

newsletter

The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1979

NUMBER 25

NEWS &C.

- THE CONTINUING SAGA OF COMMITTEE CHANGES (by Jacob Struben)

Win a few, loose a few... As most people are aware by now, Pearse Mooney has rejoined the committee, this time in the post of member responsible for publicity and external relations. It's good to see a founder member back on the committee, and on my part, I hope he will be a valuable and lasting addition.

Also, on the credit side, we have a new chairman. Chairman pro tem Eoin Bairread has been confirmed in this post by the committee, so you know whose ring to kiss at the next meeting.

Unfortunately, there is another resignation coming up. I will be moving to London in December to rejoin my family, amongst other things, and therefore I will obviously not be able to continue serving on the committee nor taking care of publications. My stint in these posts didn't last as long as I had expected, but I enjoyed it (most of the time), and I hope that whoever will take over from me will be able to continue, in his or her own way, the high standards set by John McCarthy over the last few years.

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+++ UPCOMING MEETINGS +++

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+++ Sunday, 28 October 1979 +++

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+++ This happens to be the day that Summer Time ends, so if you want to get to +++

+++ the meeting on time, you'd better check your watch is right. The meeting +++

+++ will be held, as usual, upstairs in the Parliament Inn, Parliament Street, +++

+++ Dublin 2, starting at 7.30 pm. Walter Lee will deliver a paper entitled +++

+++ "The Supernatural in Fantasy and Science Fiction." I wonder if he's going +++

+++ to climb all those stairs... +++

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+++ Writers Workshop +++

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+++ There will be no Writers Workshop meetings in November and December. This +++

+++ is partially to allow people to concentrate on their entries in the Ais- +++

+++ ling Gheal contest (see elsewhere), partially because lately production has +++

+++ been lower than usual. +++

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+++ Sunday, 25 November 1979 +++

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+++ Same place (Parliament Inn), same time (7.30 pm). This will be the first +++

+++ meeting this winter to be honoured by the presence of a patron. We are +++

+++ looking forward to welcoming James and Peggy White once more. What James +++

+++ will be talking about is still a dark secret, but I'm sure it will be as +++

+++ interesting and entertaining as his previous talks. +++

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+++ Sunday, 16 December 1979 +++

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+++ Note that the December meeting will be held at the revised date shown, so +++

+++ as not to clash with the Yuletide celebrations. Parliament Inn, 7.30 pm. +++

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=== Library Loss ===
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=== One of the risks involved in running a library, of the lending variety ===
=== usually, is that some books do get lost. It happens quite often that mem- ===
=== bers forget to return a book after the return deadline expires, and sub- ===
=== sequently lose it. This is particularly unpleasant when the book in ques- ===
=== tion is irreplaceable. I'm afraid such a book has disappeared from the ===
=== library, and we would be very grateful if somebody remembers borrowing ===
=== it, but not returning it, to have a look around the house, flat or garage, ===
=== and return it. ===
=== The book in question is a NASA commemorative booklet about the ===
=== Apollo 11 First Moonlanding mission, in which (and this is what makes it ===
=== so unique) the original photographic prints have been pasted over the ===
=== printed, "dotty" type illustrations. ===
=== Should you come across any other overdue library books while you ===
=== are looking for the above, it wouldn't hurt to return those as well. ===
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- Aisling Gheal and Stargate contests.

What is Stargate in Gaelic? If you know that, or have a better name for the award, please let us know. Repeating briefly, the Stargate Award is the proposed name for the award to be given to that piece of SF or SF-related writing published in Ireland between 1 September 1978 and 31 October 1979. A voting form will be included with the upcoming Stargate, and we would like to have them back by 1 January 1980.

The 2nd Aisling Gheal Award will be given early next year to the author(s) of the best new SF short story. Entry is open to all members of the ISFA, all Irish nationals, and everybody residing in Ireland (32 counties). The story can be in one of our two official languages, Gaelic and English (or indeed in both), and if any of the judges requires a translation, this will be sent to the author(s) for approval. Entries should be sent to the secretary, Brendan Ryder, at the following address:

18 Beech Drive,
Dundrum,
Dublin 16,
Ireland.

There are a number of other rules (I'm afraid that anarchy is no suitable system for running short story contests):

- Length: no more than 20,000 words.
- Entries per person: three (3) including co-authored efforts.
- Pseudonym: you must use one. Your name should not be on the manuscript, but use some form of pseudonym (or e.g. your telephone number). This is to ensure as objective a judging process as possible. Enclose a letter saying what pseudonym you are using.
- Typed: entries should be typed. Handwritten entries will be accepted only under the most extreme emergency circumstances.
- Closing date: 2400 hrs. on 1 February 1980. No entries whatsoever will be accepted after that date.
- Prizes: any person can only win one prize for a short story. However there will be a draw from among the entrants for a year's free membership. The money prizes for the best three short stories last time were respectively £25.00, £15.00 and £10.00. This time round they will not be payable in sterling, but they may well be of a higher amount in IR£ (phunt, whatever...).

Nothing more to be said than may the muse be helpful, and good luck...

- AUGUST MEETING (by Seán Moraghan)

The August meeting was postponed to the second of September so that members who had been attending the Seacon in Brighton could relate their experiences to those who could not attend.

Despite the low turnout, due to the fact that many people were on holiday, the meeting proved nevertheless to be entertaining. Firstly there was an SF book auction conducted by Bobby McLoughlin. The few books donated were auctioned off quickly, and afterwards we were treated to an impromptu talk by Brendan Ryder, David Costello and Bobby McLoughlin about the World Science Fiction Convention held in Brighton. Most of the SF writers were there and one, Arthur C. Clarke, announced there that he would be retiring (!) so as to devote himself to his hobby - scuba diving off the coast of Ceylon (Sri Lanka -ed.).

The trio agreed that there was a lot to see and do at the con, so much so that, as Bobby said, it was impossible to see everything because so much was happening.

Unfortunately the next World Con will be held in Boston, but the British Easter Convention will be in Glasgow in 1980.

(Editorial note: Our patron James White has been appointed toastmaster to the Albacon 80 (i.e. next years Eastercon). If you want to see James, and others, in action, you can contact the following address for more information:

Albacon 80,
Gerry Gillin,
9 Dunnottar Street,
Ruchazie,
GLASGOW G33,
Scotland

If you think you are probably going to attend, it wouldn't hurt to send UK£2.00 for a supporting membership, which can be upgraded to an attending membership at the door during the con at the pre-1 January 1980 price, but only if you pay up those two quid before 1 January 1980. The con will be held on 4-6 April 1980.)

