

# Foreword to the Second Edition

Where would we all be without dragons? We would be altered in some primeval, intrinsic, and unfathomable way. Authors would not have been published, worlds would not have been forged, and the imagination of uncounted souls would collapse within a cavernous maw devoid of enchantment.

Why are dragons so important? Aren't they created fictions, crafted to sell books and adorn video games? Dragons have been the windows into our collective psyche, as necessary to the human spirit as magic, chivalry, and King Arthur. Dragons are real.

But for many, the first encounter with dragons is a frightening, astounding, and humbling experience. For both of us, Jessica and myself, our first encounter with a dragon was with the same dragon—Smaug the Tremendous. As we progressed through childhood our experience with dragons grew. Whether on film or in books, dragons were always within reach and on the edge of our mental landscape. New experiences included dragon-slayers saving sacrificial victims, luck-dragons tracking bullies in a modern neighborhood, Pernese flyers defending against Thread. All of which fed our inquisitiveness. Where did dragons come from, and why do we need them?

In 2005 answers unfolded in the form of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Anne Petty's *Dragons of Fantasy*. Our studies and imaginative foundations were flooded by the intense vision in Petty's text. The wealth of dragon lore and critical study of the creative process nested in our hearts. Petty's text vindicated our own efforts: that academic works can be enthusiastic, compelling narratives that enlighten, inform, and delight. For aspiring authors, Petty provides a plethora of tools to aid the research of creative methodology in fantasy and dragon story.

With the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Petty reinvigorates the text with edited material from the 1<sup>st</sup> edition. As discussed in her introduction, this reinstated material enhances the text and demonstrates Petty's love and inherent grasp of the mechanics of sub-creation. Sub-creation is the living theory about artists' literary works brought into existence; this fundamental human connection to fantasy was a cornerstone of Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories." Petty says, in Chapter 1: "One of the most important truths about fantasy writing is that archetypes can be used in fresh ways"

(Petty, 15). Aspiring fantasists must have their creative imagery fueled by knowledge, creative tools and the blending of ancient archetypes into a unique vision. For us this “depth of knowledge” provides insightful clues into how to weave a fuller, richer secondary world. Petty provides this information through our love of dragons. She says “wide reading in many areas and disciplines creates a larger data bank from which to draw when its time to put fingers to keyboard” (12). This sage advice is encouraging in our techno-centric world, which relies more on force-fed imagery than sitting amongst piles of books

Whether we choose to allow the characters we create to speak through us, ceasing to invent but record as our predecessors have, are we then adding to the world’s historical record? By understanding the work of the authors Petty discusses, and the writer’s craft, the validity of the dragon in history is possible. History reports experiences of a particular event. A sub-creator experiences the fantastical first hand, taking on dragons bluntly, allowing them to become as real and tangible as earth in our hands. The work of early fantasists proves the reality of the tools of sub-creation; Petty furthers this for every reader by ripping open the gateways to fantasy and laying it bare in all its glory. By examining the work of Tolkien, McCaffrey, Le Guin, Rowling, Pratchett, Yolen, and Goodkind, Petty opens our minds to their particular methodology. This examination is paralleled by her discussions on the creative process which allows readers to grasp the very fabric of this reality. Petty has gone where many would dream to go: she has taken her love for her craft, her dedication to scholarship, and she has walked with dragons.

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