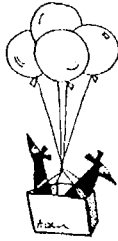


Ansible



Ansible 203 June 2004

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. <http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible/>. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE, bilbys, gleeks or mereens (but not smeerps).

ACCA. The new-style Clarke Award presentation took place in London on 12 May, in the relatively cosy English Heritage Lecture Theatre (off Regent Street) rather than the echoing vastness of the Science Museum. After all the talk of ACCA budget problems, Britain's thirsty sf glitterati were greatly cheered to find that administrator Paul Kincaid's team had contrived to lay on free wine before the ceremony, though reverting to a cash bar afterwards... As usual, Paul summarized the virtues of the nominated novels. Without agonizing delay, 2003 winner Chris Priest wrenched open the envelope and announced the judges' choice: *Quick-silver* by Neal Stephenson, who hadn't been able to make it. Shortlisted authors in attendance (Stephen Baxter, Gwyneth Jones) smiled bravely, and yet another 'But is it really science fiction?' debate began.

The Meths Festival

Brian Aldiss responds to my idle query about one of his early pseudonyms: 'C.C. Shackleton is in hiding. He was considered too amusing for a serious matter like sci-fi. Compare the situation in Sweden. Advertising the movie, *Lost in translation*, posters carried the tag line, "So funny it was banned in Norway".'

J.G. Ballard's *Millennium People* wasn't shortlisted for the 2004 Clarke Award, leading to speculation in certain quarters about anti-Ballardism among the judging panel. But no: it is revealed that Paul Kincaid asked several times for *Millennium People* to be submitted to the Clarke jury. The publisher (Flamingo Books) refused, conveying the distinct impression that this was at Ballard's own request.

Michael Moorcock confirms his *Spectator*-reported plan to leave Texas and settle in some continental European city, though probably not Rome: 'I'll be 65 at the end of this year and will be retiring (that is, only writing one book a year) back to the restful city. The country has been killing me and I deserve some tranquility in my old age.'

Michael Swanwick has an anecdote: 'I was waiting for a panel to begin at the Fantastic Genres conference at SUNY New Paltz last weekend, when Rachel Pollack swept in, waved a dismissive hand at John Clute, Farah Mendelsohn, and three other leading lights of the interpretive art and said, "Everybody's a critic." • "That's pretty good," I said. "I made it up last night," she replied. "I just came down here now to deliver it." • Then she left.' (5 May)

Confix

8 Jun • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Cherith Baldry, and Michael Marshall.

23 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**. *Another new venue:* The Star, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. Nearest tube station is Knightsbridge. 6pm onward; fans present from 5pm. With Les Edwards ('Edward Miller').

26 Jun • **Interaction Open Meeting** (Worldcon 2005), Glasgow Hilton, 1 William St, Glasgow. SECC tour 10:30am; Hilton 12:30 on. All welcome, but please notify info[at]interaction.worldcon.org.uk.

17 Jul • **Tolkien Society Seminar**, St Martin's College, Carlisle. 10am-5pm. £15 reg, inc lunch. Booking closes 2 July. Contact (SAE) 85 Woad Lane, Great Coates, Grimsby, DN37 9NB.

11-18 Sep • **Milford SF Writers' Conference**, Trigonos Centre, Snowdonia. Published authors only; 15 members max. Approx £323 per person inc single room for 7 nights. £75 deposit to Milford SF Writers' Conference, Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

5-8 Aug • **A Commonwealth of SF** (SFF event), Liverpool Foresight Centre. £150/\$270 inc meals but not accommodation; £110/\$198 for deadbeats earning under £15,000 p.a. (those would be the authors). Contact SF Foundation, 22 Addington Rd, Reading, RG1 5PT.

5-8 Aug • **Bulgacon 2004** (Eurocon), Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Seems to be contactable only on-line: <http://www.bgcon.org>, info[at]bgcon.org.

6-8 Aug • **Brentcon** (Sproutlore), diverse activities at 'various venues around Brentford'. GoH Robert Rankin, launching another book. £22 reg for Sproutlore members and their guests; non-members £30. Cheques to Sproutlore, 211 Black Horse Ave, Dublin 7, Ireland.

20-23 Aug • **Discworld Convention IV**, Hanover International

Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. £50 reg (no March 04 increase as initially announced). Contact PO Box 102, Royston, Herts, SG8 7ZJ. 07092 394940.

