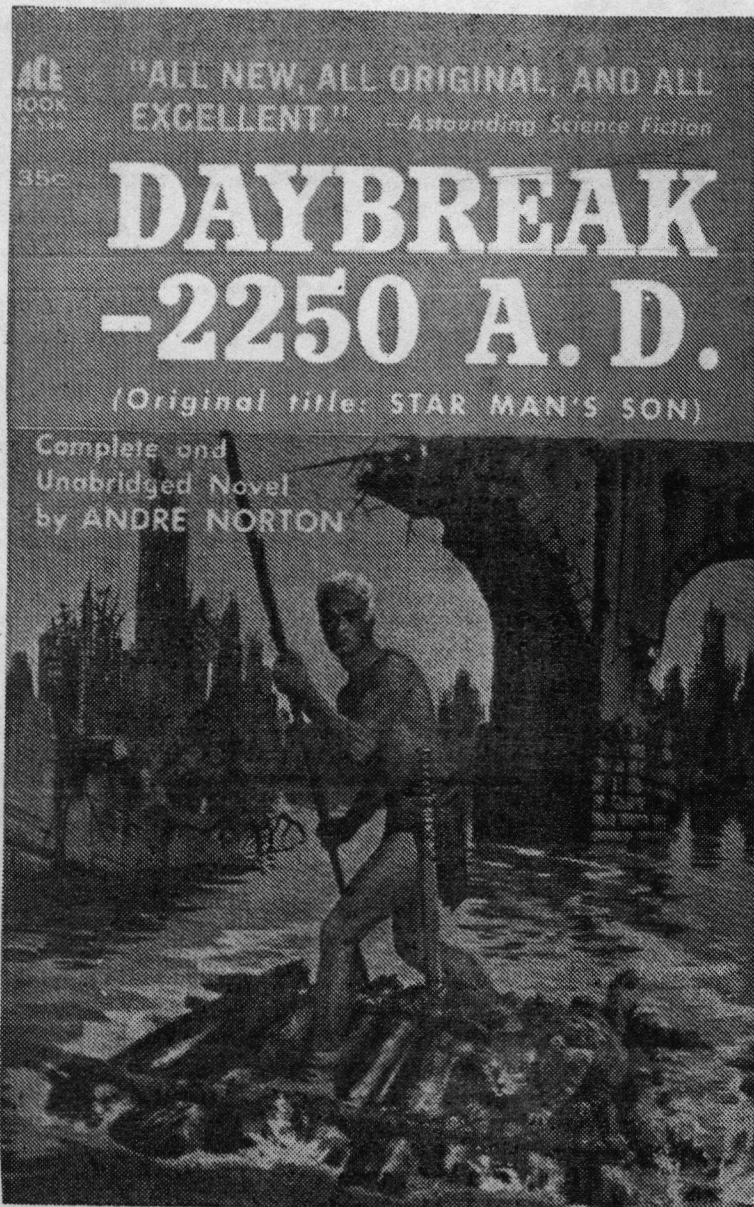


# Andre Norton: Loss of Faith



The impression that a regular reader of Andre Norton's books might have is that of growing pessimism. From light hearted adventure stories like *STAR RANGERS* and *SARGASSO OF SPACE*, she has gone to books like *DREAD COMPANION* and *DARK PIPER*, that give the feeling at the conclusion that it is best not to see or even guess what lies ahead.

While Miss Norton has never seemed too comfortable in the here-&-now, it seems that now the future that once beckoned has become another area for distrust. Even the latest Solar Queen story, *POSTMARKED THE STARS*, is more subdued and grim in tone. The Patrol, a largely unsullied organization, comes in for its lumps in *THE ZERO STONE* and its sequel, *UNCHARTED STARS*. In *ICE CROWN*, the Service makes no move to help those under a planetwide conditioning program. As a correspondent, children's librarian Devra Langsam remarked: "...more and more it is the organized cultural groups, like the Patrol, and in this case, the Service (cultural-anthropology?) who are the villains...I suppose that this was foreshadowed in her Solar Queen stories, but it's still surprising...and she's a bit old to be getting this anti-establishment thing."

But are these impressions correct? Has Miss Norton lost faith in the future? After reading her books over the last few weeks, I see the answer as yes...and no. She has definitely lost some of her optimism -- but haven't we all? In novels like *DREAD COMPANION* and *DARK PIPER*, she is trying for deeper characterization. This slows down the action and gives one more time to spot her usual lack of blind faith in the future.

*STAR MAN'S SON*, her first science fiction novel, was written after warming up with a couple of short stories (as Andrew North) in *FANTASY BOOK*, two historical novels, and "Adapting" the myth of Huon of the Horn. Since Miss Norton "wastes" little in previous writings, in 1965, *STEEL MAGIC*, a juvenile sequel to *HUON OF THE HORN*, came out.

## by Rick Brooks

STAR MAN'S SON takes place in a post-nuclear-war world. While the ending is upbeat with the hope of a rebirth of civilization, most of the story is rather bleak. This novel sees the birth of a theme that runs through all Norton's books — tolerance for other races.

STAR RANGERS (her first of many Ace Books, published in 1955) extends this theme to non-humans and introduces the reptilian race of Zacan (the Zacathans) which have become almost a fixture in her later far future novels. The mighty stellar empire of Central Control seen at a much earlier stage is collapsing later in STAR GUARD, and a battered Patrol ship limps back to Terra, now long forgotten, to start anew. The upbeat ending again overshadows the brutal future pictured with a hardening of hereditary stratification in all groups, even the Patrol, and bloody power struggles in which entire worlds with all their people are burnt off with little apparent concern. The character's rather matter of fact acceptance of the latter is quite chilling.

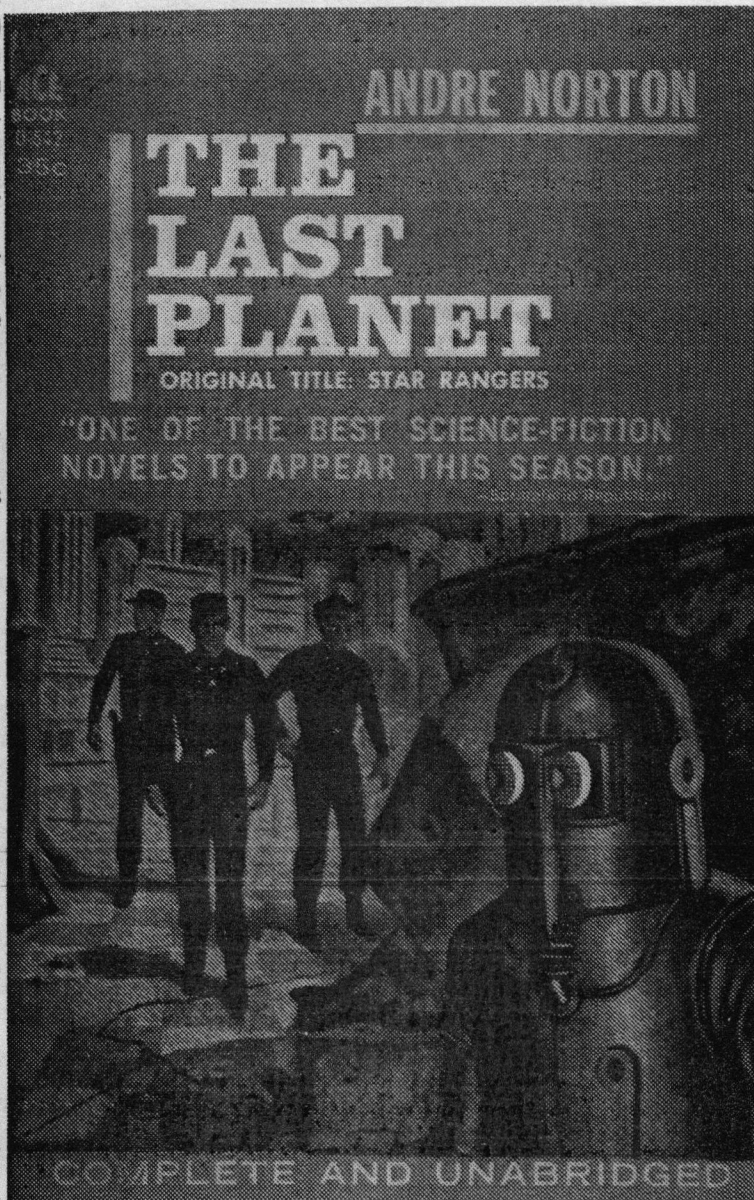
THE STARS ARE OURS starts on another post-destruction Terra, this time by a satellite burn-off which triggers a program against Free Scientists. A few escape to Astra under cold sleep. The bleak repressive Terra miraculously gives way to the vividly drawn Astra. With this, Miss Norton comes into her major strength, the portrayal of other worlds. The switch between bleak winter on Terra and the verdant growing season on Astra also seems to mark a turning point in Norton's writing.

She now has a more optimistic tone as she explores the glory of other worlds. In SARGASSO OF SPACE, the planet Limbo has been partially burnt off, but in a long gone Forerunner war. STAR GUARD sees an attempt to set human mercenaries against each other, but no killings of non-combatants. THE CROSSROADS OF TIME does show some brutal alternate presents. PLAGUE SHIP features a run-in with the Patrol and the danger of being shot on sight as plague carriers. SEA SIEGE is a downbeat near-future tale where radioactive mutated sea life and a nuclear war endanger humanity. STAR BORN features a clash with Those Others, the vicious native race of Astra. While there still is a lot of violence, the characters' attitude has changed from passive acceptance of it as a part of life to downright loathing.

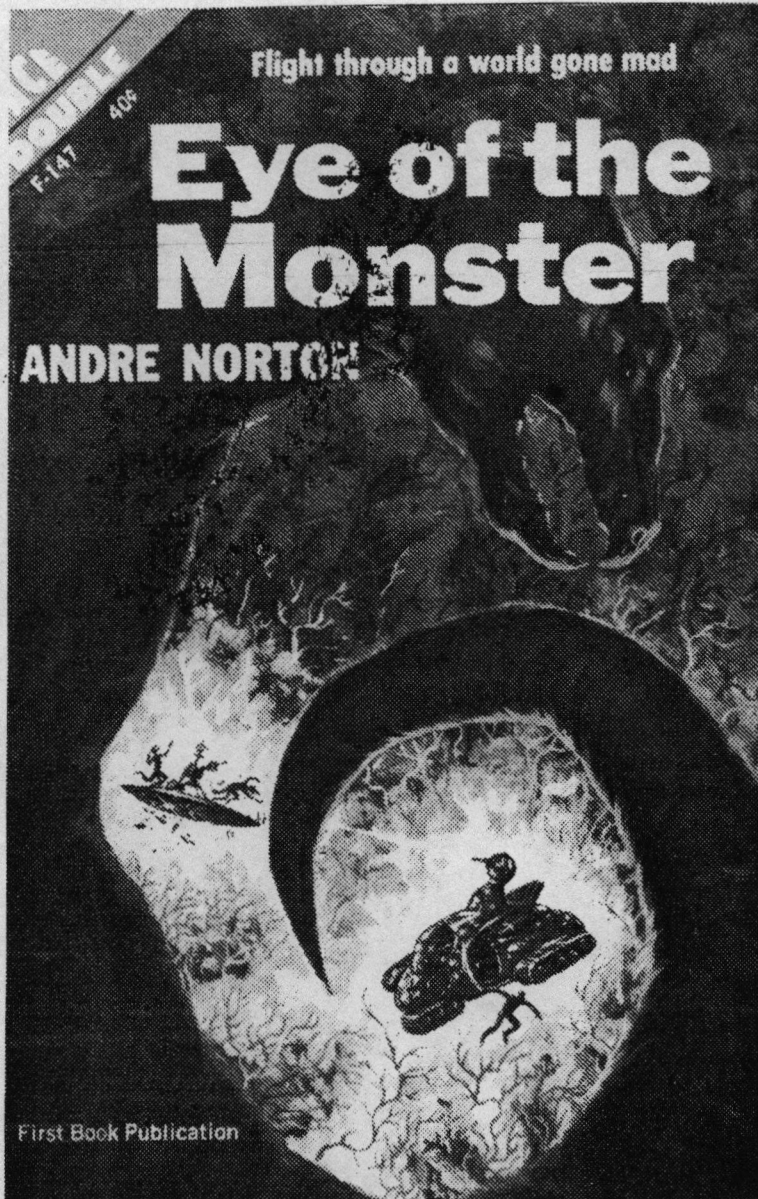
STAR GATE is a rather unique book as it concerns the alternate histories of another world. With the exception of Norton's later "Toys of Tamisan," this is the only science fiction that comes to mind covering both star travel and travel "sideways" in time. Creating an alien world is usually considered enough, without creating a history to go with it.

