

Is there anyone fanzine who has never been a member of FAPA 55  
who has received Horizons from the Time Spaceways folded

Here beginneth the lamentations of Harry Warner, Jr., 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Maryland, forming the summer, 1953, issue of Horizons, the poor man's Jeremiad. This is volume 14, number 4, whole number 55, and FAPA number 49. Published, after a fashion, on the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph, whose counter began its third hundred thousand during the last issue.

### In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: I felt a sharp pang when I paid my dues this time, because I've stayed in the FAPA for many years without sending dues to anyone. One year I was secretary-treasurer, saving the need for writing a check. The next year I didn't have to pay because someone's check for dues had bounced and I assumed the loss. Before that, there were a couple of years when I put out small official publications for the FAPA, expenses on which just about equalled dues and I called it even. I think there were other ways in which I escaped the formal sort of dues paying in the dimmer past. Chapter-Play: When rosebud was the battlecry of fandom, I frequently felt myself getting embarrassed when the word turned up in non-fannish gatherings in a way whose vulgarity was apparent to no one but myself. Even now, I feel just a bit uncomfortable, when listening to Mahler's Second Symphony, at the point where the contralto suddenly begins singing: "O Röslein rot..." The Polaroid Diary: A person who can see things as clearly as Lee needn't worry about the standardization and uniformity of America's towns, which we read about so often. Maybe all the McCrory stores and bus terminals are pretty much alike. But such things as the town markets obviously keep their individuality. Hagerstown, for instance, doesn't have salt blocks or mules on market day. But it does have unbelievably lovely Mennonite girls in their plain dresses; pot cheese, an indescribable substance which is made only in this area and always gives me a stomachache; and Pennsylvania Dutch-influenced talk, filled with such expressions as "Come here once" or "The potatoes are all." Sky Hook: I'm glad that those fanzine titles weren't copyrighted. I'm much more pleased with a prozine calling itself If or Imagination than with one entitled Super Cosmic Universe Thrill Tales. The first prozine that wants to use Spaceways as a title will have my blessing. " You needn't worry about that statement that music never sounds as the composers intended it to sound. There is a gap of sorts between intention and realization, that holds true even for composers—it also affects performers, who seldom produce precisely the sounds they mean to produce. However, we have enough records of works conducted or performed by 20th century composers to have a pretty good idea of approximately what they wanted their music to sound like. The conducting tradition for the 19th century works is direct enough to give us pretty good insurance that we're hearing something very close to authenticity. It's 18th century and earlier music that produces real problems about intentions, and causes the big fusses about harpsichord vs. piano, brisk tempo vs. extremely deliberate speed, interpretation of ornaments, the amount of freedom permitted in realizing a figured bass, and such things. " Atheling shouldn't attribute to all fiction the current magazine fiction rule about the deus ex machina. I think that most of the world's really great literature depends on the deus ex machina. Starting with the Book of Job and ending with The Naked and the

I don't know if it was necessary or not, but this  
morning seems to be one calculated to bring fancy  
out of his head. Carr - Bradley - McCann - Mussen  
Barber - Collier





