INTRODUCTION

Andre Norton's colorful, swift-moving science fiction adventures have pleased readers of all ages for the past three decades. This continuing delight has made her one of the most widely popular SF writers of all time. (A 1966 Analog magazine poll listed her as the eleventh of seventeen favorite authors.) Her books have sold millions of copies worldwide in nine languages and have enjoyed frequent reprints and reissues. She has received Hugo award nominations for Star Hunter (1961), Witch World (1963, republished by Gregg Press in 1977), and "Wizard's World" (1967). In 1977, she won the Gandalf Award, given in memory of J. R. R. Tolkien for lifetime achievement in fantasy.

The prolific and versatile Ms. Norton, a native of Cleveland who now makes her home in Florida, has authored nearly 80 novels and two dozen short stories and has edited six anthologies. She was a librarian prior to her retirement in 1950 and later an editor at Gnome Press for eight years. Although best known for her SF, she has also written gothic, mystery, suspense, and historical fiction. Her first novel, a romantic adventure entitled *The Prince Commands*, was written while she was still an undergraduate at Western Reserve University and published in 1934, but her first SF novel, *Star Man's Son/ Daybreak*, 2250 A.D., did not appear until 1952.

It was this professional beginning in the male-dominated action story field, not prejudice within SF itself, that prompted Alice Mary Norton to adopt the ambiguous first name "Andre" which is now legally hers. The truth about her sex has been a matter of public record for more than 20 years, although Gnome Press did request her to use the pseudonym "Andrew North" on three books written while in their employ.

Now available in library hardcover editions for the first time, these seven Space Adventure Novels of Andre Norton are representative examples of the author's early work. The first five occur within the same imaginary universe; the others are independent.

Sargasso of Space (1955), Plague Ship (1956), and Voodoo Planet (1959) narrate episodes in the apprenticeship of Dane Thorson, young assistant Cargo-Master on the Free Trader Solar Queen. (The fourth Thorson volume, Postmarked the Stars, 1969, is still in print from Harcourt, Brace, and is not part of the present set.) In each story, Thorson gains firmer acceptance from his crewmates. He helps them clean out a pirate den, stop an epidemic, and destroy an evil witch doctor.

Secret of the Lost Race (1959) relates young Joktar's struggle to escape from slavery on a frozen planet and discover the truth about his mysterious origins.

In Star Hunter (1961), interstellar criminals are foiled when Vye Lansor, their pawn in a fraud scheme, uproots the false memories they had implanted in him and survives alien mantraps on a game preserve world.

The Sioux Spaceman (1960) describes the successful efforts of trader-xenologist Kade Whitehawk to win the confidence of primitive aliens and equip them with the means of winning their freedom from civilized overlords.

In The Crossroads of Time (1956), college student Blake Walker is plucked out of contemporary America and swept through alternate Earths in pursuit of a psychotic would-be conqueror from another parallel world society. (The sequel, Quest Crosstime, 1965, is not included here.)

All these stories exemplify Norton's ability to create fascinating imaginary worlds. This skill is the fruit of her personal interest in the ways of life and thought among real human cultures past and present. She reads widely in archeology, mythology, anthropology, and history. Whether she is describing primitives like the Ikkinni In The Sioux Spaceman or more sophisticated peoples like the Salariki in Plague Ship, Norton's societies are plausible and appropriate for their settings. Her absorption in parapsychology and the occult infuses her SF with magic touches whose marvels survive rational explanation, as in Voodoo Planet, for example. She is also noted for her love of nature and animals, especially cats. Felines - pets, wild beasts, and intelligent aliens - abound in Norton's work (five of the seven stories in this set feature them). So Intensely fond is she of her own cats that she even dedicated a book to them (Breed to Come, 1972). One publisher's release describes her as "living under the careful management of her feline associates."

Overall, Norton has a decided preference for a mystical rather than scientific vision of reality. She values empathy over intellect. This attitude makes her fiction more accessible to readers who might be intimidated by the rigors of hard SF. She is a storyteller rather than a stylist, but the adventure tale attains a special sensitivity in her earnest and intuitive hands.