Andre Norton seems to have suffered a rough period in 1961-62. STAR HUNTER has the Patrol ignoring the mental conditioning of a young drifter so that a Veep can be nabbed. In THE DEFIANT AGENTS, a group of Indians are mentally conditioned and sent off to occupy Topaz before the Reds can. The optimism of GALACTIC DERELICT,

upbeat ending  
again overshadows  
the brutal future...



no other Norton  
hero has  
reacted by  
a hatred...



where the universe and its wonders had been opened to man, have in its sequel turned to dread of the weapons of the earlier galactic empire in human hands. *EYE OF THE MONSTER* is Norton's most xenophobic story by far. The previous *STORM OVER WARLOCK* had a very nasty portrayal of the Throgs, but humans still try to make peace. Here there is no thought of peace. In all other stories, evil aliens are the result of forbidden researches. Here the crocs are vicious barbarians that suddenly start butchering all off-worlders. Several racial characteristics are adversely mentioned, especially odor. In all other Norton novels, aliens are evil for what they do, not what they are. Despite provocation, no other Norton hero has reacted by a hatred that could be classified as racial. This momentary failure underlines her usual tolerance for living beings.

Outside of these three novels, not much distinguished one Norton novel from another during the late fifties and most of the sixties except a little more polish in the writing of later ones. With *DARK PIPER* (1968), a lessening of optimism is again visible.

One of the most fascinating things about Andre Norton has been her consistency with respect to certain ideas and themes while totally ignoring consistency where most authors wouldn't. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds...with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do...Speak what you think today in words as hard as cannon-balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today."

At least one fan has waged a titanic struggle in trying to sort out a consistent "future history" from Norton's books when she never has bothered with one. However, most of her stories do fall within a loose framework. It is almost like such terms as "Free Traders," "Forerunners," "First Ship," "Patrol," "Jack," "Veep," "First-in Scout," and "Combine" fit so well that she doesn't bother to coin others. Races such as the Zacathans and planets such as Astra receive mention in many stories, as does the game of Stars and Comets. Whether this is a matter of sentiment, laziness, or practicality (it is work to create an entire world for just one story, let alone several worlds) is a point that can be argued.

Miss Norton, instead of being bound by a future history, has created a series of alternate universes that largely overlap. All her interplanetary stories, with the exception of *STAR GATE* (though a planet Gorth is mentioned in *MOON OF THREE RINGS*), *SECRET OF THE LOST RACE*, "Long Live Lord Kor!" and *DARK PIPER* have interlocking references. The latter is probably to emphasize the isolation of the research planet of Beltane from the rest of the galaxy. I think that it is significant that the two novels date from 1958 and 1959, while the other is a novelette. Since Miss Norton's references to previous books have become more numerous in her last group of books, it would seem that certain races,

planets, and things have become touchstones for her.

In UNCHARTED STARS, the sequel to THE ZERO STONE, she runs wild with references to THE ZERO STONE, a Salarik (pp. 13, 72; the feline race of Sargol in PLAGUE SHIP), a male Wyvern of Warlock (p. 114; ORDEAL IN OTHERWHERE), a Trystian (p. 117), Zacathans (pp. 117, 176), a Faltharian (p. 166; three races prominent in STAR RANGERS), "...the Caverns of Arzor and of that Sargasso planet of Limbo..." (p. 140; THE BEAST MASTER and SARGASSO OF SPACE), and koro stones (p. 173; PLAGUE SHIP). References to many other races and many other gem stones are mentioned in passing.

This is a good thing and gives depth to a story, but occasionally Miss Norton goofs in choosing a "spear-carrier" from an earlier story. The worst example is the Salarik who tended bar in STAR HUNTER. He could not have taken the odors of the place without protection.

Miss Norton's stories are born in many ways. STAR RANGERS started from the story of the Roman Emperor who ordered a legion eastward across Asia to the end of the world. Childe Roland and the Dark Tower became WARLOCK OF THE WITCH WORLD. THE YEAR OF THE UNICORN owed its origin to the folk tale of "Beauty and the Beast." Even more obvious are the links between DARK PIPER and the Pied Piper. However, few would realize that NIGHT OF MASKS was sparked by the "powerful descriptions" of William Hope Hodgson's classic THE NIGHT LAND.

"Long Live Lord Kor!" was written around an unused cover that showed the couple mounted on a giant fire worm firing at a flying thing. The title was originally "Worm Walk." Running things -- by human default was a giant super computer called XAT "...whose limitations had yet to be discovered." (WORLDS OF FANTASY No. 2, p. 53). X FACTOR is dedicated to "Helen Hoover whose weasel-fisher people gave me the Brothers-In-Fur." Helen has a series of excellent nature books illustrated by her husband Adrian (whose illustrations remind me of Ernest Thompson Seton's, who was a very early idol of mine. But Adrian's are much better.)

The stories are shaped by references to an "extensive personal library of natural history, archaeology, anthropology, native religions, folklore, and travel in off-beat sections of the world." The "...forests of Janus and THE ZERO STONE are both taken from the great forests of the Matto Grosso." And of course history plays an important part.

"History, by the way, is not weapons (which are again a form of machines) but human beings -- the fact that some ruler was ill on a certain day and so made a decision he might not have done otherwise -- the fact that some personal animosity moved action can be seen over and over again. Until we read it from the viewpoint of the people, who were worked upon by the strains and stresses of their times which again may be alien to our present thinking, we do not read real history. I wish the students in school would study diaries and the volumes of contemporary

occasionally  
Miss Norton  
goofs...

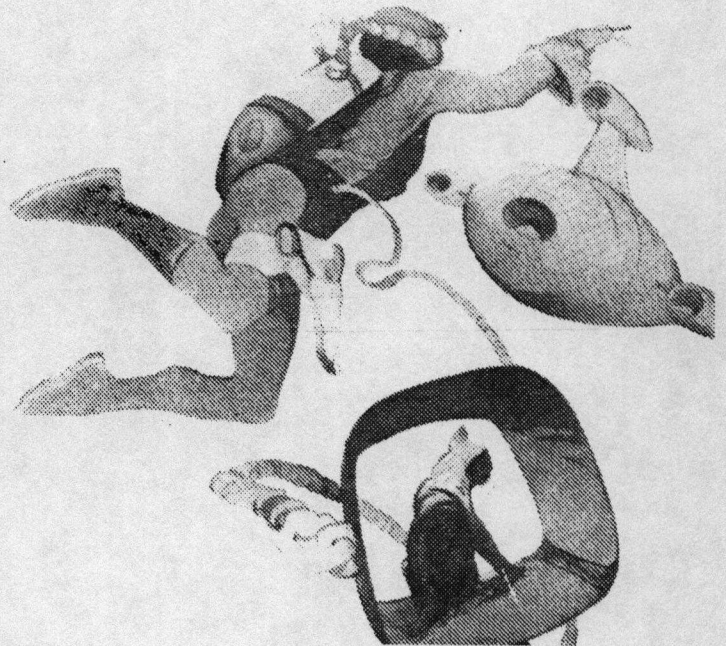


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## ANDRE NORTON THE ZERO STONE

"Extraordinary imagination... Good sustaining action."

—KIRKUS REVIEWS



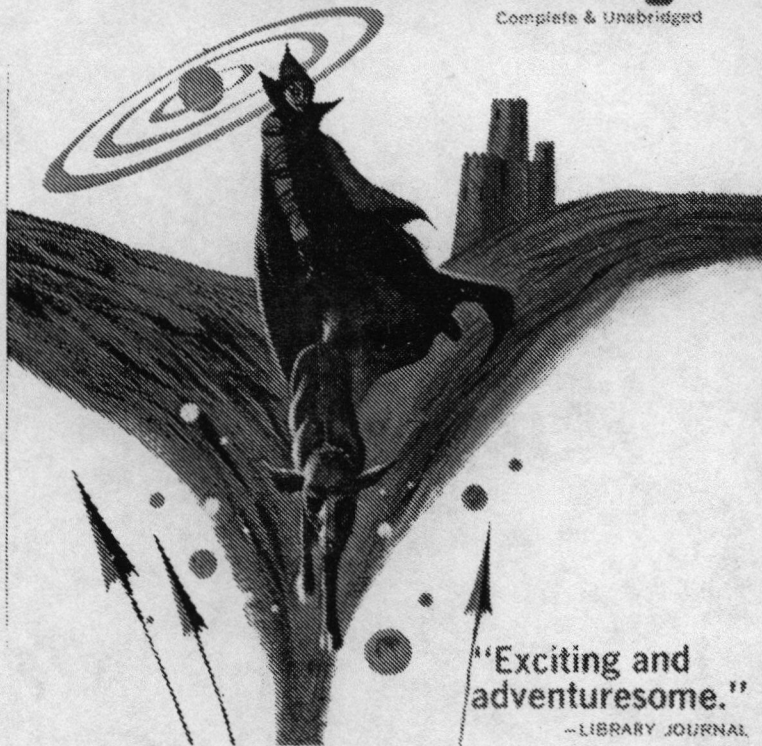
"re-enchanting"  
us with her  
creations...

# ANDRE NORTON

## Moon of Three Rings

Complete & Unabridged

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60¢



"Exciting and  
adventuresome."

—LIBRARY JOURNAL

letters of the period they are seeking to study rather than read the texts (which can not help but be influenced by the personal tastes of their writers). From such sources they would learn what moved these people three, four, five hundred years ago to behave as they did. One volume of Pepys' diary can give one a vivid impression of Restoration England of far more value to the student than any list of dates and decisions of Parliament of that period."

To which, I agree heartily. To create an alien culture, it is a big help to understand one. Which means just about all previous cultures as well as the present one. Our command of technology separates us from the cultures of the past. The Founding Fathers had more in common with the Classical civilization members of Greece and Rome than they do with us. But have we lost something?

"Descartes' dicotomy had given modern man a philosophical basis for getting rid of the belief in witches, and this contributed considerably to the actual overcoming of witchcraft in the eighteenth century. Everyone would agree that this was a great gain. But we likewise got rid of the fairies, elves, trolls, and all of the demicreatures of the woods and earth. It is generally assumed that this, too, was a gain, since it helped sweep man's mind clear of 'superstition' and 'magic.' But I believe that this is an error. Actually what we did in getting rid of the fairies and the elves and their ilk was to impoverish our lives; and impoverishment is not the lasting way to clear men's minds of superstition. There is a sound truth in the old parable of the man who swept the evil spirit out of his house, but the spirit, noticing that the house stood clean and vacant, returned, bringing seven more evil spirits with him; and the second state of the man was worse than the first. For it is the empty and vacant people who sieze on the new and more destructive forms of our latter-day superstitions, such as beliefs in the totalitarian mythologies, engrams, miracles like the day the sun stood still, and so on. Our world has become disenchanted, and it leaves us not only out of tune with nature but with ourselves as well." (MAN'S SEARCH FOR HIMSELF by Rollo May, Signet, pp. 62-3)

So in the end, the chief value of Andre Norton's writing may not lie in entertainment or social commentary, but in her "re-enchanting" us with her creations that renew our linkages to all life. One might say of her writing that "...there was much she said beyond my understanding, references to events and people unknown, such hints only making me wistful to go through the doors they represented and see what lay on the far side." (MOON OF THREE RINGS, Ace, p. 103)

But Norton falls into a much more rigid pattern in her view of the complex technological future that largely ignores the individual. Her sympathies can be easily seen as the Norton hero or heroine never seems to fit into their society and often are outright misfits. In NIGHT OF MASKS, Nik Kolkerne has a badly mutilated face and a personality to match. Diskan Fentress is a clumsy oaf crashing through the faerie

world of Vaanchard in *THE X FACTOR*. Ross Murdock is an alienated criminal when he becomes part of a time traveling team in *THE TIME TRADERS*. Roane Hume in *ICE CROWN* finds the medieval life of Clio draws her from her relatives who treat her like an extra pair of hands.

