

handful of people conducting a biological survey in one of the deserted and overgrown cities. And in particular, we follow one Kerans as he feels the pull of the sun and jungle shaping his destiny. In the ceaseless heat of these watery realms it seems only natural that Kerans' battle with himself should be couched in terms of a nightmarish fantasy and not a straightforward narrative. Kerans' gradual loss of interest in the project, his gravitation toward those who might share his feelings, his withdrawal into himself as his bodily wants become fewer, and finally his departure from the lagoon to follow the sun all form an unforgettable portrait.

It is interesting to compare this book with Ballard's mediocre last novel *The Wind From Nowhere*. That had as its focal point a natural phenomenon gone berserk so to speak. The catastrophe was used as the basis for a not very convincing adventure story, whereas in the present instance, it is used as the springboard into a superb introspective study. Might there be a path here for Mr. Ballard regarding his direction for development in the future?

Lord of Thunder. By Andre Norton. 192 pp. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$3.25.

This latest from Andre Norton

is, in a sense, a sequel to *The Beast Master*, involving as it does the same setting and some of the same characters. But it can be read independently of the earlier book without the slightest loss of enjoyment.

The hero is Hosteen Storm, a Terran who has made his home on the planet Arzor after the destruction of Terra in a galactic war. He is happy there with his cat Surra and his eagle Baku, with whom he can communicate (in best Andre Norton fashion) and feels at home with the native Norbies who, in many ways, remind him of his American Indian ancestors. The Norbies, in turn, accept him as a friend because of his skill with animals and his respect for and understanding of their ceremonies and magic.

All goes well between the Norbies and Earth people until all the Norbies leave their herding duties and their accustomed haunts to have a grand conclave together in the sinister and far-distant Peaks. Tribes which previously had warred with each other make sudden truces in order that all can attend. And all this in the middle of the Great Dry, when to go far from water and shelter means certain death.

At the same time, Hosteen is asked by an off-Worlder to go into the Peaks to try to hunt his son who has been downed in a spaceship accident. Weak signals

from the area seem to indicate a chance that there might have been survivors from the wreck. At first Hosteen refuses, realizing the madness of going into an unchartered area, especially during the dry season. But then he is persuaded to change his mind by the Earth authorities on Arzor who are anxious about the Norbie meeting and who see the accident as a legitimate excuse to go there and observe.

Armed only with his cat, his eagle and his knowledge of magic and "medicine" inherited from his relatives, Hosteen sets off. He discovers a whole world under a mountain, learns of an uprising planned against the off-Worlders and does battle with what the Norbies know as the Lord of Thunder.

All this is written in Miss Norton's own distinctive way—a combination of a fast-paced plot with a clear, lucid style. Chalk up another superior adventure story for one of science fiction's most predictable and consistent craftsmen.

NOTES ON REVIEWING: (Whereby Mr. Cotts sounds a loud retort in defense of self and others in the profession.)

I am going to claim a privilege which I have not yet done, that of blowing off steam at certain writers in the letter column. My irritation, strange as it may

seem, is not with those fans who say "Cotts is talking up his sleeve," or "I bet he didn't even read the book," or "How could anyone be stupid enough not to like that story?" Comments such as these show that the column is fulfilling some of its goals—not simply to report on the plot, but to encourage a more analytical reading of said books and to make the fires of discussion blaze a little higher.

No, my specific complaint is with readers who put words in my mouth that I never said. Some recent examples of this come from Mr. Cunningham of Georgia and Mr. Shellum of California. Mr. Cunningham criticizes my review of Andre Norton's *Daybreak 2250 A.D.* and says "we are not all so sentimental as to require a love interest in every story we read." Then he goes on to list several fine books that contain no mention of women. True, and I could name other womanless books to join this list. But my comment did not refer merely to the book in question but to the whole, extremely large body of Miss Norton's work. And though I did mention the omission of romance, my prime concern went much farther than that—to point out the almost complete absence of any female (whether little girl, grandmother, high priestess, teacher or what), along with the comment