

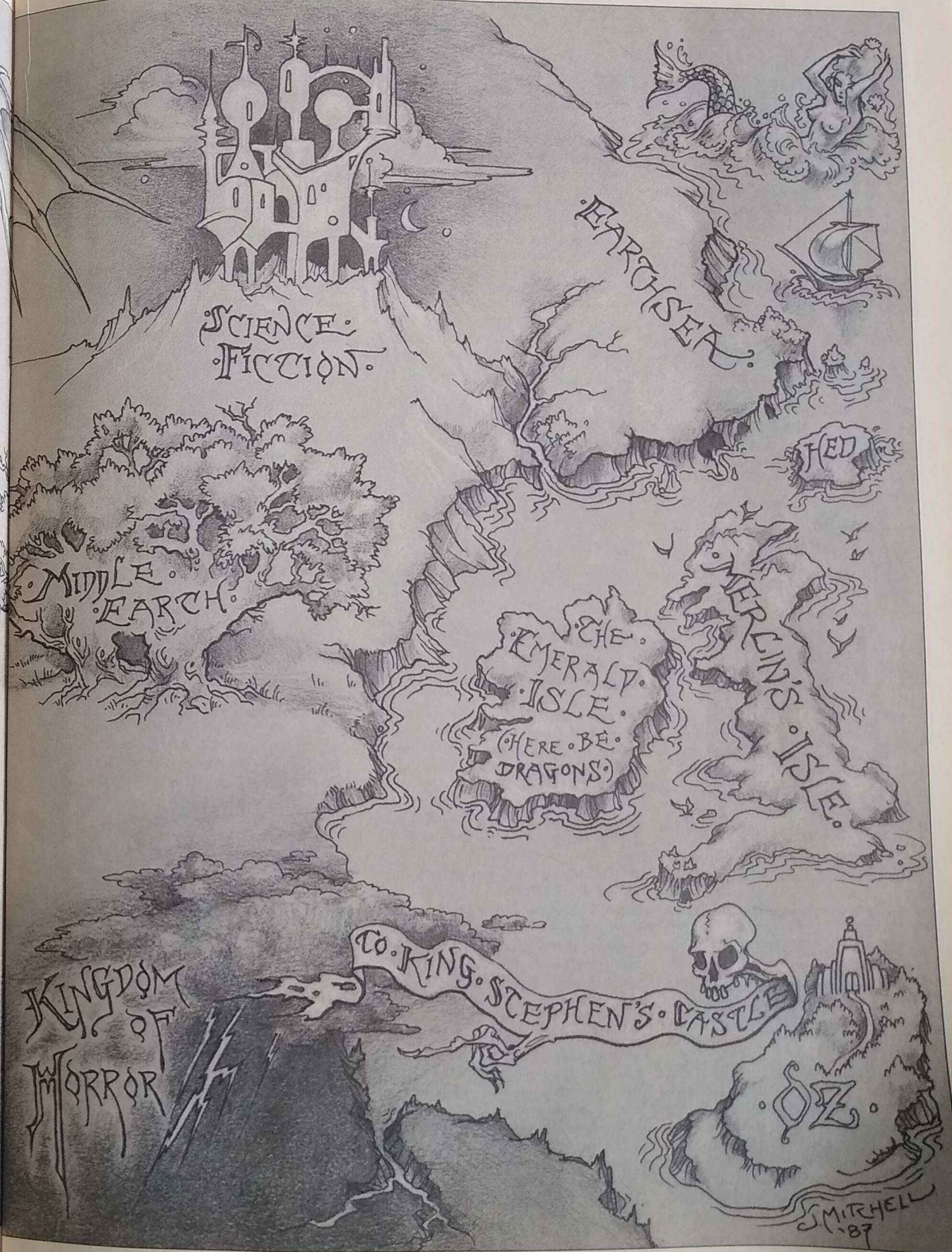
*An Introduction to the Many Realms of Fantasy
by One of Faerie's Brightest Bards*