Dead, you can find it as the backbone of such diverse works as The War of the Worlds, Alice in Wonderland, almost everything that Dickens wrote, The Pit and the Pendulum, and a thousand other stories. "While I agree that every fan should do the best writing of which he is capable, I don't think that this article shows the old, true Speerit. There is no comparison in literary worth between Speer's projected article on Methuselah's Children and the output of a Keasler or a Sneary. But the latter stuff exists and the former doesn't, and so the latter is of more value to fandom. I wouldn't encourage any fan to delay writing or publishing something, simply because he might be able to do a better job later, when he has more time or skill; revisions are always possible, after all. I violently disagree about the desirability of looking up in the dictionary any words which the individual may not know how to spell. It would be much better if the individual chose another word or group of words that mean the same thing, because if he's uncertain about the spelling, he may also be uncertain about the fine shades of meaning implied by the word, the good usage which no dictionary can teach. "Is "weekend" to be found in any language except English? "Maybe Redd was looking at a Kodak auto-release. But I've been suspecting the existence of a sort of occupational telepathy, consisting of ability to recognize certain often-thought thoughts. I find that I'm able to guess what a stranger coming into the newspaper office wants, four times out of five. Part of this can be written off because of the way couples who want to announce an engagement cling together or the writhing approach of new fathers who want to insert a birth announcement, but not all of it. Irusaben: I don't think that New World Writing ever promised to limit itself to new authors; the "New" seems to refer to the specific story or essay or poem, rather than the writer. "Ballantine Books is the first sane innovation in publishing since the monkish days of Gutenberg. Hardcover books are a useless survival from reference volumes, and similarly much-used books. The paper-back editions will hold together for seven to eight readings, public libraries in major cities have found, and what novel or biography do you read oftener in your life? (Naturally, substantial bindings are still needed for books which will go into public libraries or rental collections. But even public libraries are turning more and more to paperback editions.) "I don't think that Puccini would be too angry that Turandot isn't very popular in its present form. That opera would certainly have received a complete overhauling, if Puccini had lived, because it's even more unsatisfactory in the existing version than the original Madama Butterfly's 90-minute second act. The music is fine in Turandot, too good for the plot, because the music has done such a thorough job of making Liu a sympathetic character that no spectator can be satisfied with the way her death simply increases Calaf's admiration for Turandot. The whole third act is anticlimactic in Turandot, anyway. Unasked Opinion: I can't quite understand how Russians today can own less than the nothing they owned under serfdom in Czarist Russia. "It's nice to read an occasional foreign publication, for opinions on the United States. But those opinions are apt to be as unfounded as the accounts of life in Zanzibar or Russia by the "experts" from the United States who read two books about those nations, then spend six weeks there as visitors. Much better-founded criticisms of America can be found in this nation's magazines, if you can tear yourself away from Collier's and Life and read a dissenting pub-



lication from time to time. There are many things that aren't published in magazines which require seven million readers and hundreds of inches of advertising to keep going. ' ' Your explanation of "humor proclivity for a nativity" doesn't sound logical to me. What do the "humor" and "proclivity" mean, if it refers "to a character prediction based on a natal horoscope?" ' ' Unfortunately, I fear that the character who got himself blown up on someone else's honeymoon wasn't Wetzel of fannish fame, although it sounds in character. Fandom's Wetzel must be about 30 by now. ' ' Although it means repeating myself, I'll say again what I've pointed out in the past to answer complaints about Horizons' format: I have no artistic ability, and the stuff I write for Horizons doesn't lend itself easily to illustration. To put an irrelevant picture on each page of Horizons would be a greater crime against the laws of format than the present method. If you're unable to concentrate long enough to read a dozen typewritten pages every three months, picture magazines and television have really done their work well. Despite the lament over poor spelling, incidentally, you misspelled at least a dozen words in this issue. Lark: Folks are degenerating. The people who live on this city's Featherbed Lane have just completed legal proceedings to change the name to Antietam Drive. Moonshine: If van Vogt ever tried to tie up all the loose ends in a new edition of "Slan," we'd have the first five-volume science fiction novel. ' ' Civilian defense around here consists of a lot of yelling and no action. I'm not alarmed about that fact. You cannot keep people in a state of continual emergency alarm, and in Hagerstown's case, it's hard to convince them that a constant threat of enemy attack and the two-week shutdown of the C-119 factory for vacations can be reconciled. Besides, the sky watching program plans are ridiculous in some respects. This county has been asked to man on a 24-hour basis a half-dozen observation posts, some of them only five or six miles from others. It should be pretty obvious that even the direst emergency doesn't require such closely spaced observatories. Hallucinations: I don't see how you can save much money by taping the music from the library's lp's, unless high quality tape has suddenly gone down in price. By purchasing from the discount houses, you can get up to 65 minutes of music on an lp for \$3.50 to \$4.00 if you buy the more expensive lines; for the lowpriced variety, the discount price is \$2.20 or thereabouts. Unless you can get more than an hour's tape for \$2.00 or less, you won't save enough to make it worthwhile, and your tapes probably wouldn't be of first quality anyway, because you'll be using records that have been battered by use on all sorts of equipment and careless handling. ' ' I'm inspired by all these plugs for the SAPS to wonder whether any FAPA member has ever been induced to join that organization. The efforts at recruiting have been going on in the FAPA for years, and I strongly doubt whether they've ever won a new SAPS member. The Lark's Appendix: When you have stereophonic sound, what do you do about piano concertos and such compositions, in which the sound comes to you in the concert hall part of the time from a single point, part of the time from a wide field of angle? Grotesque: I wonder, did the people in this Connecticut town adopt the peculiar form of patriotism during World War Two that those in Maryland's Berlin displayed? People who lived in Berlin, Md., during the last war showed their Americanism by insisting that their town's name be pronounced with the accent on the first syllable. Flop: Probably everyone gets the impression that his own state's government is



