

Science Fiction VIEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF THE PHILADELPHIA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

MARK II, # 2
May, 1960

The formal meeting for May will be Friday the 13th. This unlucky affair will be held in room 203 at the Central, YMCA, 1421 Arch Street, starting at 8:00 P M.

We are presenting a sound motion picture entitled "Three, Two, One, Zero". The film, made with the technical assistance of the AEC, is the story of atomic energy; its uses for peace and war.

"A joy of beauty is a thing forever."

Informal meeting for May will be Friday the 27th at The Gilded Cage, 261 South 21st Street at 8:00 P M. Again, no second notice will be sent. I didn't get enough complaints the last time.

On April the 10th, the Lunarians held their fourth annual conference, LUNACON 1960. Hal Lynch, Chris Jameson, Will Jenkins and myself drove up Sunday. Harriet Kolchak was already there, having gone up for the weekend to help the Dietz's & Co. with the preparations.

Hans Santesson opened the proceedings. Chris Moskowitz showed several films. The first, taken at the Detention was narrated by Sam, Christine, and random identifications called out from the audience. This film ended with shots of Niagara Falls which I had missed, but then I left Detroit early. Her other film was taken at Sam & Christine's wedding. More fans here than at the Detention.

Ed Emsh showed his first film here (while the 8mm projector was still set up). This was the zany "Big Vacation", a humorous fantasy composed of paper cut-outs in motion. I've seen this before and my memory is correct, Mr. Emsh has made some minor revisions to the original.

After this film, Hal Lynch gave a talk on the PITNIK and we passed out literature to the assembled multitudes. (Afterwards we picked up off the floor three times as many leaflets as I had taken up but I haven't been able to understand this.)

The main speakers were Randall Garrett and Judith Merrill, both of whom were scheduled to talk on WHERE IS SCIENCE FICTION GOING?. Mr. Garrett spoke first.

Mr. Garrett, having recently read Kingsley Amis' New Maps of Hell, devoted most of his talk to a critique of this book. He feels that Mr. Amis, although not having a full knowledge of the science fiction field, sets himself up as the authority on what it is and what it should be. Mr. Amis makes the statement that science fiction stories could not happen in the world as we know it. Mr. Amis is irritated by the story conventions used in science fiction (i.e. faster-than-light drives). He considers Pohl to be the greatest living science fiction author, and blames Kornbluth for the violence depicted in The Space Merchants. Mr. Garrett says that New Maps of Hell is self-contradictory and fails to credit authors whose stories are referred to. (Mr. Garrett also noted that the name is spelled with an M, not an N.) (The Amis book was reviewed in Time about six weeks back, rather favorably, which is significant considering Time's attitude toward science fiction. A middle-of-the-road review by Damon Knight in the June F&SF.)

Mr. Garrett went on to talk about the field of science fiction writing. He feels that the gadgets and gimmicks have all been used; that there is nothing left to wonder at as there was when the field was brand new. He does not think science fiction should be used as a medium to popularize science. He says that science fiction is an entertainment medium and this is the direction in which it should move.

Judith Merrill continued the program and the topic, Where is Science Fiction Going?. She discussed Reginald Brentnorr's The Science Fiction Novel, containing critical essays by Bloch, Kornbluth, and Heinlein with an introduction by Basil Wells. She cited Mr. Brentnorr's definition of science fiction as fiction involving the use of the scientific method. In answer to the criticism that science fiction uses devices that are contrary to science, she mentions Heinlein's distinction between things that are contrary to present-day orthodox theory and things that are contrary to 'fact'. She quoted from Mark Clifton's New Standards that "thinking can be fun, not morally wrong, and not necessarily leading one to a bad end."

Miss Merrill feels that science fiction is moving into the mainstream of literature. In her latest anthology, she is using the letters SF instead of "Science Fiction", on the back cover the publishers suggest a variety of acceptable alternates to Science Fiction. Lipincott is avoiding the use of the words in their publicity, even when publishing the works of recognized science fiction writers.

The two talks were followed by an auction of books, magazines, and artwork and a concurrent break for coffee and muffins.

The second portion of LUNACON 1960 was opened by Robert Silverberg who made the presentation, for Lunacon 1960 and for the Lunarians, of a plaque to the guest of honor Ed Emshwiller (EMSH, Emser, Willer). Following this, Chris Moskowitz

showed slides of four ELSH cover paintings.

