

After almost three months of fapiation, Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., the publisher of Horizons, of which this is volume 39, number 4, FAPA number 149, and whole number 144, dated August, 1978, must try to remember how to commit fanac. Horizons is produced by the Coulsons.

In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: Something is wrong with these egoboo poll results. Wasn't there a division for best editing? If that got left out, it would account for most of the discrepancy between various members' total points and the sum of their points in individual categories. I do think we should consider dropping the unsung Fapan section, or making ineligible for it anyone who finished in the top dozen or so the previous year. It's obvious that some members are using this category to build the point total for favorite sons who always finish near the top. It would also be nice if we knew who voted this year since failure to vote can boost one's ranking. 'I didn't receive the Stupefying Stories which was supposed to be a postmailing. The same thing happened a while back with an Erg. Should we consider dropping this method of saving a membership, since there's no way to determine if a postmailing really did go to all members? Isolated complaints could result from loss in the mails or the publisher's whim. What the Dormouse Said: Australia seems more cynical about prospective teachers, if it requires those given financial help with studies to teach for a few years. Maryland has a scholarship program of this sort but requires only promises to teach in this state for a while. Those promises get broken quite regularly. 'The things that Marc writes about Naracoorte reinforce my notion that Australia's remoter areas are uncannily like the United States conditions in the early years of this century. Senior citizens who used to teach in rural schools around here tell quite similar accounts of their experiences in the 1910's or 1920's. Synapse: This is the first Speer fanzine I was unable to finish reading. I just couldn't take any more of the eternal nagging. However, this issue did cause me to decide on a punitive action. Starting with this issue of Horizons, I'm no longer proof-reading the stencils or correcting even the mistakes I sense as I mistype them. I invite other FAPA publishers to join in this corfluboycott until such time as Speer resumes the production of comments and material on other topics. DREGS Papers: It's strange, when you take into consideration my hermitting, and the fact that I've met such a low percentage of all the famous California fans, that I should have had personal contacts with both Ron and Lee. I liked them just as much as the contributors to this fanzine, although I saw them only a few times at long intervals. I remember Ron best for the evening he spent in Hagerstown when he was very young, a curious combination of sophistication and naivete as a fan and as a human being. The mental image of Lee that is strongest is drawn from a worldcon somewhere, when he was holding court to a lot of famous fans while one of the tiny Berman girls was curled up in his lap like a sleepy kitten. Damballa: I've been thinking about moving into old radio fandom, if science fiction fandom continues to be more than I can handle, as it has been in recent years. A Washington FM station has been offering nearly solid Sunday evening programming of old radio and my interest has been quickened. I've taped from this source some things not normally available, like one

of Arthur Godfrey's early morning shows from the years before he became a network celebrity, as broadcast over WJSV where he got started, and a Coast to Coast on a Bus hour, the old NBC Sunday morning children's hour including Milton Cross singing. " I'm 55 so I can't claim to be the oldest FAPA member in the strict interpretation of the matter. But I do claim to feel older, look older and think more senilely than any other FAPA member, so I feel that my date of birth is a mere side issue which shouldn't prevent me from claiming the status of the most ancient fap. Come to think of it, it's ironic: when I was in my late teens, I wished so much that I might be a bit younger to delay somewhat the danger of being drafted, and now here I am, wishing I were older so I could retire sooner from a hated job. Quantum Sufficit: I grew a trifle nervous, reading about the microfiches, because of problems I've been having with their ancestors, microfilms. I've been hors de fanac since late winter because I had to write about 100,000 words for a special edition to go out when the local afternoon newspaper publishes its 150th anniversary. Almost all the research for this involved the newspaper's files, available only on microfilm. Many of these microfilms were poorly produced, with shadows and distortion where pages were photographed with curves near the edge closest to the binding. Moreover, most of the reels have been scratched and gouged by careless handling over the years. The company's reader is a quarter-century old, won't hold focus properly, has a damaged screen, and is positioned where there is a frightful glare from room lights. A fine new reader is on order but won't be installed until the new building is occupied, many months in the future. I like to have went blind. " I couldn't figure out why John is surprised at the speed with which garage sale rounds can be accomplished. Then it occurred to me that he might assume that sale means auction. Not so; things are usually marked with a price and if not the owner provides prices viva voce. Perhaps 95% of the offerings at a typical garage sale can be dismissed at a glance by me since the bulk of merchandise is usually clothing, dishes, children's toys, and furniture and there are rarely enough books, records, or other necessities of life to keep me looking more than a couple of minutes per sale. Hagerstown is small enough to keep travel time between sales to a few minutes. " I agree that no United States of American science fiction writer can write as well as Mark Twain did. But Bob Tucker can remind me of Mark Twain for long passages, often many pages in length. I keep wondering why Bob doesn't try a mundane novel in the Twain style. " What's so awful about the Pike passage quoted here? Admittedly it contains some cliches. But it gets a fair quantity of facts into a few lines and it must have won lots of readers who wouldn't look at a scholarly, dryasdust narrative. What the Dormouse Said again: Nobody has surveyed the matter scientifically, but I suspect that the average fan's auto is in better mechanical condition than the United States' railroad system. If that isn't sufficient reason for fans to avoid rail travel, there's the dreadful difficulty of finding a city in which passenger trains ever stop, and once such a city is found, locating someone who knows which month the next train will arrive there. Mumble Gutter: I wonder if I'm the only fan who has great difficulty reading the kind of lettering Tim uses for his title? Sometimes I think I'm the only person stupid enough to be unable to decipher instantly the lettering of this sort which is used in many fanzines now and then. But then I start to wonder if all fans suffer from this same problem and everyone is too timid to

say so publicly. ' I hope the decline in the waiting list brings livelier new members into FAPA. I vainly propagandized for years a change in the method of getting new members because most new members were burned out, feeble old fans by the time they climbed from bottom to top of a waiting list composed of forty or so individuals. But I'd still like to see the new member have a year to produce the eight pages of activity. I think we may have lost some potential longtime members because they happened to join at a busy epoch in their lives or couldn't get into the FAPA swing from just a couple of mailings. ' I've known a couple of Chestnuts. If I hadn't encountered them, maybe I'd have a different outlook on the general public and wouldn't feel as many misanthropic impulses. JDM Bibliophile Bulletin: I can't imagine the JDMB under any aegis except that of the Moffatts. On the other hand, I couldn't imagine a JDM book in the limelight at bookstores as Condominium has been, so maybe this is the millenium for sure. Horizons: I'm sorry about the poor appearance of this issue. The spotty appearance of many pages came from my stenciling, not the Coulsons' mimeography. I used the same brand of stencils, the same typewriter, the same film and cushion sheet as always. It may have been an inferior quire of stencils or maybe I subconsciously protected my fingertips which suffered exceptionally from cracking open during the extra-cold winter. The last stencil in that quire contains page one of this August issue and I believe these inside pages are cutting cleaner and deeper than last time. Helen's Fantasia: Richard Malliburton was a big thing in my teens, too. But I reacted differently in the sense that I considered them almost science fiction. It never occurred to me, as it did to Helen, that some day I might achieve some of the things described in the books. Even then I was a coward. Gnomes's Island: I believe that Ross's new neighborhood is the only part of New York City that I could ever imagine myself living in. I was wandering around Manhattan one afternoon, partly afoot and partly on the subway and suddenly I came across this section where I felt somehow comfortable and the people seemed less determinedly New Yorkers than elsewhere. I could never be happy in either the slums or the luxury neighborhoods of New York City. Meanwhile, although I've officially retired as a fan historian, I retain enough of the old habit to wish someone would go around the city with a camera and photograph the buildings which have become famous as fannish addresses. A few years from now, many of them will have fallen down or been destroyed in riots or unrecognizably remodeled, and part of fannish history will be lost in the visual sense. Detours: I don't feel particularly jealous of my privacy in the sense that privacy is usually used nowadays. I don't care in the least if my telephone is bugged, how many people and agencies know my social security number, or who has inspected my income tax returns. The one kind of privacy which obsesses me is a different kind, the right to have a room of my own if I eventually must enter a rest home. The one thing about old age that terrifies me is the thought of spending year after year cooped up with another old man in a small room or with a whole passle of them in a ward. Ornithopter : I can't cite chapter and verse, but I think I saw a Doctor Who movie containing several glued-together episodes a year or two ago on late night television. I can't remember the title or much of the plot because I seem to remember being worried about something or other and trying to occupy my thoughts with a movie and not succeeding very well. ' One way to give yourself more time before FAPA deadlines would consist of electing an

