

Andre Norton

There have always been magical beliefs about the gentle implements of needle and thread. Ancient mythologies referred to "the thread of life" and had many rituals regarding the crafts of spinning, weaving, and sewing. The Fates, the three Greek goddesses who controlled destiny, were always depicted as seamstresses and embroiderers of the patterns of destiny. It is possible that these early myths originated in the old custom of sewing clan marks into a newly born child's swaddling bands, with the later embellishment that one of the Fates spins the thread of life, another measures it, and the third cuts it off. Thread, of course, was sacred to the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis, and the Greek goddess Athena used it to embroider the robes of the immortals. In all of witchcraft there is a persistent belief in the magic of needles, pins, and scissors.

Andre Norton, born Alice Mary Norton, is one of our most extraordinary writers of fantasy and science fiction. She began writing during the 1950s after a dedicated period as a librarian, which included a job as a special librarian at the Library of Congress. In contrast to many writers of fantasy and science

fiction, she depicts characters that seem enormously real, and in all her writing displays a remarkable talent for minute description.

Andre Norton's delightful yet harrowing description of the art of embroidery in this fantasy is based on her own experience. In addition to being a collector of antiques, particularly old dolls, she is a superb practitioner of the art of needlework.