Miss Norton seems to be fond of the medieval period. *MOON OF THREE RINGS* was deliberately based on the culture of the European Middle Ages. (Dark Ages is a misnomer, for an age that saw the inventions of the horsecollar, the windmill, and stirrups. These allowed men to harness horsepower and windpower for the first time and to weld man and horse into a battle unit. See Lynn White's book on medieval technology. Miss Norton would stress the Guilds and other human factors.) All six Witch World novels, *KEY OUT OF TIME*, *STAR GATE*, *STAR GUARD*, "Toys of Tamisan," "Wizard's World," and to some extent *PLAGUE SHIP* feature a medieval-like culture. Some writers use such a culture regularly because they are too lazy to work out another, but Miss Norton sees important values that we have bypassed in the medieval period.

Another major feature is the stressing of the bond between man and animal (and Iftin and tree in the Janus series). In *STAR MAN'S SON*, Fors of the Puma clan had Lura, the mutant cat, as a companion. In *STAR RANGERS* occurs the following:

"Fylh's crest lifted. He raised his face to the sky and poured out a liquid run of notes, so pure and heart tearing a melody that Kartr held his breath in wonder. Was this Fylh's form of happy release from emotion?

"Then came the birds, wheeling and fluttering. Kartr stiffened into statue stillness, afraid to break the spell. As Fylh's carols rose, died, rose again, more and more of the fliers gathered, with flashes of red feathers, blue, yellow, white, green. They hopped before the Trystian's feet, perched on his shoulders, his arms, circled around his head.

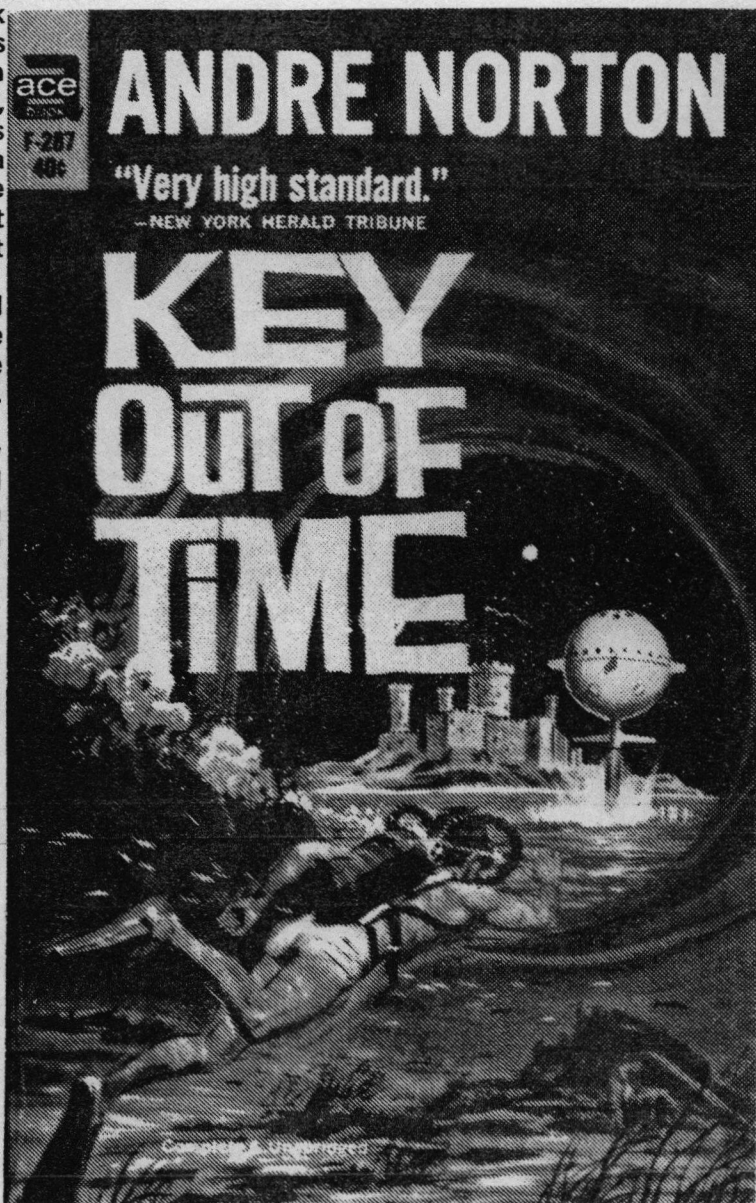
"Kartr had seen Fylh entice winged things to him before but never just this way. It appeared to his bewildered eyes that the whole campsite was a maze of fluttering wings and rainbow feathers.

"The trills of song died away and the birds arose, a flock of color. Three times they circled Fylh, hiding his head and shoulders from sight with the tapestry of tints they wove in flight. They they were gone -- up into the morning. Kartr could not move, his eyes remained fixed on Fylh. For the Trystian was on his feet, his arms outstretched, straining upward as if he would have followed the others up and out. And for the first time, dimly, the sergeant sensed what longings must be born in Fylh's people since they had lost their wings. Had that loss been good -- should they have traded wings for intelligence? Did Fylh wonder about that?" (Ace, 1955, p. 166)

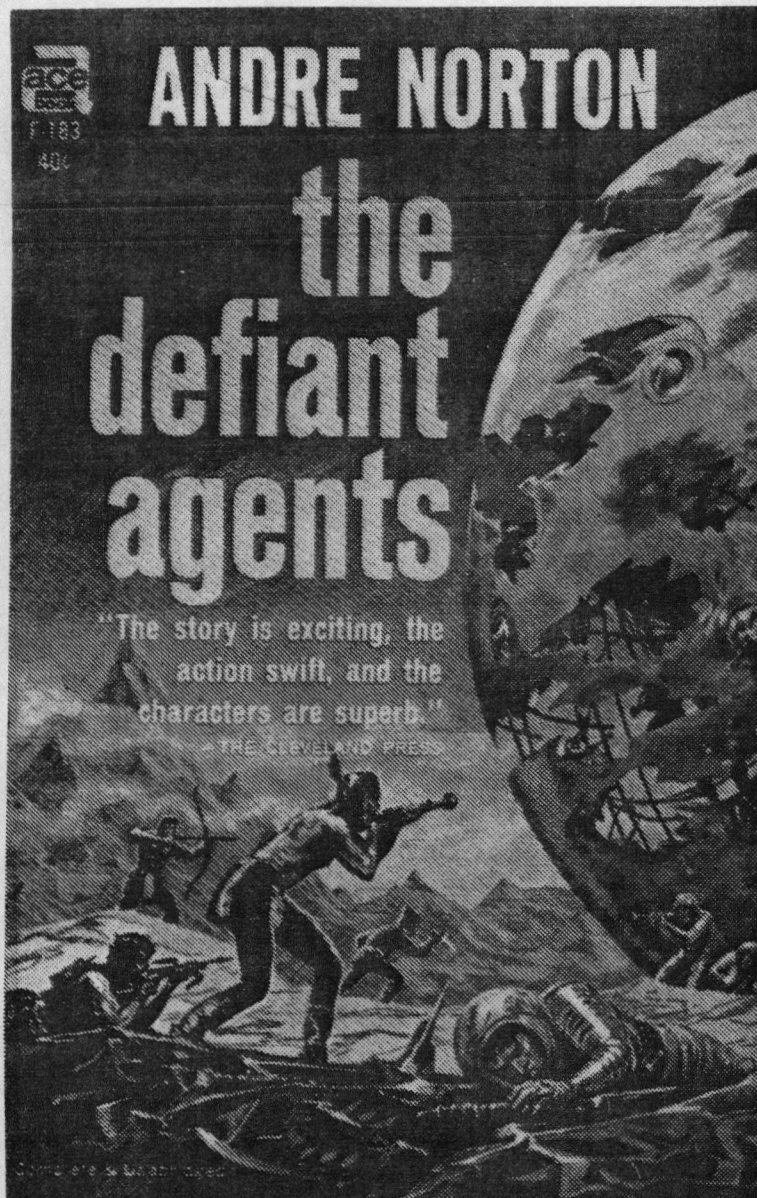
In view of this, it is also hardly surprising that the survivors of the Patrol choose to go out into the wilderness and live off nature instead of seeking another abandoned city to live in at the book's end.

*STAR RANGERS* also introduces the theme of

stressing of the  
bond between  
man and animal...



Norton's only  
favorable  
mention  
of robots...



telepathy. In *THE BEAST MASTER* (1959) the two are fused together and we have Hosteen Storm, the Beast Master, and his team of African Black Eagle, Meerkats, and dune cat are telepathically linked. But like Diskan Fentress in *THE X FACTOR*, his talent just covers animals. Kartr in *STAR RANGERS* as well as Zinga the Zacacathan can communicate telepathically with animals, but do not try for an emotional bond or work with them.

Murray Leinster's "Exploration Team" (Astounding Science Fiction magazine, March 1956, "Combat Team" in *COLONIAL SURVEY*) had a team of man, eagle, and giant bears. They manage to save a colony that was supposed to be protected by robots. It could have influenced Norton, but since she was heading that way anyway, I doubt it. Besides, she makes a point of not reading other sf when she is writing so it won't influence her. The treatment of robots is about the same (the robots in Leinster's story were computer controlled as I remember). Andre Norton's only favorable mention of robots is in *STAR RANGERS* where one had been a member of the crew and "...he was good with engines - being one himself." (Ace, 1955, page 20).

In *MOON OF THREE RINGS*, Maelen the Moon Singer can telepathically communicate with her animals that work together for her traveling show. Travis Fox and the mutant coyotes work together and communicate on Topaz in *THE DEFIANT AGENTS*. *KEY OUT OF TIME* features Karara Trehern telepathically linked with dolphins. Shann Lantree and his wolverines mentally share information and work together in *STORM OVER WARLOCK*.

*CATSEYE* carries the idea the next logical step. Troy Horan, once son of a Range Master on Norden, becomes an equal partner with a kinkajou, two foxes and two cats that have been mutated for greater intelligence. Renne, the ranger of the wilds, asks, "Always we. Why, Horan?" Renne rubbed his wrists.

"Men have used animals as tools." Troy said slowly, trying to fit into words something he did not wholly understand himself. "Now some men, somewhere, have made better tools, tools so good that they can turn and cut the maker. But that is not the fault of the tools - that they are no longer tools but -"

"Perhaps companions?" Renne ended for him, his fingers still stroking his ridged flesh, but his eyes very intent on Troy.

"How did you know?" the younger man was startled into demanding.

"Let me say that I am also a workman who can admire fine tools, even when they have ceased, as you point out, to be any longer tools."

Troy grasped at that hint of sympathy. "You understand -"

"Only too well. Most of our breed want tools, not companions. And the age-old fear of man, that he will lose his supremacy, will bring down all the hawks and hunters of the galaxy down on your trail, Horan. Do not expect any aid from your own species when

it is threatened by powers it cannot and does not want to understand..." (Ace, pp. 141-2)

In Eric Frank Russell's "The Undecided" (Astounding Science Fiction magazine, April 1949, DEEP SPACE) he handles the same theme of equality between man and our "little brothers." As he sums it up:

"For all had passed through the many eons. Some had leaped ahead, some lagged behind. But several of the laggards had put on last moment spurts -- because of late functioning of natural laws -- and the impact upon their various kinds of the one kind called Man.

