
George H. Thompson

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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 V covers The Lord of the Rings, New Editions. The three parts of the final article cover Tree and Leaf, The Adventures of Tom Bombadil, and The Road Goes Ever On and Poems and Songs of Middle-earth.

Additional Keywords
Patrick Wynne

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Karen blinked, then remembered that in both Wagner and Tolkien everyone was fighting over a magic ring, and laughed. [pp.48-9]

In light of Holst's allusion, there is little surprise that Ingold later finds on his bookshelf amid "an eclectic collection of fiction," "Tolkien" (p. 158). The Lord of the Rings, presumably.


In a discussion of Shakespeare's Sonnets as a poetic sequence, Rosenthal and Gall have this passing put-down: "C.S. Lewis' claim that The Sonnets as a whole constitutes 'the supreme love-poetry of the world' is heart-warming but artistically almost meaningless." (It is surprising that some of John Wain's poetic sequences are not mentioned in the book: Feng is too narrative to receive full approval from Rosenthal and Gall, but its variety of verse forms should make it interesting.)


Despite the title, this is more an appreciation than a review. Wallace lists the books with brief plot comments in the order of publication, and then offers a few, general Christian parallels. Typical is this paragraph:

In another book, the people of Narnia think that Aslan is dead, much as some people today report that God is dead. Another adventure has a search for the end of the world and Aslan's land, as we often feel that we will find God's land up in the stars, and vainly build towers and rockets to reach it. Most children could never appreciate the depth and subtlety of such parallels.

Wallace, who is the art editor of the fanzine, ends by admitting that her article (or review) was inspired by the need to have a text to accompany some Narnian-like illustrations (particularly the head of a lion, by Stuart Gison, on p.23).


Watson surveys Shaw's attitudes toward woman's rights and related topics, he being a male feminist with some unique emphases. In the seventh chapter, "Bread and Circuses: The Career Woman," she traces Shaw's belief that women might have done better politically in the nineteenth century than men, and could not have done worse, paralleling it with a belief in women's sometimes superior "vitality" found in the psychoanalyst Ernest Jones. Watson offers as a contrasting example a passage from Surprised by Joy prefacing it with the statement, "Hostile comments... are usually so vague in their venom as to offer no clarification at all." Then she quotes Lewis, whom she calls "normally a precision":

You may add that in the hive and the ant hill we see fully realized the two things that some of us most dread for our own species -- the dominance of the female and the dominance of the collective.

Watson concludes, "Whether this means that Shaw and Jones are [wrong], or whether this means that they are right about the vital genius of the female, since it seems to be strong enough to threaten the entrenched power of clever men, no one can say" (p. 175). Perhaps Lewis felt threatened by the rule of women since he had handed himself over to the rule of Mrs. Moore; but Watson uses the passage to make an interesting contrast between attitudes men have actually taken over women's rule (although the matter of 'vitality' fuzzes the point to a degree). (Surprised by Joy is listed in the bibliography on p. 241.)

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

Part V
The Lord of the Rings, new editions

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| Blackwood's Magazine  | 301     | 493-494 | [A mainly descriptive review by "a Tolkien aficionado." He notes, however, that the "weakness of the book is in the men, who are conventional heroes of some expurgated Victorian romance.... As for the women, they are like Millaes figures -- beautiful but dead boses."

Brace, Keith. "Modern Epic or Donninh Whimby?" Birmingham Post (Eng.), Midland Magazine, 21 Jan. 1967, p. 2. [He notes the great admiration of some and the dislike of others for LOTR because of its pastiche of romance and epic, "the Magnet-Bem buffoonery and the common-room heartiness of the central characters." He then proceeds in a general way to apply the story to...
Europe. "The Ring might be man's lust for knowledge which can be used for good or evil. This is not exactly allegory so much as a re-writing of Tolkien's personal experience of a tragic century and its return to barbarism..." LOTR "restores the human dimensions of the physical world" with its description of a difficult journey. But it is unrealistic and unprogressive. A wide-ranging review. +

LOTR '66

Brady, Charles A. "Crime and Saga". The Lamp: A Catholic Monthly (Society of the Atonement) Peekskill Garrison, N.Y. 64 (Nov. 1966), 32. [The reason for "this fairy epic's astounding rise to popularity" is not far to seek: "Youth's imagination cries out, first, for images of heroism, then for myth, above all, perhaps for assurance of the essential goodness of things..." LOTR is "the Dance of Love."] +

LOTR '66

Choice 4 (July-Aug. 1967), 535. [A brief informed notice. LOTR was "initiated in 1936."
Quote: "It is also characterized as not 'adult,' a word currently employed in a rather childish manner."] +