Australian as official editor. The few Australians on the roster are producing activity in quantities disproportionate to their numbers, two more are on the waiting list, and obviously the balance of power in the organization is destined to head south. Whispers in a Deaf Ear: This FAPA mailing seems vaguely reminiscent of a famous Lafferty story. I feel somewhat left out of all these grandfather memories. Both of mine died when I was very small and I can't remember either of them. But it's just in the past few years that total strangers have stopped asking me if I'm related to Billy Klipp who had such a wonderful voice, so that one must have been quite famous around here, and just the other day I ran across a small item in a late 19th century newspaper about James Warner being elected an officer of the local YMCA so he must have been community-minded, too. ' ' I'm alarmed at the way the nation's libraries are putting more and more emphasis on films, paintings, and other non-literary stuff. I know all about the articles which contend that the audio-visual age has arrived and the book is nearly obsolete. But the library industry should at least put up a fight for printed matter instead of surrendering and joining the camp of the enemy. I remain unconvinced that movies, television, picture books and such things can provide as much knowledge that will last as long as can be obtained from the printed pages. ' ' If things in Minnesota are anything like those in Maryland, much of that library "junk" at a dime a copy goes to dealers. There are more dealers than readers at most book sales around here and they buy the strangest things, books that would seem to have no possible interest to collectors. Every time the AAUW stages its annual used book sale, I can count on finding books I inspected but didn't buy at a half-dozen or more tables at flea markets the following month. ' ' I'm sure library cataloguing is difficult. It amazed me that the local library was able to produce a Dewey decimal number for the copy of All Our Yesterdays which I gave them. Or maybe such numbers are thought up by some library service, even when the book is published by an obscure firm and doesn't get bookstore play or reviews in big circulation publications. Bobolings: I also wondered about Sons of the Sand, and suspected that it might somehow be related to Laurel & Hardy fandom, whose chapters I believe are known as Sons of the Desert. Come to think of it, I don't remember any fan claiming membership in one of the L & H chapters that are scattered across the country. ' ' I don't have the dexterity to do model railroading. But a review copy of a railroad lp came to the office and I've been fascinated by it. I don't know if the Norfolk & Western steam locomotives featured on it came as far east on the N & W tracks as Hagerstown, but they certainly sound like the ones that puffed and tooted through Hagerstown for the first three decades of my life. The Rambling Fap: I thought that parodies of copyrighted material didn't infringe copyright and presumably could be created without permission of whoever owns rights on the original. ' ' And at least one large dictionary lists realtor as a plain everyday noun which needn't be capitalized and doesn't belong to any particular organization. There is an architects' group which writes nasty letters to newspapers if a story refers to someone who hasn't met their qualifications as an architect, so I suppose eventually we'll be asked to capitalize Architect, too. Ecce Fanno: I'll vote against the amendment, mainly because I dislike the joint membership concept, not particularly because of the proposed liberalizing of it. There is too much potential for big fusses in joint member-

ships. What happens if the components of a joint membership disagree on a petition, refuse to act as a single person, one insists on signing and the other refuses, and that joint membership causes the petition to fail or to pass according to how its split decision is interpreted? Who gets the joint membership if the pair split and both want it? Can half of a joint membership retain that status year after year without any activity whatsoever? Those gray areas involve the present husband-wife joint membership, which is why I'd prefer abolition of the things with a grandfather (rather, grandancestor) clause to retain those in effect when the change occurred. The amendment would provide fresh possibilities for arguments. How do we define "long-term cohabitation"? Must the long-term aspect have already existed when the joint membership is sought or do we assume that a pair newly shackled up can look into the future? A couple is either married or not married, but where is the equivalent way of determining when an unmarried couple have split? I don't think the argument that this amendment brings FAPA into step with changing social patterns is valid, because it assumes that everybody still adheres to the old Victorian two's-company-three's-a-crowd philosophy. It makes no allowance for modern folks who are beyond jealousy and prefer a menage a trois or even more complicated unions of four or more individuals. The Tiger Is Loose: I think it's also true that many people are poor because they're criminals, in addition to the undoubted fact that many turn to crime because of poverty. An organization did a study of local families years ago which showed startling income problems for families after a member had been convicted of a serious crime. Esdacy-os: I've been wondering about the moderate prices that dealers ask for the Munsey reprint magazines, compared to most science fiction and fantasy pulps of that era. Finlay did much illustrating for them and you'd think that his drawings, if nothing else, would produce major demand for them. Another oddity is the bargains that can still be found in old copies of Argosy, except a few which contain Burroughs fiction or a handful of other authors. I also seem to detect, just from reading the ads, a bear market for Unknown and Unknown Worlds in recent years, relative to some other pulps. They still bring impressive prices but not as much higher than most other prozines as they did only a few years after the magazines died. "I hope Burb remembers after the passing of several decades what Al Ashley thought and did about immortality and mimeograph ink, ^{better} than the contents of Horizons after only a couple of months. The Worst of Martin hasn't missed an issue of Horizons in the 1970's. Voyager Thru FAPA: This really gives my sense of wonder a good shaking up. When I changed Horizons from a subzine to a FAPA publication, I hoped I would live long enough to hear about man's first space travels. But it certainly never occurred to me that while Horizons was still appearing through FAPA, another member would be giving us details of what he was doing in a job involved in space flight. Another concept that I would have had great trouble comprehending when Horizons was young is the way I am getting more information on the space program from fanzines than from the newspapers. The Hog on Ice: Isn't "everyone will have one" in reference to home computers on the wild side as a prediction, in view of the mental processes of the average United States of American? Home computers would have many uses in the average home but the average man or woman is going to find a home computer a tougher challenge than a video tape recorder. Remember, open reel recorders have fallen into disgrace

with the average person. Putting reels on spindles and threading tape through the head assembly was too much trouble for John and Jane Doe when cassette and eight-track cartridges appeared and needed only to be slipped into a player to operate. Heil Discordia!: I've been riding local buses a couple of times a week mainly to do my bit toward keeping down the deficit. The tendency for weirdos to be bus passengers on the intra-city vehicles seems to be comparatively new around here. Years ago, there was never any trouble; now almost every trip the driver must yell at someone who tried to slip on without paying, or must threaten to toss someone overboard for foul language, or bawls out a little old lady for offering a transfer which she had been saving since last week. I thought it might result from the current tendency to revolt against anyone in uniform, until I noticed that city bus drivers here no longer wear uniforms as they used to do. One good thing about the current city bus service is enforcement of the no smoking regulation. The number of passengers has been growing steadily. Years ago, when patronage was at its lowest point, no effort was made to prevent smoking. This reinforces my belief that a ban on smoking wouldn't hurt business if it existed in restaurants, ball parks, and other places where smoking is allowed for fear a ban would cause all the smokers to stay home. Smoking has always been permitted in all taxi fleets in Hagerstown and now all but two fleets have gone out of business and one of the two remaining taxi companies is in so much trouble that it will probably sell out to the other. Galactic Jive Tales: I second resoundingly Mike's stand on rights. The trouble is, everybody is obsessed with rights and nobody thinks about responsibilities. Both are needed if life is to be worth living. I also think it's time to start remembering that the rights everyone claims as part of the constitution should be defined as they were understood when the constitution was new. Cruel and unusual punishment, for instance, had a different meaning in the late 18th century from the way courts are defining it today. One judge has just issued a ruling against crowded prisons which would cause every rest home and hospital in the state to be illegal, if old and ill persons had the same rights as crooks. The Speed of Dark: Why don't successful bidders at police auctions become guilty of receiving stolen property? If I remember correctly the elements necessary to support an indictment, the item must be stolen, the receiver must know that it is stolen, and he acquires it with no intention of returning it to the owner. 'Moorcock's fiction may have gained sudden popularity. But the NFFF ballots on Hugo nominees which I recently tabulated gave him amazingly few votes in the grand master of fantasy category. 'The Hogu sheet with its references to putridity reminds me how I recently ran across a pre-fannish emphasis on that term. Apparently it was a catchword in Aleck Woolcott's younger days, too. Twentieth Century Unlimited: Horizons, like all other FAPA publications, probably has had no protection in the past from common law copyright, because of the way FAPA publications are offered for sale periodically from surplustock. But I can't believe that the new copyright law has killed off common law copyright altogether. That's the aspect of copyright that prevents a publisher from returning a manuscript to an author and then printing it in a magazine or a book without paying for it. It's also the reason a famous man's letters can't be printed without his consent, even though the physical paper and ink which make up the letters belong to the individuals to whom they were addressed. But someone should study the new laws and summarize their fannish effect.

