



**OOPS.** An unfunny thing happened to the *Ansible* e-mail list on 14/15 December, when someone contrived to send a 'Happy Christmas' message with an infected attachment (Klez worm) to the entire list, using a back-door address I hadn't known about. Apologies all round. The list was rapidly disabled and moved to a more secure server at Glasgow University by hero sysadmin Naveed Khan, though not before everyone received several confusing bounce messages and a deliberate spam: there had to be one fugghead, didn't there? For details of the New Deal, send e-mail to [Ansible-request@dcs.gla.ac.uk](mailto:Ansible-request@dcs.gla.ac.uk), with the word 'help'—no quotes—in the subject line. • Belated New Year greetings to all!

### The Thaumalogicon

**Ray Bradbury** is interviewed in the January 2003 issue of *The Writer*. Doubtless you've all been itching to know what the old master thinks about contemporary science fiction authors: '... I do not read those writers. [He laughs.] Well, first of all, I don't read them because when you're working on a novel, you are always a little worried that somebody else has already had that same idea. And then also because I can't really find any love and passion in what they write.' [LW]

**Ursula Le Guin** was chosen this month as SFWA's twentieth Grand Master, with a formal presentation to follow at the Nebula ceremony in April. Her first sf story appeared in 1962. [SM] • On 6 December she led a 50-strong peace march in Portland OR, and delivered a writers', editors' and artists' petition against war on Iraq to a local congressman.

**Terry Pratchett** committed trilocation on Saturday 7 December. That weekend, several hundred fans attended festivities celebrating the twinning of Wincanton, South Somerset, England, with Discworld's Ankh-Morpork—featuring a sausage-and-mash feast so oversubscribed that it was split across three separate pubs, two of them supplied with proxy Pratchetts to entertain and propose the toast after dinner. 'Terry provided spare hats to the two substitutes to enhance the illusion of him being in three places at once.... The shop of the Cunning Artificer (the wonderful Bernard Pearson) now has a plaque on the wall outside declaring that it is the Ankh-Morpork Consulate.' [CR] All for charity. Conspiracy theorists may link this story with a curiously inept press release from StarCity Entertainment Centre in the Midlands, promising showings of a recent film entitled *Lord of the Rings, Twin Towns*. [NE]

**Joel C. Rosenberg**, author of *The Last Jihad* (heavily promoted in the US of late), is not 'our' Joel Rosenberg the sf/fantasy author. Who wrote: 'I know nothing about the book, but I do hope that it's good, and will do well, for both the obvious reasons, and the self-centered one that, perhaps, some of his readers will accidentally pick up my books.'

**Emily Somma** clarifies Great Ormond Street Hospital's attempts to block US publication of her *Peter Pan* sequel *After the Rain*: 'The reason why there is no issue in Canada is because the GOSH didn't apply for an extended copyright here for the 1904 play (*Peter and Wendy*). So, in Canada, all of Barrie's works (including the play) are public domain. In the US though, the GOSH has an extended copyright on the play until 2023. I think that by US copyright law, if my work was a similar expression to the play ... which it's not ... but if it were, the GOSH could ask for royalties. (And actually I did offer them royalties from the outset ... not because I had to ... but as a goodwill gesture.) Legally though, they can't block a publication, or order someone to "cease and desist" as they did to me because they felt (and expressed in writing) that my book created or creates unfair competition for them. I think I can tell you this, because this part is already out in the open.'

**Jonathan Weir** resigned as Amazon.co.uk reviews editor on 18 November, to become marketing and publicity boss for the Voyager sf/fantasy imprint at HarperCollins UK. He replaces Susan Ford, who has left HC to work from home. What's the outlook for the motley band of freelancers (personal interest declared) who were regularly commissioned to write the official Amazon.co.uk reviews? Jon mentions 'lots of worried publishers left wondering what will happen to the SF and Fantasy at Amazon now. After glancing, with sinking heart, at the now rather barren SF page at Amazon, I can't help but wonder myself....'

### Coniaker

22 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA. Or not.

7-9 Feb • **Quinze** (filk), Holiday Inn, Ipswich. £25 reg. Contact 155 Long Meadow, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP21 7EB. Phone 01296 331055.

21-23 Feb • **Redemption (B5/B7)**, Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent. £50 reg; £55 at door. Day: £30, £35 at door. Children £15 or £10/day. Contact 26 King's Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

22 Feb • **Picocon 20**, Imperial College Union, London. GoH Dr Jack Cohen, Gwyneth Jones. £8 reg, students £5, ICSF £2. Contact ICSF, IC Students U, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB.