- 1979 HUGO AWARDS (information supplied by Paddy O'Connell)

As is, or will be, clear from other parts of this newsletter, the 1979 Hugos and related awards were given at the Seacon 79 in Brighton in August.

Briefly, these awards are voted on by all the members of the convention, but since the deadline for the return of ballot forms was well before the start of the con, last minute joiners had no chance of voting. This system also resulted in the anomalous situation in one of the categories, as related below (Hugo for Dramatic Presentation). When I say "1979 Hugos", these are the Hugos awarded in 1979 for achievements perpetrated in 1978, and most people would refer to them as 1978 Hugos. Anyway here goes:

Firstly the related awards, which aren't exactly called Hugos:

First Fandom Award: Raymond Z. Gallun (US)

Big Heart Award: Georges H. Gallet (France)

John W. Campbell Award for the Best New Writer: winner Stephen R. Donaldson (for Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever), 2nd James P. Hogan (for Inherit The Stars), 3rd Elizabeth A. Lynn (for We All Have to Go and A Different Light). The other nominees were Cynthia Felice, Barry Longyear and Charles Sheffield.

Gandalf Award for the best Book-length Fantasy: winner Anne McCaffrey's White Dragon, 2nd Roger Zelazny's Courts of Chaos, 3rd Katherine Kurtz's Saint Camber. The other nominees were Gloriana by Michael Moorcock, who withdrew the book from the balloting, and The Stand by Stephen King.

Our, that is to say the ISFA's, congratulations go to Anne McCaffrey for winning this award.

Gandalf Grand Master Award: winner Ursula K. LeGuin, 2nd Roger Zelazny, 3rd Ray Bradbury. Also nominated were Jack Vance and Michael Moorcock, the latter withdrew his name from the balloting.

The Hugos were awarded as follows:

- Novel: winner - Dreamsnake by Vonda N. McIntyre
2nd - The White Dragon by Anne McCaffrey
3rd - The Faded Sun: Kesrith by C.J. Cherryh
also - Blind Voices by Tom Reamy and Up the Walls of the World by James Tiptree Jr. (the latter was withdrawn from the ballot).
Note that four of the five nominees for this, the main Hugo, as far as prestige goes, were women. What better sign that SF is alive and well....?
- Novella: winner - The Persistence of Vision by John Varley
2nd - Fireship by Joan D. Vinge
3rd - The Watched by Christopher Priest
also - Enemies of the System by Brian W. Aldiss and Seven American Nights by Gene Wolfe.
- Novellette: winner - "Hunter's Moon" by Poul Anderson
2nd - "Mikal's Songbird" by Orson Scott Card
3rd - "The Man who had No Idea" by Thomas M. Disch
also - "The Barbie Murders" by John Varley and "Devil You Don't Know" by Dean Ing.
- Short Story: winner - "Cassandra" by C.J. Cherryh
2nd - "Count the Clock that Tells the Time" by Harlan Ellison
3rd - "View from a Height" by Joan D. Vinge
also - "The Very Slow Time Machine" by Ian Watson and "Stone" by Edward Bryant.
- Dramatic Presentation: winner - Superman (cinema)
2nd - The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy (radio)
3rd - Watership Down (cinema)
also - The Lord of the Rings (cinema) and The Invasion of the Body Snatchers (cinema).
Judging by the loudest and longest applause of the evening, i.e. that which greeted the mentioning of The Hitch-Hiker's Guide as a nominee, and the heckling that followed the announcement of the winner, Douglas Adams' BBC radio play should have won. The reason why it didn't was that by the deadline for the return of balloting forms, most American and other non-British members of the con hadn't heard it yet. We would also like to note that a very sympathetic Christopher Reed, who accepted the Hugo for Superman, took the entire affair in extremely good grace, and acknowledged that The Hitch-Hiker's Guide was well worth of the support it evidently enjoyed.
- Professional Editor: winner - Ben Bova (for Analog (his 5th!!) and Omni)
2nd - Edward L. Ferman (for Fantasy and Science Fiction)
3rd - George Scithers (for Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine)
also - James Baen (for Ace/Destinies) and Terry Carr (for Universe and Year's Best SF)
- Professional Artist: winner - Vincent di Fate
2nd - Michael Whelan
3rd - Boris Vallejo
also - Stephen Fabian and David Hardy
- Fanzine: winner - Science Fiction Review (ed. Richard E. Geis)
2nd - Maya (ed. Rob Jackson)
also - Mota (ed. Terry Hughes), Twll-ddu (ed. Dave Langford) and Janus (ed. Janice Bogstad and Jeanne Gomoll)

Fan Writer: winner - Bob Shaw (The Menace from Belfast - a sample of his writing can be found elsewhere in this newsletter)
2nd - Richard E. Geis
also - Leroy Kettle, Dave Langford and D. West.

Fan Artist: winner - Bill Rotsler
2nd - Jim Barker
3rd - Alexis Gilliland
also - Harry Bell and Stu Shiffman

Our congratulations go to all winners, and especially our patron Anne McCaffrey for the excellent performance of her The White Dragon, and the other Irish winner, Bob Shaw, who, by the way, presided over the ceremonies in his function of toastmaster to the con, and very well he did it, so. Jocular shouts of "fixed!" were heard.

- SEPTEMBER MEETING (information supplied by Paddy O'Connell)

At this meeting, held on 30 September, Brendan Ryder held a brief talk about the history of Star Trek, which surely must be the best known TV series using the SF medium, and the one with the most dedicated band of followers (Trekkies), of the present day. Illustrative material was also present.

The mainstay of the meeting was another one of Paddy O'Connell's inimitable SF quizzes, which follows in its entirety. By the way, who won? (I wasn't there, you see - ed.)