The Book Stops Here

I feel nothing but contempt for those who recently used this title to try to persuade people not to read the other side of the Nixon events. But I have been using it for several years in Horizons. Hitler was a vegetarian and I still eat vegetables, so I suppose I won't be tarred by the brush if I continue to use the same old title.

For reasons I don't pretend to understand, I received not long ago a free book from the people at Ballantine. It's Stephen R. Donaldson's *Lord Foul's Bane*. This gave me the unprecedented luxury of knowing I'd read two Hugo nominees in the same year they are being voted on, since I'd earlier gone through *The Shining*.

In general, *Lord Foul's Bane* gave me pleasure. As I've probably mentioned six or eight times previously in *Horizons*, my admiration for the Tolkien-inspired type of fantasy fiction is somewhat qualified and I've never even felt the impulse to read any of the Tolkien canon a second time. Nevertheless, the Donaldson book is superior to most of the imitations. The character of the hero is a particularly appealing relief from all the protagonists in heroic fantasy who find themselves capable of marvels with no preparation and no qualms. A hero who usually doesn't accomplish much in crises and keeps worrying between crises about his capacities is a great relief. Moreover, the fact that the hero is a leper makes him distinctive in the memory. The fact that he yields to a rape impulse and then worries endlessly for having done so also helps to make Thomas Covenant seem something more than a paper doll.

I also like the swinging, rhythmic prose in which Donaldson indulges on many pages of the book. Curiously, it's much more poetic in these sections than the occasional lines that are put into type as poetry. The latter seem stiff and vague, as if the author had grown nervous at the thought that he must write poetry at this point and that one.

Still, there are some things that I like less about the book, although many of these things are common to the whole genre, not special faults of Donaldson's volume. As in the case of Tolkien, I am left with a skeptical feeling about the validity of the evil which the author and most of the characters keep raving and ranting about. I don't think it's enough to be told that a race and its territory are evil. I want to read about the way this evil manifests itself before I'll accept its nastiness. In particular, it is useless for an author to depend on making things black as symbols of evil. I'm not afraid of the dark, I've never found any relationship in nature between blackness and badness, and in this real world of racial tensions, it might be advisable to softpedal this cliché of equating black with bad.

Lord Foul's Bane shares another fault which seems common to most quest-type fantasies. In these stories, the major characters travel together across vast domains for weeks or months. Usually one or more of these main characters are unfamiliar with their companions and their surroundings. During these extended journeys, it seems logical to assume that the travelers would talk, talk and talk some more, to help pass the time. After many days of conversation, it seems likely that they would become familiar with one another's background, capabilities and intentions. Moreover, there is every likelihood that they would talk about strategy and tactics which they intend to use when they reach whatever struggle may im-

pend. But the Donaldson book, like some others of its general type, presents us with battles which the good guys improvise, the hero doesn't know what is expected of him or what powers his companions possess, and the fight is won or lost because of luck or ignorance.

Less important are a couple of reactions which most readers might not show. Birinair talks in this book in exceedingly short sentences and phrases. I suppose the author did this in an effort to characterize him, make him seem different from the other characters. But his conversations reminded me so much of those of Mr. Jingle in *The Pickwick Papers* that I couldn't remain in as solemn a mood as the events in the book seemed to require. Moreover, many of the characters' names, all the way from Drool Rockworm to Sparlimb Keelsetter, struck me as hilarious because they're so similar to the names of the characters which Bob and Ray used to impersonate in their soap opera parodies.

Still, the Hugo nomination shows that many fans loved this book, just as they've enjoyed many other novels in the style of Tolkien. Someone might write a learned thesis on the fact that this should be so when these same fans feel so much scorn for most prominent English language novelist from the three-decker novel era. The Tolkien-Donaldson-and Company writing style, many aspects of their plot construction, and the oratorical nature of their characters' conversation are obvious although indirect descendants of the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. I doubt if one out of a hundred heroic fantasy enthusiasts would have the patience to read a Scott novel from beginning to end, and yet much the same sort of novels are received with the wildest enthusiasm when written and published in the 1970's. (But I doubt if even Sir Walter would have padded a book so outrageously as Donaldson does when everything stops on page after page where one character is hailing everyone in sight, one after another. I also got very tired of reading about Covenant's shaving chores, but I'll reserve final judgment on all those play-by-play accounts of whisker pogroms because of the faint possibility that shaving might have some significance which becomes evident only later in the other two books in the series.)

Something else that I've never been able to share the widespread adulation for is Judy Garland. My main problem is inability to see the vulnerability and basic innocence that her fans profess to see even in her middle-aged self. Even as early as *Meet Me in St. Louis*, perhaps even in *The Wizard of Oz*, I see something hard and ~~fixix~~ infinitely cynical in her eyes and her mouth. Nevertheless, I bought a remaindered copy of David Dahl and Barry Kehoe's *Young Judy* at a bargain price and I'm glad I did. I am dubious about the points which the writers try to get across about Judy's early years but I enjoyed immensely the non-Judy parts of it, its pictures and text descriptions of small town life. There are wonderful pictures of main streets, a drug store interior, and family snapshots. They derive from the middle of the continent and its western edge but they aren't too dissimilar to what I knew around Hagerstown when I was growing up.

The authors make much of their belief that Judy's father had homosexual activities and that these had an important effect on his daughter's life. However, they seem to admit that she never knew the full facts about this aspect of her father, and their belief that homosexual scandals caused the Gumms to move from Minnesota to California is based on quite shaky evidence. If Grand Rapids, Minn., was anything like Hagerstown, at least half of its most prominent men

became the topic of whisperings and gossip at one time or another. None of the leaders in Hagerstown's community life whom I heard such tales about moved away or lost a wife as a result of the suspicions. Gumm seems to have avoided the things that would really have caused people to run him out of town, like molesting a child or getting rough with an adult. (It has nothing to do with Judy's family. But the prominent man in Hagerstown who probably justified the whispers about his sex life lives on in community lore for an entirely different reason. Old folks around here still talk occasionally about the day his toupee fell off while he was shopping in a stationery store. Remember, this was many decades ago, when wigs for men were almost unknown in frontiers like Hagerstown.)

One good thing about the book is the way it softens the character of Judy's mother. She is depicted here as just another ambitious mother of a talented child, not the Lady Macbeth figure that she cuts in some other books and in some of her daughter's own recollections. In fact, the whole Gumm family emerges from the book as a batch of human beings who happened to spawn a major celebrity. There's also a useful partial list of Judy's stage appearances in her childhood and young girlhood. It leaves unsettled the question of whether she might have played Hagerstown. I've been thinking for a long while of trying to compile a list of all the important persons in show business who appeared here during the vaudeville era. But I'm handicapped by inability to find any list of vaudeville names for all the important people who changed their names when they emerged from obscurity. Such a list could be compiled by painstakingly going through hundreds of biographies and books about show business, but I haven't the time. Still, it's surprising, how many major names showed up in Hagerstown when it was even smaller than today: George Arliss, Minnie Hauk (one of the two most famous 19th century Carmens), Al G. Fields himself with his minstrels, Will Rogers, and many others.

A while back, Marboro was selling dirt cheap a whole batch of Vienna House reprints of older books on music, most of them collections of composers' correspondence. I bought most of them, but still haven't finished reading all of them. The most recent ones I've found time to enjoy are the two-volume Life and Letters of Tchaikovsky, originally put together in Russian by his brother, Modeste, then translated and sharply abridged by Rosa Newmarch. I don't know if a complete translation has since been published, but I find myself wishing to see all the omitted material. The Russian set runs to nearly two thousand pages, and this English version contains only about forty per cent of the original text. It's not so much a completist attitude on my part as the fact that Tchaikovsky wrote such frank letters and I'd like to see all of them.

