

OF MAPS AND HOBBITS¹
A BRIEF SURVEY OF MAPS IN FANTASY LITERATURE

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Since pre-history human beings have as a pre-requisite of survival been compelled to explore the world around them. Consequently the parameters of the physical dimension of the world were constantly being expanded through history. This can be seen in the land based explorations of people like Marco Polo in the 14th century and the great sea voyages of exploration by people like Columbus, Cook, De Gama, Vespucci in the 15th and 16th centuries. Cousteau in the early part of this century opened up the undersea world to exploration with his invention of the aqualung. By the 1960's, a new era of exploration had begun; the exploration of space, perhaps the Final Frontier, led by both the American and Soviet space agencies. This is a continuing quest; to reach out beyond what is known; to break down the barriers of our current knowledge; but always to push onwards. One vital aspect of this reaching out and exploration has been the recording of the new knowledge gained. In terms of the exploration of new lands and uncharted vistas, this has meant some element of mapping being involved. It is not too surprising then that fantasy literature, concerned with exploring life and landscape and their interaction on imaginary worlds, has included this element of recording through maps. The inclusion of at least one map with the text in fantasy novels seems to be standard for the genre.

The purpose of this brief survey of maps in fantasy novels is three-fold. Firstly, it seeks to compare and contrast the maps in order to identify the common or unique features and to ascertain if all the maps follow a particular style. Secondly, it is an attempt to understand why the maps are included in the novels and to assess whether the style, or styles, of maps chosen meet this aim. Thirdly, the usefulness of the maps in the novels is assessed. In the survey carried out, eight fantasy novels were examined and eight maps were thus analysed. If more than one map occurred in any of the novels, the one chosen for the survey was selected in a random fashion.

I will now briefly describe the books themselves. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings represents the classic fantasy novel and is considered by many to be the best fantasy novel ever written. Le Guin's Earthsea Trilogy is also considered to be one of the greatest fantasy books

¹ Hobbits are small sentient creatures, the heroes of the trilogy "Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien.

ever written, not far behind Tolkien. McCaffrey's dragon books of which Dragonsinger: Harper of Pern is one part and Donaldson's Chronicles of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever of which Lord Foul's Bane is a part represent minor classics in the genre which are held in high esteem by the fantasy fandom. Vance, Harrison and Feist represent probably the best of the more recent work in the genre with Harrison's Eden series and Feist's Magician series destined for greatness. Chalker's work represents some originality in the genre and his Well of Souls series is probably not destined for classicdom. Thus the books examined in the survey represent a broad cross-section of the genre from the classics to the more normal offerings of the authors of fantasy literature.

To meet the first aim of the survey, to examine the maps in terms of stylistic content, there is a need to look at the maps from two perspectives. The first relates to the type of maps; whether they were topographic, only showing physical features, or political, showing only life form created features, or a combination of both of these. The second relates to the occurrence or non-occurrence of particular items which are accepted by cartographers as being an integral part of most maps. These are title, key, scale, north sign, frame, typological levels of letter differentiation and decorative features.

Six of the maps in the survey have been classified as location maps. These are maps which show a combination of both physical and lifeform features of the landscape. The remaining two maps have been classified as topographic maps in that they essentially show only the physical features of the landscape. These maps are those of Le Guin and Donaldson.

In terms of symbols used in the maps, some interesting results emerge. Coastline is the most common feature portrayed. It occurs in all eight maps in the survey yet it is symbolised in six different forms. The most common form used is that of a dark line. This occurs three times. The coastline is also portrayed in the form of a dark line with a lighter line outside it. It occurs also in the form of a light shaded line. As can be seen from this, there is some consensus on the manner in which the coastline is portrayed.

Rivers are the next most commonly occurring feature. In five out of six cases the symbol used is a light line. This indicates a level of conformity in choice of symbol; the only exception being Donaldson who uses two light shaded lines to portray this feature. Two other

