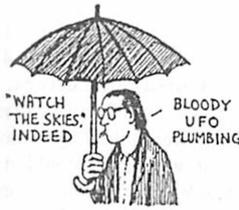


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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0118 966 9914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: D. West. Available for SAE, whimsy, or Casaubon's Key to All Mythologies.

GREASY POLE. News of Arthur C. Clarke's New Year knighthood for 'services to literature' led to debate over whether this is a first for sf. The obvious contender Kingsley Amis was probably knighted in spite of, not because of, his sf/fantasy; the same goes for Compton Mackenzie and Angus Wilson. Fred Hoyle got it for science. Rather dispiritingly, Conan Doyle's and H. Rider Haggard's knighthoods were for Approved Politics, as indeed was Thomas More's.... (Lord Dunsany inherited his title and doesn't count.) So dear old Arthur C. does seem to be the first wholly science-fictional knight. Which of the usual suspects could be next? No doubt Ladbroke's will soon announce their long-term odds on Sir Brian Aldiss, Sir Iain Banks, Sir Terry Pratchett, Sir Iain M. Banks ...

The Shubshub Race

Steve Baxter struggles desperately to be newsworthy: 'Playboy axed my famous photo [see A123]. Well, Miss January did use up a lot of room. I've joined the SF Writers of Japan, the first overseas member. And I won a prize from the dealer Barry Levin as the most collectable author of 1997. So there is a strategy behind small print runs....'

David Brin published a piece in the *Los Angeles Times* (5 Jan), denouncing horrid critics for sneering at the 'overall theme of hope' in Kevin Costner's movie of *The Postman*, and endorsing comparisons with Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Not all fans of the novel agree.

Malcolm Edwards has moved from his awesome position of not-quite-total power at HarperCollins UK to become managing director (and Publisher of Trade Books) at Orion.

Simon R. Green cannot be dissuaded from revealing secrets of his *Deathstalker* novel-in-progress, now months overdue: 'I have just introduced the Sisters of Glory; an order of warrior nuns with leprosy. You know, if it wasn't for bad taste, I wouldn't have any taste at all....'

David Pringle recalls the late Kathy Acker, whom 'I met just once, but it was kind of memorable. It was at the launch party for Ballard's *The Day of Creation*, which would have been in September 1987. Gamma introduced us, and we spoke for a long time. She was nothing like her rather fearsome, tattooed public image (the image of magazine photos and even her TV appearances): she seemed small, enthusiastic, and had a cute top-knot. Curiously vulnerable and, well, *ordinary*. Unfortunately, I then made the *faux pas*, a few weeks later, of rejecting a story submission from her. She never sent another....'

Anne Rice, secret mistress of good taste, has licensed a t-shirt which no fan can miss—silk-screened with an MRI image of her brain.

Nicholas Royle, lauded last issue as a finalist in the *Literary Review's* Bad Sex competition (for a scene in *The Matter of the Heart*), was indeed the winner. The trophy, 'a beautiful statue ... suggestive of bad sex', was to be presented by Stephen Fry, who—having dictated the day of the presentation—forgot to turn up and went to Toronto instead.

Andy Sawyer enjoyed desperate fun at last month's B5 Academic Conference: 'The sight of hardened academics telling each other *Babylon 5* "chicken crossing the road" jokes and voting whether they liked Delenn was curiously heartwarming. Large portions of food were provided and the conference meal was suitably posh, while the scenic quadrangle of Ripon and St John's York campus proved a setting for photographs and the civilized atmosphere was only slightly dispelled by the morning chorus in the student rooms of "Where's the showers?" ... "Oh, there aren't any showers." • Panic struck when the week before the conference my car was broken into and among the things taken was my Psion containing the full and only text of my paper on Lovecraftian echoes in B5, carefully and securely hidden in a bag in the car boot, and snugly surrounded by nearly all my notes. My thoughts that the Elder Gods did not want their secrets revealed turned out to be paranoid fantasies which a lack of green iclor and an absence of car radios, mobile phones, sports bags, and other contents of the boot slightly dispelled, although there is a wonderfully Lovecraftian air about Cthulhu disporting in my wife's swimsuit, listening to Classic FM and doing business over the mobile with Hastur the Unspeakable. Farah [Mendlesohn] declared "I have faith in you, Andy" which I took to

mean a lightly encoded "let me down at this stage and I'll roast your entrails," so a new and revised edition was duly written. On arrival, I discovered that someone had gone to the wrong campus and would I be first on? I gibbered my way through my paper, and my ad-lib that the Great Race of *The Shadow Out of Time* were obviously librarians got such a surprising laugh that eldritch scenarios began to flow as I wondered if it could possibly be *true*.'

