

newsletter

The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association



March/April 1980

Once again we come to the end of an ISFA year - not to be confused with any other kind of year - and perhaps it's as good as time as any to sum up the year and all its changes.

But I won't. So there!

What I will do is pay tribute here to some committee members who unhappily could not complete their term on the committee, and who are therefore not likely to be publicly thanked at our AGM.

Firstly, it would be difficult to think of anyone who has done more for the organisation than John McCarthy. He was an energetic and competent Chairman, and taking over the job was, for me, made even more difficult by the fact that I was succeeding someone like John. Moira Harrison was sorely missed when she decided to take herself up into the airy fastnesses of Co. Wicklow, there to besport with all sorts of strange and bucolic playmates. And then Jacob Struben went and left us for the bright lights of London, from which he has promised faithfully to keep in touch.

Maybe they'll come back. You never know.

Now - the dates.

The annual general meeting will be held in Buswell's Hotel (as usual) on the afternoon of Sunday, 25th May at 2.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of last AGM
2. Report of Secretary/Treasurer
3. Motions
4. Election of 1980/1981 Committee

The presentation of the Aisling Gheal Award for 1980 will take place in The Parliament Inn, Parliament Street (the place where the meetings are held) on

Saturday, 31st May at 7.30 p.m.

The keynote address will be given by Anne McCaffrey, and it is hoped that our other two patrons will be there. The food will be a buffet supper WITH WINE, and the cost will be \$2.50. Those who wish to attend should give their names - and contributions - to the Secretary

Brendan Ryder,
18 Beech Drive,
Dundrum Dublin 14.

The June meeting will be held under the direction of the new Committee, so the topic will be decided by them. You can be sure that it will be on the last Sunday of the month, and, if we're not kicked out, in the Parliament Inn.

Statement of Accounts for the year 1979/1980.

Debit		Credit	
	Balance 1st June 1979		65.88
SEACON '79	270.00		267.00
Journals	80.00	Membership	187.00
Stationary	17.09		
Postage	29.13		
Photocopying	11.45		
Newsletters	35.00		
Bank Charges &			
Secretarial	5.25		
Gift	20.00		
Balance			
13 April 1980	54.56		
	522.55		522.55

Brendan Ryder
Secretary/Treasurer

MEETINGS

One of the most scientific talks of recent times was given at the February meeting by John McCarthy. He reported on a paper by Dr. Milton A. Rothman in the September 1979 copy of IASFM.

The problem discussed is a Scientific paradox, which is best illustrated by the following two diagrams.

In the left hand diagram a beam of light is shown being reflected by a mirror onto a photographic plate. The right hand side shows two such mirrors, with light being deflected to BOTH of them by a 'half-silvered' mirror near the source. This is a mirror which reflects HALF the light, and lets the other half through. The problem arises from the pattern which appears on the photographic plate in the right hand experiment. Instead of there being an image of the source on the photo, you get what are called 'interference patterns'. This basically means that instead of spreading evenly all over the plate, the light concentrates in bands. This is a sign that the light is actually travelling in WAVES, but there is a large flaw in such an argument.

It can be shown that light is actually described by what are called 'wave packets'. The wave packet is not something with any physical existence: it is the PROBABILITY of finding a photon in a given area of space. Quantum physics makes extremely accurate predictions about this, but what it boils down to is that the light travels in small chunks called photons, which are in theory separate entities. Since only one photon hits the detector at a time, how can they interfere with one another?

The explanations of the phenomenon are often extremely sophisticated, but the one which John mentioned as being of special interest to SF readers was by a Hugh Everett. He suggested that at each instant in time the universe is faced with a number of possible NEXT moments, and SPLITS into many universes so as to take all possibilities.

ISFA patron Harry Harrison entertained those at the March meeting by giving a talk, the theme of which seemed to be non-existent.

He began by saying that that he wanted to talk about his books. He has just finished the last book of a trilogy, and has also written a novel strangely titled QE2 DOA (Dead On Arrival). Why write a novel about that ship? What inspired Harry to write the book was the fact that while voyaging in her he had the unfortunate opportunity to sample the British and their cuisine - pretty nauseating.

So? So what happens when the QE2 is discovered empty of all life - all the thousands of passengers missing? A type of revenge for Harry. He was also offered a large sum of money by a publisher.

