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Abstract
Briefly annotated checklist of minor early secondary materials on Tolkien not represented in Judith A. Johnson’s *Six Decades of Tolkien Criticism*. Part III covers *The Return of the King*.

Additional Keywords
Tolkien, J.R.R.—Bibliography; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Critical reception; Sarah Beach

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Early Review of Books by J.R.R. Tolkien
Compiled by George H. Thompson

Part III
The Return of The King

RK '56 Boston: HM, 1956

"Again the Long Trip Around the Triangle". Washington Post and Times Herald. 15 Jan. 1956, p. E6. [The imaginative power of the trilogy will appeal to some; others will consider "the obscure symbolism of a three-volume fairy tale approximately as much fun as a textbook in integral calculus." Brief.] + RK '56

"All Sorts to Make a World". The Times. 3 Nov. 1955, p. 13. LOTR is discussed with special comment on Vol. III. There is praise for "the adult sweep and power of this extraordinarily imaginative work, part saga, part allegory, and wholly exciting." A fairly slight review.] + RK '55

Auden, W. H. "At the End of the Quest, Victory". New York Times Book Review. 22 Jan. 1956, p. 5 ["... Tolkien has succeeded more completely than any previous writer in this genre in using the traditional properties of the Quest, the heroic journey, the Numinous Object, the conflict between Good and Evil while... satisfying our sense of historical and social reality..." He has created "a world of intelligible law, not mere wish." For example, Evil "has every advantage but one — it is inferior in imagination.... Evil, defiantly chosen, can no longer imagine anything but itself."] + RK '56

Bailey, Anthony. "Power in the Third Age of Middle Earth". Commonweal 64 (11 May 1956), 154. [A mixed review. He notes the absence of complexity in character relationships and in psychology; the plot complexity, and the achievement of timelessness. "It is a large-sized fairy tale..."] + LOTR '56

Best Sellers 15 (1 Feb. 1956) 327. [The tale has all the sweep and bursting vigor of the best epics; it is indeed the creation of a new epic." The appendices are "a kind of monument to the creative imagination he has brought to bear upon the construction of his work."] + RK '56

Blair, H. A. "The Two Towers and The Return of the King". Theology (London) 59 (Feb. 1956) 81–82. [This "heroic cycle" is much more than an adventure story, it has "archetypal validity." The work is interpreted religiously: "... the redemption comes through the Hobbit.... The redemption is in the true Death-Resurrection pattern..." ] + TT '54, RK '55

The Booklist 52 (15 Feb. 1956), 252. [A brief plot summary of RK and a comment on the nature of the whole of LOTR.] + RK '56

Boucher, Anthony. "Recommended Reading". Fantasy and Science Fiction 11 (July 1956), 91–92. [LOTR is "one of the pure unquestionable classics of the century. Sometimes it is too long, but the only work with which it may be compared is The Worm Ouroboros." + LOTR '56

Boucher, Anthony. "Recommended Reading: The Best Science-fantasy Books of 1956". Fantasy and Science Fiction 12 (March 1957), 100. [LOTR is as masterly as it is massive, and it is sheerly magnificent imaginative creation." Brief] + LOTR '56

Boucher, Anthony "Recommended Reading: An All Star Survey". Fantasy and Science Fiction 15 (Oct. 1958), 50–54. [In the list of outstanding fantasies of the last 9 years, he includes LOTR (p. 54).] + LOTR '56

Brady, Charles A. "Tolkien, Masters Lead You by Different Paths, Out of Prosaic Present". Buffalo Evening News. 21 Jan. 1956, Magazine Section, p. 8. ["Huge in expande, uneven in excellence, sheerly magnificent on its higher reaches, The Lord of the Rings is a staggering thing to come across in any age.... Sauron is Satan or his surrogate, all the hobbits — and especially Sam — are Dickensian. ... Tolkien's subject is nothing less than Milton's war in heaven; and, on another plane, Norse legend's twilight of the Gods."] + RK '56

Churchill, R. C. "New Novels". The Birmingham Post (England), 1 Nov. 1955, p. 3. [A brief description and this comment: "The comparison with Spenser's Fairy Queen... is probably true in both the flatterling and the unflatterling sense: Dr. Tolkien has much of the Spenserian charm, but also something of the Spenserian soporic."] + RK '55

