

Ansible



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COLUMBIA. It's hard to find words for the new Shuttle disaster of 1 February, but Ken MacLeod provided this epitaph:

'Husband, McCool, Anderson, Brown, Chawla, Clark, Ramon.

'Komarov, Grissom, White, Chaffee, Dobrovolsky, Volkov, Patsayev, Resnick, Scobee, Smith, McNair, McAuliffe, Jarvis, Onizuka.

'These names will be written under other skies.'

The Master Plan

Diana Wynne Jones continues to be doomed: 'I am suffering from concussion—have been since a car accident before Christmas—and at the moment it seems never ending. "Yes," says my doctor cheerfully, when I told him I felt my brain had hit the inside of my face, "that's just what it did. Then it bounced back and hit the back of your skull, probably more than once." Oh, fun.'

Katherine MacLean has been named as this year's SFWA Author Emeritus, to be honoured at the Nebulas over Easter. She began publishing sf in 1949 and won a 1971 Nebula for 'The Missing Man'. [SL]

Michael Swanwick reports from the memorial service for Virginia Kidd in Milford on 20 January (see R.I.P. below). 'In attendance were family, past and present members of the Virginia Kidd Agency, David Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer with offspring, Eileen Gunn and John Berry, and Thomas Disch, as well as a varied group of friends from outside the SF community. Virginia's daughter, Beth Blish Genly, revealed that her last words were "This is the best glass of water I ever had," and everyone who knew her agreed that the zest encapsulated in that simple statement pretty much summed up her entire life. • After the service everybody gathered at Arrowhead, Kidd's home-and-office, to reminisce. A surreal note was added by the fact that all the time a videotape of Virginia, bedridden and talking steadily and calmly, ran with the sound off high in the corner of one room. Because it was a large-screen TV, Virginia remained, even in death, larger than life.'

H.G.Wells isn't often news these days, but various sf groups including SFWA have been offered the stupendous opportunity to buy a 'historic property', the Baker Street flat where Wells lived in the early 1930s. According to owner Maggi Bonner Fox, 'Although the property has been fully modernized I have endeavoured to restore and maintain many of the character features that would have been evident when Mr. Wells was in residence.' (Young Fabian Society groupies, perhaps?) Rush your offers to 47 Chiltern Court, Baker St, London, NW1 5SP. [JF]

Gary Westfahl is to receive the SF Research Association's Pilgrim Award for lifetime critical contributions, at the SFRA event in June. [L]

Conclamatio

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

10 Feb • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London (top floor). With Pat Cadigan, Ellen Datlow, and Stephen Baxter. 6:30pm. 'Yes, it is a Monday—switching to Tuesday isn't possible at the moment'

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.

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

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.

7-9 Mar • **Mecon 6**, Senior Staff Common Room, Queen's University, Belfast. GoH Peter F. Hamilton. £15 reg, £18 at door; day rates also available. Contact 12 Hopefield Ave, Belfast, BT15 5AP, N.Ireland.

30 Mar • **Fantasy Fair**, The Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. 10:30am-4pm. Contact 5 Arran Close, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7QP; phone 01477 534626.

18-21 Apr • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. GoHs: Chris Baker, Chris Evans, Mary Gentle. £45 reg (£68, €75) or £22 (\$35, €37) supporting only. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR. All single rooms in main hotel now booked.

3 May • **New Myths? SF, Fantasy and Horror** (academic conference), Bucks Chilterns Univ Coll, High Wycombe. Probably £25 reg (£15 unwaged) inc lunch. Contact Dr Andrew M Butler, D28, Dept of Arts & Media, Bucks Chilterns Univ College, High Wycombe, HP11 2JZ.

31 Oct - 2 Nov • **ArmadaCon 15**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. Contact 88 Knighton Rd, St Judes, Plymouth. Phone 0780 1492114.

