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Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition (2015) by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Verlyn Flieger

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Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition, by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Verlyn Flieger. Illustrations by Pauline Baynes. London: HarperCollins, 2015. x, 214 pp. £9.99 (pocket hardcover) ISBN 9780007557288.

Tolkien's *Smith of Wootton Major* (initially titled "The Great Cake") was written between September 1964 and February 1965, read publicly by its author in October 1966, and published as a small book in November 1967, with illustrations by Pauline Baynes. It began as an inpromptu example of a fairy-story in an abandoned preface to a planned edition of George Macdonald's *The Golden Key*. Tolkien's manuscripts related to the composition and publication of the story are held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition, edited by Verlyn Flieger and utilizing the Bodleian Tolkien manuscripts, was first published in Great Britain in 2005. Ten years on there comes a newly formatted pocket edition (6 1/4 by 4 3/4 inches), slightly revised, and with some material new to this edition (mostly comprising illustrations by Pauline Baynes). Neither the 2005 or the 2015 edition has had distribution in the United States—scholars must order the British edition. The differences between the two editions are given a close comparison here, followed by an overdue and detailed description of some of the serious flaws of the original edition which, unfortunately, remain unaddressed in the new one.

The 2005 edition (8 3/4 by 5 3/4 inches) comprises eleven sections, 1) a one page Foreword by Flieger; 2) a facsimile reproduction of the 1967 first edition of Tolkien's story *Smith of Wootton Major*, including the original illustrations by Pauline Baynes; 3) an Afterword by Flieger, discussing the composition and reception after publication; 4) "Genesis of the story": Tolkien's Note to Clyde Kilby; 5) Tolkien's unfinished draft of an introduction to *The Golden Key* by George Macdonald, dating from late 1964, in which Tolkien began the *Smith* story as an example of a fairy-story; 6) Tolkien's notes on "The Great Cake" Time scheme and Characters; 7) Tolkien's notes "Suggestions for the ending of the story"; 8) a lengthy essay by Tolkien titled "Smith of Wootton Major"; 9) a fragmentary draft—Flieger calls it a "hybrid" draft—of an earlier version, written after the introduction was abandoned and leading towards the first finished typescript Draft A; 10) two pages, one holograph and one typed, with transcriptions of the "Lake of Tears" episode of the story; and 11) notes by Flieger to several of the previous sections.

The 2015 pocket format edition—which is unfortunately not differentiated on the copyright page from the 2005 edition—retains this basic structure, but adds a new image "Gallery" between the story proper (section 2) and Flieger's Afterword (section 3). The text of the story has been reset (section 2), and the illustrations by Pauline Baynes for the Gallery are the redrawn versions for *Smith of Wootton Major* as first appeared in *Poems and Stories* (1980), though there

they were printed in orange and black rather than the black and white in the 2015 pocket format. Additionally, Baynes's color wraparound cover for the 1975 edition of *Smith of Wootton Major* appears (in color) on the endpapers (and slightly differently on the dust-wrapper of the pocket edition). But the smallness of this pocket format is a poor design choice—deleterious to the quality of reproduction of Baynes's illustrations, and to the readability and use for scholarly study (one practically has to break the spine to read the text in the gutter). Admittedly, the original 1967 book publication was in a format similar to the pocket edition, but a larger and more attractive format was used for many years, beginning with the second edition of 1975, and continuing through the original extended edition of 2005.

One other large concern, however, is Flieger's ordering of the materials, which seems arbitrary. The sections are not chronological, and they do not represent the breadth of the associated manuscript materials in the Tolkien papers in the Bodleian Library. For example: section 4 publishes only a part of Tolkien's own description of the associated manuscript materials, made circa early 1968, when Clyde Kilby had inquired about purchasing the *Smith of Wootton Major* papers for the Wade Center at Wheaton College. The Bodleian also holds Tolkien's draft of the introductory remarks he made before he read the story publicly at Blackfriars in Oxford on 26 October 1966, the year before it was published. Flieger chose not to include it, and she barely mentions any of the correspondence with the various people with whom Tolkien shared (by mail, and before publication) his new story, including his cousin Marjorie Incledon, his correspondent Eileen Elgar, and the Oxford newspaperman John Ezard. These materials provide a larger context to Tolkien's concerns about the work, which is the only fictional narrative that he completed and published himself after *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) and before his death in 1973. Indeed, the extended edition gives the impression that Flieger has cherry-picked from the archive, and put these items together in a random order. The result is unsatisfying, especially if you have seen the materials in the Bodleian from which it is derived.

I was first alerted to the more serious problems in the 2005 edition by remarks published by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond in their *Reader's Guide* (2006), the second volume of their *J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*. In the entry for *Smith of Wootton Major* (pp. 942-950), they note of Flieger's edition that: "On p. 75 of the text the initial version of the story is said to break off only a few lines into the tale; in fact, it continues on the typescript pages reproduced and transcribed on pp. 108-13 of the 2005 edition" (p. 944). What this means is that Flieger has mis-ordered the pages of Tolkien's draft of the introduction to *The Golden Key* (section 5), and of Flieger's "hybrid draft" (section 9). The problems are slightly more extensive than Scull and Hammond suggest, but they are essentially correct.

Flieger has not only mis-ordered some pages, but she has left out one completely. This can be said with certainty because the pages were typed on both sides, and the bleed-through text, as well as the numbering of the pages in the upper right-hand corner, confirm the proper ordering. Tolkien's papers relating to *Smith of Wootton Major* were not catalogued in the best order in the first place (the working drafts are mostly in Tolkien MS. 9, but some stray pages are at the end of Tolkien MS. 6; the typescripts and proofs are in Tolkien MS. 10 through 13), but it is apparent that Flieger did not sequence the pages properly (and the copyright page acknowledgement of the specific Bodleian manuscript pages reproduced in this edition has errors).

