

Ansible



Ansible 200 March 2004

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Numerology. The magic of round numbers led some fans to expect a bumper *Ansible* this month. But, remembering an early double issue and nine with numbers like 53½, this is the 208th.... To mark the non-occasion, the British Library reproved me for putting the print version's ISSN in the on-line edition. Instead I have had another ISSN thrust upon me, with stern instructions to distinguish print from digital by using both numbers in both editions. This makes life so much simpler.

Opus 200

Andrew M. Butler won the 2004 Pioneer Award for *sf* criticism, with his essay 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at the British Boom' (*SF Studies* #91, November 2003). [FM]

Orson Scott Card has a crushingly final word on the current hot issue of gay and lesbian marriage in the USA: 'In the first place, no law in any state in the United States now or ever has forbidden homosexuals to marry. The law has never asked that a man prove his heterosexuality in order to marry a woman, or a woman hers in order to marry a man....' [*Closely reasoned examples omitted.*] 'So it is a flat lie to say that homosexuals are deprived of any civil right pertaining to marriage. To get those civil rights, all homosexuals have to do is find someone of the opposite sex willing to join them in marriage.'

Cory Doctorow names no names in his 12 February speech to the O'Reilly Emerging Technologies Conference: '... I was shocked silly by legal action by one of my colleagues against AOL/Time-Warner for carrying the alt.binaries.ebooks newsgroup. This writer alleged that AOL should have a duty to remove this newsgroup, since it carried so many infringing files, and that its failure to do so made it a contributory infringer, and so liable for the incredibly stiff penalties afforded by our newly minted copyright laws like the No Electronic Theft Act and the loathsome Digital Millennium Copyright Act or DMCA. • Now there was a scary thought: there were people out there who thought the world would be a better place if ISPs were given the duty of actively policing and censoring the websites and newsfeeds their customers had access to, including a requirement that ISPs needed to determine, all on their own, what was an unlawful copyright infringement -- something more usually left up to judges in the light of extensive amicus briefings from esteemed copyright scholars. • This was a stupendously dumb idea, and it offended me down to my boots. Writers are supposed to be advocates of free expression, not censorship. It seemed that some of my colleagues loved the First Amendment, but they were reluctant to share it with the rest of the world.' Um. The free expression of Cory Doctorow giving his own work away (including this speech, placed in the public domain) strikes me as rather different from that of some talentless git with a scanner who rips off other authors' creations. I must be an old fogey.

Harlan Ellison's lawsuit against AOL continues, with the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals partly reversing though partly affirming the 2002 district court's adverse decision, with 'Each party to bear its own costs' and the road open for further exciting litigation. Apparently the case goes back to the district court for a jury to decide (a) whether AOL is guilty of contributory copyright infringement; (b) if so, whether or not AOL qualifies for 'safe harbor' under the DMCA. More as it happens.

Jasper Fforde's *Lost in a Good Book* won the Dilys Award as 2003 favourite of the US Independent Mystery Booksellers Association. [SFS]

Edwin Morgan, 83-year-old Scots poet and *sf* enthusiast, has been chosen as his country's national poet or 'Scots Makar', equivalent to the Poet Laureate. His 'space poetry' was broadcast on BBC Radio in 1966; he was in the *sf* verse anthology *Holding Your Eight Hands* (1969). [JB]

Terry Pratchett on all those US awards for *The Wee Free Men* (see A199): 'Oh dear. I don't know whether to be worried or pleased that a book containing words like "sussuration", treating witches with respect and featuring a mob of drunken, thieving, swearing Scottish pixies is considered wonderful by the great and good of the US YA Book world, but I nurse a sneaking desire for someone to ban it.... • It's the 21st anniversary of DW this autumn. There will be dancing in a street.' • **Michael Bishop** helpfully adds: 'Just thought you should know I've

written a new fantasy Christmas-themed novel called *Wee Free Kings*.'

Robert Silverberg is the 2004 recipient of what is now called the Damon Knight Memorial Grandmaster award, from SFWA. [BW] In his own words: 'It's an awesome thing to be put up there in the same company as Heinlein, Asimov, De Camp, Leiber, Simak, van Vogt, and the rest of that crew. I'm still pretty stunned. This isn't modesty I'm expressing—far from it. Just awe. These guys were my boyhood heroes and now I am one of them.'

Contrate

5 Mar • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Princess Louise pub, Holborn, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome. Next: 4 Jun, 3 Sep.