Some of the things he wrote I could mistake for locs which I'd written and some fanzine publisher had carelessly attributed to another fan with a Russian name. Ninety-eight years ago, for example, Tchaikovsky was grumbling about modern music much as I do today: "What is the so-called New... School but the cult of varied and pungent harmonies, of original orchestral combinations and every kind of purely external effect? Musical ideas give place to this or that union of sounds. Formerly there was composition, creation; now (with few exceptions) there is only research and invention. This development of musical thought is naturally purely intellectual, consequently contemporary music is clever, piquant, and eccentric; but cold and lacking the glow of true emotion." Of course, Tchaikovsky was think-

ing of Brahms and Wagner while I'm thinking of Berio or Boulez. The parallel would be complete if I were also a great composer or Tchaikovsky had been eligible for First Fandom.

There are other interesting things in these two plump volumes. I was surprised to find when I read the original source of the "program" for the Fourth Symphony, in a letter to Tchaikovsky's benefactor, Nadezhda von Meck, that a key paragraph is almost always omitted in program notes and other places which quote the description. In the letter which contains the program, Tchaikovsky added a rarely copied P.S. in which he confesses "misgivings as to the confused and incomplete program.... I have attempted to put my musical thoughts and ~~musical~~ forms into words and phrases. I have not been very successful.... How is it possible to reproduce it in clear and definite language? I do not know. I have already forgotten a great deal." It's a shame this is so often cut, because the program as usually printed inclines the listener to match up everything he reads with everything he hears. Then there are passages which seem to prove that there's no one way to perform music if you're trying to recreate what the composer wanted it to sound like. Tchaikovsky is all mixed up after he has composed the scherzo of that symphony, because he doesn't know for sure just how fast stringed instruments can play pizzicato, and he says in effect that if it can't be performed as fast as lightning then it might as well be played more slowly. I sense a spiritual kinship with Tchaikovsky in the letters where he discusses his love of solitude and the reasons why he doesn't spend more time in the company of others. "The society of another fellow-creature is only pleasant when a long-standing intimacy or common interests make it possible to dispense with all effort. Unless this is the case, society is a burden which I was never intended by nature to endure." At another time he wrote to Nadezhda, whom he never met despite enjoying the hospitality of her houses and a substantial amount of her money: "I have frequently been interested in you as a fellow-creature in whose temperament I recognized many features in common with my own. The fact that we both suffer from the same malady would alone suffice to draw us together. This malady is misanthropy; but a peculiar form of misanthropy, which certainly does not spring from hatred or contempt for mankind. People who suffer from this complaint do not fear the evil which others may bring them so much as the disillusionment, that craving for the ideal, which follows upon every intimacy."

I spent part of last winter reading some of the historical novels of Kenneth Roberts. It seemed as if circumstances were arranging that I should do this, because just as I finished one of his novels, I encountered another one at a garage sale or second-hand store. There was no gap between completing a book and finding another and I didn't run across more than one Roberts novel at a time; they were handed me by fate like the day's rations for a lifeboat passenger.

I was surprised by two things: how much the novels by Roberts which I've read resemble one another and how anxious I am to read more of them despite these similarities. The hero is a young man slightly superior in breeding and intelligence to most of those around him. He always encounters a rough-and-ready prince of a fellow who possesses vast quantities of homespun wit and resourcefulness equal to any emergency. The good guys and the bad guys are alike hampered by venality and incompetence in high places when they try to accomplish their goals. Strangely enough, although the books are

mostly about what men do, and are usually told in the first person by a male hero, Roberts gets some variety into the characters of the heroines. They're uniformly virtuous and beautiful but they differ commendably from one another in the way they behave within that general framework.

One thing that may be a big factor in persuading me to continue reading the Roberts novels is the fact they're long ones and in the editions I've acquired, devoid of interior illustrations or any noticeable amount of white space. I seem to be about the last remaining reader who loves nothing better than extremely thick books which are jammed with words in every available bit of space. I know some local persons who love to read but must have large margins, frequent new chapters starting far down a page, photo sections, and such format features or they can't find the courage to start reading a really long book. To me, the combination of the maximum utilization of space and so many pages that it's a real effort to pick up a book can be as fine a thing to start reading as it is to come home from a day's work knowing that two weeks of vacation and utter freedom from job duties lie ahead.

Oliver Wiswell was, I suppose, the first major manifestation of the American history debunking movement. I didn't realize fully how daring Roberts had been until I'd finished the book and looked for the first time on the page which contains the copyright notice, finding the date of 1940, the very time when the United States was being whipped into a frenzy of imitating the founding fathers, for it was increasingly obvious that we were going to war pretty soon. I was too immersed in science fiction in 1940 to pay much attention to the mundane fiction field, but I gather that Oliver Wiswell created a major sensation, both for its merits as fiction and for its picture of the Revolution as a nasty thing to be in or around, no matter whose side you took. I suppose Roberts exaggerates the bad things about the Revolution as consistently as other writers have whitewashed the men who supported and fought the war. But I'm fully in sympathy with the attitude which runs through this and other Roberts novels, about the way war is the worst possible method of accomplishing either good or bad purposes. And I find myself able to keep historical facts in mind more clearly when I read about them in fiction like this than when I read a non-fiction book on historical topics. Roberts' main fault as a storyteller is involved in this, unfortunately. He has a tendency to be clumsy when he tries to get as much information as possible to the reader by having various characters summarize those facts in conversation. It sounds something like the prozine stories of the 1920's in which the Theory of Relativity or the full story of how carbon forms compounds used to be converted into highly improbable conversations between the scientist and the hero. But Roberts is otherwise so skilled that I wouldn't dare try to guess exactly which of his characters are imagined and which are drawn from the real past. I suppose that he has improved on reality in some cases. There must have been useless gadgets like Perkins' Metallic Tractors for sale during the Revolution, but I'm sure no historical figure found as many uses for them and talked about them as engagingly as Buell does in Oliver Wiswell.

In the case of Rabble in Arms, its sympathetic treatment of Benedict Arnold started me to thinking about how a future novelist might change the nation's opinion of Richard M. Nixon. For all his faults, Nixon has never done anything as dangerous to the nation as Arnold did. And yet Roberts makes him a noble figure in this novel

and also, I gather, in another that I haven't read, Arundel. The author argues that Arnold was the difference between victory and defeat for the Revolutionary forces during the early years of the conflict, and finds a semi-convincing way to explain his treason. Nixon has created as much scorn in the past few years as Arnold did almost two centuries ago. But I suspect that there will be a reaction eventually, because successive generations of history authorities fall into the habit of taking exactly the opposite stand from previous generations just for the sake of being original and so they'll be able to read reviews of their startling new books which praise the daring fresh approach to old assumptions.

Don Dunn's *The Making of No, No, Nanette* holds a permanent and special place in my affections for reasons which have very little to do with its contents. In the worst part of last winter, when there was snow and ice everywhere for several weeks, I didn't even try to drive the car over Hagerstown's glaciated streets, I was afraid of busting something in a fall so I didn't risk unnecessary walking, and for entirely too long my life was circumscribed to this house, the office, downtown Hagerstown, and a couple of shopping centers, all easily attainable by bus. There was almost no opportunity to hunt second-hand stuff like books and records. By all logic, I should have been pleased with this situation, because it created a temporary truce in my losing battle against the way this house is filling up with stuff I'll never have time to read or hear. In fact, I was exasperated at the thought of bargains I might be missing and suffering a cheated feeling like the one Oliver Twist experienced when his pleas for more were useless. After this situation had been in control for too long, I happened across a counter of remaindered books in Kresge's one afternoon, found this book, and felt that the famine was over, spring was on its way, and so I could stop feeling sorry for myself.

There really should be a book like this about almost every important Broadway production, major movie, and even new opera productions. I'm sure as many strange and awful and amusing things happen during the rehearsal and preparation periods for most of them as Dunn could write about in his narrative of the famous revival which included the resurrection of Ruby Keeler and Busby Berkeley. The sort of information contained in this book can be found about other productions only by difficult searches for feature articles, interviews, reviews and the like in certain newspapers, trade publications, and various magazines. I know, because of the trouble I've had trying to learn more about the harrowing final days of rehearsals for *My Fair Lady* when Julie Andrews almost didn't make it and had to rework Eliza almost on the eve of the opening.

