Horizons continues to plod along, having reached in this summer of 1948 this point: volume 9, number 4, FAPA number 39, whole number 35, VAPA number 9. Harry Warner, Jr., 303 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Md., is responsible. The mechanical part of the production comes out of the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph.

In the Beginning

This issue of Horizons almost had even right hand margins. A month ago, I had a few hours to spare, and dummied most of the issue. Then came the abrupt realization: cutting the stencils from these dummies would give a smooth, finished appearance to material that was actually only a first draft. I decided it would be better to improve the stuff by re-writing it on the stencil, even though it meant sacrificing the margins. Now that I'm stenciling, I find myself unwilling to make the time-consuming large-scale changes in what is already written. So what you see is still essential first draft, and it doesn't have the even right hand margins, and I still can't understand how I arrived at such a bad compromise.

The latest FAPA and VAPA mailings contain so many publications that I am not going to attempt to mention each and every one. So, please understand that the amount of space given or not given to this or that magazine has no bearing on its merits; I'm simply making a few remarks that I want to get off my chest. I'll have to ignore altogether the FAPA postmailing and the later than latest VAPA mailing, both of which arrived this week and lie unread on my desk.

In the VAPA, Tumbrils interested me more than anything else in the mailing that went out at the end of April. The review of Peter Grimes is the best I've seen concerning that opera. I don't feel so enthusiastic about the merits of the music, but it's dangerous to try to judge anything by one hearing; that first impression told me that it's an uneven work, with moments that sound like genius, sandwiched between long plodding passages. A couple of minor remarks on the review: I'd bet my boots that the "bedrock chord" and "flying spray" are represented by something more exciting than a flat and its dominant; and the Met has been more generous with living composers than the indictment admits--how about The Warrior, L'Amore dei Tre Re, Cavalleria Rusticana, and The Opera Cloak in recent years? Idle thought: will the day ever come when television stations permit audiences to read the scores of new works as they are premiered? Three obvious rules of puzzlemaking that VAPA crossword puzzles have violated: diagrams should be symmetrical, every letter should be part of a word in each direction, and abbreviations should be shunned. '' My apologies for assuming in print that the Blish/es were to be active in The Spectator Club. More on this subjects elsewhere in this issue. '' Didn't the founders of the VAPA once say some majestic things about the avoiding of constitutional hairsplitting in this new organization? '' I actually appreciate the typerrors in Stefantasy. They prove that I'm not the only one who makes them. '' Yep, there have been two full-sized recordings of The Messiah within a year. It's a fine example of the stupidity of the competition between Columbia and Victor. Choral works have been the most shamefully neglected field of music. There have been three near-complete domestic recordings of The Messiah, yet of the dozens of equally great Handel oratorios and operas, only a pitiful few tiny fragments may be purchased in recorded form. Similarly, Victor and Columbia have released within a month the Brahms German Requiem. It

was certainly needed on discs, but not in two versions when you cannot buy things like Haydn's Creation or Seasons, Beethoven's Mount of Olives, Rossini's Stabat Mater, or any of the big works of Schubert and Mozart. '' I don't like to labor the point, Doc, but I really couldn't expect any individual to become a 19th century person "as soon as the last stroke of midnight died away on December 31st, 1799," unless he owned a year's supply of time traveling ability. '' I didn't care too much for "A Revision of Vision;" I fail to see why a nude girl should come down the stairs today any faster than three centuries ago. '' "As Time Goes By" is the best thing I've ever seen on this distressing apparent acceleration of the time stream. I first noticed it ten years ago, but it didn't become so bothersome until the last year or two. And it was just as well that DB" got stuck on "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse;" it's possibly the most overrated book of modern times.