Ed Emshwiller then showed four of the films for which he is becoming almost as well known as for his illustration work. The first was a temporal record of the creation of several paintings, both cover illustrations and abstracts. This film adds the third dimension of time to Mr. Emshwiller's paintings. The next film was a seaside fantasy entitled "Seascape" acted by the Crab Players. Third was called "The Thing from Back Issues". It shows the emergence of a THING from a pile of old SF magazines which attaches itself, puppet master-like, to the body of a writer. The THING multiplies and we are presented with the spectacle of writers producing science fiction in a tremendous mass effort under direction of the THINGS.

The final film was "Dance Chromatic". This film combines Mr. Emshwiller's painting with the rhythmic movement of a dance done to a modernistic percussion composition (Lou Harrison's Canticle No. 3). The three arts are combined by the magic of Mr. Emshwiller's photography into a tremendously impressive spectacle.

The next event was the announcement of the Provisional World Government of Mars by Garry Davis, World Citizen of Earth. This new government, composed of Mr. Davis as Kjeddak of Jed-daks, Randall Garrett as Secretary of Extra Solar Affairs, the Emshwillers, Judith Merrill, and others, will act as a government-in-exile awaiting transportation home. In this manner, the officials of the new government hope to avoid the difficulties that Earth has suffered due to the many governments here.

This quasi-facetious announcement was followed by more auction.

The final event of the afternoon was a Fan Editors Panel composed of Ted and Sylvia White, James Taurasi, Sidney Porcelain, Belle Dietz, and moderated by Leslie Gerber.

Discussion started out with an attempt to define the purpose and scope of fanzines. Belle Dietz said they could contain anything that interested the readers. Ted White said that he had included articles on sport cars, jazz, and other fanzines. Les Gerber thought that there is now a split between fanzines actual discussing SF and Fantasy and fanzines discussing fandom. He talked about a future split of fandom into SF-fandom and Fandom-fandom.

There was no general agreement amongst the panel on this question. Some seemed to feel that mutual interests in many fields hold groups together and that these interests had their place in the fanzines. It was mentioned that a good many of the LASFS (Los Angeles) members also belong to the local Baker Street Irregulars. Comment was made that such outside interests should be published in separate 'zines and not cause SF fanzines. One opinion from the floor was that fans should

stick to something they know about and not write on politics, music, etc. Hans Santesson answered this from the floor by saying that everyone has a right to express an intelligent opinion on any field in which he has a general knowledge.

When the Conference was over, we found an opportunity to leave Hal Lynch behind, so only three returned to Philadelphia.

Some further comment on Mr. Kingsley Amis. There is on the stands now, a rather interesting alternate time fantasy called The Sound of His Horn by a (British?) author who calls himself, rather pretentiously, Sarban (no first name or initials for this man). This Ballantine paperback is introduced by Mr. Amis. The novel itself deals with a hunting forest where the quarry is girls rather interestingly costumed or perhaps selectively uncostumed is more to the point. It takes place in the future of a time-stream in which Nazi Germany won World War II. The story is enjoyable and, in my opinion, fairly well written but not what I would call outstanding or great. Mr. Amis seems to feel that it is. He starts out by criticising fantasy in general for being reactionary and pessimistic, characterised by cynicism, cruelty, disgust, and despair. He does not seem to be aware of such classics as The Worm Ouroboros, The Lord of the Rings, and C. S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters, none of which fit his pre-conceived ideas of fantasy. He spends most of the second half of his introduction astounded that the story has merit (and great merit in his opinion) in spite of its fantasy element. Personally the chief merit of the story seems to be in its development of a future history in an alternate time stream, an impossibility without the introduction of the fantasy element.

DISCLAVE VI: May 21-22 at the Diplomat Motel, 1850 New York Ave, Washington D. C. Informal overnight conference. Doubles at \$14 and up. There will probably be several of us going down. I'll bring what further details there are to the meeting.

MIDWESCON XI: June 25-26 at the North City Plaza Motel, 7911 Reading Rd., Cincinnati 37, Ohio. For further details, write Don Ford, Box 19-T, RR #2, Loveland, Ohio.

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George R Heap
513 Glen Echo Rd.
Phila. 19, Penna.

FIRST CLASS