

ansible



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MONEY! Andy Sawyer is cock-a-hoop over the Heritage Lottery fund's decision to put up £85,500 of the £100,000 needed to buy John Wyndham's archives for preservation in the SF Foundation collection. This wad of material includes original MSS of *The Day of the Triffids* and *The Kraken Wakes*, five unpublished novels (one an incomplete sequel to *The Midwich Cuckoos*), short stories, early and abandoned drafts, and hundreds of letters. It's interesting to compare the opening of *Triffids* with such early versions as: 'On the day when the Great Calamity put an end to the world I had known for almost 30 years, I happened to be in bed with a bandage all round my head and over my eyes.' (*Noises off: a mob of SF writers burning far more embarrassing old drafts....*)

The Forgotten Enemy

Arthur C. Clarke was attacked as an alleged gay paedophile by the *Sunday Mirror* on 1 Feb, with a front-page story (CHILD SEX SHAME OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE), internal 2-page spread and typically temperate editorial: STRIP THIS PERVERT OF KNIGHTHOOD HE SHAMES. All nastily timed for maximum shock value, since Clarke's investiture as knight by Prince Charles had been scheduled for 4 Feb in Sri Lanka—where, as the *S/M* did not fail to gloat, any gay sex may now be punished by imprisonment and/or flogging. Sir Arthur: 'I am outraged by the *Sunday Mirror's* allegations, and I am seeking legal advice. I am convinced this whole exercise is a cheap attempt to embarrass my friend Prince Charles. I am against mucking about with small boys. There is no truth in the allegation. I have not been sexually active for over 20 years.' In an e-mailed circular he thanked friends and associates for their unanimous support.

Simon R. Green has his finger on the pulse of something or other: 'Apparently the latest entry in the filmed autopsy stakes (Princess Di was the last) is the Teletubby Autopsy. Which is the Roswell Alien Autopsy, with Dipsy's head superimposed. Which in turn led to the rumour that the Teletubbies are in fact the long-awaited human-alien hybrids, and that the Powers That Be are trying to convince us all that they are actually nice likeable creatures, and Not To Be Feared....'

Chris Priest ponders the Feb *Interzone*: 'Leigh and I, gazing in horror on the current cover, could not help but remark that after all these years, with so much written and said about the maturity of sf, the bad old days put behind us, the cutting edge, the new literature for the next century, with all that said we have a sci-fi magazine with a cover painting showing a pretty girl being sexually assaulted by a robot. And the thing is, it's not a post-modern representation, or in any way genre-knowing ... it really is a robot feeling up a girl who seems to be loving it. Only the style of painting has changed.'

Terry Pratchett is apparently not Literature after all. The academic editors of the British Council's posh 'Writers and their Work' series were keen to commission a critical monograph on Terry's work, and invited me to write it; the publisher also made eager noises; and then, even as my pen hovered over the contract, came the news that 'there has been a policy change'. Project cancelled. Terry: 'I am intrigued that after (you tell me) unrestrained joy and enthusiasm from everyone involved in producing this, suddenly they do a handbrake turn ... who's that lurking outside? ... what's that clicking on the phone? ...' The ashen-faced, tight-lipped General Editor would only say: 'I am sorry about the policy change, but we do have to work with the British Council.'

Keith Roberts deserves a plug, writes *Phil Stephensen-Payne* ... for his 'latest (and possibly last) book, *Lemady: Episodes of a Writer's Life*. This is a blend of fiction and autobiography ... possibly Keith's best work to date, as well as giving a fascinating insight into the English publishing scene through which he moved. • The book is published by Borgo Press in both paperback (0-8095-3101-1) and cloth (-2101-6) editions ... but, as with many Borgo Press titles, has been allowed to creep out without fanfare and hence, if left to them, will sink without trace. Keith himself is obviously too ill to promote the book to any degree, but I do know that he is very proud of it (as he should be).'

Whitley Strieber again overthrows the dogmas of fuddy-duddy so-called 'orthodox science'. *Damien Broderick* reports: 'Have you been

keeping up with our favourite abductee? Just lightly buzzed across the surface of Strieber's *The Secret School*, and learned that "Without the slowing effects of the moon's gravity, the planet's thousand-mile-an-hour rotational speed would cause constant surface winds of at least three hundred miles an hour" (p103). This was not as exciting, though, as "What we would need [for time travel] is access to a particle stream that was moving faster than light ... Certainly such particles exist; there is a straight-line stream of particles pouring out of the stellar object Cygnus X-3 that must consist of neutrons. Since neutrons have a half-life of only fifteen minutes, and we can see them although they are light-years away, they must be accelerated to faster-than-light speed. If we could harness them, we could use them in some way, perhaps to sail backward in time or shine them like a beam into the past" (pp47-8).'