Norton's prime interest is not the daring deed in the exotic locale — however entertainingly described — but the hero's struggle for self-discovery, maturity, and freedom. For her, survival has moral ramifications and physical ordeals make possible psychic growth. The universality of these problems invites reader identifi-

cation and sympathy. Norton's ability to tap fundamental human concerns is the key to her popularity.

Now let us examine Norton's major themes in more detail. The most important of these is initiation, the developmental process every adolescent and every mythic hero experiences. In his study Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949), Joseph Campbell summarizes elements from all the world's hero-tales in a scenario called the monomyth: in the monomyth a young or obscure person, aided by helpers and hindered by foes, leaves his home and passes tests to acquire new powers that benefit himself and his community.

The typical Norton hero is a misfit seeking his rightful place. He is usually poor, young, powerless, and frequently a victim, orphan, cripple, or outcast. His character-building struggle against his enemies is commonly plotted as a chase-capture-escape-confrontation. The hero grows in wisdom, knowledge, and virtue under stress, but it is the unique Norton touch that his triumph so often hinges on rapport with an alien being or animal or else on a gift for using some strange talisman or device. Finally, the victorious hero saves others besides himself.

Applying these patterns to the seven stories at hand, note that all the heroes except Kade Whitehawk in The Sioux Spaceman are orphans. Vye Lansor in Star Hunter is an orphan impersonating an orphan. Blake Walker of The Crossroads of Time has lost both natural and adoptive parents. Ras Hume in Star Hunter is missing a hand and a career. Whitehawk is in disgrace professionally. Jotkar in Secret of the Lost Race originally works for a racketeer, a special variation — at the novel's opening, he is already impressively self-reliant and appears to function perfectly in his niche, but by the climax he has been revealed as an utter outsider for whom a special place must be created.

All the heroes' adventures involve painful, dangerous journeys across space and time. Each of them gains self-confidence and survival resources within himself. As Blake Walker muses: "...Deep inside him he had a new satisfaction. He had been moved about by the agents.... But he had escaped from Pranj. And here, without tools or any real knowledge, he had managed to achieve food and warmth. No thanks to anyone but himself" (p.

73). This growth process is perhaps best epitomized by Dane Thorson's transition from shy, bumbling apprentice to competent spaceman in Sargasso of Space, Plague Ship, and Voodoo Planet.

Finding human allies is essential in The Crossroads of Time and Secret of the Lost Race. Conforming to alien folkways and handling animals are important elements in Plague Ship and The Sioux Spaceman. Unlocking the secrets of alien mechanisms is necessary in Sargasso of Space, Star Hunter, and The Crossroads of Time, while mastering exotic magic is the crucial element in Voodoo Planet.

Personal acceptance, honor, and even profit are won by all the heroes and they all save the lives of comrades. But, in addition, the wider social benefits of their deeds include: the destruction of criminals (The Crossroads of Time, Star Hunter, Sargasso of Space, and Voodoo Planet); identification of travel hazards (Star Hunter and Sargasso of Space); freeing an enslaved people (The Sioux Spaceman); and ending a racial state of siege (Secret of the Lost Race).

The foregoing components fit the noble pattern of Joseph Campbell's monomyth. However, a more prosaic element is also shared by all seven stories. This is the issue of employment. Finding and holding a good job — one that is useful, satisfying, and renumerative — is a matter of desperate importance to each hero. It is the motive and the reward for their deeds. Thorson and Whitehawk strain to keep the positions they have so arduously secured. Hume and Walker adjust to careers chosen for them by outside forces. Jotkar fights his way free of captive servitude. Lansor — the most dramatic example — rises from bus boy in a saloon to membership in the respected Out-Hunters' Guild.

This same preoccupation with work occurs throughout Norton's fliction — for example, in Catseye (1961), Judgment on Janus (1963), and Dread Companion (1970). It even shows up in her Magic series for young children where plots are shaped by the employment conditions of the protagonists' parents. Norton's contern for economic problems is a realistic touch and a good device for quickly establishing a character's alienation and vulnerability.

