

# newsletter (isfa)

The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association

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NUMBER 18

## AGM SUMMARY

The second Annual General Meeting of the ISFA was held as scheduled on 28th May at Buswell's Hotel. While the turnout was somewhat less than hoped (about 16 showed up), a good bit of business was gone through.

The reports of the 1977-1978 Committee were all accepted unanimously. In addition to the reports contained in the April/May Newsletter, Paddy O'Connell gave the financial statement. Along with a balance of about £42, he said that we are still holding £18 owed to persons holding tickets to the abortive 2001 showing in December. If you still have your tickets, you should redeem them from Paddy at the usual address.

Next discussed were amendments to the ISFA Constitution. The changes, which were all adopted unanimously, were as follows:

i.) Add to Article 17: "However, individuals must have been a member of the ISFA for at least two months preceding an Annual General Meeting, subject to the verification of the Committee."

ii.) Article 20 (entirely revised): "The first order of business at a General Meeting shall be the presentation and verification of proxies. The total amount of proxies outstanding shall then be announced to the meeting at large. Votes may be given personally or by proxy; in the event of a vote by count of hand, if the sum of the number of minority votes cast plus the number of proxies presented exceeds or equals the number of majority votes cast, a poll shall automatically result. Therefore a count of hand votes must be announced."

iii.) Article 24 (entirely revised): "No member shall be eligible for membership on the Committee unless such member has been a member in good standing at least through the calendar year preceding the date of the AGM, except when there is a unanimous poll vote in favour of extending special qualification to a member who might not meet this criteria."

### Sunday 25th June:

This meeting being held the evening after Harry Harrison's Writers' Convention wraps up, we hope to be able to persuade a few of his attendees to drop by to chat with us on an informal basis. This meeting will be held at 7:30 at the Parliament Inn, as usual.

### Sunday 30th July:

It is hoped that we will have Mr. Peter Costello, the author of the new biography of Jules Verne, as our guest on this date. This meeting will also be at 7:30 at the Parliament Inn.

- iv.) Article 26: strike the "and" before "(e)" and insert the following: "when so determined by a majority vote of the Committee, or".
- v.) Article 28: insert after "discretion": "and with the consent of those co-opted" and strike out the last sentence. Insert at the end: "Those co-opted shall have no voting power upon the Committee, unless they are so co-opted to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation or removal of a Committee member."
- vi.) Article 42: Strike out "The auditor" and replace it with: "When an auditor has been demanded by a majority vote of an AGM or ECM, such person".
- vii.) Article 44 (entirely revised): "The Committee may not refuse the application of a new member without good reason which must be given to the applicant in writing. This refusal may be overruled by a majority vote at an AGM or ECM."

The next order of business was the nomination and election of the 1978-1979 Committee. P.J. Goode, as Librarian, did not have to stand for reelection as is provided for under Article 36. For the five vacancies thus available, we had six nominees: John Mahon, John McCarthy, Paddy O'Connell, Brian Redmond, Brendan Ryder, and Fred Woods. All were elected save Brendan Ryder. Votes received were 10, 14, 13, 14, 5, and 12 respectively.

Votes of thanks were then proposed and passed for the outgoing Committee members (Rita Meehan, Bobby McLaughlin, and Michael Gardner), and special votes were passed for former Chairman Robert Lane and for P.J. Goode in recognition of his excellent work and dedication as evidenced by the work in the Parliament Inn.

Immediately after the AGM, the new Committee held a responsibility apportionment meeting and the following offices and functions were assigned:

John McCarthy: Chairman and Publications

Paddy O'Connell: Secretary and Treasurer

P.J. Goode: Library

Brian Redmond: Patron Liaison, Public Relations, Alchemist's Head Liaison, and Ombudsman

Fred Woods: Writer's Workshop Subcommittee and meeting coordinator

John Mahon: Fund Raising Subcommittee and Function Secretary

Needless to say, many of these responsibilities overlap and it is expected that the various Committee members will feel free to call on their fellows to accomplish the aims of the ISFA.

Work has begun in preparing a Calendar of Events for the next year's activities.

## RECENT MEETINGS

The 23 May meeting was a rather informal get together of the membership, as was planned. The idea was to talk over the plans for the coming year's activities. It also was the first public display of P.J. Goode's handiwork to the General Public.