2-6 Sep 04 • **Noreascon 4** (62nd Worldcon), Boston, MA. \$140 reg, rising to \$160 on 1 March 2003. Children's rates will stay the same, \$105. Supporting membership \$35. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

Rumblings • **Noreascon 4** is taking up its option to award Retro Hugos for 1953 work, as none were given in 1954. The Hugos haven't missed a year since then, and Retro Hugos are allowed only 50, 75 or 100 years after a Hugoless Worldcon, so the Retros will then fall into merciful oblivion until the 2014 committee decides whether or not to award the Hugos that weren't presented at the first Worldcon in 1939.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. 'Close encounters of the prolonged kind: Steven Spielberg's mini-series *Taken* will please science fiction fans but everyone else should prepare to laugh in the wrong places.' (BBC website) [RN] Likewise, one Adam Smith calls *Taken* '... his smash hit ten-part series (well, sci-fi viewers loved it—there was some criticism in the wider world) ...' (*Radio Times*, Jan) [POM] Was the uncritical enthusiasm of sf fans ascertained, one wonders, by actually asking any?

Glittering Prizes. *Arthur C. Clarke Award* shortlist for 2003: David Brin, *Kil'n People* (US *Kiln People*); M. John Harrison, *Light*; China Miéville, *The Scar*; Christopher Priest, *The Separation*; Elizabeth Moon, *Speed of Dark*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Years of Rice and Salt*. Winner to be announced at the usual Science Museum ceremony on 17 May. • *BSFA Awards* shortlist: NOVEL Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Effendi*; M. John Harrison, *Light*; Gwyneth Jones, *Castles Made of Sand*; China Miéville, *The Scar*; Christopher Priest, *The Separation*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Years of Rice and Salt*. • SHORT Greg Egan 'Singleton' (*Interzone* 176); Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*; Sean McMullen, 'Voice of Steel' (*SciFiction*); Paul Park, 'If Lions Could Speak' (*IZ* 177); Charles Stross, 'Router' (*Asimov's* 9/02); Michael Swanwick, 'Five British Dinosaurs' (*IZ* 177). • ARTWORK Peter Gric, 'Experiment 1' (*TTA* 31 cover); Dominic Harman, *IZ* 179 cover; Fraser Irving, 'My Name is Death' (*2000AD* Prog 1289); Joachim Luetke, illustrating 'The Routine' (*TTA* 31); Richard Marchand, 'Obliquitese' (*TTA* 32 cover). • RELATED PUBLICATION Nick Gevers interviews Chris Priest (*IZ* 183); Dave Langford, intro to *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek*; Oliver Morton, *Mapping Mars*; Lucius Shepard, 'The Timex Machine' (electricstory.com); Fred Smith, *Once There Was a Magazine*. Winners to be announced at Seacon '03. [TB]

R.I.P. *Leslie Fiedler* (1917-2003), mainstream critic who took an interest in sf, died on 29 January aged 85. His genre work included the 'historical-critical' sf anthology *In Dreams Awake* (1975), and *Olaf Stapledon: A Man Divided* (1983). [L] • *Ron Goodwin* (1925-2003), UK musician and composer, died on 8 January aged 77. His film credits include *Village of the Damned* (1960), the remake *Children of the Damned* (1964), *Day of the Triffids* (1962) and *The Spaceman and King Arthur* (1979); he was by then the in-house composer for all British Disney productions. [SG] • *Virginia Heinlein*, widow of Robert A. Heinlein and editor of his selected letters (*Grumbles from the Grave*, 1989), died on 18 January; she was 86. Joel Rosenberg wrote: 'It was a peaceful passing; she's been talking for some time about how it was getting to be time to go.' • *Virginia Kidd* (1921-2003), US literary agent and sf anthologist (twice in collaboration with Ursula Le Guin), died on 12 January after prolonged illness. Best known as an sf agent, she wrote some fiction—her first solo story was 'Kangaroo Court' in Damon

Knigh's Orbit 1 (1966)—was married to James Blish 1947-1963, and brought a strong feminist viewpoint to the genre. Her agency work continued to the last although she was long bedridden and immobile. ● **John Mantley** (1920-2003), TV writer and producer whose sf novel was *The 27th Day* (1956; film with JM's script 1957), died on 14 January; he was 82. ● **Daphne Oram**, pioneer of electronic music who in 1957 persuaded the BBC to launch its Radiophonic Workshop (famed in sf for the 1963 *Dr Who* theme music), died on 5 January aged 77. [BB] ● **Peter Tinniswood** (1936-2003), UK author and scriptwriter most popular for radio and TV work, died on 9 January after long treatment for oral cancer. He was 66. His idiosyncratic humour tended to the surreal and fantastic; the outrageous cricket stories are set in what's virtually an alternate world, while *The Stirk of Stirk* (1974) is a comic-heroic fantasy that didn't make it into the *Encyclopedia*.

