

# 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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## STAR MAN'S SON 2250 A.D.

*Author:* Andre Norton (1912- )  
*First book publication:* 1952  
*Type of work:* Novel  
*Time:* Two hundred years in the future  
*Locale:* The United States after an atomic holocaust

*After America has been ravaged by an atomic holocaust, the remaining bands of men and women, reduced to savagery, attempt to rediscover their world and survive the radioactivity that remains*

*Principal characters:*

FORS, a young mutant member of the Puma Clan  
 LURA, a member of a race of large, telepathic mutated cats  
 ARSKANE, a scout for a Negroid race, once pilots, who have been driven out of their settlement by volcanic activity  
 BEAST THINGS, hideous creatures mutated from rats and led by a newly mutated genius

Although *Star Man's Son 2250 A.D.* is Andre Norton's first science fiction novel, it was neither her first published work nor her first excursion into space and time. Originally having planned a career in the field of juvenile adventure and having legally changed her name from Mary Alice to Andre in 1934 to accommodate this male-dominated market, she had written *The Prince Commands* (1934), *Ralestone Luck* (1938), *Follow the Drum* (1942), and *Sword is Drawn* (1944) — all juvenile historical novels — before *Star Man's Son 2250 A.D.* Then in 1947, she published her first science fiction work, the short story "People of the Crater"; it appeared in the first issue of a short-lived magazine, *Fantasy Book*. The story was later included as "Garan of Tav" in one of her most successful collections, *Garan the Eternal* (1972). When *Star Man's Son 2250 A.D.* appeared in 1952, it marked Norton's first recognized (and very auspicious) entry into the field; Donald A. Wollheim, in *The Universe Makers: Science Fiction Today* (1971), indicates that by 1970 the novel had sold more than one million copies in the Ace paperback edition.

The novel is not formidable in its complexity and can justifiably be labeled a juvenile work with all-ages appeal. It focuses on the fortunes of Fors, a mutant, and his alienation from a community of explorers known as the Star Men. Born of a Star Man and a plainswoman amid the fragmented future of postholocaust Earth, his unusual senses and silver-white hair mark him as an outcast in an age when any deviation from the norm is cause for fear. Striking out on his own with his companion, the mutated cat Lura, Fors is the prototype of many Norton protagonists to come.

Norton's heroes and heroines are frequently outcasts, disenfranchised and alone with only a few close companions. Often they are hounded by the established order: Fors is pursued because he defied the tribe and stole his father's

pouch and maps from the Star Hall, just as Murdoc Jern and Eet are harried in *The Zero Stone* (1968) and its sequel, *Unchartered Stars* (1969). In other works, the principal characters are isolated by holocaust or conflict, as in *Storm Over Warlock* (1960) and *Ordeal in Otherwhere* (1964). Most often, they are set apart by special powers: Fors has acute hearing and night sight; in *Forerunner Foray* (1973), Ziatha's psychic abilities are the source of her persecution and alienation.

Yet, whatever the reasons for their separation, Norton's characters are uniformly isolated and driven. Fors ventures out into the radiation-scarred blue lands to prove his value as an explorer, and it is not unexpected that he, as well as other characters in the Norton canon, are besieged by fear. While Fors's fear of the unknown and of the dread mutated rats, Beast Things, is effectively presented, it is the tragic hero of *The Beast Master* (1959), Holsteen Storm, his native Terra destroyed and his personal and racial origins lost, who is Norton's most accurate presentation of the agonizing terror that almost paralyzes many of her characters. The characters' reactions may seem almost excessive until one realizes that it is not fear of physical harm that shakes them, but fear of the deprivation of self.

C. G. Jung, in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, identifies this fear and its numerous variations as the greatest of human fears. Fors dreads the loss of identity within his clan, which is why he must return for their judgment at the end of *Star Man's Son 2250 A.D.* even though he has been offered safer alternatives by Arskane and others. He fears the loss of his own place within his own destiny. His restlessness and his need to explore and to seek knowledge is linked to the Star Men. Thus, when he is originally passed over by his tribe in their rites of passage, he must strike out on his own to preserve himself from the nonexistence the tribe has dictated for him, but he must also return and complete the circle for an affirmation of his growth and wisdom.

In his journey into the shattered shell of Cleveland and the blue lands, Fors also illustrates other central features of Andre Norton's fiction: lack of prejudice and stress on internal value. The cat, Lura, and the Negro, Arskane, are both alien in appearance and nature, yet they are Fors's strongest allies and deepest friends. Norton's characters come in all different sizes and shapes, but their most important qualities are internal. In *Breed to Come* (1972), Fertig, the protagonist, is a mutated cat; in *The Beast Master* (1959) and its sequel, *Lord of Thunder* (1962), the main character's best friends are telepathic animals and his allies are a race of aliens with horns. The longlived Zacathans, a reptile race, are the wise and honored historians of the galaxy in *Storm Over Warlock* (1960), *Ordeal in Otherwhere* (1964), and *Forerunner Foray* (1973). In *Catseye* (1961), intelligent cats, foxes, and a kinkajou are the salvation of the human Troy, and in *Star Guard* (1974), a race of serpents are the comrades of a group of human mercenaries in a battle against other humans. It is this truly humanistic attitude that has also made Norton, along with C. L. Moore,

one of the pioneers in the use of realistic female protagonists in science fiction.

Alone, frightened, alienated, threatened, searching — Norton's characters are always admirable; their ethical systems may shake with fear and weaken, as Fors's and Arskane's do in the middle of the plot, but ultimately, they are vindicated and are more attractive for their frailty. Despite their varied shapes and talents, these characters achieve a genuine nobility. Thus, Fors creates his own rites of passage and his own myths, for which he is awarded a high symbol of recognition and identification — a multipointed star as opposed to the traditional five-pointed one — by the Star Men at the end of *Star Man's Son 2250 A.D.* Indeed, like so many of Norton's characters, he heals himself and those around him and gains a dignity and freedom that comes only from the exaltation of self. Most of all, Fors and all of Norton's protagonists discover a sanctity of ideas and ethics, and they come to recognize their own special places within the patterns and rhythms of elemental law. They carry that recognition into a hopeful future that they have been instrumental in establishing.

*Roger C. Schlobin*

### Sources for Further Study

#### Reviews:

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