

The New Criterion

Poems

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"A science fiction writer of the Fifties"

by [Brad Leithauser](#)

A new poem.

I. When the Smoke Rings Sail

Although it scarcely matters where he is,
He's in Urbana, Illinois, tonight,
As he is on most nights; it's where he lives.
Move to New York, they're always telling him.
Or San Francisco, L.A., Washington—
As if these places were appreciably
Nearer, somehow, to what he writes about.
Even his friends, they don't grasp that all places
Are roughly the same distance when your subject
Is Time itself, the pure future ...
Besides, he's drawn to these Midwestern skies,
Clean and enormous, stars all the way down
To the horizon, where the very lowest
Float at eye-level and the illusion is
You're walking to the stars.

...

Brad Leithauser's most recent book is *The Art Student's War*.

[more from this author](#)

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