Contrahent

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

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

25 Feb • **BSFA** London meeting, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on (fans in the bar by 5pm). With M. John Harrison.

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

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 ... CANCELLED owing to apathy. *Disillusioned Organizers*: 'We will never ever do another one in Lincoln.'

28 Feb - 1 Mar • **Microcon** 18, Devonshire House, Stocker Rd, Exeter. GoH Brian Stableford. £5 reg; students £2.50. Contact (new address) 16 Fairlea Close, Dawlish, EX7 0NN. 01626 888797.

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, Carshalton Beches, Surrey, SM5 3LQ.

4-6 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Sacha's Hotel, Manchester. GoH Gerry Anderson and others. £45 reg (£55 from 1 Apr) to Soc of Fantastic Films c/o 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

Nov • **C.S. Lewis Centenary Exhibition**, Belfast Central Library; they 'are interested in Lewis's connections with the sf world.' [AS] Contact Linda Greenwood, BCL, Royal Ave, Belfast, BT1 1EA.

? Nov • **Armadacon X**, Cophthorne Hotel, Plymouth. Flyers so far are mysteriously reticent about the actual dates. £25 reg, £19 unwaged. Contact PO Box 38, Plymouth; 01752 267873/812698.

26-28 Feb 99 • **Redemption** (B5/B7), International Hotel, Ashford, Kent. £35 reg; £40 from 1 Sep. Contact 28 Diprose Rd, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 3QY.

Rumblings • **Boston for Orlando, 2001**: the official bid site is now in Disney World, Florida (Dolphin & Swan hotels), which a poll of presupporters preferred to the International Drive, site of Magicon in 1992. Opposing bids are Philadelphia and a (spoo?) Kansas City bid for Worldcon in ... Boston. • **Eastercon 2000**: the Radisson Edwardian (Heathrow) bid chaired by Pam Wells now has a name—Radicon.

Infinitely Improbable

Arthur C. Clarke Award shortlist (best sf novels first published in Britain in 1997): Stephen Baxter, *Titan*; Elizabeth Hand, *Glimmering*; James Lovegrove, *Days*; Jeff Noon, *Nymphomation*; Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow*; Sheri S. Tepper, *The Family Tree*. The presentation will once again take place at the Science Museum, in Spring. [PK]

Publishers & Sinners. 'Anyone got 151 million quid?' asks Simon Forrester of Future Publishing and *SFX*. 'Future's being sold, and our office whip-round only got us 28 notes....' An earlier *SFX* panic followed their quiz which asked readers the source of the acronym TANSTAAFL; in the event, nobody at Future knew the esoteric answer ('Er, something to do with Heinlein?') and frantic phone calls were made to the BSFA.

Amazing Stories (est. 1926 by Hugo Gernsback) will be relaunched this summer, as a quarterly from card games outfit Wizards of the Coast. A press release about what they inspiringly call 'science fiction properties' implied that all the stories would be game, film, and TV tie-ins. Apparently, though, original fiction will predominate.

BSFA Awards final ballot for 1997 work ... NOVEL Jack Deighton, *A Son of the Rock*; M. John Harrison, *Signs of Life*; Tim Powers, *Earthquake Weather*; Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow*; Michael Swanwick, *Jack Faust*. SHORT Stephen Baxter, 'War Birds' (*IZ* 126); Eugene Byrne, 'Thigmoo' (*IZ* 120); Pat Cadigan, 'The Emperor's New Reality' (*New Worlds*); Richard Kadrey, 'The First Man Not to Land on the Moon' (*BBR* 23); Paul Kincaid, 'Last Day of the Carnival—36 Exposures' (*BBR* 23). ARTWORK Brian Froud, *The Wood Wife* (Terri Windling); Dominic Harman, *IZ* 124 p27; SMS, *IZ* 116 cover; Michael Whelan, *The Golden Key* (Melanie Rawn et al); Paul Young, *A Child of the River* (Paul McAuley/*IZ* 123). Winners to be announced at Eastercon (Intuition). [CH]