Enter a sinking feeling as I look at the bulk of the FAPA mailing and the small amount of space that I want to spend on comments! The Laney Memoirs entertained me immensely on my May 30th holiday. They are not as strong as I had expected, but much more entertaining and for the first time I find myself really interested in the LASFS politicking. I'm tremendously anxious to see the final half. At this distance, I would say that Laney falsely represents only one person--himself--and that that error is confined to his analysis of his immersion in fandom. I refuse to believe that fandom did him more harm than any other hobby into which he might have plunged at the time, and I am pretty sure that he would have submerged in some other hobby if he hadn't encountered fandom at that time. I might point out, too, that Laney should not consider himself as an accurate specimen of the fan, because he was for a couple of years maintaining an activity pace that few others have approached or equalled before or since. '' It has been so long since I read many Keller stories that I wouldn't dare try to decide just how fine a writer he is. At a guess, I'd say that he needs more than anything else a sympathetic but tough editor. Without his conviction that he can turn out great fiction, Keller probably would not have accomplished as much as he has. But at the same time, he is obviously completely blind to his own faults as a writer; otherwise he would never considor allowing to be published something as mawkishly melodramatic and school-girlish as "None So Blind." In any event, I'm very glad to see the Keller revival coming before his death, while it may have some effect on his career as an author. '' Lack of a mimeoscope is no excuse for poor stencilling of pictures. A piece of glass straddling a couple of piles of books, and a small desk light inverted underneath, does almost as well. '' Art says somethings about Palmer that I was thinking, but I didn't want to risk an eruption from the specimen under dissection by referring to his physical handicap. If we're going to think about Negroes in weird and fantasy fiction, my favorite is the African in Heinlein's "Devil Makes the Law." Don't forget Wells' "Pollock and the Porroh Man," unless I've misquoted the title. '' I don't see what justification is back of Donn Brazier's lamentation over the entrance of fantasy into the slicks. I don't read the fiction in the slicks, but if I enjoyed detective or western stories, I think that I'd like those in the Saturday Evening Post more than those in the average pulp. Is there any reason why fantasy in the slicks, when and if it does become prominent, should be an exception? The mention of Yerke Memoirs in One Fan's Outlook worries me. Have the complete Sugarfluous Fan reminiscences by some wonderful chance been published?

'' Stfanatic is a good example of why fanzines don't get material. Cripes, Hugh, if a person takes an hour's time and trouble to write something for you, you might have the courtesy not to say you'll "see if I can't slip it in somewhere," and you might be willing at least to spend your own money for a three-cent stamp if you want to return the manuscript. '' I agree in substance with Milty's pleas in Plenum, but differ in details: Idon't pay too much attention to appearance of a publication, unless it's hopelessly illegible orexceptionally good, and think that a drive for better contents, rather than better format, is needed in the FAPA at the moment. '' Len seems to have solved the problem of typing legibly on the stencil; how about elimination of the drawings, unless they too can be improved an equal amount? '' "Time for Union of the Free" is another violation of the FAPA rules. If outside material like this is distributed regularly, we're apt to be flooded with it. I don't mind the work involved in separating it from the fan-produced publications, but the extra postage that a growth of the trend would involve could wreck the FAPA finances. '' I like Disturbing Element better than the more pretentious Masque, William. The little pictures that went with the mailing review tickled me no end. '' Maybe someone with a better brain thanmine could figure out why the percentage of fantasies is so high among the most famous books of all times and nations. Two minor corrections to the interesting Kennedy article: Don Quixote is mundane, except for the remarkable way the hero resembles some of this country's presentday politicians and government officials; and there is no fantasy in Tartarin de Tarascon, which nevertheless is an extremely delightful story, in which a Major Hoople is put to the acid test and actually comes through on top. I've never been able to see much justification for counting Green Mansions as fantasy, either, and doubt that there is anything fantastic in our sense among the Saroyan short stories. Anyway, I own 30 of those 60-odd fantasy classics, which puts me just a little short of your 50% query. '' I think you're off the beam about Palmer, Fran. Financial success is one thing that few fans seem to care much about. Even supposing that that isn't so, why wasn't the same jealousy evidenced toward Hornig, Pohl, Lowndes, Wollheim, and Weisinger? It's true that some of them "failed" in that their magazines folded after a year or two, but the jealousy should have bobbed up before fandomknew that those magazines were going to fold. Nor have I noticed any resentment toward Tucker and Bradbury, such as should exist among fans who like to try to write fiction, under your theory.... A couple of pieces of serious music strike me much as "Little Jazz Boogie" does Fran. I can see no reason why I should endure 21-year-old recording, and bad accompaniment, of a stickily sentimental song, but I still find myself putting the Schumann-Heink versionof Humperdinck's "Weihnacht" onto my turntable at least once a week, regardless of the season of the year. '' Was Loxygen titled under the same system as Le Zombie? In any event, I often suspect that your statement about "every woman in the world will blow her brains out" is an obvious impossibility. '' Stop me if I'm wrong in thinking that there has never been a fan publication issued through the multigraph process. Croutch may thereforehave set a precedent by getting those two pieces of type into Light. '' Thanks for the poll votes, people. My only regret is that I didn't inscribe my ballot for myself and pull up even closer to Bothman!