"Until they had breasted the tape together." (Bantam, p. 53)

Or, as Miss Norton puts it in CATSEYE:

"We are of one kind, plains rider." Then Nerne looked beyond the man to the animals. "So shall we all be in the end." (Ace, p. 176)

JUDGMENT ON JANUS (which begins in the Dipple of Korwar, as does CATSEYE) has a working agreement between the Iftin and the quarrin, a vaguely owl-like bird that can communicate mentally with the Iftin. In THE X FACTOR, Diskan Fentress seems to almost fall under the domination of the "Brothers-in-Fur," and their communication is rather uncertain.

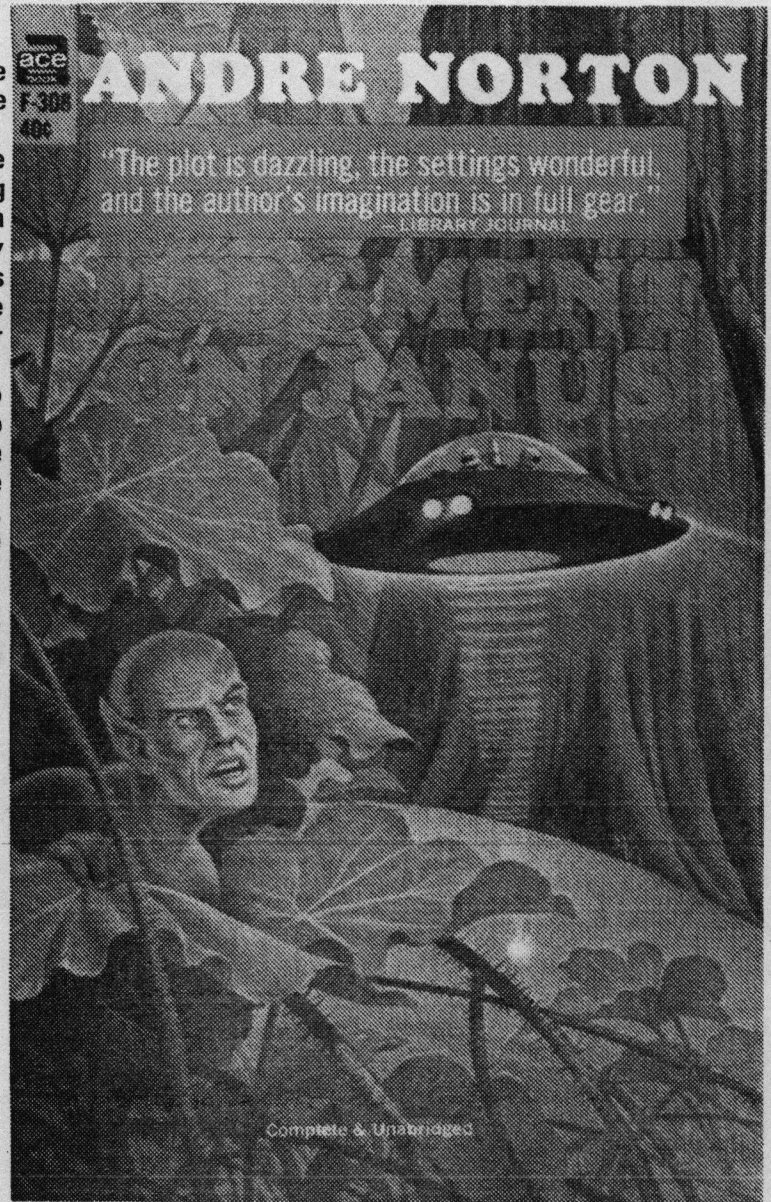
ORDEAL IN OTHERWHERE, the sequel to STORM OVER WARLOCK, takes things a step further than equality. Shann Lantee and the wolverine Taggi (Togi is busy with the kids) are joined by Charis Nordholm and Tsstu, the curl-cat. Together they form a unit (almost the same as the mental fusion in Doc Smith's THE CHILDREN OF THE LENS, Astounding Science Fiction magazine, November, December 1947, January, February 1948) that can withstand all that the Power of the Wyverns can throw at them. (But even in the unit, the man is still "first among equals.")

In places, Norton's consistency is disturbing as she insists on attacking the computer of ten or fifteen years ago. But Miss Norton is true to her daemon wherever it leads her. She sees a nuclear war as our probable future and it or the threat of it is a part of all her near future stories except THE STARS ARE OURS. The crosstime series, the time trader series, and OPERATION TIME SEARCH take place in the calm before the storm and this blights THE DEFIANT AGENTS. Both STAR GUARD and PLAGUE SHIP note the changes wrought on Terra by such a war several hundred years past.

But her afterview is much too optimistic. Our civilization has delved deeply into the earth for the resources we now use. Let civilization collapse for very long and some of the resources needed to rebuild it will be out of reach. This is our main chance. Muff it, and most likely the stars will forever remain no more than points of light in the night sky.

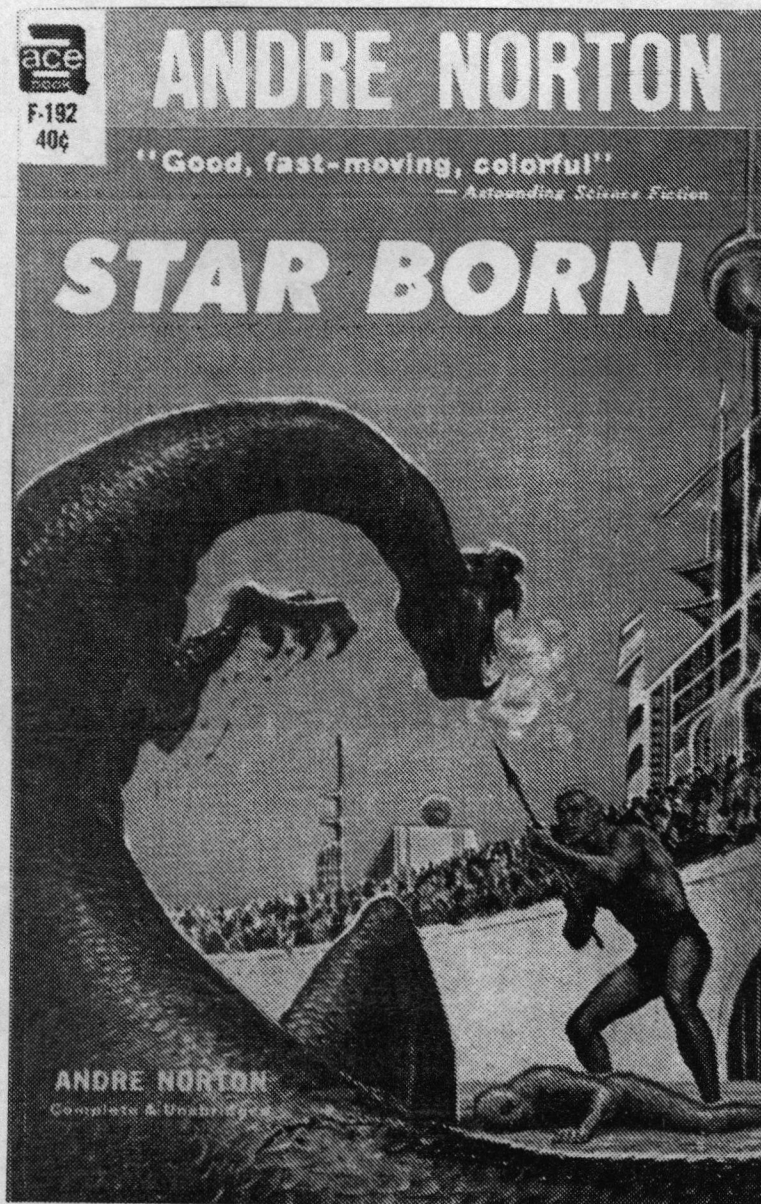
However, Miss Norton's main thrust is not in the area of science and technology, but in that of human society. While all her stories are good entertainment, most contain more. Most of the writers now considered great, from Shakespeare on, have considered it necessary to entertain as well as say

Norton's  
consistency  
is disturbing...





## relationship between man and machines...



something, but for some reason that is out of style today.

"No writer writes out of his having found the answer to the problem; he writes rather out of his having the problem and wanting a solution. The solution consists not of a resolution. It consists of the deeper and wider dimensions of conscience to which the writer is carried by virtue of his wrestling with the problem. We create out of a problem; the writer and the artist are not presenting answers but creating as an experience of something in themselves trying to work - 'to seek, to find and not to yield.' The contribution which is given to the world by the painting or the book is the process of the search." (LOVE AND WILL, Rollo May, pp. 170-1)

Miss Norton's main problem seems to be that of the relationship between man and his machines. And her attitude is fairly obvious. I'd hardly expect a Norton story featuring a planet-bound misfit who finally realizes his dream of becoming a star ship mechanic. There have been sympathetic characters that have dealt with machines, but not recently. Since GALACTIC DERELICK (1959) only Ali Kamil from the engine room of the Solar Queen in POSTMARKED THE STARS comes to mind. And he had played a strong part in the first two books of the series.

Miss Norton is rather unacquainted with the "hard sciences" and her earlier books suffer a bit with her attempts to go into detail. This was especially true of astronomy. Sol is off the charts, yet the "Sirius Worlds" are mentioned as a familiar part of history (THE LAST PLANET/STAR RANGERS, Ace, 1955, pp. 158, 170) while the ship is the "Vegan Starfire" (page 183) and the Hall of Leave-Taking was supposed to be on Alpha Centauri (page 171). NORTON'S STAR ATLAS gives Vega as 26 light years away, Sirius 9, and Alpha Centauri 4.3. With a galaxy around 100,000 light years wide, these are literally in our lap. And only Proxima Centauri is now closer than Alpha Centauri.

By THE STARS ARE OURS and following books, Miss Norton avoids the trap most beginning sf writers fall into, and coins most of her planet names, mostly from mythology.

Even this early, Miss Norton showed a marked distrust of what Gene Marine in AMERICA THE RAPED termed the engineering mentality. Those Others who inhabit a part of Astra and almost wiped themselves out were rather evil. In STAR BORN (1957), Astra is visited by Terran space travelers generations after the events of the first book.

"To Raf, the straight highways suggested something else. Master engineering, certainly. But a ruthlessness too, as if the builders, who refused to accept any modifications of their original plans from nature, might be as arrogant in other ways." (Ace, page 39)

In the battle between technology and nature, Miss Norton took a stand long before the great majority of us had any doubts. Miss Norton has little knowledge of technology and rarely tries to explain the scientific wonders in her stories. John Campbell,

whose death has left us all the poorer, once said something like, "If we really could explain it, we'd patent it." The less explanation, the less likely the science of the story is to date. But Andre Norton doesn't go into detail because she doesn't care. Technology is a necessary evil to get there for the adventure and to get some of the story to work. And the adventure is as much to mold her universe to her views as to entertain.

Two of the most extreme nature vs. technology novels are JUDGMENT ON JANUS and its sequel, VICTORY ON JANUS. In this story the Iftin race have left "traps" that change humans sympathetic to nature into Iftin. Their lives are bound with nature and the massive trees. Technology becomes very distasteful. The chief villain turns out to be an alien computer.

The same type of villain turns up in STAR HUNTER, while a human built computer is the main evil in ICE CROWN. In both THE STARS ARE OURS and DARK PIPER where the computer performs a useful function, it isn't allowed any more scope than yesterday's model. In STAR RANGERS, a city computer directs a robot to destroy the heroes.