Here is how the pages of Tolkien's draft introduction to *The Golden Key* (section 5) should be presented as derived from the Bodleian sources:

Tolkien MS 9 folio 11 recto [numbered 1 in upper right-hand corner]
begins "DON'T READ THIS!" (p. 71 line 1; 2015 p. 89 line 1)
ends: "first what you" (p. 72 line 5; 2015 p. 90 line 21)

Tolkien MS 9 folio 11 verso [numbered 2 in upper right-hand corner]
begins: "could for yourselves" (p. 72 line 5; 2015 p. 90 line 21)
ends: "countries (even counties)" (p. 72 line 31; 2015 p. 92 line 5)

Tolkien MS 9 folio 12 recto [numbered 3 in upper right-hand corner]
begins "they are" (p. 72 line 31; 2015 p. 92 line 6)
ends: "it may also be" (p. 73 line 21; 2015 p. 93 line 16)

Tolkien MS 9 folio 12 verso [numbered 4 in upper right-hand corner]
begins: "misleading." (p. 73 line 21; 2015 p. 93 line 16)
ends: "already know it." (p. 74 line 11; 2015 p. 95 line 3)

Tolkien MS 6 folio 99 recto [numbered 5 in upper right-hand corner]
begins: "The truth is" (p. 74 line 12; 2015 p. 95 line 4)
ends: "with sugar-icing" (p. 75 line 4; 2015 p. 96 line 16-17)

Flieger says "here the text breaks off" (p. 75; 2015: p.96), but this is not correct. The verso of Tolkien MS 6 folio 99 [numbered 6 in upper right-hand corner] continues the text. Flieger prints this page as part of her "hybrid" text in facsimile on page 108 (2015: p. 152) and in transcription on page 109 (2015: p. 153). (The bleed-through seen in the facsimile on page 108 corresponds exactly with the text on the recto.)

Flieger's subsequent "hybrid" text (pp. 110-113; 2015: pp. 154-157) actually contains the rest of *The Golden Key* introduction. These consist of Tolkien MS. 9

page 13 recto and verso [numbered 7 and 8 in upper right-hand corner]. And at the end of this, Fleiger writes: “Here the typescript. [sic] breaks off in mid-page. The story continues in a careful manuscript hand on small, lined notebook or writing-pad paper, hand-marked in the upper right-hand corner ‘a’ through ‘h’ ” (p. 113: 2015: p. 157). Where this typescript page breaks off is actually where *The Golden Key* introduction ends. The hand-written pages ‘a’ through ‘h’ do not belong here, as will be detailed below.

Thus, the full of Tolkien’s draft introduction to *The Golden Key* (eight consecutive pages in typescript) runs in the 2005 edition from pages 71-75, followed by pages 108-113. In the 2015 edition, the pages are 89-96, 152-157. It is interesting to note that in this earliest version of the story the special token put in the great cake is a magic ring, not (as it soon became) a star.

If we turn now to Fleiger’s “hybrid” text, what remains are pages 102, 104, and 106 (2015: 146, 148, 150), transcribed, respectively, on pages 103, 105 and 107 (2015: 147, 149, 151), and the hand-written pages ‘a’ through ‘h’. The facsimiles on pages 102 and 104 are the recto and verso of the same leaf, clearly a new opening for the story made sometime after the abandonment of the introduction to *The Golden Key*. The facsimile reproduced on page 106 is the recto of Tolkien MS. 6 folio 98. Fleiger says that subsequent pages are missing, but she has clearly lost track of the verso of folio 98, which remains unpublished; it carries the story through the discovery in the Cook’s black box of a small star—not a magic ring, thus clearly part of a revised version. This text unfortunately does not lead directly into the handwritten pages ‘a’ through ‘h’, which also use the star as a plot point. It may not be possible to sort out the pages of the first separation of the story from its initial development in the introduction—certainly not without further and extensive study of the papers themselves. The relevant pages all precede the three complete typescripts, which Fleiger delineates (confusingly) as “Drafts” A, B, and C (pp. 62-63; 2015: pp. 73-74), the first two titled “The Great Cake,” the third having the final title *Smith of Wootton Major* typed on a separate title sheet. The only material from Drafts A through C that Fleiger has included in the extended edition is to be found in section 10, the draft and transcription of the “Lake of Tears” episode, which derive from Draft B.

Scull and Hammond also note that Fleiger published the greater part of the essay “Smith of Wootton Major” (section 8), “except for a few final pages of wandering philosophical comments unrelated to the story” (p. 947). This is not precisely correct. Fleiger published ten and three-quarters pages of a fourteen page typescript. The omitted ending (three and one quarter pages) directly continues Tolkien’s argument; he obviously intended these pages to be part of his essay, though they do not discuss Tolkien’s story. That these pages were simply omitted from the extended edition (without any notice given to the reader of their existence or absence) is an editorial decision that can only be regretted. Also, it is

useful to note that a passage in the unpublished final pages of the essay refers to an advertisement in *The Times* published on 22 February 1965, which helps to date the essay as probably written very soon after the story itself was finished.

These serious flaws in *Smith of Wootton Major: Extended Edition* make for a disappointing and misleading edition which is of limited usefulness to Tolkien scholars. One hopes for a corrected and revamped edition in the future, one which better and more fully presents the archival materials.

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