



David Falkayn: Star Trader

Poul Anderson

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1. Poul Anderson remains one of science fiction's most popular writers, and this generous volume of his best work, with wide-ranging themes and settings, will attract his thousands of fans and win him many new ones.
2. Included is a complete novel, *Satan's World*, and a number of equally exciting short novels.
3. A book with strong appeal to readers of David Drake's RCN series.
4. Many of the works in this volume have been out of print for years, and none have been previously gathered together in chronological sequence. Long-time Anderson fans will welcome old friends, and newer Anderson fans will find a host of prime, real science fiction by one of the field's very best.
5. Advertising in *Locus*, more

The Polesotechnic League of star traders was prospering, and Nicholas Van Rijn, its most flamboyant member, was prospering most of all as commerce flowed between the stars. But not all League members played fair when trading, nor did some of the non-human races of the galaxy object to dirty tricks. Van Rijn could not be everywhere, and relied on his representatives, foremost among them his young protégé, David Falkayn, and the members of David's trader team: Adzel, a large dragon-like being who practiced Buddhism, and Chee-Lan, a brilliant but hot-tempered felinesque extraterrestrial.

This is the second volume in the first complete edition of Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization saga. And, after the three volumes chronicling the Polesotechnic League's rise and fall will come more volumes, telling of the rise of the Terran Empire and the adventures of Poul Anderson's other legendary character, **Captain Sir Dominic Flandry**.

David Falkayn: Star Trader Details

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From Reader Review David Falkayn: Star Trader for online ebook

Tim says

Some good. Some not so good.

Nik Renshaw says

TLDR: Each story follows the same general pattern: female characters act as accessories as clever white male capitalists puzzle through the key to out-maneuvering alien species or adversaries either figuratively or literally for financial gain, through psychological/anthropological analysis of motivations or physical science and tactics. This pattern is executed by Anderson with a great level of skill and intelligence, especially scientifically. If this sounds appealing to you, then read this book because it is really good at doing this one thing, but it's not as deep as it tries to be.

This collection of stories was definitely entertaining, and I would generally recommend it to people interested in hard sci-fi. Poul Anderson is impressive in his scientific detail and the way in which the plot of the stories is generally very closely tied with a concrete scientific phenomenon and its impacts on the evolution of a species, economics, or other logistical consequences. I haven't read much hard sci-fi, and I found myself appreciating--if not fully understanding--a lot of the scientific detail.

The role of women in the stories is terribly disappointing as the primary purpose of all the female human characters is very clearly only to be objects of male goals, actions and sexual desire. Unless I'm forgetting a scene, all 7 of the stories fail the Bechdel test, even including female aliens, which is a sad, sad statement. And on that note, even though Chee Lan, one of the main supporting characters is a female cat-like being, her role is simple and constrained and her characterization is quite one-note and superficial, as are those of Adzel, a male Buddhist dragon-like being who is also meant to act as a supporting foil but whose perspective and motivations are disappointingly closely aligned with the rest of the main characters.

Along similar lines, I was also disappointed by the way that Anderson's gestures at complex anthropological and psychological studies all boil down to relatively simplistic and repetitive perspectives. He makes a great show of many of the stories hinging on his characters needing to suss out the underlying evolutionary and anthropological causes of the motivations and social structures of various alien species. These explorations are often interesting, but ultimately they all fall into the same pattern that these complex interactions can be understood, summarized, and exploited for financial gain with relative ease by his white, male laissez-faire capitalist lead characters. This eventually makes for pretty repetitive fare as we get no real diversity of perspective, and all alien species end up being equally predictable and understandable from a single lens after some token chin-scratching by Falkayn and/or van Rijn.

I was pleasantly surprised, though, that my initial assessment was wrong that the whole work was a rather transparent parable in favor of the power and rightness of laissez faire capitalism. The protagonists are part of a merchant guild working behind the back of a government shown to be bureaucratic, foolish and petty, and the heroes are generally characterized as promoting social good for alien species by opening up new markets via the soft power of economic exploitation and often also the hard power of technological might and threats of retribution. This was starting to get tiresome for me, but further into the collection, Anderson

introduces more nuance into his treatment of the Polesotechnic League and galactic government and more explicitly describes the drawbacks and damage caused by the League's single-minded focus on profits, with a capstone story that for better or worse favors altruism over profit. So while I was initially put off by this aspect of the stories, I felt Anderson redeemed himself and showed a fair amount of complexity in the end.

