

A Short Guide to Irish Science Fiction



Jack Fennell

As part of the Dublin 2019 Bid, we run a weekly feature on our social media platforms since January 2015. Irish Fiction Friday showcases a piece of free Irish Science Fiction, Fantasy or Horror literature every week. During this, we contacted Jack Fennell, author of *Irish Science Fiction*, with an aim to featuring him as one of our weekly contributors. Instead, he gave us this wonderful bibliography of Irish Science Fiction to use as we saw fit.

This booklet contains an in-depth list of Irish Science Fiction, details of publication and a short synopsis for each entry. It gives an idea of the breadth of science fiction literature, past and present, across a range of writers. It's a wonderful introduction to Irish Science Fiction literature, and we very much hope you enjoy it.

We'd like to thank Jack Fennell for his huge generosity and the time he has donated in putting this bibliography together. His book, *Irish Science Fiction*, is available from Liverpool University Press.
<http://liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/products/60385>

The cover is from Cathal Ó Sándair's *An Captaen Spéirling, Spás-Phíolóta* (1961). We'd like to thank Joe Saunders (Cathal's Grandson) for allowing us to reprint this image.

Find out more about the Bid to host a Worldcon in Dublin 2019 on our webpage: www.dublin2019.com, and on our Facebook page; Dublin2019. You can also mail us at info@dublin2019.com

Dublin 2019 Committee

Ireland's Myths & Legends

-  Fionn McCumhaill and
The Salmon of Knowledge
-  Cúchulainn battles Ferdiad
for the Brown Bull of Cooley
-  Deirdre of the Sorrows
-  St Murrrough O'Heaney and
the Last Serpent in Ireland
-  Balor of the Evil Eye
-  Queen Medbh and
The Cattle Raid of Cooley
-  The Tuatha Dé Danann defeat
The Fir Bolg for control of Ireland
-  Oisín and Niamh
leave for Tír na nÓg
-  The final resting place
of The Children of Lir



Anonymous. *The Battle of the Moy; or, How Ireland Gained Her Independence, 1892-1894.* Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1883.

Due to massive savings held in offshore bank accounts, accruing interest since the end of the Famine, Ireland is able to completely boycott Britain and import foodstuffs from America, refusing to raise crops or livestock for export to Britain. Panicking, the British government acquiesces to Irish demands for Home Rule in 1892. Two years later, Britain finds itself engaged in war on the continent, as Germany and Austria join forces to conquer the Netherlands and Belgium, thus threatening Britain's mastery over the seas. Nationalist parties in the Irish Parliament seize the opportunity to declare Ireland's full independence, signing a treaty with the Austro-German forces. This triggers a three-month war in Ireland, the key battle of which is fought on the banks of the river Moy in County Sligo, and Ireland is finally transformed into an independent nation. The depiction of the Irish victory is sheer fantasy: Austro-German and Irish-American soldiers are able to land in Ireland without any hindrance from the British; the conflict is conducted without any recourse to guerrilla warfare; cavalry forces clash head-on, and numerous references are made to 'the hatred of centuries' carrying the day for the Irish in the absence of any military training. Equally unbelievable is the description of the Irish march on Belfast, where they are received with open arms by the entire local populace. One futuristic weapon mentioned is a nitro-glycerine gun.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Nationalism

Anonymous. *Newry Bridge; or, Ireland in 1887.*

Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons,
1886.

Another ‘dire warning’ novel of the consequences of Home Rule. When Home Rule is granted in 1886, Ireland is transformed into a single-party state dominated by the Land League and their puppet ministers. Ulster refuses to recognise the Dublin government, and after her pleas to England to be taken back into the Union are ignored by the ineffectual Liberals, establishes a provisional government of her own. This state of affairs leads to a civil war in 1887, the key battle of which happens at Newry, a transportation hub to both North and South. After Newry is secured by the Ulstermen, the rest of the country falls, and Ireland is delivered back into the British Empire. The story is told by a gentleman in late middle-age, to his children, and it includes a sub-plot of star-crossed love between himself and a Catholic girl (after this woman dies tragically, he marries and starts a family with her sister, seemingly out of pure pragmatism). The depiction of an independent Ireland conforms to a couple of typical patterns - after an initial period of lawlessness and anarchy, the government introduces martial law and Ireland becomes a police state, ruled by incompetent demagogues, once again with the help of the Irish-American diaspora. Even after Ireland is re-conquered, violence and rioting continues all around the world, in any colony or territory where Irishmen and Englishmen live in close proximity.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Nationalism; Unionism



Anonymous. *The Re-Conquest of Ireland, A.D. 1895.*
Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co., 1881.

A short future-history pamphlet detailing the disastrous consequences of the 1881 Land Act. The establishment of Land Courts to fix fair rents for impoverished tenants leads to a flood of spurious claims against decent, hardworking landlords, who are beaten or assassinated if they dare to defend their income. The Land League and the Fenians, having learned that the over-generous British government will acquiesce to Irish demands when threatened with agitation, parliamentary obstruction and agrarian violence, continue to preach revolution and rent defaulting. The situation is made worse by a second famine in the years between 1892 and 1895, and by disturbing international developments. American Fenians finally stage an uprising of ten thousand men on the banks of the Shannon, and only after three days of pitched battle is the rebellion quelled. A couple of recurring late- Imperial obsessions are mentioned in the text: firstly, the oft-cited Boer uprising (though the Battle of Majuba Hill, an occasion almost deified by the Fenians in other rebellion-fantasy novels, is not explicitly mentioned); secondly, the Russian advance into Afghanistan - as in other future-war texts of the time, from this the author extrapolates an attempted Russian conquest of the Indian subcontinent.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Nationalism; Unionism



Baneham, Sam. *The Cloud of Desolation*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1982.

The protagonist of this story is an individual named Dig 951, a young inhabitant of a subterranean society called Utopia. By persistently asking awkward questions, Dig creates pandemonium in Utopia, a totalitarian theocracy where an ungarded comment can give rise to a far-reaching political scandal. It is clear to the reader from the outset that this underground civilisation arose as a result of worldwide nuclear war, and that the mythical ‘Overlanders’ referred to by its inhabitants are the scattered bands of people who survived the conflagration. Dig is sent on an expedition to the surface, where he encounters an Overlander family and learns some uncomfortable truths about the world he lives in.

Keywords: Dystopia; Nuclear Holocaust

Barry, Kevin. *City of Bohane*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2011.

Set in 2053-2054, in the eponymous fictional city in the west of Ireland. Bohane is a bleak urban environment where crime and murder are part of the fabric of everyday life, ruled by gang lords. The most profitable trades in Bohane are prostitution and opium, both of which are concentrated in the Smoketown area: whoever controls Smoketown controls the city, and currently that person is Logan ‘The Albino’ Hartnett, chief of the gang now known as the Hartnett Fancy. The city has been calm for many years, but the peace is starting to look shaky, as the Fancy’s traditional rivals, the families of the Northside Rises, have been growing in strength and are seeking an official feud. To make matters worse, the Fancy’s former

boss, a ruthless man known as ‘The Gant’ Broderick, has returned from the Big Nothin’ after an absence of twenty-five years, for reasons best known to himself. The most striking aspect of the novel is its use of language, which has drawn just comparisons to Joyce and Burgess.

Keywords: Dystopia; Crime

Beckett, Samuel. “Krapp’s Last Tape.” 1958. *Modern Irish Drama*. Ed. John P. Harrington. Norton Critical Editions. London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1991. 311-18.

A “wearish old man” named Krapp, who has been recording his observations on life for many years, rummages through boxes of reels, trying to make sense of the now-cryptic labels. As he listens to recordings of younger versions of himself, full of joy and optimism, he becomes increasingly upset and needs alcohol to keep listening. The play ends with Krapp’s recorded voice saying, “Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn’t want them back. Not with the fire in me now.” Beckett explicitly sets this play in the future - a dramatic necessity, since at the time of writing, commercial tape recorders had not been available for very long - and though it seems like ‘mundane’ naturalism, it explores the impact of technology on human memory to make philosophical observations on the passage of time.

Keywords: Technology; Theatre

Beckett, Samuel. “Endgame.” 1957. *The Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*. London: Faber & Faber, 2006. 89-134.

Another ambiguously science-fictional play from Beckett, this time set in what appears to be a post-apocalyptic world. The principal characters are Hamm, the master of the last remaining ‘Big House’ in this shattered world, and Klov, his servant. We learn from Hamm that the countryside surrounding the house is full of refugees. The nature of the apparent apocalypse is never explicitly stated. Hamm sends Klov to look out the window with a spyglass and report on the state of the world, and the most we ever learn (based on Klov’s descriptions) is that the sea has no tides anymore, and the sun is “zero,” signifying that not only has the order of nature broken down, but language itself has become almost entirely arbitrary. Originally published as *Fin de Partie*, and translated to English by Beckett himself.

Keywords: Dystopia; Apocalypse; Theatre

Booth, Tim. *Altergeist*. Bantry: Fish Publishing, 1999.

This bombastic novel is set in a fractious near-future “New Ireland” where the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Army and an American media corporation compete with the remnants of the Irish government for control over the state. The plot follows Misha Ploughman, a cadet at the “DizBee” Learning Centre for Advertising Design, who goes on the run after top-secret software is downloaded into her brain, one consequence of which is the “Altergeist Effect” – for reasons unknown, the software triggers personality changes in young women, accompanied by phenomenal telekinetic powers.

Keywords: Dystopia; Cyberpunk

Brophy, Catherine. *Dark Paradise*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991.

On the planet Zintilla, a humanoid species has evolved into two distinct types: natural humans who live rustic lives in the wilderness, and ‘Crystal Beings’ who have altered their bodies over the generations through participant evolution. The Crystal Beings lack legs, reproductive organs and excretory appendages, and they live beneath the Cowl - a colossal roof covering a large portion of the planet’s five continents - in a society devoted to knowledge and logic, where emotions are abhorred as ‘chaos.’ Somewhat predictably, a group of young Crystal Beings manages to escape from the cowl with the help of the unevolved ‘bipeds,’ forming a rebel movement to end the joyless, antiseptic Zintillian hegemony.

Keywords: Dystopia



Bullock, John William (‘Shan F.’) *The Red-Leaguers*. London: Methuen & Co., 1904.

Motivated by jealousy and unrequited love, James Shaw joins the Red League, a revolutionary movement distributed over the whole of Ireland, and assumes command of the Armoy Commando in County Fermanagh. In a ridiculously swift uprising, Ireland is liberated in a single night, and a Republic is declared. Within a few short weeks, however, the country descends into anarchy, sectarianism and rioting, while food prices skyrocket and commerce grinds to a halt. Eventually the English army arrives to save the Irish from themselves. A tedious story, full of Boys’ Own-style military derring-do, with

a morally repugnant 'hero' who abuses his newfound power to try to force a woman to return his affections. The novel is prefaced with a map of all the locations mentioned in the narrative.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Unionism

Carbery, Mary. *The Germans in Cork: Being the Letters of His Excellency The Baron von Kartoffel (Military Governor of Cork in the Year 1918) and Others.* Dublin: Talbot, 1917.

This short novel tells the story of a German invasion of Ireland in 1918, aided by Sinn Féiners who naively think that the Germans will cede power to them once the takeover is complete. Instead, members of the Sinn Féin party are exiled to German colonies in the Baltic, and all other political parties are banned. Baron Kartoffel then begins a series of overhauls, bringing improvements to Irish health, sanitation, agriculture and education, as well as eliminating alcoholism; soon, however, trade unions are suppressed, slum-dwellers are moved to concentration camps, the insane are put to death, eugenics experiments are initiated and the Irish language is outlawed. Eventually the Baron transforms the Irish into 'a race without a soul.' Originally published anonymously in the form of letters to the *Irish Times* in 1916, the series was discontinued a week before the Easter Rising, and the novel version differs in many respects from the original text, as the aftermath of the Rising had to be taken into account. Carbery did not publicly admit to being the author until 1937.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Unionism

“Conán”. “Marbhán.” *Connacht Tribune* March 25th; April 8th 1933: 3; 3.

A two-part detective story set in the year 2000. The disestablishment of the British monarchy has given rise to a British Republic and a United Ireland. There is, however, an underground society dedicated to the reinstitution of the monarchy, known as the “Screacháin Roilige” [‘The Owls’], and it transpires that they are also active in Galway. After the Irish President’s secretary is robbed of £20,000 and a stack of sensitive documents, the government and the Gardaí determine that the Screacháns are responsible. Thus, a secret agent known only as “Marbhán” [‘corpse’] is assigned to liaise with the Gardaí in Galway. After infiltrating the Owl cell, Marbhán leads Daithí Ó Brudair, the Garda Commander in Chief, to arrest the subversive group’s ultimate leadership, who are masquerading as husband and wife in a house in the countryside. In the end, this story works better as a detective tale than a science fiction work.

Keywords: Crime; Independence; Nationalism; Irish Language

Fromie, Robert. *A Plunge Into Space*. 1891. Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, 1976.