Harry then decided to talk about Science and Technology - i.e. Computers. At the moment he has a computer that writes all his novels (I just type what's in front of me - honest I do Harry. ed.) he has a computer that writes all his novels, in Wicklow - which hasn't even heard of the typewriter. He just presses a key and the computer begins making noises for a long while, Harry's words appearing on a screen, where, with a slight effort he can correct mistakes. So he writes novels pretty fast now. Harry smuggled the first home computer into Ireland (from California

- where they are DEARER) - and set it up in his Wicklow eyrie. The only trouble was with the ESB power supply. When Harry used his own power supply things worked fine. He also uses the power supply to pump water from his well, and now when anyone flushes the toilet everything goes haywire.

Then Harry put forward the idea of staging a one day convention in Ireland. Leading figures in fandom could be invited, and a Fan Guest of Honour could be chosen. Writers would come because of their egos. Harry said he would provide names and addresses of writers, and suggested that people be invited to become Associate Guests - for a small membership fee.

A talk filled with inextinguishable zest and humour.

REVIEWS

The Outward Urge Penguin 95p.
John Wyndham & Lucas Parkes

I read this book with a sense of homecoming. I first read it many years ago, and enjoyed it, but enjoyed it more this time. It follows the concern of the Troon family with space, and, in five connected short stories, covers the years 1994 through the world war to 2194. The position held by the commander of the British moon station during the war is extremely well depicted. The final story concerning life and deep sleep and soul loss applies to modern life today, and not to the so-called future. Read and enjoy.

Kinsman Futura/Orbit 1.25
Ben Bova

I hate reading books out of sequence, and avoid it whenever possible. I read Colony and then was given this one, and then had to buy Millenium to complete the trilogy. Kinsman is a well constructed story concerning the USAF move into space, the Kinsman of the title is Chet Kinsman, an astronaut determined to make it to the moon. This determination is transferred to a desire to use space for peace, a difficult switch for an officer in an armed service, after he kills a girl from a rival power in space. The tale is carried to its logical conclusion in Colony and Millenium.
David Tobin

Time and Again	75p. + taxes
Way Station	65p. + ditto
A Choice of Gods	70p. + again
all by Clifford D. Simak in Magnum Books	

Magnum Books are reissuing Simak's novels, and not before time. The only thing that narks me is that they only sent these three for review. Time is the Simplest Thing and Cemetary World are also in the

series. But never mind.

Time and Again is one of the few stories involving time loops that actually works for me. I must add that Time is the Simplest Thing is another. A lone astronaut reappears after 20 years lost in space. He has been sent to a planet which had hitherto prevented exploration missions from reaching its surface. This astronaut discovers that he will become the author of a book which will change the world - a book called This is Destiny. In a fairly obvious allegory of what has been done to the teachings of every leader, either political or religious, since the beginning of time, Simak traces the conflict between two future factions who both accept totally what he has/will have written, but who interpret it in diametrically opposing fashions. It is a surprisingly moving book for a work of SF, and Simak successfully manipulates the reader into feeling annoyed by a faction who would take the text

We are not alone...there has never been a single entity that walked or crawled or slithered down the path of live alone.

and would make it into a plea to kill other creatures. It's all so irritatingly familiar, as we remember

as you would that men should do unto you

or

cherish all the children of the nation equally

The end of the book is a bit slushy, but that doesn't take from a fine story, well told AND with a moral.

Way Station is perhaps the most readable of the three books. The story of the 'station master' at an intergalactic railway station is told with humour and feeling. Simak's concern for all living things, and his lack of sympathy with aggressive bureaucrats comes through on every page. The characters are all sensitively drawn, and he finds time to make a plea for those bigots with whose attitudes he is so clearly at variance. The very readability is perhaps a sign that the differences between the various characters are not as clearly examined as in the first book, and certainly not as much as in A Choice of Gods. The picture tends to be fairly black and white, with very little grey. Nonetheless, it is a book well worth an evening.

Now we come to the story where Simak does try to do what the most able novelists in any genre attempt. He describes a conflict between right and right.

The story concerns an Earth which was suddenly depopulated, except for a family birthday party, a small (American) Indian tribe, and all the robots. The survivors are given amazing longevity, and begin to come to terms with a deserted Earth.