In all, if you're looking for some pretty straightforward sci-fi entertainment, I think this is a solid offering by a talented author. If however, you're looking for something challenging and complex, I think you'll find this collection lacking. In the progression and resolution of each story, Anderson seems to imply that the work is clever and complex and revelatory of deep truths, but ultimately I think it falls short of the standard Anderson seems to be trying to set for himself.

Anthony Faber says

More stories and another novel from the Van Rijn/David Falkayn Polesotechnic League universe, happening after those in "The Van Rijn Method". Typical Anderson, but I find Van Rijn (who's still around in some of these stories) particularly annoying.

Dennis says

<http://pro-libertate.net/20151001/279...>

Jay says

This is the second book in the new compilation of Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization stories, and it's going to be hard to top. Apart from the titular Falkayn and his alien trader-pioneer partners, Chee Lan and Adzel the dragon, it features Nicholas Van Rijn himself again in most of the stories, and he is at his best. This volume includes the novels *Satan's World* and *The Trouble Twisters*, classics in their own right but here set in chronological order amidst shorter tales that give them their rightful context. The book takes the reader from the pinnacle of the Polesotechnic League's exploration and exploitation of known space, to the beginning of the League's dissolution into a tyranny of robber barons who care little for the trillions of sophonts who must suffer so that the barons can maintain their cashflow. By the end of the volume, civilization is still in full flower (and still dominated by humans), but you can just make out the clouds gathering on the far horizon.

As a nice bonus, there's a complete timeline of Anderson's Technic Civilization in the back, with each of his books and stories set in proper chronological order.

John says

Like the previous volume, I've read many of these stories before, but not in chronological order.

Overall, I find the stories in this volume more interesting than those in the previous one, largely because I find the character of Falkayn more interesting than that of Van Rijn. Van Rijn is nearly an embodiment of the capitalist ideal. He often does the right thing, but because it's also the most profitable thing, not the most moral one, and while he gets older, he does not really change.

A son of aristocracy, Falkayn begins his career as a follower of Van Rijn's philosophies. As time goes on though, he sees that capitalism does not succeed at bettering everyone. Entire species of intelligent beings are falling through the cracks due to not having anything worth trading to the merchant princes. Eventually he deviates from Van Rijn's form of capitalism to follow his own moral compass.

While none but the last story deal with these issues in any but a passing way, it's interesting none the less. It's also interesting to note that Van Rijn's adventures were largely written before those of Falkayn's, and it makes me wonder how much the author's political and economic views may have changed between the stories.

This growth of the Falkayn character only really comes out when reading the collected stories. It's not really present in the individual stories themselves, so it's understandable why Van Rijn has been at least as popular a character for many (including myself in the past), as his idiosyncrasies are generally quite entertaining, and his lack of development as a character is not apparent when reading individual stories.

Lee says

I fell onto this while reading about the inspirations for the space RPG "Traveller." I'd not read any of these stories, but I think I've read some of Anderson earlier.

Quite good, and they certainly didn't seem aged to me: it was shocking to find that the central novella in this collection is as old as I am!

I'll have to go look for some more.

Rob says

...The next volume, *Rise of the Terran Empire*, will introduce the next phase in Technic History. Dominic Flandry, the main character in most of the stories from the Terran Empire period will not show up until part four however. I think this change of scene will be good for the readers not familiar with Anderson's work. The stories in this volume are starting to feel like repetitions and at times van Rijn's East India Company mentality annoys me tremendously. Anderson has shown he is not blind for the risks of an organisation like the Polesotechnic League however, it will be interesting to see what its fate will be and what follows this era of uncut capitalism. This book has its ups and downs but Anderson's future history intrigues me none the less....

Full Random Comments review