The April meeting held on the 30th was the long-awaited debate concerning the relative virtues of Fantasy and Science Fiction. The motion was as follows below: "Resolved: that Science Fiction fulfills a greater social need than does Fantasy." Chairing the meeting was Brian Redmond. The negative view was represented by Fred Woods and John McCarthy. Speaking in favour were Rita Meehan and Paddy O'Connell.

The first speaker was John McCarthy. Basing his arguments on a fairly stiff definition of SF, H. G. Wells' Rule, John attempted to show that SF was essentially taking accepted human or explicable alien reactions to new situations to create the conflict upon which the plot would be based. Fantasy, on

the other hand, would take known situations and superimpose some sort of strange reactions or beings to build the story. By condemning apocalyptic SF as only marginally entertaining, he said that any positive benefits would be overshadowed by the lack of escapist release. This would, he concluded, show that SF could have a negative effect upon society, and thus prove the negative side's contention out of hand.

Needless to say, the first speaker in favour, Paddy O'Connell, did not agree with the above exposition. Speaking entirely extemporaneously, Paddy claimed that since Fantasy deals with things we know to be impossible, it gives us no chance of trying to predict (and thus avoid) the effects of technological developments upon human society. This would imply that Fantasy would wield the greater detrimental effect upon society, by preparing to prepare us adequately for the future.

Fred Woods then resumed the negative side's attack. He pointed out that Fantasy was the source of all civilisation, for it was through the imagining of a better way of life that man's creative efforts were directed into labour-saving devices such as wheels, brooms, fire, and medicine. Fred then pointed out that the one willing suspension of disbelief allowed in SF (H. C. Wells' Rule again) was in fact an element of Fantasy. Given the negative potential of SF, this subcategory of Fantasy could not help but yield a smaller social benefit than Fantasy could as a whole.

Rita Meehan concluded the expository presentations with the second favouring speech. Rita stressed that SF has one virtue which Fantasy could never have, i.e. an awareness of change and its relationship to ourselves as people. She defended this argument with several examples of the nature of interpersonal relationships. Given the advance of the Future Shock theory, clearly one must learn in advance what the future could demand of us. This is the real social need which faces us all and which Fantasy cannot handle.

Both sides then took a short break to prepare rebuttals. These concluding statements were remarkable for their coloured rhetoric and near-libellous denunciations. In the voting, the team of Rita and Paddy won both the decision and the best speakers award. There followed a lively discussion from the floor.

#### RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

P. J. Goode has asked that the following additions be made to your library booklists:

ALDISS (Brian)	Billion Year Spree
BULMER (K.) (Ed.)	New Writings in SF 24
BRACKETT (Leigh)	The Big Jump
DISCH (Tom)	The Puppies of Terra
GOULART (Ron)	Vampirella 2
MCHLAND (Dick)	Heartclock
NOUNSE (Alan E.)	Tiger by the Tail
ROBERTS (Keith)	Pavane
SMITH (E.E. "Doc")	First Lensman
TEMPLE (William P.)	The Flesh-pots of Sansato
VANCE (Jack)	Big Planet
VONNEGUT (Kurt)	Slapstick
WILHELM (Kate)	Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang
WILLIAMSON (Jack)	SEETEE Ship
Magazines: ANALOG	Oct., Nov., Dec. 1977
GALAXY	Sept. 1977

Recent donors to the ISFA Library include David Lase, John Mahon, and John McCarthy.

## REVIEWS

### Imperial Earth by A. C. Clarke

This is not an easy book to review. Clarke himself relates some of the slight weaknesses in the book in his notes in the back. For a highly critical reader these should suffice, for without these two key assumptions, the book would have no plot and no conflict. I'll leave it to the reader to find out what they are.

They can be tolerated, of course. The plot itself is rather odd---it involves interplanetary smuggling and a predicted economic crisis, but these are merely background to the story. The real point of the book is a discourse upon the effects of the expansion of human society to the planets and moons of the solar system. Aside from the one big technological breakthrough evidenced early in the book, all is a linear extrapolation of the current state of the physical arts up to 2276.

It should be mentioned that Imperial Earth contains some of the strongest characterisations that Clarke has yet produced. Immensely interesting is the way people older than myself are given an insatiable curiosity and a revealed insecurity which would result, far beyond what the run-of-the-mill book might present.

