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Abstract

A brief history of Tolkien-related fanzines and other fan frivolities. A useful list of early fan-produced materials.

Additional Keywords

Fanzines; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Fans

SCIENCE FICTION FANS SALUTE TOLKIEN
by Edmund R. Meškys

Science Fiction fans the world over wish to join the chorus of greetings on the occasion of Dr. Tolkien's 75th birthday. Whether you consider SF a division of Fantasy or Fantasy a division of SF, the fact remains that they are related, and an interest in one usually implies an interest in the other. SF fans have shown keen interest in the LotR since its initial publication a decade ago. For the last ten years hardly an SF convention has passed which didn't have several Gandalfs, orcs, and hobbits at the masquerade, and many fan magazines have published articles about the books.

My first inkling of the wonderful world of Middle-earth came at the 1959 annual Philadelphia SF Conference when L. Sprague de Camp mentioned it in passing in a speech. My only regret is that I didn't follow up this lead until a later date.

During the 18th World Science Fiction Convention in Pittsburgh in 1960 some 30 fans met to organize a special interest club based on Middle-earth similar to existing clubs devoted to Howard and Burroughs. After considerable talk that the choice might be presumptuous, they did select the name "Fellowship of the Ring". It was to be modeled after the Baker Street Irregulars in that tough admission requirements would be established, but this was never carried out. All the club ever did was to print up a membership card and put out four issues of a magazine, I Palantir. At this meeting someone reported hearing of several already existing clubs, including one at Harvard, but as far as I know no contact was ever made.

At about the same time, a Britisher, Peter Mansfield, started a Tolkien-oriented fanzine of his own. Eldritch Dreamquest, however, contained a lot of material about other fantasy such as Poul Anderson's Broken Sword and the works of Lord Dunsany. The last issue appeared about four years ago. The only other Tolkien fanzine of that period was Nazgûl's Bane, a one-sheet newsletter by a British member of the Fellowship, which appeared four times.

Other people published fanzines with Tolkien-based titles such as Ancalagon, but these had nothing to do with LotR. There were also numerous articles about Tolkien and LotR in such diverse fanzines as Cry of the Nameless, Psi-Phi, Speleobem, Andúril, Flabbergasting, Bastion, and Lighthouse, and Marion Zimmer Bradley published a 25-page booklet, "Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship." In 1957 Science Fiction Parade had carried a debate as to whether LotR was SF or fantasy.

Since it had been several years since the last Tolkien-centered fanzine had appeared I decided to convert my Niekas into one, starting with the 9th issue in 1964. A short time later Greg Shaw started Entmoot and printed some LotR material in his Feemwlort. Even though only about a third of the material in Niekas is about LotR (about a sixth is about SF and the remaining half is on other fantasy), I have probably published more on Tolkien than anyone else, simply because Niekas is so large (85 pp. average) and long-lived (#18 is in preparation).

In summary, the current Tolkien-oriented fanzines are:

Entmoot: published very irregularly by Greg Shaw (2707B McAllister, San Francisco, Calif. 94118) for 50¢ a copy. This magazine specializes in discussion of the languages and alphabets of Middle-earth, and settings for the songs.

I Palantir: published very irregularly by Bruce Pelz (Box 100, 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, Calif. 90025) for 25¢ a copy. This one specializes in humor based on LotR and reprints of Tolkien articles

from non-specialized fanzines.

Niekas: published 3 or 4 times a year by Ed Meškys (Belknap College, Center Harbor, N.H. 03226) for 50¢, 5 for \$2. It is running serially Bob Foster's "Glossary of Middle-earth", giving preces of the available information on each named person, place, or thing and the etymology of the name. It has printed many articles about LotR, including "Coinage of Gondor", and Jack Gaughan on how he did the Ace covers. No back issues of I Palantir are available, but a few copies of the other two are, at inflated prices.

Science Fiction Conventions offer an opportunity to meet other Tolkien enthusiasts, though they generally do not have program items specifically related to LotR. Some twenty conferences and conventions are held each year, about half in the USA. The three largest are: THE WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION. #25 will be in New York City, at the Statler Hilton hotel, September 1-4, 1967. Advance membership, which brings progress reports, is \$3 from P.O. Box 367, New York, N.Y. 10028. THE WEST COAST SCIENCE FANTASY CONFERENCE (Westercon). #20 will be in Los Angeles over the July 4 weekend. Advance membership, again with progress reports, is \$2 from Ted Johnstone, Apt. 4, 619 South Hobart St, Los Angeles, Calif. 90005. THE LUNACON. #10 will be at the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, April 29-30, 1967. Information from Frank Dietz, 1750 Walton Ave., Bronx, N.Y. 10453. OTHERS. For information on other conferences and meetings refer to a fan news magazine such as Degleri, published weekly by Andy Porter, 24 East 82 St., New York, N.Y. 10028, at 3 for 25¢, 15 for \$1.

SF fans have done many other things. Each convention art show has had paintings based on Tolkien's works, and much Ring art has been published in the fan magazines. Some of the best art has been by George Barr, Jack Gaughan, Eddie Jones, Diana Paxson, Dian Pelz, and Bjo Trimble. The fans are in general unhappy with the covers of both the paperback editions of LotR, and Diana Paxson has drawn a set of 4 dust jackets which will fit either. Dave McDaniel, author of several "Man from UNCLE" novelizations, had done a radio dramatization of The Hobbit while a student at San Diego State College, and I believe a tape still exists.

Science fiction fandom will continue to pay homage to Dr. Tolkien with various projects, and join all others in eagerly awaiting the publication of The Silmarillion and Akallabêth.

Happy birthday, Dr. Tolkien!

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For California TSA members: would anyone be interested in producing a Samwise for Governor button to complement the Gandalf for President?

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In Ottawa (where the Ace edition is strictly illegal), the following slogan was found written in what appeared to be bat blood on a wall: "Smeagol Lives! Buy Ace Books!"