1-2 Mar • **Microcon 2003**, University of Exeter, Devon. GoH Jasper Fforde; other guests. £3.50 advance reg, £5 at door (students £3.50). Contact Flat A3, 11 Kingdom Mews, Exeter, EX4 4BU.

27-8 Sep • **Phoenix Convention (P-Con)**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. GoH announced: Ken MacLeod. Now £16/€25 reg; £20/€30 from 21 Apr, £22.50/€35 at door. Contact: Yellow Brick Road, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

24-6 Oct • **They Came and Shaved Us**, Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland. GoH Robert Rankin, FG0H Pádraig Ó Méalóid. Now £30 reg to 13a Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QW; or £(I)45/€45 to 123 Carnlough Rd, Cabra West, Dublin 7, Ireland.

**Rumblings** • **ConJosé** (Worldcon 2002) has an estimated surplus of some \$60,000, and last month passed on donations of \$10,000 to each of the next three Worldcons, Torcon 3 (Toronto 2003), Noreascon 4 (Boston 2004) and Interaction (Glasgow 2005), plus a further \$1,000 to the World SF Society Mark Protection Committee. [KS]

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** A change from the usual litany of contempt for sf and fantasy! Novelist Joanne Harris of *Chocolat* fame, asked to choose her six favourite books for *The Week* (28 Dec), came up with a distinctly fannish selection: *The Gormenghast Trilogy*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Salammbô*, *Lolita* and *Zelazny's A Rose for Ecclesiastes*. [DG] • Meanwhile, for those unsure of the precise genre of *Star Trek: Nemesis*, a Salisbury cinema sign reveals the answer: 'Romantic Comedy'. [JG]

**Glittering Prizes.** *Philip K. Dick Award* for US paperback originals: here's the shortlist. Carol Emshwiller, *The Mount and Report to the Men's Club and Other Stories*; Kay Kenyon, *Maximum Ice*; Karin Lowachee, *Warchild*; China Miéville, *The Scar*; Jeff VanderMeer & Forrest Aguirre (ed.), *Leviathan Three*; Liz Williams, *Empire of Bones*. [GVG] • *UK New Year Honours*. Ridley Scott was knighted. Peter Ackroyd (whose literary fantasies include *Hawksmoor* and *The House of Doctor Dee*) and Brian Cox (an actor with several TV sf credits, including *Red Dwarf* and *The Cloning of Joanna May*) received the CBE.

**Sic Transit Gloria.** 'Neil Gaiman? Don't know who he is....' Thus Graham Norton on Channel 4, as he scanned a website that listed famous ex-residents of East Grinstead. [SG]

**R.I.P. Nicolai Mikhailovich Amosov** (1913-2002), Russian-born engineer, heart surgeon, keep-fit pundit and author whose 'sleeper awakes' sf novel was translated in 1970 as *Notes from the Future*, died at his Ukraine home on 12 December, aged 89. [PB] • **Walter Cole**, an active New York fan for more than half a century (head of the Centaurian League in 1948, and for decades an officer of the Lunarians club) was found dead in his apartment on 7 December. He was 69. [AIP] • **Thomas E. Fuller**, US author of several short fantasy and horror stories since 1990, died on 21 November aged 54. His story 'The God of Midnight' (*Realms of Fantasy*, 1996) was co-written with Brad Strickland, with whom he also wrote 14 young adult novels, mostly mysteries. [L] • **Ian MacNaughton** (1925-2002), director of almost every episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and of the first Python film *And Now For Something Completely Different* (1971), died in Munich on 10 December following a car crash; he was 76. In an earlier acting career, he appeared in the sf film *X The Unknown* (1956). Paul Barnett remem-

bers: 'He was one of the nicest, friendliest of men. It's little realized that, without him and his faith in this oddball new series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* might have had an extremely hard job making it to the screen, if at all ... I've always regarded him as the extra, uncredited Python.' ● *Glenn Quinn*, Irish actor who played the half-demon Doyle in the first series of *Angel*, died early in December aged 32. [ISFN] ● *Kenneth Tobey* (1919-2002), US actor who appeared in more than 100 films and played a lead role in the classic *The Thing From Another World* (1951), died on 22 December. He was 83. [BB]

