Early Review of Books by J.R.R. Tolkien

Abstract
Briefly annotated checklist of minor early secondary materials on Tolkien not represented in Judith A. Johnson's *Six Decades of Tolkien Criticism*.

Additional Keywords
Patrick Wynne
Early Review of Books by J.R.R. Tolkien
Compiled by George H. Thompson

Part III
Smith of Wootton Major & "Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham"

Smith of Wootton Major

SWM '67A Boston: HM, 24 Nov. 1967

SWM of Middle Earth. Much of the column is taken up with Tablet (London) 222 (10 Feb. 1968), 132. [It is "a myth of Fairy... The book has that haunting quality characteristic of the best of the 'deeper' folk-tales."
A brief review, mostly summary.] + SWM '67E

Best Sellers 27 (1 Dec. 1967), 358. [A brief favorable description.] + SWM '67A

Box of Spice." Times Educational Supplement. 24 Nov. 1967, p. 1219. ["This wisp of a story is about the Land of Faery... The book has that haunting quality characteristic of the best of the 'deeper' folk-tales."
A brief review, mostly summary.] + SWM '67E

Derrick, Christopher. "And See Ye Not Yon Bonny Road?" Tablet (London) 222 (10 Feb. 1968), 132. [It is "a myth of great delicacy" but a precise allegory. It enjoins love "towards the old small pie tie and the middleness of Middle Earth." Much of the column is taken up with highly poetic religious thought.] + SWM '67E

Ezard, John. "Headington's Spellbinder." Oxford Mail, 14 Dec. 1967, p. 8. [This is "the best single thing" Tolkien has written. It perfectly illustrates what a fairy story is. Moreover it is moving to read -- "and it's moving also to find that Prof. Tolkien, writing from Headington in his 70th year, is still adding new strings to the bow of his imagination."] + SWM '67E

"Fiction", Virgina Kirkus' Service 35 (15 Sept. 1967), 1164-1165. ["The star is a trinket, and so, virtually this..."
Brief.] + SWM '67A

Ford, Stephen C. "Dying Cult Pushed Along: Tolkien Offers Faltering Fantasy for Adults". Courier-Post (Camden, N.J.), 14 Dec. 1967, p. 20. [Mainly a plot summary. "It's a story strictly for the pulpit set, regardless of what it claims to be."] + SWM '67A

"Forecasts: Fantasy". Publisher's Weekly 192 (18 Sept. 1967), 62. [SWM is announced for 24 Nov. 1967. This gentle little fantasy is, "purely and simply, a fairy story." It belongs to the children's book realm. The writing has a poetic quality.] + SWM '67A

Green, Roger Lancelyn. "Slicing a Magical Cake". Sunday Telegraph (London), 3 Dec. 1967, p. SWM is worthy to

rank with FGH and LBN. Like LOTR, "the true Tolkien magic is as securely hidden as the star in the Master Cook's cake and can only be found by those who chance to swallow it unknowingly."] + SWM '67E


Head, Victor. "Some New Books for Children: Tolkien's World of the Hobbits". The Field, 23 Nov. 1967, p. 1027. ["This slight and magical fairy tale will serve as introduction to H, now in paper. It in turn is prologue to LOTR, "a prodigy of imagination and a classic to rank with those of Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, T H White and A A Milne."] + SWM '67E, H '66P

Hudson, C.H. "Tolkien Territory". Oxford Times, 10 Nov. 1967, p. 26. [Some of the spell may come from memories of LOTR, but SWM has its own moments of awe and terror. The cook who comes among the people is compared to Strider. Brief.] + SWM '67E

The Junior Bookshelf 32 (Feb. 1968), 54. [A very satisfactory story which will probably appeal to a larger audience than the Hobbit sequence. "The central portion might almost be by MacDonald but the story does not seem derivative in any way, just a new and rather nicer bit of Tolkien."] + SWM '67E