LOTR '66, '67

Comans, Grace P. "Imaginative masterpiece". Hartford Courant (Conn.), 21 May 1967, p. 7 (Date not confirmed.) [A mainly descriptive review which concludes that this "epic is a masterpiece of the imagination."] +

LOTR '67

Cox, C. B. "The World of the Hobbits". The Spectator No. 7227 (30 Dec. 1966), p. 844. [Noting the dispute over the merits of LOTR, he concedes that it is inferior to The Faerie Queen because sex is absent, but praises it highly for its re-creation of "simple human pleasures."... Tolkien has the virtues of the great story-tellers -- quick-moving action, a lucid all-purpose style, and a wealth of incident and character. "Tolkien's supreme achievement is the paradise of Lothlorien which offers a touch of vision." This is a good review.]

LOTR '67

Delbriick, Maurice. "Sawed-off Beowulf". Book Week, Fall Children's Issue, 31 Oct. 1965, pp. 7, 32. [LOTR stands up on rereading, though the verse does not. He prefers H to LOTR."] +

LOTR '65


LOTR '67

Ellwood, Robert S. JR., and Gracia Fay. Ellwood. "Good News from Middle Earth". Reformed Journal (Grand Rapids) 17 (Feb. 1967), 20-22. [The quasi-religious fan of LOTR fans is a response to the religious nature of the work. There is great tension between good and evil, the ring is a powerful symbol of sin, and the characters are images of archetypes (hence not complex). Evil expresses itself as greed, for Sauron the object is total absorption: "The ring is the symbol of and means to this total self-aggrandizement which equals total destruction." This is well put, but elsewhere in attempting to build up Christ-Frodo parallels the authors are reduced to asserting "that Jesus had an unmistakable appreciation of good food and fellowship. He appears frequently at some dinner-party or other..." etc. A long review, but a good deal is plot summary.]

LOTR '67

Fuller, Edmund. "Reading for Pleasures: Of Frodo and Fantasy". Wall Street Journal 167 (4 Jan. 1966), 14. [He welcomes the Ballantine paperbacks. The rest of the review is material in brief from the chapter on Tolkien in his Books with Men Behind Them (1962). (See West B 57.)]

H '65 LOTR '65

Green, Roger Lancelyn. "Frodo and Sam Battle On". Sunday Telegraph, 11 Dec. 1966, p. 14. (With a caricature of J.R.R. by Nicolas Bentley.) ["This is a good moment to take another look at what is among the greatest works of imaginative fiction of the mid-20th century." There is no religion in LOTR. "Yet it has what we might call a religious sense implicit throughout -- the more potent for never being mentioned..." Behind the neatness and wonder of the surface "there is the deeper sense of a home-coming, the supreme anguish and exaltation" that proves the mythopoeic to be at once the most romantic and the most realistic of all literary experiences...]

LOTR '66

Haas, Joseph. "'Ring' Revival Just Keeps Rolling Along". Chicago Daily News, Panorama, 25 Feb. 1967, p. 8. [H and LOTR have sold over 3,000,000 copies in the last 18 months throughout the world. Now there is a Revised Edition. It is a work to love and to change your life for "it is a moral work exemplifying values that transcend classes and cultures and which, if man is to survive, must prevail..."] +

LOTR '67

Hanns, Leslie. "Under the Spell of a Wizard". News Letter (Belfast), 15 Nov. 1966, p. 4. ["No heroic romance has been attempted on this scale since the Faerie Queen."
The reviewer praises Tolkien's thoroughness, his spell-binding power, and the matter-of-factness which makes the incredible credible.
A final question: Did he have the Book of Enoch in mind in describing Mordor?] +

LOTR '65

Hentoff, Nat. "Critics' Choices for Christmas". Commonweal 83 (3 Dec. 1965), 284. [A brief recommendation of H and LOTR. "The setting and the time, to be sure, are not 'contemporary' but Tolkien's values and concerns are -- or should be -- timeless."]

