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As I write, the Clute/Grant *Fantasy Encyclopedia* is entering its final throes of assembly (► CREATION MYTH), with editors (► DARK LORDS; INSANITY) and contributors (► BONDAGE; NAZGUL) struggling (► LAST BATTLE) towards completion (► EUCATASTROPHE). The trouble (► WRONGNESS) with working for months (► CALENDAR) on this behemoth (► MONSTERS) of books (► LIBRARY) is that sooner or later (► TIME ABYSS; TIME IN FAERIE) you start tearing your hair (► THINNING; TORTURE), thinking (► PERCEPTION) entirely in cross-references (► RECURSIVE FANTASY), and wistfully (► SEHNSUCHT) wondering (► PORTENTS; SCRYING) if you'll ever again have time (► TIME FANTASIES) to visit (► NIGHT JOURNEY; QUEST) the pub (► INNS; PLOT DEVICES) for some relaxing beer (► HEALING)....

Elephant with Wooden Leg

Steve Baxter's *The Time Ships* won the Kurd Lasswitz award for best foreign language novel published in Germany in 1995 ... 'despite the fact that the only German character in the book is an anonymous time-travelling aviator who drops a nuke on Guy Gibson,' notes Steve.

Greg Egan's novel *Distress* (which interestingly suggests the ontological necessity of killing off theoretical physicists before they Meddle With Thoughts Man Should Not Think) won the Aurealis Award for excellence in Australian sf.

Jo Fletcher had a spectacular car accident in March: her car was forced off a motorway by another driver (who neglected to stop) and rolled over four times. Despite concussion, whiplash, sprains, cuts and bruises, she returned home—with crutches—after one night in Peterborough hospital.

Neil Gaiman has been having desperate fun with the shooting of his *Neverwhere* tv series in obscure crannies of London; repercussions even reached *The Times* when Piccadilly Line travellers were spooked by 'ghostly glimpses of strange characters at a table on a shadowy platform covered in serpents and beetles; the vision flashed by seemingly suspended in mid-air ...' This was a scene set on the platform of Down Street tube station, abandoned since 1932. Quoth NG, 'I worry, now that I've had so much fun on top of and underneath London, that the actual TV show will prove to be crap. But I'll walk away happy, because I got to go everywhere I wanted to go in London; I have tromped in the Fleet River (deep in a tunnel under Blackfriars bridge) and wandered the bell-towers and attics of the St Pancras Hotel, and all it cost the BBC was, um, around two million pounds actually...'

Anne Gay and Stan Nicholls, celebrated UK sf people for celebrated UK sf reasons, were married on 30 March.

Garry Kilworth was bemused to find the cover picture of his novel *House of Tribes*—all about mice—used as the illustration for an *Elle* magazine article on how to rid one's house of vermin....

John Sladek smacks his lips: 'I heard from Charles Platt the other evening. He is doing well, and on his way to sit by the bedside of the dying Timothy Leary. Charles belongs to the Cryogenics Society, who are going to freeze the good doctor's head. I suggested that it would be so saturated in high-powered drugs that it would not freeze. I can certainly imagine the freezer being plundered by tattooed kids in search of acid. Can you picture them taking a communion of Leary's brain?'

John Wyndham's papers are up for sale: trunkfuls of MSS, proofs, correspondence, etc. ... including the handwritten MS of *The Day of the Triffids*, four unpublished mystery novels, and much unpublished sf in draft form. The SF Foundation finds itself awfully tempted, but the price tag is £100,000. Can National Lottery money save the day? George Hay, SFF founder, would prefer investment in other, more scientific areas: he points out 'the rocket that was put up—and, more to the point, retrieved—lately by some totally unknown space

buff, aided only by sugar for the propulsion explosives from Tate & Lyle. £100,000 would pay for a whole star-fleet!' Once again I realize the inferior, laggard nature of my own imagination.

Contador

12-14 Apr • **Accelerate** (*Quantum Leap*), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, nr Heathrow, £35 reg. Contact 78 Sterry Rd, Dagenham, Essex, RM10 8NT.

17 Apr • **Arthur C. Clarke Award** presentation, London.

24 Apr • **BSFA** London meeting, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on. 'We don't need no steenkin' guest....'

