



## Witch World

*Andre Norton*

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# **Witch World**

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## **Witch World Andre Norton**

Andre Norton enthralled readers for decades with thrilling tales of people challenged to the limits of their endurance in epic battles of good against evil. None are more memorable than her Witch World novels. Simon Tregarth, a man from our own world, escapes his doom through the gates to the Witch World. There he aids the witch Jaelithe's escape from the hounds of Alizon, only to find himself embroiled in a deeper war against an even deadlier foe: the Kolder.

## **Witch World Details**

Date : Published January 1st 1986 by Ace (first published 1963)

ISBN : 9780441897087

Author : Andre Norton

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fantasy, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Witch World for online ebook

### AndrewP says

Andre Norton is well known as one of the greats of the early years of SF & Fantasy. In the recent past I've read 4 of her short SF novels and was not overly impressed with any of them. To give her a fair chance I thought I needed to read something from her well known 'Witch World' fantasy novels.

This is the first of the Witch World books and it follows a familiar pattern very common in the pulp era. (Modern man gets transported to another world.) From there on it's a familiar sword and sorcery adventure tale. For me it was very representative of the genre but nothing special. I DID find it more enjoyable than her SF books, but not enough to actively seek out the rest of the series.

Overall I think I've given Andre Norton a fair shot, but in the end found her not to my particular taste.

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### Kinga says

The reason I (and maybe many other people but let me not make any bold claims) return to childhood and adolescence favourite reads is to access that careless (careless?) fourteen-year-old who would lose herself in the book like the real world didn't exist and the worlds her imagination created were so powerful and absorbing she could almost touch them. However, re-reading is a futile exercise, not only can I not connect with that inner child, I don't even know who she was anymore. She is a stranger to me. Still I'm reading those books to see if through them I can at least catch a glimpse of that foreign girl who grew up to be me, so that I assure myself of the continuity of my own self.

The fourteen-year-old me LOVED Andre Norton. The fourteen-year-old me didn't even realise Andre Norton was a woman but she didn't much care. She was excited over the trashy covers with half naked women and buff guys, often accompanied by dangerous wild animals. What kind of titillation she was getting out of the books?

I am not and never have been a particularly introspective kind of person. My diaries just talk about what happened, often in a funny way but hardly ever about how I felt any of that. And I am not any smarter after re-reading Witch World. This was a lot less sexy than I remember but it is entirely possible I had never read this particular instalment of the series. I read them out of order, based on whatever was available in the library at the time. I just remember when I borrowed my first one I was afraid the librarian wouldn't let me take it home because there was a woman on the cover with very little clothing.  
(<http://www.bookhunter.pl/okladki/9259...> I think this might've been the one).

Have I ever read the very beginning of the series? Did I even know how it started? Did I know that it started in our world with Simon, a WWII veteran who got himself in a pickle and was looking for a way out and he got maybe a little more than he bargained for when he got teleported into an entire different world of magic and whatnot?

From then on the book takes place mostly in Etscarp – the feminine land ruled by benevolent, wise witches, facing threats from all sides, but mostly from Kolder – the land representing technology gone rogue and masculine ruthlessness. Our hero, Simon, finds himself helping defend Etscarp and discovering his feminine

side.

Norton was trying to do some interesting gender things in her series (or at least interesting at the time), she was a proto-Le Guin if you excuse the comparison. It is sad to think that the concepts here were revolutionary mere 50 years ago. There is a lot of female power/magic, which unfortunately goes when they lose virginity (barf, how I hate anything that makes female virginity into a thing), but at least that means the main character couldn't go round screwing every woman he meets which is what happens in other fantasy books. Of course that means the only way to disarm a witch, conquer her, was to rape her – which is spot-on the main thing about rape, it's never about sex, but about power. And if a witch decides to marry and give herself to a man, she essentially relinquishes her power.