"Conflicting Aims and Emotions". The Scotman. 17 Nov. 1955, p. 11 [The main discussion is of style. Mannered and archaic, indebted to older literature and the Authorized Version of the Bible, the style comes naturally to Tolkien and is suited to his conception.] + RK '55

Culpan, Norman. "From Sixteen to Upper Sixth: Fiction". School Librarian and School Library Review 8 (15 March 1956) 43–46. [It is true that Tolkien is no Malory, but LOTR is more than "boys' stuff". The story is "an echo and an allegory of our own time." Fairly brief.] + RK '55


Curen, Doris L. "Strange World of Fantasy has Mystical Call". Hartford (Conn.) Times, 28 Jan. 1956, p. 18. [A largely descriptive review. LOTR is an adventure story of enduring quality.] +

Dobier, Maurice. "Between Shelob and Nasgul". Providence Sunday Journal, 15 Jan. 1956, Section 6, p. 8. ["And yet, despite its host of strange and wonderful characters, its scenes of roaring action and brilliant pageantry and beauty, its humor and its heroism, there is, I think, a sort of emptiness in the work. As an adventure story, it scores; as an allegory it doesn't." The allegory troubles Dobier because of the absence of God.] +

Earley, George W. "Science Fiction Shelf". The Hartford (Conn.) Courant: Sunday, The Courant Magazine, 4 March 1956, p. ? [A highly appreciative review, with some references to Vols. I and II as well. Tolkien puts all other writers of his class, even Eddison, in the shade. The Hobbit is also recommended as "a most marvelous piece of work."] +

Faussert, Hugh l'A. "Fantasy". Manchester Guardian, 4 Nov. 1955, p. 4. [The destruction of the Ring surpasses all that has gone before. The rest is "rather an anti-climax." But on the whole Tolkien "has succeeded well in combining the cosmic and heroic grandeur of his tale with the simple humours of men." Brief.] +

"Fiction". British Book News, No. 185 (Jan. 1956), p. 67. [A brief notice, full of high praise. "It is Professor Tolkien's achievement to have created an imaginary world in which the inhabitants...the geography, history, songs and legends are all credible in relation to one another and in context — even the nomenclature is masterly."] +

Forrest, Julian. "Last of Trilogy". Boston Sunday Herald, 8 Jan. 1956, Section ii, p. 13. [Though LOTR is influenced by Tolkien's professional interests "there is a tension and a wastefulness about it which are distinctly modern." It is an answer to the futuritarianism of contemporary fiction. Brief.] +

"For Teenagers". New York Herald Tribune: Books, 22 July 1962, p. 10. [LOTR is recommended as "one of the most remarkable exercises in imaginative fantasy in modern English writing."] +


"Good Reading for Spring / SR's Seasonal Book Poll". Saturday Review 39 (14 Apr. 1956), 21, 61. [McAllister assigns one vote to LOTR. A very brief summary calls it Vol. IV of Tolkien's allegorical history (p. 61).] +

Hahn, K. J. "In den van de ring" ("Under the spell of the ring") De Linie (Belgium) 11 (17 Nov. 1956), 6. [The Dutch translation of Lotr is In de baan de ring, Utrecht: Spectrum, 1956-57. This is a review of Vol. I of the translation De Reisgenoten (The Travelling Companions), 1956, and of Vol. II and III of the English version. Though some of Tolkien's names and figures come out of his scholarly background, he has created a complete new world. An epic of courage and faith and dark fear, it is a powerful engaging symbol of the life of men. The existential conflict in the heart of man is projected in a grand epic saga in which the motives become symbols and the events become memories. The story is told with impersonality yet intensity as though the narrator were from the lands of which he speaks.] +

Hall, David. "Cabbages and Kings". New Zealand Listener, 2 March 1956, pp. 13-14. [An appreciative review which surveys the whole work and concludes: "The main theme has an epic nobility... . At his best Tolkien writes a highly-charged poetic prose which has both strength and grandeur without ever losing its compelling simplicity."] +

