



## Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings

By *Stefan Ekman*

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**Winner of the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies (2016)**

Fantasy worlds are never mere backdrops. They are an integral part of the work, and refuse to remain separate from other elements. These worlds combine landscape with narrative logic by incorporating alternative rules about cause and effect or physical transformation. They become actors in the drama—interacting with the characters, offering assistance or hindrance, and making ethical demands. In *Here Be Dragons*, Stefan Ekman provides a wide-ranging survey of the ubiquitous fantasy map as the point of departure for an in-depth discussion of what such maps can tell us about what is important in the fictional worlds and the stories that take place there. With particular focus on J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ekman shows how fantasy settings deserve serious attention from both readers and critics. Includes insightful readings of works by Steven Brust, Garth Nix, Robert Holdstock, Terry Pratchett, Charles de Lint, China Miéville, Patricia McKillip, Tim Powers, Lisa Goldstein, Steven R. Donaldson, Robert Jordan, and Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“Fantastic and surreal landscapes are one of the unique charms of the fantasy genre. Yet, scholarship on fantasy has tended to focus on character and lot over setting. In *Here Be Dragons*, Stefan Ekman aims to fill this lacuna of fantasy scholarship by providing a critical vocabulary that explores the unique role maps and settings play. ... *Here Be Dragons* is a valuable contribution to fantasy studies.”—Jason M. Calabrese Baidenmann, *SFRA Review*

“*Here Be Dragons* ... provide[s] a starting point for future scholarship on the topic. It will be a useful grounding reference for scholars who intend to explore these themes in greater analytical depth.”—Stentor Danielson, *Historical Geography*

“This volume will be a welcome addition to libraries and personal collections, and the framework of topical study would make an excellent teaching tool and exemplar for students. This book is recommended not only for Ekman’s clear and precise writing style, but also for the polishing interweaving of primary and secondary sources so that each illuminates the other purposefully ... Ekman’s study has added much to the array of tools at critics’ disposal in the discussion of fantasy texts.”—Caitlin Herington, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*

#### Review

“This excellent and innovative work draws on theoretical ideas from inside and outside of fantasy scholarship, and combines an impressively broad survey of texts with thoughtful reading of key examples. Ekman convincingly shows how much of fantasy’s significance comes from its representation of settings.” (Brian Attebery)

“What do maps and mapping have to tell us about the construction of fantasy worlds? What is the role of landscape in the creation of the myth-scape of fantasy? *Here Be Dragons* considers the role of boundaries and ‘polders’ in constructing the dynamics of fantasy and asks how the mythological relations of humans to their world are shaped.” (Farah Mendlesohn, author of *Rhetorics of Fantasy*)

#### About the Author

STEFAN EKMAN is a freelance lecturer on fantasy, role-playing games, and manga, and serves as the head of the Fantasy Literature Division at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. He teaches in the Creative Writing Program at Lund University in Sweden.

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