

# A Letter From ANDRE NORTON

I am so pleased that you have found my works interesting and enjoy reading them. The same is true of your Darkover books as far as I am concerned. I have the full set in the original pbs--have kept them for years since they first came out.

Yes, I have come across the two beliefs in witchcraft--the old idea of a virgin witch goes with the worship of Diana (one of the aspects of the Great Mother). Sexual power, they believe, once expended weakens the inner concentration of the talent. The Great Mother had three aspects--The Maiden, The Matron, and The Old Woman. Each had her own particular type of power. The first achieved hers through virginity, the second was fertility, and the last was Death.

The best known aspect is, of course, the fertility goddess, and that is the one you discover the Wicca are engrossed in. But in the ancient world, apparently, the priestesses of Diana had greater power and claimed it through their not expending any force sexually. I would think that the intellectual Sorceress as opposed to the more earthy witch would be the virgin. There is good reason then to think that a form of sorcery founded on that would build up in its followers the belief that the loss of virginity meant the loss of "power". The Vestal Virgins of Rome, for example, possessed supposedly a great power of protection for the city--and if one of them erred sexually she could not be killed out of hand, for no man must ever touch her, but she was walled up alive in a specially built underground tomb. And the city went into mourning and fear for the loss of the "power".

I know that what is important in the Wicca circles is the fertility part of the worship. I know no one who is a member of a coven--but I have accumulated a vast amount of reading material on many aspects of the subject. I am, I am afraid, very much of a skeptic unless I can actually see something work--as I have psychometry. But if I am going to use something in a book I get a sensitive to give me a demonstration. With witchcraft I have had to dig my details out of research reading.