Then they find out that the others did not

disappear into thin air, but to another planet, from which they eventually learn to travel through space. The story of an unknown and seemingly malevolent entity discovered at the heart of the galaxy, and of its connection with the by now almost human robots is interwoven with that of the humans, both on and off the Earth, to give a complex and satisfying story.

I think this is probably the best book Sinak wrote, and I advise all lovers of SF to read it.

By the way, I also read the other two books while I was at it. It doesn't fall to me to review them, but I think I CAN recommend them.

Eoin C. Bairead

Cluster Series by Piers Anthony
 Panther all at 1.37
 Vol 1: Vicinity Cluster
 Vol 2: Chaining the Lady
 Vol 3: Kirlian Quest

In reviewing this series I had the somewhat confusing experience of not knowing that I was enjoying the task until I was well into the first book. What I am not finding a pleasurable experience is the review-writing.

Spread out over a millenium or two, the story follows the interaction of numerous species in their attempts to change their future, and the conflicts that arise as their mutually opposing interests involve them in several wars.

The first conflict involves the Vicinity Cluster and the Andromedan Galaxy. (The V.C. of the title is composed of various "spheres": The Solarian Sphere - the area controlled by the planet Earth; Sphere Antares, Sphere Polaris and so on.) The Andromedans are motivated by the modest desire to dispose of the Vicinity Cluster, in other words the Milky Way, of its entire energy supply. The 'entire' covers atomic interactions, the force of gravity, the whole schmeer. No pussyfooters, these Andromedans!

Central to the entire tale is the technique of identity-pattern transfer. One of the prerequisites for easy transfer is the strength of the 'Kirlian Aura' of the transferee. It just so happens that as war is about to break out, the powers-that-be recall that there is an individual of extremely high aura on a backward planet under the control of Earth. He is enlisted to spread the method of transfer of the personality throughout the galaxy as an aid in combatting the Andromedan threat. This task causes him to inhabit various hosts of widely differing physiologies and psychologies. In his travels he comes up against a similarly gifted enemy, a female, and in one aqueous world he clashes with her and rapes her. From this forced union comes a line of high aura descendants, and one of these is the hero(-ine) of the next stage of the V.C. - Andromeda dispute.

Melody of Mintaka is an old female-neuter who has retired from life to study the Tarot, a discipline that is also central to the story. She is recalled to duty as the Andromedans resume their attack on the Milky Way. On this occasion the baddies have perfected the technique of hijacking the minds and bodies of their enemies, in the previous story the host had to be willing or on the point of death. Her primary task is to discover which officers of the sphere Etamin contingent of the Cluster fleet have been taken over by the enemy. Using her knowledge of the Tarot she gradually unmasks the cuckoos-in-the-nest and the fleet segment splits into two segments and a titanic space battle ensues.

There is a surprise ending to this volume of the saga, and if you want to know it, read it yourself.

The final stage of the series is concerned with the invasion of the united realm of the V.C. and Andromedan clusters by an immense fleet which had previously thought of as 'The Space Amoeba'. As this threat approaches, yet another descendant of the arch-typal hero of the first volume is called into service. He is Herald/, Healer of Sphere Slash of the Andromeda cluster. He is an expert in heraldry, coats of arms and all that, and he is also a healer, by virtue of his immense Kirlian aura. He falls in love with one of his patients and loses her in a most abominable manner. (He had been called to exorcise her, 'failed', and she was burned at the stake). The 'demon' which possessed her is, he finds out, no more than an affinity with the power which is contained in the sites which are found scattered around the universe. These are abandoned cities of the 'Ancients', a mysterious race which had controlled things before the various sapients which now run things had evolved.

As the attacks of the invaders commence, he sets out to unravel the secrets of the former rulers of the galaxies and the story builds up to another surprise ending, and, believe it or not, everyone lives happily ever after(sort of).

Now, this series can be called Space-Opera, (you have my permission), but it's a damn good Space-Opera. The bewilderingly array of intelligent life-forms is very well thought out, and their mores, prejudices and so on are convincingly portrayed. As far as detail is concerned, the entire story-cycle is crammed with it, and this allied with the various sub-plots makes it difficult to give any sort of comprehensive review. I would, however, enthusiastically recommend these three books to anyone who likes a good entertaining read. The more I see of Mr Anthony's work, the more I like it.

