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An Introduction to Worlds of Fantasy

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moral relativism "mirrored" in the myth of a crumbling civilization, a civilization destroyed by the same sort of secularism which characterizes today's troubled and restless society.

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**AN INTRODUCTION TO WORLDS OF FANTASY**

by Bernie Zuber

Last October the first issue of a magazine entitled Worlds of Fantasy appeared on the newsstands. Galaxy Publishing intended it for readers of fantasy in general, but I thought it would be of interest to readers of Mythlore, and Tolkien fans in particular because of a report on Tolkien by Lester del Rey, the editor. Tolkien is also mentioned in two other instances in this issue.

To begin with, there is a cover by Jack Gaughn, who also created all of the interior illustrations. In the center of a green and yellow background stands a green monster of reptilian nature with large pointed ears, frog-like orange eyes, sharp scales on its back and talons on its hands. It is cradling a normal human baby and feeding it milk from a bottle while looking suspiciously toward the reader.

The green motif of the cover is even repeated inside the magazine because all the pages are a pale green tone. This, we have been told by other publishers, is supposed to be easier on the eyes. I'm not sure about that, but I do feel that sharper printing would be easier on my eyes! As with other Galaxy publications (International Science Fiction for instance) the printing varies between somewhat smudgy black and fading grey. This can be unfortunate, especially in the case of the illustrations. I do hope that in the near future Galaxy will be able to conquer its printing problems.

In addition to the feature articles by del Rey there are nine all new fiction pieces. There is some confusion in my mind as to what constitutes a short story, novelette or novel according to the number of words. I was further confused while reading the stories listed on the page of contents as novels. I felt they were too short for novels. Then when I turned to the first pages of these stories, I saw them listed as novelettes (probably more accurate). Obviously there was some confusion in the layout of the issue.

Irregardless of my quibbling criticisms of technical details, I do mean to encourage fantasy fans to read this magazine. Not being an experienced reviewer I can only give you some brief impressions of the stories and my reaction to them.

"The Mirror of Wizardry" by John Jakes is a story of Brak, the barbarian. I believe there have been other Brak stories before. It is a sword and sorcery story, straightforward but with some rather interesting and colorful details. For instance: living
stones with rock crystal fangs! I had hesitated to read it but once I got into it I enjoyed it.

However, I much preferred "However" by Robert Lory. Another sword and sorcery yarn but with a good sense of humor. It reminded me of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gary Mouser series. I particularly enjoyed the people of Grath with their kooky and useless, but rigidly enforced, occupations. Hamper, the official However of Balik, is an amusing hero.

As Is by Robert Silverberg was well written and also cleverly amusing. This has been my year for discovering Silverberg. First I read "Nightwings" and "Perris Way" in Galaxy. Those two connected stories were very colorful and well plotted. Then I read the novel Thorns, which had been nominated for a Hugo, but didn't care as much for the subject matter. As Is I found to be quite different from those other Silverberg stories and thoroughly enjoyable in its own way. It is about a man who buys a foreign car for a cross-country trip only to find that the trunk, which he thought couldn't open, apparently does open under the most unusual circumstances.

A blurb on the cover mentions L. Sprague de Camp and Robert E. Howard, the creator of Conan. What you will find inside are "Conan and the Centotaph" by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter and - surprise! - a non-Conan story by Howard entitled "Delenda Est". Of the two, I preferred
the Conan adventure. The story by Howard is one never published before which deals with the ghost of Hannibal.


Finally, I come to the real excuse for this report. The feature articles that mention Tolkien. The first, "Fads and Fantasies" is actually Lester del Rey's editorial. He begins by explaining the origins of fantasy stories and relating them to the current interest in astrology and flying saucers. He believes these present fads are not any more imaginative that primitive fantasy. What is imaginative is fantasy based on a deliberate displacement from reality. Tolkien's stories are almost complete displacement into another time, another universe. Yet Tolkien's fantasy is well anchored in the type of folklore we half remember. Uttermost West for instance is akin to Arthur's Avalon. The editor concludes by stating that fantasy of displacement is readily accepted by those of flexible mind, a desirable trait, and that escape "into" another reality is not escape "from" reality. Fantasy can be most enjoyed when once can accept a new reality without losing touch with the old.

"A Report on J.R.R. Tolkien," also by del Rey, is a paean of praise for the creator of Middle Earth. The editor claims that Tolkien casts spells in real life and proceeds to list his accomplishments. He succeeded in convincing his publishers that faity stories, which had declined in popularity, could still sell well. By 1963 there were thirteen hardcover printings of The Lord of The Rings due to practically nothing more than word-of-mouth publicity. Then the Ace paperbacks controversy arose, Tolkien was able to convince his readers to buy only the Ballantine editions approved by him. This was an unprecedented feat. The Lord of The Rings received serious reviews rarely accorded to paperbacks. Tolkien's success spurred a veritable renaissance of fantasy books, a fact del Rey is evidently grateful for. I would like to quote a paragraph from this report which should be of interest to readers of Mythlore.

The Tale of Wonder passed from the literary scene about three hundred years ago. Its demise was noted by many and seemingly mourned by few. Yet today, as the result of one man's work, it is back with us. And it is causing excitement in the most serious academic circles, under the new name of mythopetetic literature.

The editor concludes with the latest information on the Silmarillion and the possibility of The Akalabeth and notes that, even though the publishers despair of ever seeing the final manuscripts, nothing should be considered impossible from
a man who can work miracles.

So much for the literary contents of Worlds of Fantasy but there is yet another item which I saved for last because it is such a clever gem. I refer to the one-page advertisement from Ballantine Books which, of all things, pushes science fiction books in a fantasy magazine! It is a primer on how to recruit new fans, and I quote: "Enquire if they have read Tolkien (never mind that he's not s.f.: Tolkien is a magic word, a touchstone; just about anybody knows he wrote a book. And first we have to establish that the prospect is literate)." This must be the most amusing and enthusiastic piece of literary advertising I have ever read. Even if the rest of the magazine had not been worthwhile (but it is!) I would say this ad is worth the sixty cents. Someone as Ballantine's publicity department knows how to sell intelligently. Congratulations, whoever you are!

As of this writing, Worlds of Fantasy, volume one, number one, is still on the newsstands here in L.A. Go buy it! I haven't seen number two yet. Let us hope there will be one.

In addition to the annual Elvish New Year and Bilbo and Frodo's Birthday Party events, tentative plans have been made to hold a Narnia Conference in 1969. The Conference would accept papers to be read on criticism of the seven Narnia books by C.S. Lewis. Further details will be announced at a later date.

Mailing procedure: after your name and address the code indicates whether you are a Subscriber - S( ) - with the number in the parenthesis indicating the number of issue left on your subscription; Contributors - C - you have written an article letter that was printed, or have given art work that was used; Free Sample - FS - this is a sample and we hope you will subscribe and/or contribute.

The Ork pictured on page 8 is an adaptation of a John E. Neill illustration in The Scarecrow of Oz. The Little Green Dinosaur who exclaims "Orc!" is a creation of Johnny Chambers.

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