

ansible



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LIFE & ART. Once I wrote a satire about nuclear research, and still keep finding my jokes outdone by reality. Yes, I lacked the nerve to invent uranium reprocessing plant inspectors who, as has emerged from 1950s Cincinnati records, checked the concentration of uranium by sprinkling it on their tongues to see if it tasted right.... [Grauniad, 20 Jun]

The Wrecks of Time

Douglas Adams is supposed to be delivering the script of the long-threatened *Hitch-Hiker's Guide* movie next month—to Disney. 'People may frown and think the film will be like *Bambi*,' he said. 'But remember that Disney did *Pulp Fiction* too. So the *HH* film will be a mixture of *Bambi* and *Pulp Fiction*....' [AH]

Malcolm Edwards may or may not be apocryphal: 'The following is no doubt completely and utterly untrue, but lots of ex-colleagues at HarperCollins have been queuing up to relay it to me and the least I can do is pass it along....' • You will no doubt have noticed that for the past several weeks those two literary sons of Weston-super-Mare, T. Pratchett and L. (for Lord) Archer have been sitting at the top of the hardcover bestseller lists, with Terry's *Last Continent* at #1 and Jeffrey's *Eleventh Commandment* at #2. Apparently, Lord Archer has taken to going into bookshops and demanding to know why his book isn't in the #1 spot in their bestseller displays, since it is obviously outselling everything else. When politely informed that well, er, actually it isn't selling as well as the Pratchett, he demands that they call up the sales on their terminal so that he can demonstrate the absurdity of the claim. When they do as he asks and the information on the computer confirms that, yes, Terry's book is outselling his (generally by about two-to-one) he darkly accuses them of falsifying the computer figures as part of some conspiracy whose purpose is as yet unmasked. • I think it must be part of Terry's sneaky campaign to become Mayor of London....' [7 Jun]

Steve Gallagher moans: 'I think I finally found my niche. I used to aspire to seeing something of mine appear on the shelf in John Sheridan's second-hand bookshop in Hull which gloried in the section heading of "Smut", but last weekend at Michael Moon's bookshop in Whitehaven I was firmly put in my place. There a copy of *Nightmare*, *With Angel* was to be found under a heading of "Thick Fiction".'

Peter Hamilton unknowingly developed a mystery collaborator, according to the Amazon.com bookshop, which says his novels are by him and one R.Woodman. 'I'm now wondering if I've got one (two?) of those multiple personalities, who just takes over when I sit down in front of the computer and does my work for me. Authors often read through their older work saying I don't remember writing this. Oh my God. Do you think he'll start getting half of my royalties?' The Amazon response: (a) they have no idea where Woodman came from, (b) it takes 4-6 weeks to fix such an error in their catalogue web pages. Cool!

Terry Pratchett OBE officially received this arcane British honour, the Order of the British Empire, for his services to literature. Terry: 'I suspect the "services to literature" consisted of refraining from trying to write any. Still, I can't help feeling mightily chuffed about it.'

Alison Spedding, a UK anthropologist and fantasy author (preferred nom-de-plume 'Spedding' only) now living abroad, has been imprisoned in Bolivia on suspicion of drug-dealing [Guardian, 20 Jun]. David Pringle wonders about a hidden agenda here: 'She was perhaps treading on dangerous drug-related political ground', having announced a few years ago that she was writing 'a thriller set in 1984 Bolivia (hyper-inflation and the cocaine trade)' and that coca leaf was 'the principal subject of my anthropological work.' (See Letters, overleaf.)

Conestoga

10-12 Jul • **Infinity** (media-ish), Angel Hotel, Cardiff. £45 at door, children £25. Contact (SAE) 12 Stuart St, Treherbert, CF42 5PR.

17-19 Jul • **Nexus 98** (Trek), Bristol Hilton Hotel. £44 reg. Contact (SAE or 2xIRC) 1 Lullington Rd, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LH.

22 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Jubilee, nr Waterloo. 6-7pm on.

5-9 Aug • **Bucconeer** (56th Worldcon), Baltimore, MD. No more

advance memberships: \$165 at door, children (4-12) \$80, supporting \$30. Contact PO Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701, USA.

15 Aug • **BFS Open Night**, Princess Louise pub, Holborn, 7pm on.

21-24 Aug • **The Wrap Party** (BS etc), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £70 reg, to Aug; £80 at door. Contact (SAE) PO Box 505, Reading, Berks, RG1 7QZ.

11-13 Sep • **AKFT 98** ('Adult Trek', it says here), Warwick Arms Hotel, Warwick. £30 reg or £150 for group of 6; £15/day. Contact (SAE) 7 Belgrave Clo, St Mary Cray, Orpington, Kent, BR5 3TJ.

