Winter 2-15-1985

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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 II includes *Fellowship of the Ring* and *Two Towers*.

Additional Keywords
Tolkien, J.R.R.—Bibliography; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Critical reception
Early Review of Books by J.R.R. Tolkien
Compiled by George H. Thompson

PART II
The Fellowship of the Ring

"The Fellowship of the Ring." British Book News No. 170 (Oct. 1954), p. 577. [A brief notice which speaks of "the curious fascination of this strange romance with its original and compelling mythology, its sense of serious purpose and its fine imaginative writing."] + FR '54E

Flood, Robert H. "Hobbit Hoax?" Books on Trial 13 (Jan.-Feb. 1955), 169-170. ["Pretentious snobbery is the best description for this scholarly off-shoot of a once-done fairy tale." Violent objection is entailed to the dust-jacket testimonials. "This book is not recommended; there is no 'moral' problem involved except injustice by the publisher or a waste of time by the reader." Brief.] - FR '54A

Hughes, Richard. "The Lord of the Rings". The Spectator No. 6588 (1 Oct. 1954), pp. 408-409. [He defends his statement on the dust jacket that LotR was "something which has scarcely been attempted on this scale since Spenser's Faerie Queene," and that it was distinguished by width of imagination. But he agrees with Edwin Muir that it is simplified in characterization and lacking depth.] + FR '54E

Jackman, Stuart B. "The Fellowship of the Ring". Theology (London) 58 (June 1955), 240-241. ["Mr. Tolkien has written a long, pedestrian fairy-story for adults...." Two things are wrong with the book: (1) Tolkien's obsession with detail produces a "morass of words"; (2) though the book appears to have meaning, one can't make out what it is. See letter from Waal.] - FR '54E

John, K. "The Novel of the Week". Illustrated London News 225 (9 Oct. 1954), 612. [This review of modest length ends by asking if FR has as much genius as The Wind in the Willows: "I am afraid the answer is self-evident. It is a wonderful invention, an enchanting feat; but it has not the salt of genius"] + FR '54E

Kiely, Benedict. "Hobbits in the Belfry". The Irish Press, 4 Sept. 1954, p. 4. [Tolkien's book is "an enchanting freak," "more than four hundred pages of rich fantasy about nothing in particular." The invention and the lovely prose do not save it from dullness.] - FR '54E

Lambert, J.W. "New Fiction." Sunday Times, 8 Aug. 1954, p. 5. [The allegory is "not unduly stressed; and the story of the pilgrimage...is followed with verve and humour, and cunning variations of pace and style." The Brothers Grimm, The Wind in the Willows and The Sword in the Stone are fair comparisons.] + FR '54E

Lehamann, L. Th. "Het Occulte Indianenboek" [the Occult Indian Book]. Litterair Passpoort (Amsterdam), April 1955, pp. 78-80. [He is annoyed at so much fuss over LotR and so little over John Cowper Powys' Atlantis. Tolkien can make landscapes come alive. But the ring is a piece of lifeless occultism and the more supernatural characters like Tom Bombadil are not believable. Tolkien is not economical in his invention. He calls in new characters every time he needs a new sensation. The adventures become a conglomerate of unexpected attacks and narrow escapes, so that the whole begins to resemble an occult Indian book. Tolkien does not spare us the suggestion that the Hobbits are the salt of Middle Earth. But he fails to define the evil of Sauron and the Orcs.] - FR '54E

Lewis, C.S. "The Gods Return to Earth". Time and Tide 35 (14 Aug. 1954), 1082-1083. [Lewis praises FR as a new conquest in the territory of romance, as a solid and wholly created world (from which the Hobbit was torn, a juvenile fragment), as myth without allegorical pointing; and for its note of anguish at the darkness having come, and for the powerful sense of history in the work.] + FR '54E

Kepert, L.V. "Adventure in a new Fairyland". Sidney Morning Herald (Australia), 16 Oct. 1954, p. 11. [A long rather wordy sympathetic review. He admires the "brilliantly wrought scenes," and the mysterious and terrifying power of the supernatural. After quoting from the Beowulf essay about "Shoreless Sea and the outer darkness" he says of Tolkien: "It is something of that feeling which he has infused in this peculiarly memorable twentieth-century contribution to legendary romance."] + FR '54E


Miller, P. Schuyler. "The Reference Library". Astounding Science Fiction 55 (July 1955), L56-157. ["This [H and FR] is one of those rare fantasies, invented for children but taken over by adults, which
become classic in their circle. If you like the blend of faerie and saga that is in Fletcher Pratt's Well of the Unicorn or Poul Anderson's The Broken Sword, maybe you'll go for these oddly charming, oddly heroic adventures of a synthetic half-world.... "It's not science fiction, in spite of what eminent writers say about it on the jacket..."