More than a full stomach is at stake here. The jobless are non-

persons in a technological society. No one can be free while subsisting on a government dole, and dependence on the whims of a harsh employer is no better. Norton is strongly individualistic and has an inborn suspicion of large organizations like the trading cartels. To her these institutions are as unprincipled as they are unimaginative. The Thorson novels describe tensions among the cartels and between them and the Free Traders, a group which the author holds in special esteem. The bloody clashes between independent and corporate miners in Secret of the Lost Race are another example of the same phenomenon.

Yet size is not the only factor Norton judges. She is equally critical of small, selfish elites like the Patrol, the bane of the Free Traders. And the longer an elite persists — or the longer the author writes about it — the worse it becomes. Compare the officious Patrol of Sargasso of Space with the malicious one in Uncharted Stars (1969). The same is true of natural-born superiors, as the increasing severity of the witches in the Witch World series demonstrates. Fortunately, Norton balances these off against responsible elites such as the Rangers in Voodoo Planet or the Space Service members fighting secretly for justice in The Sioux Spaceman.

Be they large or small, repressive groups threaten the freedom and most especially the integrity of living beings. Norton has a visceral horror of external control or compulsion in any form. Persons should be free in body, inviolate in spirit. Even animals should be persuaded rather than coerced as much as possible. Notice how Whitehawk's considerate treatment of a tame bear parallels his sympathy for the oppressed Ikkinni. Star Hunter decrys the force field's compelling effects on wild beasts as well as on men. Compare these descriptions of a deer and a man driven by the field:

Its brown coat was roughed with patches of white froth, while more dripped from the pale pink tongue protruding from its open jaws, and its shrunken sides heaves.... The creature did not start nor show any sign of seeing the rock fall. It trotted on at the same wearied pace.... (pp. 151-52)

Wass hit the invisible barrier full force, was hurled back to lie gasping on the turf, but already raising himself to crawl again to the gateway.... [He] beat at that unseen curtain, first in anger and fear, and then just in fear, until the fear was a lonesome crying that went on and on until even that last feeble assault on the barrier failed. (pp. 156-57)

This point is worth stressing because Norton is well-nigh obsessed with compulsion. She returns to this issue again and again. The Witch World series all by itself constitutes a virtual encyclopedia of constraints. Compulsion is Norton's definition of evil: solal vices compel groups; private vices compel individuals (both varieties of corruption unite in the person of Voodoo Planet's evil witch doctor, a villain driven to his death by the very forces with which he had ensnared others). The author condemns every form of coercion, from dictatorships and commercial monopolies to addictions; from the mighty tractor beam in Sargasso of Space to the cruel tanglers in Secret of the Lost Race. Even though a small predator's hunting skill saves the crew in Plague Ship, they are queasy watching it enthrall its prey before the kill.

Physical acts of compulsion like slavery and rape are terrible enough, but Norton regards non-physical abuses as the ultimate outrage. This includes mental conditioning induced by mechanleal means, drugs, hypnosis, psi powers, or magic (Secret of the Lost Race, Star Hunter, Voodoo Planet, The Sioux Spaceman, and The Crossroads of Time provide overlapping examples of each category). The attempt to tamper with Lansor's memory in Mar Hunter is an early example of what has subsequently become a persistent Norton motif. Identity alterations occur in Night of Masks (1964), Android at Arms (1971), and Forerunner Foray (1973). Body exchanges take place in the Moonsinger series (1966, 1971) and Knave of Dreams (1975). An entire planet is conditioned by human scientists in Ice Crown (1970), and a single child is possessed by an alien intelligence in Dread Companion (1970). In each case, the interference is the problem that the plot resolves, just as in Star Hunter.

Norton's belief in the inviolable dignity of the individual also

makes her staunchly anti-racist (for example, acute racial paranoia is the key issue in Secret of the Lost Race). As a result of her open-mindedness, her casts of characters were multiracial long before this became common in SF. In 1952, her earliest novel, Star Man's Son, featured a thriving post-atomic war culture established by black Air Force veterans. Similarly, a wise black veteran leads an integrated band of survivors in The Crossroads of Time, a novel whose hero is of undetermined non-white origin. Thorson's best friend on the Solar Queen is black and Thorson encounters a vigorous Neo-African people, the Khatkhans, in Voodoo Planet. (Norton also mines African materials to excellent effect in Android at Arms.)