Media Watch. A question posed in the 15 January instalment of that naughty e-bulletin *Popbitch* might make an interesting *Ansible* competition if I could think of a suitable prize (and, of course, if I ever dared to publish the answers): 'Which *Star Trek* officer likes to pay high-class prostitutes to pleasure themselves with a large dildo while he reclines in an armchair listening to classical music?' [SG]

Roll That Log. It's Hugo nominations season again, and some discreet hints are being dropped about the Best Related Book category. Oliver Morton urges correspondents to note that his *Mapping Mars* is not just another pop-science book but 'deals with specific works, themes and tropes of science fiction as part of its subject matter.' Although the rules for this category discourage anthologies, Kathryn Cramer wonders whether her and David G. Hartwell's *The Hard SF Renaissance* might be in with a chance, presumably on the basis of its critical content. This is a terrible temptation to place in the way of D. Langford, who edited and wrote the critical introduction to *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek* ... no, no, get thee behind me, Kathryn! ● Meanwhile the publishers of the Canadian fanzine *The Voyageur* placed a double-page ad in the fourth Torcon (Worldcon 2003) progress report, urging us to nominate it and its frequent contributor Alex von Thorn (who would have preferred not to be mentioned) for the fanzine and fan writer Hugos. Who knows what ruthless counter-campaigning may follow? ● *Ansible's* guilty retreat from the fanzine to the semipro category provoked widespread apathy, a few approving nods from fanzine editors, and one pained reproof. Kent Brewster of *Speculations* wrote: 'I wish you wouldn't; I have a horrible feeling that you'll wind up pushing *Speculations* off the ballot. Are you serious about this? You just can't please everybody.'

Random Fandom. *Jim Battista* charmed me with his revelation on Usenet that the great Forrest J Ackerman 'had a bit part as Judge Reinhold in *Nudist Colony of the Dead*. Of all the musicals I've seen about zombie nudists who kill only fundamentalist Christians, it was the most recent.' ● *Alice Bentley's* Chicago sf bookshop *The Stars Our Destination* (founded 1988) is yet another which is to close, after clearance sales now in progress. Again, trading continues by mail order and on line at <http://www.sfbooks.com/>. [BH] ● *BSFA Shock Horror!* One of the terrors of holding a sinecure position on the Council of the British Science Fiction Association Ltd is that you (all right, I, and Steve Baxter and others) get threatening letters from Companies House warning of £5,000 fines for all concerned, if the BSFA doesn't deliver its overdue company return by mid-February. Argh! Get a move on, nice BSFA treasurer, please pretty please... ● *Kim Huett*, our smoke-blackened man in Canberra, sent alarming reports from the front line as bush fires consumed whole suburbs and forests. Kim, living just three streets from the line of devastation, is shaken but unharmed. ● *The Internet Speculative Fiction Database*, a useful non-profit resource, ran into trouble on 17 January when the host ISP (your-site.com) disabled its database search facility for being too popular for its own good, with well over 3,000 queries being processed each day. See the ISFDB supremo Al von Ruff's lament at <http://isfdb.org/whatsnew.html>.

Small Press. *Eidolon: The Journal of Australian SF and Fantasy* (31 issues 1990-2000) has officially ceased publication. *Eidolon* Books will continue; likewise web activity with *Australian SF Online*.

Ansible 181 Footnote. It was widely assumed in sf circles, and so reported in *A181*, that comics man Grant Morrison had joined the far from exclusive ranks of those who have written caricatures of Gregory Feeley into their sf. But see this interview extract forwarded by an eagle-eyed reader.... RICHARD JOHNSTON: 'Yes, Greg Feeley. In *The Filth*, your central character is initially named Greg Feeley and described in rather unflattering terms, depicted as a sad, lonely man, masturbating to transsexual pornography and suspected by his neighbours of being a paedophile? What relation is he to sci-fi critic Greg Feeley, and has