Contabescent

24 Jan • **British Fantasy Soc Open Night**, Princess Louise, High Holborn, London. Upstairs bar. With Geoff Ryman.

28 Jan • **BSFA** London meeting, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on (fans in the bar by 5pm). Will there be a guest? Who knows?

6-8 Feb • **Decadence** (10th British filk con), Albany Hotel, Grand Parade, Eastbourne. £28/\$45 reg, £15/\$22 supp. Contact 43 Millbrook Gdns, Cheltenham, GL50 3RQ. Note venue change from Gatwick.

13-15 Feb • **Starfleet Ball** (*Trek*), Moat House, Bourneimouth. Contact Five Elms, Holtwood, nr Wimborne, Dorset, BD21 7DT.

13-15 Feb • **Lightspeed** (*Trek*), Coventry ... CANCELLED.

28 Feb • **Picocon 15**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB. Cost and GoH TBA. Contact ICSF, above address.

28 Feb • **SF Fair**, Drillhall, Lincoln. 10am-5pm. 50p reg. Contact 44 Staverton Cres, Birchwood, Lincoln, LN6 OYW; 01522 689271.

27 Feb - 1 Mar • **Starfury** (B5), Holiday Inn, Leicester. Contact 148a Queensway, Bayswater, London, W2 6LY.

28 Feb - 1 Mar • **Microcon 18**, Devonshire House, Stocker Rd, Exeter. £5 reg; students £2.50. Contact 25 Victoria St, Exeter, EX4 6JA.

14-15 Mar • **Corflu** (the fanzine con), Griffin Hotel, Leeds. £25/\$40 reg. Contact 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY.

10-13 Apr • **Intuition** (Eastercon), Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £35 reg, £15 supp. Contact 1 Waverley Way, Garshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 3LQ.

21-24 Aug • **The Wrap Party**, Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £65 reg to end of Intuition at Easter; £75 to Jul; £80 at door. Contact (SAE) PO Box 505, Reading, Berks, RG1 7QZ.

4-7 Sep • **Cult TV**, Telford Moat House. £44 reg to 1 Jun, then £49 to 31 Aug. Contact (SAE) PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER.

18-21 Sep • **Discworld Convention II**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Now £35 reg, £25 unwaged. Contact (SAE/IRC) PO Box 4100, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2GZ. PR2 now out, with hotel booking forms.

? Jul 99 • **Baroquon** (RPG), Cambridge. GoH Mary Gentle. Contact (SAE) 3 Saddlers Close, Baidock, Herts, SG7 6EF.

Rumblings • **Octocon 98** (Irish national con) should soon be announced for late Oct; two groups are currently bidding. [DL] • **2001** ... the Boston (MCFI) Worldcon bid, finding local facilities expensive, is switching venues to Orlando, Florida. Disney World is a possibility. [SS]

Infinitely Improbable

TAFF. The 1998 TransAtlantic Fun Fund eastbound race was won by Ulrika O'Brien, who will come to Intuition at Easter—and Corflu in March. General applause for energetic and productive TAFF campaigns to Ulrika and her rivals Victor Gonzalez, Vicki Rosenzweig and Tom Sadler. (But no marks at all to US loon Bill Bridget, whose inaccurate last-minute smears horrified the candidate burdened with his 'support'.) Condensed voting figures follow. First count: VG 55, UO'B 69, VR 46, TS 42, Hold Over Funds 3, No Preference 9. After eliminating TS (20% rule) and HOF: VG 60, UO'B 82, VR 57. Final round: VG 77, UO'B 105. Of 2.24 initial ballots, 70 were received by Martin Tudor (Europe) and 154 by Dan Steffan (NA). Eerily, the betting odds suggested in A122 by Honest D. West (The Old Firm) exactly predicted the voting order.

Publishers & Sinners. *Martha Soukup* adds a footnote to the tales of *Wired* empire cutbacks: 'Guess what! You were the first and last British "Head Space" guest. [See A124.] HotWired laid off so many people no one was left to be in charge of us—anyway we were the last fragment of the chat program that was so wildly ambitious, that they

sank so many programming decades into, only a year ago. Oh well! ● On 16 Dec a US judge's order transferred control of bankrupt *Marvel Entertainment*, including Marvel Comics, from its now-dissolved board of directors to a neutral trustee ... as desired by secured creditors (owed \$812 million) and opposed by Marvel stockholders, who could yet lose their entire investments. Further fun in court to follow on 30 Jan.

