



FROM THE DESK OF

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

May 21, 1977

Dear Andre --

I've never made any secret of how I feel about the Witch World books.

Thanks be, I am finally getting a chance to say so in public.

The enclosed review will, hopefully, be printed in the upcoming Norton issue of DeLaps F & SF REVIEW--an honor you richly deserve.

All the best, always

Marion Z.

MZB

The only thing I regret about the Florida boycott of the Worldcon is that it deprives me of the chance of finally meeting you in person!

THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD. BY Andre Norton. Reprint of the Ace Books edition, New York, 1964; Gregg Press, 1977, a division of G.K. Hall and Co, Jacket and text art by Jack Gaughan, frontmatter art by Alice Phalen, endpaper maps by Barbi Johnson. \$6.95 189 p. ISBN 0-8398-2358-4

The only complaint I've ever had about the Witch World novels of Andre Norton is that they were printed in the fairly flimsy editions of Ace Books, and that my copies usually wore out faster than Ace could reprint them. Now the beautiful and durable Gregg Press editions are here to remedy that fault, and I'm sure the rejoicing can be heard all over the country.

Some series readers complain that it's impossible to enjoy a series book unless they can read all of the series at once. The obvious answer to this is to go ahead and read all the series; but for those not familiar with the Witch World series, it deals with one Simon Tregarth, who, adventuring somewhere in science-fictional time, stumbles through a time-trap into the past of another planet, an era called Estcarp, ruled over by the feared and dreaded witches of Estcarp; Simon somehow becomes involved with, and eventually marries one Jaelithe, a Witch who has lost her powers with the loss of her virginity (in one of the Celtic-Druidic traditions). This particular book deals with the three children of Simon and Jaelithe: Kyllan, warrior, Kemoc, wizard, and Kaththea, witch --although much of the present volume deals with Kaththea's attempt to remain free of the hands of the tyrannical Estcarp witches, who are trying to reclaim Jaelithe's daughter for their training/brainwashing. Kyllan and Kemoc help Kaththea to escape from the place where the witches have taught her/imprisoned her, after which all three

escape into an alien land which has been, for generations, closed off by a kind of mental barricade against those from Estcarp. The story is told through the eyes of the warrior of the triplets, Kyllan, and most of the dangers of trials which he must undergo arise from his arrogance and self-confidence, believing that in his physical strength and warrior-training he can overcome even supernatural perils.

Andre Norton is too often regarded simply as a writer of action stories and juveniles. I am firmly convinced that when the contemporary fad for depth psychology and sociology thinly disguised as fiction has subsided somewhat, Norton will be more highly regarded than she is now; and justly so. Those who insist on telling a good, compelling story are often prophets without honor in their own country, or among writers who take themselves Very Very Seriously as prophets and pandits. As in the case of Shakespeare (his contemporaries regarded him as a shameless panderer to popular tastes) I am convinced that Norton will outlive most of the critics who ignore her work. Carefully backgrounded, so subtly characterized that her works do not need self-conscious "character study" (her characters convince because they simply go about their business in a completely logical and self-consistent way) one is occasionally convinced, while reading Norton, that for her, at least, ^{the} ~~with~~ Witch World actually exists, and she is simply reporting what happened there. And this is the hallmark of all great fantasy -- that the reader should be convinced that somewhere, in some other dimension, it does exist, on its own level. As Vincent Starrett wrote about 221-B Baker Street, where Watson and Holmes dwell "Who never lived, and thus can never die," adding that "Only those things the heart believes, are true,"

Estcarp and ~~WIKIN~~ the whole of the Witch World have their own existence, and therefore their own faults and problems. Unlike self-sconscious futurology-fiction, which is intended to point a didactic moral, the Witch World, like all "real" worlds, has its drawbacks. I am convinced that feminist extremists, for instance, would cavil because Norton has not painted the Witches of Estcarp as entirely good and therefore more fit to rule over men than are some of the men they rule. But then, I do not believe that fantasy, or even science fiction, must exist to show the readers their own wish-fulfillments. The Witch World is too true to life to be a Utopia...which classical scholars should remember, means literally no place. Fantasy can often be truer than reality, by lighting up the dark corners of the human psyche; and the Witch World books shwze this dimension of reality with all other truly fine fantasy, that they show humanity as it is, has been and forever more will be...not as theorists sometimes think they would like it to be.

This new edition is beautifully printed, beautifully bound, beautifully illustrated...and I can't imagine a single fantasy-lover who would be willing to go without a single volume of the set. Run, do not walk, to any local bookseller and get them now. All of them. Highly recommended for everyone who loves the Witch World series -- or for its potential lovers, which are legion.

Marion Zimmer Bradley