the nation's second-worst. You read year after year of the inanities in your own state capital, and only occasionally do you hear of some even more bungling action in another state that makes you realize that things could be worse at home. The last session of the Maryland legislature was a dilly. As usual, bills dealing with the salary of some obscure magistrate or the mileage allowance for an income tax investigator occupied all the attention until the final days of the session. Then in the last-minute rush the house and senate passed slightly different versions of several really important bills, like the rent control extension, making them invalid. Primal: I'd like to know how the statisticians induced a feeling of "posed wonder" into their subjects, to find out how much time was spent inhaling and how much exhaling in that exalted condition. "If Howard Miller still doesn't exist, a few more of these efforts by Don Wilson will spring him into full life, no doubt about it. Horizons: Paul Spencer has pointed out that I made a serious mistake in that article on time-displacement. He doesn't think that Gernsback is to blame for the world's situation through the early release of the April, 1928, issue of Amazing Stories. "I think this ominous trend can be traced back to a more spectacular and much earlier event," he writes. "Christ was born in 4 B.B.!" The United World Federalists have had another adventure in Maryland, this time in Baltimore. Some of them put on a rally there, and an agent of the state's anti-subversive organization functioning under the celebrated Ober law showed up. He (a) walked around the block copying down in a little notebook the license numbers on parked autos, assuming that most of them belonged to people attending the rally, and (b) asked a newspaper photographer to take a picture of everybody on the stage, for further study. The Baltimore Sunpapers had a lot of editorial fun with these remarkable methods of combatting communism infiltration. Birdsmith: Ah, but the recording industry has been turning out shellac lp's for years. They were used extensively in "talking books" for the blind before vinylite came along, and Victor marketed a classical music lp series on shellac in the mid-30's. The latter failed, but I don't think noisy surfaces were the main cause; rather, it was the difficulty of turning out cheap turntables that revolved without fluttering at the slow speed and the impossibility of selling expensive slow-speed machines at the height of the depression. Even without vinylite, I think we would have had the lp revolution much earlier, if it hadn't been for the depression, then the scarcity of turntable materials during World War Two. "Your record-buying system sounds fine from the standpoint of opening up new fields with which you're not acquainted; too many collectors get into the rut of specializing in one composer or one tiny aspect of a school of composition. However, this system doesn't make any provision for the fact that eventually you'll develop definite standards of performance in classical music. You may find it hard to believe today, but if you continue to listen, you'll feel about two interpretations of a symphony as you do today about Mildred Bailey and Bing Crosby as interpreters of the same song. It would be wise to try to accelerate the process of forming your own standards, since it is a question of what you prefer, not what is "good" or "bad" in some cosmic scheme. Here is one way to make a start. Every time you visit a record store and can spare a half-hour, find two or three recordings of the same composition, take them into a listening booth, and play the shortest movement over and over, alternating the discs. If it's orches-