18-21 Sep • **Discworld Convention II**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. £40 reg, £30 unwaged. Booking closes 15 Jul. No memberships at the door. Contact (SAE/IRC) PO Box 4100, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2GZ.

25-28 Sep • **Albacon 98** (sf) & **Homeland** (Highlander), Central Hotel, Glasgow. £30 reg, £15 supp; £35 at door. Contact F1/2, 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE. It turns out that these are two simultaneous cons, explaining why Albacon can be grumbling about too few members even though the hotel is 'very full'. Should Albacon be cancelled, memberships will optionally be transferred to Homeland.

10 Oct • **Octocon Lite** (mini Irish national con), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, nr Dublin. £10 reg—Irish or British. Contact (SAE) 43 Eglinton Rd, Dublin 4, Ireland, or UK agent Dave Lally, 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX (0171 735 3819) ... who plans a booze-up for early arrivals on 9 Oct and maybe a rare Guinness brewery tour (limited numbers; ask in advance, with extra SAE) on 12 Oct.

11 Oct • **Post-Octocon Celebration**, Flying Pig Bookshop, 17 Crow St, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. Birthday party for the shop, with guests from Octocon Lite, drinks, readings, etc. No fee. Info +353 1 6795099.

13-15 Aug 99 • **Wincon V** (Unicon), King Alfred's College, Winchester. GoH John Baines, Warren Ellis, Diana Wynne Jones. £20 reg, £10 supp, rising 1 Aug to £25/£15. Contact 53 Havant Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants, PO2 7HH.

2-6 Sep 99 • **Aussiecon 3** (Worldcon), Melbourne, Australia. £100 reg, £25 supp or child (aged 3-12 at con date; infants free)—to 'rise steeply' from 1 Sep 98. UK agent Martin Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Rd, Reading, RG1 7TT. Cheques to 'Aussiecon III'.

2-6 Aug 2000 • **Eurocon**, Gdansk, Poland. Guests TBA. \$15 reg, \$10 supp, \$5 'presupporting'. It's a confirmed event, but owing to a pledge that Westerners won't be charged more than locals, there's no money for promotion. A \$5 membership is essentially a donation towards US publicity. Contact (Europe) Krzysztof Papierkowski, Chlopska 7/107, 80-362 Gdansk-Przymorze, Poland; (USA) Lance Oszko, 6176 Edsall Rd, #73, Alexandria, VA 22304. (There's no Eurocon in 1998.)

Rumbblings • **Not On:** both Infinity and The Wrap Party have suffered from false rumours of cancellation, source still unknown. • **Magicon 2** is now the official name of the Boston for Orlando in 2001 worldcon bid ... that is, it'll be the con name if they win. • **London (Media) Group**, New Connaught Rms, Great Queen St, WC2: 18 Jul, 12 Sep, 21 Nov; 10:30am-7pm. £8; £4 from 3pm. Videos, dealers, social stuff. Contact 38 Rochford Ave, Loughton, Essex, IG10 2BS. (Not to be confused with London Group/Circle open meetings dating back to 1946—still 1st Thur eve each month, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo.)

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers & Sinners. Ellen Datlow and her team were slightly embarrassed to find that their sf/fantasy/horror web magazine title *Event Horizon* (launching in Aug) was already being used by, of all things, a web magazine. Which has since been persuaded to change its name. Next episode: Ellen discovers this movie using her title, and ... • *Weird Tales* is now being edited by George Scithers, who is looking for submissions: 123 Crooked Lane, King of Prussia, PA 19406-2570, USA.

Random Fandom. Dave Clark warns us all: 'You know how fans are always worrying about the apparent lack of new blood in fandom, and their own widening bodies. At the last BayCon, Lea Farr revealed her theory on how this is all interconnected. There is a Fixed Aggregate Gross Weight for fandom. As fans die or gafiate, their weight is

redistributed among those of us remaining in fandom. We need a constant influx of new people to keep the aggregate weight down.' • *Ken Forman & Arnie Katz* inaugurated a new 3-weekly fan newsletter *Cri-fanac* (333 S Decatur #152, Las Vegas, NV 89107, USA), with a Statement of Policy: 'We'll leave science fiction to *Locus*, con fandom to *File 770* and literacy to *Ansible*.' • *Catherine McAulay* is reportedly depicted as a nun on the new Irish five-punt note ... but fortunately for fannish sanity, this wimpled portrait is in fact of Catherine McAuley. [TF]