Questions:

1. Who coined the term robot?
2. In whose novel did the detective Daneel Olivaw appear?
3. What unusual power source did the chief plotter's robot have in Harry Harrison's Stainless Steel Rat ?
4. What was the name of the humanoid robot in Star Wars ?
5. Who was the author of The Cyberiad ?
6. What function did robots perform to solve the Midas Plague in a novel of the same name by Frederik Pohl?
7. Who ran from the Sandmen in the film and book ... 's Run ?
8. What is the shape of Dr. Who's time machine?
9. Who was the host of the Hugo award winning series "The Twilight Zone" ?
10. What Hugo award winning series was produced by Gene Roddenberry?
11. Who directed 2001, A Space Odyssey ?
12. What was the name of the film made from the book Flowers for Algernon ?
13. Name or describe the rôles of at least two of the characters played by Peter Sellers in the film Dr. Strangelove.
14. Name two editors who had SF awards named after them.
15. Who made his first appearance as an editor in the magazine Science and Invention ?
16. What famous American editor was completely agoraphobic and did most of his business by telephone?
17. Who edited Dangerous Visions?
18. Who took over from E.J. Carnell as editor of New Worlds ?
19. What was the name of the successor magazine of Science Fantasy ?
20. What was the name of the film made from Harry Harrison's novel Make Room! Make Room! ?
21. In what series of novels by Harry Harrison did Jason din Alt, Meta and Kerk appear?
22. What was the Stainless Steel Rat's middle name?
23. What was the name of the book on which Harry Harrison recently collaborated with Gordon Dickson?
24. Where was the decision made at a meeting of two races in a book by Anne McCaffrey?
25. What was a person called who returned from the dead in a book of the same name by Anne McCaffrey?
26. What was the name of the short story which started the Dragon series?

27. What was unusual about Gaxom's Dragons?
 28. What was the name of either the doctor hero or the empathic insectoid in Hospital Station by James White?
 29. What was unusual about the people who communicated with ETs in The Watch Below?
 30. Name at least one of Adzeal's poker partners.
- Tie breaker questions:
- a. Who played the rôle of the most prominent android in the film Westworld ?
 - b. Who played the lead in the film Silent Running ?
 - c. Who is the current editor of Analog ?
 - d. What was the hero's surname in A Transatlantic Tunnel Hurrah ?

Answers:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Karel Capek, in <u>RUR</u> | 2. Isaac Asimov |
| 3. Coal burning | 4. C3PO |
| 5. Stanislaw Lem | 6. They consumed surplus products. |
| 7. Logan | 8. A police telephone box |
| 9. Ron Serling | 10. <u>Star Trek</u> |
| 11. Stanley Kubrick | 12. <u>Charlie</u> |
| 13. a) US President, b) Dr. Strangelove, c) <u>US General</u> , (d) RAF Wing Commander -ed.) | |
| 14. a) Hugo Gernsback, b) John W. Campbell jr | |
| 15. Hugo Gernsback | 16. Horace Gold |
| 17. Harlan Ellison | 18. Michael Moorcock |
| 19. <u>Impulse</u> | 20. <u>Soylent Green</u> |
| 21. <u>The Deathworld Series</u> | 22. Bolivar (James B. DiGriz) |
| 23. <u>Lifboat</u> | 24. Doona (<u>Decision at Doona</u>) |
| 25. Restoree | 26. "Weyr Search" |
| 27. It was white and small. | 28. a) Conway, b) Priscilla |
| 29. They lived in a submarine. | 30. Muddlehead, David Falkayn, Chee Ian |
| a. Yul Brynner | b. Bruce Dern |
| c. Stanley Schmidt | d. Washington |

FLASHBACK

Continuing our series of reviews of old and at the moment unobtainable books (except if you're lucky). If you have any well-loved-but-neglected-by-the-publishers books, we are looking forward to publishing your review of it.

The Winds of Time by Chad Oliver (Pocket Books, 1959, 25¢)

This unpretentious book is a marvel of strong characterisations, cleverly worked flashbacks (! -ed.), and exciting adventure. It concerns the wreck of an alien space ship in Siberia around 13,000 BC. Most of the all-male crew, which is human to nine decimals, survives and migrates to Colorado by helicopter, where they put themselves to sleep for 15,000 years in the hope of returning to their home world of Lortas.

The background of the story is that Lortas was alone in the Galaxy able to survive the transition period between the discovery of nuclear weapons and that of a workable FTL drive. The crew of the ship were engaged in a survey to try to find another race that has also succeeded, and they have already visited many planets when they arrive on Earth. The crew consist of the usual newsman, priest, playboy, and so on, but the use of stereotypes is minimal. You get a real flavour for each individual without any sense of forcing.

Coincidentally, when the sleepers start waking, there is a medical doctor taking refuge in their cave when a storm spoils a day of fishing. He is captured, but in spite of his rapid acceptance of the Lortans, he has to tell them they woke too early. It is hinted that if their presence on Earth were to become known to the authorities, the Lortans would probably be coerced into working on armaments. An inferior author would probably have let the book degenerate into such a solution,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16.

CONMANIA

The first in an occasional series of goodies from the many SF fan conventions held all over the world each year. And how better to start than with a speech delivered by an Irish author at this year's world wide gathering.

Bob Shaw needs little introduction as one of the outstanding authors in the field on this side of the Atlantic, but it is perhaps less well known in this country that he is active in fandom as well. This landed him in the post of Toastmaster at Seacon '79, the world convention held in Brighton, England, from August 23rd to 27th. Fortunately, he managed to take an hour off from his strenuous tasks (in the bar) to deliver the following Serious Scientific Lecture.

We are very grateful to Mr. Shaw for kindly supplying us with a copy of his Lecture for publication. So here goes:

EAU DE CLONE Bizarre Biological Revelations

by Bob Shaw

Welcome to yet another of my Serious Scientific Talks -- all part of the United Nations "Education Through Suffering" programme -- in which this year, for a change, I'm going to forget about the hard sciences -- like astronomy, astronautics and computation of the bar bills in this hotel -- and concentrate on the life sciences. I'm doing this partly to show off my versatility, partly because I've made some astonishing new discoveries in the field of biology, but mainly because I can't think up any more good Star Trek jokes.

It's on the TV again, you know. "Space, the final frontier..." What's final about it? -- that's what I'd like to know. It keeps coming back again and again -- like a Brian Burgess pork pie -- each time looking a bit more plastic than the time before. Perhaps I've been mishearing that opening voice-over. Perhaps it says, "Space, the vinyl frontier..." My kids have watched some episodes so many times that they're getting Spocks before their eyes. As I have said, as I have just demonstrated, I can't think up any more good jokes about Star Trek, and I don't want to descend to things like mentioning my favourite episode -- the one in which Kirk loses his ship and is sacked for his lack of Enterprise. Anybody who could make a joke like that deserves to go to the chair, and the governor of my local prison is so sadistic that he puts a whoopee cushion on the electric chair...