LOTR '65

Hodgart, Matthew. "Hobbit-Forming". New York Review of Books 9 (28 Sept. 1967), 38. [See article of 4 May 1967. [Replying to letters by Virginia Tilley and Craig Harrisson, Hodgart praises Tolkien's poems in LOTR and describes H as "perfect in narrative, scholarship, and humor." But LOTR proposes serious themes which the characters are not adequate to sustain.]=

LOTR '67

Hodgart, Matthew. "Kicking the Hobbit". New York Review of Books 8 (4 May 1967), 10-11. [This review article makes many comparisons, especially with writers like Buchan and Haggard. The main objections to Tolkien are that his work is morally simplified and that, except for the hobbits, the characters are not real or complex or believable. LOTR is a parody with a Christian message; Frodo is Christ-like; and the underlying
Hone, Ralph E. "Myth-Maker Extraordinary". Los Angeles Times, Calendar, 10 Sept. 1967, p. 30. [In comparison with the "dreams of clinical realism" of much 20th-century writing which "seems a withered branch," the experience provided by Tolkien's "golden imagination" is "positively psychedelic." "All epics and romances deal with the conflict of good and evil. The Lord of the Rings, no exception, has the additional quality of timelessness in the struggle." Tolkien's myth-making unites "recognizable literary prototypes with some of the more prominent psychological archetypes in our heritage."] +


Jonas, Gerald. "Triumph of the Good". New York Times Book Review, 31 Oct. 1965, pp. 78-79. [Largely a personal essay about reading LOTR several times in several settings. The quality of the review may be judged from this: "The rule is: Don't read Tolkien unless you can keep your eye on at least one small patch of something green and growing." And see Henry, Judy.]

Kiely, Robert. "Middle Earth". Commentary 43 (Feb. 1967), 93-96. [A long and competent review, half of which is devoted to Tolkien's language: "It is a force with enormous potential to create beauty or ugliness, good or evil." "The overlapping of historical reality and legend is a concept central to Tolkien's work..."

"The psychological and moral depths of the narrative, in combination with the sure handling of linguistic and historical detail, lends his work a rare authenticity."] +

Lobdell, Jared. "Words that Sound like Castles". National Review 19 (5 Sept. 1967), 972, 974. [This solid and thoughtful review takes C.S. Lewis's essay "On Stories" as starting point. H and LOTR are examples of works where everything exists for the sake of the story.]


McWilliams, Wilson C. "Critics' Choices for Christmas". Commonwealth 83 (3 Dec. 1965), 287. [Brief. Tolkien is praised as "the master of theiddle."]


FR. This epic romance fits Johnson's dictum that "a book should teach us to enjoy life or to endure it." Tolkien's "work is deeply rooted in the great literature of the past..." and he remains "in complete control of his copious material." The result is "a gigantic myth of the struggle between good and evil." Of the three volumes, FR has the widest variation in tone. (Pp. 326-329)

TT. Tolkien's fertile imagination is praised and related to his essay "On Fairy-stories." LOTR "is a story about choice, or free will... and the sum of the choices makes the fate of the characters." (Pp. 1242-1245)

RK. "like a symphony the book reaches its climax and subsides into a quiet coda..." (Pp. 1063-1066) +

Malcom, John "Tolkien Talk". Punch. 251 (16 Nov. 1966), 755. [Though the revisions are for adult addicts, LOTR is "a children's book: the one thing it does not rely on for its effects is an adult experience of the world." The book mainly rewards by "a powerful and extraordinary power of myth-making — the ability to create images which reverberate in the understanding."

A fairly brief review.]

Martin, Murray A. "The Lord of the Rings and the Prelude, The Hobbit". Voces (American Academy of Psychotherapists) 3 (Summer 1967), 65. [Tolkien has created a work of genius. "The reading of The Lord of the Rings is an altogether engaging adventure." Brief.]

"Paperbacks". The Observer, 13 Oct. 1968, p. 34. ["Very handsome edition of Tolkien's epic..." Brief, with a photo of Tolkien.]

"Paperbacks". The Times, 12 Oct. 1968, p. 24. [This shortish review is mostly plot summary. "The sequence casts the same spell as the gigantic folk myths." The paperback "is well printed and easy to read.

"Paperbacks:March of the Hobbits". The Yorkshire Post, 16 Oct. 1968, p. 6. [A brief notice: "one of the major events of the paperback year."] +

Peckham, Robert W. "Revised Edition of a Masterpiece". The Michigan Catholic (Detroit) 95 (7 Sept. 1967), 8. [A sympathetic description. LOTR is remarkable "because it is both a great book and a book that the common reader can enjoy. Such a combination has not occurred since the days of Dickens."]

"Pick of the Paperbacks". Saturday Review 48 (26 June 1965), 42. [A one-sentence mention of the Ace edition of FIL] o

Prescott, Peter S. "Books", Women's Wear Daily 114 (10 March 1967), 24. [The admirers of LOTR are distinguished from the faddists. "Tolkien's admiralers find his fantasy, flawed and special as it is, a truly moral and relevant tale, concerned with the dangers of power and the corruption of excellence, the burden of duty and the temptations of virtue."]