Following the discovery of a means to circumvent the law of gravity, a team of seven adventurers (the scientist who made the discovery; a renowned explorer; an Irish politician; a financier; a writer; a newspaperman, and an artist) take off from Alaska and travel to Mars. There, they discover a highly evolved quasi-anarchist society without laws, disease, money or conflict, where there is (for all practical intents and purposes)

no material scarcity, very few emotions, and it only rains at night-time. The Martians are depicted as beautiful, wise and resplendently dressed (since the eradication of want and need has left them with nothing else to do besides dress themselves), observing total equality between the sexes and a two-hour working day. While on Mars, the Earthlings succumb to boredom and attempt to 'improve' this idyllic society by re-introducing politics and capitalism, and are therefore expelled by the Martians. Tragically, a Martian girl has fallen in love with one of the Earthmen, and attempts to stow away on their ship. In order to maintain a sufficient air supply, the Earthmen jettison her into outer space. Upon their return to Earth, the broken-hearted writer commits suicide. The curious Martian 'utopia' appears to be socialist, but there are apparently upper-class and lower-class people living in it.

Keywords: Aliens; Utopia; Mars

Fromie, Robert. *The Crack of Doom*. 2nd ed. London: Digby, Long & Co., 1895.

Arthur Marcel, 'a doctor in all but the degree,' joins the *Cui Bono?* Society in order to further his romantic aspirations for the beautiful Natalie Brande. Natalie's brother Herbert, a brilliant scientist, has come to the conclusion that suffering and injustice are the organising principals of the material universe, and has founded the Society with the aim of destroying planet Earth. Even more unfortunately for Marcel, members of the Society are possessed of considerable telepathic powers, and use these abilities to kill anyone who tries to leave. The narrative contains a plethora of fascinating allusions to end-of-Empire anxiety (the *Cui Bono?* fanatics are a mixture of scientists, socialists and feminists), as well as a prolonged

meditation on masculinity and gender (the female protagonists begin the narrative as quasi-transvestite 'evolved women'; Marcel outlines the different varieties of cowardice; every male character is described either as 'manly' or unmanly,' and one of the minor characters is transparently coded as being homosexual). It is also hinted at that the Brandes and their co-conspirators may in fact be extraterrestrials - their telepathic powers are never explained, and Herbert Brande refers to a previous experiment 'on the planet that once existed where the Asteroids are now.'

Keywords: Aliens; Conspiracy; Telepathy

Fromie, Robert. *A New Messiah*. London: Digby, Long & Co., 1903.

Willie Penrose, a young gentleman who has squandered his inheritance, enters into the service of one Leslie Ziestman, a financier with ties to the criminal underworld. Too late, he learns that he has inadvertently joined the ranks of the New Vehmgerichte (sic), a terrorist society specialising in very public assassinations. As he seeks a way to rescue himself from his plight, Penrose learns something of the Vehmgericht's motives: to fundamentally alter the structure of the financial world in order to bring about a more just society. They seek this end, they assassinate millionaires and seize or destroy their assets, in the hope that this will restore the original function of currency - as a token of just recompense for services rendered by an Individual to Society - in place of the system of credit and debit which they see as the root of all evil. Among the tools at their disposal are bribery, blackmail, murder, and the hypnotic ability to induce a Lovecraftian cosmic horror that renders their victims brain-dead slaves. Their secret weapon is an advanced

submarine (boasting a televisual/holographic surveillance system in place of a periscope), which they use to sink millionaires' yachts and cargo-ships. Ziestman evades capture thanks to his uncanny ability to, in essence, mould his face to resemble another man's, and he later dies in exile, having repented of his extremism; we are left to presume that Penrose lives happily ever after with Ziestman's daughter, but the tone of the narrative is markedly different from Cromie's earlier work - Ziestman is the "New Messiah" of the title, his demise is depicted in a quasi-tragic manner, and it is hard to ignore the fact that he makes a convincing argument against the current financial system.

Keywords: Crime; Conspiracy; Telepathy

Downey, Edmund (as 'F.M. Allen'). *London's Peril*. London: Downey & Co. Ltd., 1900.

Mr. Treherne, assistant to the British State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, is informed by a French traitor of a plot to invade London. Whereas his superior dismisses the plot as mere fantasy, Treherne takes the rumour seriously, and tries to get to the bottom of it. His investigation brings him face-to-face with an old nemesis, General Xavier, who is leading a private enterprise to construct a tunnel under the British Channel - the idea being that once the project is complete, the French government will seize the opportunity to invade. Treherne uncovers the whole dastardly plot through his skills in diplomacy, espionage and cryptography, and sets forth to uncover the tunnel's location in France in order to ascertain how much progress has been made. On the journey across the channel, however, he crosses swords with General Xavier for the last time. Both men fall into the sea and drown, bringing the

novel to an open-ended conclusion – we are not told whether the full extent of the French plot is discovered, or whether the invasion occurs. This is not quite a ‘future war’ story, but rather one of Downey’s patented ‘dire warnings’: in the case of the Empire’s security, one can never be complacent, no matter how ridiculous the supposed threat appears to be. There are also a few references to a science-fictional campaign of disinformation: falsified documents claim that the French have developed a new kind of super-weapon (a gun capable of firing shells across the English channel), as well as ‘flying machines.’

Keywords: Conspiracy; Future War

Boyle, Roddy. “57% Irish.” *The Deportees*. London: Vintage Books, 2008.

A short story set in Celtic Tiger-era Ireland, in which an academic is asked by the Minister for the Arts and Ethnicity to develop a means of measuring Irishness. The young man develops a Blade Runner-esque device that measures the subject’s emotional reactions to Riverdance, goals scored by footballer Roy Keane, and Irish-made pornography. Principally a satire on the Irish and European attitudes to immigration, the narrative also contains hints that it is set in the future (for example, the aforementioned Roy Keane has quit football to take a post at the UN, and pop singer Ronan Keating is now bald).

Keywords: Satire; Technology



Dunsany, Lord (Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany). *The Last Revolution*. London: Jarrolds Publishers Ltd., 1951.

An eccentric inventor named Ablard Pender creates a sentient machine, which starts to build other intelligent machines in a bid to take over the world. It soon becomes clear that these mechanical monsters have the ability to influence other devices which are taken for granted in human society - telephones, vehicles, even pocket-watches. When the original monster, named 'Robespierre,' kidnaps Pender's fiancée, the inventor and the anonymous narrator must join forces to rescue her and stop the Last Revolution. In many ways, this is more like a gothic novel in the nineteenth-century style than a post-WWII sf novel, and while there are unnerving flourishes (such as the foreshadowing image of Robespierre tearing a dog to pieces), much of the novel is unintentionally hilarious.

Keywords: Technology; Horror

Dunsany, Lord. *The Pleasures of a Futuroscope*. Ed. S.T. Joshi. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2005 (posthumous).

A journalist in the year 1955 borrows an invention from his friend, a scientist named Methery. The invention is the titular futuroscope, a device allowing the user to see into the future. The narrator looks six hundred years into the future, to see a rural England that has returned to nature. Following a nuclear cataclysm, London is now a water-filled crater, and human beings have returned to a 'neolithic' state of being. The narrator decides to follow the fortunes of one particular family,

and records their encounters with wolves, a Wild Man, and a band of dastardly gypsies. This novel was published posthumously, and may in fact even be a first draft, thus accounting for the minor irritations of the text itself: the narrator persistently interrupts the narrative to inform us that he is taking a break for lunch, and quite often repeats himself as he endeavours to remind the reader that he is not a scientist. The most notable aspect of this novel is the attention Dunsany gives to the depiction of nature. His utopia is a wild wood, where machinery and heavy industry are gone and forgotten.

Keywords: Dystopia; Nuclear Holocaust

Fraser, Julia Agnes. *Universal Equality; or, Jonathan Baxter's peep into the future.* Edinburgh: John Menzies and Co., 1871.

Irish lands are confiscated from landlords and distributed equally to the people of Ireland. The 'free rider' effect wrecks it all, of course, and everything is put back to normal with reintroduced landlordism.

Keywords: Independence; Unionism



Greer, Tom. *A Modern Daedalus*. London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1885.

A young genius named John O'Halloran, having been fascinated as a child by the flight of seagulls in his native Donegal, spends his life in pursuit of one of mankind's oldest fantasies - a machine enabling a human being to fly. Returning home to his father and brothers after a spell in university in Belfast, he manages to invent such a machine, which is apparently no more difficult to use than a bicycle. His family pressure him to use this invention in the service of the nationalist cause, but his personal pacifism and abhorrence of bloodshed leave him no option but to refuse. Banished from his family home, O'Halloran manufactures an improved model of his flying machine, and flies to London with the intent of making his invention available to the general public. His appearance has unintended consequences, however, causing mob violence, paranoia and a financial panic. When O'Halloran comes forward to try to assure the British parliament that he means no harm, he is arrested, to be held prisoner until such time as he agrees to build a flying army for the Crown. His imprisonment causes the young man to develop greater sympathy for the Irish nationalist cause, and when his brother helps him to escape, he returns to Ireland to take part in a nationwide uprising.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Nationalism



Joyce, John. *A Matter of Time*. Dublin: Poolbeg Press Ltd., 1999.

The first part of Joyce's *Virtual Trilogy*. Following an air crash in Egypt, billionaire computer expert and captain of industry Theodore Gilkrensky comes out of seclusion to investigate whether a device manufactured by his company had anything to do with the disaster. He is aided in his investigations by a small army of pilots and bodyguards, as well as a self-aware computer system modelled after his deceased wife (the titular Maria). Opposing him is a Japanese *keiretsu* which is seeking to acquire controlling shares in the company, and prepared to go to any lengths to do so - including hiring an Islamic fundamentalist group to kidnap Gilkrensky, and sending a mentally-unstable ninja to acquire the miraculous computer. Every character has a personal agenda of their own, with revenge as the primary driving force behind most of the plot strands. The narrative strays outside of the corporate/conspiracy/technothriller pattern, however, by introducing new-age spirituality into the mix.

Keywords: Technology; Virtual Reality; Conspiracy; Crime; Mysticism

Joyce, John. *Virtually Maria*. Dublin: Poolbeg Press Ltd., 1998.

The second in Joyce's *Virtual Trilogy*. Following the first book's adventures in Egypt, billionaire software designer Theo Gilkrensky continues his quest to find a way to travel into the past to save his wife Maria from assassination, using the reality-warping powers of ley-lines. Circumstances lead him to Florida, where he finds a naturally-occurring ley-line wormhole

in the area known as the Bermuda Triangle, and manages to successfully transport himself back to the year 1945. Complicating matters are Yukiko Funakoshi - the deranged ninja assassin from the first book - and Jerry Gibb, a perverted and sadistic computer game programmer, who steals Gilkrensky's "virtual Maria" to fulfil his sexual fantasies.

Keywords: Technology; Virtual Reality; Conspiracy; Crime; Mysticism

Joyce, John. *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Dublin: Spindrift Press, 2008.

The third in Joyce's *Virtual Trilogy*. Theo Gilkrensky continues his quest to travel back through time and prevent his wife's murder, using a wormhole generated by 'ley lines.' Once again, he is pursued by the insane ninja Yukiko Funakoshi, and in this volume he acquires additional enemies in the American and Japanese secret services, corporate pirates and lawyers. As in the previous volumes, the alpha-geek Gilkrensky extricates himself from tricky situations by means of James Bond -style heroics, as well as relying on his colossal personal wealth to avoid the legal and political fallout of his actions; all the while, he continues to fend off the affections of a brace of beautiful, jealous women - including the self-aware VR simulacrum of his dead wife.

Keywords: Technology; Virtual Reality; Conspiracy; Crime; Mysticism



Mostick, Conor. *Epic*. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2004.

A Young Adult novel set on New Earth, a colony planet settled by Scandinavian pacifists. The planet's economy and legal system are controlled by Epic, a colossal virtual-reality role-playing game originally developed to keep the colonists entertained as they voyaged through deep space. As citizens spend every spare moment playing Epic, their real-world society crumbles, and a small handful of players have amassed enough in-game wealth to effectively control the entire planet. When a teenager called Erik assembles a team of adventurers to kill a dragon, thereby earning enough in-game money to force a change in the constitution, he finds himself at the centre of an anarchist plot to destroy the game, and discovers that Epic has become self-aware. As the title foreshadows, the plot culminates in an apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil. The game is ended, the 'Casiocracy' is overthrown, and an egalitarian world system is established. In places, *Epic* reads like a dramatised textbook on economic theory for teenagers, but it is notable for including references to political philosophy, naming Machiavelli and homaging Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

Keywords: Interplanetary Travel; Virtual Reality; Conspiracy

Lewis, C.S. *Out of the Silent Planet*. 1938. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1996.

The first of Lewis's trilogy featuring Professor Ransom. In this story, Ransom uncovers a plot by the dastardly scientist Weston to sacrifice a mentally-disabled boy in the name of scientific progress. Ransom rescues the boy and takes his place in the experiment, which sends Ransom to Mars. There, he

meets the various species of Martians and becomes aware of a whole new cosmology: every planet has a guardian spirit called an ‘eldil,’ and all the eldila naturally communicate with each other. Earth’s eldil, however, has become corrupted and cut itself off from the others (hence the ‘silent planet’ of the title), giving rise to greed, bloodshed and misery. It transpires that Ransom has been recruited by the Martian eldila to prevent Earth’s corruption from infecting the rest of the solar system.