Random Fandom. **BSFA Horror:** large chunks of the Jan mailing have been delayed/lost in the post. • *John L. Coker III*, long-time US fan historian and photographer, is first to receive the Sam Moskowitz Fan Award, 'given annually to encourage and recognize outstanding fan activity.' • *Steve Green* demonstrates his mature reporting technique: 'No sooner have Arthur Clarke and Stephen Baxter braved the glossy interior of *Playboy*, than Maxim Jakubowski slips between the sheets of *Penthouse UK* with a splash of erotica ("An invisible request I could not disobey ..."). How long can it be before *Knave* cracks and pleads for a certain *Ansible* editor to return to the (centre)fold?' • *John D. Berry & Eileen Gunn* 'are moving to New York City! John's becoming Editor (or Editor and Publisher) of *U&L*—*Upper and Lower Case*—published by ITC (International Typeface Corporation). Whoohoo! Big time.' [GFS] • *Ian Gunn* sends strange egoboo: 'I was puddling about with *Alta Vista*'s new Babelfish translation service and discovered, on an Italian SF resource page, the following link: "*Ansible*: Nine times prize Hugo in the version on paper, this fanzine, cured from Dave Langford, give news and speak about fandom the American." Just thought you might like to know that.'

Phillip K. Dick Award shortlist (best original US paperback novel) ... William Barton, *Acts of Conscience*; Stepan Chapman, *The Troika*; Susan R. Matthews, *An Exchange of Hostages*; Richard Paul Russo, *Carlucci's Heart*; Denise Vitola, *Opallite Moon*; Catherine Wells, *Mother Grimm*. Winner to be announced on 10 April. [GVG]

To and Fro. *Paul Barnett* is once again a single man, as of 5 Feb. 'Such a pity everybody's daughters are locking themselves up...' • *Benoit Girard* is moving house in Quebec, and plans to cease publication of his popular fanzine *The Frozen Frog* and to attend no more cons—all owing to his divorce from Ginette Belanger. [TH] • *Nancy Kress & Charles Sheffield* were scheduled to marry on 10 Jan. • *Lynda & Ted White* have separated, amicably; see COA. Ted, who was 60 on 4 Feb, has also lost his job (and thus his e-mail access)—all sympathy, boss.

Sci Fi Wire reported on-line that '*Publisher's Weekly* recently listed its best books for 1997, with acclaimed author Patricia Anthony topping the science fiction category ...' As Vonda McIntyre observed from further down this list, 'It was absolutely amazing, the coincidence that the order of the books (and as far as "sci fi site" was concerned, their quality) correlated exactly with their author's position in the alphabet.'

C.O.A. *Janice Gelb*, 1070 Mercedes Avenue #2, Los Altos, CA 94022, USA. *Phil Greenaway*, 29 Anthony Grove, Abercarnaid, Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales. *Microcon*, see con list. *Chris O'Shea*, 18 Letchworth Ave, Bedford, Middlesex, TW14 9RY. *Johan Schimanski*, Winston Churchills veg 63 II, N-9014 Tromsø, Norway. *Lynda, Aaron & Spencer White*, 520 Anne St, Falls Church, VA 22046, USA.

Dear Miss Manners: Q. 'Tommy Ferguson's mild grump about the new TAFF winner ("I don't want to support Ulrika because I don't think she is a good candidate", plus allegations of a UK conspiracy of silence about her Unworthiness) would pass unnoticed in his own fanzine, but isn't it a bit tacky to publish it in the official progress report of the first convention Ulrika will attend on her trip?' A. 'Not at all. Corflu UK added a feeble disclaimer at the end and therefore cannot be faulted.'

R.I.P. *Kjell Borgstrom* (1929-1997), Swedish sf poet and fan since 1964, died on 23 Dec. • *Ferdý Mayne* (Ferdinand Philip Mayer Horckel, 1916-1998), whose movie roles included Count von Krolock in Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers*; or *Pardon Me, Your Teeth Are in My Neck* (1967; alias *Dance of the Vampires*), died on 30 Jan. [PB]

Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest for worst novel openings ... once again Thog shakes his head sadly, at the 1997 Fantasy category winner: 'Prince Oryza's determined, handsome countenance was reflected in the gleaming, polished steel of his sword, Gowayoff, as he hewed valiantly

at the armored sides of the dragon, which could only be pierced by gleaming, polished steel and not the regular kind of steel, which doesn't gleam as much, and isn't polished quite as well, but does a pretty good job against your smaller dragons.' (J.N.Pechota, Dulzura, CA) [GVG]

Small Press. Steve Sneyd is at it again, with *Laying Siege to Tomorrow: Poetry in UK SF Fanzines, 1930s to 1950s*, including annotated extracts by Bulmer, Brunner, Clarke, Tubb, Youd/Christopher, etc. £2.70 post free from 4 Nowell Pl, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8PB.