**In Typo Veritas.** A recent *SFWA Bulletin* article on the Vingean Singularity, by Robert Metzger, interestingly appeared with all superscripts shown as normal text. Thus it emerges that the human brain has 'something like 10 billion neurons, where we'll use scientific notation of 10<sup>10</sup> to denote this large number (in Vernor's case we would naturally suspect many more). This specialized cell looks like a miniature starfish, with about 10<sup>4</sup> (10,000) arms.... Where those arms meet a synapse is formed.... Do the math and you find that there are 10<sup>14</sup> of these synapses. [...] At the time I write this, the most advanced micro-processor ... is made up of about 10<sup>8</sup> transistors. That's certainly a big number, but still one million times smaller (10<sup>6</sup>) than the number of connections in your head (perhaps 10<sup>7</sup> in the case of Vernor).' [DL] ● In similar vein, *Book Trade News Digest* reported a financial coup on 13 December: 'Rare Harry Potter book sells for 000. / A woman who bought a Harry Potter book for 99 today sold it for 000 at auction.' [MC]

**Nebula Campaign Trail.** Here's Robert Metzger again, spreading sweetness and light across America as reported by Lawrence Person: 'Many SFWA members have received copies of Robert A. Metzger's *The Picoverse* not just signed, but inscribed with a personal note praising their own work. Any egoboo this might have given the receiving writers was quickly washed away by the fact that almost every active U.S. member of SFWA seems to have received an inscribed copy (a quick survey showed only one writer, whose name begins with "W", who hadn't received one: "It's probably taking him a while to get through the whole SFWA directory"), and that inscribed copies were already showing up at used bookstores across the country. Indeed, it seems likely that uninscribed copies are rarer than inscribed ones...'

**Random Fandom.** *Cardinal Cox* was installed as Poet Laureate on 17 December, and will occupy this vital post for a year. Poet Laureate, that is, of Peterborough. ● *Kathryn Cramer & David G. Hartwell* were (for some reason or other) too distracted to let me know earlier about their latest collaboration: 'Elizabeth Constance Cramer Hartwell, born October 21, 3:28 pm, 6lbs, 10 oz. Mother and baby in fine condition.' ● *Rafe Culpin* suggests a New Year resolution for conrunners: publish the hotel's postcode, so travelling fans can use websites that produce maps and route plans based on postcodes. ● *John Foyster* embarked on chemotherapy for his brain tumour in November, and deftly summed up the experience so far: 'Yuck!' ● *Craig Miller* confirms: 'I have an answer from Michael Nelson, the Hugo Administrator for the 2003 Worldcon. If you want *Ansible* to move into the Semi-Prozine category, it will be in the Semi-Prozine category.' Here we go!

**Thog's Double Entendres.** *Teletubbies*. The friends play a game explaining what it is to be "on top" and "underneath". (Radio Times)

**Outraged Letters.** *Stephen Baxter* never rests: 'I'm not sure why but I'm writing a short history of Warhammer fiction for *Vector*. It was always a bit of a laugh, with heresies and lawsuits and collapses and bouncing cheques and all the rest.' ● *David Bratman* was first to say it: 'Let me be the 5,271,009th person to remind you of an additional genre credit for the late James Coburn: his turn as the voice of multi-legged boss Henry J. Waterhouse III in the Hugo-nominated *Monsters, Inc.*' ● *Guy Haley* reveals the Xmas party secrets of Future Publishing: 'It was James Bond themed, the highlight being an "Ice Palace" with a bar made of genuine ice and everything! It came complete with leggy/busty ladies in small shiny outfits doling out free vodka. Needless to say, my head hurts like a bastard today. Life in magazine publishing is so very hard.' ● *Mike Moorcock* on that 10 Downing Street reception: 'Sorry to hear the kids' writers were rounded up by the Blairs to get smuggled. I expect Tone and Cher to feature in various guises as hypocritical villains in future juve epics. This could affect voting patterns for decades to come. Dangerous liaisons. Remember how the pop music world turned against them after a bunch of musicians was invited to Number Ten? Good thing about politicians is that they never learn, thus remaining perennially good originals for comic roles. Made me think of the Blurs as obvious characters from a William book. In fact I'd swear I remember a suitable Thomas Henry illustration for *William and the Pious Politician*.' ● *Lloyd Wood* grumbles about the jacket blurb for that nice Mr

*Baxter's Evolution*: 'THE EPIC STORY OF LIFE ON EARTH TOLD BY THE NATURAL HEIR TO ARTHUR C. CLARKE. Excuse me. *Natural* heir? You'd think that someone publishing a book describing evolutionary biology (with a recommendation from an evolutionary biologist on the back cover) would understand what being a *natural* heir involves. What was Clarke up to in 1956? ● Still, suspect that the basic underlying theme of evolutionary biology (to wit: in the end everything dies) is what will make this yet another cheery and life-affirming Baxter read.'