Keywords: Mad Science; Aliens; Conspiracy; Mysticism; Interplanetary Travel

Ludlow, Frank, and Roelof Goudriaan, eds. *Emerald Eye: The Best Irish Imaginative Fiction*. Dublin: Aeon Press, 2005.

An anthology of short sf, fantasy and horror, produced by Irish authors, and authors resident in Ireland. Contributors: Mike McCormack; Mike O’Driscoll; John Kenny; Robert Neilson; Bob Shaw; Seán Mac Roibin; David Murphy; William Trevor; Michael Carroll; Anne McCaffrey; Dermot Ryan; James Lecky; David Logan; John Sexton; Sam Millar; Fred Johnston.

Keywords: Short stories

Mac Aodha Bhuí, Iarla. *An Clár AMANDA*. 1998. Indreabhán: Cló Mhaigh Eo, 2000.

When Séamus Uí Dhuibhir downloads a program into his brain without realising what it is, it’s up to his brother Conall to figure out a way to save him. The eponymous

AMANDA program grants Séamus a phenomenal degree of control over the stock market, but it is also re-writing his personality at the behest of persons unknown. Conall, together with hard-drinking investigative journalist Jane and computer-geek Wayne, follows leads across Korea and China while trying to keep one step ahead of Colonel Kim, the South Korean chief of police with dreams of dominating all of Asia. Unusually for young adult fiction, there are no teenage characters here with which the target audience can identify: the protagonists are all professionals who appear to be in their late twenties to early thirties, while the hapless Séamus is happily married. The novel won a prize at Oireachtas na Gaeilge 1998, but it was not published until 2000.

Keywords: Cyberpunk; Thriller; Conspiracy; Irish Language

Mac Aodha Bhuí, Iarla. *Domhan Faoi Cheilt*. Indreabhán: Cló Mhaigh Eo, 1999.

A juvenile space opera. The title means, “A Hidden World.” Two teenagers from a distant future (when humankind has colonised outer space) discover an artificial environment floating in the void. When they enter it, they find themselves in a replica of Earth, populated by descendants of the last inhabitants of Atlantis. There are two tribes at war here, one of which is a slave-driven economy, while the other is peaceful and lives in harmony with the environment. Our two heroes lead a slave rebellion, and help the good Atlanticans to escape before the artificial sun (a nuclear reactor) explodes. Notable for its use of Gaelicized sf terms borrowed from *Star Trek* (e.g. “féasair,” meaning ‘phasers’).

Keywords: Space Opera; Irish Language

Mac Craith, Micheál. “Cuairt ar an nGealaigh.” *Fainne an Lae* March 17 1923: 5.

An abbreviated and somewhat bowdlerised version of Lucian’s *True History*, which finds a group of mariners transported to the Moon by a powerful storm. Thereafter, all the bizarre manners and customs of the Moon-people are presented just as they appear in Lucian’s text (i.e. they eat smoke, sweat milk, carry their young in kangaroo-like pouches, etc), although Lucian’s depiction of an all-male society, where homosexuality is the norm and men give birth through a vagina-like orifice on the thigh, is conspicuous by its absence. This omission is probably to be expected, as Mac Craith was a Jesuit priest. The story was continued in another episode, ‘Eachtraí Fuirne’ [The Adventures of a Team of People], published in the *Fáinne an Lae* newspaper on December 15th of the same year.

Keywords: Moon; Translation/Homage; Irish Language


Mac Maoláin, Seán. *Algoland*. Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1947.

The unnamed narrator of this novel (possibly Mac Maoláin himself) tells us at the beginning that everything that follows is a dream brought on by eating seafood before bedtime. He finds himself in the country of Algoland (named after a phrase in the works of Pliny the Elder), where he befriends the poet laureate, Tagaldus. Tagaldus takes it upon himself to guide the narrator around Algoland’s capital city, La Primabura, while answering questions about the strange country. Algoland is shielded from view by a canopy of trees with blue-green foliage, camouflaging it against the sea to anyone that might be

flying overhead. The capital city is underground, and the inhabitants speak a language very similar to classical Latin, wear skin-tight clothing, and travel around on motorised roller-skates. Most of the buildings have wheels, so that houses can be situated according to the occupier's mood; VIPs and members of the military have the option of flying hither and yon by means of Greer-like wing apparatuses, and the elderly are conveyed to and fro on floating seat-platforms. Algolandish society is not a perfect, egalitarian society - there is a ghetto for the poor, citizens are obliged to carry a psychometric device that measures emotions associated with violent behaviour (and to present themselves at the Court of Law once a week, so that their 'read-out' can be examined by a clerk), and there is a flourishing criminal element concerned primarily with illegal tobacco farming. There is no plot to speak of in this text; neither are there any sf neologisms, despite the repeated references to 'replicator' technology that seemingly produces foodstuffs from nothing. The novel ends when, just as he is about to be killed by a falling house, the narrator wakes up.

Keywords: Utopia; Dream/Aisling; Irish Language

Mac Síomóin, Tomás. *Ag Altóir an Diabhail*. Dublin: Coischéim, 2003.

“At the Altar of the Devil.” A recently-widowed teacher named Beartla B receives a circular letter from a company called Marital Electronics Ltd. The company wishes to sell him ‘an electronic bride,’ also known as a ‘Juliet.’ This appliance is apparently very realistic, and has lifelike responses to touch and verbal interaction. Initially enraged by this offer, under the duress of prolonged loneliness Beartla B begins to entertain the notion. Soon, he has ordered a ‘Juliet,’ and in so

doing, he triggers a tragic chain of events. The situation lends itself to some comic scenes. Beartla tries to decide on the appearance of his custom-made bride, but cannot make his mind up between Monica Lewinsky and Mary Robinson; he then finds that he cannot follow the badly-translated assembly instructions. All the while, he remains oblivious to the affection shown to him by a flesh-and-blood woman, “Deirdre of the Blue Nails.” However, the comedy of the text is mixed with anger and sorrow: Beartla is narrating this tale to a psychiatrist in a mental institution, where he has been incarcerated after detonating a bomb in the centre of his village.

Keywords: Dream/Aisling; Technology; Cyberpunk; Irish Language

Mac Síomóin, Tomás. *An Tionscadal: Fabhal don nua-aois i dtrí eadarlúid.* Dublin: Coisceim, 2007.

An Irish expat living in Catalonia comes into possession of an old map showing the location of a mysterious village in the mountains. Daithí Ó Gallchóir researches the village of Les Pedres, and learns that the locals have an average lifespan of two hundred years. This longevity, Daithí discovers, is linked to a bioluminescent species of ginseng that only grows in the vicinity of the village, and he soon starts planning how best to exploit this plant for financial gain. There is a link to *Ag Altóir an Diabhail*: Daithí works as a marketing executive for Martel, the mysterious multinational behind ‘Marital Electronics Ltd.’

Keywords: Mad Science; Irish Language



Madden, Samuel. *The Reign of George VI, 1900 - 1925.* 1763. 2nd ed. London: Rivington's, 1899.

A history of the reign of George VI, who inherits a British kingdom crippled with debt, and transforms it into the world's pre-eminent power. George VI's reign is characterised by an almost constant state of war - indeed, from the year 1920 it becomes a world war, with Britain, Switzerland, Austria and Sicily on one side; and Russia, France and Spain on the other. Britain acquires Spain's colonies in Latin America and the Phillipines, and France is made into a peaceful and prosperous nation under English rule. An early example of the 'future war' genre from the author of *Memoirs of Life in the 20th Century*.

Keywords: Future War

Maguire, John Francis. *The Next Generation.* London: Hurst and Blackett, 1871.

The plot of this novel, such as it is, features a large cast of characters - politicians, doctors, reverends and soldiers - who are loosely connected through blood ties and marriage. There are weddings, professions of true love, and pleasant ambles through the countryside, all conducted in an atmosphere so amiable as to border on the insipid (even the innermost thoughts of the family's pet dog are elaborated upon). What is remarkable about the novel, however, is the setting. In 1892, Ireland is a bucolic utopia, thanks to the disestablishment of the Irish Church (1869), the wise application of Gladstone's first Land Act (1870), and the marriage of the English Prince to an Irish woman. Violence and sectarian hatred are a thing of the past (much to the chagrin of one minor character, who argues

that ‘the sperrit is gone out of the counthry’), and Dublin has its own Parliament on an equal standing with Westminster. In this setting, there is also (notionally) complete equality between the sexes, with women sitting in Parliament and practicing medicine - though they are expected to give up these careers upon becoming wives or mothers. Among the issues debated in the Parliament are the Opium Question, the war in China, and questions of public safety relating to the proliferation of flying machines over London.

Keywords: Utopia

Maxton, Hugh. *20/16 Vision*. Killiney, Co. Dublin: The Duras Press, 2009.

The debut novel of the poet Hugh Maxton (pseudonym of the literary historian and critic WJ McCormack). The text is split into two main sections, which initially do not seem to have much to do with one another: the larger first part is set in the days and weeks leading up to the centenary of the 1916 Rising, in an Ireland which has been re-united as a federal republic, with each province having its own Provincial Vice President who retains absolute control over his or her own province’s affairs, and an All-Ireland President residing in Phoenix Park. In the background, a coup is underway, as ‘the Brotherhood,’ an unnamed Republican paramilitary organisation, has reinvented itself as a business concern and is using economic trends to seize control of the country. The second part is set in Dublin in 1941, where Nazis have arrived in Ireland and have seized control of the capital. Within the confines of the ‘Shellburnt’ Hotel, a group of guests and hotel staff work behind the scenes to keep a young Jewish pianist out of the hands of the local SS commander. At last, it is revealed that the whole book is

founded upon this alternate history, through the appearance of a character called Harding, a military man (and later a Jesuit priest) ‘cursed with the blessing of second sight.’ The novel is also quite a difficult read, at times seeming more like an epic poem, and it is very nearly derailed altogether by the author as he repeatedly (and needlessly) breaks the fourth wall to emphasise satirical jabs at various politicians.

Keywords: Easter Rising Centenary; Nationalism; Unionism; Conspiracy; Satire

McCormack, Mike. *Notes From a Coma*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.

⚡ O’Malley, the adopted son of a farmer in the West of Ireland, volunteers to enter into a medically-induced coma. This is a ‘dry-run’ of a pilot scheme proposed by the European Union, whereby congestion in the prison system will be eased by placing criminals into comas for the duration of their sentences. The experiment is taking place on board a ship anchored in Killary Harbour. His story is told via interviews with those around him - his adopted father, his neighbour, his teacher, his girlfriend and the local TD who brought the EU experiment to the area. Each of them tries to guess at his reasons for volunteering, and express their worries about his safe return. In the background, we see the cultural reaction to the experiment, as the volunteers progress from being the latest reality TV sensation to almost being deified by the general population. Throughout it all, footnotes comment on JJ’s story, possibly reflecting the thoughts of JJ himself. The footnotes surround the regular text, in effect creating an ‘event horizon’ within which JJ keeps his loved ones safe.

Keywords: Technology; Cryogenics/Suspended Animation; Cyberpunk; Satire

McDermot, Murtagh. *A Trip to the Moon: Containing Some Observations and Reflections, made by him during his stay in that Planet, upon the Manners of the Inhabitants.* Dublin and London: J. Roberts, 1728.

Dedicated to the “Worthy, Daring, Adventurous, Thrice-renown’d and Victorious Captain Lemuel Gulliver,” this is the story of a young Irishman carried into outer space by a whirlwind and deposited on the Moon, where he finds himself in a society of humanoid animals. Lunar society is an intensely literary one - the narrator encounters a hideous species of chimera called a ‘Critick,’ and observes an underwater workshop where poetry is literally hammered into shape, with the use of special hammers and anvils, before being sold to poets who then take credit for writing it. The Lunar beast-people also bait their fishing lines with books, and they have developed a unique system of education whereby books are liquefied and then ingested by the student. It is also revealed that the Greek philosopher/mathematician Pythagoras was originally from the Moon, where he was reincarnated many times before being reborn on our planet. Upon returning to Earth, the narrator discovers a civilisation of intelligent parrots in the heart of Australia, whom he defends against the predations of a gang of hawks, before returning to Dublin on an English merchant ship. The obvious influences on this text are *Gulliver’s Travels* and Lucian’s *True History*.

Keywords: Moon; Translation/Homage; Gulliveriana



McDonald, Ian. *Chaga*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1995.

Extraterrestrial “packages” crash into Mount Kilimanjaro, unleashing a wave of self-replicating alien life that rapidly spreads through East Africa, assimilating and supplanting terrestrial ecosystems as it goes; other packages come down in South America and the Indian Ocean, but the novel is set for the most part in Kenya. Named after the Wa-Chagga people who first encounter it, the Chaga resists and adapts to all attempts to destroy it, and its steady advance causes panic throughout Tanzania and Kenya while the United Nations struggles to understand and contain it. Into this setting arrives Gaby McAslan, an ambitious and manipulative aspiring journalist from Northern Ireland, who falls in love with the UN’s enigmatic Doctor Shepard and finds herself rubbing shoulders with psychotic gangsters, corrupt peacekeepers and paramilitaries.

Keywords: Aliens; Crime; Conspiracy

McDonald, Ian. *Sacrifice of Fools*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1996.