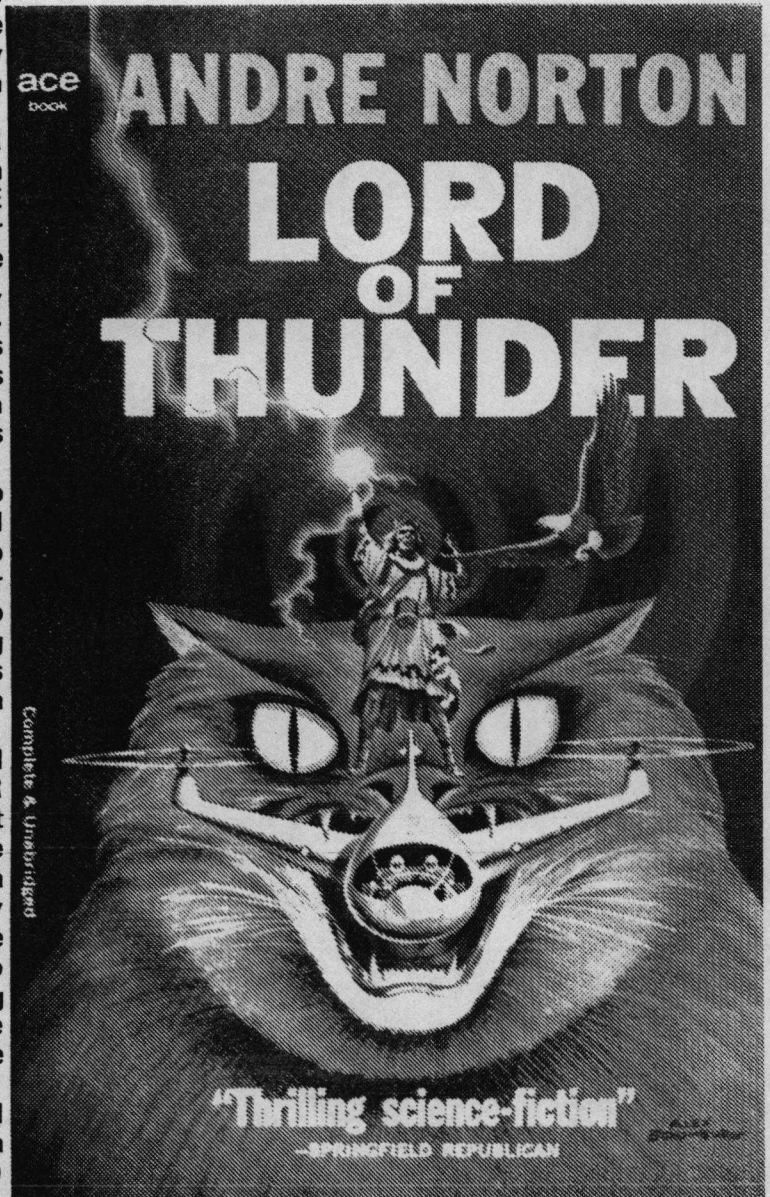
No, Norton does not like computers. Which is really a pity. Out of all the tools that man has created, the computer may well prove to be even better than the scientific method. Its potential is barely scratched today.

In Florida, Miss Norton lives on the border of two countries. She has been charged by both for local taxes due to a "computer error" (a term used to cover a computer operator or computer programmer error). She was told that it was too much trouble to correct the programming and to ignore the wrong tax. Which could have led to legal problems. "...It is this sort of thing which arouses hatred of having a machine in control."

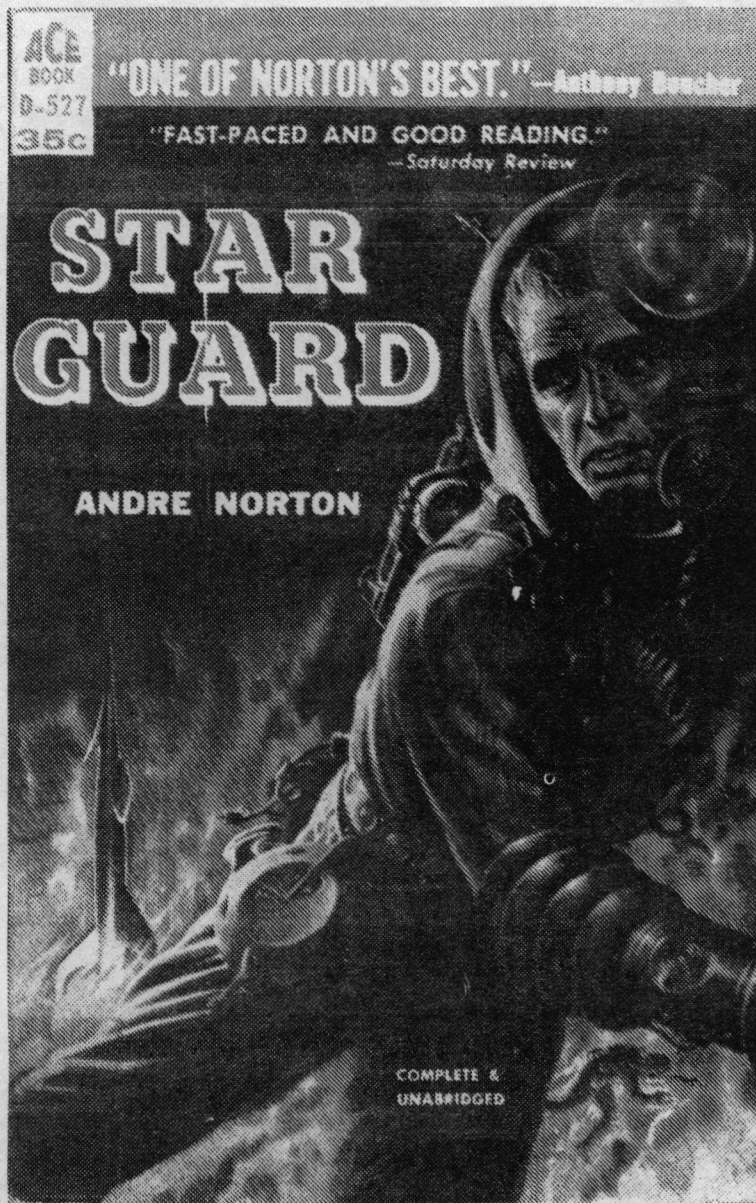
But the point is that the machine is in control only in the way that it is told to be. In STAR RANGERS, the computer was programmed to shoot any trespassers (Ace, 1955, page 68). All that people blame on the computer, which is getting to be a symbol of technological oppression, is due to lazy programming. A computer can be made responsive enough so that every child can have a private tutor to supplement his teacher. But the programming barring a breakthrough would take a vast effort. Is the machine to blame for our refusing to take the time and expense to make it responsive?

Miss Norton sees no marriage of science and human powers. "One had to be anti-tech to be a Beast Master." (LORD OF THUNDER, page 120) "But even so much a modification as a dart gun -- that meant careful preparation in thinking patterns. We could not ally with a machine!" (SORCERESS OF THE WITCH WORLD, page 126) So it should not be a surprise after traversing all the magical horrors of the Witch World universe has to offer to find that the ultimate depth is a world from an environmentalist's nightmare where a degenerate humanity fights against men incorporated with machines both using weapons of advanced

Norton does  
not like  
computers...



2½ billion  
people would  
probably starve...



technology.

An interesting treatment of the theme occurs in Roger Zelazny's *JACK OF SHADOWS* where technology is relatively untainted and human powers largely harnessed to evil ends. Jack of Shadows runs afoul of the Lord of Bats and he retreats to tap day-side technology (again, a computer) and harness it to his magic. In doing so, he destroys his world so that a better one can be rebuilt on its foundations, utilizing technology.

Even the biological technologies are usually not for Miss Norton. In *THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD*, delving too deeply in magic (?) to create humanoid races and to gain knowledge is condemned. In *WARLOCK OF THE WITCH WORLD*, one of the characters is still considered within the pale since he "...had for a tutor in his childhood one of the few remaining miracle workers who had set a limit on his own studies." (page 27) But Dinzil went on from there and he turns out to be the chief villain of the story.

In her only fall from grace, *STAR GUARD* (1955) has the bodies of the mercenary group being adapted to the conditions of the Planet Fronn while in flight to that world. Yet they show no discomfort on returning to Terra, despite no mention of reverse conditioning. After this, she ignores adverse planetary conditions.

After considering the possibilities set forth in Gordon Rattray Taylor's *THE BIOLOGICAL TIME BOMB*, one is tempted to agree that there are things the human race shouldn't mess with at its present level of maturity. "Science and our social habits are out of step. And the cure is no deeper either. We must learn to match them. And there is no way of learning this unless we learn to understand both... So however we might sigh for Samuel Butler's panacea in *EREWON*, simply to give up all machines, there is no point in talking about it... It is just not practical, nationally or internationally." ("Science, the Destroyer or Creator" by J. Brokowski in *MAN ALONE: ALIENATION IN MODERN SOCIETY*, edited by Eric & Mary Josephson; page 284.)

Going back to nature has its temptations. But it would mean that at present 2 or 2½ billion people would probably starve -- most of them in the cities. That is a rather high price to pay.

Miss Norton's reasons for disliking machines tie in with her liking for medieval settings. In her words: "Yes, I am anti-machine. The more research I do, the more I am convinced that when western civilization turned to machines so heartily with the Industrial Revolution in the early nineteenth century, they threw away some parts of life which are now missing and which the lack of leads to much of our present frustration. When a man had pride in the work of his own hands, when he could see the complete product he had made before him, he had a satisfaction which no joys of easier machine existence could or can give.

"Why all the accent on hobbies and do-it-yourself projects now -- so many of them futile? Simply because in his productive work a man can no longer take any pride. Read some of the accounts of the old

Guilds and I think you can see what I mean. Before a man could practice any trade then, he had to prove to his peers that he could do it. Very few people now have any pride in what they do -- they are slipshod in a piece of labor because they cannot see that good workmanship in the day of the machine means anything more than poor.

"This extends on now from the work itself -- there is a wave of bad manners, of outright discourtesy in stores and businesses -- no worker identifies with his job enough to actually want to produce something better -- he feels a part of a machine, vast, impersonal, not the master of it. And the more we deal so with machines -- for example the more computers are brought in to rule our lives -- with their horrible mistakes and no one to appeal to to correct them -- then the more alienated man will become.

"So I make my machines the villains -- because I believe that they are so; that man was happier --if less geared to a swift overproductive life-- when he used his own personal skills and did not depend upon a machine. And I fear what is going to happen if more and more computers take over ruling us.

"This will doubtless seem like rank heresy to you who are training to use such machines -- but with the growth of the impersonal attitude towards life which these foster, there is going to be more and more anger and frustration. And where it will all end perhaps not even a writer of s-f can foresee."