tral, notice how one conductor does things differently from another. The most obvious alternatives include the speed, the degree of accentuation on the downbeat notes, the amount of hurrying and slackening that's present, the choice between lingering over small details or building for the large design, the amount of prominence given to the inner voices or decorative trimmings to the melody, and whether the conductor makes the music ultra-representative of the composer or universalizes it to some extent—for instance, makes Verdi sound like Verdi or directs in a way that brings out suggestions of Beethoven or Mozart. Once you've trained yourself to notice these differences (as well as the less obvious ones for which a score may be necessary, and recording techniques like the amount of reverberation and balance between solo and tutti), you'll quickly be able to decide which way you prefer things. After that, it's easy to remember the conductors who do things your way. Of course, if you can find a friendly collector or a clerk who knows something about records, you can speed up the process of acquiring standards. Until you develop preferences, I would recommend purchasing discs conducted and played by musicians who are members of the old school. You can still enjoy Busch's Bach, even if you someday grow to like Stokowski's, but it doesn't work the other way around. ' ' Fandom seems to have overlooked a successful fantasy hoax that occurred a couple of years ago. A staid British musical magazine related solemnly the discovery of an unknown Wagner opera in a Venetian boarding house. The ms. was entitled *Der Nachmorgen*, and was devoted to the adventures of the son of Siegfried and Guttrune, Siegheil, with the gods who escaped the fire that broke out in Valhalla at the end of *Götterdämmerung*. People who should have known better broke into print with learned articles in Russia and Mexico. Looking Backward: Earl Singleton was a college student who published the only decent fanzine devoted to poetry in history, *Nepenthe*. Suddenly his correspondents were informed by his roommate, Oliver King Smith, that Singleton had committed suicide in a fit of despondency. A few suspicious people contacted the college and other sources and learned that Singleton had moved to Washington, getting a job there. The reason for this odd exit from fandom was never disclosed, at least in print. ' ' I think that Larry has been using Farsace as his last name for mundane matters because it doesn't involve worries about pronunciation. The Fantasmith: I don't think that Lovecraft's writings are in the public domain. If this thing is copyrighted, it involves a certain amount of danger for the FAPA as distribution agent. ' ' Bradbury needn't have worried about reconciling Christianity with whatever may live on other planets. The Catholic archbishop for this area recently came out with an interview in which he covered all possibilities of e-t's and doctrine. Light: That "weather reconnaissance" account was later questioned by people who knew more about it than Sen. Flanders. But it's hard to get excited about one specific instance of military tampering with the truth. It's a trait that is common to the species, whether it's Caesar or the United States Air Force or the Red Army. Elfin: I tried to remain calm when Singer started to take trolley rides and Laney got interested in player pianos, but I'm nonetheless staggered by Coswal's new hobby. Maybe we'll yet have an FAPA member engaged in scientific research, attempting to unearth in Syria or elsewhere some variant on papyrus that will fill up the gap in his collection of alternative endings to the Book of Job. I assume and trust that we will not be expected to read in Coswal publications all translations of the goings on that involved the Witch of Endor!



## Away From It All

At the office, we decided that we might make a nice hot-weather feature out of the vanished glory of the Blue Mountain House. This was a 400-room summer resort for the upper middle and lower upper classes which burned down 40 years ago. It stood atop South Mountain, a few feet south of the Mason-Dixon Line, and was enormously popular with persons in the Baltimore and Washington area. Mac, who is fiftyish and hikes as a hobby, knew where to find the ruins. I went along because I take pictures and have a car. Gloria decided to come along, because it would be a different way to spend an afternoon, and a chance to get away from it all for a little while.

Persons who cross South Mountain, when driving through Maryland on Route 40, raise their eyebrows when told that it is a mountain. It is barely a bump in the road to persons who have been over the Rockies, and merely a hill to those acquainted with the Smokies. But the highway crosses at a low gap, and South Mountain is almost impressive a little farther north: twice as high, much steeper, and looking over lovely scenery in four states.

Mac was brandishing a small cylinder when we picked him up, and spent most of the trip to the mountain explaining that it contained several chemicals which would stave off death by a half-hour or longer in case of snakebite. Gloria and I spent most of the time continuing our eternal argument about seasons; I prefer autumn, and don't like the lack of imagination nature shows by making practically everything green in the spring, but she likes green things.

To reach the Blue Mountain House ruins from Hagerstown, you first drive across the valley on a good road, then take a narrow road up the side of the mountain. (This was an exasperating pull, because I lost momentum while squeezing around an enormous truck, then showed my usual obstinacy by continuing to operate on the hydra-matic drive instead of sensibly pushing the thing into the low gear position for a while. I just like the sensation of having that low gear in reserve in case the car stops going up.) This brings you to Pen Mar, once the biggest summer resort in Maryland, now only a few dozen cottages which city folks rent during warm weather. The amusement park that used to be there has vanished. At Pen Mar, you take a still narrower road which runs almost perpendicularly toward the highest point in Washington County, Mount Quirauk, but no longer is very useful, because it's blocked just this side of the peak where the government has erected an enigmatic, war-connected tower. I parked at the point where Mac told me to turn off; what he euphemistically described as a dirt road was a slight thinning of the underbrush into which I didn't propose to delve. So we got out of the car, and Mac cut down a tree, stripped its branches, swung it with a circular motion several times, and announced that he was ready for the snakes.