Sound Your A

I wanted to write a learnedarticle on the application of non-Aristotelian philosophy to music and music criticism. Heck, I told myself, van Vogt wrote a science fiction story about null-A, and so no one will dare object if I write another article about music in Horizons, using this asthe theme. However, when I thought the situation over a little, I realized that I'm not equipped to do the job. All that follows is, therefore, partof what might have been, and I freely admit in advance any accusations oftwisting my own pre-existing ideas to fit what I learned from Korzybski. 2

There probably is nothing in this structural universe that encounters as much difficulty with the tyranny of words as music. I have in the past pointed out how vainly writers try to say things about music with words that simply are not adequate for the task. There isn't too much hope of solving the problem. Music itself is in a peculiar and obvious way oneof those unspeakable things that all matter turns out to be in the final analysis.

However, real music lovers get mixed up even worse than the professional critics. They fall into the trap of identifying. The result: they listen not to the music but to something that goes under the tag of "program" or "Beethoven" or "sonata form." The most obvious result is the difficulties with new music. Most listeners identify new works with compositions that they already know, making comparisons rather than listening to the new piece alone; or perhaps the listeners concentrate on the "program" that the composer has supplied to go with his new piece; or the hearer may fall back on his knowledge that the composer has spent the last three years collecting Serbian folk tunes. In published criticism, this shows up in such inanities as Sigmund Spaeth's pointless discoveries that this sonata has a theme resembling that popular song; or it turns up in books like Brockway and Weinstock's "The Opera," which devote ten per cent of the wordage to the operas and 90% of the wordage to the first nights and the lives of the opera composers and the fame of the people who have sung the leading roles. And itresults in criticism like the famous fellow who decided that Franck's composition is not a symphony because it contains an English horn part. (In actual fact, that fellow was right when he said that the work is a symphony in name only, but hewas wrong when he claimed that the English horn had anything to do with it, and when he implied that its being or not being a "symphony" has anything to do with its merits as a piece of music.)

Relevant to semantics is the frequent assertion that music is the universal language. Nothing could be more wrong, and nothing has created more misconceptions about music. This "universal language" is far from universal, and definitely not a language. Rather than existing as a "universal" thing, music is actually very narrowly confined in time, space, and social strata. The majority of people who like serious music in this country today enjoy only the works that have been produced over a span of about 300 years in Europe or by composers strongly indoctrinated in European music. Almost all the music written before 1700 in Europe, and all the musical idioms of the Orient, South America, Africa, and other regions are virtually a closed book to today's Carnegie Hall patrons. Only the rarest of fortunate individuals can honestly enjoy both serious and popular music. Opera has never become popular in the United States, and Brahms has had terribly tough going in France. Music can ap-

peal only to thosewho have grown up with music in that idiom, unless the individual makes a strenuous and prlonged effort to learn to like the beauties of some unfamiliar musical idiom.

When you say that music is "universal," you're repeating a familiar misstatement. But when you say that it is a "language," you're in serious trouble. Music doeswhat language cannot do, and it cannot do the things that language does. If it were a language, a decision could be reached on whether Mozart's G minor symphony is essentially a tragic or a gay composition. Richard Strauss would not be forced to point out that a certain passage in Don Juan was intended to depict the hero's abrupt expulsion by force from a tavern, following a "critical analysis" which identified those bars with one of the Don's love affairs. Pianists would be able to decide whether the E flat at the close of Chopin's F major prelude was a stroke of genius or an accidental slip of the pen which should be ignored in performance. The Wagnerian leitmotif is superficially similar to the word in language, and that caused the production of scads of hopelessly bad operas in the last half of the 19th century by composers who thought so. Actually, the leitmotif is something quite different, a sort of time-binding element that is far more multi-ordinal than any word in any written and spoken tongue.