The hero of the book is Duncan Makenzie (a black clone), third "generation" descendant of the ruler of Titan. The background of the settlement of the moon and the development of the society it contains is succinctly yet fascinatingly presented. Duncan's country's economy is dependent upon rights for mining hydrogen from Titan's atmosphere for fusion power; this is threatened by a new space drive referred to by Clarke himself as "outrageous", which would only need a very small fraction of their usual year's GNP.

Duncan himself is sent to Earth (in his early 30's) for three reasons: to find a solution to the economic problem, to have the next "generation" of Makenzies cloned from him, and to deliver a 10 minute speech to the Congress in Washington on the 500th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence. I won't bore you with the details of the flight or of the structure of society in 2276, but suffice it to say that it appears that these are well worth investigating by any reader.

There are several points worth mentioning, however. First, it seems that to a large extent, the evolved society is no more than a utopianised version of the American Dream minus the profit motive. Second, there is an annoying abundance of what can only be called cloacal imagery in sometimes unlikely places. Third, it is a shame that Clarke didn't have Makenzie meet some representatives from Mars, Mercury, or Luna in a note-comparing session or two. All his narrated contact on Earth is with Earthmen, save the Fateful Encounter with a fellow Titanian, from which only one walks away alive.

To condense the ending, Titan finds an industry to solve its economic problems, Duncan makes his speech, and he brings home a clone. There is an interesting narrative technique employed of having a stranger walk into a new (to him) society as the vehicle for telling you about that society; the few flashbacks are very well handled; and the computer technology is well worth reading for its own sake.

In conclusion, I would have to put this fine book in the category of one of the best I have read.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

Tower of Glass by Robert Silverberg (London; Pan Books, 70p.)

This novel is set in the year 2218, in an earth ruled by a World Congress from Geneva, when all national governments have disappeared due to the invention of the "Transmat", or an instantaneous matter transmitter.

The main character is Simeon King, a billionaire inventor, who has created a new race of androids to run both his own and other industries. When the novel opens, he has just started building a huge tower in the Canadian Tundra, in order to send replies by tachyon beam to a star in the Proxima Centaurus system, which has been transmitting signals to Earth.

In his portrayal of the androids' creation, Silverberg recalls Huxley's Brave New World, especially in his description of the "Alpha, Beta, & Gamma" classes. However, he is strikingly original in his description of a new anaroid religion, based on the worship of their creator King, and the novel develops to a powerful tragic climax, when King brutally destroys the androids' faith in him, by describing them as mere animated tools, things without any rights, working for humanity's benefit.

Silverberg has partly disproved this view by showing earlier in the novel that alpha class androids are capable of human feelings, and that even King's own son has fallen in love with an alpha female.

This novel is a fascinating exploration in hard SF terms of the problems concerning human-android relationships, and I would personally recommend it to ISFA members.