5-7 Mar • **Mecon 7**, Senior Staff Common Rooms, Queen's University, Belfast. £20/€30 at the door; just turn up, I suppose.

5-7 Mar • **Oktokon/AKFT 8 (Trek)**, Fircroft Hotel, Owls Rd, Bournemouth, BH5 1AE. Latest rates not sent. Contact 0208 801 8867.

6-7 Mar • **Microcon**, Exeter University campus. Contact Daniel Bond, 100 Magdalen Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4TU.

8 Mar • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6.30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Richard Morgan and Rob Grant.

20 Mar • **Revelations in Fairyland**, BSFA/SF Foundation free event, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Sq, London, WC1. 10:30am-5pm. With Paul McAuley, Alastair Reynolds, Liz Williams, BSFA & SFF AGMs.

24 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, White Hart pub, 119-121 Bishopsgate (near Liverpool St Station), London. 6pm on. With Steve Aylett.

3 Apr • **TTA Con 5 (The Third Alternative mag)**, The Anchor pub, 'by the river', Cambridge. 12 noon to late. All welcome.

9-12 Apr • **Concourse (Eastercon)**, Blackpool Winter Gardens. £45 reg until *advance booking closes on 21 March*; £25 unwaged. £60 at the door. Contact 4 Cody Rd, Waterbeach, Cambridge, CB5 9LS.

20-22 Aug • **The 15th Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester Conference Centre & Hotel. Guests TBC. £70/\$110 reg. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN. 0161 707 3747.

12-14 Aug 05 • **Consternation (RPG)**, New Hall, Cambridge. With David Pulver, Marcus Rowland. £20 reg until 1 Aug 04. Contact 130 South Rd, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6EL.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. 'This column's favourite novel of 2003, William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*, has been shortlisted for two big awards—only Sci Fi awards but better than a poke in the eye.' (Jeremy Jehu, 'Best Sellers', ITV Teletext reviews, 13 February) [MB]

R.I.P. Donald Barr (1921-2004), US author and academic best known in *sf* circles for his space opera *Space Relations* (1973), died on 5 February. He was 82. [PDF] • **Islwyn Ffowc Elis** (1924-2004), Welsh author of popular Welsh-language novels including the *sf* *Y Blaned Dirion (The Fair Planet)*, 1968, died on 22 January at age 79. [SH] • **Peter Garratt** (1949-2004), UK psychologist, fan and author, died unexpectedly on 2 March, perhaps from a heart attack; he was 54. David Pringle writes: 'I've known Pete for over 30 years, and he was a kind friend, so obviously this is deeply saddening for me, as I'm sure it will be for many others who knew him well—and also for those who knew him socially, from writers' groups or *sf* conventions, or through his stories in magazines and anthologies. We published at least nine stories by Pete in *Interzone* over the years, the first being "If the Driver Vanishes—" (IZ 13) ... He also had stories in many small-press magazines, and one in *Asimov's SF*.' • **Julius Schwartz** (1915-2004), US fan, literary agent, influential comics editor, and in later life a DC Comics consultant and 'goodwill ambassador' to conventions, died on 8 February aged 88. With Mort Weisinger he coedited what many regard as the first true *sf* fanzine, *The Time Traveller* (1932); his and Weisinger's agency Solar Sales Service was the first to specialize in *sf*. As editor at All-American Comics (which became part of DC) from 1944 to 1986, he was involved in the revival and development of such superheroes as The Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Adam Strange, The Atom, and

Batman; from 1971 he edited *Superman*. As he wrote in his autobiography: 'Here Lies Julius Schwartz. He met his last deadline.'

Asimov's Porn Scandal. Following one easily outraged mother's complaint, a Michigan TV news show ran a shock horror exposé about *Asimov's SF* ('an adults-only magazine ... full of sexual content ... stories about sex, drugs, and molestation') being pushed to innocent children. Really? *Asimov's* response: 'Reporter Kristi Andersen and the News 8 anchors portrayed the QSP magazine drive as children buying and selling magazines. As a matter of fact, in this fundraising drive, students sell magazines to their family, their neighbors, and their parents' coworkers. We reviewed the QSP catalog with the reporter and showed her that many of the magazines are for adults, including *Esquire*, *Vogue*, *GQ*, and *Elle*. As we showed the reporter, the QSP catalog has a section specifically geared to children, and indicates age-appropriate titles. *Asimov's* was correctly listed in the catalog, not under "Children," but under "Science/Technology/Environmental." The reporter chose not to include this information in her report, and, in fact, said that we "did not know it was on the school magazine list." And so on. The fact that *Asimov's* had already ceased to deal with QSP (for financial reasons) was presented as a moral victory won by the fearless TV station.