Mittchison, Naomi. "One Ring to Bind Them". The New Statesmen and Nation 48 (18 Sept. 1954), 331. [A review filled with praise which concludes: "And above all it is a story magnificently told, with every kind of colour and movement and greatness." She holds that Middle-earth is flat.]

Muir, Edwin. "Strange Epic". Sunday Observer, 22 Aug. 1954, p. 7. [Though "an extraordinary book," the characters are simply good or evil, there is no room for a Satan both evil and tragic. "But admitting that Mr. Tolkien does not have the sensibility or the style to express the particular degree of humanity which we find in Spenser and Ariosto and Malory, his book remains an extraordinary feat." Muir concludes: "And if Mr. Tolkien's imagination was equal to his invention, and his style equal to both, this book might have been a masterpiece."

Nicholls, Alan. "A Fairy Tale--But Not for Children". The Age (Melbourne), 24 Dec. 1954, p. 16. [Though "a fairy tale," it is "not unreal. The closeness of its analogy to the human situation gives it a dreadful reality and relevance. It is a prose-poet's rendering of the mental twilight of the modern world, darkened as it is by the bomb power...of the atom bomb." The book is "one of the most significant literary achievements of modern times."

Pearson, Gabriel. "Two Dons". The Isis (Oxford) No. 132 (20 Oct. 1954), p. 11. [Tolkien has created a varied, ample, and rich world. Fortunately "there is no suggestion of allegory, nothing Kafkaesque and terribly modern. True, there is a basic conflict of good with evil, but this conflict is at once archetypal and subtly concrete.


Prescott, Orville. "Books of the Times". New York Times (2 Nov. 1954), p. 25. ["This is a remarkable book, but it is far from a completely successful one. It grows tedious. It becomes repetitious. And finally it frankly bores." As a writer of romantic fantasy, Tolkien is not as good as E.R. Eddison. In particular he fails to make his characters interesting as individuals and fails to give them sufficient heroic qualities.]

Price, Anthony. "Fairy Story for Grownups Too". Oxford Mail (Eng.), 16 Sept. 1954, p. 4. ["The matter-of-fact skill with which the story is told makes it easy to accept Tolkien's fantasy than one might expect; and once the imagination has accepted Middle Earth a new world opens up." Tolkien's mythology has all the authority of the old Celtic, Scandinavian and German mythologies, yet is a new creation. The book is like a chronicle of true events in a real world outside our own. The story is stirring beyond measure."

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Tolkien's realistic-unrealistic epic has parallels ranging from medieval romance to The Wind in the Willows. To pick up the book is to be carried away for Tolkien has created his own mythical world with unequalled imagination. The story is carried forward with a lean and varied style. It is free of didacticism and excessive symbolism. It is masterful in its range of human sentiment and in the unity it achieves out of multiplicity."


Smith, Ronald Gregor. "Vigour and Strength". British Weekly (London) 135 (23 Dec. 1954), 2. [A brief, reasonably thoughtful review of FR and TT. "...the best way to encourage you to buy and read these books is to speak not of the great epics and romances of other ages, but of the sheer vigour and strength of the narrative, the verity with which the adventures unfold."

Sotemann, G. "The Fellowship of the Ring: Een fantastisch epos" ("A fantastic epic"). Algemeen Handelsblad (Amsterdam), 20 Nov. 1954, p. 13. ["Tolkien's realistic-unrealistic epic has parallels ranging from medieval romance to The Wind in the Willows. To pick up the book is to be carried away for Tolkien has created his own mythical world with unequalled imagination. The story is carried forward with a lean and varied style. It is free of didacticism and excessive symbolism. It is masterful in its range of human sentiment and in the unity it achieves out of multiplicity."

Spring, Howard. "Imagination, Fancy and Invention". Country Life (London) 116 (26 Aug. 1954), 667-668. ["...a work of art." Though in the form of prose fiction, it "is also a long poem, in the sense in which Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur is a long poem; and, as surely as that book, it meets Keat's test: it has invention, fancy and imagination." Tolkien sees splendidly and describes splendidly. He proves that creative fiction is not dead."

"There were Hobbits in the Land in those Days". The Northern Echo (Darlington, Eng.), 3 Sept. 1954, p. 8. [Confronted by this remarkable feat of the imagination, scholars and critics have spoken of Malory, Spenser, Ariosto. The present reviewer sought a pedigree out of Puck of Pook's Hill, but none of these will really do. The best thing is to accept Tolkien as a considerable romancer in his own right. The fit reader will find in this strange world an astonishing variety of scenes and characters. (Summary from Book Review Editor. Not seen.)