A murder mystery-slash-political thriller set in the aftermath of first contact with an alien species, the Shian, who now live alongside human beings in a number of selected areas around the world. One of the places the Shian have been settled is Belfast, in what is suspected to be an attempt at social engineering in a region still bitterly divided along the Catholic/Protestant binary. By 2004, the “slow Peace” has culminated in Joint Sovereignty over the North between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, though ethnic tensions still run high. The main protagonist, Andy Gillespie, is

a former getaway driver for a loyalist hit squad. Having learned the Shian language while incarcerated in the Maze prison for his part in the attempted murder of a drug dealer, Gillespie has since his release worked for a Welcome Centre, attending to the needs of itinerant Shian. Unfortunately, his paramilitary past makes him the ideal suspect when five of his co-workers are killed and mutilated, in what the Northern Ireland Police Service suspect is a plot to arm dissident militias with alien weaponry. To clear his name, Gillespie sets out to solve the case himself.

Keywords: Technology; Aliens; Conspiracy; Crime

McDonald, Ian. *River of Gods*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

A sprawling story set in the days and weeks leading up to the hundredth anniversary of India's independence. India has broken up into a collection of independent states, of which Bharat is the principal setting. Bharat is suffering from a three-year drought, and this is bringing it closer to the brink of war with its neighbour, Awadh, which has dammed the Ganges. The story focuses on ten characters: Shiv, a gangster; Mr. Nandha, a 'Krishna Cop'; Parvati, his wife; Shaheen Badoor Khan, advisor to the Prime Minister; Najia, a journalist of Afghan extraction; Vishram Ray, a wannabe stand-up comedian who inherits his father's power company; Tal, a 'nute' (surgically-created genderless human); Lisa Durnau, an expert in the field of artificial intelligence; Thomas Lull, her former teacher and lover; and Aj, a teenage orphan possessed of uncanny powers. Most of the story is concerned with artificial intelligences ('aeai'), which are multiplying at an unexpected rate, and growing closer and closer to full self-awareness, while older

and more dangerous aeai manipulate political, business and underworld events towards unknown ends.

Keywords: Technology; Conspiracy; Cyberpunk; Artificial Intelligence

McDonald, Ian. *Brasyl*. London: Gollancz, 2007.

The first, set in Rio de Janeiro in 2006, follows reality-TV producer Marcelina Hoffman as she searches for the disgraced footballer who cost Brazil the 1950 World Cup; soon after she starts looking for him, her life is turned upside-down by a mysterious doppelganger who seems intent on destroying her life and reputation. The second thread, set in Sao Paolo in 2032/2033, describes a future where electronic surveillance is omnipresent. When petty criminal Edson Jesus Oliveira de Freitas seeks out a secretive gang of quantum physicists for help with a stolen item, he falls in love with their leader, Fia Kishida. Soon afterwards, however, Fia and her companions are murdered with a "Q-blade," a knife sharp enough to cut between atoms; not long after this, Edson finds her alive again, with no memory of their brief relationship or any of the events leading up to her death. The third story is set in 1732/1733, in the early years of the European colonisation of Brazil. Father Luis Quinn, a Portuguese-Irish Jesuit who has asked God for "a task most difficult" to make amends for the sins of his past, is sent to the New World to track down a Jesuit missionary who has taken a swathe of the Upper Amazon as his own private kingdom. The three narrative threads are connected through a framework of a quantum multiverse, wherein time travel and travel between parallel universes are possible.

Keywords: Technology; Conspiracy; Time Travel; Parallel Universes

McDonald, Ian. *The Dervish House*. London: Gollancz, 2010.

Set in Istanbul in the year 2027, when nanotechnology has become the driving force of the global economy: the markets are regulated by AIs, police forces use insect-sized “swarm bots” for crowd control and crime scene forensics, and “nano” can be customised for a wide variety of legal and illegal uses. The novel follows six characters: retired economics professor Georgios; power couple Adnan and Ayşe, a stock trader and an antiques dealer respectively; Can, a “boy detective” with a heart condition who explores the world outside his home with the aid of his toy robots; Necdet, an aimless young man with psychotic tendencies; and Leyla, whose marketing and deal-making career is just beginning. In the aftermath of a suicide bombing, these characters’ stories start to intertwine: Georgios is recruited into a secret government think-tank while Can uses his robot proxies to try to solve the mystery behind the attack; Adnan hatches a scheme to trade cheap Iranian gas through an illegal pipeline for a colossal profit, while Ayşe is hired to track down a magical artefact, the body of a holy man preserved in a coffin full of honey; Leyla, in order to secure the future of a small tech start-up, has to track down a family heirloom that grants legal ownership over a revolutionary new invention; Necdet, meanwhile, has started to see djinn since getting caught in the attack.

Keywords: Technology; Conspiracy; Cyberpunk; Religion



McManus, L. *The Professor in Erin*. Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1918.

Originally serialised in Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Féin* (Weekly) newspaper in 1912, Charlotte ('L') McManus's story follows the Celtologist and philologist Professor Schliemann as he tries to navigate a parallel universe where Hugh O'Neill defeated the English at the Battle of Kinsale, and went on to liberate Ireland. In this alternate world, Ireland is a constitutional monarchy with a thriving economy and a number of scientific achievements to its credit; Irish society is based as far as possible on the old clan system, and Irish is the primary language of the people. As Schliemann tries to find a way home, he becomes embroiled in a number of intrigues and is accused of being a spy as Ireland prepares to go to war with Germany.

Keywords: Parallel Universes; Utopia; Dream/Aisling; Future War; Independence; Nationalism

Meade, L.T. *The Brotherhood of Seven Kings*. London: Ward Lock, 1899.

Norman Head, a young English philosopher and amateur scientist of independent means, falls in love with a beautiful, intelligent Italian woman and joins the secret society of which she is the leader, the Brotherhood of Seven Kings. Shortly afterwards, he learns that the Brotherhood may be much more sinister than he first suspected, and he flees back to London to live his life in solitude. Ten years later, however, he discovers that the Brotherhood is active in England, and he finds himself embroiled in a series of adventures to protect the estates and fortunes of the British aristocracy from the

villainous Madame Koluchy, whose schemes include: infecting a young peer of the realm with Mediteranean fever, so it may appear that he has died of natural causes; killing a racehorse with tsetse flies in order to disrupt a wedding; using a trapeze to rob a bank, and composing a popular waltz with the precise harmonic frequencies needed to shatter a glass goblet containing the key to the Brotherhood's cypher. Co-authored with Robert Eustace, and originally published in *The Strand* magazine, these stories are typical of late nineteenth-century detective stories relying entirely on exotic or obscure criminal means, or make reference to scientific principles that were not widely understood at the time. 'LT Meade' was the pseudonym for Elizabeth Smith, born in Bandon, Co. Cork.

Keywords: Crime; Conspiracy; Mad Science

Meredith, James Creed. *The Rainbow in the Valley.*

Dublin: Browne and Nolan Limited, 1939.

Following a near nervous breakdown, an Irish solicitor named Bartholomew Hobson takes some time for himself to travel the world. He finds himself in China, in a place called 'The Valley of the Shadows,' home to a research station staffed by a host of international scientists and philosophers. The motley crew of Westerners has managed to establish radio contact with Mars, and they have been exchanging ideas, theories and philosophies with the Martians. What follows is a series of debates on evolution, subjectivity, personality, race, religion, politics, economics and psychology, all of which are recorded in Hobson's journal. There is much talk about the impending Second World War, and the Martians show a surprising amount of interest in Irish society and politics.

Keywords: Aliens; Mars

Milligan, Alice L. *A Royal Democrat: A sensational Irish novel*. Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1892.

Prince Cormac Arthur, heir to the British throne, has always been too clever for his own good - so much so that his family and tutors spend his entire childhood trying to dull his intelligence so that he will be a suitable, “orthodoxly empty-headed” monarch. In 1939, at the age of 21, the Prince causes a scandal by publicly cheering for a radical socialist MP, as the latter is being arrested; to avoid further disgrace to the royal family, he is dispatched on a tour of the world to keep him out of the public eye until such time as he learns to behave himself. During his travels, however, the royal ship sinks, and the Prince is shipwrecked on Innishowen; knowing that he will be presumed to be dead, he seizes his chance to escape his royal destiny, and pretends to be an American citizen. The locals of Innishowen accept him into their community, where he falls in love with a local girl.

Keywords: Independence; Nationalism; Unionism

Moore, Brian. *Catholics*. 1972. London: Vintage, 1992.

Following Vatican IV (in which private confessions are abolished and the Mass is explicitly stated to be symbolic and not miraculous), the balance of religious power rests with the World Ecumenical Council in Amsterdam. The Roman Catholic Church is about to enter into a historic merger with Buddhism; however, a community of monks living on an island off the coast of Kerry insist on celebrating Mass in ways that existed prior to Vatican II (i.e. they say Mass in Latin, and the chief celebrant stands with his back to the congregation), and due to television coverage, more people attend these ‘traditional’

Masses than the modern ones authorised by the World Ecumenical Council. Wishing to avoid embarrassment in the run-up to the merger with Buddhism, the Albanesian Order sends an American priest, Father Kinsella, to Muck Island, to get the isolated monks to toe the official line. Kinsella, who sees the Catholic Church as a way to inspire revolution around the world, does not comprehend that he is ending a way of life by ordering the monks not to believe in the miracle of transubstantiation. He is resisted at first by the Abbot, but eventually the elderly monk's resolve fades away. In the end, the monks will do as they are told, and the monastery enters into 'the null,' the metaphysical torment of those denied the presence of God. Of interest in the text are the numerous references to Lewis Carroll's poem, 'Jabberwocky,' implying that the 'new' Catholicism is something fearsome and yet indescribable, a concoction of nonsense that ultimately proves dangerous.

Keywords: Religion; Satire

Mordaunt, Jason. *Welcome to Coolsville*. London: Vintage, 2004.

A near-future satire set in Maymon Glades, a fictional suburb of Dublin. The narrative is a rat's nest of characters and plotlines, including the development of a chemical agent that makes people docile and compliant, a *Charlie's Angels*-style sisterhood of warrior nuns established by a rogue Jesuit, the establishment of a museum of popular culture, genetic engineering and the search for immortality.

Keywords: Dystopia; Technology; Conspiracy; Cyberpunk

Neilson, Robert. *That's Entertainment*. Norwich: Elastic Press, 2007.

A collection of short stories by Robert Neilson, each looking at a separate facet of the entertainment industry. Stories include “That’s Entertainment” (a supervillain from the ‘Golden Age’ of comics hires a young journalist to ghostwrite his autobiography); “Bigger Than Jesus” (an alternate history tale wherein John Lennon was kicked out of the Beatles before they made it big); “The Big Fellow” (a documentary crew travels back in time to film the battle between David and Goliath); “To Be A King” (an alternate history where Elvis Presley’s twin brother Jesse survived); “The Pope, Sonny Liston and Me” (a time-travelling Irish Pope and his nephew interfere with history in order to win a bet); “Trouble Ahead” (the story of a writer who grows a second head); “Camels” (a world where the wealthy can buy the right to render entire species extinct); “Sideshow” (a story of psi powers and the last carnival in Britain); “The Great Eddie Clarke Farewell Tour” (a young rock star dies on stage); “Hungry Eyes” (a story about a mutant bare-knuckle boxer); “Love Song” (a young American folklore researcher falls under the spell of pre-Christian Irish gods); “Alias Morton Pinkney” (Elvis is rescued from death and brought to the future); “Faces I Remember” (another alternate Beatles history, where the Fab Four are a band of state-sponsored assassins), and “Tales of Far Americay” (an elderly storyteller entertains his grandchildren with stories of his adventures in ‘Americay.’ The setting is alternate history). The intriguing concepts and gleefully irreverent tone are let down somewhat by occasionally dreadful proof-reading.

Keywords: Short stories

Neilson, Robert. *Without Honour: A Collection of Stories.* Albedo One Showcase. Lusk, Co. Dublin: Albedo One Publications, 1997.

A collection of seven short sf stories by author Robert Neilson. Themes include gender (“Pleasing Mister Ross”; “Off Season”; “Hands of Mercy”), loss (“Lost in an Amber Moment”), religion (“The Lincoln Recording”; “Without Honour”) and heroism (“The Quest for the Perfect Knight”).

Keywords: Short stories

Netterville, Luke. *The Queen of the World, or, Under the Tyranny.* London: Lawrence & Bullen, Ltd., 1900.

A future-war novel. Gerald Lacy, a failed Irish medical student, takes up an interest in the occult, becoming the apprentice of a master mage. After many years of study, the mage offers him the opportunity to travel through time, to any period of his choosing. Lacy opts for the future, and chooses the number 2179 seemingly at random; following a mysterious ceremony in a cave in the Andes, conducted by members of a secret brotherhood of magicians, Lacy is catapulted through time to the year 2174. There, he learns that the world is now under the control of a single, tyrannical government, ruled over by the Chinese; rebellion is being fostered by the former King of England, and Lacy joins the ranks of the rebels. Espionage, double-bluffs and aerial battles follow, until the narrator witnesses the “the victory of Anglo-Saxon freedom over the slavery of the Yellow Horror”; following the rebellion, Britain is restored to her rightful place at the top of the world’s racial hierarchy, as the King’s estranged daughter - the narrator’s

love-interest, Lenore - becomes the eponymous Queen of the World. Even by the standard of other future-war novels of the time, this novel is despicable. 'Luke Netterville' was in fact the pseudonym of the Irish author and journalist, Standish O'Grady.