The Khatkhans' ancestors were refugees from genocidal warfare on Earth who forged a new civilization from traditional elements. With a wry touch of irony, "they set up a color bar in reverse. The lighter your skin, the lower you were in the social scale' "(p. 8). This bit of background information and the comment, "'As if the color of a man's skin makes any difference in what lies under it!' "(p. 8) are the author's only explicit statements about race in these seven novels. Otherwise, she lets situations speak for themselves. (However, prejudice is more pointedly discussed in the Magic series, especially in Lavender-Green Magic, 1974.)

Other minority groups also appear in Norton's work. White-hawk belongs to a "Mixed Team" of space traders which includes a black, an Oriental, and a white. The theory behind this practice is to bring the special insights of each human racial stock to bear on vexing problems. In this instance, Whitehawk uses a lesson from his race's history to help the Ikkinni. (Norton herself has a trace of Amerindian ancestry and draws on this ethnic source for her Beast Master series and for Fur Magic, 1968.) Nevertheless, the author's happy ideal of interracial/interculture cooperation does not preclude creating the vicious empire of Ixanilia, an Amerindian-Nordic-Celtic complex mentioned in The Crossroads of Time.

But although these seven stories are admirably multiracial, one group is conspicuously missing — women! These novels are almost

devoid of female presence. Of the entire set, only The Crossroads of Time contains so much as a single line of dialogue spoken by a woman, but she is a figure too insubstantial to even call a spearcarrier. (There is also a grunting, subhuman mutant female who briefly menaces this novel's hero.) The omission becomes all the more glaring when one notes the frequency and liveliness of female supporting characters in the books Robert A. Heinlein was writing in the same decade for young audiences. Although Norton had featured women in her non-SF (for example, Follow the Drum, 1942 or Shadow Hawk, 1960), her SF rarely ever mentions them prior to the early 1960s. Witch World (1963) contains her first notable women characters and Ordeal in Otherwhere (1964) her first book told from the heroine's point of view. Both novels had difficulty gaining acceptance from publishers. According to the author, her editors had previously insisted that she omit female characters on the grounds that no market existed for SF stothe about girls or women. Adventure SF was believed to have strictly masculine appeal, therefore, it must be cast with strictly masculine characters. Yet once Norton was allowed her "daring experiment," she made an excellent success of it. Brave heroines have held the foreground of her fiction ever since. (Feminist aspeets of Norton's work are examined in my introduction to the Gregg Press edition of the Witch World series.)

Norton has had a keen, lifelong interest in history. (She had planned to become a history teacher until the economic necessities of the Depression forced her into library science.) She has written a number of accurately researched historical novels as well as applying her knowledge to the fashioning of SF backgrounds. Obivous examples are stories with medieval settings like the Witch World series or The Sioux Spaceman, which reflects events on the American frontier. Norton skillfully conveys a sense of the depths of time. The archeological dimension of her worlds is always vivid. In Sargasso of Space, the humans stare at colossal alien ruins with the uncomprehending awe of 19th-century Europeans among the monuments of Egypt or Asia Minor.

An extention of this process is the design of alternate histories as

in The Crossroads of Time and its sequel Quest Crosstime (1965), as well as in Operation Time Search (1967) and Knave of Dreams (1975). In these stories, Norton postulates that Earth is replicated in another dimension at each important historical point and that travel between the different versions of reality is possible. (The above are instances of controlled transit; Here Abide Monsters depends on a Bermuda triangle-style passage through a space-time warp.) But Norton surpasses fellow practitioners of this genre, like H. Beam Piper, by creating alternate histories of alien worlds as in Star Gate (1958), Key Out of Time (1963), and Perilous Dreams (1976).

