

# **Survey of Science Fiction Literature**

**FIVE HUNDRED 2,000-WORD ESSAY REVIEWS OF  
WORLD-FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS  
WITH 2,500 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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## HERE ABIDE MONSTERS

**Author:** Andre Norton (1912- )

**First book publication:** 1973

**Type of work:** Novel

**Time:** July 21, 1972

**Locale:** Initially, a small American country town; after Chapter One, a parallel world with no specific location

*An attempt to provide an explanation for mysterious disappearances such as those in the Bermuda Triangle, and a study of identity and alienation as people from different times and places are exiled together in a parallel world of superscience and extra-sensory perception*

**Principal characters:**

**NICK SHAW**, a young man estranged from his father and unpleasant stepmother

**LINDA DURANT**, a young woman who travels to the parallel world with him

**AVALON**, one of the four Heralds of the parallel world

**ADRIAN HADLETT**, an elderly vicar transported to the fairy realm

**RITA**, one of the group of World War II Britons who have banded together in the parallel world

**JEREMIAH**, a cat, a transported pet

**LUNG**, a Pekinese, another transported pet

To confront one of Andre Norton's many works of fiction is to have an experience rich in learning and wonder. Consistently, her writing springs from a deep well of sources and thought and from an abiding affection for the individual. *Here Abide Monsters* displays both of these elements. Its inspiration flows from the many unexplained disappearances that have been recorded throughout history. More specifically, the novel draws on those vanishings associated with the English fairy mounds and from Charles Fort's more contemporary accounts in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

Such excursions into myth, legend, history, and literature are typical of Norton's work. *Dark Piper* (1968) and *Year of the Unicorn* (1965) are drawn from the folk tales of the Pied Piper of Hamelin and the Beauty and the Beast, respectively. *Star Guard* (1955) is a retelling of Xenophon's *Anabasis*; *Shadow Hawk* (1960), a historical fantasy, emerged from Norton's reading of Joan Grant's novels of ancient Egypt. More like the use of the historical and pseudohistorical sources of *Here Abide Monsters* is the utilization of Paul Herrmann's *Conquest by Man* (translated from the German in 1954), which includes an account of the prehistoric Beaker Traders, as a source for the Time Trader novels: *The Time Traders* (1958), *Galactic Derelict* (1959), *The Defiant Agents* (1962), and *Key Out of Time* (1963). In the same vein, *Scarface* (1948), an early juvenile adventure story in novel form, stems from the diary of a Dutch physician and the life of Henry Morgan. *The Beast Master* (1959) and its sequel, *Lord of Thunder* (1962), were researched through actual

Navaho phrase books. More specifically, the Celtic and British backgrounds for *Here Abide Monsters* are anticipated by the Arthurian Britain of *Steel Magic* (1965; later title *Grey Magic*), a juvenile fantasy, and are repeated in the adult science fiction novel *Merlin's Mirror* (1975).

In *Here Abide Monsters*, however, the Charles Fort and Bermuda Triangle allusions are merely devices that help the reader suspend disbelief. They offer a semiscientific explanation for the characters' movement into the parallel world of mental miracle and superscience. When Nick Shaw and Linda Durant pass into the numinous realm of the Heralds and the wondrous Kin to join a group of World War II Britons, they become involved in a mixture of the seemingly rational and irrational. On one hand are various historical groups transported into the singular time of the fairy world: Chinese, Mongols, Anglo-Saxons, and a singular group of religious fanatics. On the other are the native inhabitants: the Kin with their Heralds; their king, Logos or Merlin; and their varied beasts, such as unicorns, enfields, lamias, and griffons.