Bram Stoker Awards were presented in New York on 6 June: NOVEL *Children of the Dusk* by Janet Berliner & George Guthridge. FIRST NOVEL *Lives of the Monster Dogs* by Kirsten Bakis. NOVELETTE 'The Big Blow' by Joe R. Lansdale. SHORT 'Rat Food' by Edo van Belkom & David Nickle. COLLECTION *Exorcisms and Ecstasies* by Karl Edward Wagner, ed Stephen Jones. NON-FICTION *Dark Thoughts: On Writing* by Stanley Wiater. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT William Peter Blatty, Jack Williamson. [GVG]

Medical Doom & Gloom. *Ian Gunn's* stem cell transplant (mistakenly announced as a bone marrow transplant) wasn't too successful, but he and Karen are optimistic about a different treatment with new and terrifying chemotherapy this month. [KPG] • *Jean Hoare*, thought to be in the clear at the end of 1997, has resumed chemotherapy. [MH] • *Diana Wynne Jones* is suffering the pains of yet more collapsing vertebrae and awaits a 10-hour operation to rebuild them, perhaps today. She regrets probably having to drop out as a GoH at Albacon this year. [CB/PB] • *Dave Langford*, ever eager for attention, contrived to puncture a wrist artery with a shard of milk bottle in mid-June. (Now healed.)

Society Column. *John Dallman* reports: 'The wedding of Bridget "Bug" Hardcastle and Simon Bradshaw was planned like a military operation. This was just as well, since it was held on the RAF base where Simon works. The celebrations went off in fine style, with good performances from the Bug Father as the Mad Scientist, Dave "Two Hats" Clements as the Best Man, Amanda Baker as the Scarlet Bridesmaid and Gordon Brignal as the Second Best Man. Alison Scott didn't quite catch the bride's bouquet, despite a spectacular dive for it, and consoled herself by raiding the Wing Commander's garden for more flowers. A distant roar of jets was heard as Pam Wells drove me home....' The bride later announced herself to have become Bridget 'Bug' Bradshaw.

C.o.A. *Ken Bulmer* (temporary), Halliwell Nursing Home, Kingswood Rd, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4UN ... letters and fantasy novels welcomed. *Cuyler W. 'Ned' Brooks Jr.*, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047, USA. *A.V. Clarke*, Gillies Ward, St. Mary's Hospital, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6LT. (A move to 'rehabilitation' ... Vince may be home within weeks.) *Vincent Docherty*, Brugstraat 17b, 9712 AA Groningen, Netherlands. *George Flynn*, PO Box 426069, Kendall Sq Station, Cambridge, MA 02142, USA (new box number only). *Kate Solomon & Malcolm Davies*, new phone number 01223 520 903. *Gary Farber* (current maildrop), c/o Zev Sero, Apt 1L, 396 12th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215-5017, USA. *Charles Platt*, PO Box 36, Jerome, AZ 86331, USA ('I have ceased using my New York address'), phone 520 634 5800. *David Power*, 23 Boleyn Walk, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7HU; 01372 378674. *Jean Weber & Eric Lindsay*, PO Box 640, Airlie Beach, Qld 4802, Australia.

Evil 'David' Cult Gains Recruit! The Former Steve McDonald babbles: 'I'm keeping my old name as my byline (Steven E. McDonald) and adopting David Alexander Edward McDonald for regular life purposes. This is something I've wanted to do for a long time—I wish I'd had the gumption to do this way back when, but now that I've got the equivalent of a brand name, I have to stick with it. • Besides, "Christopher Priest" was already taken, I'm not short enough for "Harlan Ellison", not tall enough for "Joe Straczynski", and you had the swinish foresight to trademark "David Langford" many years ago....'

Condition Critical. From a US local paper's TV movie listing: 'Transported to a surreal landscape, a young girl kills the first person she encounters then teams up with three total strangers and plots to kill again.' Fans will have instantly identified *The Wizard of Oz*. [BB]

R.I.P. *Carlos Castaneda*, whose druggily mystical 'nonfiction' about Yaqui Indian shaman Don Juan was perhaps best appreciated as highly readable fantasy, died from liver cancer on 27 April. His birth year remains mysterious: some say 1925, others 1931. [BB] • *Peter Nilson* (1937-1998), Swedish astronomer and best-selling sf author in the 80s, died on 8 March from complications after a stroke. He was 60. [AH] • *Maureen O'Sullivan* (1911-1998), the Irish-born actress who came to fame as Jane in the 1930s Johnny Weissmuller *Tarzan* films, died from a heart attack on 23 Jun, aged 87. She had 60+ movie credits from 1930 to 1986, and was Mia Farrow's mother. [BB]

Thog's Language Lessons: Vril-ya. The speaker is a philosopher belonging to a humanoid race evolved from frogs: 'Humble yourselves,

my descendants; the father of your race was a *twat* (tadpole).' (Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*, 1871)

Seeds of Time. That huge archive of John Wyndham's manuscripts, drafts, letters and unpublished stuff has indeed been acquired by Liverpool University—where it joins the SF Foundation collection and the Olaf Stapledon archive. Most of the money came from the Heritage Lottery Fund. From *Andy Sawyer's* serious and constructive press release: 'Recent BBC Radio 4 adaptations of *The Kraken Wakes* and *Chocky*, and the optioning of virtually the entire Wyndham catalogue by Samuelson Productions, the makers of *Wilde*, show that interest in the author remains strong. At least one biography is being planned.'