Reviewed by David Lazz

UBIK by Philip K. Dick and The Early Asimov (Vol. I.) by Isaac Asimov

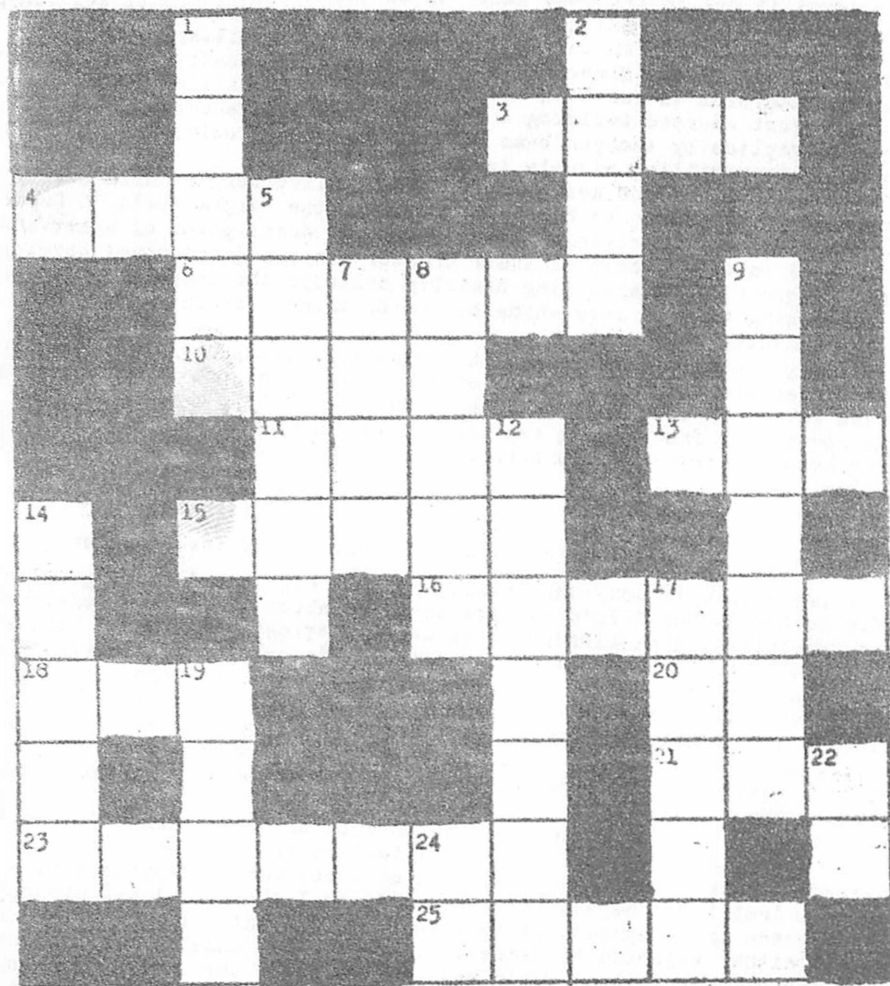
It is impossible to deny that Philip K. Dick has a fertile imagination. In a prolific career he has forced readers to think about the way we construct our "reality", especially that element of it we call "time". This book, however, is not one of his best. He has taken several ideas: telepathic and counter-telepathic business practices, life after death, time slips, and the ubiquitous pressure of advertising, and made them into a novel which I must confess I found sloppy. Any of these ideas could have been developed into a good book; collectively they constitute a rather appalling bag of worms. The failings of the book lead inexorably to an ending which is undoubtedly weak, and which I thought was a cheat.

As if to show how unmeaningful it is to talk of "all science fiction", the second book was a total change. It is a collection of eight short stories written by Asimov in the years 1939-1941, none of which has yet appeared in anthologies. This last is perhaps a telling point, as I think that all his good stories have been anthologised. It is also relevant that all except one of the stories were either rejected by Cambell, or considered unsuitable for sending to him (on the grounds that he would reject them). Yet the stories are completely readable. They are all "good ratteling yarns", a form of writing not to be sneered at. The feature of the stories that I found most fascinating, given the well-known urbanity of the good doctor, is their naiveté. He really was terribly innocent. Apart from this, it is not at all evident from the writing that these were written by a totally inexperienced 18 year old. For anyone except the very best, these stories would be considered good. Even if they are still less than average by Asimov's standard they are still eminently readable.

Happily I read the Asimov second. It made a delightful and refreshing change from the first.

Reviewed by Eoin Barrett

# SF CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

3. SF artist (4)
4. Horsey occupation (4)
6. Nuclear power type (6)
10. Brother of aragonrider with flair (4)
11. Type of coal (4)
13. Paperback publisher (3)
15. Waxed and (5)
16. Time unit in world of Ptavva (6)
18. Gesture with head (3)
20. Chemical symbol (2)
21. Madame (Ab.) (3)

## DOWN

1. Matter (loosely speaking)(5)
2. Astrophysical status of Jinx (4)
5. Makenzie (6)
7. In a short while (4)
8. Annoyed (5)
9. Cause of death in a spacing (7)
12. What Asimov and Scithers are (7)
14. Star (5)
17. Jacque Lafeyvre's job (5)
19. Type of yeast in protector (4)
22. What most BEM's are (2)
24. Chemical symbol (2)

ACROSS (Cont.)

23. "Slippery Jim's" middle name (7)

25. Employers of tools (5)

Answers on page 8.

## NEWS OF INTEREST

### PCSTER CONTEST & MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

In a move to increase the membership of the ISFA, the Committee have announced that any member who can recruit five (5) new members between now and the end of July will receive a refund of this year's membership fee. As was announced in the last issue of the newsletter, among the method of getting new members is the use of posters which should be drawn and located by you; the August meeting will award a prize for the best poster, this being based both upon effectiveness and upon artistic merit.