The only trouble is, I don't like the way Don Dunn wrote this book. I'm not sure if he is opposed to fame or opposed to maturity. Whatever his problem may be, he depicts Ruby Keeler as a cow-like woman who could never act, sing or dance, Berkeley as a nearly catatonic example of advanced senility, Cyma Rubin who found the money as a combination of all the nasty female characters in Tennessee Williams' plays, Harry Rigby who did most of the production work as a caricature of a helpless fairy, and so forth. This leaves Dunn in some difficulties, such as the unconvincing way he tries to explain away the fine impression Berkeley made when he made the rounds of the network talk shows around the time of the revival's opening. But the author doesn't even try to explain how *No, No, Nanette* was so successfully revived by the individuals whom he describes as so

incompetent. Then there's another trouble. From the jacket, I gather that he has failed to make the success in showbiz that he had hoped for himself. But he seems to have had some experience with the stage so he must have deliberately blown up into epic proportions the fusses which accompanied the preparations and rehearsals for the No, No, Nanette revival. Surely he realizes that there is nothing unusual in the replacement of a cast member who turned out to be unsatisfactory for one reason or another, or for in-group struggles for control among various persons with some authority. These things happen all the time but he makes them sound in this book like the extraordinary spawn of an unprecedented malignancy on the part of this or that person.

Still, it's a good book to have because No, No, Nanette must have been some sort of climax of the whole nostalgia binge which the nation has enjoyed in the past couple of decades. There are also lots of fine pictures, although the old ones from the original incarnations of Berkeley and Keeler are remarkably better than those taken during the revival. One minor puzzle about the book is the binding. It's a two-tone job, partly a peculiar shade of red, partly a blue with hints of green. The combination causes my color sense to scream in protest. I can't help wondering if somebody made a mistake at the bindery, or if the publishers just decided to use an impossible color combination as a test to see if any purchasers remove the dust jacket to look at it.

A while back, I finally found a copy of one of the favorite books of my childhood, Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did*. Strictly speaking, I suppose, it's a girls' book, but I must have been prematurely liberated from sexual stereotypes because I loved it and must have helped to wear out the copy in the local public library. It must have been about forty years between the last time I read that copy and the first reading of this second-hand copy which is an improvement over the one at the library because it has a full-color picture of Katy inlaid into its front cover. I obtained this copy around the time the serialization of the novel was running on the local PBS outlet. I decided not to watch the television version, fearful that it would somehow spoil the special place the book has in my affections. But I did benefit from some publicity materials for the series, which told me much more than I'd ever known about the author, such as the fact that the book is partly autobiographical.

Re-reading it after all these years, I was delighted to find that I still enjoyed it immensely. The only thing that disturbed me is the element of suffering which seems to be too prominent in a book meant mostly for children. But when I was a child, I never noticed this tendency, so I suppose it doesn't matter. Katy spends a great deal of the book incapacitated from an accident, one of the important adult characters is partially paralyzed and Katy's old aunt inconsiderately dies partway through the book, not to mention enough other calamities to make me wonder how much money Susan could have made if television soap operas had existed in her lifetime.

When I was small, I was also unable to appreciate fully the felicities in the narration. The description of two teachers, for instance, doesn't sound like most writing of the Victorian era: "Mrs. Knight was a stout, gentle woman, who ~~x~~ moved slowly and had a face which made you think of an amiable and well-disposed cow. Miss Miller, on the contrary, had black eyes, with black corkscrew curls waving about them, and was generally brisk and snappy." The

line from the book that I remembered best after all those years turned out really to be there, to my great relief. I have an awful habit of remembering most clearly things that never were. But there it was, Aunt Izzie's remark about an affected little girl whose odd behavior has won Katie's heart, "Perhaps she's bilious." I remember having been unable to understand that line when I first read it, so I asked somebody what "bilious" meant. Immediately, that line took on for me the status of the funniest thing in the English language. I kept mumbling it to myself and bursting out laughing. When I was unhappy over something, I needed only to think of that line and I cheered up immediately. Every time I re-read the book, I would become increasingly tense and excited as I neared the chapter in which I knew the line was, and when I finally reached that page, the whole universe seemed to have perfect order, God's in his heaven and all's right with Katy and the rest of the world. I can't conscientiously claim that the line has retained its original impact on me. In fact, when I finally encountered it this time, I grew a bit worried, wondering exactly what had caused that combination of words to have shaken me up like that. But maybe other people have had equally unaccountable fetishes for other lines in other books. I seem to remember a Dean Grennell article years ago about the effect wrought upon him by a line from a western story, something like "He didn't expect that."

It would be nice to know how many small hands this book passed through before it fell into my large ones. On the front flyleaf is the name of Janice Thomson in old-fashioned handwriting. It is written over another name which either grew faint over the years or was partly erased and can't be deciphered now. Moreover, on the next page something must have been written at one time in pencil, but was erased so thoroughly that just the faintest traces of the letters are visible, together with fragments of the eraser. This edition isn't dated but must be a rather old one, and apparently was published in England since the publisher is listed as Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, London and Melbourne.

I've been reading a scandalously large numbers of books about movies and Hollywood. For a while, I was rationing myself in the sense that I forced myself to read non-fiction on some other subject after going through a book on the cinema. But my morals are relaxing as I grow increasingly ancient and I've let myself go to the extent of reading one book after another about the film and its creators. Two of them have been a bit out of the ordinary.

I must have been thirty or forty pages deep into The Westmores of Hollywood before I was satisfied that it was non-fiction. At first I suspected that it was a novel or a hoax book. I mean, I'd never even heard of the Westmores before picking up this book, unless I encountered passing references to them in other books and immediately forgot the name. It didn't seem probable that members of several generations of one family could have had so much control over the makeup departments of the entire Hollywood complex. But then I started to pay more attention to credits when I started to watch a movie on television, and sure enough, the makeup credit went to one of the Westmores with improbable frequency.

Even after getting that straightened out to my satisfaction, I wasn't sure if I wanted to read an entire book about the application of makeup. But the narrative became more fascinating as I penetrated deeper into it. The strangest thing about this makeup family is the way its members' careers had parallels with those of acting

celebrities. Various Westmores rose and fell in favor at the studios, just as a star's career waxed and waned. The makeup family members established a record of divorces and remarriages that any random group of movie actors might be amazed at. The Westmores had drinking parties, occasional wild changes in personality, and other peculiarities that seem more customarily associated with actors.

One question the book raises is who deserves the greater amount of credit for makeup achievements. Not long ago, I read biographies of Paul Muni and Charles Laughton, which indicated that they made most of the decisions and even did some of the work in films where their roles were critically linked with their makeup. The book by Frank Westmore and Muriel Davidson seems to say that a Westmore had almost sole responsibility for these makeup jobs. But some of the anecdotes have the ring of truth. It's hard to believe that anyone could have thought up out of his own imagination the things that happened when Frank Westmore got the task of turning Shirley MacLaine into a Japanese for the production of *My Geisha*. Even more remarkable and just as convincing is the much longer account of how he went to Egypt thinking he was simply going to handle makeup for the remake of *The Ten Commandments* and suddenly found himself in two unexpected situations: in costume to lead the *Exodus* and chosen by Cecil B. DeMille to woo his granddaughter because the old director didn't want her to marry a foreigner with whom she was infatuated. The book makes C.B. seem strangely human, more real than the larger than life image which emerges from most descriptions of the director.

The *Hollywood Posse* by Diana Serra Cary is another special case. For one thing, it's almost unprecedented in the sense that it's written by a one-time movie star about people she knew and she gives herself only minimal attention. In childhood, she was the celebrated Baby Peggy. But she writes here primarily about the genuine cowboys who went to Hollywood and did the hard, dangerous riding in hundreds of westerns without becoming stars themselves. It's a sad book, in a sense, because it ends with the end of this breed of extras and bit players. They started to grow old, the westerns declined in favor, and there were no more genuine cowboys to replace them even if low-budget westerns were still being made in large quantities.

Mrs. Cary's father was Jack Montgomery, who drifted into western movies after a picaresque life in a series of other riding jobs. He started in Broncho Billy films, to give an idea of how long ago that was. Father and daughter knew many of the other former cowboys who served as extras and doubles in the great era of the western movie. She has great admiration for the posse's bravery and moral standards, and as a result I feel encouraged to hope that the typical cowboy wasn't as unpleasant a person in real life as the debunkers of American history have made him in recent years.

