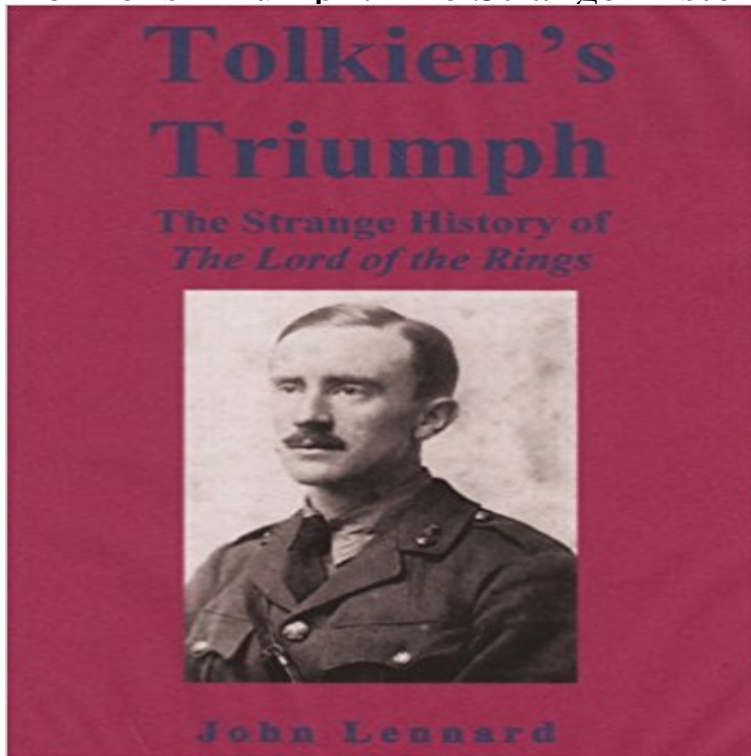


Tolkiens Triumph: The Strange History of The Lord of the Rings



How on Middle-earth did a fantasy book that is more than 1,000 pages long even in small print, written in high style, and has six appendices as well as passages of untranslated poetry in imaginary languages, come to sell on average 8,500 copies per day for nearly 50 years? Even before the notorious Ace pirate editions of 1965 sales were exceptional, and since then they've been astounding -- so how did Tolkien do it? In four sections this book explores Tolkien's improbable triumph, examining how *The Lord of the Rings* fits into the wider legendarium, the carefully shaped ending (which the films greatly simplify), the Tolkien cult and responses by individual readers, and the growth of Tolkien fanfiction. His professional scholarship, experiences of 1914-18 and 1939-45, and devout Roman Catholicism were vital to his fiction, and the literary appeal of the books complexity and truth to sadness are explored. But so too are the books relations with role-playing gaming and associations with political protest, from the Civil Rights and anti-war campaigns of the 1960s to later anti-racist and ecological dissent, with the irrational contempt for Tolkien shown by some critics and the hugely creative responses he continues to provoke and inspire. Those who only know Tolkien's masterpiece casually or through the films will find many new vistas opening up, and those who are already knowledgeable fans will find much to chew on and to surprise. John Lennard is an independent scholar who has taught at Oxford and Cambridge as well as for Notre Dame and other universities, and has a long history of publishing on genre fiction as well as works deemed worthy by the academies. He first read *The Lord of the Rings* more than 40 years ago and has been thinking about and reading around it ever since.

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