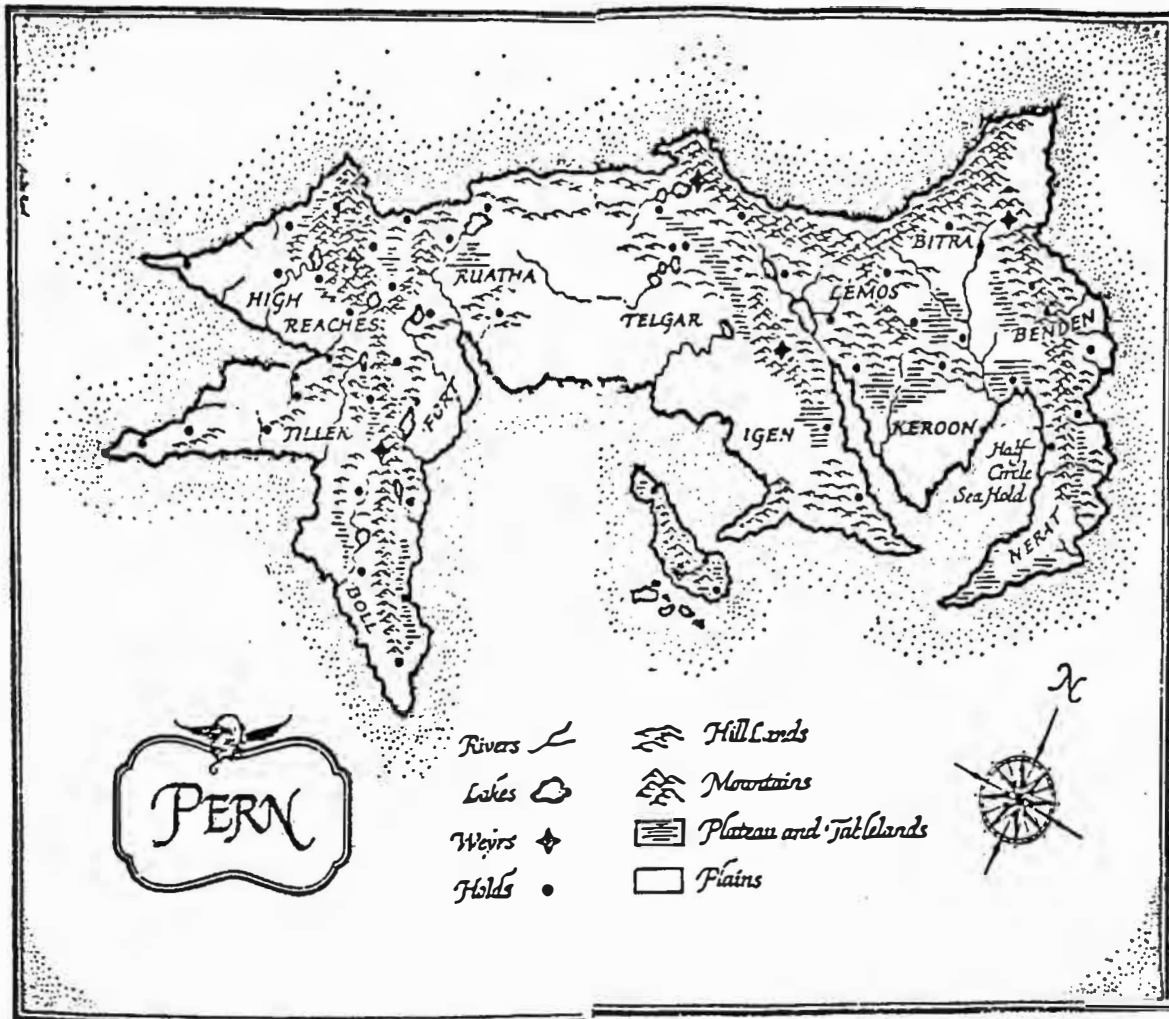


Figure 1 Map From "Dragonsinger: Harper Of Pern" By Anne McCaffrey

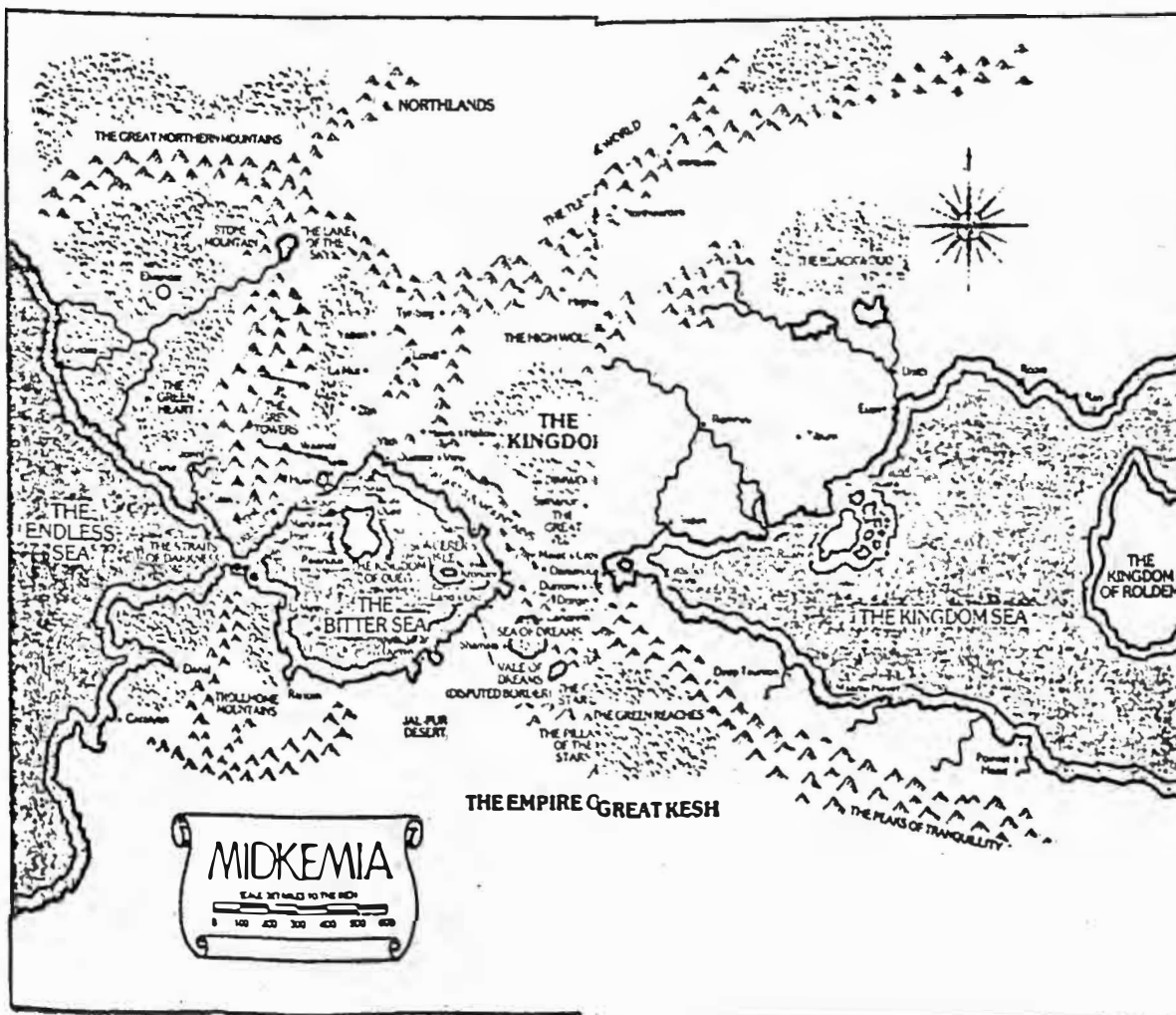


Figure 2 Map From "Magician" By Raymond E Feist



Figure 3 Map From "The Earthsea Trilogy" By Ursula Le Guin.



Figure 4 Map From "Lord Foul's Bane" By Stephen Donaldson.