Norton has also developed an extensive future history but it is an exceedingly loose construct, not to be compared with the orderly chronologies of Robert A. Heinlein, James Blish, or Poul Anderson. Except for stories directly linked through the same characters or setting, the interrelationships are probably more accidental than otherwise. There are numerous discrepancies and some tales are only connected by mention of the ubiquitous game of "stars and comets."

Other simple linking elements in Norton stories are common institutional names (Patrol, Survey, Thieves' Guild, Free Traders, Companies, Confederation, Council) and terminology (Forerunners, First-in Scout, Veep/ VIP, Dipple). Certain planets and races (Astra, Kowar, Salariki, Zacathans) also recur in many stories.

Events in the novels are strung out over the next three millenia. There is little indication of time scale — Secret of the Lost Race takes place 300 years after space travel, the Thorson series 700 years later, and Star Hunter somewhat after that — but enough is shown to convey a general impression of rapid interstellar colonization in the wake of atomic wars on Earth, divergent developments and even mutations among these human colonies, extensive contact with other races through trade and occasional warfare. Traces of a vanished Elder Race called the Forerunners are found on many worlds.

As the centuries roll on, economic competition grows increasingly ruthless with the great mercantile Companies becoming more powerful than governments and the Free Traders developing into a separate nomadic civilization. The Patrol turns ever harsher in its futile efforts to control the Traders and the Thieves' Guild. The War of the Two Sectors brings a temporary interstellar peace of exhaustion at ghastly cost. There is renewed interest in solving the mystery of the Forerunners in order to apply their lost knowledge to contemporary human problems but this hope appears to be vain.

Here is a list of novels which seem to belong to Norton's future history scheme. The list is alphabetical by title, except that where several novels form a series, the remaining titles in the series are shown in series order after the first title, and the name of the series is given in parentheses.

Android at Arms, 1971

The Beast Master, 1959; Lord of Thunder, 1962 (Beast Master series)

Catseye, 1961

Dark Piper, 1968

Dread Companion, 1970

Eye of the Monster, 1962

Ice Crown, 1970

Judgment on Janus, 1963; Victory on Janus, 1966 (Janus series)

Moon of Three Rings, 1966; Exiles of the Stars, 1971 (Moonsinger series)

Night of Masks, 1964

Sargasso of Space, 1955; Plague Ship, 1956; Voodoo Planet, 1959; Postmarked the Stars, 1969 (Dane Thorson series)

Secret of the Lost Race, 1959

Star Guard, 1955

Star Hunter, 1961

Star Rangers/ The Last Planet, 1953

The Stars Are Ours!, 1954; Star Born, 1957 (Astra series)

Storm Over Warlock, 1960; Ordeal in Otherwhere, 1964; Forerunner Foray, 1973 (Warlock series)

The X Factor, 1965

The Zero Stone, 1968; Exiles of the Stars, 1969 (Murdock Jern series)

Norton's noted love of animals has inspired her to imagine special bonds of empathy or even telepathy existing among the various higher forms of life (Catseye, The X Factor, Beast Master series, Warlock series, Murdock Jern series). Mystical affinity with animals is the basis of Voodoo Planet's illusions, but real "brothers-in-fur" are not especially conspicuous in the seven novels at hand. However, Missus, the hardworking kitten in The Crossroads of Time, receives telepathic commands from her masters and is instrumental in destroying the cat-hating villain of that book. A domesticated stallion battles deadly predators in The Sioux Spaceman without benefit of psi signals. And on a gentler level, the popularity of Sinbad, the Solar Queen's cat mascot, is a valuable public relations advantage for the crew.

Norton's interest in aminals is only one aspect of her sensitivity to nature: man and beast can collaborate because they belong to the same universal web of life. Threats to this web frighten Norton, especially sterile mechanization and war. Indeed, the author seems to connect the two — the wages of technology is death. Machine-dominated civilizations turn into radioactive slag heaps, as has happened on Earth (the Thorson series, The Sioux Spaceman, The Crossroads of Time) and other planets (Sargasso of Space). "Burnoffs" — war-ravaged worlds — are grim facts of life in Norton's major universe. A number of her stories (Catseye, Judgment on Janus, and Night of Masks) open in the Dipple, a dreary compound for interstellar war refugees. High technology run amok may soon send humanity tumbling after the Forerunners into oblivion.