Halle, Louis J. "History through the Mind's Eye". Saturday Review 39 (28 Jan. 1956), 11-12. [What...does this invented world have to do with our own? You ask for its meaning -- as you might ask for the meaning of the Odyssey, of Genesis, or of Faust -- in a word? In a word, then, its meaning is 'heroism.' It makes our own world, once more, heroic."] +

Hudson, C. H. "Triumphant Trilogy". Oxford Times, 4 Nov. 1955, p. 16. [LOTR is one of the few books written today that will endure. Tolkien's "creation of an entire mythical world, sustained and inspired by the age-old myths of its own distant past, is a brilliant achievement. He has language for every mood -- for elfin magic or for dire conflict. He has the gift of creating majestic figures and making them speak majestically, and he can make a conflict... completely real and disturbing."] +

Huxley, Francis. "The Endless Worm". The New Statesman and Nation 50 (5 Nov. 1955), 587-588. [Adjudicating between Mitchison (FR) and Richardson (TT), he comes down on the side of Mitchison, though agreeing that Tolkien writes in "a flat, rather Pre-Raphaelite style" and is not entirely successful with the hobbits. But he deals with "genuinely mythological situations." "...the ring is the image of the dragon itself, endless because its tail is in its mouth..." ] +

John, K. "The Novel of the Week". Illustrated London News 227 (3 Dec. 1955), 976. ["Deflated — that is how he felt at the end. There is the rather William-
Morris, bogus-archaic style, and its incongruity with the hobbit-idon. And again: "The real flaw is that a higher power of imagination was demanded for a last lap." The work is "not a true epic — it is an addiction." -

Jordan, John. "Tolkien comes to Journey's End". The Irish Press. 3 Dec. 1955, p. 4. [A substantial review. Tolkien's triumph as an artist is "in restoring to our imaginative experience not only the romance and virtues of Anglo-Saxon and Arthurian literature, but also in persuading us to accept the creatures of folk-and-fairy-tale as being as actual as Men." The fineness of the work is increased by the return to the Shire in Vol. III and the vision of men cultivating their garden-plot. Tolkien's style is a great deal more than adequate and his dialogue can rarely be faulted. "Men, Elves, Hobbits, Dwarfs, all are given distinctive utterance. . . ."] +

Jordan-Smith, Paul. "Wonderland of Fantasy may be Lesson for Modern World". Los Angeles Times. 5 Feb. 1956, Part IV, P. 8. [A descriptive review in praise of LOTR. "... Tolkien has done a book that stands out as one of the unique and most beautifully written stories of our time."] +

Kepert, L. V. "Heroic End To Hobbit Trilogy". The Sydney Morning Herald. 18 Feb. 1956, p. 15. [LOT is "a gigantic work of imagination." The review illustrates the way the "mood of the writing is able to change from the grand and heroic to the cheeky Cockney commonplace." The appendices are a personal joke "which will amuse the author rather than the reader."] +

Krieger, Robert E. "God-Men Vs. Demons": Worcester Sunday Telegram. 5 Feb. 1956, p. 7. [The "characters are more like god-men opposed by strange hellish demons" yet they are believable and credible. "... the myth becomes reality."] +

Laycock, EdWARD A. "Fairy Tale for Adults". Boston Globe. 15 Jan. 1956, A-13. [Vol. I was "rare and beautiful"; the others have continued so. "There is a parallel to our day" but the work is "pure pleasure. Fairly brief."] +

Lehmann, L. The. "Een Herodotus voor Nephelokokkugia van het Professoraal Devertissement". Litterair Passpoort (Amsterdam). Feb. 1956, pp. 28-30. [He cannot stand the men of Rohan who resemble heroic, prudish, perfect Wagnernian Germans. Sauron disappears and we never learn who or what he is. The men are too heroic, the elves too proud, the hobbits too tough. They all have an unhuman saneness, they are standardized. Moreover, they experience a sinister and suspect pleasure in massacring as many Orcs as possible. The Orcs' speech is cockney-like, and they are always arguing among themselves like people. They are rather sympathetic compared to their ruthless slaughterers. It could not have escaped Tolkien that the Orcs resemble the soldiers in Barrack-Room Ballads. Yet this professorial diversissement has charm and a good sense of atmosphere.]