The book leaves you feeling uncomfortable in some ways. She doesn't spare any of the details when she writes about the callousness which movie makers held toward horses until animal protective organizations forced them to abandon some of their techniques for causing horses to fall. She also casts some of the western stars and directors as villains for one reason or another. C.B. is the subject of a long narrative in this book, too (and it spells his last name De Mille). He doesn't emerge from the Cary treatment as creditably as in the Westmore volume. Curiously, his share of the book starts with the wild happenings at the filming of the first version of *The Ten Commandments*. It ends with a convincing claim

that Montgomery and five other old cowboys conspired to kill him by staging a stampede on the set for *The Crusades*, and only accidental circumstances saved his life. The book ends pathetically with Montgomery reduced to handling a mule ride concession at Disneyland (and running into problems with the Teamsters over his job) and then saving a child's life on a runaway horse while on a fishing trip, and not receiving even thanks from her parents. The last episode seems to typify the lack of gratitude that the posse suffered over the decades from the people who made the movies and from those who watched them.

"An Authorized Biography" on the jacket of a book are words which normally mean that great caution is advised on the part of the reader. Quite often the books are shameless vanity trips, telling about the subject's life as it should have been lived rather than what really happened. However, Kenn Harris' biography of Renata Tebaldi, which has those words in type almost as large as her name, is a better book than it might have been. Her periods of vocal difficulties are described in detail, and the summaries of her recordings include lots of unflattering remarks about the less satisfactory ones. Even more remarkable is the fact that the book doesn't take sides in the Callas matter. (For the benefit of those who listen to no female vocalists other than Grace Slick, I should explain that Tebaldi fandom and Callas fandom were bitterly opposed to one another during the years when the two singers were in their prime, and on rare occasions the singers themselves acted catty toward one another. For reasons which I wouldn't want to have to figure out, Callas seems to have attracted homosexuals as fans and I suspect that this helped to keep things lively between the two camps.) The only major fault which reveals the authorized nature of the book is the photo section which is terribly careful to include nothing which is unflattering to the Tebaldi features.

Harris traces the feud to Rio de Janeiro where Callas and Tebaldi both sang at a benefit concert. My opinion of the sanity of Brazilians has sunk to an all-time low, if some of them were moronic enough to think two ladies of their stature could appear together without awful consequences. Tebaldi broke an agreement that nobody would sing an encore, and "the two sopranos squared off and fought the most senseless battle since Lenski and Eugene Onegig shot it out in the second act of Tchaikovsky's opera."

The biography has surprising success in the difficult task of creating suspense in the reader over questions like Tebaldi's ability to finish a performance while suffering from the flu and what condition her voice would be in when she sang for the first time after a long silence for one reason or another. Harris seems, in fact, to have spent about half of his life standing in line outside box offices, waiting for a chance to attend a Tebaldi performance. He does a good job of demolishing the claim that Tebaldi sang similarly to Claudia Muzio, something I find hard to believe solely from an acquaintance with their recorded voices (not even I am old enough to have attended Muzio performances and I've never heard Tebaldi sing in person). The discography has aroused a most dangerous urge to try to obtain all the Tebaldi commercial recordings I don't yet own. Harris even discusses some of the pirated recordings. I was lucky enough to find a copy of the Tebaldi Festival several weeks ago at a good price, and I realize I shouldn't put off too long the search for others I need. Rumors of yet another impending revolution in recording techniques, converting everything to digital im-

pulses, leaves me with a strong suspicion that a pogrom will again occur in the Schwann catalog, just like the one that decimated the wonderful things which had been available when the stereo records became the topic of a gigantic hype and most of the monaural recordings were discontinued or ruined by "electronic stereo" processing.

Willie Mays: My Life In and Out of Baseball is the strange title of one of those as-told-to ballplayers' biographies. I don't know exactly how the current habit sprang up, of producing biographies partly conversational in style, usually written by a sports writer. When someone writes a biography of a movie star or a politician which is then published as a first-person autobiography, it's rarely or never done in a style that tries to imitate the subjects' ways of speaking. But it's usually done that way when a baseball star is the subject. I suspect it might be the last feeble attempt of sports writers to keep alive the myth that ball players talk like six-year-olds. Ring Lardner was probably to blame for this in his newspaper columns and his fiction. It died out on the sports pages after television began to put lots of ball players on the air and listeners could hear that most of them had the same way of talking as anyone else. This book doesn't commit the old excesses of reproducing the little verbal faults that everyone suffers from in casual conversation. But it has an annoying habit of shifting from very informal style ("Pop-Up Mays. To him, that's me, and nothing'll change it. The press box sticks out right over where he sits, so they hear him there too.") to a style which can't be imagined in conversation (on the next page, "I think my all-time favorite game was the 1959 All-Star game at Pittsburgh, when I got the winning triple, hit to center field where Harvey Kuenn, who later was to become a Giant, was playing then for the American League.")

Then there's another as-told-to fault. Such books almost always are peppered with exact statistics which the told-to writer obviously looked up in the Spink Baseball Guides or other sources. No ball player remembers more than a few exact statistics from his career. But here we have this casual conversational biography and Willie puts on almost every page the final score and date of a long-ago game, the team standings in a pennant race at a given time, how many games the Giants won in a season from each of the other National League clubs, and many another arcane fact.

Fortunately, this particular book doesn't suffer much from yet another fault common to the breed. Sports writers rarely have staying power. They are so conditioned by the limited space available for a news story or a regular column that it usually shows in the books they write. They seem unable to write at length on the most important matters and to dispose of trivial ones in a few sentences. Many of their books seem like a pile of newspaper clippings joined end to end. Einstein, fortunately, fills more than 300 pages about his subject and if you can get used to the other flaws, the book at least doesn't seem choppy. There are such incidental goodies as a tabulation of all his homers through 1965 and lots of first-rate action pictures.

Louis Bromfield is a writer I knew little about until I began plowing through an omnibus volume containing three of his novels. At some forgotten time in the past, I'd read some book or other by him, considered it amateurish, and never concerned myself with his fiction again. Maybe I was too young, maybe that book was a bad one, or maybe my standards are lowering. I found myself enjoying

these novels with only occasional throwbacks to wondering if I'd been right the first time in my judgment.

All three were first published in the 1920's, yet they seem as if written yesterday, as far as their iconoclastic attitude toward the United States of American bourgeoisie is concerned. The general impression given is that the little people of the nation are cloddish but still superior in character and behavior to its rich people. There's an intense effort to put capitalistic progress in the worst light and some of the sections dealing with changes as towns grow into big cities might have been written by one of today's environmentalists.

But I don't know how the writing style would suit the younger fans of today who think that Dr. E. E. Smith wrote in a grotesque style. I've tried to argue in loc sections that Smith was simply imitating quite well the style that the most popular mundane writers of the 1920's and 1930's were using, but I don't think many people listened. Consider this extract from Early Autumn:

"Turning, he took both her hands and looked at her. 'There's something I must tell you...Sybil...something you may not like. But you mustn't let it make any difference....In the end things like that don't matter.' She interrupted him. 'If it's about women...I don't care. I know what you are, Jean....I'll never know any better than I know now....I don't care.' 'No...what I want to tell you isn't about women. It's about my mother.' He looked at her directly, piercingly. 'You see...my mother and my father were never married.'"

I'm sure any prozine writer who tried to use a conversation like that would be laughed at or worse. But Early Autumn won a Pulitzer Prize. That's the kind of writing that impressed people a half-century ago.

That novel and the other two in the collection, The Green Bay Tree and A Good Woman, are interconnected in various ways. One or more characters from one novel appear in another. One event, a strike and the disorder connected with it, is described in two of the novels from entirely different viewpoints. I don't know enough yet about Bromfield to be sure how often he did this sort of thing, but he couldn't have planned it out completely in advance, because one character loses a leg in action in World War One in one novel, and turns up in another a few years later with the leg grown back again and showing no worse effects than a limp. I'm surprised that somebody didn't notice the discrepancy and edit out the amputation, which isn't an essential part of the earlier novel.

Of the three, I think I like best A Good Woman. The title character is as devastating a depiction of momism as Philip Wylie ever wrote. She seems strangely like a prototype for Mrs. Gant in several Thomas Wolfe novels, and I kept wondering while reading the Bromfield book if Wolfe had been familiar with it when he started to write. The novel is also unusual for the way it destroys virtually all the important sympathetic characters, particularly the most pious ones.

