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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 & Farmer Giles of Ham

Smith of Wootton Major

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

Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham

SwM & FGH New York: BB, March 1969

Berglund, Sonja. Review of SwM. Portland Oregon Journal. 8 March 1968, p. ? [A Brief, youthful review by a student of Lake Oswego Junior High.] + SwM '67A

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 ties 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". Virginia Kirkus' Service 35 (15 Sept. 1967), 1164-1165. ["The star is a trinket, and so, virtually is 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 palm 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 faery. "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 (Feb. 1968), 59. [She comments on Tolkien's popularity and quotes his statement: "Hobbits have what you might call universal morals. I would say that they are examples of natural philosophy and natural religion." The fairy element in SwM recalls George MacDonald's Phantastes. It is a graceful and skillful story. ] + SwM '67E

Lobdell, J.C. Review of SwM. National Review 20 (5 May 1968), 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

Malcolm, Janet. "Children's Books for Christmas". New Yorker 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 Bayne spell out what Tolkien has been good enough to leave unsaid..." Most of the review is a summary of the plot. ] + SwM '67A

Mitchison, Naomi. "Why Not Grow-ups Too?" The Glasgow
They contain only wholesome characters. The first is moral fairy story which can be enjoyed by anyone having leisure. Brief. SWM & FGH recommended only for younger fans. Others may find it slavery, Jan. Luna No. 8 (January, 1970), 27. [These loosely written; the second is enjoyable but to be approached without danger,' he restores to the genre an uneasy edge too often replaced by sentimentality.]

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.]


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."]

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."]

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 predetermination 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."]

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

Tolkien Journal

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"Under Nines - 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.]

V., R.H. "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."]
The Daughters of Beatrice: women in fantasy

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commemorating the Charles Williams' centennial

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Scholar Guest of Honor: Judith Kollman

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