors. Release: J. R. R. Tolkien." Accessed July 26 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/writers/12237.shtml>. Originally *Release*, BBC2 March 30, 1968; repeated September 3, 1973.

O'Sullivan, Patrick. [Blog Post] "The rescue of 'Tolkien in Oxford.'" January 7, 2014. Accessed July 26, 2017, <http://fiddlersdog.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/the-rescue-of-tolkien-in-oxford.html>.

-----, "Tolkien in Oxford". November 6, 2013. Accessed July 26, 2017. <http://fiddlersdog.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/tolkien-in-oxford.html>.

Scull, Christina, and Wayne G. Hammond. *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion & Guide*. 3 vols. London: HarperCollins, 2017.

Sibley, Brian. [CD]. *J. R. R. Tolkien: An Audio Portrait*. BBC Audiobooks, 2001.

Wood, A. "Fireworks for the Author – and BBC2 Viewers," *Oxford Mail* February 9, 1968: 10.