

And there is Bloch, whose poem in memory of Stephen Vincent Benet's "Metropolitan Nightmare" should, I guess, be up there with Davidson and Blish as worthy of the Kornbluth association. "Nightmare Number Four," he calls it, and the satire cuts deep.

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THE WAR AGAINST THE RULL, by A. E. van Vogt. Simon and Schuster, New York. 1959. 244 pp. \$3.50

Setting "Slan" aside, I have always liked the early Van Vogt, who conjured up the strange worlds and believable monsters of "Black Destroyer" and its ilk, better than the plot tangler of the later books. Here are the Rull stories, published here in the "good old days" from 1940 to 1950, fitted together into a book-length sequence that is too episodic to be quite a novel by our more demanding 1960 standards.

Actually, although the protean Rull are the nominal adversary against whom human civilization is fighting a hopeless interstellar war, the real interest in the book comes in the parts in which Trevor Jamieson is battling the frightful, telepathic *exwals* of Carson's Planet, and trying to make them into allies. Best of all is the opening section—"Co-operate or Else" in 1942—in which Jamieson and an *exwal* are spacewrecked and fighting a savage three-cornered duel, with each other and with the horrible

world on which they are trying to stay alive. Another thriller originally appeared as "The Rull," in 1948: here Jamieson and a Rull are setting traps for each other.

Out of key with the Man-against-Nature themes of the other episodes, but moving in its own way, is the story of Jamieson's small son's adventure in search of "The Sound." Used by the Rull and against them, he gets his real satisfaction from at last learning what it is that stirs him so.

But this is not a short story collection, though the parts were once separate. The assembly is uneven and jouncy, and I wish Van Vogt had taken the time to fit the material together in a real novel.

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GALACTIC DERELICT, by Andre Norton. World Publishing Co., Cleveland & New York. 1959. 224 pp. \$3.00

SECRET OF THE LOST RACE, by Andre Norton.

ONE AGAINST HERCULUM, by Jerry Sohl. Ace Books No. D-381. 1959. 132+124 pp. 35¢

It should be no news to regular readers that Andre Norton can do practically no wrong where I am concerned. I think this quiet Cleveland librarian writes the best planetary adventure yarns going, brimming with the "sense of wonder" that is supposed to have been lost years ago, and I can't see why they aren't even better



fare for knowledgeable adults than for the teen-aged readers for whom they are supposedly published.

In both these books, though, Miss Norton is writing a bit below her best level. In the case of "Galactic Derelict," I think the reason is the "mixed purpose complaint that has also infected some of Robert A. Heinlein's recent books. With "Secret of the Lost Race"—titled "Wolfhead" in the original manuscript, which I got in one of the Detention auctions—the trouble is a little too much experimenting with other people's formulas. But what good is a writer who doesn't continually experiment?

"Galactic Derelict" is a sequel to "The Time Traders," a superb time-travel-adventure story that is apparently to be part of a still-unfinished series. United States time traders are searching through past eras for a wrecked fleet of interstellar ships, from one of which the Soviets are salvaging highly dangerous scientific secrets. In the new book an Indian hero, Travis Fox, comes upon a post of the traders and is enlisted to help them find a derelict in the time of the Southwest's Folsom men, some ten thousands years ago. To be strictly correct, the Folsom man didn't hunt mammoths; the mammoth hunters were his Clovis predecessors—but the point is a quibble, because the story abruptly turns into an interstellar and possibly an intergalactic jaunt, when the deserted ship, programmed for an automatically controlled voyage, takes off for a series of strange ports among the stars.

Here the pure Norton touch regains its full magic in scene after scene, clarifying one aspect of the mystery star-race, only to throw out new puzzles. In the end, though much has been learned, the central mystery is unsolved, and we can hope that the time traders will go on through still more books as good or better than this one. Even more, I'd like to see Travis Fox take his impoverished Apache kinsmen to pioneer a brand new planet, drawing on old skills and understandings to tame a world like their own, yet subtly different. *That* could be pure Norton, and magnificent and they'd make wonderful planet pioneers!

"Secret of the Lost Race" also gets its best scenes from the ice-world of Fenris, to which the mysterious youngster named Joktar has been shanghaied and sold into bond-slavery. He escapes in an avalanche, fights off the animal and climatic dangers of the frigid world, joins forces with a group of malcontents, and eventually discovers the secret of his own origin and the forces lined up against him. But the Van Vogtian intertwining of hidden forces gets in the way of the Man-against-the-elements theme and the sense of wonder. Given a little more space, it might all have turned out better.

Jerry Sohl's "One Against Herculium" is also a righteous-man-against-a-warped society story. Unable to advance on the colonial planet, Herculium, without paying off the head of the examination system, Alan Demuth uses a loophole in the social code and