25-8 Apr • **Eurocon/Baltcon/Lituanicon**, Vilnius, Lithuania. Contact Gediminas Beresnevicus, PO Box 216, Vilnius 2040, Lithuania. Fax +3702 766578.

26 Apr • **Brit Fant Soc Evening**, The Wheatsheaf, Rathbone Pl, London W.1. 6pm on. With Joe R. Lansdale signing.

2-5 May • **Reading Beer Festival**, King's Meadow, Reading. Bafflingly variable entrance fees from free (Fri lunch, Sun pm) to £2.50 (Fri or Sat eve). Enquiries 01734 508119. 'Of course it's a fan event: I'll be there!' belches Martin Hoare.

2-6 May • **Warp Two** (*Trek*), Cardiff International Arena. £35 reg. Contact 69 Merlin Cr, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6JB.

24-7 May • **Inconsistent** (sf/humour), Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. £22 reg; £27 after Easter. Contact 26 Northampton Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA.

14-16 Jun • **Nexus** (*Trek*), Holiday Inn, Bristol. £35 reg. Contact (SAE) 26 Milner Rd, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9PQ.

28-30 Jun • **Discworld Convention**, Britannia 'Sasha's' Hotel, Manchester. *Membership closed*; supp members can still convert. Contact P.O. Box 3086, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 6LD.

26-29 Jul • **Albacon 96**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. £30 reg. Contact F1/2, 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE. 'Nobody south of Carlisle seems to realize that Albacon is on, or that we have both Harlan Ellison and Terry Pratchett!' wails Cuddles; 'The numbers are so poor [...] that we are considering calling it a day.' You are urged to join instantly and prevent this terrible thing.

1-7 Sep • **Cathars, Castles & Crusaders**—a week's tour of mysterious Languedoc in France, shepherded by that 'erudite and well known lecturer, author and TV presenter' Lionel (*The Holy Blood and the Holy Badger*) Fanthorpe. £500 all-in. Contact—if you dare—PO Box 4, Llandeilo, Dyfed, SA19 6YZ.

4-6 Oct • **Fantasycon XX**, International Hotel, London. £40 reg; BSF members £35. GoHs Christopher Fowler, Tom Holt. Contact (SAE) 137 Priory Rd, Hall Grn, Birmingham, B28 0TG.

24-6 Dec • **Yulecon**, Plough & Harrow Hotel, Hagley Rd, Edgbaston, Brum. Avoid the family Xmas for £20 reg (and 3 x SAE). Contact 56 York Rd, Torpoint, Cornwall, PL11 2LG.

28-31 Mar 97 • **Intervention** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. £25 reg/£15 unwaged (£30/£20 after Easter); cheques to 'Wincon'. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

Rumblings • **Chris Bell** issued great ululating cries of horror and despair on discovering that (a) Evolution hotel rooms don't have tea- or coffee-making facilities—'We are a 5-star hotel. Our customers do not wish to make their own coffee'; (b) room service allegedly charges £2.50 a cup; (c) others on the committee knew this but had neglected to tell their e-mail-less hotel liaison person C.Bell.... • **Brum Group** 3rd-Fri-of-month meetings have moved (after vast upheavals) to Prince Hotel, Station St; **Reading Group** Monday beerfests (9pm on) are

now in the Three B's bar, Town Hall basement. • **Worldcon 1999:** the selection ballot will apparently feature only Australia and Zagreb, a mooted Las Vegas bid having failed to file its papers in time (though a campaign for write-in votes may still be an option).

Infinitely Improbable

Would You Do It For A Penny? The fabled US sf magazines *Asimov's* and *Analog* have been sold (along with all other Dell Magazines titles, including *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*) to Penny Press, a Connecticut publisher previously specializing in crossword puzzle magazines. SF editors Gardner Dozois (7, 6) and Stanley Schmidt (anag.) are expected to remain in charge.