Virginia Kirkus' Service 22 (1 Sept. 1954), 598. [A descriptive, mildly favorable notice.]

Waal, Victor de. Letter in reply to S.B. Jackman's review. Theology 58 (Aug. 1955), 308. [He defends Tolkien whose "learning in myth and folklore has enabled him to touch the springs of human symbolism; and through his world charity breathes."

Wagenknecht, Edward. "Book Relates Wonderful Story". Boston Sunday Herald, 31 Oct. 1954, Sect. 4, p. 7. ["Here is a great work of the imagination...." The story is wonderful as story alone and the prose a consistent glory. Though not an allegory, FR may illuminate our world, or even rise, here and there, to prophetic stature. A rather brief review."

Wagenknecht, Edward. "Ring Joins Great Novels of the Year". Chicago Sunday Tribune: Part IV, Magazine of
The Two Towers

**TT '54**
London: M.U., 11 Nov. 1954

**TT '55**
Boston: HM, 1955

**The Booklist** 51 (1 May 1955), 368. [A brief notice surveying the plot.]

**TT '54**

[Boucher, Anthony], The Editor. "Recommended reading.

*Fantasy and Science Fiction* 9 (Aug. 1955), 93. [Though his books are unduly long, it is still true that "no writer save E. R. Eddison has ever so satisfactorily and compellingly created his own mythology and made it come vividly alive."]

**TT '55**

Boucher, Anthony. "Recommended Reading: The Best Science-fantasy Books of 1955". *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 10 (March 1956), 120-124. (He includes *TT in the "Fantasy" section. "...Tolkien continues with the second volume of his magnificent epic myth...")

**TT '55**

Brady, Charles A. "Wonderous Visit to Land of Dwarves and Elves". *Buffalo Evening News*, 23 April 1955, Magazine Section, p. 10. ["How is one to sum up the unique flavor of Tolkien's sturdy fantasy? Epic is too strong a term, fairy-tale too weak." Tolkien's myth sustains the spirit. "It scales down to the dimensions of the story the most tremendous and immutable moral truths.... *The Two Towers* is a nursery *Nibelungenlied*, a domesticated Inferno, a Paradise Lost diminished for the fireside consideration of Robin Goodfellow."]

**TT '55**

"Brief Notes, Fiction". *The New Yorker* 31 (14 May 1955), 154, 157. [Brief. "Mr. Tolkien writes with love and precision, but...he is tedious a good deal of the time."]

**TT '55**

Cherryman, A. E. "Modern Legend". *Truth* (London) 154 (12 Nov. 1954), 1402-1403. [Vol. II is just as good as Vol. I. This "fictional masterpiece piece of our time" breathes a spirit of "optimism." In part this is expressed by "sheer goodness of the forces of good." But what is even more significant, there are infinite lessons in the author's compassion for the forces of evil.]

**TT '54**


**TT '55**

Cureau, Doris L. "Hobbits, Ents, Wizards Struggle Against Evil". *The Hartford (Conn.) Times*, 23 April 1955, p. 22. [A modest review with some good perceptions. She observes that the "reader's mind must compass a world that is not man-centered." To call this fantasy is scarcely true. There is too much of substance, too much of what holds truth in any time or in any world.]

**TT '55**

de Camp, L. Sprague. "Book Reviews". *Science Fiction Quarterly* 4 (May 1956), 51. [Vol. II is even better than Vol. I. "It keeps its suspense up better, with fewer long passage."

**TT '55**

Doliber, Maurice. "Hobbit-Forming". *Providence Sunday Journal*, 24 April 1955, Section 6, p. 10. [This is "one of the most remarkably imaginative works of modern times." Brief.]

**TT '55**

Dunlavy, Marjorie. "Role of Fantasy: Universal Meaning Artfully Inserted". *Dallas Times Herald*, 22 May 1955, Section 2, p. 2. [Remoteness in time gives credibility, a fact true equally of epic and of *LOTR*. Fantasy is Tolkien's "method for packing more universal meaning in an action story." Courage and selflessness are the heroic virtues and they transmute hobbits and men to heroes when the situation is desperate and a champion is needed."

"An intelligent review."

**TT '55**

"Elemental Forces in Conflict". *The Scotsman*, 17 Dec. 1954, p. 11. [TT has its roots in the Norse Sagas, Old English heroic poems, and medieval romances. The values it embodies are heroic values; nobility, courtesy, loyalty, and courage. The author's narrative and descriptive talents and outstanding."