TT '54 RK '55


Lewis, C. S. "The Dethronement of Power". Time and Tide 36 (22 Oct. 1955). 1373-1374. Reprinted in Isaac Asimov's, pp. 12-16. [A review of Vols. II and III. He contends that the characters are not black and white. In general he offers a sentimental view of LOTR. But he makes a good point about Elves, Hobbits, etc.: "The imagined beings have their insides on the outside; they are visible souls... The value of the myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores them the rich significance which has been hidden by 'the veil of familiarity.'"] +

The Listener 54 (8 Dec. 1955). 1013. ["Tolkien has succeeded wonderfully in his attempt to write a twentieth-century fairy romance for adults..." But it is too long and has cumbrous digressions. A slight review.]


L., T. N. "Tolkien Completes Trilogy". Houston Post (Texas): Sunday Supplement, "Now", 19 Feb. 1956, p. 21. [Style is stressed. "And the style itself so well embodies the imaginative concept that it is hard to see how it could be improved. It is... capable of very great beauty; and when it achieves it, it is usually the beauty of noble simplicity." "Professor Tolkien... has written a large novel of existential moraity embodied in mythmaking on a large and scale." Christopher Tolkien once said to the reviewer about his father that he was "the rarest of birds, a philologer with an imagination." A solid review. (Extenive quotations supplied by the newspaper's librarian. Notseen.)] +

McAllister, Durwood. "Ancient Majesty and White Towers". The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. 15 Jan. 1956, p. 4F. [A descriptive review. "This is a world... of dread, power... of deep wisdom and of ancient majesty briefly unveiled to the avid adventurer." LOTR is "one of the great adventure classics of all time."]

Manzalouhi, Mahmoud. "A Fantasy based on Ancient Myths". Egyptian Gazette (Cairo). 20 Apr. 1956, p. 2. [The reviewer finds difficulty in adequately praising LOTR: "perhaps the best of English romances since Spenser's, very possibly the best of English epics since Milton's..." Moreover, "the symbols of power and evil... are as archetypal, yet as truly actual, as anyone knows of." A fairly extended and serious review."]

imaginary writing is praised.) +


Parker, Douglass. "Hwaet We Holbytla..." Hudson Review 9 (Winter 1956-57), 598-609. [An excellent review article which discusses the problems of creating an imaginary world. Wilson is vigorously attacked and Tolkien defended. There is an admirable footnote on the linguistic basis and the meaning of Tolkien's names (605). Also good is the observation that the major characters have corrupted counterparts: Gandalf-Saruman, Aragorn-Denethor, Frodo-Gollum (605).]

Metcalfe, John. "Home is the Hobbit". Sunday Times. 30 Oct. 1955, p. 5. ["Opinions about The Lord of the Rings come in three sizes: that this is The Wind in the Willows in Cinerama; that this is the ultimate in donnish Follies; that this is the greatest epic-romance since The Faerie Queene." The appendices are finally building. "The manufactured, incantatory prose is sometimes effective, more often a bore." Yet "the whole has a compelling grandeur of vision, a soaring inventiveness and a depth of humanity that gives it a rare -- and rewarding -- greatness."] +


LOT R is a masterpiece of fantasy. Vol. I is the greatest. "But there is a disappointing quality of anti-climax to the final ease with which Frodo and Samwise win through to destroy the Ring of Power. "I don't usually write reviews, but I felt I had to write something about this book. The story is not as like Malory as it is like Rider Haggard but much more inventive and brilliant. The book is of its kind -- as a boy's adventure story. A thoughtful review that established early one of the possible basic responses to LOTR.

"New Venture in Fantasy". Sunday Register (New Haven, Conn.) 19 Feb. 1956, p. ? (Date not confirmed.) [A fairly brief, descriptive review of "this epic of imagination."] +

Nicholls, Alan. "Elves, Monsters and Mystery: Work of an Eerie Genius". AGE (Melbourne), 24 Dec. 1955, p. 8. ["The most astonishing novel of the year -- in some ways the most astonishing in the history of literature -- is... The Lord of the Rings by an eerie genius of Oxford..." "The theme is the conflict of good and evil, centered upon a talisman of power, the Ring. This tremendous heroic drama is played out in an invented country with some of the lineaments of Europe."] +

Pearson, Gabriel. "Bookmark". The Isis (Oxford) No. 1263 (18 Jan. 1956), p. 29. [The style of LOTR is mannered and artificial, and the return to the Shire "falls rather flat." "... there is a disturbing hiatus between its complexities and the complexities of moral decisions." But then, it is a day-dream. It will take its place as children's literature. The balanced praise and criticism of the review includes a good discussion of names and topography.]