Keywords: Future War

Ní Ghráda, Máiréad. *Manannán*. Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940.

World-renowned astronomer Micíl Uí Fhlaithim has discovered, while on holiday in Egypt, an ancient star-map that shows an unknown planet between Earth and Mars. After spending ten years investigating this conundrum, he has uncovered this planet's existence, and discovered that it has been hidden from terrestrial view by an enveloping cloud of toxic gas that does not allow light to escape. With the financial aid of an elderly Irish-American millionaire, the astronomer organises an expedition to this planet, christened Manannán after the ancient Irish god of the sea. With him are ace pilot Seán Ó Maolchatha, physics professor Máirtín Mac Con Midhe, and his precocious young son Brian. Flying to Manannán in a void-proofed aeroplane, they find themselves in a beautiful world where the human population lives in cities protected by forcefields. The reason for these forcefields is the presence of amphibious monsters called Cráidhmí, who kill and eat everything in their path. After learning the local language, and gaining the trust of the local ruler by foiling an attempted *coup d'état*, the Irish build a giant robot to destroy the Cráidhmí, only to discover that 'the High-Master' will not let them leave, and that he wants them to build an entire army of robots that will make him ruler of all he surveys. The Irishmen use their robot to take back their aeroplane and escape back to Earth. Juvenile

sf tailor-written to appeal to boys (there are no girls or women anywhere in the story, and the principal character is Brian, whose *Famous Five* -style adventures with a local boy carry the plot forward).

Keywords: Interplanetary Travel; Dystopia; Aliens; Irish Language

Ó Brolacháin, Mícheál. *Pax Dei*. Dublin: Taibhse, 1985.

This Gaelic text takes place in a future world where nation-states no longer exist, and the care of civilian populations is administered by multinational corporations. There are two plot-strands. The first concerns a young boy called Rurc, who lives with his mother in a colossal block of flats, until she dies and Rurc is forced to fend for himself. His exploration of the tower-block brings him into contact with another little boy and a psychopathic gangster. The second plot strand concerns one P.X. Winterbottom, an executive in one of the multinationals, who is frantically preparing for the arrival of the company's chairman. The grim story of the two young boys is written in the present tense, making their suffering immediate and inescapable, while the more comic bungling of the company men is placed at a comfortable distance through the use of the past tense. The comic antics of the powerful beget tragedies for the powerless.

Keywords: Dystopia; Irish Language



Ó Caochlaigh, Barra. “An Tost.” *An Tost agus Sgéalta Eile*. Dublin: Alex Thom & Co. Ltd.; Oifig an tSoláthair, 1927.

A novella made up of five rather disjointed chapters. The title means “Silence,” and this is the underlying theme that links the five sections. Part one is set in 1914, and concerns Seán Ó Suíbhne, a young employee of Dublin Castle who loses his job for partaking in an IRB manoeuvre, and in so doing loses the respect of the woman he loves. Part two is set in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising, when the two are reunited in a hospital, and their love is rekindled as Máire helps Seán to escape the British. Part three takes place in 1921, when Seán and Máire are married and have an infant son, Fionnbarra. Seán is a commander on the anti-Treaty side of the Civil War, and rescues his family from a cruel Treatyite commander. The fourth section is set in the future (1938), when Fionnbarra is a medical student. He is given the opportunity to pursue music as a career when a visiting director of an international music group hears the young man’s fine tenor voice; however, Fionnbarra is also committed to healing the sick of Dublin’s slums, where he contracts diphtheria. The disease nearly destroys Fionnbarra’s throat, and leaves him unable to sing. The final section moves forward to 1975, when Britain and Japan declare war on the Americas. Ireland declares it will remain neutral, despite an ultimatum from the British. The British invade, motivated mainly by a colossal stockpile of oil and minerals held by the Irish in a secret location. Fionnbarra by this time has become Minister of Air-Travel, and has been entrusted with a secret map which he must conceal from the invaders. Part five includes references to futuristic inventions, such as coin-operated public radios on every street corner, and a description of torture by laser.

Keywords: Future War; Nationalism; Irish Language

Ó Conaire, Padraic. “Páipéar a Fristhadh i mBosca.”
Connacht Tribune 1926: 3.

A scene from the year 1966, in which ‘an Burcach’ [Bourke], the ‘Warden of Galway,’ addresses a mob of people who are demanding radical social change. In order to calm the crowd down, he reads them excerpts from a forty-year-old copy of a newspaper, which he has found in a box in his father’s house. The old newspaper details the awful condition in which the people of Galway lived in those far-off times, crowded into tumbledown slums in appalling sanitary conditions, with neglectful landlords and drunken soldiers fighting in the streets. The recitation has the desired effect, and the mob calms down, having seen how far their city has progressed in forty years. The paper quoted in this story is the May 22nd, 1926 edition of the *Connacht Tribune*, published exactly seven days before this story of Ó Conaire’s appeared in the same paper.

Keywords: Independence; Predictions; Irish Language



Ó Muirí, Pól. *Siosafas*. Dublin: Coiscéim, 1995.

A collection of short stories in Gaelic. Of interest to sf readers is “Siocshuan,” a very short character-study of a human travelling from Earth to another world. The title is a neologism referring to the trope of technologically-induced hibernation on interstellar journeys that would normally take longer than the average span of a human life (literally translated, it means “frost-sleep”). The narrator ponders his status, and seems to reach the conclusion that human identity is socially constructed - by leaving Earth, and travelling solo to another planet, he has ceased to properly belong to the human race. He refers to his mission as a process of rebirth, of transfiguration into something new.

Keywords: Interplanetary Travel; Cryogenics/Suspended Animation; Irish Language

Ó’Nolan, Brian – a.k.a. Brian Ó Nualláin, Flann O’Brien, Myles Na Gopaleen

---. As Brian Ó Nualláin. “Dioghaltas ar Ghallaibh ‘sa bhliadhain 2032!” Short story. *The Irish Press* Monday, January 18th 1932: 4.

This short story is set in a future United Ireland, where Gaelige is the first language of the majority of the citizens, and not many remember how to speak English. The narrator describes meeting an English tourist who cannot speak Gaelic, who is desperately looking for an English-speaking hotel. The bilingual narrator at first attempts to help the hapless tourist, but is suddenly enraged by the memories of English atrocities against Ireland, including the near-eradication of the Irish

language and the slaughter of “2,000 brave Corkmen” in Dublin on Halloween, 1997. To avenge these crimes, the narrator teaches the tourist what he says is a phrase asking for directions, but in reality is a string of obscenities so vile that they cannot be printed. When the unfortunate tourist recites this to a taxi driver, he receives a terrible beating, and is arrested for disturbing the peace. The structure of the story reveals that, if not a dyed-in-the-wool fan, then Ó Nualláin (a.k.a. Flann O’Brien, Brian O’Nolan and Miles na Gopaleen) was certainly conversant with the tropes and clichés of science fiction. He also correctly predicted one major cultural trend related to the revival of the Irish language - it is now a common practical joke to ‘teach’ non-speakers Irish phrases in this manner.

Keywords: Nationalism; Irish Language

As Brian Ó Nualláin. “Teacht agus imtheacht Sheáin Bhuidhe: Iarsma an Béarla - Cuireadh ar phlátaí ceoil é!”
The Irish Press June 13 1932: 4.

The narrator tells us that the manuscript to this story was discovered under the floor of a demolished house, as operations were under way to widen a street. The title means, “The Arrival and Departure of John Bull: The Relic of English [language] - Put it on record [lit. ‘music plates’]!” Presumably set in the future, the story takes place in a united Ireland ruled over by a High King named Seán MacCumhaill mhic Airt mhic Tréanmhóir Uí Bhaigne, assisted by a Gaelic nobility, where the population speaks only Irish. In fact, it appears as though the entire Western world speaks only Irish. The narrative concerns the arrival of a grotesque giant named John Bull (also an Irish speaker), who says he will only leave if the Gaels can prove that they have an esteemed literature, and that English is still spoken

somewhere in the country. For proof of Ireland's rich literary heritage, the Gaels mention 'An Grá Agus an Gruaim' (a book of short stories that functions as a Gaelic primer). To answer the giant's second demand, experts are summoned from Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Limerick, to recite the little English they know. The Dubliner and the Belfast man recite strings of non-sequiturs; the Corkman parrots a train timetable, and the Limerickman uses a phrases in German (in fact, he asks, "Sprechen sie Deutsch?"). The giant is delighted with this linguistic knowledge, and having recorded it for study, he departs the country on amicable terms with the High King. It transpires that John Bull is, in fact, a researcher for a society named 'Connradh an Bhéarla,' a group with the noble aim of reviving English as a spoken language. The joke is enhanced by Ó Nualláin's decision to write the story in deliberately terrible Irish.

Keywords: Nationalism; Irish Language

As Flann O'Brien. *The Dalkey Archive*. 1964. London: Paladin, 1990.

On Vico Road in the parish of Dalkey, the physicist and theologian De Selby has invented a substance called DMP (named after the Dublin Metropolitan Police), which is capable of removing oxygen from the atmosphere, and in so doing re-aligns human perception to reveal the true nature of time, i.e. that the 'passage of time' is a fallacy; there is no past or future. This enables him to converse with individuals existing outside of normal time, in particular Christian saints and philosophers in the afterlife. The 'celebrities' De Selby speaks to include Saint Augustine, Jonah (whom De Selby describes as 'a bit of a bollocks') and John the Baptist. Through conversing with all

these learned and saintly people, De Selby has come to the conclusion that he is the New Messiah, and that it is his God-given duty to destroy life on Earth with a massive application of DMP. Keen to stop this destruction is Mick Shaughnessy, an alcoholic civil servant, with the aid of his loutish drinking buddy Hackett, the borderline-insane Sergeant Fottrell, and the Jesuit Father Cobble. This novel contains many elements from *The Third Policeman*, which was published posthumously: De Selby is expanded from a recurring footnote into a principal character, and the ‘Mollycule Theory’ by which human beings can change into bicycles is quoted wholesale (following the rejection of *TTP*, O’Brien claimed to have lost the manuscript, though he raided it for narrative elements when he believed it would never see the light of day).

Keywords: Mad Science; Apocalypse; Religion

Ó Sándair, Cathal. *An Captaen Spéirling agus An Phláinéad do Phléasc.* Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1960.

“Captain Spéirling and the Planet that Exploded.” In the year 2007, Professor Ó Glarcáin discovers that the planet Mercury (‘Mercurius’) is about to explode, causing massive loss of life on Earth. The United Nations scramble to prepare themselves for the event, constructing underground shelters and evacuating regions likely to suffer catastrophic habitat change (for example, the Sahara Desert, as well as Holland, Belgium and parts of Ireland and Australia will be drowned). Meanwhile, a mysterious alien race known as “The People of the Light” (who evolved within the nucleus of the star, Sirius) have arrived in our planetary system to establish a colony. Upon realising that their first choice (Mercury) is about to explode, they set their sights on Terra; they hover over our world until the

catastrophe passes, and then attempt to insert Earth into Mercury's now-vacant orbital path. They are foiled by Professor Ó Glarcáin and Captain Spéirling, and thereafter Earth enjoys a much sunnier climate than it did previously. Also included are four short stories: "An Deoraí" [The Exile] features a Kerryman who emigrates to the Moon to seek employment, only to discover when he returns home after fifty years that his body has adjusted to Luna's lower gravity and artificial atmosphere; in "An Cailín ón gCian-Spás" [The Girl from Deep Space], a disoriented deep-space prospector rescues a Terran girl from her Robinson Crusoe-esque existence on a backwater planet; "An Spás-Fhoghlai" [The Space-Pirate] concerns the escapades of an infamous raider, and the eventual eradication of space-piracy by an interplanetary military coalition; and "An Phláinéad Toirmeasctha" [The Forbidden Planet] is a short adventure featuring Spéirling and Ó Glarcáin, who find themselves relying on their wits to survive on an incredibly hostile planet, to which they have been sent to catch a gang of drug smugglers.

Keywords: Space Opera; Aliens; Mercury; Irish Language

Ó Sándair, Cathal. *An Captaen Spéirling Arís*. Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1960.

“Captain Spéirling Again.” Spéirling and Ó Glarcáin are sent to Venus to bring back Ross Simms, an English space-pilot who has travelled to Venus without authorisation, and subsequently disappeared. Upon arriving on Venus, the two Irishmen discover that Simms has married the Venusian Queen, Ena, and that he is helping her to launch an assault on Earth. Spéirling and Ó Glarcáin are sent to the Venusian marshes as slaves; ten days later, they manage to escape, end slavery and oversee the transition to a more just and equal Venus. Simms, driven mad by a Venusian prophet who tells him he will die in

seven days, attempts to escape from Venus and ends up crashing his ship into the Sun. All's well that ends well, and the two Irishmen return home to planet Earth, where nobody will ever realise the danger our world was in.

Keywords: Interplanetary Travel; Aliens; Venus; Irish Language

Ó Sándair, Cathal. *An Captaen Spéirling, Spás Phíolóta.* Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1961.