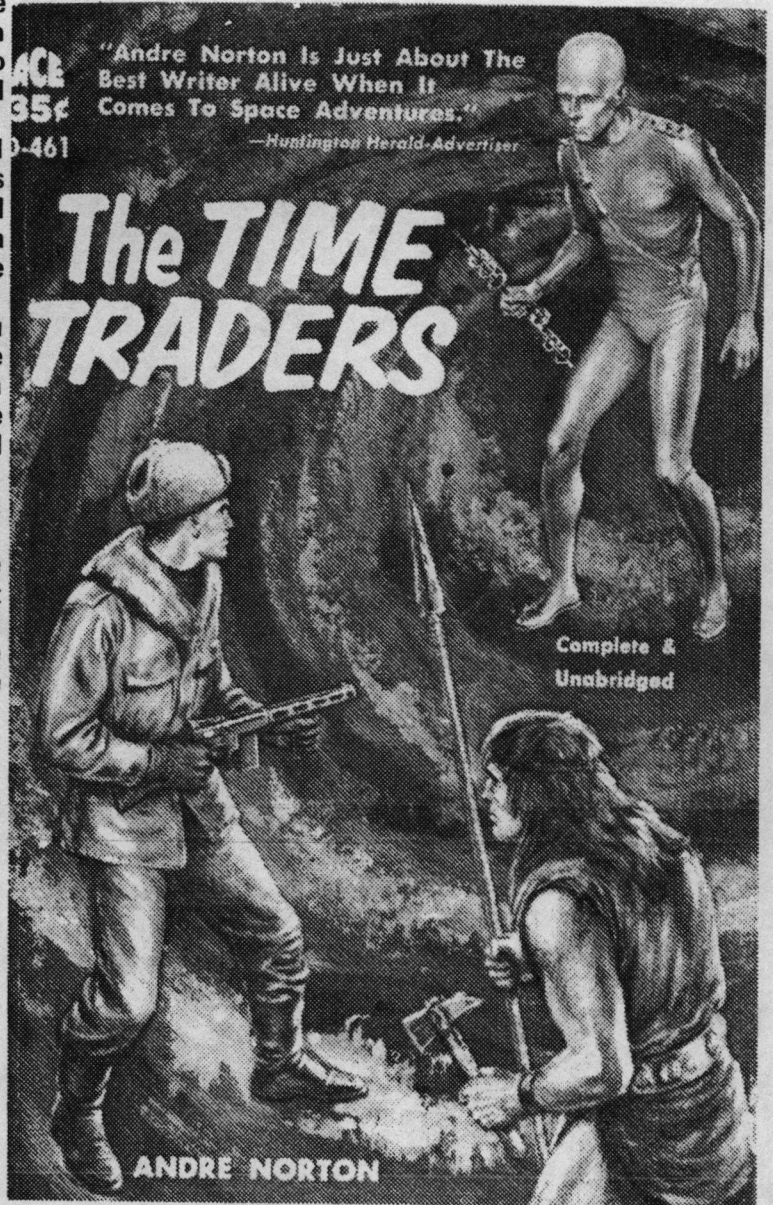
This is indeed a damning indictment of our age, and there is enough truth in it so that it bites deeply. It is over-reacting -- and placing the blame in the wrong place. We have definitely lost something, but this is the fault of those who lacked foresight and took the easy way of fitting the much more adaptable man to the machine. "Now some men...have made better tools, tools so good that they can turn and cut the maker. But that is not the fault of the tools..." (CATSEYE, Ace, page 141)

"The enemy is not a devil out there called technology -- he is Man, the creature we are trying to save. Only because he has become more conscious of his powers is he capable of so much folly and evil." (THE CHILDREN OF FRANKENSTEIN: A PRIMER ON MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN VALUES by Herbert J. Muller, page 331)

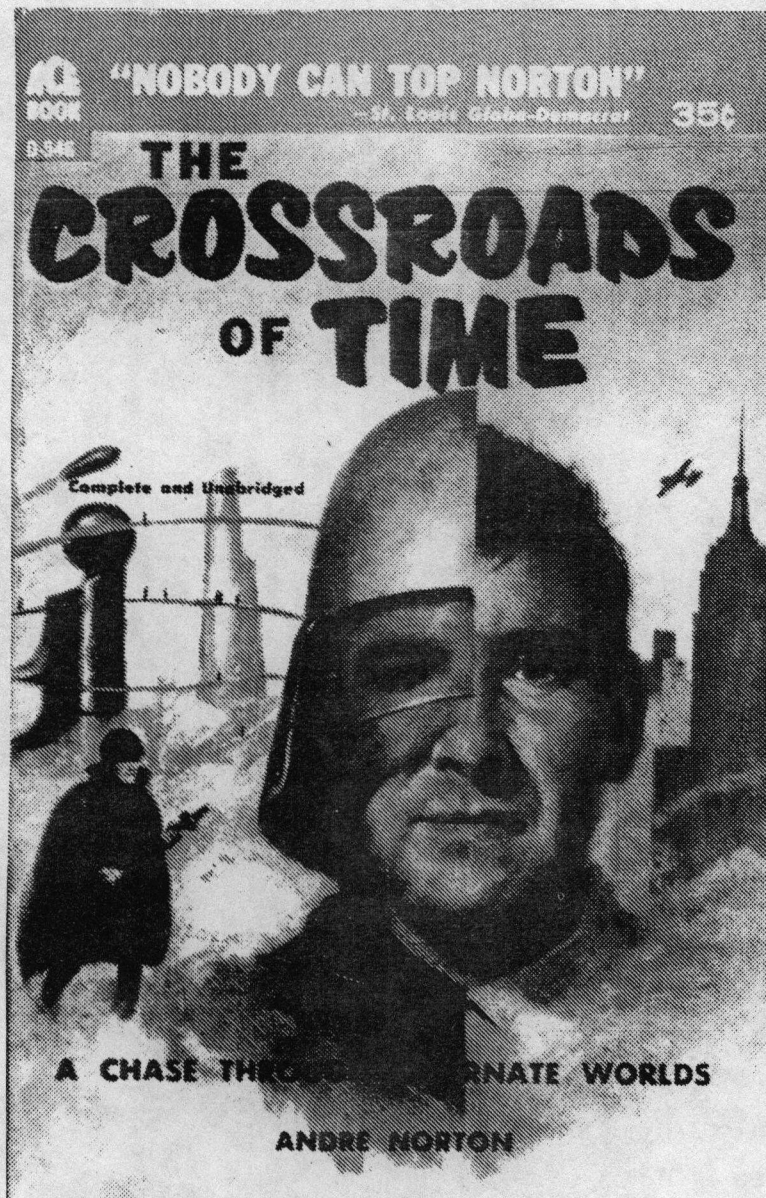
THE THIRD FORCE by Frank Goble concerns the theories of "humanistic psychology," mainly those of Abraham Maslow. Behaviorism and Freudian psychology are both looks at a limited part of man; humanistic psychology tries to view the whole man. Instead of studying people who have mental problems, Maslow started with "self-actualizing" people whom he felt had adjusted the best to living. The second part of this excellent popularization is concerned with proof of these theories.

"The president of an electronic manufacturing company challenged Dr. Argyris to prove his contention that the average worker was giving the company only about a third of his full capability. Argyris set up a one year experiment in which twelve female electronics assemblers were given individual

"The enemy  
is not a devil..."



Our  
our culture  
vastly  
overstresses  
economic values...



responsibility for assembling an entire electronic unit. Instead of efficiency experts telling the assemblers how to do the job, they were free to develop their own methods. Furthermore, each of the twelve girls was to inspect the finished product, sign her name to the product, and then handle related correspondence and complaints from customers.

"The first month of the experiment was not encouraging. Productivity dropped 30% below that of the traditional assembly-line method, and worker morale was also low. It was not until the end of the eighth week that production started up. But by the end of the fifteenth week production was higher than ever before, and overhead costs of inspection, packing, supervision, and engineering were way down. Production continued significantly higher than that of assembly-line methods for the balance of the one year experiment. Rework costs dropped 94%, and customer complaints dropped from 75% a year to only 3%.

"...When the twelve girls were returned to the routine assembly line, three of them were relieved by the decrease in responsibility. The remaining nine found it hard to adjust to the old routine; they missed the challenge of greater freedom with greater responsibility." (Pocket Books, pages 186-7)

Other cases with about the same results were also covered. The most significant point is not the economic factors --our culture vastly overstresses economic values-- but the improvement in workmanship. With almost complete control over what they were doing and the faith in them showed by giving them responsibility for the product, the women seemed to care about what they were doing and felt that it --and they-- were of value. Of course, this will not work with very complex products. But they can and probably should be broken into sub-assemblies. One auto plant is totally automated at the moment. All should be.

While the Society for Creative Anachronism wastes most of their energy on costuming and mock duels, they have the right idea in trying to select out of that bygone era what we need today. "Time was and it was all time up to 200 years ago, when the whole of life went forward in the family, in a circle of loved, familiar faces, known and fondled objects, all to human size. That time has gone forever. It makes us very different from our ancestors." ("The World We Have Lost" by Peter Laslett in MAN ALONE, page 93) (While overstated and overlooking the brutality of the period, and "tyranny of the family," the point is certainly valid.)

"In a society of hereditary privilege, an individual of humble position might not have been wholly happy with his lot, but he had never had reason to look forward to any other fate. Never having had prospects of betterment, he could hardly be disillusioned. He entertained no hopes, but neither was he nagged by ambition. When the new democracies removed the ceiling on expectations, nothing could have been more satisfying for those with the energy, ability and emotional balance to

meet the challenge. But to the individual lacking in these qualities, the new system was fraught with danger. Lack of ability, lack of energy or lack of aggressiveness led to frustration and failure. Obsessive ambition led to emotional breakdown. Unrealistic ambitions led to bitter defeats.

"No system which issues an open invitation to every youngster to 'shoot high' can avoid facing the fact that room at the top is limited. Donald Paterson reports that four-fifths of our young people aspire to high-level jobs, of which there are only enough to occupy one-fifth of our labor force. Such figures conceal a tremendous amount of human disappointment." (EXCELLENCE: CAN WE BE EQUAL AND EXCELLENT TOO? by John Gardner (now head of Common Cause), pages 19-20)

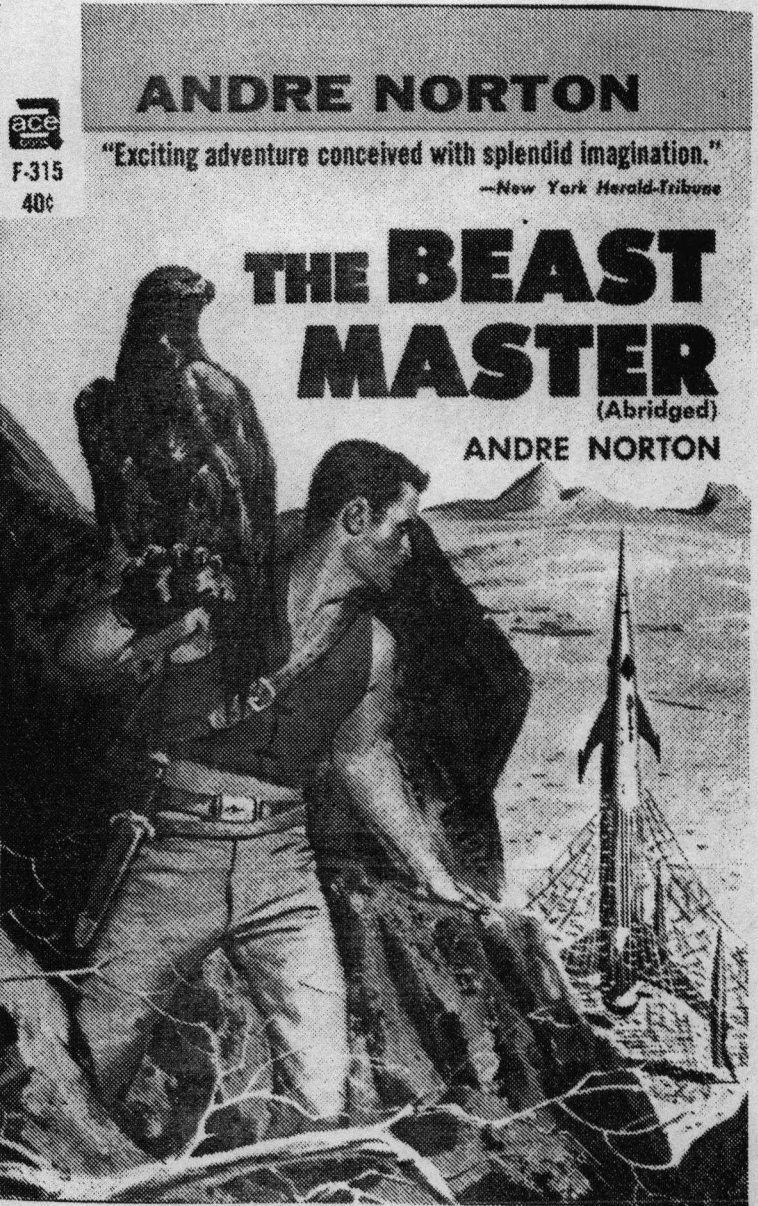
Here is a major social problem that has little to do with machines. Worrying about machines is worrying about an effect rather than a cause. The answer is remodeling society. Gardner's solution to the problem he stated above is for our society to cultivate excellence in all walks of life. "An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water." (EXCELLENCE, page 86)