Frank Roche

The Magic Goes Away ACE 2.95
 Larry Niven
 illustrated by Estaban Maroto

This is the last in the series of Niven's stories about the Warlock. Shouts and jubilations from the back quarter of the room.

But seriously, folks.

Niven is the only fantasy writer I know of who tries to de-mythologise his fantasy. All his heros have feet of clay, and all his magic has an explanation.

Even Ursula Le Guin, that most realistic and socially aware of SF writers, falls prey to the Fantasy trap in her Earthsea books. Also, I'm not at all sure that Niven isn't sending up certain Fantasy conventions when he DOES use them. He's a very clever writer. Why the man ever started writing with J

But that's another day's work.

The basic story of this book is of the efforts of the trio of wizards introduced in earlier books to restore the 'mana' or magic-force to the world. It has been whittled away after many years of use. The magicians team up with a most attractive lady magician, and a most attractive gentleman warrior(non-magic). Later the m-a lady and the m-a gentleman team up in a different fashion, but that's not really central to the story. The quarto + skull (I didn't tell you about the skull, did I?) travel on cloud nine, as it were, to meet the last of the gods, a most unusual character called Roze-Marree, sorry, I mean

Roze-Kattee

from whom they want the mana. "Give us the mana!", they say. In the heel of the hunt he doesn't, but the story has both a happy ending and a moral, and all for the ridiculously low price of 2.95 + the rest.

A word about the artwork. The female character (the most-attr etc.) seems to change in every illustration. I know she's supposed to, up to a point - at least the colour of her hair is supposed to, but the only parts of her which seem to remain unaltered in fact are the mamaries and glutei maximi (look it up, children, look it up). It is perhaps only coincidental that in the cover illustration, which is by an entirely different artist, the only parts of either the young gentleman's or the young lady's phisique on which there is some measure of agreement are those same.

And to think we have junior members in the ISFA who might be exposed (if that's the word I'm looking for) to THAT SORT OF THING. What's the world coming to at all - come back Buck Rogers.

I wouldn't buy this book myself, but that's not to say I would stop anyone else from buying it. As I said, I feel that the author is to a certain extent messing, and I don't think the artist took HIS job any more seriously. We do have the book in the library, so if you want to read it and disagree with me, go right ahead. If you don't want to read it, but would like to disagree with me anyway, likewise go ahead.

Eoin C. Baird

Colony 1.35 + tax
Ben Bova Magnum Books

This is the story of the first child actually born on a large Space-Station, which is orbiting both the Earth and the moon at what is called a libration point. This is a point at which the forces of gravity from the two bodies cancel one another out, and the station can be in a stable position.

The child, who was actually conceived in a test-tube, grows up under the care of an old man who is actually training him to take over the station some day. But the boy, David Adams, rebels against this, and goes to Earth, where he meets a beautiful Arab girl. She is one of a group of terrorists, and is herself in love with an Irish engineer who is murdered by her father, a politician with the World Government. Eventually she tries to capture the space station with her fellow terrorists, but is defeated by the hero.

The story is very exciting, and, you will be glad to know, has a fairly happy ending.
Tom O'Brien

Unto Zeor Forever
Jacqueline Lichtenberg

\$2.25
Playboy Press

I'm serious. Yes - THAT Playboy. Poor Hugo, poor John!

Anne McCaffrey, you don't know what you started. I mean the 'Cult Series'. But here you have Gens and Simes instead of dragons and riders. You also have a story that is as yuchily cloying and sickeningly sweet as any you are likely to meet. It is also a thinly disguised plea for tolerance and understanding between people of all races, and a passioante plea for god, motherhood and the American way of sex. It has already taken off in the States, and, the publishers assure us, it will become a fervent cult if it isn't one already. This from the wonderful folks who brought you the playmate of the year, so you'd better believe it.

On a technical matter, the author introduces not alone a host of peculiar characters, relationships and phenomena, she also gives us a whole new vocabulary. It is a little de trop; I found myself skipping back to the word-list every few pages to find out whether 'ambrov' was a person, a thing, a condition or a large pig in a Myles na gCopalleen story.

The book itself has everything that makes life worth living - romance, death, tragedy, rape, murder and baddies, but in keeping with the afore-mentioned yuchiness the baddies aren't really bad, they just know no better.