Random Fandom. *Don Fitch*, having been diagnosed with cancer of the nose, underwent a rhinectomy on 6 Jan and cheerily speculated on prostheses: 'one with a red light, for the Rudolph Season, one with a miniaturized soap-bubble machine, and one for the insertion of big safety-pins, for wearing (with appropriately-dyed green&purple hair and beard) to PunkRockRaves ...' [GS] ● *Jean Hoare* was given a clean bill of health in Dec, after a grim year of treatment for cancer. ● *Eric Lindsay* suffered a mild heart attack on 5 Dec but was released from hospital in good condition by the 11th. [JW] ● *NESFA*, fannishly concerned for the welfare of the skunk that lives around and under its Massachusetts clubhouse, was recently reassured by a truly appalling stench that permeated clubhouse and environs.... [IM] ● *Harry Payne & Omega* report the birth (by emergency caesarean) of their Henry Stanley on 2 Dec. *Harry*: 'I've put him down for Intuition, Reconvene, and sundry other cons. Speaking as a victim of the English Public School system, his education at cons will be a damn sight better, and far cheaper than the ratholes I had to attend.' ● *Derek Pickles* is recovering from a successful knee-joint replacement operation. ● *Nancy Tucker Shaw* held a popular party in memory of Bob Shaw at Novacon 27, in the science-fictional Room 334; she hopes to make this a regular event.

C.o.A. *Gary Farber*, c/o Rebecca Lesses, 419 W 119th St, Apt 7H, New York, NY 10027, USA (maildrop only). *John Howard*, 11 Chesterfield Ct, Middleton Hall Rd, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 1AF. *Steve Kerry & Carol Ann Kerry-Green*, 278 Victoria Ave, Hull, HU5 3DL. *Kirk S.King*, 60 Brand Rd, Honiton, Devon, EX14 8FD. *Catherine McAulay*, Orion Bruxelles, Quai au Bois à Brûler 51, B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium (until mid-March). *Jeanne Mealy & John Stanley*, 1595 E. Hoyt Ave, St Paul, MN 55106, USA.

Birthday Boys. *Arthur C.Clarke* was 80 on 16 Dec. As his famous *Third Law* says, 'Any sufficiently advanced birthday is indistinguishable from magic.' It was left to Tony Blair to think of a suitable present. ● *Stripling Chuch Harris* turned 70 on 23 Dec, celebrating with an Xmas newsletter of unparalleled filthiness. ● *Ken Slater* was 80 on 27 Dec, and looked back on being 'a science fantasy reader for 70+ years, an active fan since 1945, and a dealer (of sorts) since 1947.' Cheers to all.

Logical. Letter in the *Irish Times* last year: 'Sir, I have just received a letter bearing one of the new *Dracula* stamps. The stamp has been franked with the message: "Blood donors are always needed."'

R.L.P. *Owen Barfield*, Inklings member, 'philosopher of language, author of the children's fantasy *The Silver Trumpet*, and best-known as the close friend off whom C.S.Lewis most liked to bounce ideas, died on 14 Dec at the age of 99.' [DB] ● *Ed Cox*, long-time US fan, died on 9 Dec; prominent in late-60s LA fandom, he memorably insisted that his group's social meetings were in fact the G.Peyton Wertenbaker Appreciation Society. [LB] His fanzines appeared from the 50s to the 80s. ● *Ted Pauls*, US fan since 1958 and publisher of the 60s fanzine *Kipple*, died on 5 Nov after a period in coma following a brain aneurism. [SS] ● *Eugene Shoemaker*—or rather, 7g of his cremated remains—went into space aboard the *Lunar Prospector* on 6 Jan; when the probe finally crashes in 18 months or so, he'll have the first 'burial' on another world. ● *Richard Vernon*, who played Slartibartfast in the original *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* radio series and also on TV, died on 6 Dec. [MH]

1997 Mythopoeic Awards. Adult Fantasy Novel: *The Wood Wife* by Terri Windling. Scholarship (Inklings Only): *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams* ed. Charles A.Huttar & Peter Schakel. Scholarship (Rest Of Universe): *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animations, Metamorphosis and Development* by Lois Rostow Kuznets.

Small Press. The 1998 *Phone Boxes of the Western Palearctic Calendar* is a homage to Frank Key's *Hooting Yard Calendar* (not seen this year) by Jonathan Coleclough—with unlikely images of phone boxes, weekdays in Finnish and Albanian, and at least 365 strange rubrics. Some spares available: £5 to Jonathan at 3 Eldon Road, Reading, RG1 4DJ. ● *The Third Alternative #14* (Dec 97) is warmly commended by *Ansible* for, er, reasons. *The Plain People of Fandom*: That means Andy Cox printed one of your stories. *Myself*: Oh, very clever of you. £2.75 from TTA Press, 5 Martins La, Witcham, Ely, Cambs, CB6 2LB.