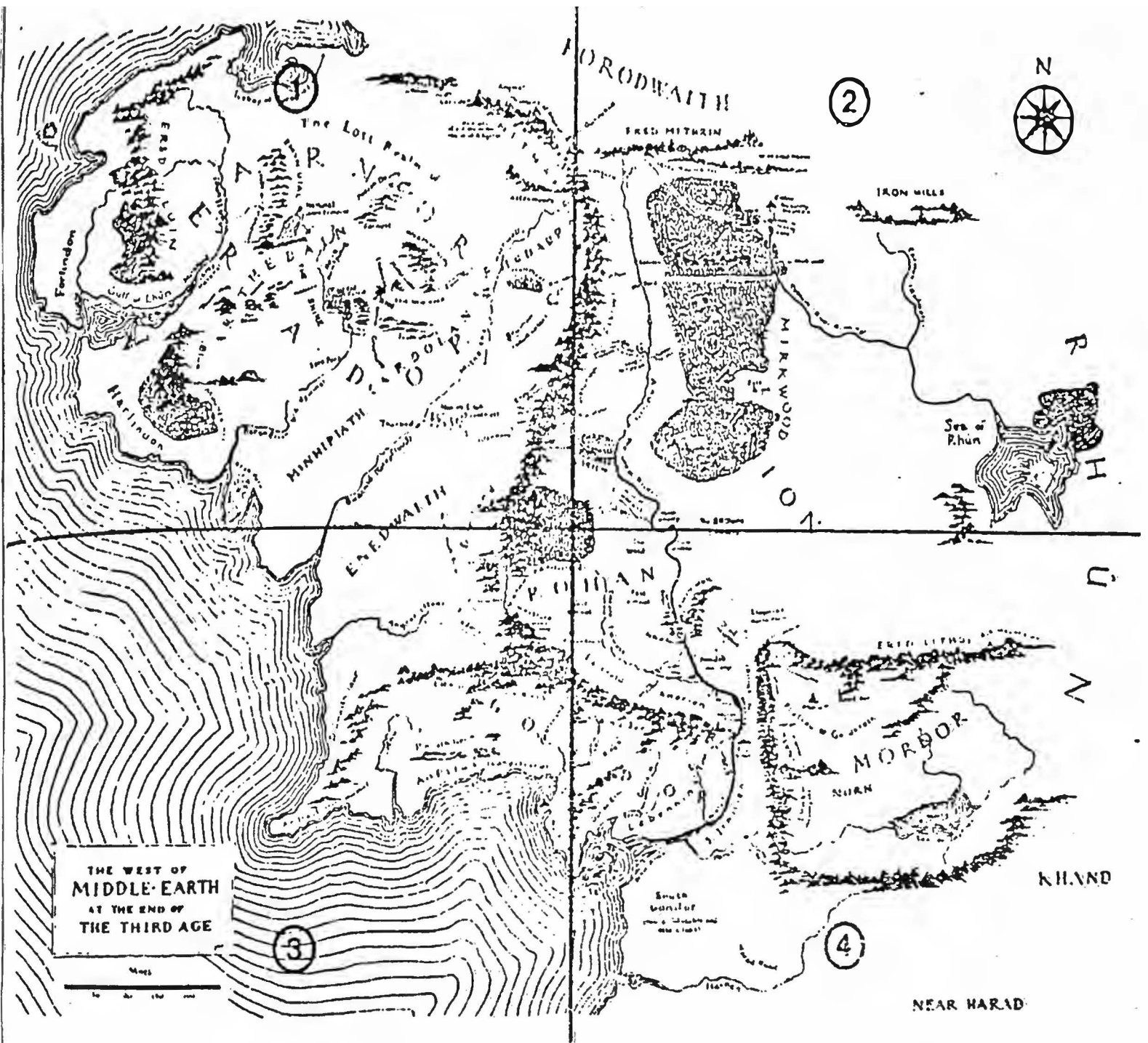


Figure 5 Map From "The Lord Of The Rings" By J R R Tolkien.

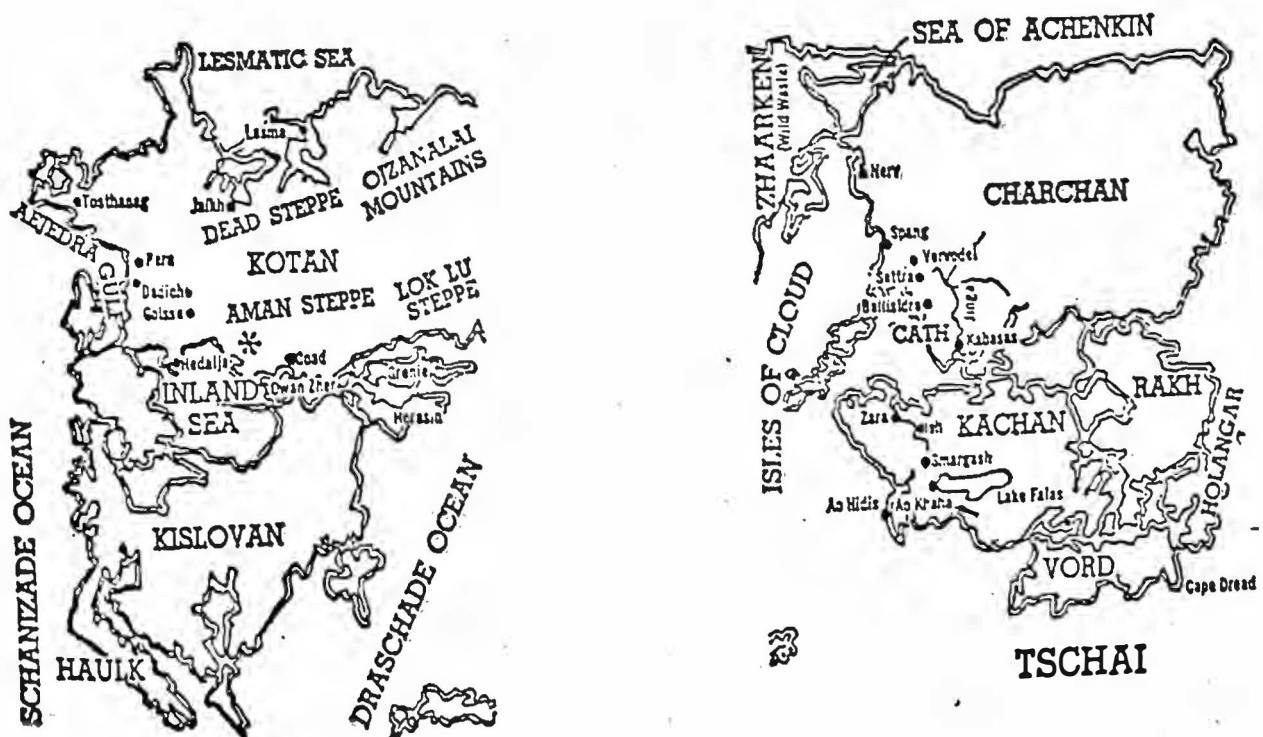


Figure 6 Map From "Planet Of Adventure" By Jack Vance.

