

Fantasy At Large:

The Witch World Series

This feature was proposed in the last ASHARITE and Rayna has ~~added~~ suggested that I handle it, since I enjoy cross-universe travel. I intend to ask Rayna to supply a guest lecture on some universes I don't know very well, but this time around, I'll share my scraggy unaided knowledge.

ASHARITE readers almost certainly know where to get Darkover fan materials and Sine/Gen fan materials, so I'm not going to go into those universes at all. If for some reason a non-Ashar reader is reading this, write to the editor, Rayna Daughtry, at the address which is undoubtedly printed somewhere in the front, and she'll be glad to tell you everything you ever wanted to know about getting in touch. SASE's are polite but not required.

I presume the readership of this modest publication is also likely to know about Fern, or Anne McCaffrey Dragonrider and Harperhall series. Fan action in that universe is a rather knotty question, one I fully intend to handle at a later date. Similarly, I suspect everyone already knows everything she or he needs to about Katherine Kurtz's Derynd books and their fan-ish counterparts. Again, I'll cover that later. If you feel you need the information immediately, write Rayna, as above, or me (I'm Barbara Tennison, 1834 1/2 Selby, Los Angeles, CA 90025; I love getting fan-ish mail@).

Now that I've explained what this column is not doing, at least not just yet, the subject I will cover is Andre Norton and the Witch World series. Norton's Witch World is fairly well known, according to a brief biased sample of my fantasy-reading acquaintances; many fantasy and SF readers seem to have got started in the field by reading Andre Norton's fiction from the juvenile shelves of the library. Andre Norton has written a huge number (somewhere on the order of 80-100) of books, most in the category loosely defined by librarians as "science fiction" or "young-adult science fiction". Many qualify as 'hard' SF, and there is nothing wrong with them unless you are allergic to spaceships.

With her very high volume of output, Andre Norton has several series of more or less connected books. In fact, nearly all of her books could be thought of as in the same universe, even if they are unconnected, if you concede that magic isn't used everywhere. It's a large, sprawling, loosely connected universe but most of the books have the same "tone"; they do not split into groups with mutually contradictory settings.

Organized fan action focused on Norton's books is fairly sparse. (I invite information that isn't included here -- it will be included in future columns) There is a NORTON NEWSLETTER, or which issues #1-3 are out and #4 is in the works. This is a small, four-page publication, available from Michale Rosenberg, 85-45 130th Street, Kew Gardens, NY 11415. There is also a round robin, run through the National Fantasy Fan Federation, focusing on Norton in general and her Witch World series in particular. ((addresses for NFF and the round robin will be provided at the end of this FANTASY AT LARGE installment)) The NORTON NEWSLETTER also focuses on the Witchworld, but both will gladly include material and discussion of other Norton books and series.

There are eleven ((twelve)) books set in the Witch World, and several short stories.

- WITCH WORLD (1963). Simon Tregarth and Jaelithe, witch of Estcarp.
- HEB OF THE WITCH WORLD (1964). Continuation of Simon's and Jaelithe's efforts to defend Estcarp.
- THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD (1964). Tregarth's three children, Kemoc, Kyllas and Kaththea, migrate east, inland, to Escore.
- WARRIOR OF THE WITCH WORLD (1967). Kemoc battles inimical forces of ancient Escore.
- SORCERESS OF THE WITCH WORLD (1968). Kaththea discovers more of Escore as she rescues her parents and brings them there.
- TREY OF SWORDS (1977). Final tale of Escore, featuring Yonan and Grytha.
- YEAR OF THE UNICORN (1965). Across the sea from Estcarp, Gillan finds herself with witch talent in High Hallack and Arvon among the Were Riders.
- THE CRYSTAL GRYPHON (1972). Kerovan and Joisan deal with Old Power forces in High Hallack.
- JARSTHOR'S BANE (1978). Erixia wanders in the magic-saturated area inland, west from the Dalea.
- SPELL OF THE WITCH WORLD (1972). "Dragon Scale Silver", Elya and Elyn novella "Amber Out of Quayth", Yamay and Hylle "Dream Smith", short story. All set in the Dalea.
- LORE OF THE WITCH WORLD (1980). Collection of short stories published separately, 1972-1979, all set in the Witch World.

{{editor's note: Barbara, till now, had not known that there was still another Witch World book, THE JARCOON PARD, published in 1975. This story also deals with Were Riders/shape-changers and, in some ways, is a sequel to Year of the Unicorn as it deals with the child born to Gillan and Herrel}}.

These are not intended as complete synopses of the books' action, but to help you identify them if, like me, you tend to forget titles (especially when so many of them are so similar) and need to identify the books by content. Most have been reprinted fairly recently, though I cannot speak for availability anywhere but in Los Angeles.

The witches of Estcarp are all women, organized into a power structure that rules jointly with a male military establishment. Only virgin women exercise witch powers, aided by training and each witch's Jewel. When Simon and Jaelithe prove able to work together, even after Jaelithe is married to him, the witches are incredulous and not particularly supportive. The couple's two sons as well as their daughter all have some degree of witch talent. Escore, where sources of the old power are far stronger, has magic-using individuals of all descriptions.

Most stories of High Hallack and the Dalea involve a magic user of Estcarpian blood (marked by black hair and pale skin, as opposed to the

More common brown or blond hair of Hallack), or a throwback to the old
Faces who exercised frightening powers. West, inland, and north appear
to be areas of stronger magic in Hallack.

The stories combine action and adventure with witchcraft; the latter is a
resource to direct and give emergency help to individuals and parties as
they search through and/or flee from dangerous territory. Most of the
territory is dangerous either because it is or has been in the path of an
invading army, or because it is riddled with areas of old Power which are
pitfalls for the unwary.

The technology and social-organization level is approximately late middle
ages; swords and bows are the most common weapons, horses and ships the
methods of transportation. Hallack has a system of Abbeys which resemble
Christian monasteries or nunneries, but no strong Christian Church. The
culture there is agrarian and feudal with most clothing, food, etc., pro-
duced within the household. Etcarp has some cities and a stronger sense
of rationalism, but is not too far removed from the same 1200-1400 European
period.

For your convenience:

BOSTON NEWSLETTER
70 Michele Rosenberg
85-45 130th Street
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Barbara Tennison
1834 1/2 Selby Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90025

NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION

(to join)
Janie Lamb
Route 2, Box 272
Keiskill, TN 37754

(round robin--must have NFF membership)
Sharon Albert
Box 80925
College, AK 99708

Zlinning the Cosmos

DARKOVER: At last word, NEB is 125 pages into SHARRA'S KILLE. The deadline
for submitting entries for the professional anthology, SWORD OF USAOS, is
March 15, 1981.

C. J. CHERKIN: The Guest of Honor for Westcon '84 has four offerings for
us in 1981: DONKEYLOK STATION, Feb.; SUNFALL, May (Novellas set at the
end of the world); WAVE WITHOUT A SHORE, August (sf); THE PRIDE OF CHANUR,
Dec 81/Jan 82.

DERYNI: CAMDEN THE HERETIC should hit the stands sometime around early
Summer '81. Deryni Archives #5 carries a very interesting article on esp/
laran. SASE Kayna for ordering info.

NANCY SPRINGER: The third novel in "The Book of Isle", THE SABLE MOON, will
be available in February '81. The first two books in this series are: THE
WHITE HART and THE SILVER SUN.