Fangs of WFC ... the 1997 World Fantasy Con has opened legal action against an evil-doer in Reading, being (to my guilty relief) the book dealer Christopher Barker—who grumpily stopped payment of his

membership cheque after being 'forced to miss the evening performance of Bram Stoker's prologue to *Dracula: or The Un-Dead* because it started later than scheduled and he had to get home.' [SJ] Ho hum.

Outraged Letters. *Simon R.Green* claims near-parity with *Iain Banks*: 'You know, I was going to be mentioned on *The Archers*. But they were told they couldn't use language like that on the radio.' ● *Tom Holt* wishes he could make it into Thog's department: 'After all, a Masterclass citation is one of the highest honours our community can bestow, comparable to a posthumous VC, or being top of the bill at the Coliseum on Caesar's birthday.' ● *D.M.Sherwood*, scourer of the web, was rather taken by Harlan Ellison's feisty comment on the celebrity death of '97: 'Yesterday, a ferry boat leaving Haiti sunk and 300 people died, drowned, as the boat capsized. But a tragedy was avoided when they discovered that none of them on board was a Princess.'

SF Prophecies. Robert Conquest's *A World of Difference* (1962) is set near 2010 and features 'that most distinguished and exclusive of all bodies, the Interplanetary Society. Its ninety-odd-years-old Honorary President, the legendary "Sir Arthur", was one of the guests ...'

Starburst magazine celebrated 20 years of publication in Dec 97.

10 Years Ago. John Norman's 1988 letter to an admiring fan is timeless: 'As you know most science-fiction fans are still very young. Most have certainly not reached their full sexual maturity. Similarly, the sorts of things to which many of them are attracted, e.g. space ships, ray guns, etc, or, say, magic, sorcerers, dragons, etc, are quite alien to the *Gorean* books, which are, on the whole at least, extremely realistic. Similarly, the *Gorean* books are not simple action novels. They are also intellectual novels, philosophical and psychological novels. This puts them in a different category from the average science-fiction or adventure fantasy story ...' In short, and who can doubt it, 'The *Gorean* books are written for highly intelligent, highly sexed adults.' [DMS]

FAAns ... Fanzine Activity Achievement Award ballots are now available, from Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Ave N #103, Seattle, WA 98103, USA; I'll run off bootleg UK copies on request. Voting deadline 1 Mar.

20 Years Ago. 'Meanwhile, in the sercon strongholds of the SF Foundation, Malcolm Edwards has replaced Peter Nicholls as boss, and David Pringle has moved in as an Igor figure. [...] Harlan Ellison plans to sleep in a tent at Iguanacon for political reasons. Look, don't ask me, I just print the bloody news.' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint 86*, 1978)

TAFF Sales. Chuch Harris donated part of his fabulous vintage fanzine collection for TAFF auction. This will be a mail auction, run by Vicki Rosenzweig. Details on request from her at 33 Indian Rd, 6-R, New York, NY 10034, USA. ● *TAFF Tales* is Ken Bulmer's 1955 TAFF trip report, published in fanzines from 1959-61 and only now retyped and collected as a 30pp A4 perfect-bound booklet. £5 post free from *Ansible* in Europe. Copies available in North America real soon now, at \$10 post free from TAFF-administrator-elect Ulrika O'Brien: 123 Melody Lane #C, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, USA. Proceeds to TAFF. Good old SCIFI of California has donated its traditional \$500 to the fund as reward for the publication of a trip report. [BP] Hint, hint.

Editorial. My thanks to all who sent Christmas cards, messages of New Year cheer, etc. With callous brutality I failed to post cards in return: there is what we euphemistically call a cashflow problem, whose gloom is deepened by my father's current hospitalization. Of all the *Ansibles* since its 1991 revival, this one came closest to not appearing. A lapse or even a halt later in 1998 is all too possible. Be warned.

Thog's Masterclass. "Can I use the bathroom?" Stanley asked, his bladder full of fear.' ... 'She trotted over to the car, her footsteps echoing like a noisy shadow.' ... 'But Hollis's bloodlust would not be denied: he was going to snap the faggot's head off his shoulders, and then watch the blood spurt like cancerous semen.' (all Carl Huberman, *Eminent Domain*, 1996) ● 'He wanted to [...] put his tongue between her legs and watch her eyes roll back.' (Rupert Thomson, *The Five Gates of Hell*, 1991) [PB] ● 'Miss Laurence raised her eyes and threw them over Clemence's face.' (Ivy Compton-Burnett, *Two Worlds and Their Ways*, 1949) ● 'For a split second, Strider's stomach was at least fifty metres above her prone body.' (John Grant, *Strider's Galaxy*, 1996. *Pained Author*: 'That was a deliberate joke.' Researcher *Tanya Brown*: 'It wasn't printed in *Ironics* so how is anyone to know, huh?')

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