Paging Mr Tucker! Can it be coincidence that the latest Lemony Snicket outbreak, *The Slippery Slope*, has a cameo appearance by one C.M. Kornbluth? 'Mr. Kornbluth was a quiet and secretive man, so secretive that no one ever knew who he was, where he came from, or even what the C or the M stood for, and he spent much of his time holed up in his dormitory room writing strange stories ...' [YR] • Kevin J. Anderson brags that he's given the young Jack Williamson a major part in his DC *Justice Society* superhero comic series, set in the 1940s.

Oscars. You read it here last. *The Return of the King*, nominated in 11 categories, won them all: best picture (the first genre film to get this big one), director, adapted screenplay, film editing, score, sound mixing, make-up, visual effects, song, costume design, and art direction. It now ties with *Ben-Hur* and *Titanic* for most Oscars won. *Finding Nemo*, narrowly edging out Gimpli's eyebrows, won as best animated feature.

Random Fandom. *Chris Bell* to the rescue: 'I am assured that the menu for the "Concourse Medieval Banquet", for which a booking form is enclosed with PR4 for the forthcoming Easter Convention, was not selected by Marcus Streets or Chris O'Shea, who are aware that "Baked jacket potato" somehow lacks true Medieval authenticity.'

SF Hall of Fame. This year's inductees are that inseparable quartet Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Mary Shelley and E.E. 'Doc' Smith.

What the Papers Say. 'Polyamory's intellectual genesis is often attributed to Robert Heinlein's tedious sci-fi epic *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961); the protagonist's polysexual adventures read like a dirty old author's wish-fulfilment.' (*Sunday Telegraph* magazine, 29 February) • 'With a massive cult following in the US, Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan saga has set the standard for space opera fiction—she's won more Hugo awards than anyone else in the last 30 years.' (Fantasy and SF Book Club newsletter, January) [PW] Er, no comment. • '... one is tempted to say, "It's only a TV series, guys." But Galactic Hitchhikers, a sub-division of Trekkies and only marginally less deranged than Doctor Who wonks, will not have it so. They give new meaning to the word "aficionados"—lovers of *Goodbye, and Thanks for All the Fish*, one of Adams's weakest books ...' (Iain Finlayson on *Hitchhiker*; *Times*, 14 Feb) [IG] So only nerds remember the radio series. Or get titles right.

BAFTAs: At the mid-Feb presentation, *The Return of the King* won for best film, adapted screenplay, cinematography, and visual effects. Popular vote also made it the Orange Film of the Year. The BAFTA for best short animation went to the fantasy *Jojo in the Stars*.

Thog's Critical Masterclass. *Dept of In 1877 They'd Believe Anything:* 'Although the first edition's claim that *Black Beauty* was "translated from the original equine" now seems quaint or absurd ...' (Raymond E. Jones, *Characters in Children's Literature*, 1997)

Publishers and Sinners. Darren Nash, the editor who went down with Earthlight when Simon & Schuster killed it off, joined Tim Holman's editorial team at Time Warner/Orbit on 2 March. Earthlight founder John Jarrold, still in the wilderness of freelancing, would love you all to pay him to edit your unsold sf masterpieces into publishable shape (actual publication not guaranteed): j.jarrold@bopenworld.com.

Nebula Finalists for 2003 or, as the case may be, 2002 work. NOVEL Lois McMaster Bujold, *Diplomatic Immunity*; Carol Emshwiller, *The Mount*; Kathleen Ann Goonan, *Light Music*; Nalo Hopkinson, *The Salt Roads*; Jack McDevitt, *Chindi*; Elizabeth Moon, *The Speed of Dark*. • NOVELLA Eleanor Arnason, 'Potter of Bones' (*Asimov's* 9/02); Kage Baker, 'The Empress of Mars' (*Asimov's* 7/03); Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*;