So that's why things get interesting when Simon discovers he might have some magic powers of his own. Will they go away if gets laid? Unfortunately I will never find out because I won't rush to re-read the remainder of the series. There is not enough world building and character development for my liking and the ending is a bit anticlimactic. Therefore I'm leaving those books where they belong – with my 14 year old self.

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

I don't know why the sight insists on a "1" after the title of this book as it was originally just "Witch World".... oh well.

I read this long ago and enjoyed it. It seems that for a while Andre Norton sort carried the banner for everyone who enjoyed popular (and it also might be called "teen") fantasy. She wrote many solo novels and then turned her hand to collaborations.

This is a "fun" read what I call brain candy and it's a start to one of fantasy's longest running series. Read it for fun.

Another person from "our reality" finds himself in an alternate world or universe, the Witch World. Let the adventures begin.

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### **Derek says**

I had forgotten how comprehensive and detailed this story is, and how the base premise blossoms out into an array of consequences, implications, derivations, and plot hooks. You consider the idea of "matriarchy, magic powers require virginity" and see how this plays off a nearby machismo-based society, or how it affects political relations with neighbors either jealous or fearful of their power, or even showing how the idea of "women with power will probably not have children" will affect population growth.

Even relative subplots like the inheritance of Verlaine and the Duke's ambitions for a trading port are developed into something that in other hands would consume an entire novel.

This is not simple sword-and-sorcery: the Witch World is a strange mix of the magical/psychic, the

medieval, and the supertechnological, all carefully thought out, and, at least in the early novels of the series, more similar to Barsoom than anything else.

It's easy to see how this one book sprung into the sprawling series and offshoot series. The conclusion is deliberately open-ended, with further problems for Estcarp to wrestle. Not just the Kolder war or the fractious neighbor states, but there are challenges to redefine its own culture and its relations to, say, the Falconers. And, as Simon points out, the weird Kolder artifacts remain on Gorm and must be managed.

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### **Timothy Darling says**

I confess, I did not finish it. I am finding that navigating Norton's efforts at exotic to be tedious. I'm sure that if I had read it earlier in my life I would have enjoyed it more, but I don't have a tolerance for fantasy that does not explain itself a little. I'm a quarter way through the book, a short book, and I'm still being introduced to new characters that could be likable, but I just don't know where it will stop. I'm comparing her to Moorecock or Howard who use just such unreal exotic devices, but in a much briefer format. You are neither expected to understand these locations or connect with these characters. With Norton it is different. She clearly wants her reader to engage the story on a significant level, but even as the last location I read was blown to smithereens, I still didn't know the characters or care that they had died. I was still trying to figure out the relationship between the doomed place and the home of the main characters. I Couldn't weed through it. I'll set this aside and perhaps pick it up again someday, but not while I have reading I know I'd rather do.

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### **Judy says**

Another author, new to me. I decided to try her out after learning she is considered part of an almost forgotten triumvirate of women who were instrumental in developing science fiction and fantasy as it is today: Anne McCaffrey, C J Cherryh, and Andre Norton. I have read almost everything by Anne McCaffrey but until now nothing by the other two.

Another notable aspect of the three groundbreaking women is they felt no compunction about combining science fiction and fantasy in the same novels, something that had been a purist taboo. N K Jemisin, Charlie Jane Anders, Neal Stephenson and other current authors also combine magic and science. I like that.

Witch World begins with Simon Tregarth, a disgraced former Colonel in the World War II US Army, who is on the run. He meets a benefactor who escorts him through a portal into Witch World. Simon finds himself in this world of witches, decayed and super advanced science, and political intrigue. He knows none of the languages spoken there but aligns himself with one of the factions in its long running conflicts. As he fights with them he has to prove himself at every turn since he is from another world and they don't completely trust him at first.

The reader shares his confusion for most of the book as he learns about his new world as he goes. Having recently read both *The Fifth Season* and *The Obelisk Gate* by N K Jemisin, I was fairly accustomed to a good deal of confusion, so I proceeded, if slowly. By the end of the book I was hooked as well as oriented and amazed.