5-7 Nov • **Armadacon 16**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. *New dates!* £30 reg, £27 unwaged. Contact 4 Gleneagle Ave, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Alfonso Cuarón, director of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Whatsit*, may next write and direct an sf film, *Children of Men*—presumably based on the not very good P.D. James novel. With the usual disclaimer: 'It's not really science-fiction. It's the world 30 years from now, in which for 18 years no human child has been born, for unknown reasons. Civilizations are falling apart. England is the last remaining civilization as we know it, because it's an island that's insulated itself from Europe, which is in civil wars and complete pandemonium. So the story takes place in that context.' (*SCI FI Wire*) [CV] All very different from those sci-fi shockers like, well, *Greybeard*.

Vatican Viewpoint. *Astrobiology Magazine* interviewed Brother Guy Consolmagno, Jesuit astronomer to the Vatican, and asked the inevitable question. GC: '... But, I'm also a science fiction fan—' AM: 'Have you read *The Sparrow*?' GC: 'Yes, and I hated it.' [TC]

R.I.P. **Anthony Ainley** (1932-2004), UK actor who played Doctor Who's fondest enemy The Master (originally Roger Delgado) on TV during the 1980s, died on 3 May; he was 71. [DK] • **Richard Biggs** (1961-2004), US actor who played Dr Stephen Franklin in *Babylon 5*, died unexpectedly on 22 May, perhaps from a stroke; he was only 43. [BB and many others] A memorial service was held in North Hollywood on 26 May. • **Olga Druce** (1911-2004), US producer/director of *Captain Video* for TV (1949-56), and *House of Mystery* and *Superman* for radio, died on 18 April aged 92. [AIP] • **Gill Fox** (1915-2004), US comics artist, editor, and writer, died on 15 May aged 88. In the 1940s he produced covers for *Police Comics*, featuring Jack Cole's 'Plastic Man', and backgrounds and scripts for Will Eisner's 'The Spirit' in daily newspapers. [AIP] • **Nelson Gidding** (1919-2004), Hollywood screenwriter who scripted *The Haunting* (1963), *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and *The Mummy Lives* (1993), died on 1 May. He was 84. [PDF] • **Rod Hall**, UK literary agent representing many film and TV writers, was found stabbed to death in his South London flat on 23 May; he was 53. Years ago at the A.P. Watt agency, Hall was film/TV agent for such sf authors as Brian Aldiss and Chris Priest. • **Robyn Meta Herrington** (1961-2004), Australian-born author and editor resident in Canada for the last 25 years, died on 3 May after a lengthy struggle against cancer. She was an acquisitions editor for Edge Science Fiction and Fantasy and also published genre poetry. [RS via JS] • **Fred Karlin** (1936-2004), Oscar- and Emmy-winning film composer who composed the music for *Futureworld* (1976), died from cancer on 26 March; he was 67. [AIP] • **Lincoln Kilpatrick** (1932-2004), US actor who appeared in *Soylent Green* and *The Omega Man*, died on May 18; he was 72. [AIP] • **Peter 'Mac' McNamara** (1947-2004), Australian fan, editor and publisher, died on 1 June from brain cancer diagnosed in early 2002; he was 57. His mid-1980s sf magazine *Aphelion* led to the small press Aphelion Publications; he coedited the anthologies *Alien Shores* (1994) and *Forever Shores* (2003), and was still working on *Future Shores* in May 2004. Peter is survived by his wife Mariann. All sympathy to her and the family. • **Brian McNaughton** (1935-2004), US horror author whose collection *The Throne of Bones* (1997) won a World Fantasy Award, died on 14 May. [ED] • **Tony Randall** (Feb 1920-2004), US comic actor whose rare genre parts included the title role—and several others—in *7 Faces of Dr Lao* (1964), died on 17 May aged 84. [SD] • **Edward Wagenknecht** (1900-2004), US scholar of supernatural fiction who edited several collections, anthologies and *The Letters of James Branch Cabell* (1975), died on 24 May at the remarkably ripe age of 104. [NB] • **Basil Wells** (1912-2004), US sf author who flourished in a small way from a 1940 *Super Science Stories* debut until approximately 1957, died on 3 May. [MR via JS]

Egoboo. From the cutting edge of dark fantasy, a reader reports the heroine's reaction (in Charlaire Harris's *Dead Until Dark*, 2004) when

a vampire acquaintance reveals his name: 'Before I could stop myself, I rocked back onto my butt with laughter. "The vampire Bill!" I said. "I thought it might be Antoine, or Basil, or Langford! ..."' [JB]

2004 Prometheus Award shortlist: Terry Goodkind, *Naked Empire*; Paul Levinson, *The Pixel Eye*; Chris Moriarty, *Spin State*; J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*; F. Paul Wilson, *Sims*.