What on earth, some of you must be saying, has all this got to do with with clones?

Good question! This year I'm determined not to wander away from the point. Last year a woman in the audience got so angry with my vacillations that she stabbed me in the arm with her umbrella and left a permanent scar. That's it there -- my vacillation mark -- so I'm not going to start nattering about the room party I was at last night. It was a weird sort of party, anyway. I thought they were only kidding when they told me that all the guests had to give a pint of blood, and I was amazed that anybody should even consider pumping some of my blood into a defenceless sick person. On Thursday there was so much alcohol in it that the hotel charged me corkage just to check in. Six of my corpuscles are appearing in court next week for being drunk and disorderly. On a more serious note about alcohol, let me acknowledge that it is possible to take too much of the stuff. A film I saw on TV last week has prompted me to change my drinking habits. It was The Hunchback of Notre Dame, and when I saw him swinging around on the end of that that rope chanting, "The Bells made me deaf," I decided to switch over to Johnny Walker. I'm told they're already doing that in the schools -- because of the shortage of Teachers...

Clones? I'm coming to those, madam -- just be patient. I wouldn't want to fool around too much in front of such a large and distinguished audience... which reminds me that some of you may have missed the introduction of notables at the beginning of the convention. For those of you who are feeling a bit lost and are wondering who everybody is I'll point out some of the more interesting science fiction personalities for your benefit. There's one! And there's another one! And there's another one over there...

Okay, okay -- clones. Clones -- as some of you may already know -- is a

small town on the border between Northern Ireland and Eire. It's absolutely true -- check it out on any map if you don't believe me. Well, not any map -- a map of Ireland would be best. I visited Clones quite a number of times when I was a child, and was impressed by its peacefulness, stillness and utter tranquillity -- which is another way of saying it's a bloody boring place to be in. Most Irish towns and villages are like that, but Clones is a particularly bad case -- the most exciting event of the year is the annual sweepstake in which they try to guess whether or not Easter is going to fall at a week-end. I entered it myself one time, but it was only because -- being a country music fan -- I rather fancied the first prize, which was a life-sized rubber statue of Dolly Parton filled with Irish whisky.

All this explains why, some years ago, I got quite a surprise when I was accosted by James White. It was in Belfast and I was out walking, strolling, just putting one foot in front of the other -- nothing too fancy -- when Jim came dashing up to me. "Bob," he said, "you'll never guess what all the ASTOUNDING authors are writing about now."

"Surprise me," I said.

"Clones," he said.

I was surprised, all right. My God, I thought, Campbell must be desperate. The Dean Drive, Dianetics, and now Clones.

"Jim," I said patiently, "there isn't a science fiction writer in the world -- not even Captain S.P. Meek -- who could produce a good story about Clones. I mean, what would you write about the place?"

He blinked at me. "It isn't the place -- it's a term in biology."

I blinked back at him, wondering if this was some devious way of getting revenge on me over a little literary mishap which had occurred previously. In the early part of his career Jim spent a number of years working in the tailoring department of a large store. When he first started there it had old-fashioned mahogany counters, then they changed them to Formica counters, and finally switched to very trendy glass counters. Jim was very intrigued by the last sort and he formulated great plans to write a story about them -- called "Clothes Counters of the Third Kind". I put him off it by explaining that a story with a silly title like that was doomed to abject failure, so he gave up the idea. And ever since the runaway success of a certain notorious film, which I have dubbed The Incredible Shrinking Saucer... (Did you notice how when the ship came up behind the mountain it was about two miles wide, and when it reached the runway it was down to about the size of a football field? Perhaps it was the damp that did it.) ...I have sensed a certain coldness in Jim's manner. It's nothing I can put my finger on -- just something about the way he keeps wrenching the elevator doors open for me when the elevator isn't there.

"You can't write SF stories about soppy things like biology," I said stoutly.

"What would George O. Smith think?"

"It's the latest craze," he said. "Bob, what do you think the world's going to be like in the 21st Century? Try to visualise how different it will be, all the fantastic changes that will have taken place."

"Well," I said, putting my superb creative imagination to work, "Petrocelli might have finished building his house."

"That's not what I mean," Jim said.

I thought again. "I've got it! Last Dangerous Visions will be out!"

"Don't be stupid," he said severely.

"I know," I said. "Isaac Asimov has had his hundredth birthday and he's sent a telegram to the Queen."

Jim shook his head. "What's going to happen -- according to all these stories -- is that everybody will be going around cloning. Everybody will be producing copies of themselves."

"So what's new?" I replied, giving him my best evil leer. "A couple of the guys I used to work with..."

"It will be done asexually," he cut in. "By cell manipulation. Just think of it! Instead of only one Ted Tubb there could be a dozen of them -- all churning out Dumarest stories."

"I thought there already was," I said weakly, wrestling with this new concept.

It had become obvious to me that Jim had done something which is quite unforgivable in a rival science fiction writer -- he had actually learned some science. Once that sort of thing creeps into the profession there's no telling where it could end. However, I decided that if he could cheat I could cheat, so I went off and got a job working for a doctor so that I could learn all about cells and DNA and stuff like that.

I didn't hold the job long, though -- it was too embarrassing every time I tried to take a day off on the sick. Have you ever thought how awkward it is for anybody who works for a doctor, wants the day off and telephones the office to say he's sick? Instead of saying something like, "Get better soon," your boss says, "Oh? What symptoms have you got?" Or, worse still, he says, "You'd better come round to the surgery," -- which defeats the whole idea!

Anyway, I decided to fall back on my own resources, which meant consulting my extensive reference library. I went through some of the books -- Teach Yourself Embalming ; The Origin of Charles Darwin -- by Galen ; Sex Changes in Poultry -- by Willy Ley ; Painless Childbirth -- by Pangborn ; Against the Fall of Night -- by Mrs. Knight ; Mating in Small Birds -- J.J. Coupling ; The Dysentery Plague (known in this country as Logan's Run) -- by Kurt Vonnegut. You can tell a lot about a person by the books he has on his shelves, can't you?

