

SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN
BOX 3186
THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER
WOOSTER, OHIO 44691

TREASURER
7 AMSTERDAM AVENUE
TEANECK, NEW JERSEY 07666

SFRA NEWSLETTER #16

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SECONDARY UNIVERSE V

Secondary Universe V, sponsored by SFRA and the College of Fine Arts of Drake University, was held 6-9 October 1972 in Des Moines, Iowa. Over 125 individuals actually attended the conference on the general theme of "Science, Technology, and the Arts"; an additional 200 attended the film programs and the workshops on bibliographic studies and the teaching of science fiction. Special highlights of the conference were a retrospective showing of the films of Ed Emshwiller and the films of Standish Lawder of Harvard University; a planetarium showing at the Des Moines Center of Science and Industry; and an exhibition of the works of Claes Oldenberg at the Des Moines Art Center.

Main speakers included Kenneth Jernigan, the director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, which has the largest collection of SF in Braille in the United States; Dennis Livingston, consultant for education in alternative world futures; Leon Stover, anthropologist, Illinois Institute of Technology; Darko Suvin, McGill University; and Lawrence Ianni, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, Indiana State University of Pennsylvania. Well-known SF writers and editors included Alexei and Cory Panshin, Gordon Dickson, James Gunn, Ben Bova, Ted White, Don Wollheim, Jack Williamson, and Joanna Russ.

Papers ranged in subject-matter from the usual SF criticism to a panel on SF in the comics; "Modern Technology and Modern Theatre"; "Technology and Music"; panels on Tolkien and Cabell; a multi-media performance; and the like. As usual, there were too many things going on at the same time for everyone to catch everything; but there was sufficient space for interested individuals to continue their discussions for as long as they wished past the time of the section.

SFRA's Pilgrim Award, for outstanding contributions to scholarship in the field of science fiction, was presented to Professor Julius Kagarlitski, of the State Institute for Theatrical Art, Moscow. Prof Kagarlitski edited the Russian edition of the works of H G Wells, and wrote The Life and Thought of H G Wells.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Thomas F Monteleone is writing a master's thesis on Roger Zelazny. To supplement personal interviews, he is looking for critical articles and reviews of Zelazny's work. (5921 Cherrywood Terrace, #301, Greenbelt MD 20770 USA).

Florence Brand is doing a preliminary study of the history of the introduction of science fiction into college courses. She would like to hear from any instructors who would be able to contribute information about their own experiences. (915 West End Avenue, #6A, New York NY 10025 USA).

Carolyn Rhodes is writing a critical study of fiction about automated personal data systems (i e, "the literary use of computers for the storage, retrieval, and information about the citizenry"), such as Player Piano, Year of Consent, and This Perfect Day. She would like to receive further examples of this genre. (English Dept, Old Dominion University, Norfolk VA 23508 USA).

Fred Lerner is writing an essay on "The Use of Library Resources in the Teaching of Science Fiction Courses". (7 Amsterdam Avenue, Teaneck NJ 07666 USA).

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Neil Goble, Asimov Analyzed. (Baltimore: Mirage, 1972). 174p, \$5.95

In this book, Neil Goble attempts to analyse the writing-style of Isaac Asimov. The first of the volume's three parts is a brief biographical study, which includes a chapter on "The Scope of His Writing". In the second part, Goble charts and discusses sentence lengths, syllabication, and frequency of personal references in eight fields of Asimov's writing; this statistical analysis is based on the methods used by Rudolf Flesch in The Art of Readable Writing. A rhetorical analysis concludes the book; this is illustrated with copious quotes from Asimov's writing. The bibliographical appendix lists Asimov's books thru Opus 100, giving original place of publication for stories and articles in collections.

"Others who aspire to writing popular science or science fiction should be able to gain something useful from a study of Asimov's methods. I aspire to both, which is why I have undertaken this analysis." (p4). I fail to see how this book would help the aspiring writer; in fact, I can't see its use for anybody. An extended reading of Asimov's own writing would be much more profitable, and much more interesting, both for the would-be writer and the literary critic.

-- Fred Lerner
Columbia University

Philip José Farmer, Tarzan Alive: A Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972). xx,312p, endpaper charts, \$5.95.