John Kessel, 'Stories for Men' (*Asimov's* 10/02); Ian MacLeod, 'Breathmoss' (*Asimov's* 5/02). • NOVELETTE Richard Bowes, 'Mask of the Rex' (*F&SF* 5/02); Adam-Troy Castro, 'Of a Sweet Slow Dance in the Wake of Temporary Dogs' (*Imaginings*); Cory Doctorow, 'OwnzOred' (*Salon* 8/02); Jeffrey Ford, 'The Empire of Ice Cream', (*Sci Fiction* 2/03); Ray Vukevich, 'The Wages of Syntax' (*Sci Fiction* 10/02). • SHORT Eleanor Arnason, 'Knapsack Poems' (*Asimov's* 5/02); Kevin Brockmeier, 'The Brief History of the Dead', (*New Yorker* 9/03); Harlan Ellison, 'Goodbye to All That' (*McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales*); Carol Emshwiller, 'Grandma' (*F&SF* 3/02); Karen Joy Fowler, 'What I Didn't See' (*Sci Fiction* 7/02); Molly Gloss, 'Lambing Season' (*Asimov's* 7/02); James Van Pelt, 'The Last of the O-Forms', (*Asimov's* 9/02). • SCRIPT *Finding Nemo*, *Minority Report*, *Spirited Away*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Futurama*: 'Where No Fan Has Gone Before'.

Deep Thought. The chance to question Ursula Le Guin in the online *Guardian* earned one seeker after truth a place in *Private Eye's* Pseud's Corner: 'As opposed to the standard model of time travellers projected into previously lived cultural patterns, what do you make of the concept "collective experrence of temporal variation," such as stalled, recursive or redundant sequences of year sets. I am thinking of collective delusion or the social construction of reality, wherein mere participation in humanity's elaborated schedules makes distance between avowed temporal judgments and an undercurrent of more objective time. For instance, what would happen if global culture lost track of the passage of the years due to the complexity of information elaborating its rote performance? I am thinking of this not so much from a narrative science fiction perspective as an anthropological dissonance between (world) culture and context.' *Ursula Le Guin replies:* 'Sorry, the more I read your question the stupider I feel.'

Small Press. *Prime Books*, edited by Sean Wallace, has joined his Cosmos Books as an imprint of Wildside Press. See C.o.A. below.

Outraged Letters. *Simon R. Green* soldiers on: 'I'm putting together a must-sell TV series for Channel 5: *Orgasms of the Third Reich*.' • *Marcus Rowland* is also disgruntled by the deeply stupid censorship imposed by Net Sweeper UK, which at his school prevents access to reproductive-biology websites, blocks several university chemistry sites for 'criminal content', and bars Google searches for the filthy phrase 'chemical analysis'. • *Simo* is 'starting to get a bit fed up with answering what seems to be the most burning question in SF: The new radio series of *Hitchhiker's Guide*, which was due for broadcast from 17th February, has been indefinitely postponed. Neither I nor anyone else, including the people who made it, know when it will be broadcast. Phrases involving the words "organize", "BBC", "brewery" and "piss-up" are being bandied about.'

Fanfundery. *DUFF*: candidates for the northbound trip—Australasia to Noreascon 4, the 2004 Worldcon—are Erika Maria Lacey, Norman Cates and Danny Oz (formerly Danny Heap). Voting deadline is 1 May.

Classics of Our Time. I was suitably numbed to learn that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is to appear in classical Greek: 'the longest text to have been translated into the ancient language in 1,500 years.' (*BBC News*) The translator, UK classics teacher Andrew Wilson, modelled his style on the 2nd-century works of Lucian, who was at least a fantasy (or sf) author. 'Harry Potter' apparently comes out as 'warrior goblet'. An Irish Gaelic version is also scheduled. Next: Elvish? Klingon?

C.o.A. Jane Carnall, 14 Hawthornbank Place, Edinburgh, EH6 4HG. *Eddie Cochrane*, 72 St Pauls Gate, Wokingham, RG41 2YR. *Alice Turner & Dave Field*, 30 Charlewood Rd, Whitmore Park, Coventry, CV6 4ER. *Sean Wallace/Prime Books*, PO Box 301, Holicong, PA 18928-0301, USA.

Group Gropes. *London 1st-Thursday meetings* seem to be reverting to the Florence Nightingale on the roundabout at the South Bank end of Westminster Bridge; there is a new, customer-friendly landlord.

Thog's Masterclass. *Tone of Voice Dept.* "'What is it, Arthur?" Admiral Greer asked, wearing a cheap golf shirt.' (Tom Clancy, *Red Rabbit*, 2002) [NB] • *Purple Passage Dept.* '... in the blood of stainless childhood the leprous limbs of phosphorescent Lilith were laved.' (H.P. Lovecraft, 'The Horror At Red Hook') [BA] • *Dept of Historical Truth.* 'But then, Oscar knew, Taneaia Gall had been Chairwoman of the Residents Association for over a century. Few of history's absolute monarchs had reigned for that long.' (Peter F. Hamilton, *Pandora's Star*, 2004) [PB]