**TT '54**

"The Epic of Westernesse". *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 Dec. 1954, p. 817. ["The whole is a prose epic in praise of courage....Westernesse... comes to rank in the reader's imagination with Asgard and Camelot."

**Brief.**]

**TT '54**

F[ausset], H. 1'A. "Magical". *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Nov. 1954, p. 9 [Mr. Tolkien's powers of imaginative invention show no signs of flagging." The theme "tends to be rather overlaid with an overgrowth of sensational romance." Mr. Tolkien is, in fact, hardly a Spenser or an Ariosto, as has been claimed. But he is a thrilling story-teller." Brief.]

**TT '54**

Books, 26 Dec. 1954, p. 4. [An enthusiastic review, praising the largeness of theme, the nobleness of imagination, and the memorable prose. "It is not really a novel but a prose romance." Tolkien, like Blake, has "created his own mythology."]

**TT '54A**

Weir, Andrew. "O, brave Old World!" *Yorkshire Post*, 10 Sept. 1954, p. 4. [Like Lewis Carroll, Tolkien has added a new country to the world. Tolkien's "power of invention is as unfailing as his gift for narrative and description is great." A review of modest length.]

**TT '54E**


"...forgetting that a fairy tale is a snow man that cannot be brought into the house."]

**TT '54A**

Wisconsin Library Bulletin 51 (Jan.-Feb. 1955), 38. [The imagery and motivation remind the reader of the legends of the North. The writing and imagination delight the special reader who will stay with the story.]

**TT '54A**

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Forrest, Julian. "Has look of New Classic". Boston Sunday Herald. 31 July 1955, Section III, p. 6. ["...this work which is one of the best wonder tales ever written—and certainly one of the best written—is also a picture of our world, all the more illuminating because we see it here in a light that never shone on sea or land." Fairly brief.] + TT '55

Gerson, Villiers. "The Spectroscope". Amazing Stories 29 (Dec. 1955), 115. [Frodo is described as a "humanoid being." This volume is not as good as the first and Tolkien is sometimes pedantic, "but his gifts are so plentiful that we must forgive him his enthusiasm and enjoy this, his masterwork, in toto..." It deserves to stand with Eddison.] + TT '55

Glackin, William C. "Out of this World". Sacramento Bee, 7 May 1955, p. 6. [An enthusiastic review. "Tolkien has created a new mythology." "The story has drama, excitement, suspense, a little humor and genuine humanity." The author "is a wizard to match against his own Gandalf the Grey."] + TT '55

Grady, R. F., S.J. Best Sellers 15 (1 May 1955), 25-26. ["A magnificently inventive creation that has the authentic ring of saga, of epic poetry." "Mr. Tolkien's great gift is that he has made his imagined land as real to us as any land just over the horizon hills." ] + TT '55

Hall, David. "Fire and Sword". New Zealand Listener, 18 March 1955, p. 14. ["The effect becomes massive, although not even his excellent and simple style can do much more than tarnish the labels placed on most of the people..." Brief.] + TT '54

Hudson, C. H. "To the Dark Lord". Oxford Times, 19 Nov. 1954, p. 10. [A descriptive review. Vol. II has not quite the appeal of Vol. I. "It is a grimier tale altogether, and we miss, among the violence and the darkness, the kindly magic of the first part..." But the story appears to be moving towards a powerful climax.] + TT '54

John, K. "The Novel of the Week". Illustrated London News 266 (22 Jan. 1955), 156. [He declines to enter the debate about the greatness of LOTR. But Vol. II is every bit as good as Vol. I and has even more action. "And the suspense is cruel."] + TT '54

Jordon, John. "The Little Life of Man". Irish Press (Dublin), 18 Dec. 1954, p. 4. [A thoughtful and substantial review in praise of Tolkien's narrative skill in the "weaving of epic, heroic romance, parable, and fairy tale, and the more adventurous kind of detective story, into a pattern at once strange and curiously familiar to our experience." The meeting of Merry and Pippin with Truebeard is especially praised as "a reflection of a relationship we know and love in our own world, the tenderness of the very weak, the bond between the very old and the very young." "Such is the seriousness of...Tolkien's vision of good and evil, that we may without irreverence note the Christian parallel of Gandalf's descent into hell, and resurrection." "...so far it has the air of a masterpiece."] + TT '54

Kepert, L. V. "More About the Hobbits". The Sidney Morning Herald (Australia), 19 Feb. 1955, p. 12. ["... the almost human characteristics of the hobbits, and their friendly, gossipy, greedy approach to life, make their dangers the more real and gripping." This volume is "rich in invention of new characters." Particularly praiseworthy is the handling of the speech of the Orcs, Ents, etc.] + TT '54