The British Library plans a book of critical essays on Jack Vance.

Mars vs Venus: *The Bookseller* reports that Summersdale Publishing classifies its title *How To Chat Up Women* as 'humour'. By way of contrast, *How To Chat Up Men* falls under 'social sciences'. [JC]

Tiptree Request. Julie Phillips seeks info on James Tiptree/Alice Sheldon, especially letters written by her, for a biography in progress: Rozenstraat 27, 1016 NM Amsterdam, Netherlands. Advance snippet: 'Almost all speculations about her and the CIA are nonsense.'

Groupies. The *Irish SF Association* was disbanded at a 3 Feb mass meeting of all members: 'The association had been dead for some time. The ex-chair (Robert Elliot) had not handed over the cash box, members list, receipts, or bank details. There were virtually no members left. Two of the three members felt it had to be done.' [JB] A replacement, 'probably with the same initials', is to be discussed on 2 Mar: St George Hotel, Parnell Sq, Dublin, 8:30pm. [DS] • *Reading Monday-evening pub meetings have moved to the Hope Tap, Friar St, for a trial period.*

Mysterious Allusion. 'The book needed to belong to someone else, someone it hadn't found yet. It altered its appearance so that outwardly it became a copy of a techno-thriller written by an aging actor who had in the writing proven himself incompetent in two professions.' (Marion Zimmer Bradley & Holly Lisle, *In the Rift*) I don't know how I managed to type that without mentioning ... er ... Ron Goulart.

Outraged Letters on A126. *Lenny Bailes* on the Ed Cox obit: 'It was *Fred Patten* who always insisted that the insurgent San Fernando Valley fangroup be known as the G.Peyton Wertenbaker Appreciation Society.... Ed Cox was pretty solidly in the "Petards", "break out the beer steins", faction of the group.' • *Paul Barnett* points out that Thog's 'John Grant' selection was in fact by Paul Barnett. • *Dave Locke* thumbs his nose at D.M.Sherwood's web research: 'Ellison was on the episode of *Politically Incorrect* where that line was said, but it was Bill Maher who said it.' Mike Sherwood deftly ripostes: 'The camera pans onto a rocky crag lashed by storm waves under a lightning-filled sky. A pitiable figure comes into view screaming his self-horror; self-pity warring with true contrition and a terror of the pits of Hell which will at any moment open before the wretch. A broken voice laments his crime: "I have violated the Absolute, I have pissed in the holy fountain of Truth. Because of me the sacred pages of *Ansible* have been stained with a misappropriation." Yes, that would seem to be the usual formula.'

Editorial. Thanks for sympathetic responses to last issue's tales of woe: you know who you are. I love the idea that *Ansible* should apply for lottery loot from the Arts Council [BB].... NESFA Press and the late George Hay also helped bail me out, with royalties on *The Silence of the Langford* and the 1978 *Necronomicon*. And my father was allowed home from hospital yesterday, but only 'on trial': fingers nervously crossed.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Gourmet Thrills:* 'His lips were on hers, pressing so hard she could feel the teeth beneath. His tongue followed after. Thin and dry and tough as old leather, it bore the vestiges of his last meal on its length.' (J.V.Jones, *Master and Fool*, 1997) [LS] • 'An old friend and they had lost touch to such a degree that, when death came, it did so unknowingly.' (Isaac Asimov, *Forward the Foundation*, 1993) [PB] • 'His eyes slid over the tall Edenist's shoulders ...' (Peter F. Hamilton, *The Neutronium Alchemist*, 1997) [KB] • *Dept of Dermatology (Non-SF):* 'But her skin was delicate and an extraordinary colour, a pale greeny-gold like apples seen under water.' (P.D.James, *Original Sin*, 1994) [PB] • 'Once, while living in Boston, her apartment had been robbed.' (Harlan Ellison, 'Broken Glass') [GW] • *Dept of Subtle Nomenclature (Bad Guys Division):* '... Trollocs are divided into tribelike bands. The known tribes include the Ah'frait, Al'ghol, Bhansheen, Dhjin'nen, Ghar'ghael, Ghob'hlin, Gho'hlem, Ghraem'lan, Ko'bal, Kno'mon, Dha'vol and the Dhai'mon.' (Robert Jordan & Teresa Patterson, *The World of Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time*, 1997)

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