"Pied Piper's Return". Church Times (London), 9 Dec. 1955, p. 4. [At the heart of this review is the use of the Gospels as "master-key": "There was only one Judas; but the last act of Smeagol reminds the reader of how God will turn even treachery into a means of salvation. There is only one Mary; but when Sam says, 'I can't carry it for you, but I can carry it and you as well,' one sees afresh... what humility is needed to accept the weight of a helpless 'saviour.'"

Price, Anthony. "Exciting, Enchanting, Inspiring!". Oxford Mail. 20 Oct. 1955, p. 6. [One is either indifferent or idolatrous about LOTR. Price is idolatrous. LOTR is "more than immense; it is complete." And Middle Earth "is an absolutely real and undeniably exciting world." The style may have flaws, but is generally good; and characters like Tom Bombadil, the Ents and Gollum are masterpieces. Vol. I is the best constructed, Vol. III is marred by a rather confusing account of the battle ending the siege of Minas Tirith. But the destruction of the Ring "is accomplished with terrifying logic." By returning to the Shire at the end, the great events are placed in perspective.]

"Ready, [William] B. "Little Known Lord of the Rings Trilogy is Great Christian Fantasy". The Monitor (San Francisco), 7 Dec. 1956, p. 14. [An extremely enthusiastic review. "Where art and scholarship blend in one man, and goodness is added, there will work glow and dream, as they do in this trilogy The Lord of the Rings. "This is a great Christian book. It is a work of fantasy, as, indeed, was Dante's Inferno, but it is far more than just fantasy. Here in this trilogy are the dangers that darkly beset us, and here also, if we are men enough to take it, is the best way to safety and salvation."] +

"Recent Fiction". Wisconsin Library Bulletin 3 (Jan-Feb. 1956), 35. ["The numerous characters, the strange country, and the beautiful prose make slow, careful reading necessary; nevertheless, the reader is
engrossed in this tale of the never-ending struggle between good and evil." This is the review.) +

Reid, J. C. "A Reader's Notebook". New Zealand Tablet, 29 Aug. 1956, p. 22. [A long and laudatory review: "the most wonderful, original and imaginative book written in England since the war." The reality of the narrative and the timeless character of the style are praised. Underneath the adventure story "is a great allegory of Good against Evil, of the nature of courage, of the essentials of a good life, of the values by which men must live."] +

RK '56

Ridley, M. R. "The Trials of Teaching in a Secondary Modern School". Daily Telegraph, 28 Oct. 1955, p. 8. [With Vol. III, Tolkien brings his great epic to a triumphant conclusion. It is grand in conception and execution, and is an "imaginative tour de force" in that Tolkien has created his vast tracts of country.] +

LOTR '55

Robert, Mark. "Adventures in English". Essays in Criticism 6 (Oct. 1956) 450-459. [He begins with a detailed but sometimes cavalier treatment of Tolkien's essay on fairy stories. Then in a 'smart' way he disposes of LOTR as having no value or relevance for the world we know. He finds that the style changes radically and mechanically, depending on the center of the narrative; and that the whole is extremely competent but mechanical.] -

S., L. C. Theosophical News and Notes (now Theosophical Journal). March-April 1956, p. 24. [Parallels with Wagner's Ring cycle are mentioned. The work may be read as a straightforward fairy-story, but has "symbolic overtones, in places unexpectedly profound."] +

LOTR '55

"The Saga of Middle Earth". Times Literary Supplement, 25 Nov. 1955, p. 704. A middle page review of RK and in fact of all the volumes. After much speculation about the meaning of the work, the review continues: "It follows that The Lord of the Rings cannot be read as a connected allegory, with a clear message for the modern world. But if it is regarded merely as a fantastic tale of high adventure, then there are many passages in it which deserve high praise." The writer goes on to praise Tolkien's style and to foresee the work as a classic like The Wind in the Willows. See letters from Lynn and Castell, Masson, Scudmore, Southwood, and Tanburn.] +