Tiptree Award: Elizabeth Hand, *Waking The Moon*; Theodore Roszak, *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (tie). [ED]

Why We Are Despicable. 'Science fiction novels are historical novels in reverse, and both are properly despised. Both are archaeological—so obsessed with discovery that the given is stunted. In both, world-mapping obliterates world-making; both attempt a kind of reconstruction, one backwards from the present, and one forwards. Specificity—how the sewers worked in 1880, or how they will work in 2080—is so strategic that it wearies the reader....' Thus James Wood in *The Guardian*, reviewing Russell Hoban's *Fremder*—favourably, since (just like 1,000 other despised sf novels which Wood knows he needn't read) the book isn't particularly concerned with world-maps or sewers.

R.I.P. Richard Powers (born 1921; died 9 March in Madrid), the artist who successfully brought abstract art and surrealism to sf book jackets. • *Evangeline Walton* (born 1907; died 11 March, of pneumonia), who novelized the four branches of the *Mabinogion*—beginning with *The Virgin and the Swine* (1936, wisely retitled *The Island of the Mighty*) and completing the set as 70s Ballantine Adult Fantasies. [CNB]

Random Fandom. John D. Berry sends a *Science News* headline proving that Eyes Are Upon Us: 'CIA studies fan debate over psi abilities'. • *Helena Gough & Martin Tudor* announced their wedding for 4 April, followed by a combined honeymoon and TAFF campaign in the sultry, tropical setting of Eastercon.... • *Kim Huett* renounced all fan-fund ambitions, preferring to visit the US under his own steam: 'Not that I would ever stand for DUFF anyway as it involves attending a worldcon, i.e. the fannish equivalent of genital warts.' • *Joan Paterson and Tibs* 'are now the proud (and exhausted) parents of Michael Lachlan Ibbes, born 1:35am on 2 April 1996 at the Queen Mother's Hospital in Glasgow.' • *Councillor Iain Thomas* of the Glasgow District Council, that fun-loving skiffy fan dear to the hearts of all locals, had plans to enliven his final council meeting with loud and amusing bangs ... but the Lord Provost's heavy mob got wind of this, took him sternly aside, and caused him to empty his pockets of fireworks. Cllr Thomas is a self-confessed Conservative. [*Glasgow Herald*, 29 Mar]

C.o.A. BEM (Spanish newzine), Interface Grupo Editor, PO Box 6092, 47080 Valladolid, Spain • *Gary Farber*, 922 East 15th St, Apt 2B, Brooklyn, NY 11230, USA (expected by 11 Apr). • *Sally Ann Melia*, 6 Addlestone Pk, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 1SA • *Rob & Pat Welbourn*, 24 Wilde Road, Waban, MA 02168-1325, USA.

Fantasy Encyclopaedia Fun. Best cross-reference entry so far, surprising yet logical: 'GUYS ► DOLLS'. • Most regrettedly unwritten theme-entry phrases: in DARK TOWER, '... often updated as black-glass skyscrapers; modern London and New York have suffered severe attacks of DTs'; and in BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR, 'The BLT sandwiches, as it were, the concepts of ...'

FAAns Redivivus. Fanzine Activity Achievement awards at Corflu went to: ARTIST D. West (runners-up Ian Gunn, Teddy Harvia, Dan Steffan); WRITER Andrew P. Hooper (r.u. Sharon Farber, Dave Langford, Simon Ounsley); FANZINE *Apparatchik* (r.u. *Attitude*, *BLAT!*, *Mimosa*). [JM] Could these results foreshadow ... the fan Hugos?

Thog's Critical Masterclass. From a Ringpull flyer for Jeff Noon's *Pollen*: 'Cyber-punk was invented by the Americans in the late 1980s when people such as William Gibson began exploring the possibilities of high-tech meets science-fiction. But cyber-punk is a million miles from the traditional world of science-fiction ruled by sword and sorcery. The new generation's worlds are ruled by the gun and are inhabited by

sharply drawn credible characters. Witty, urban and hip, cyber-punk came as a maelstrom of fresh air....'