**Did Your Mother Throw Yours Out?** A copy of the first issue of that venerable UK children's comic the *Beano*, dated 30 July 1938 and one of only 9 known to exist, fetched £7,500 at auction last month. [LP]

**Golden Oldies.** In reaction to endless hype about the Best Young British Writers promotion, Radio 4's *Front Row* chose its list of the top ten over-70s, including Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard and Doris Lessing. [FM]

**Fanfundery.** Victor Gonzalez reminds us all that TAFF voting closes on 10 February. Candidates for the trip to Europe and Seacon '03 are (still) Randy Byers, Colin Hinz, Mike Lowrey, and Curt Phillips.

**Too Good To Czech.** It's always nice to have one's work translated, and I gloated over a freebie of *Mamutí kniha Humoristické Fantasy* (Prague, 2002) until realizing that ten of *The Mammoth Book of Comic Fantasy's* 35 stories had been lost in translation, including mine. Also Mike Ashley's editorial, and his front-cover credit.... Poot.

**C.o.A.** *Alan Keeley* ('aka Mr Damage' [SG]), 28b Hewell Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NE. *Joel Lane*, 739 Warwick Rd, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 2HA. *Andrew I. Porter and Algol Press*, 55 Pineapple St #3J, Brooklyn, NY 11201-6846, USA: 'My Post Office is moving in January, and in an effort to achieve maximum confusion, they will renumber all the P.O. Boxes. Faced with that plus much less volume of mail in the post-SF *Chronicle* days, I will close the box, whatever the new number, in April.'

**Small Press.** Jeff VanderMeer's Ministry of Whimsy Press became an imprint of Night Shade Books on 1 January. 'With 2003 used for planning and set up, the Ministry will return in 2004.'

**Group Gropes.** *London First Thursdays*. Indecisiveness continues: despite repeated double-bookings, the Silver Cross in Whitehall still has some fannish support and remains the venue for the 6 February meeting. Other pubs currently suggested are The Red Lion, Kingly St (off Regent St), and The Barley Mow, 50 Long Lane. Exploring parties may inspect one or both for evidence of Weapons Of Mass Drunkenness on 6 February, setting out from the SC around 8pm. Bernie Peek helpfully notes that fans who hate the Silver Cross so much that they've stopped turning up have hardly been in a position to argue their case there. Mark Plummer, who tentatively booked the SC until March, sums up: 'There are still a reasonable number of people who see no need for a move at all. Some oppose the Barley Mow because it's in the Barbican/Farringdon area—descriptions of its remoteness lead me to the conclusion that this must in fact be a suburb of Tripoli—while the Red Lion, if some critics are to be believed, doesn't sell beer at all! ● Personally, I suspect that even if its ale is insufficiently real we'll probably end up at the Red Lion, maybe from March....' ● *City Illiterates*: the tiny meetings every Friday evening move to the Red Lion (as above) from 10 January.

**The Dead Past. Thirty Years Ago:** 'There's to be a seminar and exhibition of American sf at the American Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London, on the 26th of January.' Also, John Brunner read his sf poetry to the Poetry Society on 11 January. (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint 29*, 13 January 1973.) Both events were taped for posterity by Gerald Bishop and the BSFA Tape Library: whatever became of that, I wonder?

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Kessel Run Dept.* "By the way, we don't talk of speed in space," he [Professor Lucius Brane] explained. "We speak of it only in terms of gravity—so many gravities." [...] "We are now on the cosmic jets at one twentieth exposure. At full exposure you would be travelling at not less than twelve gravities, which in terms of speed would be very fast indeed." (Captain W.E. Johns, *Kings of Space*, 1954) ● *Secrets of Invisibility Dept.* 'We came to your world as fugitives from a great planet that once formed part of the solar system—a planet composed entirely of ultra-violet substances ...' (Clark Ashton Smith, 'The Invisible City', 1932) [BA] ● *Legend of Sleepy Hollow Dept.* 'I rolled my head to an empty quadrant of the hall.' (Richard Morgan, *Altered Carbon*, 2002) [MS]

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