RK '55

"The Saga of the Rings", Glasgow Herald, 20 Oct. 1955, p. 3. [Vol. III is thoughtfully reviewed with reference to the previous volumes. LOTR is a revival of epic, an eruption of "heroic romance, full-scale, uncompromising, unabashed." Tolkien, audaciously making his own world, has now carried this work to a "triumphant, catastrophic, and genuinely epic conclusion." Though the symbolism of the political allegory is clear enough "it is overshadowed by larger and older parables. The heir who returns in disguise, the king who comes again, the journey through dread and darkness into light, the image of the dark tower and the shining river, the legend of the lost place of blessedness and of the last departure thither over the sea... are symbols still potent to move the heart..." +

RK '55

Sciven, R. C. "Hobbit's Apothesis: The World of Professor Tolkien". Tablet (London) 207 (11 Feb. 1956), 129-130. [A very favorable treatment of LOTR with some good description of the characters. "... there are elements in this epic fairy tale which differentiate it from all other modern works in this field."

"Recently Mr. Terence Tiller adapted and produced on the Third Programme a serial version of the first book... A dramatized version of the whole cycle... is being broadcast in Home Service's 'Adventures in English for the Schools.' The script for this fuller version has been written by Sylvia Goodall. This latter series has been excellently produced..." +

LOTR '55

Scudmore, W. K. Letter about Review of LOTR. Times Literary Supplement, 23 Dec. 1955, p. 777. [Tolkien has expressed a 'perennial philosophy' -- or he has failed." The meaning is not to be pinned down or narrowed.] +

LOTR '55


RK '56


RK '55

Sotemann, G. "Tolkien's mythische wereld voltooit" ("Tolkien's mythical world complete"). Algemeen Handelsblad (Amsterdam), 25 Feb. 1956, p. 7. [LOTR is, in the complete sense of the word, a creation, a mythical world which has similarities to but is completely independent of Germanic and Celtic mythology. There is an unerring variety of incident and sentiment. In the remainder of the review one Tolkien's admirers, P.N.U. Harting, Prof. of English at the University of Amsterdam, is quoted at length. Some have allegorized Tolkien, saying for example that Shelob is an anagram for Bolshe which would leave Sauron standing for Stalin. But the symbolism is not cerebral. Tolkien wanted to write an intriguing story and not as a pendant to The Faerie Queene. Having brains does not disqualify one from writing a good story. The rhetorical style is appropriate to mythological history and is subtly varied in the speech of the characters. For instance Smaugwise is Anglo Saxon for some-wise, suggesting he is simple, and his speech is like that. Among small errors he notes that in TT a hobbit is riding with Gandalf is holding onto the saddle, though we have been told that Shadowfax is saddleless. It is worth making such small criticisms because this is one of the great classics of the century. A long review.] +

TT '54, RK '55

Southwood, Martin. Letter about review of LOTR. Times Literary Supplement, 9 Dec. 1955, p. 743. [The ring signifies bureaucratic rather than political power. Thus it confers invisibility, kills spiritually, etc. Brief reply by reviewer.] +

LOTR '55

Steele, Mary Q. "Unfailing Armor". The Chattanooga Times (Tenn.), 19 Feb. 1956, p. 27. ["It is a marvelous tale, made up of the enchantment of childhood, full of terror and sadness and mystery, touched the golden
splendor that lights, for, Norse mythology." +

Stillman, Jack. "Third of a Trilogy: The Battle Between Good and Evil". Birmingham News (Ala.), 1 Apr. 1956, Sect. E, p. 7. [Brief. The work is praised for its vast imagination. Tolkien shows at the end that the triumph of good is never absolute.] +

Straight, Michael. "The Fantastic World of Professor Tolkien". The New Republic 134 (16 Jan. 1956), 24-26. [A sympathetic and informative review of H and LOTR. The scenes of devastation recall Tolkien's memories of World War I, the description of a snow storm is drawn from a mountain climbing trip in Switzerland, and the life of the Shire reflects Tolkien's love of England. "But Tolkien shuns satire as frivolous and allegory as tendentious," Tolkien's fantasy "illuminates the inner consistency of reality. There are very few works of genius in recent literature. This is one."] +

Tanburn, 23136171 Gunner. Letter about Review of LOTR. Times Literary Supplement, 23 Dec. 1955, p. 777. [The Ring is compared with the Stone in Charles Williams' Many Dimensions. It symbolizes Human Freedom. But this interpretation does not make clear why the Ring must be destroyed.]