We hiked along this trail for a mile or more. The most impressive thing about this hike was the evidence of human cussedness that it revealed. No one lives along the trail. Only a jeep or good truck could drive on it. Yet at intervals of two or three hundred feet appeared enormous piles of garbage and junk. The persons who used the area as a rubbish pile must spend three times as much effort, hauling the stuff back there, as they would expend in burning the stuff or taking it to any of the public dumps in nearby towns.

Unexpectedly, Mac said: "Well, here we are." We gawked, Gloria and I, like yokels on their first trip to New York. We looked



around. There were trees, vines, weeds, and nothing else. I started to lose my pleasure in the day at that point.

Now, this hotel burned only forty years ago. It was a palatial structure with its own railroad siding, a fleet of carriages to take guests the quarter-mile from railroad to hotel, and a principal source of income for the owners, the Western Maryland Railway. And only forty years after it had flourished, all I could see was green stuff.

We found evidences of the hotel, after Mac pointed them out to us with care. There were eight or ten flat slabs of concrete, each the size of a washtub, which hadn't been broken up by the strength of growing plants. They looked like footprints of some enormous beast. Gloria, who can walk up any cliff like a mountain goat, worked her way to a brick wall that still ran for twenty feet or so a little higher up, along the side of the mountain. Neither of these signs could be pinned down as part of the hotel itself; they might have been ruins of the carriage house or privies. The road that once led to the railroad was invisible. We didn't want to risk exploring too far from the trail. Mac pointed out that there might be snakes back there. Besides, the whole mountain was used by the army for training exercises during World War Two. There's everything from a complete airplane (used on rescue exercises) to live ammunition scattered around. It was near here, too, that they found a girl's body, the only friend I ever had who was murdered. So I took some pictures, and went back to the car.

We decided to stop at Pen Mar for rootbeers, because it was a hot day. The combination tavern and soda fountain there has an atmosphere like a bar in a Georges Simenon novel. Everyone who patronizes it is a bit unusual—soldiers' families from the nearby army camp, a few vacationists, the shady folks who live back in the wilderness, and the decaying old people who got rich during the resort's heyday and haven't bothered to move away. A huge print of the Blue Mountain House, unexpectedly, was hanging from one wall.

"I pulled that out of the fire," an old man who learned our mission told us proudly. "It was just about all I could salvage when she burned down." I thought of the newspaper accounts that we had looked up: they told of rushing troops to the scene to break up looting. We asked him why the ruins had vanished so completely in such a short period of time. Well, he said, anyone who needed building materials in the area just went up there and helped themselves during the next few years, and pretty soon there wasn't anything left. We said thank you, and started back to Hagerstown.

On the way back, the car picked up a small stone, which ricocheted around noisily for perhaps ten seconds. Mac insisted that I should stop, jack up the rear end, and crawl under to look for damage. But I wasn't worried about that kind of damage. A little comparison of chronology and world affairs was bothering me.

I'm thirty now. If there's all-out war, and I live through it, I might still be alive at the age of seventy. That'll be only forty years from now. It took just forty years for a huge hotel to vanish, unassisted by anything more destructive than fire. I've been assuming that I'll merely vegetate the rest of my life in Hagerstown, since I'm fairly comfortable and contented here at present. But I'm beginning to have serious doubts about how much might be left of Hagerstown when I'm seventy, and I'm starting to think that it might be wise to stock up on snakebite medicines, if I'm determined to stay in this city.



## Indigestion

When I was nine years old, I discovered a tiny store on the edge of Hagerstown's downtown section. It was nearly suffocated between a large grocery and printshop, and its proprietor was the first person I heard announce himself as an atheist and a communist. Those were the days when it was perfectly safe to tell such things, even to small boys. I was encouraged to learn that I was not the only person who had doubts about fundamentalism, and I had the impression that a communist was somewhat less heroic than George Washington but much more sane than John Brown.