I could say more about the plot but I will just be dastardly and let you suffer through as I did. Simon Tregarth

is a fabulous character. So are the witches.

I do love and admire Anne McCaffrey (whom I met twice) but Andre Norton is a much more sophisticated world builder, perhaps a bridge between McCaffrey and the sadly, recently departed Ursula LeGuin. In any case, I will be following Andre Norton's books in My Big Fat Reading Project and checking out C J Cherryh soon.

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## Sable says

Read for the Women of Genre Fiction Reading Challenge and the Second Best Reading Challenge (for sci-fi/fantasy books that were nominated for awards but did not win).

Anne McCaffrey, C.J. Cherryh, and Andre Norton - the forgotten triumvirate of women who moulded the science fiction and fantasy we know today. Well, also Ursula LeGuin, but for some reason people remember *her*. I think perhaps the difference is that LeGuin is considered a "literary writer"; not that this is something she asked for or sought out.

Anne McCaffrey, C.J. Cherryh, and Andre Norton (who took said pen name because when she was writing sword and sorcery, publishers believed it was necessary to market to adolescent boys because girls didn't read that sort of thing) are legends in the field, if you ask other science fiction and fantasy writers. And if you take the time to read their work, and consider their publication dates, you will be *astounded* at how influential they were (or *are*, in the case of Cherryh, who alone among the three is still with us). But considering their amazing volume of influential work they have all collected so few awards that it kind of boggles the mind. And as a result, you have to be a true aficionado of the genre to have even heard of them.

Although she was later acknowledged as the first woman Gandolph Grand Master of Fantasy, the first woman SFWA Grand Master (1984; the next woman accomplish this was LeGuin in 2003; McCaffrey didn't receive this honour until 2005; Connie Willis got it in 2012; and Cherryh had to wait until this year;) and the first woman to be inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame, *not once* did she receive a major science fiction or fantasy award otherwise. Twice she was nominated for a Hugo; Witch World was one of those nominees. It makes you wonder what happened there. It makes you wonder if those who say the deck in the field is stacked against women were right. Nowadays she has given her name to one of *the* major sci-fi/fantasy awards, which is awarded for young adult fiction in the genre.

I see by reading other reviews here at Goodreads that this novel is one you either love or hate. I get that. The style is one that sounds strange to the modern ear. In the alternate universe that Simon Tregarth, a WWII veteran on the lam, suddenly finds himself immersed in, what we would call "magic" has direct real-world effects; although it remains to be seen whether this is fantastical or scientific, and I'm sure we'll get some clues as this long-running series progresses. He is forced to adapt to a culture which is exceptionally strange to him, where people use what seems to be mostly early medieval technology (with some notable exceptions that might be interlopers from yet another parallel dimension, one with higher technology than our own), where he doesn't even speak the language. It's the ultimate "stranger in a strange land" story. Once he does pick up the language, people speak in a formal sort of way that sounds stilted to our ear; one that has become a sword and sorcery trope. Of course, it wasn't a trope when Norton was writing it, and her writing is one of the reasons that it has become a trope. And she's just getting started.

I got the distinct impression that Norton was writing an homage to the classic pulp series of fantasy and

science fiction that she would have read in her youth (remember, this book was published in 1963). I was distinctly reminded of Edgar Rice Burroughs' classic John Carter of Mars series (also known as his Martian Chronicles, and, originally, the Barsoom Chronicles). Even that formal fantasy style of speech reminded me of Barsoom. Tregarth is clearly a foil for a John Carter in a later era; a man of action and adventure, and a war vet, who tends to get himself into trouble when he's not fighting wars due to his restless spirit. Just like John Carter, when Simon Tregarth suddenly finds himself mystically whisked away to another world, he lands in a situation in which he acts as his heart dictates, and ends up rescuing a maiden in distress.