GENE WOLFE

ILLUSTRATION BY JUDITH MITCHELL

COME IN, AND WIPE THOSE BOOTS. You needn't tell me what brings you; that sword and the feather proclaim you. The vast Empire of Fantasy extends eastward of my borderland and house, as you know. The Kingdom of Horror burns and molders to the south, rotten and rich. North glitters the icy Foundation of Science Fiction. I know them all, and for a fee—

Thank you. Learn then that Fantasy's eldest of all lands, the only country older than the Flood. There Gilgamesh clasped hands with Enkidu while men talked of walling Babylon; there blind Homer sang to the ages—none of which is of consequence to you, save you claim a human descent. By the laws of your land, Fantasy should lie in ruins. Doubtless you think it does, but nothing could be further from the truth. Why, two hundred sixty-three new-minted fantasy novels we saw just last year, half again what was there the year before. Makes



ELFLAND

a man's mouth water.

Incredible? Aye, for it bears the stamp of the place that bore it. Think it could be otherwise? Why some say Gilgamesh himself's come back, in stories by Robert of the Silver Mountain, Bob Silverberg he'd be in your speech. Gilgamesh, think on it! Not that I credit it, not I! Credulity can stretch but so far, eh? Yet that such a tale can be told proves something.

Facts? Indeed you must have 'em if you're to make your mark there. Geography first. I said Fantasy borders Horror: better I'd said it laps it, for there's much in King Stephen's realm Fantasy claims as its own, and contrariwise. Beg pardon for that last, a silly word I picked up from the Tweedle boys; it clings like a tick. But I was brought up in Fantasy, and I fear it shows.

Their laws differ, you understand. Fantasy's subjects are subjects—whatever's disbelieved: dragons and ghosts, unicorns, barbarian swordsmen, Proteus and all the other shape-shifters, giants and dwarves, princesses, fauns, ogres, trolls, and the lost lands. Old Chesterton¹ calls the whole Elfland, after the part he likes best. Some say Faerie. Most readers don't care, long as there's wonder and wisdom.

Judy-Lynn?² Did you know her? Odin, how we miss her! Yes, she was a dwarf, the greatest of all, an editor at Del Rey and a citizen of Fantasy by birth. She reclaimed the Land of Oz, not just the Baum stories but the Thompson stories too. You thought there was but one? How quaint. You've much to learn.

Horror lacks all native subjects, as I was telling you—citizenship's conferred by spirit. What inspires horror is Horror's, just as one who truly loves Big Brother's of Oceania. Orwell's book³ lies in Horror—some call it Dark Fantasy—and Science Fiction, and many a current one has a foot in Fantasy and a hand out to Horror; *Down Town's*⁴ a fine example.

Here's what Tom o' Tor—Tom Broken Collar⁵—told me: Fantasy is a pagan empire; Horror's a Christian kingdom, embracing Hell. There's wisdom in that, but exceptions by the score. What of the host bearing the banner of Narnia,⁶ I ask you? Christian to the core, with the lion-likeness of Aslan nailed to its cross. What of Tolkien-Lifegiver? Fantasy languished till he brought *The Hobbit*, dwarves

and elves, all three Speaking Peoples linked with humans in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Elves? Aye, Fantasy's got elves still, though not the tall fair-folk of Lorien. Shrink an inch a year, smaller and sillier all the time—bleached smurfs, I call 'em. Think they'd slap "In the Manner of J.R.R. Tolkien" on those books? Well, friend, they do. He's spinning like a windmill in the grave because of it, you may be sure. One day he'll blow 'em all to Horror—beg pardon, Hell. *Weird Tales*⁷ is coming back. That's a sign, mark my words. Yes, the old pulp.

But as I was saying, the faiths are

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overmixed for me. I'd say rather that Fantasy's the country of the gods—with God over them all—where the cherubim shoot arrows with Eros. In Horror, Great Cthulhu slays Satan, and is slain. How's that?

Good Queen Beth⁸ divides Fantasy in three. It's worth your listening, for no one knows the place better:

"The first is Horror. It has become a major sector of the market (labels, all is labels) differentiated from other sorts of fantasy even though literary values overlap. When Stephen King writes a science fiction novel, it is still marketed as horror, bought by readers as horror, and read with pleasure by people who 'don't read sf.'