Feeley covered your work in any detail of late?' GRANT MORRISON: 'I'd never heard of this sci-fi critic Greg Feeley until Harlan Ellison called me and said "Nice one mate! Greg Feeley must be squirming after that...." And I said "WHO?" I don't read science fiction books or watch it on telly so I'm not really familiar with that subculture at all.' (*Dynamic Forces* website) [PH] Once again the fickle finger of fate proves to be insecurely attached to the long arm of coincidence. Allegedly.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Mailu. *darikaran* to cook secretly; *daribedaubedau* to cook to a pulp; *daribunubunu* to cook in the wrong pot; *daridaroro* to cook lazily *darigidigidi* to cook to bits; *dariputara* to undercook (of sago); *dariwuwu* to be unaccustomed to cooking. (From P.A. Lanyon-Orgill, *Dictionary*, 1944) [G via MP]

C.o.A. Bill Bodden moved in with *Tracy Benton* at 108 Grand Canyon Drive, Madison, WI 53705, USA.

Wooden Rocket Awards, to be presented annually for 'online excellence in the science fiction and fantasy genre', were announced on 30 January. There are 17 assorted categories, and the first presentation is scheduled for June 2003. From the press release: 'Award Director Mark Lewis has this to say about the new awards: "It's ironic, given the first Internet connection was established on the UCLA campus in 1969, that we've now stepped into the new millennium without any award worthy of the name being established for online science fiction and fantasy. / Even the darling[s] of the field, the Hugo Awards given out annually at the World Science Fiction Convention, sadly do not yet have a permanent category to recognise web site excellence." / If you include all the related media searches such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Lord of the Rings*, almost 9 per cent of the search engine Google's traffic is related to science fiction and fantasy ... although you would be hard pressed to find recognition of this by big Internet awards such as the New Media Awards or the Webbies.' Welcome to the As Others See Us department, chaps! Further details at <http://www.WoodenRocket.com>.

Fanfandery. Last warning: TAFF voting closes on 10 Feb. Candidates are, still, Randy Byers, Colin Hinz, Mike Lowrey, and Curt Phillips.

Group Gropes. *London First Thursdays.* There's still a 6 February meeting at the Silver Cross in Whitehall, and Tony Cullen has launched The Inertia Party, 'devoted to continuing the First Thursday meetings at the Silver Cross until we are convinced that a move is necessary. TIP would like to state at the outset that a sufficient proportion of fans moving elsewhere will be considered sufficient justification for a move.' This implied challenge was soon taken up by the Barley Mowmentum Party, fans who have given up on the Silver Cross and invite all comers to join them on 6 February in The Barley Mow, 50 Long Lane. As far as I know, investigations of The Red Lion, Kingly St (off Regent St), by a party from the Silver Cross will still take place that same evening.

The Dead Past. Twenty Years Ago. Martin Morse Wooster reported: 'Harlan Ellison is the only SF superstar to grace the pages of *The American Bachelor's Register*, compiled by the learned editors of *Playgirl* as a guide to, er, "hunks". *Ansible* readers wishing to abandon their lives to the conquest of Mt. Ellison are advised that frontal assault is desirable: "Don't play panther games with me," Ellison warns. "Don't circle round and round my fire." (*Ansible* 31, February 1983)

Chog's Masterclass. True Romance Dept (or, The Fingers Have It). 'Discreetly glancing around, my fingers gingerly wriggled into the embroidered hole of her panties ...' (Joseph Covino Jr, *Prince of the Perverse*, 2002) [PB] ● *Dept of Dimensional Analysis.* 'If you could enlarge the human body, blow it up to a vast size, you would see that it was literally nothing but a swirling mass of cells and atoms, clustered together into smaller swirls of cells and atoms.' (Michael Crichton, *Prey*, 2002) [PB] ● *Dept of One-Off Use.* 'Passing over the roadie's ceramic teeth was a tongue that would help the man form a single word.' (P.P. Hartnett, *Rock'n'Roll Suicide*, 2002) ● *Dept of Pleonasm.* 'Truth had at last become time-urgent.' (Martin Amis, *Koba the Dread*, 2002) ● *Dept of Arresting Simile.* 'When he was yet a million miles away the bright ring of fire that marked its portal filled the sky in front of him, flexing and twisting like the devil's anus in spasms of immortal agony.' (Alan Glasser, *The Demon Cosmos*, 1978) [PY] ● *Relativity Dept.* "I once read somewhere," said Peter, "that a minute on Mars is equal to a year on our Earth, so that would be the reason why everything is terrifically speeded up." (Prof A.M. Low, *Adrift in the Stratosphere*, 1937)