To tell you the truth, I didn't glean much from my studies. Some of the things written by ordinary scientists are totally unbelievable. One of the worst culprits is that Albert Einstein -- you know, the man who tried to convince people that E equals Marylebone Cricket Club. I rang the MCC and they denied the whole thing. I first saw through Einstein when he got into that dreadful muddle over the twins paradox. You know the set-up -- one twin goes away for a while on a high-speed flight and when he returns he's younger than the twin who stayed at home. Einstein said that was because time passed more slowly for the traveller. How stupid! He was completely misinterpreting the evidence! Just look at the real facts. One twin goes gallivanting off on a kind of Super-Concorde, relaxing, enjoying himself, and while he's off having a good time who's doing all the work, looking after the house, struggling to pay the bills? His brother is, that's who! -- and the strain of it puts years on him. It's no wonder the other lazy so-and-so looks younger when he gets back. Instead of covering up for him by inventing ridiculous theories, Einstein should have given him a good ticking-off and told him to show more consideration.

But if you think that's bad you should read some of the stuff they put in biology books. My left ear is slightly bigger than the right, and my brother's left ear is slightly bigger than his right. According to the biology books it's all to do with things called genes and chromosomes which spend all their time dropping acid and sending messages to each other -- whereas the real reason is that at school we both had the same sadistic teacher who kept dragging us up to the blackboard by our left ears.

It wasn't long before I decided that biologists were no better informed than physicists, and that it was time for me to do some original research. My main concern was to find out if work on cloning was actually going on in secret somewhere -- so how would I start? Did I know some place where everybody looked alike? Apart from the BSFA committee room, that is. Did I know any apparently normal twins with give-away names like Pete and Repete? Kate and Duplikate? No, I didn't, but the idea of following clues in names appealed to me, partly because it didn't involve any real work, partly because it gave me the chance to make more dreadful puns. (I tried some of them on Jim Blish once, and he ran away screaming; then I tried some on my agent, Les Flood, and he ran away screaming -- which shows that some of my puns are more than Blish and Flood can stand.)

Intrigued by this new line of research I mulled it over and found my thoughts coming back to their original starting point -- the town of Clones. Perhaps the name was no coincidence. Could it be that, as in so many other fields, Ireland had been away ahead of the rest of the world? Was it possible that cloning had been worked on for so long over there that it was reflected in the very place names?

My tongue went dry with excitement, so I bathed it in a mild solution of alcohol and started thinking of all the other Irish place names which supported

the theory. There was Cloneen -- an obvious corruption of cloning; Clonard -- clone hard; Clonmel -- where they must have tried to clone somebody called Mel; and Clonakilty -- where, quite obviously, they must have tried to clone a Scotsman. And, finally, there was the name of Ireland's capital city -- Dublin!

Convinced I had stumbled on to something important, I decided to go to Dublin to investigate. I jumped on a boat and very soon was steaming up the harbour into Leningrad. The Russians objected to me steaming up their harbour -- they have awful problems with condensation over there -- so they threw me out. This time I made sure I got on an Irish boat, and very soon was steaming up the River Liffey into Dublin. (I always think Liffey is a terrible name for a river -- it sounds too much like one of those euphemisms for toilet.) But when I got off the boat I suddenly realised I had little idea what to do next. The only other lead I had was my realisation that cloning would cost a great deal of money, so I decided to make a bold frontal attack by selecting the most expensive-looking office block I could find and just barging in.

I picked out a real plushy place -- it was the European office of the Ultimate Publishing Company -- and sauntered up to the receptionist, who looked like a film star. It wasn't that she was very pretty, or anything like that -- it was just that her face was black with dirt, except for a little round patch on each cheek and in the centre of her forehead. Movie stars don't know how to wash their faces, you know. I see them on TV all the time, trying out new soaps, and all they do is rub a few suds on their cheeks and foreheads. It's no wonder the whole industry has been declining since The Three Stooges retired.

Anyway, I gave this girl a piercing stare and, just to throw her off her guard, casually crooned a bit of a song -- "Bring on the Clones". The ploy seemed to be effective, because she gave me a look in which I detected some degree of consternation. I decided to press home my advantage.

I gave her a confident smile and said, "I want to arrange to have myself cloned."

Her powers of recovery must have been phenomenal, because she smiled back and said, "The clone arranger isn't in -- you'll have to speak to Tonto."

I backed away from her -- it isn't every day I meet somebody whose puns are worse than mine -- and hurried out of the building. Depressed and defeated, I went into the nearest bar and ordered myself a Poteen Sunrise. That's a bit like a Tequila Sunrise, except that the sun doesn't come up -- you go down. After a couple of these I began to see there was only one way I could progress further, and that was by consulting my old adversary -- the famous German-Irish writer, researcher, explorer and wheelbarrow mechanic -- Von Donegan.

The only address I had for him was that of his club, a modest and unpretentious little outfit known as the Illustrious Glorious Exalted Shining Ones, which had its headquarters above a used coffin shop in Abbatoir Lane. It was evening by the time I got there and the doorman gave me a cold stare when I told him I wanted to talk to Von.

"Von?" he said haughtily. "Show more respect, you oaf. The boss's full title is Master of the Galaxy and Ultimate Controller and Supreme Dictator of all of Space, Time and Infinity."

"Sorry," I said, "can I speak to the Master of the Galaxy and Ultimate Controller and Supreme Dictator of all of Space, Time and Infinity?"

"He isn't here tonight," he said. "His wife made him stay home and wash the dishes."

"Can you tell me his home address?"

"Sorry. It would be more than my job is worth."

"I'll give you this first edition of Bill the Galactic Hero -- it's one of the very rare unautographed copies."

"That's more than my job's worth, as well," he said, snatching the book. He gave me an address near the Guinness brewery and I hurried away with a mounting sense of excitement. You've got to do that in these scientific quest stories, haven't you? If you can't do a decent mounting sense of excitement -- or, at the very least, a sudden quickening of interest -- you'd be better off in some other

line of business. I can recommend thermometer filling as a steady job, and it's nice because in the summertime, when the heat slows you down, nobody notices you're not working as hard because the mercury has got bigger and you can get away with putting less of it in. Another job I would like is working on the escalators on the London Underground. I'd like to be the man who makes sure the handrail always goes a little slower or a little faster than the actual stairway. My wife is very nervous on the escalator and she clutches that handrail like crazy, which makes it very difficult to hold a long conversation with her. By the time we get to the end she's either staring up at the ceiling or her nose is almost touching the floor. I'm saying, "It's time to get off now, dear. Dear? Dear? Where has she gone to...?" Another thing I like about the London escalators are those signs that say: DOGS MUST BE CARRIED. I just ignore them and jump on the escalator whether I've got a dog or not, and I get away with it every time.