"Second, 'genre fantasy', epitomized by good old Del Rey and Ace high fantasy and sword-and-scenery. I think of these as highly romanticized wish fulfillment, characterized by the hero or heroine's ass being saved by intervention of some superior power—usually the subtext of these books is about abandoning one's own desires in service to another, thus gaining virtue.

"Last, a small group of highly literate

and (usually) very inventive and quirky books having in common only their elements of the fantastic and resistance to being pigeonholed. Examples include Crowley's *Little, Big*; any number of old Thorne Smith novels, Pat Murphy's *The Falling Woman*, Tom Disch, Italo Calvino, Borges, Fuentes . . . you can make your own list.

"Now, the problem is that a clear distinction has been drawn between Horror and everything else, but no marketing distinction is being made between genre fantasy and what I continue to call *temporary* fantasy (even though that's a bad label, misleading in many ways). There really isn't any way the reader can tell what's going to happen between the covers. . . ."

That last's pretty much a mixed bag, isn't it? Trouble is, every writer's lord of his own lands, and some have two or three. Or lady of her own, for there's many a lass: Judith Tarr, Sherri Tepper, Barbara Hambly, and Esther Friesner, to name a few. Real maenads every one, divinely mad on any fine evening. Marion Zimmer Bradley's their queen, and Andre Norton's the queen mother. Yes, a lady, Alice Norton to you.

Jane Yolen's everybody's war-chief; and I'd say she's Hans Christian Andersen, too, back from Death to save his people.⁹

Over on Merlin's Isle, there's Tanith Lee and Diana Wynne Jones. Jo the Arrow-Maker¹⁰ says Fantasy's been looking up there since Corgi published David Eddings's *The Belgariad* with smashing covers, though three-quarters of what they read still comes from our Western Land. Century Hutchinson's committed to hardcovers, with Ramsey Campbell, John Maxim, and Chris Rowley. Macdonald/Futura is launching a hardcover fleet this August. W.H. Allen/Star seems to be concentrating on splatter—terribly violent horror, don't you know; Collins paid Clive Barker half a million pounds for an unwritten book. Gollancz, which has published in hardcover forever, will be publishing C.J. Cherryh, the Duchess of Oklahoma, hard and soft.

Which reminds me that there's The Women's Press over there; most of the women are Yanks like Suzette Hadin Elgin and Joanna Russ. Then too, Jo's own Headline House is committed to Fantasy. That's why the clever chaps hired Jo.

Have I mentioned Anne McCaffrey, across the sea in County Wicklow? She writes Science Fiction, though I've seen her folk riding

dragons; her books sell by the case, whichever.

Confused? 'Course you are. Just pull off that hat if you pass *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and you'll be all right. Now, here's a guide-book for you, *The Language of the Night*. Mind you, fold back the maps.

All women? Not on your luck! Didn't I tell you I grew up in Fantasy? Jack Vance brought me, with *The Dying Earth*. He's still rolling on *The Green Pearl*. Clark Ashton Smith brought him, I'd imagine, and Mike Moorcock and Steve Donaldson have brought thousands more.

What's going on in Fantasy now? Say, you'd make old Bottom laugh! You mean you haven't noticed Fantasy's invading your own place? It is. You might write your kin; tell 'em to put food away. Have a look at *The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars*; *The Mask of the Sun*; and *New York by Knight*.¹¹ Every one's laid right in your own world and your own time.

Who reads it? Who don't! I asked Robert of the Vineyard Mountain¹²—oh, you understand that, do you? See how wise you're becoming? I asked Bob and many another book-seller, and that's all the answer I could get. Horror's mostly ladies and Science Fiction's mostly men. But Fantasy gets them all, from the teenager you think might mug you to the retired school-teacher.

Why's it going so strong since Tolkien? Maybe that's the wrong question. It's old, I told you—old as writing, anyhow, and maybe old as talk. When you see a lad come out of the mall with a Jack Chalker book, you probably don't consider that he's going to read the sort of thing Caracalla¹³ relaxed with in the bath, but he is. Next time you get to Walden's, ask yourself what's there that would make Brian Boru and Richard the Lion-Hearted think of home. Perhaps the question's not why Fantasy's doing well now, but why it wasn't doing better before, when it's done so well since the Stone Age.

