

Fuzzy—first of the friendly, golden-furred, intelligent little creatures whose very existence is shortly to blow things wide open. Because, if Fuzzy's people are an intelligent native race, Zarathustra becomes a Class IV *inhabited* world, Federation agents will step in to protect them from exploitation, and the Company will be out.

You can imagine the hell that pops over that situation. It is more than just a story of lively action, skulduggery, and mystery, for the author meets head on the same question that was the theme of Vercors' novel of a few years ago, "You Shall Know Them." How do you know when a being is sapient? But Piper is after a far more fundamental analysis than Vercors, whose near-men were close enough to human so that they could interbreed with us. The Fuzzies are peeping fuzz-balls that make tools, enjoy TV, and become more enchanting company the more you see of them—never for a moment to be considered human—but are they *people*?

Holloway's gradual discovery of the Fuzzies' potentialities—the bureaucratic furor which results—the issues of scientific ethics vs. a paycheck next Thursday—and the final legal battle when one of the Fuzzies is killed and a Company administrator charged with murder—make as enjoyable a book as I have seen in a long time. The author makes even the villains believable and understandable—even while they are plotting to solve the problem by extermin-

ating the Fuzzies and making the matter moot.

Enroll me among the Friends of Little Fuzzy. It's the best book H. Beam Piper has ever done, and for my money the best out in the first third of 1962.

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THE DEFIANT AGENTS, by Andre Norton. World Publishing Co., Cleveland & New York. 1962. 224 pp. \$3.50

There is a kind of science fiction that will never go out of style, and Andre Norton writes it.

Jules Verne's novels were dated even in his own lifetime. Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom—and the Red Planet of many another writer—became fantasy as soon as the astronomers began to measure Mars as well as look at it. Arthur C. Clarke's space stations are about to be bypassed in the political race to the Moon, and our fictional stereotypes about that world, though better grounded than most, will soon be up for reappraisal. But twenty years from now, or two hundred—even if science realizes science fiction's faster-than-light drive—there will still be excitement and fascination in stories about strange, distant worlds that men have never seen. And nobody writes better stories about such places than Andre Norton.

This book is the third of the time agent stories. In "Time Traders," you will recall, the West discovered that Russia had developed time travel and was harvesting the scientific se-

crets of a galactic empire from a starship wrecked on Earth thousands of years ago. In "Galactic Derelict," a young Apache archeologist, Travis Fox, was investigating another such ship when it automatically took him on a tour of a series of worlds where ruins and relics of the star people served only to deepen the mystery about the star-treaders.

In the new book, the West has sent a pioneering team of young Apaches, including Fox, to colonize Topaz—a world of golden grasslands and wooded mountains much like the American West where their ancestors had lived before the *pinda-lick-o-yi*—the White Man—came to the new world. But, without their knowledge, they have been subjected to the Redax, a field which warps their minds back into those of their ancestors. Presumably this will better fit them to colonize a virgin planet.

But the Russians are there first, with a company of Tartar horseherds like those who had dominated the steppes of High Asia while the Apaches are winning the American Plains. The Western ship is shot down, and Fox and his group are on their own. The book is the story of their efforts to make a place for themselves, to reach a working alliance with the Tartars—or those of them who have escaped from the dominance of a Red mental-control machine—and to keep the Reds from discovering a strange city of the star people.

Again, as in others of Andre Norton's recent books, we have the con-

cept of a telepathic rapport between men and mutant animals—in this case, a pair of coyotes who are as real as any of the human characters. Again we get more glimpses of the star empire, opening new mysteries as old puzzles are clarified. The native animals and birds of Topaz are less fully realized than usual—to a degree, the plot gets in the way of the world—but if we return to Topaz in another book, that will certainly be rectified. The similar but contrasted traditions of the two horse people, Asian and American, are nicely used to produce legitimate conflict, and the erratic operation of Redax, which has left the Apaches mentally strewn through time from stone age days to the nineteenth century, contributes more worries for Travis Fox.

All of which I would have said with just as much enthusiasm even if Miss Norton had not honored me with a share in the dedication. "Defiant Agents" isn't her best book—in fact, I don't much like the title, which may be the publisher's—but it is one of a group of such books which have set a level all their own, well above most present day science fiction.

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WHEN THEY COME FROM SPACE
by Mark Clifton. Doubleday & Co.,
Garden City, N.Y. 1962. 192 pp.
\$2.95

The previous adventures of Ralph Kennedy, personnel director and general trouble-shooter for Computer Research, have been chronicled here