But I mustn't stray away from the subject...

I now had to take a bus to Von Donegan's place on the other side of the city, but I was desperately short of ready cash, so I decided to just run along behind the bus and save tennence. Then I got a better idea -- I ran along behind a taxi and saved two quid. Finally I reached Von's house, a rather sinister-looking place called "Sweet Chariot". (The name reminded me of my Uncle Fred, the boxer, who was known as Sweet Chariot because he was always swinging low.) As I said, the house was an eerie sort of place right in the shadow of the Guinness brewery, and I felt quite nervous as I approached it in the growing darkness. My mood wasn't helped by the thick, dank fog that was pressing against the windows -- especially as it was a perfectly clear night outside the house.

I sneaked up to a lighted window and looked in, and saw something so dreadful, so obscene, that I had to repress a moan of dismay. Von Donegan was in there, and he had hundreds of pints of Guinness sitting on a huge table, and he was busily pouring them down a sink! Gallons of it were disappearing down the plug every minute. I hadn't seen booze disappear so fast since I attended the Noreascon in 81 bidding party. At last I could stand the hideous spectacle no longer, so I smashed the window in with a rolled-up copy of Literary Highlights From Perry Rhodan, and shouted, "Stop that, you swine! Is nothing sacred?"

He turned, saw me at the window and reeled back, his face contorted with shock -- thus proving he had a guilty conscience. "Shaw," he gasped. "What are you doing here? I thought you were back in Stan Laurel's home in Ulverston organising a new branch of the Sons of the Desert."

"I decided to give them the Gobi," I said wittily. "More to the point -- what are you doing?"

His eyes shuttled briefly -- and anybody who has read any of my books will tell you that's a sign somebody is under stress -- and he said, "It's a scientific experiment, Bob. One you would approve of. You know that when water swirls down a plug hole in the northern hemisphere it always goes in a clockwise direction -- well, I wanted to see if the same thing would apply to Guinness."

I sniffed disbelievingly. "And does it go clockwise?"

"Definitely not," he said. "The clock is up there on the wall and the Guinness is going the other way."

"You're not fooling me for a minute," I said. "What you're talking about is the Coriolanus force and nobody is interested in that since I proved it's that that makes supermarket trolleys try to go in circles when you push them." I clambered in through the window and, following up a hunch, said, "What do you know about clones?"

"It's a nice place to live," he said, "but I wouldn't like to go there for a holiday."

"I'll do the jokes," I snarled, grabbing him by the throat. "You know I meant artificially produced human beings."

He cringed. "I've never met any officers of the Science Fiction Writers of America."

"Cut it out," I said. "I'm talking about biological clones."

"Oh, those! Well, I've heard they're very anaemic."

"Really?"

"Yes. You know the old saying -- you can't get blood out of a clone."

"Okay," I gritted. "You asked for this." I whipped out my copy of the Sam Moscovitz Joke Book and began to read aloud from it. Von Donegan endured it for as long as was humanly possible -- about twelve nanoseconds -- then broke down.

"Why are you doing this to me? What do you want?"

"The truth about cloning in Ireland," I said. "There's something going on and I want to know what it is."

His shoulders slumped. "All right, all right. If you know anything about Irish history you'll have heard of the Great Potato Famine."

I was unimpressed. "So a few potatoes went hungry."

He winced. "The point is that for years now the population of Ireland has been very depressed."

"You mean," I said, "even before Harry Harrison and Anne McCaffrey moved in?"

He winced again. "The Irish Government asked me if I could do anything about the low population, and -- as I'm a happily married man..."

"I'd forgotten you got married," I interrupted. "Has the union been blessed?"

"Yes," he said. "We haven't got any children. Anyway, I decided the only thing I could do to increase the population would be to clone as many people as I could, so I started working on biology."

"It's a really weird subject, isn't it?" I said. "When I tried it I had to cut up so many frogs I came down with a skin disease called Kermititis. And all those words beginning with z..."

"Oh, I never bother with actually studying a subject," Von Donegan said airily. "I've found I can write my books better by making the stuff up as I go along -- I call it original research -- and I did the same thing with cloning."

"And did you solve the problem?" I prompted, sensing that the end of my quest was near.

"Nothing to it," he replied. "The key to the whole business is that we are a carbon-based life form -- so if we are to produce a copy of a human being it will be a carbon copy."

"That makes sense," I said, a great light dawning in my mind. This was the sort of biology I could understand.

"I realised that all I had to do was keep pumping carbon into people and eventually all the molecules in their bodies will acquire duplicates and they'll divide up into carbon copies of themselves."

"That's brilliant," I breathed. "You should write the whole thing up for Omni, or perhaps even Weekend Revelle. But wait! Where can you get all the carbon from? And how could you get people to swallow it?"

"That's the beauty of my system," he said fervently. "I've got this deal with Mike Moorcock whereby he sends me all his used carbons and typewriter ribbons -- a container-load of them comes over every week on the ferry -- and all I do is put them in the blender with some water. That's the way they come out." He pointed at the glasses of what I had mistaken for Guinness.

I nodded, almost speechless with admiration. "But what's that whitish froth on top?"

"I think sometimes Mike accidentally leaves a novel or two in among the carbons." An anxious note crept into Von Donegan's voice. "Do you think they could be injurious to the health?"

"Not in that form," I said reassuringly, my gaze drifting towards the sink. "I take it that the waste pipe from your sink is connected up to the vats in the brewery."

He nodded. "Quite right! You know, you're almost as smart as I am."

I blushed prettily. "Tell me, Von, have you any actual evidence that your cloning system is working?"

"Well," he said, "there's the Nolan Sisters, and I've noticed that people who drink a lot of Guinness are getting bulkier and bulkier. It's only a matter of time before I get word they've gone fission."