Mr. Hammond's dark little store contained lots of music, fine harmonicas, repair instruments for lame musical instruments, and one wall filled with shelves of paperback editions of fiction. This was before the day of Pocket, Bantam, Avon, and all the current editions, remember. His display contained nothing but Street & Smith reprints of Frank Merriwell novels. There must have been several hundred titles, counting the Dick Merriwell and Frank Merriwell, Jr., tales. In those days, I believed that Merriwell novels were explosive stuff, not quite proper for people who hadn't reached their teens. But I purchased one of them whenever a surplus quarter came into my possession. A year or two later, the old man died and his shop was closed. I have never found out what happened to its contents, and to this day, I have never found another establishment possessing any copies of this edition of the Merriwell books. But those books left an indelible impression on my mind, as the cheapest-looking, ugliest-proportioned publications that a person could conceive. The flimsy covers, small pages, dingy paper, all such things were depressing when compared to the splendid large-size Amazing Stories of the day. And today, two decades later, I am thoroughly upset when science fiction fans become lyrical about the tendency of the prozines to settle upon exactly the Merriwell reprint format. The only important difference between today's digest-sized prozines and the Merriwell books lies in the fact that the Merriwell novels contained three times as many pages and sold for slightly lower prices.

The current fad for the digest-size format seems to have resulted from two separate causes. In the case of science fiction prozines, one cause is non-applicable, and the other cause must soon stop functioning as a cause. The first of these causes is the success of Reader's Digest. RD acquired an enormous circulation in the small format through a shrewd pandering to the nation's ideals, giving the people the things that confirmed their beliefs, in articles so short that one could be read in spare moments while riding a bus or waiting to be served in a restaurant. A format that permitted the reader to slip the magazine into his pocket was suitable for RD. Magazines which are not intended for snatch-and-run reading adopted the same format by the dozen, in the belief that if you imitate something slavishly enough, some of its fate may rub off onto you, like the witchdoctors and their dolls. The second cause has been purely economic. Science fiction prozines suffered first from low circulation during the depression years, then from rising production costs during and after World War Two. Economy measures became necessary from time to time. The publishers could cut the page size and tell the readers that this represented an advance in the magazine's appearance, thus reducing the wordage in an issue ~~more~~ subtly than by simply including fewer pages in the same format. Thus, we passed from the old large-size format to the "small-



size" format that became standard in 1934, a little later to the still smaller size in which Astounding pioneered, and eventually to the still more compact "digest-size" which seems to be the main trend today. However, this method of remedying financial troubles seems to be approaching ultima thule. Further cuts in the dimensions of the page are impractical. If further economy moves are required, they could conceivably take the form of a return to a larger size and a drastic reduction in the number of pages. For various reasons, I hope that the prozines soon take such steps.

The worst thing about the digest-size format is the waste it involves in paper. The ratio of wasted white space to total square inches on the page is considerably larger in the small format than in the larger format, with no gain in eye-appeal. It is necessary to crowd the two-column type arrangement together tightly on the page, if each column is not to be absurdly narrow, with no opportunity for the generous gap between the two columns that the old large-size format allowed. The page-turning operation has increased in frequency per thousand words. It is impossible to use any illustrations that attempt to portray massive or complex scenes; they simply look ridiculous on the small page. The height-to-width ratio of the del Rey publications makes the magazine look squat, the slightly different ratio of the Reader's Digest dimensions makes it look feminine, and I don't think there's a happy medium available for the small size.

I hope that Science Fiction Plus is the beginning of a new trend toward a less cramped, more logical format. Whatever its faults, the first issue was big enough to be found easily on the newsstands; you could read one column without accidentally getting information from the adjoining column; and there was an air of spaciousness about the whole magazine. The type-face in Science Fiction Plus impressed me as one of the best things about it; I cannot imagine why the pulp publishers continue to use such dainty, thin types at a time when their paper is getting grayer and grayer. Remember that boldface type which Astounding used in its first year or two under Tremaine? The future seems to leap out at you from those pages, and you don't mind so much the cheapness of the pulp on which the magazine is printed.

But there's little hope that the prozines will imitate Science Fiction Plus as readily as they've imitated Reader's Digest—that would cost too much money. If they insist on retaining their present dimensions, I can think of several methods of improvement. Scrapping the two-column pages would help considerably—if you want to know how much easier it is to read the same thing in a wide one-column format, try a few pages of Shakespeare in each format. The next time another economy drive is necessary, I would like to see the publishers do away with the traditional colored picture on the cover. A flashy front cover is just a useless hangover from the days when BEMs theoretically caught the eye of readers; in the present format, you need a magnifying glass to see what's on the cover. If a more radical change in format should become necessary, what is wrong with the format used by The Nation and The New Republic? It doesn't demand high-grade paper, the magazine can be folded readily for carrying purposes, the pages are large enough to permit impressive illustrations, and page-turning would be less frequent.