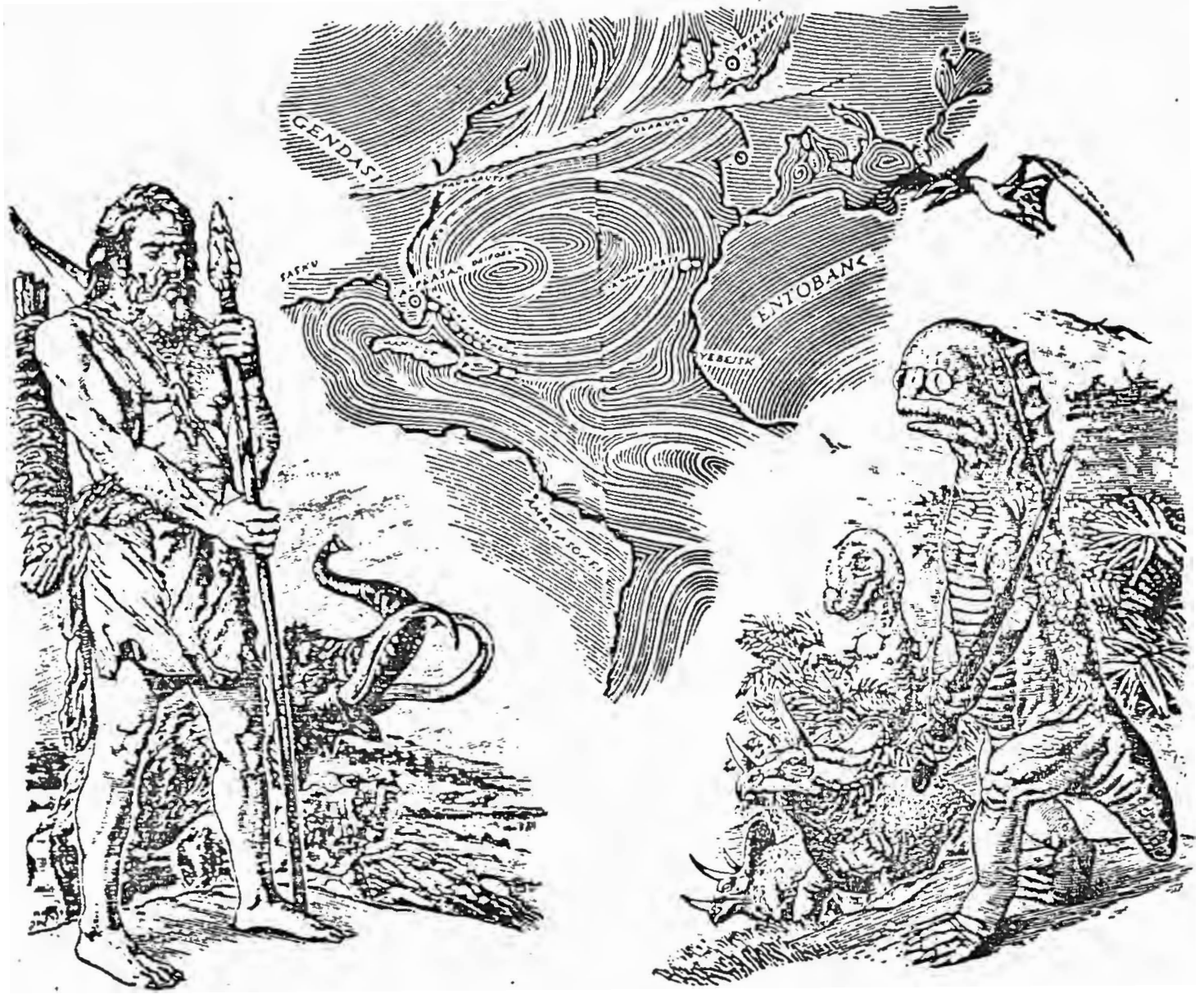


Figure 7 Map From "Winter In Eden" By Harry Harrison.

