

ANDRE NORTON

[A News Release from G.K. Hall & Co. (of whom Gregg Press is a division.)]

Andre Norton, beloved writer of fantasy and science fiction for all ages, is that enviable and rare writer with a following that spans several generations of readers who find her story-telling a continual source of delight.

Since her first book was published in the 1930's, Miss Norton has written over 80 books, including the newly-released, seven-volume, hardcover edition of the Witch World Novels from Gregg Press, a division of G.K. Hall & Co.

In a recent interview, Miss Norton shared her views on the popularity of fantasy and science fiction and the state of publishing today, and offered insights into her own writing career. Having spent most of her life writing fantasy and science fiction, Miss Norton has watched the field's growing popularity with great interest.

"I think fantasy and science fiction is more popular today than 15 years ago because children and adults don't want realism. They don't want to read about problems like their own. My librarian friends tell me that books dealing with so-called modern problems just stay on the shelves unread. The books are like dead wood.

Fiction is escape reading. People would rather pick up a Tolkien which is entirely away from their world. Fantasy also offers everyone a release for the imagination. There is so little chance for it today that people are revolting against realism.

Then, too, I think 'Star Trek' has been and continues to be very important for leading so many children into wanting to read more about science fiction."

Miss Norton has worked on a textbook to interest young readers in fantasy and science fiction and finds there is a great response in the schools. "The number of women reading science fiction has increased five times in the past five years. Most of my fan mail is coming from women 18 to 40 and they are extremely interested in sword and sorcery fantasy," she added.

The path that led Miss Norton to her Witch World Novels has been a long, winding one, filled with unexpected career turns and a deep love of history, literature, and the imagination.

Miss Norton says her interest in fantasy and science fiction began with L. Frank Baum's Oz books, which she feels showed her how to use her imagination. She remembers reading and telling stories throughout grade school but her actual writing career was launched in high school with the school newspaper and a creative writing class.

Originally, Miss Norton had planned to teach history and attended Western Reserve University in her native Cleveland, Ohio. The Depression ended this dream, so she began working in the Cleveland Public Library. She did not give up on her writing and history, however. She took evening courses in history, creative writing, and journalism while she wrote part-time and worked at the library. This diligence and persistence paid off for her very quickly. Her first book, The Prince Commands, a mythical kingdom adventure story, was published before she was 21.

In the 1930s and 40s, she concentrated on adventure and mystery stories, and historical novels. Miss Norton says she was always interested in fantasy and science fiction but she couldn't find an opening for a book-length story in the market until the 1950s.

Her love of history is reflected in all her writings.

"I started writing a history book at one point and put it aside because there was no market. That's when I decided to put history into all my stories. The sword and sorcery stories are often inspired by medieval history. The Witch World Novels are based on legends during the Crusades in Outremer. Other stories have been inspired by Cornish legends," she says.

"I approach science fiction through history and literature, not scientific inventions and gadgets. I am more interested in what happens to the people than in the action.

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ANDRE NORTON (Continued) --

"Before I write a book I read anywhere from 10 to 125 books on legends, history, folklore, magic, anthropology, literature, archaeology, and social customs. I have also drawn inspiration from such writers as Michael Moorcock, Alan Garner, Rider Haggard, and John Jakes."

During her 20 years as a librarian in children's work in Cleveland, Miss Norton found a continuing outlet for her writing. Two of her books, one of which is Rogue Reynard for the 8- to 10-year-old group, were an outgrowth of her story hours. In 1952, ill health forced her into retirement and she turned to writing full-time for the children and young adults she had come to understand so well.

She began the Witch World Novels, which were written for the adult and mature young reader, because she wanted to handle subjects considered taboo for children. In the Witch World Novels, Miss Norton creates an alternate universe in which she portrays the war between the witches and an inhuman half-robot race whose weapons are technology and mind control. The novels include a strong female central character rather than the traditional male, and a controversial abduction scene. The use of magic in the creation of a humanoid world, the struggle against the domination of the mind, and the loss of powers through submission of the mind are also discussed.

When asked if she considered the Witch World Novels feminist literature because of the strong female character she replied, "No, they are not particularly feminist. I believe men and women should be equal. Each should have certain traits. I give my women intuition and emotional and magical powers. I give my men physical powers. Both meet on an equal level but each has a supreme place of his or her own. I don't like the current anti-male view among some women writers today." To further discuss her views on this, Miss Norton is currently writing an article for an anthology on the role of the woman writer in science fiction and the creation of her female characters.

Miss Norton says she and many other women writers used initials or male names in order to get published. She has used both Andre Norton and Andrew North. According to Miss Norton, it was easier to break into publishing during the 1930s than it would be today. "Publishing opportunities for writers are closing down because some publishers won't even read the manuscripts of unpublished writers anymore and they aren't interested in anything out of the ordinary. The unpublished are getting the very worst deal since the Depression," she added.

She believes the best opportunities for publishing are in the paperbacks because they haven't closed up as much. She regrets the decline in the number of magazines.

In describing her own writing habits she says she works in the morning, starting about 7:30 a.m., and works to fill a certain number of pages. "When things are moving along I can write one chapter a day in the first draft," she says.

Based on her own experiences, Miss Norton cautions anyone entering the writing field to:

1. get a job to live on,
2. learn to discipline oneself by writing every day whether you feel inspired or not,
3. read as widely as you can and go into a subject that interests you as deeply as you can,
4. keep a notebook of ideas, and
5. study the market and learn who is publishing what.