And I'm old enough to remember the days when all fans had to worry about, when it came to format, was to convince the publishers that the edges should be trimmed even!



## The Color Out of Space

Science fiction readers are constantly boasting about the vast amounts of imagination possessed by the writers and readers of stf. However, imagination isn't quite the right word for the qualities usually shown in science fiction. I think that ingenuity or resourcefulness might be better words to describe the process of conceiving new applications for science or fresh developments of scientific principles. Certainly there has not yet appeared a science fiction writer with sufficient imagination to make live the landscape of a far planet or the earth's distant past or future. Such a feat is accomplished fairly often in mundane fiction, particularly in stories about the American West.

All that was a rather roundabout way of introducing some notes on western fiction that I've enjoyed in recent months. I think that each of the stories I'll mention could be an object lesson to all writers of stf. Each demonstrates what can be done to conjure up the atmosphere and to cause to glow the colors of a land in which the writer may not have lived. It takes imagination, coupled with knowledge of the basic qualities of the land in question, to carry off the trick successfully. These stories are the true westerns, of course, rather than the ratraces that take place in a never-never land, cluttering up pulp magazines and motion picture screens. Any adult should be able to get real entertainment from the stories about the true West.

I can't tell fully in a few hundred words the admiration that I feel for A. B. Guthrie. His best books are only slightly less stupendous feats of imagination than an equally colorful description of pioneers on Mars, written today, would be. Because Guthrie did not live in the period he describes, when the West was being opened up in the 19th century, around the Rockies. He is living in the middle of the 20th century and was reared in Kentucky. At least two of his novels are readily available in paperback editions. "The Big Sky" is the better of these two. Guthrie creates in it completely amoral men of the old West, not the immoral taintypes of sensational fiction who are simply puritans turned inside out. The fellow who occupies the place that a hero would hold in a routine western is one of the most brutal, rugged characters in fiction. He might be a symbol of the way life in general and the old West in particular brutalized mankind, when he descends to the level of the Indians and lives with a squaw. "The Way West," which uses one or two characters of the other book after they have grown old, is a less jarring account of more civilized pioneers. In a way, it returns the compliment of the earlier novel, by revealing how man in turn brutalized the land. Though it has a more conventional series of episodes, "The Way West" is even more sensitive to the landscape than "The Big Sky."

A best seller a few years back, "Honey in the Horn" had fallen completely from sight until it bobbed up in a 25¢ edition. Don't let its former popularity fool you; it's no slick assemblage of the wornout episodes found in most best sellers. It's only a bit watered-down and tamed in comparison with "The Big Sky." The characters display the same utter amorality, although the man and woman decide to live together in the end. The characters are a bit more stereotyped, like the girl's no-good father. The West is a little more civilized. But it's a great story. Also available at two bits is "Beulah Land" by the same author, H.B.Davis. I haven't read it, but it's been recommended as the writer's best work.



Vardis Fisher wrote a series of novels about old days in the West. But his approach is different. He centers attention on a single character, Vridar, in an autobiographical-sounding way. It results in curious intrusions of Thomas Wolfe into Guthrie's landscapes. The division of attention between a nearly psychopathic boy and the extroverted land and people ruins any unity that the sprawling series of tales might have possessed. I can recommend with few reservations one of the two that are available in cheap reprint editions, "In Tragic Life." The other, "Passions Spin the Plot," takes the action indoors a considerable part of the time, and the reader isn't quite as sympathetic to the hero's turmoil when he does petty theft, as when he is terrified by the agonizing death of a horse.

Walter vanTilbert Clark's "The Oxbow Incident" probably rates with "Moby-Dick" as the book which has been most frequently resurrected from an alleged oblivion. Unlike the other novels I've mentioned, it could be conceived in almost any time or country. But the message that it carries about snap judgments, unlawful justice, and suspicion of strangers makes it peculiarly appropriate to the lynch-hungry time and place with which it deals. Also available in a paperback edition, but unknown to me so far, is Clark's "The Track of the Cat." One authority on Western folklore, Dr. Levett J. Davidson, acting chancellor of the University of Denver, compares it to Melville for psychological truth.