Even if it stops short of extermination, technology can still cause grave harm. The Forerunner devices in Sargasso of Space and Star Hunter are so dangerous precisely because they are products of a more advanced science. Electronically operated slave collars keep the Ikkinni subdued, surely a shameful application of knowledge. (These collars can be mechanically neutralized, but possessing horses — not blasters — will ensure that the natives stay free.) In short, the developments that opened the starlanes also bred the Dipple, JetTown, and new slave labor camps.

Races ruled by technology are perilously isolated from their sur-

roundings. In *The Sioux Spaceman*, the Styor overlords regard animals as collectibles rather than living creatures. They wall themselves away from nature:

Cor rose abruptly from the rolling Klor plain with insolent refusal to accommodate alien architecture to a frontier world. The city might have been lifted entirely from some other Styor-controlled planet and set down here bodily with all its conical towers, their glitter-tipped spearlike crests pointed into the jade sky. (p. 56)

Compare this cliff dwelling of the free Ikkinni:

The architects of that village had taken advantage of a natural feature of the mountainside in their planning.... The structure was undeniably crude, put together by those who had worked only with a general idea of what they must accomplish and primitive, untaught skills.... The Terran gave hearty tribute not only to the city house but to the labor and the dream which had brought it into being. (pp. 114-15)

These polarities between arrogant/sterile and modest/fertile are even more sharply drawn in Star Rangers, Outside (1974), and the Janus and Witch World series. Another pitfall of technology is that automatic devices can substitute for ability, leaving the user impoverished. (Unlike the Ikkinni hunting nets, the slave collars require no special skills to operate.) Voodoo Planet is a sarcastic commentary on the fallibility of machines and the limits of purely scientific thought. The heroes are thrown back upon their own physical and spiritual resources and still manage to survive. Norton's spaceships and aircraft are highly automated but still require adroit piloting. This is one of the very few cases in which men and machines blend usefully. (But how could there be space adventures without spaceships?)

Norton's special wrath is reserved for computers. In *Star Hunter*, Lansor's inability to adapt to the "mechanical life of a computer tender" (p. 16) is supposed to demonstrate his depth of sensitivity and intelligence. Norton regards computers as dehumanizing and tyrannical. As she herself explains:

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. ¹

Norton does offer positive alternatives. She admires the expertise of men who are directly in charge of their own lives: the professional excellence of the Solar Queen's crew when at work and their creative hobbies when at play; the enlightened game management and woodcraft practiced by the Khatkhan Rangers; the wilderness skills of Whitehawk and the Ikkinni; Ras Hume's concern for his client's safety. She praises whatever is well-crafted, beautiful, or natural — and takes many opportunities to do so in the Sargol episode of Plague Ship. By implication, the glorious Ffallian in Secret of the Lost Race have successfully transcended the temptations and perils of technology. No computer-fed bureaucrats, criminal ghettos, or slave-operated mines mar their golden world.

Increasingly, Norton is taking refuge in non-standard science, parapsychology, mysticism, and magic. (Forerunner Foray, 1973, Here Abide Monsters, 1973, Knave of Dreams, 1975, and the Magic and Witch World series are only a few examples.) Voodoo Planet's hypnotic illusions and The Sioux Spaceman's spellbinding have given way to grander displays of the occult arts. The eerie Tower-level sequence in The Crossroads of Time is a foretaste of the author's gift for evoking mysterious wonders.

For wonder is really what Norton's writing has always been about. SF has merely been a means of opening our eyes to new marvels, to let us share the experiences of sympathetic characters growing into maturity. As Rick Brooks has already pointed out in The Book of Andre Norton (1975), these lines from Moon of Three Rings summarize Norton's enduring appeal: "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."²

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REFERENCES

- 1. Quoted in Rick Brooks, "Andre Norton: Loss of Faith" in *The Book of Andre Norton*, ed. Roger Elwood (New York: DAW Books, 1975), pp. 200-201.
 - 2. Brooks, p. 193.

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