Except that Norton's maiden was only *temporarily* in distress. While I feel that people grossly underestimate and misinterpret Burroughs' Martian Princess, who is a great leader, stateswoman, diplomat, and even a skilled combatant (just not with Carter's Earth-gravity induced superpowers) Norton's maiden is one of the formidable Witches of Estcarp, who rule their land through a combination of diplomacy, skill-at-arms, statescraft, and magic. The witch (whose name is not given until the end of the book because names have power and witches do not share them, and yet somehow Norton manages to fill her out as a fully developed, unique and sympathetic character despite this) was spying on her nation's enemies and fleeing across the border back to her homeland. Tregarth eventually takes service under the command of the witches, working closely with Guardian (General) Koris, who is probably the first ever major dwarf character who is not a mythical Tolkien dwarf with a significant role in fantasy literature, long before Willow Ufgood or Tyrion Lannister.

The essence of the plot is that the neighbouring nation has been taken over by a force of darkness that is accomplishing the impossible (even for the witches) and animating the coolest, creepiest zombies I've ever read about in fantasy. Estcarp is asked to help defend a neighbouring city-state that is a traditional ally, and fails. Now they must learn about their foes and unite as many friendly (and neutral) nations as they can to stop this overwhelming threat that they are ill-equipped to fight. Fortunately they have acquired Simon Tregarth who, while he does not understand all that the mysterious enemy is doing or how they are doing it, at least understands that this is being accomplished through some kind of technology, and not magic, and thus can help the people of Estcarp figure out how to deal with their foe. I will say that because Tregarth doesn't understand it, this can seem very confusing in places, and not all of what transpires is explained. I think this essence of mystery is intended and I am sure more will be explained in later books.

On a side note, the magic of Witch World is more of a "low magic" than a "high magic" sort of deal (likely borrowed in part from Robert E. Howard's classic Conan books), being composed more of illusion and mind control than the blasting of lightning bolts and fire. I am sure that Mercedes Lackey had one particular scene of this book, which involves five witches seated at a table doing an act of magic with puppets as their focus, in the back of her mind somewhere when the last Herald-Mages of Valdemar were setting the Web with their focus-stones. It feels more "real" than typical fantasy magic, clearly being based in real-world magical traditions (such as the principle of sympathetic magic and the principle of contagion magic,) and I like it. Her system of magic established two more tropes in the genre; the trope of it being a mostly-women's talent (though of course we know there will be at least one man who is the exception) and it being something women only keep if they remain virginal (which prevents our 1960s action hero from seducing every woman mentioned in the plotline, unlike the heroes created by Norton's contemporaries). I even see echoes of her Witches in the Priestesses of Avalon and the Bene Gesserit of Dune.

Let's get back to the fact that this was written in 1963, and only boys read science fiction and fantasy (or so it was commonly believed.) Star Trek wouldn't come out for three years yet. But in addition to introducing us to the powerful Witches of Estcarp, Norton takes an interlude in the middle of the action to tell us the story of Loyse of Verlaine. Loyse is a pale, angularly-built girl who is the daughter of the tyrant lord Fulk, not beautiful and not considered especially desirable for marriage. (view spoiler) This, of course, is yet

another tired old trope; but not when it was written, it wasn't.

Despite seeming a little awkward in places to a modern reader, this adventure picked me up right away and held me on the end of my seat right to the very end. An excellent book that I would call a must-read for anyone interested in sword and sorcery or science fantasy.

This was my first acquaintance with Andre Norton's work, aside from the fact that I'm *sure* that I must have read her short stories somewhere, because she was so prolific, and she edited as well as wrote (and her Catfantastic! collections are probably *the* reason that cats are now a staple in sci-fi/fantasy.) I have been itching to read about the Witch World for many years, because many people talk about it (and have written filk music about it), but sadly, these books are hard to find because I don't think they are in print any longer. This is a loss to the world in my opinion, and I hope that I can encourage others to rediscover them.