Sensing he was about to start making puns, I took my leave of him and came straight to Brighton to make my findings known to the world at large. The thing Von Donegan has overlooked, you see, is that Guinness is exported to many countries, and his special brew -- Eau de Clone, as I call it -- may be on the point of triggering a general population explosion. Not all bottles of Guinness are carbonated, of course, and most of the ones that have the code words "Double X" on the label. What I've done, in order to save the world, is to set up a small team of volunteers -- all of them, from Peter Roberts on down, connoisseurs of stout -- who are prepared to check out the world's entire supply of Double X Guinness.

It's a mission of extreme urgency, so -- if you will excuse me -- I think I'd better get back to it...

REVIEWS

Vonda N. McIntyre, Dreamsnake (Pan, 1979, 95p + VAT and fringe benefits)
WINNER OF THE 1979 HUGO AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL

And deservedly so. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, not having read any of the other nominees yet (see elsewhere in this newsletter), but I think Dreamsnake thoroughly deserved the Hugo its author received in Brighton in August, as well as a 1978 Nebula, because it is a very good book.

Whether it's a novel is a matter open for discussion, although it qualifies by the SF publishers' standard, which is based only on length. And in spite of its length of 287½ pp. (in this edition), it is not a very complex novel as far as plot or character development of the main character is concerned.

Let's face it, Dreamsnake isn't much more than an SF adventure story, but it is an unusual one, and it's beautifully done. It is unusual (a.o.) in that it is pure SF, but owes nothing to space opera (which some of us don't consider to be SF anyway), and a lot to Sword & Sorcery/Fantasy (which some of us don't consider to be SF either), especially in plot and atmosphere, but also somewhat in the physical setting. I won't go to any lengths to prove this thesis, as you will see what I mean when you read the book.

The story tells of the (mis-)adventures of a young healer in a post-nuclear-war world, who is called Snake. She practices medicine with the aid of three snakes: an albino cobra, a diamondback rattler, and rarest of the three, a small harmless creature called a dreamsnake. She ventures out of her mountain homeland to visit the desert people who haven't seen a healer for generations, and while preparing the cobra for an operation, she leaves the dreamsnake with her young patient, unaware of the terror the tribe has for snakes. The boy's younger father kills the dreamsnake. Since the dreamsnake is necessary for one of her tasks as a healer, to ease the pain of dying people, Snake must either obtain a new dreamsnake or go back to the healer's station in the hope a dreamsnake will be available for her, if she wants to continue working as a healer.

From here on the story takes on the unmistakable form of a quest, though not the usual type of quest so well known from Germanic sagas, Arthurian romances and modern Sword and Sorcery, where the quest serves as an excuse for masculine escapades and generally breaking the cultural code of behaviour. Her quest is perfectly consistent with her world, which is a consistently, rationally solid world, quite unlike the shifty (or magical, if you prefer). In fact, it is through the relation of her quest, and the subsidiary ones of Arevin, a desert tribesman who has come to love Snake, and of Snake's anonymous pursuer, a dreamsnake "venom" addict, that the author is able to inform the reader bit by bit what this future world is like, without turning the book into another boring travelogue of the future. That type of book at any rate usually describes a world much closer to our own than Snake's is.

Neither is Snake's world the pseudo-feudal world of standard Sword and Sorcery, although, e.g. by the level of technology, it could initially be mistaken for such. As more information about this world is revealed, it takes on its own unique character.

The strengths of the book lie in the able creation of a believable, complex world, many details of which are only glimpsed, in the maintenance of the pace,

which ensures that the novel rarely flags as an adventure story, and, very importantly, in the strength of the creation of the main character, Snake. This is done with such skill that Snake takes on the same degree of reality, if not more, as her world. In fact I can imagine her only as a more hardened, tanned, and perhaps slightly less pretty version of the author herself. What this character perhaps lacks is development after it has been established, which is supposed to be an element of the novel (taken as a genre), but I don't see it as a flaw in this case, or necessarily so in any case. Also it is quite possible Snake's character develops so subtly that I didn't notice it on first reading. Never mind, I'll read it again, and so will you.

Reviewed by Jacob Struben

Lloyd Biggle, Jr., The light that never was (DAW, 1972)

It is somewhat of a shame that this entertaining book will probably not be reprinted here. It was one of the experimental novels published under the DAW label in the late 60's and early 70's. The experiment, by the way, was not in publishing novels of the New Wave such as Space War Blues (could the reviewer be writing of the US rip-off of the UK New Wave? -ed.) -- rather it was to sell passable novels by obscure authors. Most of the authors thoroughly deserved their obscurity, but this is not the case with Lloyd Biggle. How he got roped into the DAW stable must remain a mystery. But this book has surely escaped the notice of UK publishers as a result of being associated with the usual mediocrity that was DAW.

The novel concerns a growing intolerance in a human dominated galaxy for non-human intelligent races. The action centers on the world of Donovan, which happens to have no native intelligent species. Donovan makes its living by the tourist trade and by catering to ambitious young painters. Long before the period of the story, Donovan gained a reputation as a world of art, and ever since then aspiring artists have been flocking to study and paint in the creative atmosphere which came to develop. The tourists come to watch the painters. So much for background.

Into what is essentially an idyllic setting comes a philanthropist with a shipload of non-human refugees which escaped a massacre on their native world by the skin of their...well, they don't have any, but you get the idea. The major character, Donovan's chief of security, tries to prevent the scattered violence which has been spreading through the sector from affecting either his world or the newly arrived refugees.

All this takes place against a background of conspiracies, art dealings, and so on, which are fairly professionally handled. Nevertheless, the book has a few faults worthy of mention. First, there are too many viewpoint characters. Second, there are too many characters. Third, there is too much shifting of location -- a map would have been helpful, especially since some place names change during the course of the novel. Fourth, the resolution of the problems is far too weak for the strength of the book.

What makes the book so enjoyable, in spite of the above flaws? There is a good bit of subtle humour, always a Biggle trademark. The characterisations are not as strong as one might like, but the characters are all very convincingly done. Let me elaborate on this: many of the characters have similar backgrounds, so you would quite properly expect them to have similar characters. They do. But the fact of the matter is that while they are all believable, one often has a hard time distinguishing the people from one another. From the differences that are clear (if you concentrate), though, one gets a variety of views about the world and culture of Donovan. The total picture is remarkably entertaining and well worth reading. If you can find a copy, this book should not be kissed.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

Barry Malzberg, Guernica Night (NEL, 1979)

Well, this time Barry Malzberg did not impress me, which is unfortunate since I had grown to like him after experiencing The Falling Astronauts and Beyond Apollo.