Lauritsen, Frederick M. Review of SWM. Library Journal 92 (15 Nov. 1967), 4175. [Unlike FGH, SWM develops Tolkien's ideas about the land of fairy. "Because Tolkien uses both plot and characters merely as mediums to express an idea, they are lacking depth."
Brief.] + SWM '67A

Lewis, Naomi. Review of SWM. The Humanist (London) 83 (Sept. 1967), 461. [The story is "even a little too charming"
but the reviewer is thankful for a new story from Tolkien and a few great moments. Brief.] + SWM '67A

Lord of the Royalties". Manchester Guardian, 29 Nov. 1967, p. 8 [A news item. After two weeks of slow sales for SWM, the deluge began. With 25,000 copies already gone, Allen and Unwin have discovered it "is being used as the newest trend in opulently arty Christmas cards."] + SWM '67E

Lobdell, J.C. Review of SWM. National Review 43 (16 Dec. 1967), 177-178. [SWM "admirably succeeds in persuading the reader to suspend his analytical powers while he is reading it." The spurious medieval illustrations by Pauline Baynes spell out what Tolkien has been good enough to leave unsaid..."
Most of the review is a summary of the plot.] + SWM '67E

They contain only wholesome characters. The first is moral fairy story which can be enjoyed by anyone having sharrow. Brief. + SWM & FGH

Peckham, Stanton. "Readers' Roundup". Sunday Denver Post (Col.). Roundup Magazine, 26 Nov. 1967, p. 12. [SWM might be a good introduction to Tolkien's work, and it "just might become a fay classic." Brief.]

Phelps, Robert. "For Younger Readers". New York Times Book Review, 4 Feb. 1968, p. 26. [A brief though fairly short review. "Like everything Tolkien has written, Smith of Wootton Major is an elegy for the decline of our human capacity for awe." For all its wonderful faery quality, "it is first and foremost a good tale..." + SWM '67A

Prescott, Peter S. "Books". Women's Wear Daily 115 (17 Nov. 1967), 30. (Also Fairchild News Service.) [A brief, thoughtful review: "...by pointing out the perils of the land of Faery, the realm that 'cannot be approached without danger,' he restores to the genre an uneasy edge too often replaced by sentimentality." + SWM '67A

R., M.G. "Magic and a Moral". The Yorkshire Post (Leeds), 21 Dec. 1967, p. 5. [Brief. "It is a very moral fairy story which can be enjoyed by anyone having passed his tenth birthday — or any decade thereafter."] + SWM '67E

Slavin, Jan. Luna No. 8 (January, 1970), 27. [These beautiful fairy stories are reminiscent of Oscar Wilde. They contain only wholesome characters. The first is loosely written; the second is enjoyable but to be recommended only for younger fans. Others may find it shallow. Brief.]

Smith, Ann. "Tolkien is for All Ages". Canberra Times, 10 Feb. 1968, p. 10. [A modest perceptive review. "Much of Tolkien's success in this short and basically simple tale lies in his splendid characterisation and sense of humour. But his great achievement is his juxtaposition of the ordinary, earthy details of village life with impressionistic glimpses of the land of Faery." + SWM '67E


"Under Mines - 1/Out of the Ordinary". Times Literary Supplement, 30 Nov. 1967, p. 1153. [In a review of 10 children's books, one paragraph is devoted to Tolkien. He has simplicity, but is too studied and balanced.]

