

SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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SFRA NEWSLETTER #7

Volume 2, Number 1

25 JANUARY 1972

The SFRA NEWSLETTER is published monthly by the Science Fiction Research Association, Inc, a nonprofit scholarly organization. It is sent to all voting, supporting, student, and institutional members. Address all correspondence to the Editor: Fred Lerner, 7 Amsterdam Avenue, Teaneck NJ 07666 USA. Assistant Editor: Janet Kagan.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As most of you know, I am on leave-of-absence this year. We have been at Cape May (a fine semi-circle of libraries as well as a desirable solitude), and will remain here until sometime in February; then we go to the West Coast (via the southern route) in order to work with various libraries and collections that a location in Ohio or the East doesn't have the best access to.

In keeping with my initial aim to acquaint the academic and "popular" SF communities with SFRA, I have joined other members of the Executive Committee in going to a variety of meetings -- from ESFA to PhilCon and the Noreascon. Fred and I were guests of Gordy Dickson one night in New York when he needed us as footnotes to prove to various publishers that there was a definite academic interest in the field. Thus, after the successful conferences at Queensborough and Toronto and the liaison-ing, I suppose as Chairman I should relax and count our gains. I could -- and would -- if I were not worried on two counts.

First, the number of classes being taught at the high school, undergraduate, and university levels has become a wildfire phenomenon. The teachers -- particularly in high school -- have expressed a need for immediate help. One system in St Louis is putting in twenty (elective) sections this Spring. I am not sure how many groups are writing curriculum plans for courses on that scale for next Fall. One man at a small school in the West told me that he had been a medievalist until last month; now he must present three sections of an SF course in February. In New York, an individual is running from publisher to publisher -- twenty-three of them -- with proposed anthologies (complete with questions and teachers' aids) for high school courses at any level from 7th thru 12th grades. He has a similar series "almost ready for the college courses".

Second: Use old Number Twenty-Three as the worst possible example, and Scribners' publication of Alexei Panshin's critical study and Greenwood Press' re-issuing of J O Bailey's book as the best. There is an amount of publishing going on in the field -- and a number of publishers are considering texts as well as critical studies, some with the idea that they can sell a package course to the colleges and high schools -- that is unparalleled and that, unfortunately, threatens to glut the market so that a reaction may set in.

That is why I worry. There is an excellent chance that unless SFRA becomes active and productive now, it will be bypassed and all the work that has gone on for many years now to form it will go smash.

To prevent that, I want to take the following actions:

- (1) Support Jack Williamson's committee on the teaching of SF as strongly as possible, with the idea that his list of courses will be augmented by such things as the drawing up of a number of proposals for presenting SF material in classes, and the compilation of a suggested list of titles.
- (2) The formation of an advisory editorial committee made up of publishers' representatives, certain writers who are also in the academic field, and certain established scholars. The aim shall be to investigate the kinds of material that should be made available and the best method of making them as widely available as possible. NOW. The idea of a scholarly series of monographs, which has dominated the thinking of the present Editorial Board, apparently, is a fine one and should be encouraged. However, that does not cover the scope of publication which SFRA should concern itself with in view of the immediate needs within the field. So far as I know now, after reports from individual members of the Executive Committee received in December at least, no book now being published or planned for publication will bear an SFRA endorsement. At Toronto, the Executive Committee recognised the problem and gave me authority to appoint the advisory committee, if necessary. I have just begun to extend invitations, and am happy to report that Norbert Slepian of Scribners and Nancy Ann Miller of Indiana University Press have agreed to serve on the committee. More later.
- (3) Projects must be undertaken leading to published records of institutional and private SF collections which would be available to researchers.

These seem the most urgent matters. To my mind, they have been given that urgency by the fact that, in very preliminary conversations regarding foundation grants, virtually the first question has been, "What has SFRA published and what is it sponsoring now?" Those I have conversed with do not, apparently, wish to give money for promises of future action.

This will have a direct effect on all SFRA members. I hope that each of you will volunteer to work on one of the above committees or upon Ivor Rogers' committee concerned with SF in the "other media". I shall be writing each of you soon about volunteering. Also, if you are now preparing anything for publication -- whether book or article -- please let us know. Some efforts may hopefully be combined.

1972 holds the promise of being an excellent year -- if we become active now.

-- Thomas D Clareson
SFRA Chairman

NOTES AND NOTICES

The New York Times has finally recognised the existence of science fiction. Theodore Sturgeon began a regular column in the Sunday Book Review for 8 January. ## Andrew Whyte has resigned from the SFRA Executive Committee to work on bibliographical projects. Glenn Sadler has been appointed to fill out his term. ## Prof James Merritt (Dept of English, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn NY 11210) is writing a biography of H P Lovecraft. ## Both Indiana University Press and Greenwood Press have announced reprints of J O Bailey's *Pilgrims Through Space and Time*. ## A Stanford University faculty advisory board has recommended the immediate dismissal of H Bruce Franklin, Associate Professor of English, for inciting campus disruptions. The University's Board of Trustees will make the final decision.