I don't know of any active writer of pulp science fiction who has displayed the qualities that may cause him to write the first really atmospheric science fiction story. The qualifications for this task certainly don't include an extraordinary supply of adjectives and adverbs, because purple passages won't do the trick. Plotting ability in the magazine fiction sense won't help, either; Asimov would be shocked if asked to use a plot that rambled like those in any of the novels I've mentioned. Mere scientific atmosphere, in the form of complete acquaintance of what conditions may exist on another planet, doesn't seem to be sufficient; and the desideratum can't be achieved by sleight of hand, by transplanting Earth's surroundings to another world, as Bradbury loves to do.

What we need is a writer who is able to conceive of lands, plants, skies and smells that are different from those perceived while driving along the New Jersey Turnpike, yet not so alien that the excesses of a Clark Ashton Smith result in the efforts to describe them. The characters in this ideal novel won't necessarily be complex in nature, but they will fit the landscape, and their surroundings will influence their actions and their way of living. If the tradition of really great Western novels is a good guide, this science fiction novel probably will be picaresque in nature, hardly a "big machine" when it comes to plotting, certainly not a story in which the universe is saved.

Unfortunately, there's no "The Oregon Trail" to serve as an inspiration to the writer of this science fiction, who will have to prove that the imagination of which we boast really exists in the mind of at least one writer. Up to now, there's been little incentive to write such a novel, because the pulp magazines wouldn't buy it. But science fiction is popular enough today to interest major book publishers in mature novels of this type.

I hope that the book gets written pretty soon. I don't think I can wait until our writers can benefit from the memoirs and histories of the men and women who make the first explorations and settlements on Mars or Venus.



### The LP's the Thing

Was it Danner who advertised a phonograph turntable which revolved no times per minute, for people who couldn't stand music? Well, it's now quite possible to start collecting lp records, even though you don't like music, and you needn't buy any special gadgets, either. You can just start to collect fantasy stories that have been recorded.

Fantasy on records is nothing new, of course. I've heard an unbelievably hammy rendering of the ghost scene from Hamlet, done in Italian by Titta Ruffo, the great baritone who was also famous as an actor in Italy. In England, speaking records were much more popular than in this country, and could be imported to the United States. But only since lp arrived have plays and stories come into their own on records in this country.

Items currently available include:

An abridged performance of Goethe's Faust on two Period records. Warning: it's done in German. But if you know anything at all of that language, I can't think of a finer way to improve your knowledge than by getting these records. Hamlet is pressed in a cut but nearly complete performance on two Victor discs. Members of the Comédie Française have recorded on a Period record a number of La Fontaine's fables. A widely publicized set of two Columbia records contains the dream scene from Shaw's Man and Superman, entitled for this production Don Juan in Hell. Another warning: you'll miss the overall significance of the scene if you don't read the entire play. Judith Anderson's version of Medea has been released on a Decca lp. The Tempest has been recorded twice, in varying degrees of completeness—on two Polymusic discs and one Allegro lp. Warning no. three: if you want the Allegro, you'd better start hunting at once, because the firm has been reorganized, and there's no telling what will be left in print following the catalog revision. A dramatized version of The Picture of Dorian Grey has been pressed by London. The London catalog also lists something entitled The Ghost Train, but that's not fantasy if it's the play that I've seen. In the Decca catalog is Lost Horizon; I know nothing of the performance, but gather that it's non-musical, because Ronald Colman is among the cast.

That's a good start. But the real outburst of the spoken word on records probably lies just ahead. By the time this Horizons is distributed, 16 rpm records may be on the market generally. Without much publicity, they were marketed at a few large stores in the spring, to see how they'd sell. If all goes well, you will be able to purchase soon a vast variety of stories and plays on non-breakable seven-inch records, each of which contains about one hour of talk and sells for about a dollar. The first release was the complete New Testament for around \$24, including the cost of an adaptor to slow turntables down to the proper speed. You'll be able to buy a play on records for just about the price you'd pay for it in book form, if no unexpected kinks result from the merchandising of the new speed records.

Incidentally, don't get excited about the value of your musical lp's. The 16 rpm system will not replace 33 1/3 records, because it doesn't seem possible to get anything resembling high fidelity at such a slow turntable speed and using grooves cut so near the center post. The spoken voice doesn't require the needle to travel quite so rapidly over the vinylite or the turntable to rotate with such uniform speed for good reproduction.