The humans and the natives do interact after a fashion. The Heralds, Avalon in particular, regularly offer a unity and a sharing to the humans. This is because the inhabitants enjoy a deep bond with the sentient land. Without this special communion, the transported humans will exist and die as strangers, forever alienated from benefits the Heralds and their people (the Kin) possess. The link between the humans and the Kin is Rita, one of the group of Britons that Nick and Linda join for mutual protection. Before Nick's and Linda's arrival, Rita had accepted the Herald's apple — offered both literally and symbolically — and been transformed into one of the Kin, the native inhabitants of the gloriously spired cities. Her transformation grants her various special abilities, including the power to protect herself and others with an invisible aura, to communicate mentally, and to move from place to place by teleportation. However, her friends, especially her former fiancé, have rejected her and her bond to the Kin and the land, and labeled her an inhuman traitor.

This juxtaposition of rigidity and flexibility, tradition and change, is not unusual in Norton's fiction. Like so many of her characters, Rita represents the fulfilled opportunity for transition and growth. Her disposition allows her to adapt to the land she has inherited through happenstance. The other members of the British group, especially Adrian Hadlett, lack this ability to cope, to find themselves, and to be free from their traditions and conditioned expectations. However, Nick Shaw and Linda Durant, because of their youth and the estrangements in their prior human existence, will, it appears, have the ability to embrace the intuitive and personal powers that the Herald and Rita offer.

Nick comes to fairyland and its dangers having lost his mother and after watching his once beloved father become a stranger through the influence of his conniving stepmother. It is no surprise that, even though he has yet to accept the Herald's offer, he is the first to display mental power. Trapped by a group of religious fanatics, led by a deranged bishop and a slovenly young

woman, Nick creates a protoplasmic arm to free himself and evade the monsters created by the minds of the religious zealots. Later, aided by Linda and the two pets, he is able to reproduce the manifestation despite the British group's strong disbelief. This intuitive and mental activity reflects a common element in much of Norton's fiction.

Despite the numerous science fiction works Norton has written, her stance is clearly antiscientific, and her views on the damage she feels the empirical mode has done to mankind are quoted in Rick Brooks' essay "Andre Norton: Loss of Faith" (1971). Elsewhere, this conflict is seen in the juxtaposition of the witches of Escarp and the scientific Kolder in the main branch of the Witch World series, and her view is supported by Carl Jung who observes that science has alienated modern man from his individual and collective unconscious. This is further emphasized in *Here Abide Monsters* by the fact that the two animals, Jeremiah the cat and Lung the Pekinese, are the first to develop mental powers because of their closeness to nature. In addition, the central psychic power source in the city of the Kin, which Nick infiltrates with his nascent power to create illusion, is a giant, radiant ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life that Norton also uses as a symbol of power in *Wraiths of Time* (1976).

The ankh is an indicator of the potential of the human mind. When Nick enters the city, he is almost overwhelmed, mentally overloaded, by its power: his mind has not yet made the intuitive commitment necessary to absorb the ankh's gift. Were Rita, the animals, and the ankh not enough of an indication of the conflict between numina and phenomena, there are also the scientific Hunters to point out the threat of the artificiality of technology. All of the people in the parallel world, natives and strangers alike, are threatened by the superscience of the Hunters, a group who use their flying saucers to trap the visitors and harass the Kin. When Nick, Linda, and the Britons finally do destroy the Hunters' base through courage and mental power, it is significant that Adrian Hadlett, the courageous elderly vicar, freely gives up his life. He knows that he can never accept the Herald's invitation: he is too committed to the old ways and his own concept of "the good" to release his inhibitions and adapt to the new world.

When Hadlett dies, he signifies the passing away of the old order and marks the end of the threat of science. As Nick and Linda, along with the two animals, turn to the gloriously emblazoned Herald at the end of the novel, *Here Abide Monsters* embodies the dominant theme in the fiction of Andre Norton: the affirmation of the essentially human. Life, in all its generative and adaptive glory is celebrated in what Northrop Frye in *The Anatomy of Criticism* calls the comic mode. New orders arise from the ashes of the old and humanity is enhanced. The artificial, contrived, and rigid are defeated, and the alienated are elevated to nobility through self-discovery and find a union that celebrates their precious uniqueness.