I must try to remember to hunt out more information about Bromfield's setting for these novels. It seems clearly to be a slightly disguised real city in Pennsylvania, westward from John O'Hara country. I suspect Bethlehem may be the model for the city. I don't know of any mundane writer who has caught as well as Bromfield the WASP attitude a couple of generations ago to laborers of foreign extraction like Poles and Italians. (In Hagerstown, for many years the newspapers didn't even run the name when an accident or crime involved the Italians who worked at a nearby cement plant. The items simply

referred to "an Italian" or "an Italian worker".) I know several local families which are running down to a stop exactly the way the Shanes are depicted in all three novels. And yet, somehow I find myself dissatisfied by this whole attitude toward the capitalistic lords of the nation. When I look at what has happened in Hagerstown in my lifetime, where wealth stopped accumulating but men still decay, I wonder if the rich people of the past weren't the only civilized people this continent has ever possessed. I wonder if life would be endurable today in the United States, if the process of making the rich poorer and the poor richer had started a half-century or so earlier than it did.

Harry Lauder wasn't a Sir yet when he wrote *A Minstrel in France*. It's a touching book in several ways. It was written and published during the final stages of World War One, when many intelligent people like Sir Harry believed in the conflict as a struggle of good against evil which would settle the matter once and for all. It's also pathetic for the very real emotion which comes across in the description of the writer's quest to see the place where his son was killed and to learn as much as possible about the soldier's final moments of life. I suppose it was ghost-written, but it sounds very sincere and personal and maybe Sir Harry did do most of the work on it, since he had a good way with words when he wrote lyrics for his songs.

It's a quiet book, in a way, despite the violent death which caused it. Sir Harry takes very seriously little adventures, as he recalls the life of his son and then tells how he combined entertainment for the troops in Europe with his journey to the site of his son's death. The first person narrative also has the ability to seem almost audible when you're reading it, if you're familiar with Sir Harry's recordings. He uses a limited amount of Scot dialect in the book as he did in his songs, and he talks his way through part of many of his recordings. So it's easy to transfer the memory of that relaxed, good-humored voice to the words on the printed page. Some of the writing is quite strong: "After we had driven for a space we came to something that lay by the roadside that was a fitting occupant of such a spot. It was like the skeleton of some giant creature of a prehistoric age, incredibly savage even in its stark, unlovely death. It might have been the frame of some vast, metallic tumble bug, that, crawling ominously along this road of death, had come into the path of a Colossus, and been stepped upon, and then kicked aside from the road to die. 'That's what's left of one of our first tanks,' said Godfrey. 'We used them first in this battle of the Somme, you remember.'"

I doubt if anyone else in FAPA has read one recently acquired book. Stamped in arresting gold letters on its broad spine are the stirring words: *Hagerstown--City Charter, Ordinances, Special Acts, 1923*. The book is in shaky condition, having apparently been scorched on one edge by a fire. But it gives clear insight into how the local laws were around the time of my birth.

For instance, there's the exciting chapter entitled *Indecent and Dangerous Performances*. The first section prohibited, among other things, "indecent or blasphemous" operas in Hagerstown. The next section would outrage Arnie Latz: "It shall not be lawful for any person or persons to give or perform in, or to be in any manner concerned in or to aid or abet any public sparring or wrestling exhibition." The third section prohibited public exhibitions "by ropes, chains or apparatus suspended at a dangerous elevation."

The section on sanitary regulations shows how far advanced Hagerstown already was in 1923. "Any owner of any dead horse, cow, sheep, or other carcass, who shall suffer the same to lie within the corporate limits of the town longer than a reasonable time" could be fined or sent to prison. The same fate lay in prospect for anyone who sold "fish, fruits or vegetables or anything intended to be used for human food in a state of decay or corruption." It was necessary to obtain a permit from the city clerk before cleaning out a privy, but I can't find any penalty for failure to perform this task occasionally. However, there was a section dealing with transportation of the "contents of any privy, privy box, vault, sink or cesspool" requiring "some air tight apparatus, pneumatic or other process" to be removed to prevent said contents "from being agitated or exposed in the open air."

Hagerstown still had some horses among its inhabitants in the early 1920's. There was a regulation in the volume forbidding a horse to stand in the same spot on a street or alley longer than five hours. I don't know why it was illegal to feed horses in Public Square.

Civil rights weren't strongly advocated in 1923, so the sections of the book dealing with animals seem quite severe. "The owner of a y bitch who shall suffer her to run at large while in heat shall be liable to the penalties hereinafter provided." "No person shall have or stand for service any stallion or jack, or any other animal, in any place open to the public view." "No owner of any horse or mule, any swine, goats or geese shall permit such animals to run at large within the corporate limits of Hagerstown."

It must have been quite difficult to have fun in 1923 in Hagerstown (by now, of course, it's impossible). The section on misdemeanors covered such no-nos as engaging in crap shooting or pitching cents, fighting "any match or main of cocks", flying a kite, washing anything in either of two downtown springs, opening the window of a stable alongside a street between sunset and sunrise, keeping empty paper boxes in the cellar, spitting "upon the sidewalks, street crossings, door steps, building, window or cellar door, upon the floors of public conveyances propelled by steam, electricity or otherwise; upon the floors or passage ways of public buildings, of theaters, market houses, churches, railroad stations, or any other indoor places resorted to by the public". Gypsies were required to take out a \$200 permit before they could engage in "fortune-telling, art or practice of telling or revealing the future fortune or events of one's life." You couldn't bum out your chimney to clean it unless it was raining, and drivers of horse-drawn vehicles couldn't crack their whips on the pavements.

Hagerstown numbered its houses logically, not by adhering to the strict laws of mathematics, because an ordinance passed in 1913 ordered "each successive square shall have its enumeration to begin with an even hundred."

Other pages of this book cover such important things as the use of tricycles, which must be equipped with "an alarm bell" and could not engage in races with other tricycles. Any automobile was required in 1923 to "blow a whistle, horn, or strike a gong" when reaching a point within ten feet of an intersecting street. There was a six miles per hour speed limit for making turns in Hagerstown.

Hagerstown had a curfew at that time: 9 p.m. in the winter and 10 p.m. in the summer for anyone under the age of 15 unless coming home from meetings or running an errand for a parent. Moreover,

the steam whistle at the Western Maryland Railway roundhouse was supposed to blow fifteen minutes before the curfew, to warn kids to take cover. That shows how different things were in the early 1920's. I doubt if anyone could hear that whistle in Hagerstown nowadays, over the commotion made by the mufflerless, tire-screeching, engine-gunning autos that have taken command of men and boys in Hagerstown.

A couple of other books about movie personalities were generally satisfying. Charles Higham's *Kate* is a biography of Katharine Hepburn, written with a sort of halfway approval from the actress. She didn't like the idea but told him to go ahead anyway if he promised not to show her what he had written about her. That sounds authentic enough. Higham betrays a considerable amount of heroine worship in the book. Kate can't do anything very wrong in his judgment, and it seems never to occur to him that her eccentricities might be defined by other admirers as downright mean streaks which come and go in her behavior. Higham also seems quite callous to the situation in which Kate left Mrs. Spencer Tracy.

But the book still paints vivid word pictures of the amazing Miss Hepburn, it finds faults where they exist in her movie characterizations, and there are fascinating descriptions of what might have been, scripts which for one reason or another never were developed into stage or screen vehicles for her, particularly a tantalizing movie script by Preston Sturges.

Still, the book proves that it's possible to do too thorough a research job for a writing project. Because the actress wouldn't give him a long series of memory-raiding sessions, Higham relied to a great extent on interviews with individuals who had been involved in one way or another in her career. I think he devoted too much space to the things that emerged from those interviews. Many of the persons he interviewed are extremely old men and women who told him about things which had happened as long ago as the 1930's and even the 1920's. Human memory is a risky thing to trust without backup evidence, as I discovered when I was doing fan history research and various people remembered clearly things which I later discovered had never happened. There's an occasional clue to this trouble in *Kate*, such as someone's memory that a Broadway play was tape recorded before World War Two. I know how untrustworthy are the newsstand fan magazines, movie company press releases, and such contemporary artifacts. But I think they might have as large a percentage of truth amid the lies and misstatements as the things someone remembers in the early 1970's about events three and four decades earlier. Besides, too many of the people interviewed seem to have seized upon the occasion to unleash a tirade of hate against someone with whom they'd clashed long ago and had just been waiting for a chance to strike back at them.