“Captain Spéirling, Space-Pilot.” It is the ‘Atomic Age.’ In the year 2000, the world is divided into a number of power-blocs, the largest being Occidenta and Orienta. Everything, including civilian vehicles, runs on atomic power fuelled by uranium. The uranium is running out, however, and when an uprising in the Mediterranean threatens the supply of the little that is left, it appears that Terra is about to be plunged into another world war. Desperate to avoid this tragedy, Professor Ó Glarcáin, his friend Captain Spéirling and Spéirling’s daughter Deirdre blast off for the moon (Luna), where the professor believes a bountiful supply of uranium might be had. Things are complicated by the misadventures of Marco, a dangerous but inept Oriental spy, but eventually Luna is reached, and contact made with the native Selenites. The Selenites, due to their history, have an abhorrence of atomic technology, and they agree to give Terra all their uranium; Terra also acquires a Selenite invention into the bargain - ‘Good Rays’ (so-ghaethe) that remove a person’s aggression and inspire a wish to co-operate and make peace. In the end, Ireland is honoured for its role in ending war on Earth forever, and for establishing diplomatic connections with our friendly extraterrestrial neighbours.

Keywords: Space Opera; Nuclear Holocaust; Aliens; Moon; Irish Language

Ó Sándair, Cathal. *Leis an gCaptaen Spéirling go Mars.*
Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1961.

The second adventure (according to the series' internal chronology) of Captain Spéirling and Company takes the Terrans to Mars, where they overthrow an oppressive regime and prevent a planned Martian invasion of Earth via a *Stargate*-like teleportation device.

Keywords: Space Opera; Teleportation; Aliens; Mars; Irish Language

Ó Torna, Seosamh. "Duinneall." *Bonaventura Spring*
(1938): 70-75.

A Duinneall (*Duine*, 'Person' + *Inneall*, 'engine') is to all intents and purposes a human being, but modern life has transformed it into a machinelike thing, which does not understand truth, beauty, humour or compassion. The narrator warns that thousands of these things exist around the world, insinuating themselves into political and civic life, and that only the 'truth' is capable of defeating them. Their aims are the eradication of traditional life, literature, music, freedom, and even the human soul, and the tell-tale signs of their activities are an increase in aeroplanes and the proliferation of jazz music.

Keywords: Paranoia; Invasion; Metamorphosis; Irish Language



O'Brien, Fitz-James. *The Diamond Lens and Other Stories*. London: Ward & Downey, 1887.

A collection of short stories, published posthumously. Contains “The Diamond Lens” and “What Was It?” The former concerns a ‘mad scientist,’ who creates a microscope lens powerful enough to see into a sub-atomic world contained in a droplet of water, and falls in love with a female inhabitant of that world. “What Was It?” is often cited as one of the first instances of an invisible predator in fiction. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these stories is the manner in which the rational and the supernatural are conflated, without any apparent contradiction: the protagonist of “The Diamond Lens” creates his magnificent lens after consulting the spirit of a dead scientist, and the bulk of “What Was It?” is taken up with scientific and philosophical questions about the nature of the invisible monster (while the landlady threatens the protagonists with legal action if they do not remove it from her house).

Keywords: Mad science; Horror

Richardson, James Nicholson. *The Germans at Bessbrook: A Dream*. Newry: Magowan, 1917.

As in Carbery’s *The Germans in Cork*, published in the same year, here Sinn Féiners aid a German invasion of Ireland in 1918, expecting power to be handed over to them following the conquest; once again, the Germans fail to honour their side of the bargain. The Bessbrook of the title is a model farm established in County Armagh by Richardson’s father; the pamphlet was originally published anonymously. Following the invasion, the Germans form a Provisional Government with

some token Irish members, and Bessbrook becomes the regional administrative centre of Ulster. The Germans regime is harsh, and the Irish economy suffers from the political instability and the continuous flow of money out of the country. Drastically underestimating the pervasiveness of sectarianism in Ulster, the Governor finally brings about the end of German rule by attempting to merge religions, allowing only one Catholic and one Protestant faith. The inevitable uprising unites Irishmen of all religions against the Germans, and is aided by the British fleet.

Keywords: Future War; Independence; Unionism

Riordan, Arthur. *The Emergency Session*. Rough Magic, Dublin: 1992.

The Emergency Session was a one-man show in which Arthur Riordan played MC Dev, a parody of Eamon de Valera as a rapper. The play is best remembered today for the song “Eire 2016 AD,” depicting a dystopian future “Theme-Park Ireland” where the unemployed have been exiled to outer space, “Robo-priest” patrols “a Disney-scape of fake round towers” and the “rare owl times are here to stay.” In 2016, Ireland will have hover cars, teleportation and cyber-cailins (such as the “remote-controlled Maude Gonne”) but “you won’t find a condom vending machine.” Much of the comedy in this piece is derived from the incongruity of SF tropes in Irish settings – Castlebar, County Mayo, is populated by mutants, “You can order a pint from your TV screen,” and the teleportation service even covers Ronald Reagan’s ancestral home of Ballyporeen, County Tipperary – but these images are juxtaposed with scathing criticisms. The Ireland of the future is a great place to live, “Unless you’re female, or jobless, or gay,” Connemara has

been sold to ICI, after which it melted for some undisclosed reason (but “at least the Brits won’t get hold of it”), and “We’ve got democracy the Irish way / With a referendum every day.”

Keywords: Satire; Theatre

Russell, George William. “The Story of a Star.”

Imaginations and Reveries. 1894. Dublin and London:

Maunsel & Company, Ltd., 1915. 189-94.

The narrator, a solitary man with a deep interest in Eastern philosophy, recalls memories of a past life as one of the Persian Magi. As a Mage, he seeks to advance his knowledge of astronomy by means of astral projection beyond the confines of planet Earth. On these sojourns, he notices a mysterious planet that appears and disappears according to a particular cycle, and after learning this cycle through repeated observation, he is eventually able to predict its appearance. He is thus able to witness the ‘birth’ of the planet, a mystical process whereby it comes into existence from nothingness, accompanied by what seems to be the music of a celestial choir and wreathed in “a vast twilight.” The Mage learns that the planet is the creation of godlike beings from a higher place of existence, so vast that he can only perceive “outer verge of their spiritual nature,” and he asks them for the meaning of life: they respond, “The end is creation, and creation is joy,” and inform him that our world will eventually become like theirs - in other words, a real of pure thought. When he awakes from his dream, he is bitterly disappointed to discover that he cannot accurately translate the enormity of his experience into written words.

Keywords: Mysticism; Interplanetary Travel

Shaw, Bob. *The Palace of Eternity*. New York: Ace Publishing Corporation, 1969.

Mack Travernor, a veteran of the war against the alien Syccans, has settled on the planet Mnemosyne, whose incredible natural beauty has given rise to a human colony with a disproportionate number of poets, writers and artists in its population. His simple life and complicated romance with the daughter of the planet's Administrator is cut short when the Federation military decides to turn Mnemosyne into a new regional base of operations, destroying the landscape and covering swathes of the land with a layer of cellulose. Mack half-heartedly takes charge of an uprising staged by the resident artists, but is captured and killed when he attempts to return to say goodbye to his beloved Melissa. Part two follows Travernor into the afterlife, where he learns that every conscious being that has ever lived exists as a self-sustaining energy pattern called an Egon. The Egon 'mother-mass,' being the repository of every scrap of human thought and existence, is the source of all human genius and creativity; the faster-than-light 'butterfly ships' used by the Federation are unwittingly destroying it, and so it has migrated to Mnemosyne, where the butterfly ships cannot operate. The mother-mass charges Travernor with stopping the use of butterfly ships, and he is reincarnated as his own son to save the human 'world-mind' and end the war.

Keywords: Aliens; Mysticism



Shaw, Bob. *The Shadow of Heaven*. New York: Avon Books, 1969.

Following a terrorist attack by persons unknown, all of planet Earth's plant-life has been eradicated; this has triggered 'the Compression,' in which the world's population migrated to coastal regions to live in overcrowded, claustrophobic conurbations, sustained by foodstuffs harvested from the sea. As a public relations exercise, the US government has established 'floating islands' in the sky using the last samples of fertile soil; these 'International Land Expansions,' or 'lies,' produce negligible amounts of vegetable foodstuffs, but their presence is believed to have a beneficial psychological effect on human beings, provided that nobody gets to actually live on one. On the Eastern Seaboard of the US, journalist Victor Stirling uncovers a startling truth when he sets out to find his missing half-brother Johnny Considine: there are people living on one of the floating islands (nicknamed 'Heaven'), in a community led by Johnny. Upon reaching Heaven, he discovers that the utopian dream of life on the floating farms is a falsehood. Johnny (known as 'Jaycee' by his followers) is a tyrannical would-be messiah, who demands awe from the other 'squatters' and takes whatever he wants by force. At the same time, the Food Technology Authority, which wields an obscene amount of political power in a world without fertile soil, is planning to scrap the inefficient ILE program and convert the floating islands into luxury real-estate for its own board-members, and they are prepared to kill all the squatters to do so.

Keywords: Dystopia; Ecology



Shaw, Bob. *The Peace Machine*. 1971. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1985.

Lucas Hutchman, a mathematician working for a manufacturer of guided missiles, uncovers a means by which all nuclear weaponry on planet Earth can be eradicated in a single instant. Prompted by horrific images of a H-bomb detonation in Damascus, he builds a machine capable of detonating every nuclear warhead in the world simultaneously, and issues the governments of Earth with an ultimatum - dismantle the weapons, or they will be destroyed. Hutchman soon finds himself pursued by British and Russian assassins; travelling around rural England as an outlaw, he is forced to reflect on his life and his beliefs, and questions whether his actions are justified at all. In many respects, this tale is a tragedy – though Hutchman survives his ordeal, regains his wife and son, and ends up living a cosseted existence in an open prison “in the heart of *The Avengers* country,” he ultimately realises that his efforts have all been for nought. Rather than ending nuclear proliferation, his device has merely changed the way in which nuclear weapons are designed, to make them immune to the effects of the “Hutchman Trigger”; Hutchman concludes his narrative by reflecting that the compassion that led him to build his machine is worthless. The novel was originally published as *Ground Zero Man* in 1971.

Keywords: Technology; Thriller; Nuclear Holocaust



Shaw, Bob. *Other Days, Other Eyes*. 2nd ed. London: Pan Books Ltd., 1974.

Alban Garrod, a scientist working in the aerospace industry, becomes a millionaire when he accidentally invents 'slow glass.' Slow glass, also known as 'retardite,' is a type of glass that light takes years to penetrate, in essence recording anything that occurs in front of it; Garrod soon finds himself swept up in a number of different political intrigues, as his invention slowly but surely turns planet Earth into a giant panopticon, though Garrod himself is more preoccupied with escaping his loveless marriage. The main narrative is split up by 'sidelights,' vignettes demonstrating how the invention of slow glass has irrevocably altered human existence. The first of these sidelights is the poignant short story from which the novel was expanded, "The Light of Other Days," which focuses on a bickering couple's visit to a slow glass 'farm' in the Scottish Highlands - having invested in a 'scenedow,' the couple discover that the woman and child seen in the windows of a cottage have in fact been dead for seven years.

Keywords: Technology

Shaw, Bob. *Orbitsville*. 1975. Gollancz SF Collectors' Editions. London: Gollancz, 2000.

Fleeing from certain death on Earth, a space pilot named Vance Garamond discovers what we would now refer to as a Dyson sphere - a metal sphere constructed around a sun, for the purpose of capturing its energy. The inner surface of this sphere, christened 'Orbitsville,' is covered with a grassy prairie covering an area five billion times the surface area of Earth.

Orbitsville and its effects on humanity are explored through an adventure narrative in which Garamond finds himself pitted against the tyrannical Elizabeth Lindstrom. The story is somewhat dated (Lindstrom is described as the ruler of a 'trillion-dollar' business empire, and Earth has become overpopulated at five billion people), but the sheer scale of Orbitsville is well communicated, as is the strangeness of the various alien species that have settled within it.

Keywords: Utopia; Artificial Environment; Aliens

Shaw, Bob. *A Wreath of Stars*. 1976. Gollancz SF Collectors' Editions. London: Gollancz, 2000.

The invention of 'magniluct' glasses allows human beings to perceive a parallel universe, made of anti-neutrinos, existing inside our own. When alien 'ghosts' start appearing in a mine in a volatile East African country, the principal characters discover that an anti-neutrino planet, hitherto hidden inside our own, has shifted out of its orbit. They attempt to communicate with the inhabitants of the 'ghost world' while fending off the attentions of a corrupt president and a violent colonel. The hero of the piece is a typical Shaw protagonist, a wisecracking aeronautical engineer who regards himself as 'a human neutrino,' able to pass through life without affecting anything. The villains are reminiscent of various nationalist strongmen who came to power in former colonies throughout Africa during the twentieth century.

