

ANDRE NORTON

received the Grand Master Nebula Award in 1983. She has written science fiction and fantasy for both adults and younger readers; among her many novels are *Star Man's Son*, *Star Rangers*, *The Beast Master*, *The Sioux Spaceman*, *Judgment on Janus*, *The Zero Stone*, *Yurth Burden*, and *Wheel of Stars*.

Perhaps it is not so much the market place as the merchants who have changed the book world so drastically these past years. Having dealt in the market place for over fifty years now, I believe that I have some authority to speak concerning the matter of the constantly shifting editors and companies. One meets an editor, arranges for a work relationship, and within weeks (or so it seems) the editor is gone, the company sold, and the writer begins all over again.

In former times the relationship between author and editor was a stable one, often leading to friendship and a sense always of working together and of sympathy from the editorial side. Now there is none of that. One hardly gets to know the name of the editor, perhaps one has even slanted a story toward what that particular market wished—then the editor is gone, almost overnight, and the author is left dangling with some work which does not appeal in the least to the present occupant of the editorial chair.

To my mind this situation had led to a deterioration of sales value for the author. Writing at the best is a very lonely business and a writer can really not foster many contacts which might interfere with his or her working hours, or which will drain energy by correspondence with another who has the power of life or death over one's work and with whom one feels very little or no common agreement.

The present insistence of many companies who have been taken over by businesses (which have no real knowledge of the literary field) is to saturate the market with questiona-

ble taste and information without consideration for quality and value to the reader. The accent thus naturally falls upon sensation and violence, with scenes which distract from the flow of a well told story.

In the science-fiction and fantasy field the story *is* the important factor and good characterization must go hand in hand with action, not action with cardboard characters alone. These shock value books do not continue to hold readers—they are usually one time books, not to be taken from the shelves for a rereading. Yet to the publisher of the new generation just that one quick sale is what matters. The fact that a writer requires some time to build up a following of faithful readers, and that circle constantly does widen with every book, makes no difference in this judgment. A second rate writer who can lavishly produce the sensational is given every chance. The newcomer, who perhaps has a much better product to offer, finds the door closed for lack of "name".

To my way of thinking this constant flux in the field of publishing as a whole has done perhaps irreparable damage—by bringing a separation between writer and editor, and by demanding more and more best selling "names" so limiting the opportunities for the newcomer.