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### **Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says**

I loved the first part of the book where Simon Tregarth escaped Earth and came to a new world. The writing there lead the way to future fantasy and scifi books. After that I hit parts that moved to slow then parts that kept up a very fast pace. This is the book for my Science Fiction Book Club this month. We are reading some of the Grand Masters of Science Fiction and Andre Norton was one of the early authors chosen. I read the book years ago and it was interesting remembering how I reacted to the story then and how I reacted to it now. Then I was looking only at the story and today I was looking at how the bones of the story as impacted writing today. Norton was a trail blazer and Witch World was part of that trail.

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### **the gift says**

continuing my reading of woman-authored pulp/golden age sff: just recalled reading this many years ago (decades...) and found i had not put this on here. i remember this was one of the first 'portal fantasies' i read, though not new at the time. and this world of witches is feminist in early sff way. i did enjoy it though i do not know if i was 17 or more, but obviously not enough to follow sequels...

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### **Carla Remy says**

From 1963. Starts in one world, then (right away) dimension shifts to a different one. A world of Fantasy, as in the genre. With kingdoms and politics and a semi medieval culture.

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### **Mary says**

I am currently re reading the Witch World series again.

I finished it and can truely say it was like reading it for the 1st time. The story seemed a little familar but I must have forgotten alot of the detail.

Anyway I really enjoyed it and am looking forward to reading the rest of the Witchworld books.

The ending left it open for lots of possibilities without being a cliffhanger. That is probably what Andre Norton was going for.

I would recommend this book to anyone who loves mixed world type Sci fi and Fantasy.

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### **Sue CCCP says**

My full review: <http://coffeecookiesandchilipeppers.b...>

This is one of those series that I have always meant to read but has somehow never reached the top of my TBR pile. With the incentive of various challenges to encourage me, I finally decided to see if it lived up to its Hugo Award nomination. I am pleased to say that, unlike *A Wizard of Earthsea*, it seems to deserve its place on all those 'Top Fantasy Series' lists out there. It does feel a little dated now, but it is fifty years old, so that is hardly surprising.

The Witch World itself is lavishly detailed and totally developed. We experience a series of very different cultures and societies, but they are not presented via a mass of exposition. If anything, I would have liked some more detail and perhaps a little longer to immerse myself in each one before we moved on to the next. This was definitely a book that would have benefitted from a good glossary or appendix explaining some of the terms and concepts as it was a little too light on explanations for my taste.

This brings us to one aspect of the world that I really did enjoy: the magic. For some reason it is confined to women, thus making them a powerful force in society, which was a very nice change for a society that was basically your typical Medieval European fantasy setting. I also liked the way that the magic was mind-based and more to do with mental discipline and good luck than anything else. This fallibility was also a nice deviation from the usual whizz, bang, point and shoot type of magic that we see so often. It also meant that the Witches had to work together with their male army in order to really accomplish anything, showing a fairly equal society in many aspects. This equality was even highlighted by the disapproval that they felt for the Falconers' society, which was male-dominated and used their women as breeding machines.

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### **Terence says**

#### **Reread: Sept 2012**

There's nothing better than a dose of Norton when in need of a comfort read.

When I was a lad growing up in St. Charles, MO, the library we frequented (a converted shop near the freeway exit, long since sacrificed to the country's love affair with shopping malls [sigh]) had two floors. The top floor catered to "adult" literature and I didn't often go there. The basement contained the YA and SF stuff, and it was there that I received my first exposure to the genre that I love to this day. Andre Norton was one of the earliest authors I read. The library had two five-book collections of her work. The first were SF titles - the first two or three "Solar Queen" novels and a few more set in her future history. The second

collection were the first five "Witch World" novels - the setting for much of Norton's most inspired and best work.

What makes Norton such a wonderful author - something I only recognize in hindsight but that I'd like to think my adolescent subconscious picked up on - is that she never allows her fantastical settings to obscure what really matters: the people who live in her stories. The story of Simon Tregarth's adventures in the service of Estcarp made a powerful impression on me, and Jaelithe was probably my first literary crush. For a long time, it was Norton and Tolkien by which I measured other authors.

My recommendation below still stands. For decent stories with interesting and admirable characters, you can do far worse.