My theory's that Tolkien woke something, poking around in the old sagas. I see you don't think much of it; maybe you'll think again when you been here longer. Preparation's what some say, for there's many coming home to Earth that's never really been here. No, it wasn't a writer told me; I've been looking into *Scientific American*, about gene-splicing and such-like.

But the best explanation might be what Algis Budrys—John Sentry he is—said about stories of the other sort

in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*: "A compulsive denial of the supernatural so staunch as to be an affirmation of its power; a testament to the terror loaded into any overt thought that apparent reality may be transient, and that the correct rules of behavior may have become ineffectual at any moment. That is, descriptive fiction may largely be an insane art, serving to lend a meretricious permanence to a self-circumscribed universe." He's editor of the *Writers of the Future*¹⁴ series; makes you think, don't it?

You'll want to read the papers. *Locus*¹⁵ and *Science Fiction Chronicle*¹⁶ are both good. *Fantasy Review*'s¹⁷ col-



lege professors mostly, but some like it. *Avalon to Camelot*¹⁸ sticks with Malory, T.H. White, and Mary Stewart, by and large—the Round Table Circle; but it's fine for them. The British Fantasy Society's¹⁹ worth joining just to get the publications.

Good-bye, and a safe passage to the Grey Havens. You can point your feather with that sword, if you've no knife. But 'ware the knives of others! For the manner, study the masters; for the matter touch none but your own. Blood blacked with smoke's a good ink, but the blood must be yours, mind. Work hard, and recollect you'll be measured against Homer. ■

1. G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), English journalist and critic, the author of numerous fantasies, including *The Man Who Was Thursday*, *The Return of Don Quixote*, *The Ball and the Cross*, and *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*.

2. Judy-Lynn del Rey (1943-1986), Vice-President and Publisher of Del Rey Books [a division of Ballantine

Books/ Random House], publisher of J.R.R. Tolkien, Stephen R. Donaldson, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Terry Brooks, and many other well-known writers.

3. 1984, of course.

4. *Down Town*, by Viido Polikarpus and Tappan King (Arbor House, 1985, Tor Books 1987). It is a young adult fantasy about a magic world beneath New York City.

5. Tom Doherty, publisher of Tor Books.

6. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis's classic children's fantasy.

7. The legendary pulp magazine of eerie fiction, currently in its fourth incarnation as a limited edition magazine from Terminus Publishing Co., P.O. Box 13418, Philadelphia PA 19101. U.S. Subscriptions \$18 a year.

8. Beth Meacham, Editor-in-Chief of Tor Books.

9. A world-renowned expert on the art of storytelling, Jane Yolen is the author of over a hundred books—most fantasy—and has recently been re-elected President of the Science Fiction Writers of America.

10. Jo Fletcher, co-founder of the British Fantasy Society.

11. *The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars*, by Steven Brust (Ace). *The Mask of the Sun*, by Fred Saberhagen (Tor). *New York By Knight*, by Esther M. Friesner (NAL).

12. Robert Weinberg, Book Dealer, P.O. Box 423, Oak Forest IL 60452.

13. The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius; his name was originally Septimius Bassianus Caracalla.

14. Volume III, edited by Algis Budrys (Bridge Publications), is currently available in most bookstores.

15. Locus Publications, P.O. Box 13305, Oakland CA 94661. U.S. subscriptions \$24 a year via second class mail.

16. *Science Fiction Chronicle*, Box 4175, New York NY 10163. U.S. subscriptions \$23.40 a year.

17. *Fantasy Review*, P.O. Box 3000, Denville NJ 07834. U.S. subscriptions \$27.95 a year.

18. *Avalon to Camelot Inc.*, P.O. Box 6236, Evanston IL 60204. U.S. subscriptions \$20 a year.

19. The British Fantasy Society, 15 Stanley Rd., Marden, Surrey, SM4 5DE, England. U.S. memberships \$18 a year.