The book won the Galaxy award, so it can't be as bad as I've been making out. This copy was donated to

the ISFA by our most respected patron Harry Harrison.. All I can say is that if I wasn't such a naive and simple-minded character, I'd be having serious qualms about his motives.

I notice that the book is on the Dark They Were and Golden Eyed catalogue for this month, so it's going to be available over here pretty soon. I think I'll stick to their other publications. At least they have a cookery column.

Eoin C. Bairread

LETTER

We got this letter recently, so here it is

Mar 3 1980

Dear members of the Irish SF Association,

Greetings from America. I am writing as a representative of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). N3F has members from many countries, but by and large focuses on happenings in the U.S.A. A few things about N3F; membership stays about 300. Dues are \$6.00 per year. Club publications are TIGHTBEAM (containing reviews, sometimes fiction, artwork and letters from members) and The National Fantasy Fan (contains reports on club bureaus and other business type matter). Our bureaus are: APA's (Amateur Press Assns), Artists' Workshops, History of SF, News/Publicity, Round Robin Letters, Short Story Contest (yearly), Teaching SF, Correspondence Bureau, International Bureau and Writers' Exchange. These are only a few. I am a member of the International Bureau. The main reason for my writing is to convey to you a project which we are undertaking; the organisation of an International Science Fiction Correspondence Circle. Dues we hope to keep as low as possible (perhaps \$1 or \$2 per year, money used to compile an annual newsletter respecting the club and listing members). Rules - very few. We want people who like to write letters, people who are willing to actively do this. Makes no difference as to age, race, sex etc., anyone is welcome. The possibilities for an organisation like this are truly exciting: exchange of books, magazines, fanzines among countries; exchange of news, views and ideas; perhaps later on small Round Robin groups, 3-10 persons united by a central interest passing a multiple letter. At any rate, a club, such as the Circle could only benefit organisations such as the Irish SF Association and N3F. On exchange of news alone both groups would benefit. And now, while we are laying the groundwork for the club, persons can get into the circle on the ground floor for FREE! What we hope you will do is to make this information available to your members. You can enter members by sending a list of names and addresses, or by writing individual letters to me. While I am writing, here is some news on SF and F from the U.S.A.

Publishers seem to be tightening their belts in

preparation for an expected recession. Other areas of books are more likely to be hurt than SF, because, as someone said, "A fan will do without lunch to buy a book." In general, cover art has become much better here, even over the last few months. A moderate number of interesting new books due up in coming months :

Joan D. Vinge	The Snow Queen.
Tanith Lee	Sabella("An SF Vampire story")
Fred Pohl	A sequel to Gateway called
	Beyond the Blue Event Horizon
Stephen R.	The Wounded Land
Donaldson	the beginning of the Second
	Chronicles of Thomas Covenant

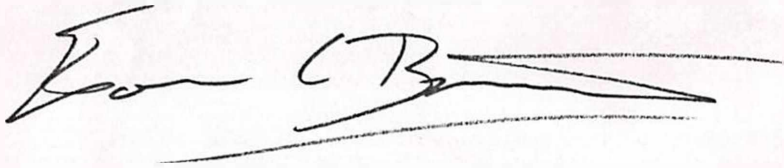
While recessions will hurt many, it is believed that second hand stories will do a brisk business. And while matters may get hard, fandom will survive; if for no other reason - it is a labour of love. Something that unites every fan.

Well, out of room. I hope to hear something from you soon. Thanks for your time and your interest, and best wishes. My address is below.

Sincerely,
Garry E. Davis
Overseas Activity, N3F
114 1/2 Bluff Road,
Columbia, South Carolina,
U.S.A. 29201.

any questions on the syntax or orthography should be addressed to Mr McCarthy, who speaks the language like a native.

Just after the last newsletter, word came that Penni Campbell had died in the U.S.A. Many of us had the pleasure of knowing her, and all who did will miss her vibrant and warm personality. But all readers of science fiction in Ireland will owe her a debt, since, through her courage in opening the Alchemist's Head, and through her many kindnesses to the infant ISFA, she, more than any other, helped develop interest in the genre. To all who were close to her, especially to her sister Moria, we extend our deepest sympathy.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Eoin C. Baird', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eoin C. Baird
Chairman ISFA