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Andre Norton is probably one of the best authors to introduce young readers to both SF and fantasy. You can't go far wrong with either the Solar Queen or the Witch World.

\* For my birthday, I picked up the first seven "Witch World" novels from my local used-book store, which prompted this particular round of rereading.

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### **Jeff Suter says**

OK - I'm a sucker for Andre Norton books and the Witch World series in particular. I discovered the author and Witch World about the same time as a teenager. Now normally I don't like genre-mixing novels - science fiction with fantasy. It just grates. Yet Witch World relies on the premise that there are "Gates" between worlds and the first major foe encountered are the Kolder, a race of technological beings bent on conquest. Science versus magic.

Our protagonist is Simon Tregarth, an American ex-soldier of Cornish descent, after circumstances found him on the wrong side of the law and the wrong side of a crime syndicate he is on the run and his time is running out. He is offered a strange escape. A mysterious benefactor possesses the Siege Perilous, a Cornish artefact of power, mysteriously located in the USA. The Siege Perilous was known to the Knights of Camelot. It is a "Gate". To escape Tregarth steps through the "Gate" and finds himself on the Witch World.

All that rich detail is encapsulated in the first chapter. The rest of the book, and the main series, are like that. A different

Late he finds himself in service to the Witches of Estcarp and the Lady he finds there. A witch.

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### **Cheryl says**

Got halfway through and could read no more. This book is just not for me.

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## **Christine says**

Too many battle scenes and not enough world building. My mind wandered too often while reading this book

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## **Kat Hooper says**

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

Simon Tregarth knows he's about to die — he's being hunted down by a professional assassin and he has a "feeling" that it's going to happen tonight. But then the infamous Doctor Petronius interrupts Simon as he's savoring his last meal and offers him an escape. Dr. Petronius's services don't come cheap, but this expense is a no-brainer (after all, you can't take it with you). The only downside is that neither Simon nor Dr. Petronius knows where Simon is actually going, for he will sit on King Arthur's Siege Perilous and be sent to a world where his soul is at home...

Andre Norton (her real name was Alice, but she chose to write SFF under a male pseudonym back in the 60s) is often called the Grande Dame of Science Fiction and Fantasy and was the first woman to receive the Gandalf Grand Master Award from the World Science Fiction Society. I've been meaning to read *Witch World* for years and since Brilliance Audio has just released the first *Witch World* novel on CD, this was the perfect opportunity.

As expected, I enjoyed *Witch World*. Andre Norton's language is pleasant, if not brilliant, and all the characters were instantly engaging. I liked Simon immediately — how can you not like a guy who has already killed two of his potential assassins and is now eating a steak dinner while waiting for the arrival of the last and best one? I also particularly liked Loyse, daughter of the odious Fulk, who doesn't want to marry the equally odious duke.

Though decades old, the plot was quick, fun, and refreshing and I liked the blend of science fiction and fantasy. However, the book wraps up a bit too quickly and easily at the end; I could have used a bit more tension. But perhaps if you go straight on to the next novel (*Web of the Witch World*, also being produced on audio) you won't feel this way since it's a continuation of the story.

Nick Podehl was the reader for this book and he did an adequate job, though his voice could sometimes be described as plodding and soporific. Consequently, I didn't find that his reading added anything to the story. It didn't reduce my enjoyment of the story, but I was disappointed that it didn't enhance it.

I'm looking forward to *Web of the Witch World*. I like Simon and his companions and I'm wondering what they'll do next in Simon's new world.

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## **Metaphorosis says**

[reviews.metaphorosis.com](http://reviews.metaphorosis.com)

2.5 stars

Simon Tregarth, hunted and tired, pays all he has for a guaranteed escape. He finds himself on another world, where he promptly helps a witch defeat her own pursuers, and becomes entangled in her land's troubles.

When I was growing up, I was well aware of Andre Norton, but I don't believe I read more than a couple of her books. I knew about the Witch World, but I just wasn't very interested. Decades later, I decided to give her another try. I read the *Time Traders* series (with various co-authors), and wasn't impressed, but I figured that it was the Witch World books that were what she was best known for.