Lambert, J. W. "New Fiction". Sunday Times, 12 Dec. 1954, p. 5. [An interim brief review of Tolkien's "prodigious enterprise." "The standard of invention and narrative drive is nobly maintained; I am not sure that the book grows in stature."] + TT '54


Manzaloui, Mahmoud. "No Artificial Allegory in this Fairy Romance". Egyptian Gazette, 18 Feb. 1955, p. 2. [It is a great epic set in an imaginary land, peopled with characters of fairy-land; at the same time it has the "solid, purposeful power of a heroic romance." It is symbolic of all struggles against evil. "This book has not pleased readers of the staple modern psychological novel. To them, its epic quality cuts it off from the reality of contemporary life, and its fantasy divorces it from the analytical study of human nature." It signifies, however, a new trend in fiction, along with Amos Tutuola's My Life in the Bush of Ghosts.] + TT '55


Miller, P. Schuyler. "The Reference Library". Astounding Science Fiction 57 (March 1956), 155-156. [Though Vol. I is finer, the Ents and the terrific battle at Helm's Deep are admirable. Rather brief.] + TT '55
Muir, Edwin. "The Ring". Sunday Observer. 21 Nov. 1954, p. 9. [Vol. II carries on and expands the admirable qualities of Vol. I. The Ents and episodes like the battle of Helm’s Deep are magnificent. The Ring cannot be reduced to the hydrogen bomb, it "seems to stand for evil itself," tempting the good, strengthening the bad. It is just that the natural forces of earth should be involved in this great struggle.] + TT '54

P., A. "In Middle Earth". Oxford Mail. 6 Jan. 1955, p. 4. [A fairly brief account of the story is followed by this comment: "The Ents are a fine imaginative creation, but even they are surpassed by Gollum... now emerges uneasily into daylight." ] + TT '54

Pearson, Gabriel. "An Abstract Legend". The Isis (Oxford) No. 1244 (23 Feb. 1955), p. 29. [TT is not genuine legend, the characters being too individual for that. But the world of the book has complete integrity. This review is really very confused. Its tone is one of admiration with some qualification.] + TT '54

"Professor's Fertile Fantasy". Church Times (London), 17 Dec. 1954, p. 4. [The picture of good and evil is cross-hatched by temptation and repentance." Despite what has been said about the artificiality of Tolkien's style, "the real danger of his style is its essential simplicity." This is not always effective; but most often it works and the style becomes transparent. The discussion of style makes this very favorable review of some interest.] + TT '54

Richardson, Maurice. "New Novels". The New Statesman and Nation 48 (18 Dec. 1954), 835-836. [He reacts against the praise by Hughes, Lewis, Auden, and Mitchison (who compared Tolkien to Malory). "It will do quite nicely as an allegorical adventure story for very leisured boys..." ] - TT '54

"SR's Spring Poll". Saturday Review 38 (9 April 1955), 14-15. [The book editors vote for 6 books. Dolbier gives one vote to TT. The plot is very briefly surveyed.] + TT '55

Street, Allen. "Little Men's Day". Current Literature. Dec. 1954, p. 211. [A brief comment under the heading "Epic Romance" notes that "once again the great sweep and epic quality of Mr. Tolkien's heroic romance carries the reader entralled to the last page."] + TT '54

"The Two Towers", The Times of India (Bombay), 8 Jan. 1956, p. 6. [The plot is surveyed and praised. "The allegory sticks out as plain as a pike staff." The conflict of good and evil is then discussed briefly. (Obviously the same reviewer as Vol. I.)] + TT '54


Wharton, Will. "Myth of Middle-Earth". St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 10 July 1955, p. 4C. ["...the books are excellent juveniles." (Summary from Book Review Editor. Not seen.) ] + TT '55

Wickenden, Dan. "Humor, Drama, Suspense In a Unique, Romantic Epic". New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 8 May 1955, p. 5. [The prose of this romantic epic for adults "falls repeatedly into heroic and poetic rhythms which recall Malory and the great Nordic sagas." "The great design of the whole begins to emerge... the pace is swifter, the drama is heightened, the suspense becomes at times almost literally unbearable"] + TT '55

Wizards, Elves and Goblins!" The Herald (Melbourne), 19 March 1955, p. 24. [A favorable review according to the paper. Not seen.] + TT '54

See also review of FR by Smith and of RK by Blair, Lehmann, Lewis, Sotemann, and Yeiser.