In Tarzan Alive, Philip José Farmer has undertaken the same task performed by the late William S Baring-Gould in his Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: he has attempted to provide us with the authentic biography of a man known to us only thru sensational fiction. Farmer explains how Burroughs, like Doyle, found it advisable to disguise

names, dates, and places; he reconciles the discrepancies which inevitably arise when this cosmetic approach to history is practised on an unsystematic ad hoc basis. His account is generally a convincing one, tho the skeptical reader will hesitate at sharing all of the genealogical conclusions which Farmer reaches. ("Disbelief", so the saying runs, "should be suspended, not hanged by the neck until dead"). Tarzan Alive represents a form of scholarship which has not previously been applied to our genre on a large scale; as a pioneering work it is deserving of our attention.

-- Fred Lerner
Columbia University

Robert E Briney and Edward Wood, SF Bibliographies: An Annotated Bibliography of Bibliographical Works on Science Fiction and Fantasy Fiction. (Chicago: Advent, 1972). 49p, \$1.95 paper.

Thomas D. Clareson, Science Fiction Criticism: An Annotated Checklist. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1972). 225p.

It must be steam-engine time. Both these volumes, the only of their sort of any real size to appear, were published a few weeks apart. As the titles indicate, the foci are somewhat different, indeed more so than the titles indicate, since the Clareson is centered on magazines while Briney and Wood are exclusively concerned with books and pamphlets.

Indeed, between the 116 entries in the Briney-Wood listing and the 820 in Clareson, there is an overlap of 20. If the Briney-Wood book had given a few pages of comment on historical and critical works on the field, the books could fairly be called the Best and the Rest...

Of the Briney-Wood volume, one need only make the obvious, traditional comment -- they missed a few -- and leave it recommended. The Clareson book, however... Well, there is valid and valuable material here, but you would have to dig for it, buried as it is in a mass of trivia and muddle-headedness.

One yet more serious complaint: the book lists almost no material from the science-fiction magazines. Now, I can appreciate the reasoning in rigidly excluding this material. But ten such items by Alexei Panshin are here listed... There is a tolerable amount of worthwhile work in the magazines, by such as Damon Knight, Sam Moskowitz, Robert A W Lowndes, and someone named Thomas Clareson. Must we have only the worst?

-- Mark Owings

SFRA CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 10, 1972

Science Fiction Conference, State University College, New Paltz NY. Speakers include Thomas Clareson and Norman Spinrad. Registration: \$25, includes lectures, displays, free materials, films, and planetarium. Information from: Dr Sheila Schwartz, Education Dept, State University College, New Paltz NY 12561 (#914.257.2565). (Thru Nov 12)

NOVEMBER 17, 1972

PhilCon, Sheraton Hotel, Philadelphia PA. Principal Speaker: John Brunner. Information from: Sanford Meschkow, 4413 Larchwood Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19104. (Thru Nov 19)

NOVEMBER 24, 1972

Fantasy film Fans International, First Annual Science Fiction and Fantasy Film Convention. Registration: \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. Info: Fantasy Film Fans International, Box 74866, Los Angeles CA 74866. (Thru Nov 26)

DECEMBER 27, 1972

Modern Language Association of America, Annual meeting, Americana and New York Hilton Hotels, New York City. The MLA Seminar on Science Fiction will meet on December 29 at 3.00pm in Vendome 10, Americana Hotel. Topic: The Works of Mervyn Peake. Attendance limited; participants must contact the seminar leader, Glenn Sadler. (Thru Dec 30)

JANUARY 19, 1973

InfinityCon, Commodore Hotel, New York City. Registration: \$3 in advance, \$4.50 at the door. Info: InfinityCon '73, R.R. 1, Box 50F, Longview Ave, Rocky Point NY 11778. (Thru Jan 21)

APRIL 13, 1973

Popular Culture Association annual meeting, Atkinson Hotel, Indianapolis IN. Registration: \$5 student, \$10 other (tentative). Info: Popular Culture Assn, Prof Ray Browne, University Hall 101, BGSU, Bowling Green OH 43403.

AUGUST 31, 1973

Torcon II, Royal York Hotel, Toronto. The 31st World Science Fiction Convention. (Thru Sep 3)