Outraged Letters etc ... *Simon R.Green* saw a Rare Edition at Andromeda's Banks/Green/MacLeod signing: 'The mighty Iain was there with his new book, *Inversions*. During the signing it was found that in some books, the pages had been bound into the covers upside down. "Great!" said businessman Rog Peyton: "A special INVERTED edition of *Inversions*! Signed and numbered by the author! People will pay extra for this!" And they probably will.' • *Wendy Grossman* points out that *Skeptic* subscriptions rose to £12/year within seconds of my mention; still PO Box 475, Manchester, M60 2TH. • *Nicholas Pollotta* of SFWA states that Alison Spedding has been held for months with no formal arrest or prospect of a trial, on suspicion of drug dealing (one joint for personal use, he says), and suggests polite but firm letters to the Bolivian embassy requesting her release: 3014 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA; 106 Eaton Square, London, SW1W 9AD. • *J.M.Straczynski's* tirade about that special B5 screening (A131) is much disputed, most recently in *SFX 41* (Aug 98). • *Roger Burton West* worries that NASA now has only one physicist, as conveyed by a Greg Benford story intro in *The New Hugo Winners IV* ... 'Geoff Landis is uniquely qualified to play this exacting game [writing hard sf], for he is a trained physicist working for NASA.' • *Dave Wolverton* wasn't quite outraged to be outed as the writer behind David 'Runelords' Farland—'This is one of those loosely kept secrets—but hopes the leak won't affect sales. For a small fee, *Ansible* will announce that its story was hopelessly wrong and that Farland is really Lionel Fanthorpe.

Small Press. *The Dark Fantasy Newsletter* launches in July. A5 16-20pp, £1; cheques to S.Ross, 11 Vernon Close, Eastbourne, E.Sussex, BN23 6AN. • *The Small Press Alliance* is yet another, er, alliance of small presses: £10/year for mailings, freebies, cut-price directories, etc. Now in 12-month trial. Contact 18 Nuffield Rd, Manchester, M22 9UG.

More Capitalism. Following the A131 announcement of my super SFVIEW viewer/search/addenda/etc software for the *SF Encyclopedia* CD-ROM (£11.75 inc VAT or \$17.50 US, on disk or by e-mail), I can now also supply this as a double package with the 1998 reissue of the CD-ROM itself ... for £23.50 or \$35, cheques to David Langford at the *Ansible* address. Please note, again, that SFVIEW needs Windows 95, 98 or NT. 'Makes the encyclopedia usable,' enthuses hero software tester Marcus Rowland: 'Before ... I was using the printed book for nearly everything; now I can actually get useful results out of the CD.'

Clarke Update. On 22 June *The Times* reported that Sir Arthur C. Clarke would not be prosecuted following 'allegations in the *Sunday Mirror* that he sexually abused children'; the Sri Lankan Justice Minister said there was 'insufficient evidence'. This seems less positive than Clarke's announcement that the claims were 'conclusively demolished'. Nor does it note *Mirror* efforts to give a 'molesting small children' spin to a story based on dodgy allegations of encounters with post-pubescent teenage males 20+ years ago when this was legal in Sri Lanka. Indeed, one scandalized *Mirror* accusation was specifically of Shock Horror Alleged Sex With 17-Year-Old Chap, soon to be legal even in Britain.

Thog's Masterclass. 'On the far horizon a huge red sun was setting like a pool of coagulating blood.' (Chris Evans, *The Insider*, 1981) • 'Sickened himself, Leo glanced up the corridor to be sure he was still unobserved, swallowed the clot of impotent rage growing in his throat, and slipped inside.' (Lois McMaster Bujold, *Falling Free*, 1988) [BA] • *Dept of Probably Not Very PC:* 'Emma Margolis folded down the poufy floral print comforter.' (Elise Title, *Bleeding Hearts*, 1996) [PB] • 'The stars descended upon me like an elevator in a shaft.' (Ross Macdonald, *Trouble Follows Me*, 1946) [BB] • *Dept of Tautology:* 'The annular rings turned.' (Gregory Benford, *In The Ocean Of Night*, 1977) [RBW]

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