Malzberg here has tried to repeat the formula used in his previous novels, a well defined description of paranoia and its effects on a central character around whom everything revolves.

In this case, Sid lives in a world where suicide, labelled "The Final Trip", is the preoccupation of most of the world population. He tries to save Jag, a member of his group, from taking the Final Trip (for reasons which aren't made clear), and book is dragged out without any problems being solved.

Sid is a surprisingly weak central character and this perhaps is to the detriment of the whole book. In attempting to describe an increasingly tense atmosphere Malzberg fails, because the feelings experienced by Sid are relatively sane, but unclear.

The plot is also undefined and seems to be nonexistent. Sid wanders through events throughout the book. And that's it. A series of events, nothing more.

This book is a poor attempt at regaining the marvellous sense of urgency in previous novels (though lacking here). It is a half-hearted effort of writing a novel; Malzberg on an off-day.

Very disappointing.

Reviewed by Seán Moraghan

Garry Kilworth, In Solitary (Penguin, 1979, 75p+VAT etc.)

I don't know whether it was a mistake or not, but before I began this book I read the back cover. This features a blurb from a well known Irish Sunday newspaper saying it was a very good book. This tended to bias me against poor Garry and his unfortunate book, and it was some time before the excellence of the book made its effect. It really is a grand book - a fine read by a new English author. After I had finished the book I read the publisher's blurb, where I found out that Garry Kilworth had won the 1974 Sunday Times/Gollancz Science Fiction Prize - a first class commendation for any author.

The story is way above normal in one particular area. None of the characters is treated less than sympathetically, and this includes aliens who have kept the earth in subjugation for generations. The number of writers who can do this is small enough for a newcomer to be most welcome.

The story itself is fairly straightforward, enhanced by a wide knowledge of, and obvious love for, the islands of the Pacific. This gives an extra fillip to what would, even without it, be a fine book. I might finish by quoting the second half of that blurb from an Irish paper: "an auspicious debut by a fine new writer."

Reviewed by Eoin Bairead

Douglas Adams, The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy (Pan, 1979, 80p+VAT etc.)

In an ad, placed by Pan in the Season 79 program book, two books are promoted: Vonda McIntyre's Dreamsnake, which was awarded the Hugo for best novel at that Season, and Douglas Adams's adaptation of his own BBC radio series, the latter of which would have won the Hugo for best dramatic presentation had it been broadcast in the USA.

As anybody who was lucky enough to hear the radio series in early 1978 knows, this is no ordinary science fiction novel. The only full length SF book this is even remotely comparable to, is Sheckley's fabulous non-novel Options, but Adams, not being an established SF author, approaches its subject matter from a different angle than Sheckley. Options is perhaps the most literary, i.e. occupied with literary matters, of the two. The Hitch Hiker's Guide concerns SF matters, which needn't be literary. Perhaps I'm turning off a lot of hardened SF readers when I say that this is a parody on SF, and a parody in the SF medium. But "DON'T PANIC" is "inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover." (p.7), and rightly so, because Adams does it so well that I'd think most of those hardened SF readers (as opposed to Space Opera) would enjoy this little book immensely.

For Adams has a rare command of language and wit, backed by a thorough knowledge of SF. "Far back in the mists of ancient time, in the great and glorious days of the former Galactic Empire, life was wild, rich and largely tax free." (p.89)

" 'Terribly unfortunate,' he said, 'a diode blew in one of the life-support computers. When we tried to revive our cleaning staff we discovered they'd been dead for nearly thirty thousand years. Who's going to clear away the bodies, that's what I want to know.'" (p.132)

"A huge furry creature bounded through the door with his lunch tray. It was grinning like a maniac.

Frostetnic Vagon Jeltz was delighted. He knew that when a Dentrassi looked that pleased with itself there was something going on somewhere on the ship that he could get very angry indeed about." (p.44)

Need I quote more? No. So off you go to your friendly neighborhood SF pusher, and if he or she hasn't got it in stock at the moment, he or she will, unless Pan run out. Even then "DON'T PANIC", because they are bound to reprint it.

PS: Not all the material of the first six episodes is in the book, so it looks like there is going to be a sequel. I'm dying to find out what happens in the Restaurant at the End of Time.

Reviewed by ape-descendant Jacob Struben

Arthur C. Clarke, The View from Serendip (Pan, 1979, IR£1.04½ + surcharge)

Arthur C. Clarke, author of so many good SF books, has finally written his autobiography. Long awaited for, Clarke's book contains extracts from his non-fiction works, personal anecdotes and speeches, and altogether makes pleasant reading for those who are familiar with his SF works.

Clarke's long associations with Ceylon (Sri Lanka -ed.) are the subjects of much of the book as is his discovery of the delights beneath the waves. His forthcoming novel The Fountains of Paradise (published recently in hardback -ed.) is set in his Taprolane (? -ed.), another name for the country in which he now resides, and he has often dealt with underwater-type themes, notably in The Deep Range and in many short stories.

The rest of the book is a mixture of speeches and passages from his numerous scientific books.

As for Clarke himself, the book reveals little about the man, except perhaps in the last passage, which is one of the most absorbing. Also, a passage dealing with Clarke's introduction speech to a 150-plus IQ organisation has Clarke making a very appropriate and witty observation of his friendly rival Isaac Asimov.

The book is a very interesting work for those who know and love Clarke's work, but those unfamiliar with Clarke may find it heavy going. The autobiography is enjoyable and exciting. Definitely a great addition to Clarke's other writings and a delightful book for Clarke admirers.

Reviewed by Seán Moraghan

FLASHBACK, continued from page 6

but not Chad Oliver! Rather, the remainder of the book is quite restrained, as the crew and the doctor work together to find a way home for the marooned men. There is certainly no action for its own sake, yet the book is quite gripping.

To a certain extent, The Winds of Time appears somewhat naive to a modern reader. It is most likely that it will never again see the light of day in a new edition, which would be a shame. The writing is quite good, and the scene on Alpha Centauri IV is one of the most poignant I have read in a while. If you can find a copy of this book, I would heartily recommend it.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

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