The book leaves me with one overwhelming impression: Katharine Hepburn is an individual I love to watch on the screen and enjoy reading about but I don't think I could bear to spend more than a minute or two in her company. I felt kind of weak in the knees just from reading about her energy, unending talk, and extraordinary habits.

Another book by a writer who worships his subject is even finer reading. It's *The Comedy World of Stan Laurel* by John McCabe. In this case, the hero worship seems justified because Stan was without doubt a genius as both an actor and as a writer, and from all accounts, he was that rarest of phenomena in the screen world, a very

good person as a human being whom practically everybody loved. I feel special admiration for him for an unusual reason. He didn't tempt providence by greedily striving to do something else to gain added fame, after he'd achieved renown as a member of the Laurel & Hardy team. I think of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who always thought himself superior to writing music for comic operas and wasted much of his life vainly trying to create serious music. Or A. Conan Doyle, who wanted to pierce the veil of the unknown instead of being content as the author of fine detective stories. Or Richard Thomas, who pulled out of *The Waltons* because he thinks himself destined for greater acting achievements than that of John-Boy. There aren't many geniuses in the history of mankind who were versatile enough to make a smash success out of anything they tackled. I think it's better to be content with one form of fame, even if it doesn't seem very dignified, instead of spoiling everything by reaching out for something else. Stan Laurel seems to have realized what a good thing he has going with Oliver Hardy, and to the end of his days, Laurel never tried to play Hamlet or team up with Helen Hayes in a revival of Greek drama or commission one-man plays from Dylan Thomas.

McCabe's book isn't exactly systematic. It's a biography, more than anything else. But since the same author had already written a book which told about Laurel and Hardy as a team, he left out of this more recent volume a lot of stuff already covered, and substituted some other things like previously unpublished scripts which Stan wrote for the team's recordings and stage performances. Like the Lauder book, these dialogs have an uncanny ability to enter the reader's body through the ears as well as the eyes, since the voices of Laurel and Hardy are so distinctive and familiar, and these sketches are very much in the tradition of the movies.

This book is written by a man who knew his subject very well, and didn't get acquainted with him solely because he wanted to write a biography. So there's a great deal of fascinating facts about what Stan was like in his final years, after he'd stopped making movies. Amazingly, he refused to follow the custom of film stars toward their followers. He had a listed telephone which he liked to answer himself, and he invariably welcomed in any strangers who decided to call on him. He seems to have been an instinctive humorist, not just somebody who coldbloodedly analyzed what people would laugh at and then synthesized effects.

The book's discussion of the last Laurel & Hardy features, so inferior to the shorts and the early features, reinforces my conviction that the worst thing that ever happened to Hollywood was the breakdown of the old actor control of their careers. Laurel & Hardy controlled what went onto the screen in their movies longer than most film stars did. It's sickening to think of the waste which resulted when W. C. Fields and many another strong personality failed to keep command and was forced to dilute performances to other persons' scripts, direction, themes, and editing.

The most amazing thing about Stan, perhaps, is the way he retained his sanity amid all his woman trouble. McCabe goes into some detail about the succession of wives and mistresses who were among his misjudgments before he finally found, late in life, the right wife. There's also considerable emphasis on Stan's desperate, doomed efforts to prevent people from finding subtle meanings and esoteric significances in the Laurel & Hardy performances. It

is much the same feeling that caused Mark Twain to write that vain preface to Huckleberry Finn. The book quotes Stan: "That kind of junk annoys the hell out of me. What people like that don't understand and never will understand is that what we were trying to do was to make people laugh in as many ways as we could, without trying to prove a point or show the world its troubles or get into some deep meaning. Why the hell do you have to explain why a thing is funny? We were trying to do a very simple thing, give people some laughs, and that's all we were trying to do.... Some people just don't believe that. They think deep down we all put some kind of bloody message in our films. Well, they're wrong. We were having fun and trying to give a little fund." McCabe feels much the same way: "I believe, as Stan did, that pulling comedy apart not only diminishes it in vital respects but is pretty boring into the bargain."

I've had fairly good fortune of late, picking up copies of the John D. MacDonald paperbacks written and published before the Travis McGee series made the author really famous. Fortunately, nobody in Hagerstown has publicized a collection of them or advertised his desire to buy JDM books. Such behavior has cataclysmic effects on prices. Somebody advertised in a shopper publication for those Christmas albums that various chain stores have produced over the years. They used to sell for next to nothing at yard sales and flea markets and now it's almost impossible to find them at sane prices, even though the supply is enormous and the demand microscopic.

The Damned is one of the better known JDM books outside the McGee series. I didn't like it quite as much as some of his less pretentious novels. Or maybe that's the wrong adjective because it could be just my imagination that causes me to think JDM was trying to be more symbolic and significant than usual in this book. I sense from it deliberate imitation of the Hemingway style in certain places, perhaps a use of The Bridge of San Luis Rey as an inspiration, and more planning, less spontaneity than in most of the earlier JDM novels.

Still, The Damned is a good example of the author's ability to put human-type people into his stories. Most of the main characters are stereotypes, to some extent, but you don't realize that fact while you're reading the book. You must wait until you've finished it and have time to leaf back and then you discover how predictably the characters acted in accordance with their images. It must be a great art, to be able to keep this sort of predictability from being evident while the first reading is in progress.

JDM does a dangerous thing when he relies so much on narrating the thoughts of his characters, instead of exposing them through conversations and actions. This is the way clumsy amateurs and very great writers tell stories. I think JDM is closer to the latter than to the former category. The framing device could also be a mistake, if used less skilfully. As it happens, framing a story which is mostly told from the viewpoint of United States residents with a beginning and an ending through the eyes of Mexicans works just fine.

But I keep wondering, now that Condominium has finished the celebrity status which Travis McGee started, will JDM ever return to creating small-scale novels like this one again? By now, he's in a position where he can write whatever he likes. I hope he gets the urge to tell more stories like The Damned.

The Worst of Martin

After Many a Year....

I'm an inveterate no-letter writer as you know. I appreciated your last note/fanzine which had some news about yourself besides the warning that it was the last until you heard from me. I do hope you'll consider this an answer.

Last October we moved from a few furnished rooms in Hartford to a brand spanking new ranch in Berlin (American Zone). From dismal smallness it is a great change. We keep feeling someone will wander in and explain there's been a mistake--that we'll have to go back to the furnished rooms.

Everything we own has been stored since 1943--when last the draft for me. Too little furniture and too many crates of books and sundries. Never have I seen so many sundries. An attic full--it will take months to unpack and sort. Fun, though, somewhat like being an archeologist. We find so many things we didn't know we had we're beginning to wonder if we raided the storage. Like one night discussing the need for at least six good pony glasses--luckily we unpacked another box. You guessed it--I had to buy the glasses.

Of course, in the meanwhile, the place looks like it was designed by Frankenstein and furnished by the Collyer brothers. Lots of true American antiques--or early Sears-Roebuck.

A new house as I'm rapidly discovering needs a wide variety of accoutrements: screens, storm windows, double-paning in the picture window (26 feet of glass ceiling to floor), insulate in the cellar, stop that leak, tote that grading, get a little drunk and--ah! wrong missal.

Normally, during the summer we go hiking along the Appalachian Trail. Spend a couple of weeks in the AMC network in the White Mountains--under the impression that a vacation is a "change". Seeing as how we stay under a wet rock the balance of the year it's a shocking change. Well, betcha this year I'll get my "change" building a patio or the like.

But still I claim my intentions are honorable--as far as correspondence is concerned. So do let me hear from you--good, bad or indifferent. At least a note, a postal card--hello! Are you there? I don't hear a word!

I have a feeling this issue of Grotesque is destined for great popularity and success--three people already have stated it is completely ridiculous.

1064th Mailing....

Martian Windbagg (Georg Authaus)--Pretty clever, lithoing the zine on the back of Martian sandpaper. Never could read Martian. Tried to put it to the traditional use but found that sandpaper is sandpaper. Out Damned Spot (Lemuel)--That's what I said. Asteroid Belt Notch 3 (Sznumx) Maybe that's poetry in the Asteroid Belt but it's more like pidgen Univ to me. On the second page, for example:

Xithem waluit perith wahn
Hilder mayem wold enathh
Horif perth in tothick xem
Walla yee in pernem.

Now, most of you have been right there. We know the "Mayem wold" would never "walla yee in". The inference is ridiculous.

(Grotesque, summer, 1953, by Edgar Allan Martin)