Structure occupies a very important place in "Science and Sanity," but it's even more important in music in a slightly different way. If the true importance of structure in music were understood, we might have an end to the present-day fad for excerpting and re-arranging. The thing that few people seem to understand is that the genius of the great composers consisted not in their ability to write this bar or that bar, but in their gift of putting this bar and that bar and a hundred or thousand other bars together and creating a great whole out of the many parts. I can write bars of original music that are quite as good as individual measures of the finest work of Beethoven, Bach, or Stravinsky. The ability to write great compositions is the thing that makes it possible for the world to consider Beethoven, Bach, and Stravinsky greater than Warner.

And so, when we hear a single aria from an opera, we are hearing a distortion of the composer's intent. The aria may be effective, may have a musical sense by itself, but its effectiveness in the pure musical sense dwindles in ratio to the greatness of the work, and vice versa. That is not to say that no excerpts should ever be played or sung. I enjoy the saccharine little pieces that Gaul wrote for "The Holy City," when I hear them one at a time, at intervals of weeks. But I sat through the entire work once, and that was an experience which merewwords cannot begin to describe, semantics or no semantics. Conversely, the excerpts from Wagner's operas that are generally played in concert make little sense and are pretty bad music, bythemselves.

Another peculiarity of music lovers is their unwillingness to understand that the same musical "truths" can beexpressed in any number of different ways, each of which may be equally valid. The reason for this misconception is fairly easy to discover. Writers about music use such words as "truth" and "correctness" and "perfection." Those words when used in other fields often denote something exclusive: the right answer to a problem in arithmetic, or the right solution to the mystery of what happened to the man who was seen to walk straight toward and open manhole and suddenly disappear from view. In music, there may be any number of right "an-

swers" to the same "question," each of them equally correct. If people would realize that, they'd get away from the either-or attitude, and they'd stop looking at me queerly when I insist that La Traviata and Tristan are such equally great operas that there is little to choose between them.

As far as musical criticism goes, I see no possibility of an all-embracing solution under present conditions. If a man writes a book about music, he is able to write in such detail that he has a fair chance to make himself clear. But when he is forced to confine himself to several hundred words in a newspaper review or brief magazine article or fanzine comment, the case is hopeless. About the best thing for the writer to do is to build up a special system of words over a long period of time in referring to things musical. His readers will gradually learn to understand at least in part what he is driving at. Not so many years ago some of the critics were in the habit of describing pianistic techniques in terms of colors. I don't know how it started or why it stopped, and those remarks are unintelligible today—but the system worked while it was in operation.

But another look at Korzybski would explain so musical criticism irritates people, over and above the difficulties of communication. This is it: no music critic can do more than tell how he, one individual outof earth's two billions, reacted to a given composition on one afternoon or evening of his wife. Because no composition is ever the same for two performances, and a performance of a composition is different for each of its listeners. Everything that John Doe knows about music, all the music that he has heard in the past, his ideas about things related to music, and to a lesser extent all his environment of the past and present, govern his reaction to a performance. Even if he listens to a phonograph record, and immediately plays the record again, the composition is different to him the second time, because he is under the influence of its first playing. Remember that you are not the music critic, that the composition which youheard is not the same one that you heard even though you both attended the same performance, and you'll find his reviews more understandable. No music critic can hope to annotate the eternal verities. He simply relates his reactions to music, presumably on the basis of a fairly good general knowledgecf music and listening experience.

5 How would music benefit from a non-Aristotelian approach? Well, first of all, people would hear and enjoy the music, instead of letting the music turn their thoughts to the composer's fourth mistress or what he said to the King of Prussia. The transcribing malady that is so contagious today might be partially alleviated. I see nothing sinful about arranging a composition or transcribing it for another instrument, as long as I am told in advance about what is happening. The result is not a desecration of the original composition, but rather an entirely different composition, to be judged on its own merits. But unless the arranger is a man of at least as much genius as the original composer, it's a bad gamble to waste time listening to the arrangement or transcription: the odds are very good that the original composer knew better the most satisfactory way of setting down those notes. Schubert's "Hark, Hark, the Lark" in its original version for voice and piano, and the Liszt transcription of this song, are two thoroughly different compositions which merely happen to use the same tune and similar harmonies. Either is a mess, if judged by the standards of the other, but both are very fine, considered on their own grounds. But anyone who listens

to something like the new Jeannette McDonald record of the "Rosen-kavalier waltzes" is hearing something that is inferior music, and would remain inferior music whether or not Strauss' opera existed in its original form.