"Folk Tales, Legends, and Fanciful Stories". Horn Book Magazine 44 (Feb. 1968), 63. [A brief comment on Tolkien's story: "Like his others, this new one is recounted gracefully and as naturally as a bit of village history." + SWM '67A

Wade, David. "Mighty Midget". New Statesman 74 (29 Dec. 1967), 908. [A long review praising "this astonishing little book" with its "overwhelming density of meaning." "Seen in depth the swallowing of the star is akin to the coming of grace. It is lent, it has nothing to do with merit, although it must fall onto ground where it will not be extinguished." The book also suggests "that we are not from the spiritual point of view as equal as we like to think."] + SWM '67E

Williams, Christopher. "Among a Faery Elite". New Society 10 (7 Dec. 1967), 831-832. [Moderate in length, scathing in tone. One gets to Faery by predeterminer and "after a choppy passage through the ersatz of Tolkien's prose style." Tolkien preserves a hierarchical distance between the imaginary and the real. "Imagination thus becomes a formal gift, remote-controlled by pallid parent figures, and not the right and possible prerogative of every child, as modern children expect it to be."] - SWM '67E

See also reviews of RGEO by Brady, Fuller, Glackin, Kenny, Mitchell, Wagenknecht, and Wildstrom.

Tolkien Journal

Complete sets of Tolkien Journal, numbers 1-15 (excluding #12, which is the same as Mythlore #5) are available for $23 (plus shipping). See the Order Form.

Mythopoeic Celtic Stationary

by Patrick Wynne

This stationery is available for $5 plus $1 in handling. It features four designs, all found in Mythlore number 35: The Celtic circles portray themes from J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. Each circle is at the top right of the page and is 3 5/8" in diameter, with a lined border around the page. The fourth design is of the four corners found on the front of this sheet, much larger in size. The set includes 4 sheets of each design, making 16 printed sheets, 12 blank sheets, plus 16 envelopes. The paper is of neutral but beautifully antique-appearing parchment. Each set makes fine personal stationery both for men and women, and are excellent for a special mythopoeic gift. Send your order to: Orders Department, 1008 N. Monterey St., Alhambra, CA 91801.
Mythopoeic Conferences are a very special blend of the best points of academic conferences and science fiction and fantasy conventions, resulting in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere conducive to many forms of creative expression and stimulating intellectual interchange.

There will be two panel discussions highlighting dimensions of the Conference theme: A "Women in Fantasy" discussion featuring Guest of Honor Charles de Lint, moderated by Diana Paxson, with Alexi Kondratiev and Melanie Rawls. A second panel will be on Charles Williams, delving into his works with Guest of Honor Judith Kollman and moderated by David Bratman.

The "Masque of the Silmarils" will be performed. The Committee is seeking volunteers to take part in this production; actors, costumes, stage hands. Enjoy the camaraderie of working on such a project. Please contact Margaret Purdy who is co-ordinating this production. Please write: Margaret Purdy, 307 Kensington Drive, Ridgewood NJ 07450.

Also, a drama by Diana Paxson will be performed during the weekend.

Besides papers, panels and drama, there will be films, an art show, an auction, music, a masquerade, dealer's room, a banquet and Bardic circles. The Committee welcomes further suggestions and participation.

Make checks payable to "Mythcon XVII." Please specify what you are paying for.

The Conference Theme is meant to explore the role of female characters in fantasy literature, particularly the type Charles Williams called the "Beatrician Figure," the inspirer of imagination. Williams discussed this type in his book on Dante called The Figure of Beatrice. We hope to explore the development of female characters in the evolving genre of fantasy. Papers on various aspects of Charles Williams' works in light of the 100th anniversary of his birth are also encouraged. Papers dealing with other authors and topics are welcome.

Papers will be given orally, with 30 to 50 minutes allotted for the presentation, allowing the rest of the hour for questions and discussion generated by the paper. Authors are encouraged to attend and personally present their papers. Arrangements may be made for the papers to be read in absentia.

A brief description of the intended paper should be sent as soon as possible.

The total room and meals package, including three nights (double occupancy), nine meals (Friday dinner to Monday lunch, including the banquet) and registration is $125 until June. (Single rooms are $7 more). Registration is only $20 until May 15; $25 until July 25; and may be higher at the door.

Please make your reservations early as we must know how many rooms to hold. We will not be able to supply rooms to people who register at the door.

Banquet tickets only are $8.00.