Our culture is also burdened by what Alvin Toffler called "Future Shock" in the book of the same name. Just the rate of change that an individual faces will have an adverse effect on his health if it increases. (Pages 291-6) He also points out that technology can free man. "This is the point that our social critics --most of whom are technologically naive-- fail to understand: It is only primitive technology that imposes standardization. Automation, in contrast, frees the path to endless, blinding, mind-numbing diversity." (Page 236) For example, the computer designed apartment house, Watergate East, in Washington, D.C., has no continuous straight lines, no two floors alike and 167 different floor plans for 240 apartments. (Page 237)

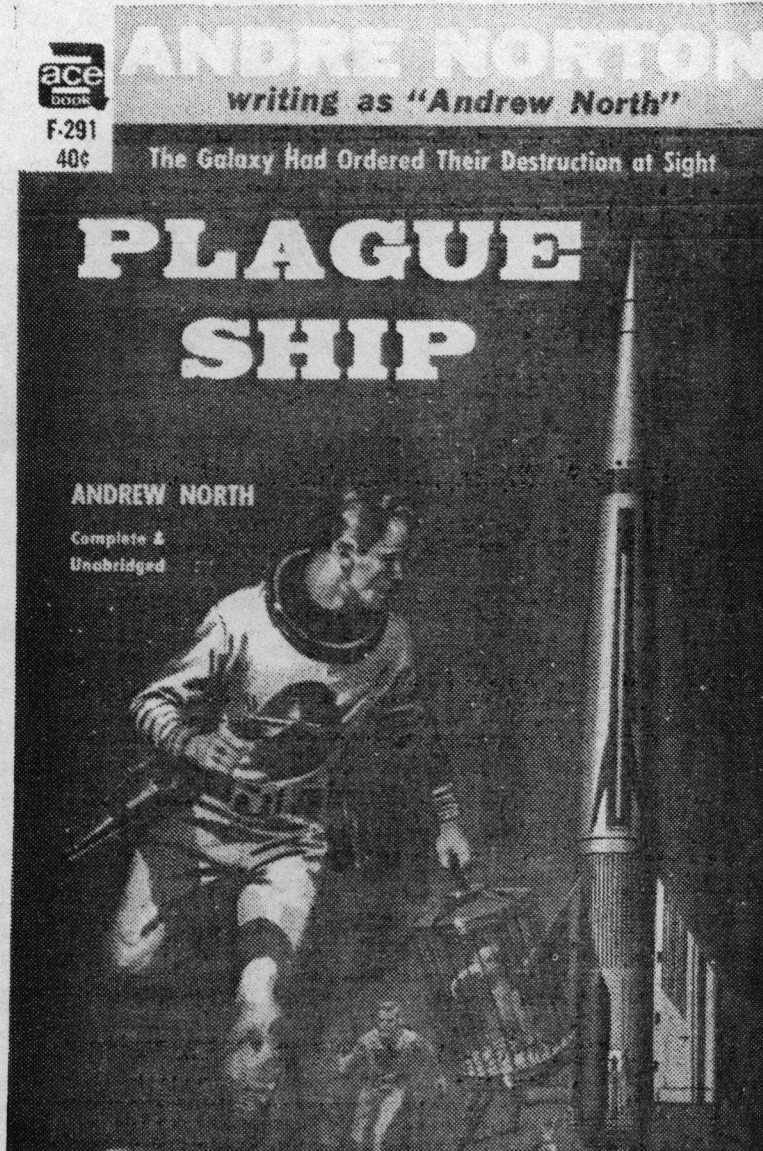
Just as Norton's computers are a parody of the ones we now have, so are the people of the future's attitude toward machines. "The assigner sent him and it was supposed to be always right in its selection." (Troy Horan in CATSEYE, page 9) "All his life, he had relied on machines operating, of course, under the competent domination of men trained to use them properly. He understood the process of the verifier, had seen it at work. At the Guild headquarters there were no records of its failure; he was willing to believe it was infallible." (Ras Hume in STAR HUNTER, page 29) Naturally with that kind of build-up, the verifier fouls up royally.

STAR HUNTER, while just apparently written so that Ace would have a short novel to fit opposite the abridged BEAST MASTER, is a meaty book for attitudes. Besides rubbing our noses in the fallibility

The society  
which scorns  
excellence...



reduced the  
value of the  
individual...



of "infallible" machines, we get her feelings on computers. Such phrases as "mechanical life of a computer tender" (page 15) and "but to sit pressing buttons when a light flashed hour after hour --" (page 85) bring out her limited view. There is another reference to button pushing in response to flashing lights in the ultra-scientific hell of the Witch World. (pages 131-2)

STAR HUNTER also has the Patrol winking at the mental conditioning of Vye Lansor so that they can net the Veep, Wass. Afterward, of course, he is offered compensation. In ICE CROWN, morality extends to not interfering with the conditioned people of Clio, but no attempt is made to release them from conditioning. In this the successors of the Psychocrats are as bad since they also keep the people of Clio for observation. In THE ZERO STONE, Murdoc Jern notes that "the Patrol ever takes the view that the good of many is superior to the good of the individual." (Ace, page 155)

Norton consistently views the future as one where the complexity of science and technology have reduced the value of the individual. But the good of many is in the long run the good of the individual. As John Gardner points out in SELF-RENEWAL: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE INNOVATIVE SOCIETY, our cultures become rigid and decay when they cease to allow a wide range of freedom to the individual.

So Miss Norton is actually wrestling with the prime problem, that of human worth and purpose. The question of human purpose has led to reams and reams of prose, most of it junk. Miss Norton is right in saying that it is not to be machine tenders, but she is vague on what human purpose should be. Arthur C. Clarke in his "beautiful vision" of the future in PROFILES OF THE FUTURE feels that "...in the long run the only human activities really worthwhile are the search for knowledge, and the creation of beauty. This is beyond argument; the only point of debate is which comes first." (Bantam, page 87)

Margaret Mead would certainly disagree. She states that automation should result in people doing only "...human tasks -- caring for children, caring for plants and trees and animals, caring for the sick and the aged, the traveler and the stranger." ("The Challenge of Automation to Education and Human Values" in AUTOMATION, EDUCATION, AND HUMAN VALUES, edited by W. W. Brickman and S. Lehrer, page 69)

And I have little doubt which Miss Norton would side with. But either is too restrictive; we need a synthesis of the two. The important thing is to establish a society where all individuals can realize as much of their potential as possible. Since our society comes the closest -- despite its many faults -- we should start improving it.

As Herbert J. Muller points out (THE CHILDREN OF FRANKENSTEIN, pages 369-83), utopias are out of style in this era as they tend to be too simplistic and too rigid. We get glimpses of a Norton utopia in JUDGMENT ON JANUS and VICTORY ON JANUS as well as scattered places throughout her books. The most appealing might well be the Valley

of Green Silences which we see very little considering that parts of three Witch World novels take place there. While all her desirable places are those of nature, it is well to remember that man might not be man as we know him without his links to nature.

In STAR RANGERS, they ponder the reason why the cities are deserted.

"It seems to me," began Fylh, "that on this world there was once a decision to be made. And some men made it one way, and some another. Some went out" --his claws indicated the sky-- "while others chose to remain -- to live close to the earth and allow little to come between them and the wilds --"

"Decadence -- degeneracy --" broke in Smitt.

But Zacita shook her head. "If one lives by machines, by the quest for power, for movement, yes. But perhaps to these it was only a moving on to what they thought a better way of life." (Ace, 1955, page 169)

The question today is not whether we can do without technology, but how much we can compromise with nature. Like the Orbsleon in UNCHARTED STARS (page 165), we shall have to learn to live by using technology to assist nature.

As Charis Nordholm explains to the Wyvern Gidaya in ORDEAL IN OTHERWHERE, "Four have become one at will, and each time we so will it, that one made of four is stronger. Could you break the barrier we raised here while we were one, even though you must have sent against us the full Power? You are an old people, Wise One, and with much learning. Can it not be that some time, far and long ago, you took a turning into a road which limited your power in truth? Peoples are strong and grow when they search for new roads. When they say, 'There is no road but this one which we know well, and always must we travel it,' then they weaken themselves and dim their future.

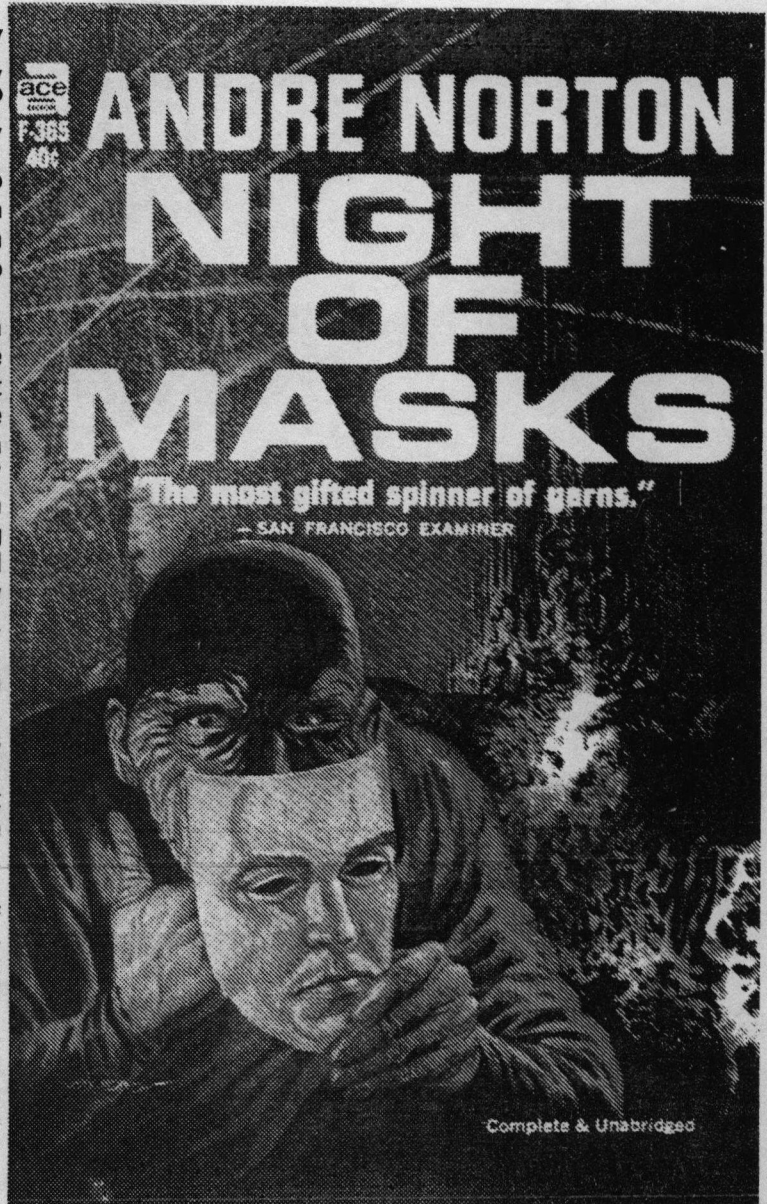
"Four have made one and yet each of that four is unlike another. You are all of a kind in your Power. Have you never thought that it takes different threads to weave a real pattern -- that you use different shapes to make the design of Power?" (Ace, page 188)

It is impossible as far as we are along the way of the machine to leave it without untold human misery and suffering. But we must traverse the byways that will make the most of our humanity.

In her horror at the machine forcing men to be its tenders, she overlooks that machines have taken much drudgery off our shoulders and can free us from much more routine labor. When she turns her back on the machine, she ignores all the potential good that it can do us.