Bram Stoker Awards. 1996 finalists: NOVEL *Widow*, Billie Sue Mosiman; *deadrush*, Yvonne Navarro; *Zombie*, Joyce Carol Oates; *Bone Music*, Alan Rodgers. FIRST NOVEL *Diary of a Vampire*, Gary Bowen; *The Between*, Tananarive Due; *Madeleine's Ghost*, Robert Giardi; *The Safety of Unknown Cities*, Lucy Taylor; *Wyrn Wolf*, Edo van Belkom. NOVELETTE 'Baby Girl Diamond', Adam-Troy Castro; 'Lunch at the Gotham Cafe', Stephen King; 'Looking for Mr. Flip', Thomas F. Monteleone; 'Lover Doll', Wayne Allen Sallee; SHORT 'Becky Lives' Harry Crews; 'Chatting with Anubis', Harlan Ellison; 'The Bungalow House', Thomas Ligotti; 'Death of the Novel', William Browning Spencer. COLLECTION *The Panic Hand*, Jonathan Carroll; *Cages*, Ed Gorman; *The Black Carousel*, Charles Grant; *Strange Highways*, Dean Koontz. NONFICTION *The Supernatural Index*, Mike Ashley & William Contento; *Psycho: Behind the Scenes*, Janet Leigh & Christopher Nickens; *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural*, James Randi; *Immoral Tales: European Sex and Horror Movies 1956-1984*, Cathal Tohill and Pete Tombs. Winners to be announced 8 June. [ED]

Oops. Mighty defender of truth *Jim England* denounced me in *The Skeptic* magazine as 'importantly wrong', for an obituary that quoted the full name John Kilian Houston Brunner. Armed with infallible memories of some conversation with John in the early 50s, JE declared that the middle names were 'invented' as a pseudonym. 'Most SF writers ... seem to have wrongly assumed they were part of his real name.' **FACT:** John's 1934 birth certificate is available through the Office of National Statistics, and lists his forenames as John Kilian Houston. (From which he extracted the briefly-used pseudonym 'Kilian Houston Brunner'.)

Thog's Masterclass. "And I've been here many times before. In fact, I was here when you were running around in dirty diapers, Mr Coal. Things have a way of leaking out." / "I think you've had leaks yourself," Coal said.' (John Grisham, *The Pelican Brief*) • 'The likelihood of life elsewhere in the Galaxy, the inevitability of her species being drawn into an interstellar extinction lottery, was all spelled out on the insides of Sargenti-Peterson.' (Charles Pellegrino & George Zebrowski, *The Killing Star*. S-P is, luckily, a comet.) • *The Author* reports extreme difficulty in recording one novel's alleged immortal line for an audiobook: 'All the streets of the port were running with Arab seamen.'

Holdstockgram! *Rob Holdstock* rips the lid off: 'Good God it's Peter Weston! At the International Association for Fantasy in the Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida! "What are you doing here, Peter?" many a delegate asks (shocked). "It's terrible," the reply comes from his seat at the poolside. "I'm supposed to be selling doorknobs to a bunch of blokes in Orlando. It's a business trip, see? But my connecting flight from Fort Lauderdale was cancelled! Isn't that terrible?" "Shocking! When's your next available flight?" "Mine's a Pina Colada," comes the chortling reply! • Astonishing scenes at the panel on British sf where Tom Shippey and John Clute heatedly disagree about *Interzone* publishing policy following a teasing statement from Peter that were he to write an upbeat space-opera, *IZ* wouldn't publish it because it wouldn't be pessimistic enough. Generously ignoring any other reason for rejection, Clute's impassioned defence of new writer optimism is only slightly undermined when Ellen Datlow, of *Omni*, informs the audience that the new generation of dour British sf writers collectively call themselves "The Miserables". "I'm sorry John. I just thought you should know." • Even more astonishing scenes at the guest lunch on Friday, where 300 delegates are holding copies of *The Hollowing*. How quickly one is able to forget that the book was distributed as a freebie! • To the Bahia Cabana with a small gang all curious to see if it's true that the menu includes Blackened Dolphin Steak Sandwich. It is. After minutes of silence and soul searching—*First Englishman* (softly): "It may be politically incorrect ... but I'm going to have the fucking dolphin. How about you?" *Second Englishman* (whispering): "Absolutely! I was just waiting for someone to go first." • A summons from the bar to the roof, where Joe Haldeman has his binoculars pointed towards the comet Hyakutake. His instruction to delegates to "Let your eyes adjust and you'll see something blurry, surrounded by a fuzzy haze" is quite unnecessary. •