SCENE AND HEARD: *THE CLOCKWORK ORANGE*

Stanley Kubrick's latest excursion into SF is a peculiarly unsatisfying film -- "peculiarly" because there doesn't seem to be any real reason for it to be unsatisfying. For those who enjoyed the book, I believe they will find this a faithful adaptation from one medium to a more difficult one (more difficult because of the seeming resentment of film-makers for genuine SF). Alex (played splendidly by Malcolm McDowell) is established in the audience's mind as the most sympathetic caricature in the film (there are no characters) by the simple expedient of making him like Beethoven. This "rounds him out" in your mind. However, despite this, Alex remains thoroly unlikeable thruout the film, and one is drawn much more to Patrick Magee's portrayal of the insane Mr Alexander. (If Boris Karloff is to have a successor, surely it is Mr Magee).

The use of music has improved since *2001* and, as one who has seen and enjoyed Gene Kelly's dance routine, I found the "Singin' in the Rain" sequence both horrifying and horrifyingly funny. In more than one way, this is the kind of black comedy that the filmed *Catch-22* deserved but didn't get.

Brand names abound as usual. One entire scene which did not quite seem to fit the rest of the movie may have been included in order to allow for the prominent display of the soundtrack recording of *2001* in a record shop. (In the underground section?)

Why is this unsatisfying? The film is horribly (and I use the word advisedly) funny -- each piece (with the exception I've already mentioned), each caricature is exquisitely drawn. Yet the pieces don't fit together properly. The futuristic trappings seem unnecessary; one has the feeling that they were included merely to justify the use of the street slang. This, incidentally is never alibied, and -- despite its appealing lilt -- is extremely difficult to understand unless you've had a year of Russian and a friend who speaks the language atrociously.

The Clockwork Orange is a film worth seeing once, especially if it's for free. It is a film that may be a turning point in the history of SF films -- away from space opera, but not necessarily away from horror, since everyone in the film is a monster -- but it will probably leave you unsatisfied.

-- Janet Kagan
Barnard College

SFRA CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 18, 1972

BaltiCon, Sheraton-Baltimore Inn, Baltimore, Maryland. Annual fan convention. Guest of Honor: Gordon R Dickson. Registration: \$2 in advance, \$3 at the door. Information from: Ted Pauls, 1448 Meridene Drive, Baltimore MD 21239. (Thru February 21)

MARCH 4, 1972

Drew University Conference on the Future: Mankind, Machine, and Man. Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Information from: J Mark Lono, Director of Public Affairs, Drew University, Madison NJ 07940.

MARCH 31, 1972

LunaCon, Statler-Hilton Hotel, New York City. Annual major fan convention sponsored by New York Science Fiction Society - The Lunarians, Inc. Guest of Honor: Theodore Sturgeon. There will be an informal SFRA discussion meeting on Saturday evening, April 1. Registration: \$3 in advance, \$5 at the door. Information from: Devra Langsam, 250 Crown Street, Brooklyn NY 11225. (Thru April 2)

APRIL 14, 1972

Boskone IX, Statler-Hilton Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts. Annual fan convention. Guest of Honor: I. Sprague de Camp. Registration: \$3 in advance, \$4 at the door. Information from: NESFA, Box G, MIT Station, Cambridge MA 02139. (Thru April 16)

APRIL 28, 1972

Tolkien Conference V. This conference was originally scheduled for Belknap College, Center Harbor, New Hampshire, on this weekend. Due to the illness of Tolkien Society Thain Ed Meskys, the conference will either be postponed, or held at a different location. Changes will be announced in the February or March SFRA NEWSLETTER; or write or phone Fred Lerner for information.

JUNE 9, 1972

Pulpcon #1, Colony Motor Hotel, Clayton, Missouri. Pulp magazine convention. Registration: \$4 in advance, \$6 at the door. Information from: Pulpcon #1, Box 15853, Overland Branch, St Louis MO 63114. (Thru June 11)

JUNE 30, 1972

WesterCon XXV, Edgewater Hyatt House, Long Beach, California. Annual major fan convention. Guests of Honor: Lloyd Biggle Jr, Len Moffatt. Registration: \$4 thru June 1, \$5 at the door. Information from: Ed Cox, 14524 Fillmore, Arleta CA 91331. (Thru July 4)

MythCon III, Edgewater Hyatt House, Long Beach, California. Annual convention of Mythopoeic Society, held this year in conjunction with WesterCon. Guest of Honor: Poul Anderson. Information from: Lois Newman, Box 24150, Los Angeles CA 90024. (Thru July 4)

JULY 12, 1972

EuroCon I, Trieste, Italy. First European Science Fiction Convention. Guests of Honor include Stanislaw Lem. Convention is being held in conjunction with annual international SF film festival. Information from American agent: Anthony R Lewis, 33 Unity Avenue, Belmont MA 02178. *More information on this convention, and on conventions listed below, will be included in future issues of the SFRA NEWSLETTER.* (Thru July 16)

AND DON'T FORGET

L A Con (30th World Science Fiction Convention), Los Angeles, Sept 1-4, 1972
Secondary Universe V, Des Moines, Oct 6-9, 1972