Attention to the differences between compositions, instead of their points of resemblance, would also relegate to a deserved limbo many works which gain temporary popularity simply because their composers have done a fairly good job of imitating really first-rate stuff. It might also stop the present unpleasant trend toward listening in categories, which the radio and the phonograph record have helped to develop: the trend, that is, that causes people to say that they like waltzes, and refuse to recognize that a good waltz may be much more closely related to a good symphony than to another and inferior waltz.

Some of the above might be construed in the wrong sense. I have no objection to being told the historical details surrounding the composition and early performances of a piece of music, and knowledge of such information is [illegible] valuable in getting an over-all idea of the musical past. But it shouldn't be allowed to interfere with the hearing of the music as music.

In short, I still think that music is music, regardless of how little Korzybski would like that statement. And I think that anyone who decides differently is headed for as much trouble as Lohengrin encountered when he attempted to stop people from calling him Lohengrin.

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All in the Way You Look At It

A series of mishaps really messed up the effect of the article in the last issue of Horizons about new ayjay societies. Most of these mishaps were not of my own making.

One was. I took it for granted that Jim Blish was to be active in the newly formed Spectator Club. It was an unwarranted assumption, which I suppose I made because Lowndes and Blish have been the main cogs of the VAPA for long, long years.

However, soon after the issue of Horizons appeared I received a letter from one Joe Schaumburger. He took me to task for saying in that article that Lowndes was connected with the Spectators. I began to get worried at this point, did a little thinking and re-reading, and suddenly realized what had happened.

There is a fantasy ayjay group called the SAPS, and I had completely forgotten the fact that the first S in that abbreviation stands for Spectator. Schaumburger's letter made it [illegible] pretty obvious that there is also a group of barbarians, apparently for the most part members of the SAPS, who meet in the New York area regularly and call themselves the Spectators. I can't cite chapter and verse, because Schaumburger for some obscure reason warned me that I mustn't quote his letter in print.

So, like Joe says, Lowndes has nothing to do with the junior FAPA that is called the SAPS, nor with the SAPS members who meet under the name of Spectators. (I think it's safe to assume that Doc would shudder in horror at the thought.) Lowndes apparently was as ignorant of these titles used by the younger generation as I was, and so Doc called his new ayjay group The Spectator Club. The article in the last issue of Horizons referred exclusively to the new, Lowndes-inspired organization which really isn't a fan group to begin with, and I'm sorry if anyone was inspired to think the wrong thoughts about the Schaumburger crowd because of what I wrote.

Books and Bucks

I do only a modest amount of fantasy book buying through the mail& and have never yet been severely stung on a purchase of this kind. But I think that the fans who would like to set up codes of ethics would do well to start at this point.

At least a half-dozen semi-pro and pro fantasy book dealers with whom I've never done any business whatsoever haveme on their mailing lists for catalogs, and I'm going to confine myself to them in order to write without prejudice. In other words, what follows is intended as suggestions to the trade, not complaints.

One thing that strikes the eye most forcibly, in any glance through an issue of Fantasy Advertiser, is the manner in which many books are listed for sale without reference to their edition. I grant that in many instances such information is superfluous: if someone asks three dollars for a copy of Bradbury's "Dark Carnival," the would-be purchaser can be quite certain of exactly what he is purchasing. But when it comes to H. Rider Haggard books, or the dozens of fantasies that have been published first in book format, then in cheap, paper-backed reprint editions, the advertiser or dealer who fails to list the necessary information is simply not playing fair. Caveat emptor is agood excuse, but not a satisfactory one; the dealer who is actually selling a first edition without stating that fact is liable to miss an order from a collector who wants one but is unwilling to enter into correspondence about the volume in question, and the dealer who is selling a cheap reprint without admitting that factis going to make enemies among his customers, sooner or later. Lots of people who are just beginning to collect fantasy volumes will pay a dealer $1.50 for a used copy of a Modern Library edition which is still available in any book store for $1.10, simply because they haven't been around long enough to know the ropes.