Publishers and Sinners. *Marvel Comics's* prose imprint Marvel Press—dedicated to fiction about Marvel characters—launches this month. ● *Penguin UK*, dragging itself kicking and screaming into the 1990s, plans to save £100,000 a year by doing away with printed book catalogues in favour of on-line listings. After all, who nowadays reads mere paper? ● *Chrysalis* is selling off its book publishing division—including the once successful Paper Tiger sf/fantasy art imprint. Poor treatment of writers and artists under Chrysalis ownership was highlighted by a 2003 Society of Authors survey. (*Publishers Lunch*)

What the Papers Say. From *The Washington Post's* coverage of *The Day After Tomorrow* (27 May): '[Al] Gore, who says he read the screenplay while the movie was in production and saw a screening this week, admits—as everyone does—that the movie is mostly science fiction, but grounded in some science facts.' Our reporter Phil Margolies muses: 'I wonder what the science fiction part is grounded in?'

Random Fandom. *Mary Branscombe & Simon Bisson*, after years of cautious delay, are ... engaged! ● *Bernard Earp* awaits an op: 'I have been diagnosed with bladder cancer. I go into Bolton Royal Hospital on 17 June ...' Chemotherapy to follow. Fingers duly crossed. ● *Ben Jeapes* can't escape the curse of having published *The Leaky Establishment*. He is now 'Documentation Officer at UKERNA ... part of the mighty institution that is the Rutherford-Appleton lab. I had my fire safety training course yesterday, in a decaying Portakabin surrounded by rabbit droppings. It was all I could do not to wipe away a tear of nostalgia.' ● *Farah Mendlesohn* explains the BSFA venue change (see above): "The landlord of the White Hart claims we haven't booked, have never booked and have in fact never been there—we just imagined it.'

As Others Reposition Us. According to *Publishers Lunch*, a US deal is being lined up for bestselling French author Jean-Christophe Rufin's *Globalia*, reported as a speculative novel which 'steps into the future, not exactly as science fiction but as a projection of today's American-dominated world toward what he calls "totalitarian democracy".' No talking squids in outer space there.

Small Press. *Orbital*, now allegedly to be launched this month, is a cunning rebranding of the magazine about sf initially announced as *Orbit* (I feared that using the title of a major British publishing imprint might be unwise). Same editor, Steve Williams; same address, 1 Firs Hill Mews, Pitsmoor Road, Sheffield, South Yorks, S3 9AH. ● *Light's List* (19th ed, 2004) covers over 1,400 English-language small press mags worldwide. 74pp. £3 inc post (US\$7; \$8 air) to John Light, 37 The Meadows, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1NY. ● *3SF* magazine died early last year ... so its publisher Ben Jeapes was thrilled and alarmed that Paul Kincaid's Clarke award speech (and later press release) included thanks 'to *3SF* who have already promised funds for the coming year.' ● *Ansible E-ditions*, still co-publishing with Cosmos Books despite fits of editorial sloth, has delivered digital settings for new POD editions of John Sladek's long out-of-print collections *Keep the Giraffe Burning* and *The Lunatics of Terra*. To follow, real soon now: Sladek's *Alien Accounts*.

Outraged Letters. *Richard E. Geis*: 'I was bitterly disappointed and shocked, SHOCKED! that you didn't accept my suggestion that you give each obit a line of separation as a small indication of worthiness and distinction. Must you dump all the dead into a common grave like that?' For the printed *Ansible*, I continue my whining excuse of space problems. But I've now tinkered with the macros that format the on-line editions, in which Dick's wish is granted! ● *David A. Hardy* is stricken by my perfidy: 'You haven't mentioned under "Awards" that I won the *Analog* AnLab Award for best Cover Artist 2004—for the second year running, as I won it for 2003 too! Er, no one told me....' ● *Harry Harrison* sends a *May Observer* interview with a UK pest control expert, who knows how to deal with the rigours of the job: 'Science fantasy books—sword and sorcery—are the best way to unwind. If you've had a bad day—clearing a dead [human] body out, or something—you can't go wrong with Stephen Donaldson or Michael Moorcock.'

2004 Mythopoeic Awards finalists: ADULT LITERATURE Lois McMaster Bujold, *Paladin of Souls*; Kij Johnson, *Fudoki*; Ursula K. Le Guin, *Changing Planes*; Patricia A. McKillip, *In the Forests of Serre*; Robin McKinley, *Sunshine*. ● CHILDREN'S Kate DiCamillo, *The Tale of Despereaux*; Clare Dunkle, *The Hollow Kingdom*; Cornelia Funke, *Inkheart* (trans from German by Anthea Bell); Shannon Hale, *The Goose Girl*; Terry

Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*. ● SCHOLARSHIP: INKLINGS Jane Chance, ed., *Tolkien the Medievalist*; Matthew Dickerson, *Following Gandalf*; John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War*; Don W. King, *C.S. Lewis, Poet*. ● SCHOLARSHIP: OTHER Mike Ashley, *Algernon Blackwood*; Francis Bridger, *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld*; William Patrick Day, *Vampire Legends in Contemporary American Culture*; John Lawrence & Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero*; Margaret Mackey, ed., *Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit*; Jennifer Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*.