"I order magazines from England because they publish much more fantasy there," she added.

Andre Norton has won several awards for her novels including The Invisible Little Man Award for science fiction, the Headliner Award from Women in Communications, an award from the Dutch government, and the Phoenix plaque given by Southern Pandom. She is currently researching medieval social games and customs for a new book.

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ANDRE NORTON (Continued) --

Her seven Witch World Novels including Witch World, Web of the Witch World, Three Against the Witch World, Warlock of the Witch World, Sorceress of the Witch World, Year of the Unicorn, and Spell of the Witch World are available for \$7.95 each or \$50.00 for the seven-volume set from Gregg Press, a division of G.K. Hall & Co., 70 Lincoln Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02111. Telephone: (617) 423-3990.

A few more details re the set from a second G.K. Hall News Release: it is a new edition produced in collaboration w/ Miss Norton, with special features not found in the earlier pb editions. "Sandra Miesel has written an extensive new introduction that traces the origin of the series and a special chronological chart that relates all of the Witch World novels and stories. The four-color jackets were designed by Jack Gaughan, the artist who in Andre Norton's own words, 'best visualizes the world and the characters I created.' A new, complete, two-part map of the Witch World by Barbi Johnson has been included on the end leaves of each book. Each volume is library bound in sturdy blue buckram cloth with Andre Norton's signature stamped in gold on the front."

THE SHAPE OF S.F. TO COME: REVISITED --

Forthcoming Releases announced by the SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB (Garden City, NY 11530) -- 5/77: Llana of Gathol & John Garter of Mars, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (\$3.50; details on pg. 13); Beasts, by John Crowley (\$1.98; details on pg. 13); / Alternates: Favorite Haunts, by Charles Addams (\$5.50; new collection of diabolically humorous cartoons); Imperial Earth, by Arthur C. Clarke (\$2.49); An Alien Heat, by Michael Moorcock (\$1.98); The Dispossessed, by Ursula K. LeGuin (\$2.98); The 1975 Annual World's Best SF, ed. Donald A. Wollheim (\$2.49); Into Deepest Space, by Fred Hoyle & Geoffrey Hoyle (\$1.98); The Dune Trilogy (Dune, \$3.50; Dune Messiah, \$2.49; Children of Dune, \$2.98; the three for \$7.97); The Dancer from Atlantis, by Poul Anderson (\$1.98); The Rest of Damon Knight (\$2.49); The Mote in God's Eye, by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle (\$2.98); The Early Pohl, by Frederik Pohl (\$1.98); Strange Gifts, ed. Robert Silverberg (\$1.98). # 6/77: Lord Foul's Ban, by Stephen R. Donaldson (\$2.98; killed(?) by a hurtling police car, Thomas Covenant comes to in a strange place, his nostrils full of the stench of rotting flesh, and became the reluctant servant of Lord Foul the Despiser); The Infinite Arena, ed. Terry Carr (\$1.98; an anthology of futuresports stories, incl.: "Bullard Reflects", by Malcolm Jameson; "The Body Builders", by Keith Laumer; "The Great Kladsnar Race", by Robert Silverberg & Randall Garrett; "Mr. Meek Plays Polo", by Clifford D. Simak; "Sunjammer", by Arthur C. Clarke; "Run to Starlight", by George R.R. Martin; "Joy in Mudville", by Poul Anderson & Gordon R. Dickson); King Kong, novelization by Delos W. Lovelace, based on conception of Edgar Wallace & Morian C. Cooper (\$3.50; 16 pp. illus.); / other alternates: The Ice People, by René Barjavel (\$1.98); Orn, by Piers Anthony (\$1.98); The Left Hand of Darkness, by Ursula K. LeGuin (\$1.98); Fantastic Science-Fiction Art 1926-1954, ed. Lester del Rey (\$4.50); The Illustrated Man, by Ray Bradbury (\$1.98); The Best of Fredric Brown, ed. Robert Bloch (\$2.49); A World Out of Time, by Larry Niven (\$1.98); Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang, by Kate Wilhelm (\$1.98); Universe 3, ed. Terry Carr (\$1.49); Before the Golden Age, ed. Isaac Asimov (\$4.50); Mutants: Eleven Stories of Science Fiction, ed. Robert Silverberg (\$1.98); The Dragon and the George, by Gordon R. Dickson (\$2.49). # 7/77: The Best of Leigh Brackett, ed. Edmond Hamilton (\$2.98; ten stories); The Ophiuchi Hotline, by John Varley (\$1.98; see pg. 19 for description); Clooseup: New Worlds, ed. Ben Bova w/Trudy Bell (\$6.50; over 100 photos, drawings & raps; "the latest discoveries and mysteries of the solar system" in a "fascinating blend of fact and scientific speculation"); / other alternates: Shakespeare's Planet, by Clifford D. Simak (\$1.98); Dangerous Visions, ed. Harlan Ellison (\$3.50); The Fall of Colossus, by D.F. Jones (\$1.49); The 1976 Annual World's Best SF, ed. Donald A. Wollheim (\$2.49); Alpha, by Charles Eric Maine (\$1.98); The Fuzzy Papers, by H. Beam Piper (\$3.50); Little Fuzzy & The Other Human Race; Maske: Theory, by Jack Vance (\$1.98); A Treasury of Great Science Fiction, ed. Anthony Boucher (\$4.98; 2 vols.); There Will Be Time, by Poul Anderson (\$1.98); Buy Jupiter and Other Stories, by Isaac Asimov (\$1.98); The Compleat

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