Another blot on the record is not altogether the fault of the dealers. It is the habit of advertising for sale, oftentimes at fancy prices, amidlistings of fantasy books certain volumes that cannot come under this classification by any stretch ofthe imagination. Sometimes these books apparently find their way into the fantasy catalogs because of their titles, or because a quick scanning indicates fantasy contents--"The Return of George Washington" or "The Living Buddha," for instance. The fantasy bibliophiles have made mistakes, too, and that shows up in the dealers' catalogs. "After Dark," a collection of Willkie Collins short stories, somehow slipped into the incomplete Searles bibliography, and dealers have been selling it ever since. I don't think this is a good practice, even if the dealers feature a money-back guarantee clause in their terms of sale. Even if the purchaser feels he has been gypped, he may be reluctant to show his ignorance of the true nature of the volume he purchased, or he may not want to take the trouble to wrap it, mail it back to the dealer, and write a letter explaining why he wants his money back.

I think something could be done to standardize descriptions of the condition of books, and in particular to thrust into limbo that monstrous euphemism, meaning "reading copy." Even back in the days when I thought a complete collection of the prozines was a highly desirable possession, I never wanted magazines--or books, for that matter--for any other purpose than to read them. I don't think many collectors feel differently today, despite the past prominence of a few people like Frank Robinson and Harry Honig who seem to have done a lot of hard in this direction. Use of a star system would stand-

ardize matters, and would also get rid of certain unfortunate connotations of words that are commonly used for descriptions of condition today. By adopting * after the title of a book to show that it is in filthy and tattered condition, ***** to indicate that a book is as fresh as new as if it just came out of the printery, and two to four stars for the shades in between, we could stop worrying what the mysterious little initials mean. We'd also move away from the idea that there is anything essentially wrong with a book whose stampings are rubbed faint and shows signs of hard wear. If a volume isn't positively grimy, I'd just as soon own it in used as in new condition. A book thatobviously has been read hard proves that at least one person found pleasure in it in the past.

There is never going to be a uniform system of pricing for second hand fantasy books, and I don't think that one is really desirable: if adopted now, it would have a tendency to keep the present inflationary prices in effect for the rest of eternity, and it would also take quite a bit of the pleasure out of the pastime of hunting through catalogs and price lists for good buys. But dealers could apply a little more common sense in their pricings, and one thing is badly needed: a listing of all the clothbound and cheap reprint volumes that are still in print and readily obtainable at their original price. Distribution of such a list would keep collectors from paying jacked-up prices on stuff which can still be purchased by applying to the publisher. The common sense is needed in connection with certain fantasy books that have gained general popularity in recent years, and with standard works. It stands to reason thata book like Mistress Masham's Repose is far more easily found in the second-hand shops than other fantasies which appeared in the same year without gaining a place on the best-seller lists; yet the fantasy book dealers don't recognize that in their pricings. The habit of referring in advertisements to books as "rare" or "scarce" isbeing badly overdone, too. Just about half of the out-of-print stuff in the latest catalog of Stephen's Book Service suffers from this unwarranted appelation; I refuse to believe that such things as a volume published only six years ago by one of England's most popular hacks, Dennis Wheatley, deserves the designation at this time. Ditto for the omnibus volumes of H. G. Wells that Garden City distributed about ten years ago. Both the "Seven Famous Novels" volume and the one containing the short stories sold in tremendous quantities in the low-priced edition, in every bookstore in the land, and I refuse to believe that anyone is going to have trouble finding copies of them today at a decent price, unless he patronizes certain dealers. Prices on Edgar Rice Burroughs books also seem out of line, considering the huge editions in which they sell, but that might be understandable in view of the demand for them among Burroughs fans in and out of fandom. I think it was Laney who pointed out that S. Fowler Wright's Deluge is one of the easiest of all books to find in second-hand condition. I know of at least a half-dozen copies that have bobbed up in Hagerstown's second-hand stores and remainder counters. Yet most dealers charge for it almost as much as they ask for the really scarce books by the same author.

I think that a whole essay of considerable length could be written, in speculation on the motives that cause fans to become book dealers, but I'll save that topic until another time and another place.