Keywords: Parallel Universes; Aliens; Thriller



Shaw, Bob. *Cosmic Kaleidoscope*. 1976. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

A collection of short fiction. Contents: “Skirmish On a Sunday Morning” (in which a crippled cowboy gives shelter to a strange young pregnant woman, and thus finds himself embroiled in a war between two time-travelling subspecies of humanity); “Unreasonable Facsimile” (which poses an amusing explanation for the myth of the Yeti); “A Full Member of the Club” (featuring a secretive group of snobbish yet naive aliens, who cater to the whims of Earth’s ultra-rich); “The Silent Partners” (a petty criminal is abducted by a plantlike alien, for reasons that remain obscure until the final paragraph); “Element of Chance” (a ‘shaggy god’ story with a sarcastic twist); “The Gioconda Caper” (a detective story surrounding the Mona Lisa, which exposes Leonardo Da Vinci as the world’s first producer of pornographic films); “An Uncomic Book Horror Story” (a shapeshifting, carnivorous alien hides itself in plain view); “Deflation 2001” (a glimpse of a future world in which unionisation and striking have been taken to insane extremes); “Waltz of the Bodysnatchers” (a story of skullduggery set on a theocratic planet where divorce and murder are unheard of); and “A Little Night Flying” (following the adventures of a ‘skycop’ in a future where human beings can fly, as he attempts to track down a flying psychopath known only as ‘the Fireman’). With the exception of the first and last stories, the tales in this collection can all be classified as ‘comic sf,’ often with a nasty or surreal twist at the very end.

Keywords: Short Stories



Shaw, Bob. *Who Goes Here?* 1977. New York: Ace Books, 1978

Warren Peace is dismayed to learn that he has joined the Space Legion, a military outfit that young men join in order to forget shameful incidents from their past. In Warren's case, however, the military memory-wiping process has erased everything. Sent into various warzones across the galaxy (for ultimately idiotic economic reasons), Warren watches as fellow legionaries are killed in a variety of ghastly ways; since the only way to get out of the Legion is to recover one's memories, he goes AWOL on a distant colony world to try and find clues to his previous identity, and discover why he joined the Legion in the first place. Complicating matters are time-machines disguised as toilet cubicles, and a group of mysterious, unstoppable alien vigilantes who appear to want Warren dead.

Keywords: Satire; Aliens; War


Shaw, Bob. *The Ragged Astronauts.* 1986. London: Futura Publications, 1987.

The first book of Shaw's masterwork, the *Ragged Astronauts* trilogy: the story is set on a pair of twin planets linked by a column of atmosphere and metals are completely absent from one planet, both of which are scientifically impossible according to the laws of physics as we understand them; Shaw indicates that this is in fact a parallel universe via a mathematical sleight-of-hand (a character gives π a value of exactly 3, as opposed to 3.14). The parallel universe setting is merely a means to a spectacular end - the description of a mass migration between the planets, through outer space by hot-air

balloon - but in constructing a world sufficiently altered to allow for this stunning image, Shaw creates a fascinatingly baroque, pseudo-feudal fictional society, forced to abandon their home by changes to their planet's alien ecosystem. Due to the lack of metal on Land, the infrastructure relies completely on "brakka," a type of tree that not only produces wood as hard as rock, but also serves as the main source of reactive chemicals needed for scientific, industrial and military endeavours; by the start of the novel, the brakka is running out, and the various nations of Land are at war for the little that remains. The depletion of the brakka has had a knock-on effect that proves more immediately dangerous to human beings: the ptertha - airborne, jellyfish-like animals that live symbiotically with the trees - have evolved a deadly toxin, and have started actively hunting humans. The only hope for humanity is to leave the planet altogether, and hope for a better life on Land's sister-world, Overland. The hero of the narrative, Toller Maraquine, is a typical Bo-Shavian man-of-action; the illegitimate son of a military man raised within the scientist/philosopher caste, who finds himself the target of a vendetta by a typical Bo-Shavian villain - Prince Leddravohr, a violent sociopath in a position of unaccountable authority.

Keywords: Aliens; Interplanetary Travel; Parallel Universes; Science Fantasy

Shaw, George Bernard. *Press Cuttings*. 1909. London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1913.

 satire set in the then-future. It is implied that Britain has become a republic, allowing socialists to work mischief with public policy; also, it is implied that Home Rule was granted to Ireland at some point in the recent past, except that

the Irish Parliament voted for its own extinction after a very short time. In this milieu, the suffragette movement has become a major threat to the state - the cry of "Votes for Women!" is enough to make government ministers reach for their sidearms, and the Prime Minister is obliged to dress in drag in order to walk the streets without being accosted. The one-act play features a series of conversations between the head of the War Office and the Prime Minister, an Irish housemaid, a Cockney orderly, and two ladies of the Anti-Suffragette League. The General is adamant that things have gone too far, and that executive power must be transferred to the War Council for the good of the nation. In addition there is the imminent threat of German invasion, which the Empire is too broke to try and repeal. Despite his best efforts, however, not one of his visitors has the common decency to acknowledge the merit of his insane ideas, and the suffragettes outside are becoming more and more violent. Though the suffragette movement is treated sarcastically in this text, the principal target of the satire is the military mindset exemplified by General Mitchener, whose answer to all political problems is to shoot at them.

Keywords: Satire; Gender; Empire; Theatre

Shaw, George Bernard. *Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch*. New York: Brentano's, 1921.

Part 1, Act I of this drama, intended by Shaw to function as a kind of new Bible, takes place in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve discover a dead faun, and converse with the Serpent about Creation and Will. Adam vows to live for a thousand years, and Eve learns the secret of procreation. Act II consists of an argument between Adam, Eve and Cain, set in Mesopotamia centuries later. Cain revels in his status as

the First Murderer, and invents the names God and Devil for the disembodied voices he hears in his head. Part 2, set a few years after WWI, concerns the Barnabas brothers, Conrad (a professor of biology) and Franklyn (a former clergyman), who determine that the human lifespan must be extended to three hundred years, in order for humankind to develop a conscience capable of solving the world's complex problems without resorting to war. Part 3 is set in the year 2170, by which time Britain has become a republic that outsources most of its administrative duties to other countries. It is discovered that two Archbishops, a former President and a general, all of whom supposedly died from drowning, were in fact the same person - the current Archbishop of York, who is using his immortality to cheat the social welfare system. Part 4, Act I takes place in Galway in the year 3,000, when long-lived people are more commonplace, the capital of the British Commonwealth is Baghdad, and the Irish and the Jews are extinct. Ireland is apparently a colony of the long-lived, and short-lived people are only allowed to visit under strict supervision, lest they succumb to the fatal disease of discouragement. In Act II, the Emperor Cain Adamson of Turania approaches a long-lived oracle for advice on how to achieve greatness, and a group of envoys learn that some of the long-lived are planning the genocide of the short-lived. Part 3 is set in the year 31,920, when short-lived humans are extinct. People in this time hatch fully-grown from eggs, apparently do not have digestive systems or genitals, and a series of short vignettes illustrate how these post-humans age and mature. The play ends with a visitation from the ghosts of Adam, Eve, Cain and the Serpent. Overlong, boring, and riddled with the queasy misinterpretations of evolutionary science that produced the fascist dream of a master race.

Keywords: Religion; Evolution; Dystopia; Theatre

Shaw, George Bernard. *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles.* 1934.

Set on an island chain that arose out of the sea (the Unexpected Isles of the title), this two-act play exhibits many perennial Shavian themes: eugenics, religion, morality, and the absurd behaviour of human governments. In the first act, an English clergyman - Phosphor Hammingtap, also known as 'Iddy' (short for 'Idiot') - arrives in the Unexpected Isles after being shanghaied by pirates. He finds himself drawn into a mixed-race family who are pursuing a utopian project by eugenic means - to mix the best of the 'Western' with the best of the 'Oriental.' Initially horrified at the thought of entering into a polygamous marriage to two young 'superwomen,' he eventually agrees to enter the 'superfamily.' Act Two, set a few years later, shows the dreadful consequences of this simpleton's admission into this superfamily. He has married 234 times, outraging the various fundamentalist states of an increasingly divided British Empire, and the spiralling political fallout from this quarrel has even caused England to secede from the Empire completely. It transpires that the 'superchildren' are amoral, brainless and lazy, and they respond to the external threat by raising their bemused mother to the level of goddess-empress, urging her to stride forth and conquer the world. The play ends with Judgement Day, and a rather cynical angel appears to let them know that useless people and nonentities are due to be erased from existence, starting with the English-speaking world.

Keywords: Utopia; Satire; Theatre



Shaw, George Bernard. *Geneva*. 1938.

Tegonia Brown, a ‘little Englander’ working in Geneva for the little-known body known as the Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, triggers a global crisis when she refers four cases to the Hague, giving the International Court an opportunity to start drafting international law. The world begins to spiral towards war, and an idealistic Judge of the Court summons Europe’s dictators to be tried. Confounding expectations, Hitler (‘Battler’) Mussolini (‘Bombardone’) and Franco (‘Flanco’) actually answer the court summons; since the International Court is empowered to make moral judgements only, however, the three dictators proceed to use the courtroom as a soap-box, making a mockery of the proceedings. The Judge finally ends the farce by bluffing that the Earth has shifted out of its orbit, and that every living thing on the planet is doomed - the dictators and witnesses rush home to craft their respective responses to Armageddon, while the world keeps turning. Here, Shaw is re-iterating his point that while humanity is an intelligent species, it has not yet evolved a conscience appropriate to that intelligence. Something better must evolve from us, and until it does, war is always inevitable.

Keywords: Satire; War; Theatre

Shaw, George Bernard. *Farfetched Fables*. London: Constable, 1951.

The first of the six linked ‘fables’ takes place on a bench in a public park. While a young man and a young woman have a somewhat frosty conversation, they hear news that ‘The Truce of God’ has been declared: the existence of nuclear weapons has made war unthinkable, and thus it has been

abolished, and armies will now be referred to as 'World Police.' The young woman voices her scepticism that war will ever end, and in so doing gives the young man (a chemist) an idea for a new type of poison gas. The second fable takes place in the War Office, where Lord Oldhand brings the Commander-in-Chief news that every living thing on the Isle of Wight has been killed by the poison gas developed by the chemist in the first fable, who sold his invention to 'The South African Negro Hitler, Ketchewayo the Second' after being turned down by the British. The fable ends with the realisation that the chemist has sold his invention to other states as well, and the characters choke to death after a gas attack is launched on London. In the third fable, the Isle of Wight is home to an 'Anthropometric Laboratory,' and is a colony of the 'Upper Ten.' People are classified with comical terms such as 'Anybodies' and 'Medocrities' by the Laboratory. The local characters encounter a tourist and a tramp: the former is an idiot who thinks himself a genius, and the latter is a genius who thinks himself useless. The fourth fable is set in the same place on the Isle of Wight, but the building is now labelled 'Diet Commissioners.' A solitary commissioner is dictating copy for his new book on the history of human diet, revealing that a large proportion of humanity has become wholly vegetarian, and as a humorous consequence of this, much more violent. A master race of humanity has emerged that lives only on air and water, while the grass-eating 'supergorillas' serve as soldiers. In the fifth fable, the same building is now a Genetic Institute, and the characters comprise two men (Shamrock and Thistle), one woman (Rose) and a hermaphrodite. They speak disparagingly of their nineteenth-century forebears, and from their remarks we learn that labour, mathematics and the passage of time are all measured through new, more efficient systems, and the physical act of sex has been abolished. Their lack of historical knowledge is such that they have confused Jesus with Hitler. In

the final fable, the building is now a Sixth Form School, and a matron initiates a surreal questions-and-answers session with the new sixth-form pupils, through which we learn that the human beings from the previous fable somehow evolved beyond their physical state, and the fable ends with a brief appearance of one of the 'disembodied,' named Raphael.

Keywords: Satire; War; Evolution; Theatre

Skorpios, Antares. *History of a World of Immortals Without a God.* Dublin: William McGee, 1891.

§ Jervaas Van Varken, physically and emotionally abused from a young age by a domineering father and a fundamentalist mother, grows into a misanthrope of the most extreme kind. In his adulthood, he wanders the globe, developing an interest in the occult and seeking a way to transform himself into something other than a human being. In Tibet, he learns a technique for achieving teleportation through meditation, and his hatred of humanity causes him to teleport to the planet Venus in search of something better. He certainly does find something better - Venus (referred to as 'Hesperos' in the text) is a world without death, disease or starvation, where universal equality is taken for granted and the entire planet operates on socialist principles. During his two-year stay, he learns of the history of Hesperos, beginning at the point when one hundred million adult humans suddenly appeared out of thin air, with no apparent cause, and ending at the point when the Hesperians realised that they were truly immortal (if you 'die' on Hesperos, you vanish from sight and are merely teleported to the South Pole). Van Varken's arrival in this strange paradise is cause for celebration among the Hesperians, who believe that his arrival from another planet might hold

some clue as to the nature of the Unseen God who created them. When they prevail upon Van Varken to give a history of Earth and its varied theologies, however, the doctor's misanthropic account of his homeworld plunges the whole of Venus into despair. Presented in the form of a recently annotated manuscript from 1729, the text makes explicit reference to the voyages of Lemuel Gulliver - Swift's masterpiece is Van Varken's favourite book, and he refers to human beings as 'Yahoos.' 'Antares Skorprios' is the pseudonym of Jane Barlow, daughter of Reverend James William Barlow, professor of modern history at Trinity College Dublin: and later vice-provost of the same institution in 1899.

Keywords: Satire; Interplanetary Travel; Mysticism; Utopia; Gulliveriana

Standún, Pádraig. *A.D. 2016*. Naas: Cló Chonamara, 1988.