LOT" Ace
Prinz, Lucie. "Review of LOTR and H. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. 5 Sept. 1965, p. 4B. ["...I recommend them highly, to all lovers of adventure and ancient lore."] +
LOTRO '65

R., E.I. "Return of the King of Rings". Glasgow Herald. 26 Nov. 1966, p. 7. ["...an astonishing and magical piece of mythology," The revisions are mainly scholarly. The reviewer finds it hard, despite Tolkien's assertions, not to find allegorical meaning in the work.] +
LOTRO '66

Ramacciotti, David. "Contemporary Fantasy Enacts". Humanist (American Humanist Association) 27 (Mar.-Apr. 1967) 62. [H and LOTR are favorably described. The emphasis on philosophy is small — Tolkien warns against looking for allegory — but it is there. "He writes with a brilliant attention to detail.... most impressive of all, is the ancient lore... that stands behind each character and his people." ] +
LOTRO '65, TR '66

Ready, William. "From the Hobbits — a Lesson of Love". The Spectator (Hamilton, Ontario), 20 May, 1967, p. 30. [A popular account of Tolkien's success and the world of his books. The story of LOTR "is a grim one and very religious." "The whole lesson of the book is sacrifice, all for love and nothing for reward, and in a world that they feel has betrayed them, the young have taken this book to their bosom more than any other book of these times. There is a world of comfort in this, not for us, but for them, who will inherit the earth and make of it what they will."] +
LOTRO '65, TR '66, H '66

Schröth, Raymond A. "Lord of the Rings". America 116 (18 Feb. 1967), 254. [A personal and somewhat routine review. LOTR is too long, but it is a re-invitation to myth and myth reveals the truth of man's affinity with elemental forces.] +
LOTRO '65

Smith, Janet Adam. "Does Frodo Live?" New York Review of Books 19 (14 Dec. 1972), 19-21. [This review includes in addition to H and LOTR. Master of Middle-earth: The Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien by Paul H. Kocher, about which almost nothing is said. As for Tolkien's fiction, the plots are summarized and the author praised as a superb storyteller and master of language. The world of epic and saga, of Rohan and Gondor is a finer creation than the Shire: "behind the Shire is a sort of Chestertonian myth of Merrie England, a much thinner affair." Though Christmas and the trade in children's books may serve as some excuse, this review is a thinner affair than one would expect from so intellectual a periodical.] +
LOTRO '65, '67, H '65, '66A

"Some of the Year's Best". New York Times Book Review. 27 Feb. 1966, p. 22. [A select list of paperbacks includes LOTR, oddly described as a "fantasy of a Lilliputian world."] +
LOTRO '65

Thevila, Dave. "The Paperback Tolkien: [2] The Ballantine Revised Edition". Niekas No. 14 (10 Dec. 1965), pp. 37-38. [An informed, opinionated review. Most of the revisions are minor. The only major change in the story concerns the ride of the Rohirrim to the Fields of Pelennor. Since Theoden is not aware of Merry's presence, the dialogue and action are altered to account for this. The major changes are found in the Appendices, especially in added information about the First Age. The reviewer deplores the printing errors and slashing attacks the "sticky-sweet" cover illos.]
+ 
LOTRO '65

LOTRO '67

West, Paul. "Nondivyasty Snap-Vungthangtl". Book Week (Washington Post). 26 Feb. 1967, pp. 1-2. [An attack on Tolkien and hobbits, painfully popular in style. LOTR "amounts to a philologist's doodle... and not so good, as story telling, as the phony folk tales of John Buchan." "...his trilogy, far from being another great saga, is a Nippleungniled, and the cult is an unweening quest for the unmeaning." There are three substantial columns of the same.]

LOTRO '65, '67

Wilkinson, Arthur. "Classic Fantasy?" Oxford Mail. 22 Dec. 1966, p. 6. [A brief notice showing little interest in the new apparatus of the revised edition, but full of praise for "a wonderful complete fantasy, a golden experience for those fortunate enough to be able to enter into it."] +
LOTRO '66

Wimsatt, Margaret. "Small Furry People": Letter, New York Review of Books 20 (22 Feb. 1973), 38. [Commenting on the review of Smith (14 Dec. 1972), she stresses this point: "Redemption will come from small (furry) people, who are willing to be tried beyond their apparent strength." ] +
LOTRO '65, '67, H '65, '66A

And for a review of the Swedish translation of LOTR, see Geijerstam, annotated in West (1970) TB3.