TO A GOD UNKNOWN
By John Steinbeck

This book is important primarily as an example of a road that Steinbeck did not take. The volume might be vastly important to followers of certain religious cults or students of abnormal psychology. Otherwise, it is primarily a curiosity. '' "To a God Unknown" is early Steinbeck, dating from 1933, a time when he wasn't equipped to handle properly fiction with the deep implications of this book. Now that he has gained skill and experience as an author, I'm pretty sure that he wouldn't touch the theme. The book as it stands is a combination of mysticism, paganism, and nonsense. '' The whole thing sounds hopelessly inane, if the plot is summarized briefly. The hero, Joseph, goes to California, becomes a farmer, marries a girl who bears him a son before dying in an accident; and at the height of a great drought Joseph kills himself in the belief that his death will bring rain. That is the bare plot, but it is the matters of little importance and the minor incidents that make the volume worth reading. '' The fantasy element lies in the character of Joseph. He has strange convictions. One of them is that the soul of his late father dwells first in a big trees near his house, later in a rock in a wonderful forest glen. Though Joseph marries a woman, his wife is really the earth itself. He worships fertility, whether in plant or animal. '' The book's gravest fault is that Steinbeck is too explicit. When he writes of the laboriously crawling turtle in "The Grapes of Wrath," the symbolism is clear and beautiful, and Steinbeck does not explain it as if to a first grade student. But the symbols and the psychology of "To a God Unknown" are demonstrated and explained in painful detail. Near the start of the book, Joseph goes to bed with the land in a manner that is not convincing to begin with; the passage becomes absurd when Steinbeck laboriously explains that "For a moment the land had been his wife. 'I'll need a wife,' he said.'' Steinbeck also goes too far in hinting at events to come. The reader has the strong impression throughout that he could complete the book if forced to stop at any point, because Steinbeck has hammered away so strongly at certain things--the drought threat, the foibles of Joseph's brothers, the malignancy in the glen. '' All the other characters, aside from Joseph, are stereotyped along the Dick Tracy system: give a person a certain attribute and never let the reader lose sight of it for a moment. But a few minor personages are quite interesting. I liked the old man who lived beside the ocean, claimed to be the last person in the living world to see the nightly sunset, and sacrified a small animal to the setting sun every clear evening. And there's a cowhand who had always had nightmares of a strange, dry land and creatures that emerge from holes in that land and tear him apart. He looks through a telescope at the moon one night, recognizes the land of his nightmares, and promptly hangs himself. '' The one great thing about this book is Steinbeck's ability to write about nature. I think he knows more about plants, insects, and animals than any other person who has ever written fiction. His insight into the psychology of a beetle, the reason a path turns away from a dead tree, the things that happen in a meadow just before a thundershower, are all as explicit and as beautiful to read in this book as in any of his later novels. It is available in the cheap but cloth-bound Tower edition, and is worth the low purchase price for the good things that it contains here and there.

Of Many Things

When We Were Very Young is missing from this issue of Horizons, because July has been a hot month in Hagerstown. All fanzines in the Warner collection are scattered helter-skelter over the attic at 303 Bryan Place. The attic, quite naturally, is immediately under the roof of the house, and is the hottest spot in three counties during a heat wave. There hasn't been a cool day around here during the last three weeks. I spent fifteen minutes in the inferno hunting the FAPA mailing that came out five years ago this summer, failed to find it, and refuse to risk a stroke by spending any more time in the attic until cooler weather arrives. Maybe it gives two of the columns in the next issue of Horizons to compensate for the lack this issue. Nor will you find Quick, Watson, the Needle. I'm waiting to see what reaction the first installment receives, before deciding to continue or discontinue the idea.

Since two full pages are left in which I can ramble, I might also refer to another Horizons matter: the reviews of the preceding mailings. If anyone in the audience, FAPA or VAPA, wants to publish and can't think of anything to put in a fanzine, I'm quite willing to supply extended comments on the mailings of either or both. I'd like to put the extensive reviews in Horizons, but if I did, there would be room for nothing else. With my fan interest at its present low stage, I just haven't the ambition to enlarge this publication or start a new one for reviews only. If anyone wants to waste time and stencils on my remarks, he need only promise to do his best to get them into the next mailing and let me know how many pages of them he wants.