### BEST FICTION CONTEST FOR 1978-1979

The Committee would like to announce that there will be a contest for the best work of fiction submitted to either ISFA publication over the next year. As usual, all works should be submitted to John McCarthy, c/o Paddy O'Connell, 11 Templemore Avenue, Rathgar, Dublin 6.

All potential contributors are reminded that the deadline for stories, etc. for the October Stargate is 15 August, so get busy.

## MORE REVIEWS

Deluge by Richard Doyle (London; Pan books, 80p., 1977)

This is a novel by the great nephew of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and is reminiscent of some of his SF works. It is written in the tradition of "disaster-catastrophe" type novels, and describes a hypothetical flood by the river Thames, caused by abnormal gales in the North Sea, and its subsequent effects on the city of London.

The scene is set in London of 1978, and the author describes the events with graphic realism, showing a detailed knowledge of the complexities of flood control, and urban technologies. Although lacking in individual character portrayals, this is a well written, realistic SF novel, worth reading.

Reviewed by David Lass

### MORE SF ON TV---The first installment of Robert Lane's review of 1977-1978

The Autumn and Winter seasons on TV seem to bring a fair sprinkling of SF and Fantasy films. Since there was only one spoken objection to my review of last summer's offerings, I shall now take a look at the films which the five stations have telecast since the middle of July last year. BBC 2 comes up with the prize this time. They ran seven films for us: the SON OF FRANKENSTEIN was followed in sequence by GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN, HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, and HOUSE OF DRACULA. The Hammer films EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN (which was reviewed by Jim Ivers in an earlier Newsletter) and SHE followed. These were then followed at Christmas by the curious DARK STAR. A big treat was the rebroadcast of the television play 1984 that brought Peter Cushing to the notice of film producers. BBC 1 gave us BREWSTER McCLOUD, OMEGA MAN, PROJECTED MAN, ATLANTIS THE LOST CONTINENT, and SILENT RUNNING. The Sky at Night programme on December 16th had Arthur C. Clarke as its guest and

they ended up with FLASH GORDON CONQUERING THE UNIVERSE for Christmas. UTV repeated the CRACK IN THE EARTH which Harlech had shown in the summer, before taking us on the FANTASTIC VOYAGE, masterminding the ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES, exposing us to the ANDROMEDA STRAIN, introducing us to the BODY STEALERS and treating us to a round trip of Ray Harryhausen's MYSTERIOUS ISLAND. RTE have tried to improve their output, but with the exception of DEVILCELL, the quality was not up to much. FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON was too long; nobody really cares when the EARTH DIES SCREAMING, and although it was animated, JACK THE GIANT KILLER was disappointing. To round off the spectacle, Harlech (before my set decided not to pick up the station anymore) put on the NIGHT CALLER and Hammer's REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN.

The Universal Frankenstein series was becoming a little jaded by the time GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN came on the market. Lon Chaney Junior took over the role from Boris Karloff and was resurrected from the now solidified sulphur pit by Bela Lugosi's Igor who, curiously, was also still very much alive after being shot by Basil Rathbone. Destruction by fire answered the old question---how to get rid of the monster? In 1943 they made FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN. Bela Lugosi donned the heavy make-up which he had refused to wear in 1931 (much to the eventual delight of Boris Karloff). The monster was not enough for movie fans so the wolfman Larry Talbot joined him in the mayhem only to be drowned with him in the finale...HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN had both of the characters returning with Count Dracula and a hunchback in tow. Glenn Strange and Lon Chaney Junior continued as Frankenstein's misshapen creature and his furry cohort and were to be seen again in the followup HOUSE OF DRACULA. The Count was played by John Carradine (father of Kung-Fu's David Carradine). The series was almost over and except for one meeting with Abbott and Costello, Universal decided to dismantle the monster. Requiescat in Pace.

TO BE CONTINUED IN LATER NEWSLETTERS...

# ANSWERS TO THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 6

## ACROSS

3. Pass
4. Stud
6. Fusion
10. Pinor
11. Coke
13. Ace
15. Waned
16. Dilton
18. Kod
20. AU
21. Mae
23. Bolivar
25. Users

## DOWN

1. Stuff
2. Moon
5. Duncan
7. Soon
8. Irked
9. Vacuum
12. Editors
14. Denob
17. Tamer
19. Dole
22. ET
24. AU

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