House Style Dept. The Skiffy Channel (British division) informs the world: 'Since the repositioning of the channel in April, SCI FI has a new look and feel which reflect the science fiction genre's move from the periphery to the centre of mainstream entertainment. Look out for a raft of action, adventure, fantasy, paranormal and reality programming in a range of UK television premieres that will debut throughout the year. ● Following this repositioning, SCI FI is no-longer spelt with a hyphen or dot in the centre (i.e. Sci-Fi or Sci-Fi) and should always be written in upper caps (SCI FI).' Dearie me, this is going to be as difficult as remembering to write 'Harlan Ellison®' every time. [AS]

Fanfundery. *DUFF*: 'By a final vote of 53 to 46, Norman Cates has been elected the 2004 DUFF delegate from Australia/New Zealand to Noreason 4, the World Science Fiction Convention.' [GHL] ● *GUFF*: Pat McMurray's triumphal progression through Australia continues. Yvonne Rousseau sighted him in Adelaide: 'Pat reports that the Continuum-convention organisation in Melbourne couldn't think what his name was, so it refers to him in the program as "GUFF-Guy"—splendid title for a trip report, Pat thinks.'

Stamp Out SF Authors! The US Postal Service is considering issuing a stamp depicting Isaac Asimov, some time after 2006. Americans who support (or, perhaps, oppose) this notion can write to: Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, c/o Stamp Development, 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 5670, Washington, DC 20260-2437, USA. [CP]

Language Lesson. I've always wanted to know the proper term for those clumps of old Penguin sf novels on my shelves. *PopBitch* (May 2004) reveals the answer: 'There is no clear, collective noun for penguins. In the past, breeding groups have been referred to as colonies, rookeries and penguineries, but at the 4th International Penguin Conference in Chile in September 2000, it was finally agreed by penguin researchers that they would refer to a group of penguins on the land as a "waddle", and a group in the water as a "raft".' [JC] A raft of Penguin sf, bobbing feebly in the water? Oh, that's too awful....

C.o.A. *Tony Chester*, 50 Wreford Cres, Thurnby Lodge, Leicester, LE5 2QG. *Lisa DuMond* is in transit: send stuff for review to PO Box 12425, Tallahassee, FL 32317-2425, USA. *Gary Farber* (since last year), 2295 Goss St, #11, Boulder, CO 80302, USA. *Alison Freebairn & Tom Sulston*, 193a Blackstock Rd, Highbury, London, N5 2LL. *Neil Rest* ('I'm moving in with Suzy ... The wedding will be July 11.'). 1138 W Farwell, Chicago, IL 60626-3810, USA. *Geri Sullivan*, 37 Monson Rd, Wales, MA 01081-9743, USA; phone 413-245-0325. *Bridget Wilkinson* (suffering badly from gallstones, alas), 128 Sherwood Ave, Abingdon, OX14 3TX.

Thog's Masterclass. *New Maths Dept.* 'I've just gotten a reply. A series of pulses: one, two, three, five, seven, nine. Prime numbers. I respond in kind with the next set.' (Synne Mitchell, *Murphy's Gambit*, 2000) [SS] ● *Movie Science Dept.* 'Of course, X-rays are impermeable to lead.' (*Teen Agent*, 1991) [TW] ● *Dept of Continuity.* Prologue: 'The last mountains had been ground to dust by the wind and the rain, and the world was too weary to bring forth more.' Chapter 10: 'Time had not conquered everything; Earth still possessed mountains of which she could be proud.' (Arthur C. Clarke, *The City and the Stars*, 1956) ● *Unmoved Mover Dept.* 'Without moving, she raised a hand to feel her bloody head.' (Laurie J. Marks, *Fire Logic*, 2002) [CS] ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'Taylor struggled to his console, tried to lift the red handset to Damage Control back aft, and realized his right collarbone was smashed. He grabbed for the phone with his left.' 'Black heads in the water, struggling amid the flames, without lips or fingers.' (both Joe Buff, *Thunder in the Deep*, 2001) [PM] ● *Must Have Been Something I Ate Dept.* 'A deep joy bubbled inside her, sounding like a sparkling stream full of spring rain.' (Leah R. Cutter, *Paper Mage*, 2003) [JC]

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