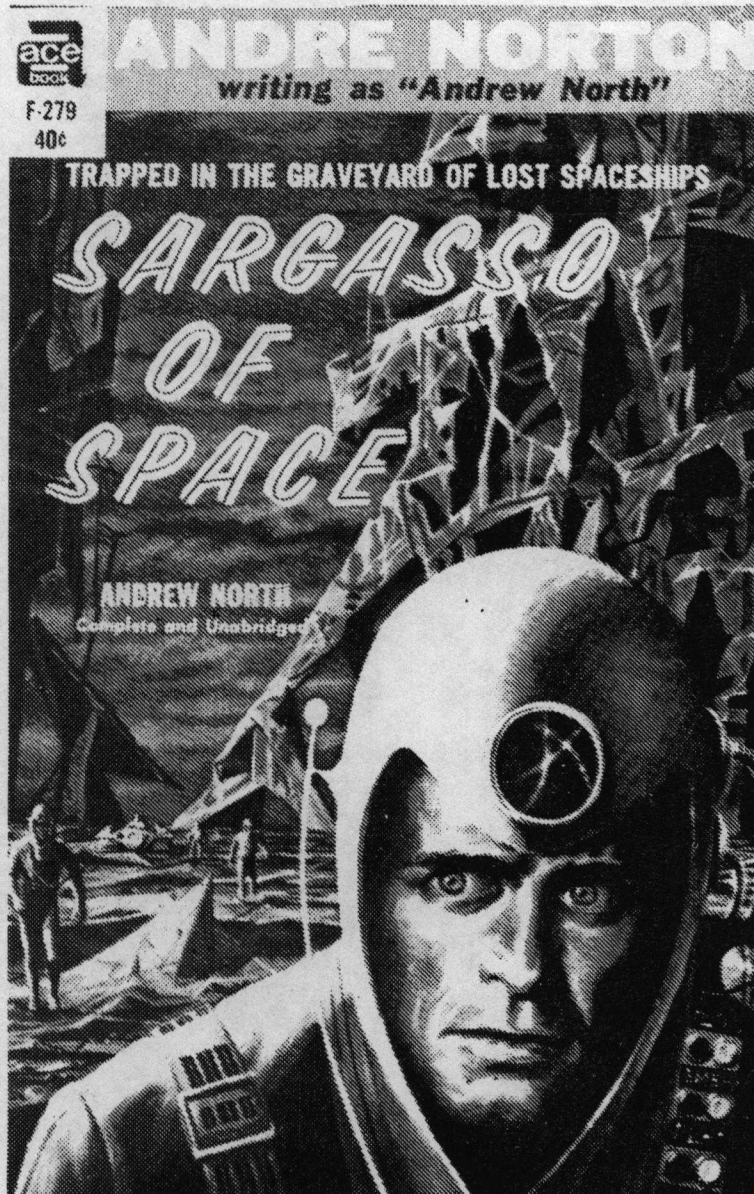
"The point was brought home to me recently when I visited an academic friend. He sat in an air-conditioned study. Behind him was a high-fidelity phonographs and record library that brought him the choicest music of three centuries. On his desk before him was the microfilm of an ancient Egyptian papyrus that he had obtained by a routine request through his university library. He described a ten day trip he had just taken to London, Paris and Cairo to

technology  
to assist  
nature...





The potential  
is almost  
limitless...



confer on recent archaeological discoveries. In short, modern technology and social organization were serving him in spectacular ways. And what was he working on at the moment? An essay for a literary journal on the undiluted evil of modern technology and large-scale organization." (SELF-RENEWAL, page 62)

We must face the fact that while much of what we have is tainted, it is also much more on the positive side than any age before us has had. The potential is almost limitless. If we fail, it will not be because "...science, too, had its demons and dark powers," (VICTORY ON JANUS, Ace, page 190), but because our nerve has failed us and we let technology run wild.

Even ARthur C. Clarke pauses in his optimistic view of the future to admit that "...Sir George Darwin's prediction that ours would be a golden age compared with the aeons of poverty to follow, may well be perfectly correct. In this inconceivably enormous universe, we can never run out of energy or matter. But we can all too easily run out of brains." (PROFILES OF THE FUTURE; Bantam, page 155)

And just as the potential exists for a heaven beyond our wildest dreams, so does the potential for a hell worse than our bleakest nightmares. Science and technology are amoral and we must fit the morals to them. If we fail, not only will we foot the bill, but many generations to follow.

"If there is a long chance that we can replace brutality with reason, inequality with justice, ignorance with enlightenment, we must try. And our chances are better if we have not convinced ourselves that the cause is hopeless. All effective action is fueled by hope. Pessimism may be an acceptable attitude in literary and artistic circles, but in the world of action it is the soil in which desperate and extreme solutions germinate, among them reaction and brutal oppression.

"It is not given to man to know the worth of his efforts. It is arrogant of the individual to imagine that he has grasped the larger design of life and discovered that effort is worthless, especially if that effort is calculated to accomplish some immediate increment in the dignity of a fellow human. Who is he to say it is useless? His business as a man is to try." (THE RECOVERY OF CONFIDENCE by John W. Gardner, Pocket Books, pages 84-5)

But no matter how deeply Miss Norton's despair in the present and the future is germinating, she never counsels quitting or even considering it. "It is better not to be met by pessimism when the situation already looks dark." (UNCHARTED STARS, page 230) Her heroes and heroines do not tamely bow their heads and accept their lot in a society that does not fit them. Some, like Diskan Fentress, may not seem to be concerned with others, but come through when the chips are down. Even if Norton's future societies do not value the individual, her sympathetic characters do.

Norton's future societies usually combine high ideals with a lack of concern for the people in it, an

extrapolation of today's society that seems to be more comfortable treating men largely as interchangeable parts. And, as our society worsens, so does her view of the future. CATSEYE (1961) marks the rise of organized crime. By NIGHT OF MASKS (1964), crime syndicates had gone interstellar. THE ZERO STONE (1968) and UNCHARTED STARS show the Patrol reacting by trampling individual rights in their efforts to stamp out crime.

In SARGASSO OF SPACE, the Free Traders were recruited from the trainees that the Combines depended upon, too. By DREAD COMPANION (1970) and EXILES OF THE STARS, the Free Traders are almost a separate race, rigidly controlling themselves on the planets, with their women and the declining feline race kept on their asteroid bases. It is almost as though the cats began to die out as their masters became less human, less linked to nature.

In the future, most of Miss Norton's work will probably be mainly the more aware and less hopeful novels such as DARK PIPER and DREAD COMPANION. But I shall miss seeing more light-hearted optimistic adventures. After all, anyone can be aware. But few can give us an Astra or a Witch World.

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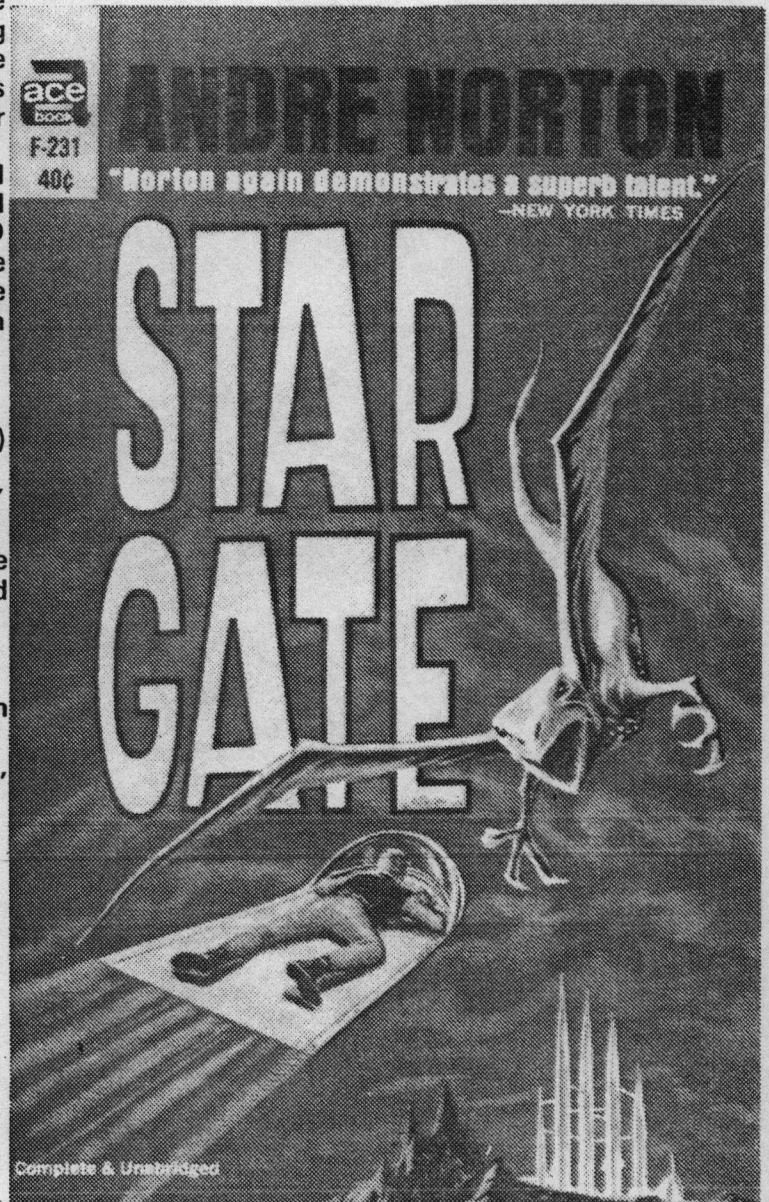
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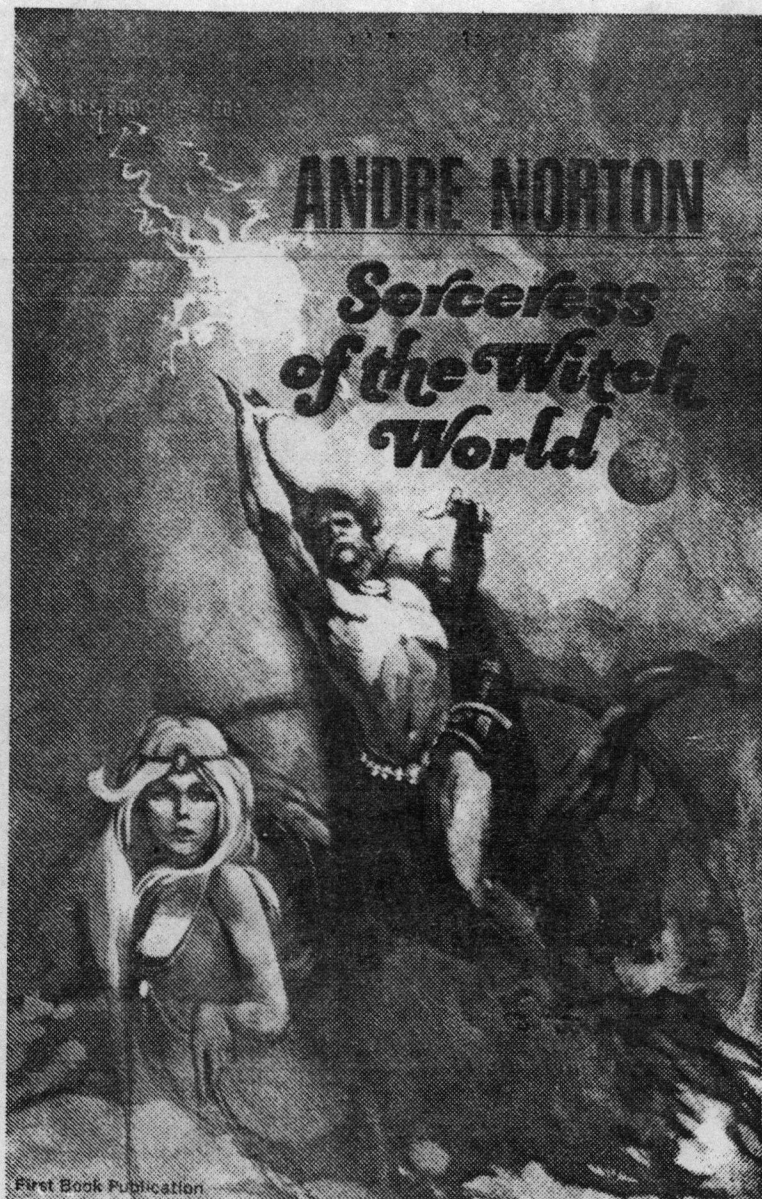
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