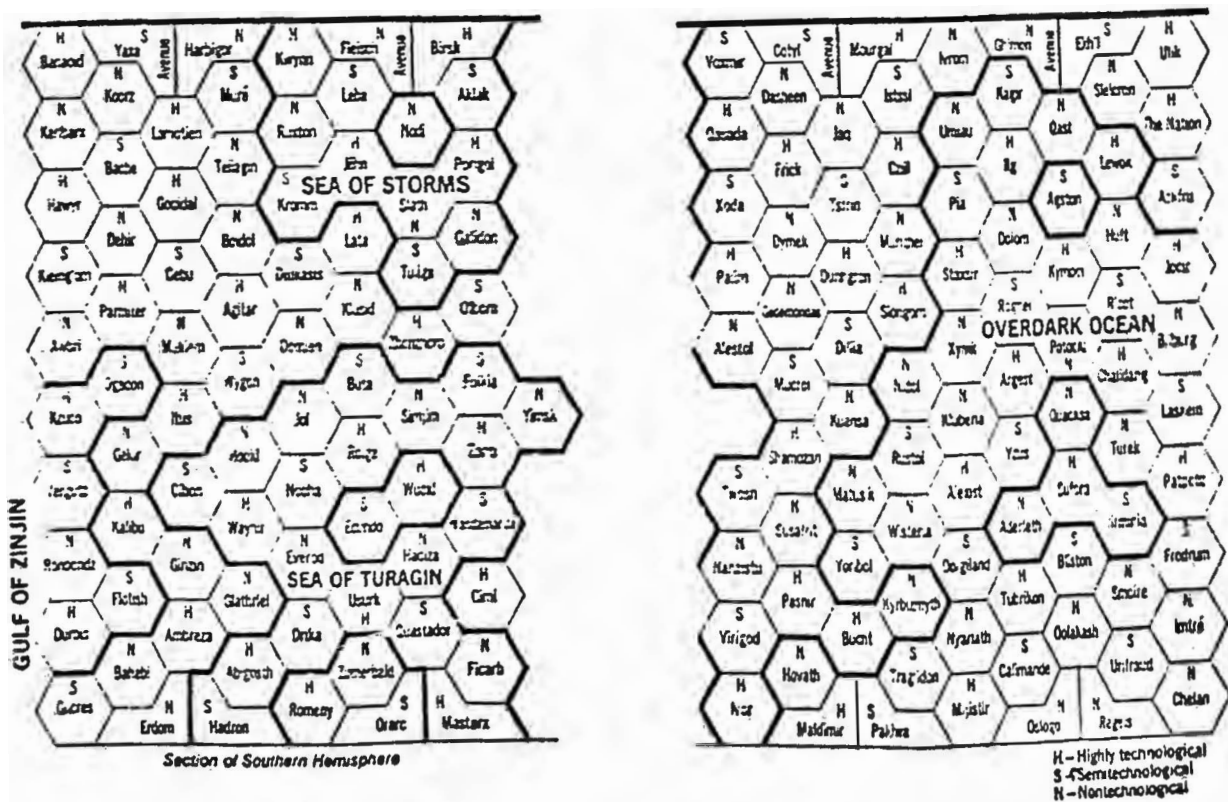


Figure 8 Map From "Exiles At The Well Of Souls" By Jack L. Chalker.

features occur in five of the eight maps in the survey. These are mountains and settlements. The symbol used for the former is a pictorial representation of a mountain in the form of an inverted 'v' with or without some element of shading on it. On McCaffrey's map two symbols are used, one to denote mountains and one to denote hills; the symbol for hills being an inverted 'U' with some shading on it. This indicates a high degree of uniformity in the choice of symbol.

The choice of symbol to denote settlement is much more complex, as three of the five maps which show settlement each use two symbols to show different settlement types. Of the eight symbols used to denote settlement, a black dot is the most common and occurs three times. Other symbols used include a hollow circle and a black star. Tolkien uses a black rectangle and a hollow triangle to represent settlement. Thus, in terms of choice of symbol for settlement, there is some degree of conformity, but greater variety than for rivers or mountains. In four of the five maps displaying settlement, the symbol used consists of a black dot or a more complex symbol with a black dot as part of it.

Of the remaining features shown on the maps, forests and lakes occur on each of three maps. Fourteen other features each occur in only one map. These include symbols for the location of the start of the quest in a novel, plateau and tablelands, edge of an escarpment, ocean currents, swamps and a variety of other physical and lifeform features. In terms of choice of symbol used in the eight maps, there is a strong level of conformity in all of the most commonly occurring features. Some variety in choice of symbols is used to represent other features.

