

From: Jan<sup>1</sup> Marquis, South Brooklyn Branch,  
Cleveland Public Library

Aug. 1975

Subject: Andrié Norton's Books

Delving into More Junior Authors, one catches an insight into the life and purpose of Andrié (Alice Mary) Norton. It is revealing to note her interest in high school, in addition to contributing to the Collinwood Spotlight (in Cleveland, Ohio), was history and that history coupled with legend prodded her to journey back into historical periods in her cycle story hours as a Children's Librarian, ultimately publishing Rogue Reynard and Huron of the Horn.

Eventually she contributed four historical novels for older children and young adults: Follow the Dream (settlement of Maryland); Scarface (piracy in the West Indies); Yankee Privateer (a Marine during the Revolution); and Stand to Horse! (Apache wars during the late 1850's).

What is more logical than, with the special subject interest of history, not only to revert backward into time but also to project forward? It was 1951 when she published her first science fiction adventure - Star Man's Son. The term "Space Opera" is, indeed, most appropriate for the science-fiction story.

The following "Star" titles of future history are listed (although not found in our own branch juvenile collection): Star Rangers, Star Born, Star Guard, Star Gate, The Stars Are Ours. Also - the "Solar Queen" series about the adventures of the crew of a tramp freighter of the future: Sargasso of Space and Plague Ship. In addition she has contributed Time Traders and Sea Siege and edited four anthologies: Bullard of the Space Patrol, Space Service, Space Pioneers, and Space Police.

It is noteworthy that some of the "Star" books and one of the "Solar Queen" have been translated into German, Italian, and Spanish. This proves that the demand for

science-fiction stories perhaps predicting future years is very great in other parts of the world.

As is emphasized, a researched background in history is a "fine tool" for a writer of science fiction, "for history repeats itself and the colonies of a mother planet might revolt in an American Revolution of some future time."

This is truly a ponderous, ominous thing to consider.

In reviewing Star Man's Son, 2250 A.D. by Andre Norton, Russ Novotny, Our Lady of Good Counsel School - Grade 6 entering Grade 7 - commented: "I thought the book was written very well. The author chose words that made me see pictures of what was going on at the time in the future. The story was filled with excitement from beginning to end, and action-packed with every chapter having something new happen."

"I like history - not only past and present, but wonder what the future will bring. Perhaps I might someday live upon

another planet. What scientific problems will I face? What type of people would I confront? Would I be happier than now on Earth? The author makes me believe I'm really there through her imagination. There are no dull descriptions like some books I've read.

"After reading this book, even though it takes a good reader (like me), I think the story was very good and the scenes were described well. I also better keep on reading more science-fiction to make up my mind whether I'd really like living on another planet or not."

Not only do young readers enjoy moving forward in time, but back in time, also. Andre Norton's Octagon Magic appeals especially to girls. A copy was standing on the desk at the branch and a number of summer reading club members requested it. They agreed that the magic ingredients are all in the book. Young Lorrie Mallard, a girl with whom they can identify; grandmother or great-aunt images of

Miss Ashmeade and Hallie in Octagon House; Sabina, the kitten (They love her); a doll house size Octagon House; and an adventure back in time with a younger Lotta Ashmeade: all delight them. The joy of Lorrie's gift of the dollhouse and its dolls to live at another time is shared by the readers. Moving from the present through the transitional Octagon House to the past adds to its appeal for girls.

One point to emphasize about André Norton's books is that she seems to have the ability to make the impossible seem believable. Her characterizations are convincing, narrative fine, imagination vivid, even though sometimes there is a bit too much detail or a slow start. However, in general, there is action-filled adventure all the way through each book. They are for mature readers - older children grades 6 and up, junior high, and young adult. Some titles are more difficult than others!

It is pertinent to note that although most of her science fiction stories have only heroes and no heroines, The Crystal Gryphon, an excellent literary contribution,

has a love interest for girls - between Kerovan and Joisan, while Ice Crown, even though with a somewhat complicated plot, introduces a girl heroine, Roane Hume, who destroys the machines and finally evolves as a free inhabitant of the planet.

Indeed, the author has transformed herself and inner thoughts to living in the future "with a reference shelf of spaceship projects and speculations at hand"; for has not Apollo Soyuz not offered another step forward in fostering added interest in the outer world - future time?

In Android at Arms the author introduces "alien settings and concepts". It commences slowly but eventually winds up with a confrontation between good and evil. There is some lack of continuity, however, as the characters move between planets and historical time periods trying to discover if they are Androids.

Breed to Come sets the scene as the earth in the future when an epidemic causes men to flee the polluted planet while the animals remaining evolve

more intelligent with each new generation. His Gamnages - from the cat people - who unifies his group against exiled men returning in a spaceship, adding to the excitement. Only very special, mature readers request this title. Some, however, when introduced to it, are fascinated by "the cat figure".