This Gaelic text takes place during the week in the run-up to the centenary of the 1916 Rising. In the future world described, Ireland has been re-united thanks to the leadership of a Sinn Féin led socialist government. Following re-unification, a cultural backlash against socialism took place, resulting in the rise of a fundamentalist Catholic theocracy, following the mantra of "Land, Language and Liturgy!" The Olympic Games are to take place in Kildare, and the Pope has been invited to open them with prayer, much to the indignation of the non-Catholic population. Against this backdrop, an old man named Pádraig, angry with the "official Republicans" now in charge, decides to walk to Dublin to make a formal protest, accompanied by a pair of eager young evangelist Catholics. Further details of this future world are delineated in news

bulletins: China's population officially grows to two billion people with the birth of a little boy named after Mao Tse Tung; a breakaway Catholic sect called "The Church of Women" gains popularity in South America, and the President of Ireland tells Protestants that if they don't like the Catholic ethos of the Republic, they can always emigrate. The final bulletin tells of a heroic band of Unionists, occupying the G.P.O. on the day of the centenary.

Keywords: Easter Rising Centenary; Nationalism; Unionism; Dystopia; Irish Language

Thacker, W. Ridley. *Ballymuckbeg: A Tale of Eighty Years Hence*. Dublin: William McGee, 1884.

After a canal is built from Dublin to Galway, bisecting Ireland into two separate states, Home Rule is granted to each half. The northern half retains the name of Ireland, while the southern half is now known as 'Mud Island,' and is at war with England. The short story follows an English visitor as he ventures into Ballymuckbeg, the new name for the southern half of Dublin, and finds himself in a squalid wasteland of ash, poverty and mud, where there are no such things as chimneys or shoes, and the speaking of English is punishable by death. Street names change on a constant basis, the old colleges are now public houses, and the Ballymuckbeg parliament meet in the street (under archways if it's raining) when they can be bothered to do so. In the twenty pages John Bull spends in Ballymuckbeg, he learns something of the history of Mud Island, becomes acquainted with the Lord Mayor, falls in love with a local 'Celtic beauty,' and rescues her and her grandfather from their life of squalor. The old man dies shortly afterwards from the excitement of it all, but the noble and fair John Bull is

happy to have found and saved his darling Norah, who loves her rescuer despite having no command of the English language, and having known him for less than what seems like ten minutes. The brazen racism of this tract is so extreme that it actually provokes laughter rather than offence. There is also a reference to the British Navy being destroyed by the inhabitants of Madagascar, an interesting hint at what Thacker thinks the state of the Empire will be in 1964.

Keywords: Satire; Independence; Unionism

Welch, Robert. *Tearmann*. Dublin: Coiscéim, 1997.

Two investigators from the Department of Art and Culture, Mac Liam and Mac an Ghabha, are sent to the city of Tearmann (“sanctuary”) to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a local Department inspector. Having begun as a paranoid, vaguely futuristic *noir* thriller somewhat reminiscent of Godard’s *Alphaville*, the story soon becomes an urban fantasy, with the conspirators known as “The Five” wielding magical control over the weather, and seemingly able to vanish from sight at will. Mac Liam is contacted by an angel in disguise, and informed that Tearmann is the site of a struggle between the forces of good and evil: the wealthy and powerful of Tearmann apparently owe their status to their allegiance to Satan. In the end, it is unclear whether this is actually true, or if the Satanic forces at work are products of holographic technology.

Keywords: Cyberpunk; Virtual Reality; Crime; Conspiracy; Mysticism; Irish Language

Whately, Rev. Richard. *Account of an Expedition to the Interior of New Holland.* London: Richard Bentley, 1837.

A 'lost world' narrative concerning the discovery of an advanced civilisation 'of European descent' in the heart of the Australian continent. The English explorers are given a guided tour of the 'Southlands,' and learn much about its history, systems of government, diet, laws, means of production, religion and morality. The Southlands are a loose confederation of states, modelled somewhat on North America, which began with the establishment of intentional communities by religious English and Germans. There are eleven states, some of which are pure republics while others are governed by hereditary monarchies. The people are racially mixed between Europeans and 'civilised' Aborigines, and in some states a mixed racial heritage is the main prerequisite for voting. Dancing and drinking are frowned upon, and perjury carries a possible death sentence. Whately constructs the imaginary confederation with astonishing attention to detail, and uses the Southlanders as mouth-pieces for discussions of morality - most notably, two entire chapters are given over to the condemnation of the practice of duelling. The Southlanders' society is meritocratic and capitalist, and discrimination based on skin colour is considered barbaric - rather, people are discriminated against economically and politically based on their intelligence and religious beliefs (while still observing the separation of church and state). Whately also excoriates the practice of sending criminals to Australia, reasoning that such people are not the proper material for nation-building.

Keywords: Lost World; Utopia

White, James. *Monsters and Medics*. London: Corgi Books, 1977.

A collection of stories by James White: “Counter Security” is a whimsical tale of first contact set in the supposedly haunted toy department of a large store; “Dogfight” is the story of a horrific war between humanity and an alien species, told from the point of view of an undercover alien agent; “Nuisance Value,” set during a period of reconstruction following a worldwide societal breakdown, concerns one man’s efforts to uncover the truth about what happened to his father, in the face of dictatorial bureaucracy; and “In Loving Memory” is a tale of star-crossed lovers set against the background of an insidiously colonial space opera. NB: This collection also includes the entire text of White’s Hugo Award-nominated novel, *Second Ending*.

Keywords: Nuclear Holocaust; Cryogenics; Evolution; Artificial Intelligence

White, James. “Second Ending.” *Monsters and Medics*. 1962. London: Corgi Books, 1977. 15-106.

This novel concerns a young doctor named Ross, who awakens from cryogenic sleep to find that organic life on Earth has been annihilated by nuclear war, and that the only company he has now is a group of robots. Ross eventually comes up with a plan to use the cryogenic hibernation chamber to ‘leapfrog’ through time, establishing the conditions necessary for life to flourish on Earth once more. In so doing, he creates a race of semi-sentient sea-grass, and triggers the robots’ evolution into

godlike, transcendental intelligences. Countless millions of years later, Ross finally finds solace with an alien species, whose evolution has been tinkered with by the robots to make them identical to human beings. Some of the themes explored in here (e.g. medical practice, pacifism and the horror of mechanised warfare) return time and again in White's writing, and the slightly colonialist solution for Ross's loneliness is revisited with greater intellectual rigour in the short story "In Loving Memory."

Keywords: Nuclear Holocaust; Cryogenics; Evolution; Artificial Intelligence

White, James. "Hospital Station." *Beginning Operations: A Sector General Omnibus*. 1962. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, LLC, 2001. 13-199.

The first in White's space-opera sequence set on board a 384-level hospital in deep space, administering to the wellbeing of hundreds of different alien species. *Hospital Station* is a 'fix-up' from a handful of short stories, and the disjointed effect this produces in the narrative has the effect of conveying the atmosphere of a busy emergency ward - no sooner is one crisis dealt with than another arises. The main character is the simpatico Conway, who progresses from intern to senior physician over the course of the book, thanks to his knack for diagnosing and treating extraterrestrial injuries and diseases that baffle his fellow doctors. Each section deals with some sort of medical puzzle which must be solved to save the life of an alien patient, and the crises presented range from treating an alien child with a lethal case of measles, to teaching a dinosaur telepathic abilities, to tracking down a possibly psychotic (and very hungry) shape-shifter in the hospital's

nursery ward. White's Federation differs from those of other space operas in that the aliens on parade here - ranging from giant, neurotic amoebas to hypochondriac crocodiles - are all fundamentally decent, despite their physical, cultural and psychological differences. The edition cited here is included in the anthology *Beginning Operations*.

Keywords: Space Opera; Technology; Aliens; Medicine

White, James. "Star Surgeon." *Beginning Operations: A Sector General Omnibus*. 1963. New York, 2001. 201-364.

The second in White's Sector General series, set aboard a multi-species hospital floating on the Galactic Rim. The Federation comes into contact with a hitherto-unknown human political entity, known only as the Empire. For the benefit of its ruling classes, the corrupt, xenophobic (and technically impoverished) Empire is deliberately infecting the population of one of its colony worlds with strange diseases, in order to profit financially from the charitable donations of other Imperial citizens. When a medical mission from Sector General led by Senior Physician Conway attempts to stop this, the Empire seizes the opportunity to prolong its own existence by declaring war on the Federation, unifying its subjects against a common foe. In the future depicted by James White, wars of conquest are a logical impossibility, but unfortunately wars of outright extermination are feasible. The Empire chooses Sector General as its principal target, as the galaxy-wide Federation has no discernible 'capital,' and launches a series of savage attacks on the hospital as the staff desperately try to evacuate patients. Conway and his fellow doctors find themselves tending to never-ending waves of wounded combatants with horrific

injuries, their efforts hampered by the infrastructural damage to the hospital's gravity grid, linguistic computers and assorted life-support systems. This novel foreshadows many of the themes that would later inform *Underkill*.

Keywords: Space Opera; Aliens; Medicine; War

White, James. "Major Operation." *Beginning Operations: A Sector General Omnibus*. 1971. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, LLC, 2001. 365-511.

Keywords: Space Opera; Aliens; Medicine

White, James. *Underkill*. London: Corgi Books, 1979.

Set in a heavily disguised (though still recognisable) Northern Ireland centuries in the future. Following a great 'Power-Down,' electricity is provided by 'power-walkers' on treadmills; privately-owned vehicles are rare; violence and corporal punishment are taken for granted in schools; and most of the population lives in horrendously overcrowded apartment blocks. The story follows the Malcolms, a husband-and-wife team of doctors working in the unnamed city's hospital, who uncover a conspiracy while investigating three separate patients - a young boy knocked down by an ambulance; a young woman who attempted suicide; and an old man with multiple gunshot wounds. The conspiracy concerns two factions of a mysterious organisation, known as 'Lukes' and 'Johns,' who are carrying out paramilitary actions that maximise civilian casualties. Let the reader beware – this novel is nothing like White's *Sector General* series, and the amiability and decency of that series is largely absent here. In this novel, White is angry, and he does not hold back.

Keywords: Satire; Northern Ireland; Dystopia; Aliens; War

White, James. *Mind Changer*. New York: Tor, 1998.

Another instalment in White's Sector General series. This novel focuses on Doctor O'Mara, the intimidating Chief Psychologist of Sector General, who is promoted to head of the entire hospital until such time as he can train a replacement. Faced with the prospect of forced retirement after a short-term period of (unwanted) supreme administrative power, O'Mara reflects on his career, and scenes from his past reveal the origins of his terrifying bedside manner. As in previous Sector General novels, the events depicted herein are episodic, and the novel reads more like a collection of short stories than a single, overarching narrative. The antagonist is xenophobia and bigotry, tackled in two different story arcs that present major crises to the functioning of the hospital: in the first, poor habitat design leads to sleep deprivation in a number of trainee doctors and nurses, who are driven to distraction by the noises other species make while sleeping; this frustration starts to manifest itself as xenophobia and racism - a situation that threatens the existence of the fledgeling hospital until such time as O'Mara figures out the problem. In the second major story arc, a telepathic alien unwittingly 'infects' the medical staff with the pain, fear and rage it feels following a botched operation; without any recognisable context, these negative feelings once again manifest as xenophobia, resulting in the hospital's first-ever multi-species brawl. Fortunately, the keen insights of O'Mara's medical staff win the day - the botched surgery is corrected, and the 'telepathic contagion' is ended.

Keywords: Space Opera; Aliens; Medicine



Wyndham Bourke, Dermot Robert. *The War Cruise of the 'Aries' (A tale)*. Dublin: Edward Ponsonby, 1894.

Tensions are running high between the French and the British following an attack on a British barracks in Cairo, believed to have been organised by the French. Shortly afterwards, ambassadors are recalled from London and Paris, and an English naval captain sparks an all-out war between the two nations by attacking a French passenger-liner. After this background is established, the text focuses on the design, construction and deployment of the Aries: a newfangled battleship equipped with a battering-ram for sinking enemy vessels. Crewed by mercenaries, the Aries turns the tide of war in favour of Britain, before being destroyed on the western coast of Ireland. The text is illustrated with numerous diagrams showing the design of the ship and the tactics used in naval engagements, along with paintings of the most dramatic episodes by William B. Boulton. To give him his full title, Dermot Robert Wyndham Bourke was the Earl of Mayo.

Keywords: Future War; Technology



Ireland By The Book



WB Yeats,
County Sligo



Frank McCourt,
Limerick city



James Joyce,
County Dublin



CS Lewis
County Down & Belfast



Seamus Heaney,
County Londonderry & Belfast



Jonathan Swift,
Belfast & Dublin city



Maevie Binchy,
County Dublin



Colm Tóibín,
County Wexford



Cecelia Aherne,
County Wicklow



NOTES

NOTES

Dublin 2019 would like to thank the following people for their work on this booklet:

Jack Fennell, for allowing us to use his work and donating it so generously to the Dublin 2019 Worldcon Bid.

Joe Saunders, for permission to reprint the cover image.

Emma England, for project management and advice

Esther MacCallum-Stewart, for proofreading.

... and most especially Lisa Macklem, for copy and design, for her patience, and for dealing with her fussy editors!



email: info@dublin2019.com

Facebook: Dublin2019

Twitter: @dublin2019

Hashtag #dublin2019