I'm sorry to say I didn't think much of this first book in the series. It starts well, with intriguing, gritty streets and an act of desperation. Then there's a reasonably standard (for the period) man saves woman, becomes champion scenario. The book then turns to a mix of interesting concepts, and I give it credit for interesting cultures and an interesting approach to multi-dimensional trade. Where it is weaker is in the human relationships. Our hero, Simon, while shown to be intelligent and resourceful, rarely shows much initiative. He wanders hither and thither as the plot requires, with no real interests of his own. He's a mechanism, not a character.

Unfortunately, I had a similar reaction to the *Time Traders* series - thinly sketched, not very credible action heroes in 'luckily it all worked out' situations. In this novel, the environment and plot were more interesting, but I think what eight books tells me is that I just don't care much for Norton's work. I don't see going on to the other (31!) books in this series.

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### **Kathryn says**

This is the first of the Witch World books and a classic. To be honest, most of the spec-fic classics I've read lately have been fairly disappointing. I thought this one bucked the trend and held up fairly well. Overall I'd give it a 3.5, rounding up for it being a classic.

We open with Simon Tregarth, our protagonist, on the run in a distinctly noir setting. It has a 1940s feel to it which probably felt like the nearly recent past when the book was released in 1963. Anyhow, we don't spend too much time in the 40s, as Simon escapes the people pursuing him by striking a deal with a shady character who promises him a portal to the world where he truly belongs. And off we go with our traditional portal fantasy!

Simon finds himself in a new world and immediately sees a person on the run from pursuers. Jumping in without knowing what's going on he helps the woman hide from her pursuers. This ends up working out for him as this in turn allows him a time and place to learn the language of his new land and find a place there. The book pretty much skips over those details!

The rest of the book primarily features Simon, the lady he rescued whose name we don't find out til the end, Koris (a dwarf who ends up a Captain in the guards), and Loyse, the heir to another kingdom who is desperate to escape her father's (stepfather's?) plans for her. There's quite a few small kingdoms with roughly described politics and stances and a lot of battle scenes. There's a bit of dipping into sci-fantasy with some interesting technology cropping up unexpectedly. There are psuedo-zombies and talking birds.

The book covers an awful lot of ground, some of it well, some if not so well. Mostly it's a fun ride. It definitely has a lot of the feel of the pulp adventures that preceded it. For a book of its era, I appreciate the balance of male and female characters and that the women had some agency. It's also nice to read one of the grand doyennes of fantasy!

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### **Katharine (Ventureadlaxre) says**

This is part of my reading challenge for 2017, to expand my woeful knowledge of women in speculative fiction by reading at least 24 books by women that were and are instrumental in our genre.

This starts as a master of intrigue. A marked man, Simon, who is or once was very capable, and once honest and a Corporal, is on the run. He expects death at every turn, and yet is still darkly witty when prompted. Having been tricked into falling on the wrong side of the law he has had to leave his old life behind him, and has so far managed to beat off those who come after him... but he finds himself following someone expensively dangerous who says he can be of some assistance - and that assistance has to do with Simon's Cornish heritage.

This reminds me hugely of Outlander by Diana Gabaldon for various reasons (though Estcarp Cycle came first, of course) as well as the many many other 'MC gets transported to a magical land by various means and has to struggle on' books out there. The general interactions at the start of the book, the light worldbuilding, and leaving the reader to make their own inferring makes this a strong book as it keeps you paying attention. The fact women are those who have magic is always a favourite of mine - turning often weaker characters who just gather herbs or sit and worry a force to be reckoned with.

Overall though, the intrigue from the start kind of set me off to expect an entirely different book, and this was a mainly plot driven piece rather than by character or worldbuilding as is my preference. This is an interesting book to read for its time, and to enjoy the genre as it once was, but overall it wasn't as for me as I'd previously hoped.

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