Catseye, while in Children's Literature Collection, is not at the branch. However, this could be used to follow up readers of Breed to Come since the hero, Troy, finds that he can talk to the animals and understand them, escaping with five of them and landing on another planet. This is, indeed, a "way out" science-fiction as the original reviewer has stated.

In the author's Dark Piper, the inhabitants of Beltane, a planet biological experimental station, find that explosions result in the isolation of the children, and after a period of time, only strange mutant creatures are found. One junior high boy interested in science and biology was fascinated by this story.

The title Dragon Magic, although mostly

fantasy, both contemporary and in the past, appeals not only because two key words are in the title, but also because the dust-covered puzzle that four American boys of different nationality backgrounds find in an old abandoned house provokes their imagination and search for adventure.

Fire Magic sees young Cory Adler lacking courage to confront the unknown on his uncle's ranch, but experiencing a realistic dream where animals have human intelligence.

It is the dream - finding his way out of it - that appeals to some older science-fiction fans who are quite fascinated. The book has a limited reading audience, but those who are enthused about it find its skillful narrative and rich imagination rewarding.

Operation Time Search appeals to a select group because the hero is projected into prehistory where he assists in the defeat of the evil ruler of Atlantis. While



not one of the author's best, with forces of good and evil not well defined, there is a call for The Search for Atlantis and perhaps this title can be a follow-up.

Beast Master is another science-fiction in which a youth, Hosteen Storm of Navajo ancestry, is able to communicate with animals, thus qualifying as a Beast Master on the planet Terre, then migrating to Armor with the animal team. This is also in adult, but while well written with fast action is rather difficult. It appeals only to the very sophisticated older reader.

Andre Norton's Huon of the Horn while excellently adapted from the Charlemagne saga, and narrating about Huon, once banished from the kingdom until completing different tasks, is an older title and is used but occasionally for a literature student.

Key out of Time, exploration of the deserted planet Havaka by three agents: a Polynesian girl and two dolphins traveling

via a time machine, assumes popularity status greater than some of the other titles because young readers can identify with characters in relation to some contemporary films.

Ordeal Elsewhere introduces young Cheri Nordholm, who is forced to retain contact with the female-controlled people on Warlocks. This could be a sequel to Storm over Warlock - with dreams and thought communications. It is not fast-moving enough, however, and holds only a minimal amount of junior highers' interest.

Lord of Thunder is action-packed. As companions on Hosteen Storm's mission to the planet Arzor, he has an African eagle and his cat. This book sparks enthusiasm through exciting adventures and is a good one to use in book talks to grade 6 - Junior High

Night of Masks relates how young Niki Kolherne, with a disfigured face, joins a gang of criminals attempting to kidnap a lad named Vandy, who possesses pertinent

information stored in his subconsciousness. It is Niki and Tandy who finally face up to a dangerous world. This book has the special ingredients: intrigue, lively action, and splendid characterization that make it a science-fiction book in demand.

Quest Crosstime chalks up another one for girls' representation in science-fiction! When Marfy and Marva, twin sisters, become separated on Planet Uroon, Marfy joins with Blake Walker as they become stranded on a terrain of giant turtles and lizards. The Children's Literature Department review compares the plot "after the manner of Kingsley's Westward Ho.

In Storm over Warlock the thought control of a weird race's female leaders eventually govern two Terrans and involverses from a Surrey Party on the planet Warlock. Imagination runs rampant as dreams compete with truth. For mature readers,

Uncharted Stars unravels the tale about Murdock Jern's search for the source and origin of the Zero Stone, a

gem of mystical powers, found in the first book Zero Stone. The novel moves faster than Zero Stone and some mature readers do read it independently. The Zero Stone reveals a gem apprentice's tracking down a murderer throughout outer space with a ring, the zero stone holding the answer to the mystery. Detailed description offers a challenge for a number of youthful science-fiction fans.

In the Children's Literature Department review of The Prince Commands ©1934 Miss E. L. Power notes: "The hero is 18... and beginning to rebel when he learns that he is to become King of Morvania. Many Graustarkian adventures, with sword fights, secret passages, wild rides, and revolution. There are no girls in the book. Might interest some of the young fellows, but not majority of readers. Style is vivid, plot improbable. The author is a member of the staff. Her work shows signs of promise." 1934

Truly, over the expanse of years, the author's prolific literary efforts

in science fiction illuminate the book scene for mature readers grade 6, junior high and up. A superb blend of fantasy and realism, with skilled narrative, tightly plotted, excellent characterization; all are ever-present in the works of this science-fiction author extraordinaire.

"Space-opera"-yes, science-fiction at its best by a prolific, distinguished author whose special interest in history becomes a perfect conveyance to project her thoughts into the future.

Sincerely,  
Jane Marquis