Traversi, Derek. "The Realm of Gondor". Month 15 (June 1956), 370-371. [Tolkien has created an entirely true imaginative world. "It is doubtful... whether the conditions which made such an achievement possible can be reproduced, or whether the work itself can serve as a model for future literary creations. To that extent, its very finality implies an inescapable limitation; but within the limits which this uniqueness imposes, the romance stands in its integrity, a monument to the vigour and consistency which have gone to its making."] +

Vos, M. R. D. "Fantasy" (Letter). New York Times Book Review, 18 March 1956, p. 44. [Tolkien's achievement is not totally original. C.S. Lewis, C. Williams, and George MacDonald have done similar things, though with less "sheer imaginative power." But one book LOTR resembles in style and form is E. R. Eddison's The Worm Ouroboros.] +

Wagenknecht, Edward. "Proving Imagination is not yet Dead". Chicago Sunday Tribune: Part IV, Magazine of Books, 15 Jan. 1956, p. 4. [The only writers with whom to compare Tolkien are Cabell and Eddison, especially the latter. "We need such boldness as Tolkien's to remind us that the imagination is not yet dead." There is a parable in LOTR but it never becomes an allegory.] +

Weir, Andrew. "Mr. Tolkien's Triumph". Yorkshire Post, 4 Nov. 1955, p. 4. [Tolkien is praised for "his cunning in establishing an atmosphere of terror or jubilation or anything in between." And also for his versatile style. Fairly brief.] +

Wharton, Gordon. "A Novel Universe". Books and Bookmen (London) 1 (Dec.1955), 35. ["The Return of the King is nightmarish in its battle-scenes, beautifully... descriptive and it evokes an atmosphere of heroic grandeur that I have never seen paralleled in prose." Brief.] +

Warton, Will. "Exit the Hobbit". St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 April 1956, p. 4C. ["... maybe Mr. Tolkien should have stopped with his first volume..." It is however a "prodigious feat."] +

Yeiser, Frederick. "Trilogy Complete". Cincinnati Enquirer, 28 June 1956, p. ? [This brief review of Vols. II and III praises Tolkien's invention and narrative skill.]

Y., H. M. "Eschatology?" The Student Movement (London) 38 (March 1956), 37-38. [A modest, sensible review which notes that in many ways LOTR is children's literature with black and white characters and a happy ending. Yet the characters show some mixture, and "the book is essentially original: weird, outlandish, sinister maybe, and yet strangely homely . . ."] +

Wilson, Edmund. "Oo, Those Awful Orcs!" The Nation 182 (14 April 1956), 312-314. Reprinted in Wilson, The Bit between my Teeth: A Literary Chronicle of 1950-1965, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1965, pp. 326-332. [This bad-tempered but famous review works on the assumption that big guns like Auden and C.S. Lewis have been lavish in their praise of a work which offers nothing more than a juvenile conflict between Good Guys and Goblins.] -

Wickenden, Dan. "Notable Allegorical Trilogy Comes to a Triumphant End". New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 5 Feb. 1956, p. 3. [The world of LOTR has a kinship with that of the sagas, of Le Morte d'Arthur, and of European fairy tales. The writing is splendid, the world Tolkien has created is minutely detailed, and is humanized by the hobbits who appropriately return to the Shire at the end. LOTR possesses "a reality that transcends mere realism and magic that transcends all the individual marvels along the way."] +

Yeiser, Frederick. "Trilogy Complete". Cincinnati Enquirer, 28 June 1956, p. ? [This brief review of Vols. II and III praises Tolkien's invention and narrative skill.]

H '38, LOTR '56

RK '55

RK '56

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