To explore the style of the maps further, there is a need to examine the presence or absence of particular items usually associated with a map. The first of these is a map title which is vital in informing the reader as to what the map relates to. Seven of the eight maps surveyed have titles. The exception to this is Harrison's map. Surprisingly, considering the amount of detail on some of the maps, a key occurs on only two, those of McCaffrey and Chalker. Chalker's key refers only to the level of technology in each zone and not to physical features or other lifeform features and is therefore only a partial key. It is also surprising that a scale for showing the size of the area covered in the map is missing from five maps. Because the maps cover fantasy lands, the size of land masses and other features are not

TABLE 1
CLASSIFICATION OF MAPS AND TYPES OF SYMBOL USE IN THE EIGHT FANTASY MAPS

AUTHOR	BOOK	TYPE OF MAP	COASTLINE	RIVERS	MOUNTAINS	SETTLEMENT	FOREST	LAKES	OTHERS
Le Guin	'Earthsea Trilogy'	Topographic							
Vance	'Planet of Adventure'	Location							* = start of quest
McCaffrey	'Dragonsinger: Harper Of Pern'	Location			= mountains = hills	= hold ¹ = weyr			= plains = plateau
Donaldson	'Lord Foul's Bane'	Topographic							= cliff = edge of escarpment = shattered plains
Chalker	'Well of Souls'	Location							= zone H = highly technological S = semi technological N = non technological
Harrison	'Winter in Eden'	Location							= land = ocean currents
Feist	'Magician'	Location				= city ² = elvander			= continental shelf
Tolkien	'Lord of The Rings'	Location			= city ³ = elf settlement				= ford = swamp = road

NOTES

- 1 hold = settlement for humans
weyr = settlement for dragon riders and their dragons usually located on a cliff face
- 2 city = settlement for humans
elvander = settlement for elves in the form of a tree city
- 3 city = settlement for humans
settlement for elves similar to that of humans

known and as most of the novels involve journeys, no indication is given except in the text, of the length of some of these journeys.

In terms of the orientation of maps, a north sign or some indication of direction is common. A north sign occurs in five of the maps; exceptions being those of Vance, Chalker and Harrison. In Chalker's case, an indication of direction is obvious from the title of the map. In Harrison's case it is assumed the reader knows the direction as his fantasy land is the earth itself. A frame can be considered to be part of a formal map and in these eight fantasy maps it occurs three times in those of Tolkien, Vance and Feist. Typological levels of letter differentiation refer to size differentiation and style differentiation of the letters and names on the map. Typological levels in names is helpful for the reader in attaching levels of importance to particular features on the maps. Donaldson's and Harrison's maps have only two lettering formats, whereas two maps have four lettering formats and three maps have five lettering formats. Tolkien's map has eight different lettering formats indicating a high level of detail and attachment of importance to different features.

Although decorative features are not considered a normal part of a formal map, they need to be examined here as they can add to or detract from the maps in terms of appearance and/or interpretability. Decorative features occur in four maps. The Feist map has a decorative title in the form of a scroll with the scale bar on it and an elaborate north sign. The McCaffrey and Le Guin maps also contain decorative features. The Harrison map is by far the most decorative. This consists of a depiction of two opposing cultures, which occur on either side of the map itself. On one side of the map, the humans and fellow mammals are depicted and at the other side the yilane and fellow reptiles are depicted. None of the maps examined include all seven features of a formal map but those of Feist and McCaffrey have six of these seven.

The above findings will be an aid in endeavouring to achieve the second purpose of the survey; an attempt to understand why the maps were included and to assess whether the style of mapping chosen suits the purpose of the maps. To achieve this second aim, there is a need to examine four items; the position of the map in the book, the number of maps in each book, the type of story in the novel and the type of book. In all eight novels, the maps are positioned at the beginning of

TABLE 2

PRESENCE OF SELECTED ITEMS IN THE EIGHT FANTASY MAPS

Author	Title	Key	Scale	North Sign	Frame	Typological Levels	Decorative Features
Le Guin	■		■	■		5	Scale bar, North sign, Drawing of a face blowing wind
Vance	■					5	
McCaffrey	■	■		■	■	4	Title, North Sign
Donaldson	■			■		2	
Chalker	■	■				4	
Harrison						2	Drawing of man and his fellow mammals & the yilane and her fellow reptiles, with backgrounds
Feist	■		■	■	■	5	Title, Scale Bar, North Sign
Tolkien	■		■	■	■	8	

NOTES: The yilane are a species of highly intelligent reptile on a par with man and where the female is the dominant sex

the novel just before the start of the text. This appears to indicate that a considerable degree of importance is attached to the maps. The map is seen as a very useful scene-setting device. Of the eight fantasy novels surveyed, four contained only one map, while two contained two maps. Feist's novel explores life on two separate fantasy worlds and has included a location map for each. Chalker's two maps are of the northern and southern hemispheres of his fantasy world. Le Guin's book includes three maps, one overall location map and plans of a monastery and a labyrinth. Tolkien sees the maps as an integral part of his work and has included seven maps in his book, including an overall location map with four enlargements positioned at various stages throughout and two further enlargements. Thus, the maps in the novels appear to be important, if not integral, parts of the creation of the fantasy lands.