Hagerstown has had several fan visitors within the last month. Mike Fern was in town over the weekend in the latter part of June, as a part of his extensive vacation tour of this country. He spent a major part of the time reading feverishly the Laney reminisiences, which he hadn't yet seen, and bringing me up to date on LASFS happenings. I in turn got some pleasure out of reading The Kappa, a satirical fantasy by a Japanese writer in an edition published in Japan in the English language. I don't have quite as high a regard for its literary value as Mike, but I think that he could very possibly be successful in his plan to publish an American edition of the book. A few days later, Dave MacInnes and wife were in town briefly, trying without success totalk me into joining their Torcon caravan. I mustconfess we talked more about records than about fans and fantasy. It just happened that at that time I was gloating feverishly over the fact that I'd purchased several dozen excellent Victor Red Seal records at discounts of 50% to 75%, through the failure of an electrical appliance store which stocked records as a sideline. At the time I assumed that I'd cleaned up all the serious music available there, and told the MacInneses so. It made me feel guilty, as a result, when I returned to the same place on a hunch a week later, and ran across a spinktingling pile of ancient discs in excellent condition, original issues of singers like John McCormack, Frieda Hempel, Pasquale Amato, Louise Homer, Alma Gluck, and Johanna Gadski at 25¢ and 40¢ apiece!

I doubt that it signifies anything, but The New Yorker has been turning up with some excellent fantasy and offtrail stories in recent months. It must have been February or March that saw the publication of a tremendously funny story about what happened to the world when bookworms suddenly got out of control. More recently, in late June or early July, appeared "The Lottery," which might be

classified as almost anything. Since its impact depends on the force with which the lastlines hit the unsuspecting or vaguely suspicious reader, I don't dare say anything more about it.

The July issue of Astounding has me worried, lest that publication be veering off to the road traveled by Amazing. Probably it is merely a coincidence, but it isn't a good one, to have every story in the issue contain either mystic overtones or the same explanations of all evil in the world that have ruined the Ziff-Davis magazines. Astounding, of course, explains the evils away in a different manner, for fortunately Campbell does not ask his readers to remember that all these stories are the gospel truth. Two of the stories follow the explain-away-everything pattern that Shaver made popular. Dreadful Police Operation does it, disappointingly, simply by assuming that all the Fortean things come about through a sidewise in time proposition. The plot of Dreadful Sanctuary turns out to be almost as pallid an angle on an old, old theme--the supposition that earth is simply an insane asylum for other planets. Decision Illogical is the worst of the examples of mysticism in science fiction that I've encountered in Astounding. It isn't too bad a story, but the person picking up Astounding for the first time, reading this yarn, and coming to those last lines about "Somehow--somewhere--provisions have been made" is apt to think the whole thing the work of a religious nut. Burning Bright is the closest to straight science fiction in the issue, and its robots who discover a god probably wouldn't seem too bad if they were not in such close juxtaposition with the other three pieces of fiction in the same issue.

I had hoped to find time to read some of the post-mailed FAPA stuff before completing the stenciling on this issue of Horizons, but no soap. I've scarcely done more than glance through it and wonder why most of it wasn't saved another month until the regular mailing, since little of the contents seems to be of urgent nature.

However, I did read the Laney article in the postmailed Burblings, it obviously being superior reading matter on account of it mentioned my name. I still think you're wrong, Fran. The fact that quite a few LASFS members once lived in other parts of the country proves nothing except that some of them were so bugs about fandom that the existence of the LASFS was one reason for their pulling up stakes and moving to LA. Much more to the point would be a comparison of the LA fans with those in other cities large enough to have fan groups. There has never been another town where a fan club interested enough people to warrant weekly meetings, never another town where a club lasted half as many years as the LASFS and its direct ancestors, never another town that supported an honest-to-goodness clubroom over a period of years. I think the real situation is this: Los Angeles fandom has had a few of the most all-out fans that this plenum has ever known, and also a couple of the most eccentric ducks, and that handful of fans has attracted to the LA fandom over the years dozens of eccentrics who would find little to interest them in New York or Philadelphia fandom. Neither of us is going to be able toprove his contention--you've been too close to the Los Angeles situation for five years, and I've been too far away from it for a longer period of time--but that is the only conclusion I can draw after reading fanzines from all over the nation, corresponding with most of the prominent fans during the last ten years, and meeting a couple of dozen fans from all parts of the country.

Tenth anniversary issue of Horizons three months from now, if I am not drafted in the meantime.