All the novels can be categorised in the adventure/quest sub-genre with the exception of Harrison's which is set on the earth but is in the alternative future sub-genre, but an alternative future so different as to be as alien as the rest of the fantasy lands. An examination of the type of books in the survey, whether they are once-off, a part of a trilogy or a longer series, gives a further insight into the aims of the authors in including maps. Each book forms part of a trilogy or longer series based upon the same alien landscape so there is room in the novels for lengthy descriptions of place and landscape, distance and orientation. Also the reader would like to visualize the same landscape from book to book. Some lengthy verbal descriptions of the above do occur throughout these novels particularly in Tolkien's and Donaldson's books. However, these tend to detract from the pace of the novels. The authors wish to give the readers an overview of the alien landscape they are about to encounter before they set out on their literary explorations. The maps also give the reader a source of reference to all the places and features and changes in location that occur throughout the story.

Six of the eight maps could be considered effective in giving the reader a concise overview of the fantasy land, the setting of the novel and a source of reference for the places and names that occur. These are the location maps of Tolkien, Harrison, Feist and McCaffrey for providing an overview of both the physical and lifeform features on the landscape of the story and, to a lesser extent, the topographic maps of Le Guin and Donaldson which only show the physical features of the

TABLE 3

CONTEXT OF THE MAPS IN THE EIGHT FANTASY NOVELS

Author	Map Position	No. of Maps in book	Sub-Genre	Type of book
Le Guin	Pre-text	3	Adventure/Quest	Trilogy
Vance	Pre-text	1	Adventure/Quest	Omnibus of 4 books
McCaffrey	Pre-text	1	Adventure/Quest	Part 2 of two- part story and also part of series of 7 books
Donaldson	Pre-text	1	Adventure/Quest	Part 1 of trilogy and also part of of series of 6 books
Chalker	Pre-text	2	Adventure/Quest	Part 2 of two part story and also part of series of 5 books
Harrison	Pre-text	1	Alternate Future	Part 2 of trilogy
Feist	Pre-text	2	Adventure/Quest	Part 1 of trilogy
Tolkien	Pre-text	7	Adventure/Quest	Trilogy

alien landscape. Two maps which could be deemed to have failed to achieve their aims are those of Vance and Chalker. The former failed because it consisted of a small number of names on an outline of a landmass, with a few features and the location of the start of the adventure. The map does not heighten the expectations of the reader nor does it present anywhere near as detailed and comprehensive an overview of the fantasy land as any of the other authors. Similar reasons apply to the failure of Chalker's map with its lack of physical and lifeform features. The map only shows an outline of the landmasses, the boundaries of various cultures and their technological level. Overall, most of the maps achieve their aims of presenting an overview of the fantasy lands, and a source of reference for the places and names encountered in the novels. In doing so, this is a stimulus to read the novel and whets the appetite of the reader for what is to come.

Before reaching some conclusions about the maps in fantasy literature, the reproduction of the maps in the books is briefly examined. In general the reproduction of the maps is quite poor and this tends to detract from the original aims of the authors in including them. This is exacerbated by the fact that seven of the maps in the survey are printed over two pages. Of these seven, five suffer from the fact that they are incorrectly aligned, thus obscuring some of the map and many of the names and features on the map. Three of the maps are badly affected by this, these are the maps of Feist, Donaldson and Le Guin. The other two maps which occur over two pages have avoided this problem by leaving a one or one and a half inch gap down the middle of the map where the bind occurs and where the problem of alignment would have occurred. This is done very well in Chalker's map as it is easy to see where the two parts of the map join but is less successful on Vance's map. Tolkien's map occurs on one page but it suffers from the problem of trying to show too much detail with some of the lettering so small as to be illegible. In five maps there are reproduction problems which detract from the overall aims of the map. More care needs to be taken in the production of the maps to avoid the problems of misalignment. The three maps for which there are no serious re-production problems are those of Harrison, McCaffrey and Chalker.

In conclusion, the eight fantasy maps examined in the survey show a certain similarity in style: in general that of a location map with

a pictorial representation of physical and lifeform generated features of the fantasy land, in which the story is set. The purpose of these maps is to present a concise overview of the world the readers are about to encounter, and to provide a reference source to the places, names and features as they occur in the story and also to whet the appetite of the reader for the text itself. In general the style chosen for the maps achieves these aims of the authors, although they are at times hampered by the poor quality of their reproduction. Who is not to say that imagination may indeed be the last great frontier, the one which mankind will never cross. Cease not then from exploration because the rewards will be unimaginable.

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