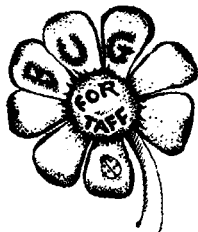


Ansible



Ansible 227 June 2006

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Web ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE or blue balticons from Mars.

The Green Flame Torch

Douglas Adams is not the only name to be dropped in this *Times* review of a 'fanta-sci-historico-romp' by Jim Younger: 'As much as *The Times* disapproves of lazy "X-meets-Y" descriptions, it is not inappropriate to suggest that reading *High John the Conqueror* is like watching a Douglas Adams-scripted episode of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, in which Terry Pratchett and Irvine Welsh wrestle, naked, and Raymond Chandler keeps the score.' (Tom Gatti, *Times*, 20 May) [JB] *Ansible* is now trying quite hard not to visualize this spectacle.

Stephen Baxter is all starry-eyed: 'I've been invited to become a Vice President of the H.G. Wells Society. This is alongside Aldiss, Clarke, Michael Foot (!) and various academics. It's a pleasant bit of recognition from one lot of peers. And as Sir A.C. Clarke and I are respectively President and VP of the BSFA, it's good to have this bit of continuity with the granddaddy of the genre. Mind you I suppose it would be bigger news if H.G. Wells had become a VP of the Stephen Baxter Society.' Steve is now practising the Wellsian sound effect which a contributor has commended to Thog's attention: 'Coot's characteristic cough—a sound rather more like a very, very old sheep a quarter of a mile away being blown to pieces by a small charge of gunpowder than anything else in the world ...' (H.G. Wells, *Kipps*, 1905) [O]

Lionel Fanthorpe has inspired a Write-Alike Contest, with prizes for both new work and rewrites of existing works in his famed Badger Books style. \$10 fee per entry (600 words maximum), to the Susan C. Petrey Fund, 2870 NE Hogan Dr, Ste. E, pmb455, Gresham, OR 97030, USA. Proceeds to SCP Clarion Scholarship Fund. Deadline 10 October.

Henry Gee speaks of himself in the third person: 'Contributions to *Futures*, *Nature's* award-winning series of SF short-shorts, have hitherto been by invitation only. But Henry Gee, who edits the series, has had a change of heart—from now on, contributions will be welcome from anyone. Just get in touch with Henry at h.gee@nature.com, preferably with a pitch or an inquiry in the first instance, so the parameters of *Futures* (such as they are) can be explained. The proviso will be, of course, that the probability of getting a story accepted will probably be even less than having a real research paper accepted by *Nature*.'

Paul Kincaid is to receive the 2006 Thomas D. Clareson Award, given by the Science Fiction Research Association for 'outstanding service activities—promotion of SF teaching and study, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring [and] leadership in SF/fantasy organizations.' Presentation on 24 June. [FM]

John Norman had lots of UK news coverage in May, as police investigated a "cult" acting out Gor-based fantasies of sexual submission in Darlington. Although the real story seemed to be that baffled police gnashed their teeth on finding that no actual crime was involved, the drooling headlines were fun: 'Gor blimey! Subservient cult is unleashed on Darlington' (*Guardian*); 'Officers discover sex-slave cult' (BBC); 'Sex slavery sect operating in suburbia' and 'Teen on a tight leash runs away to live with sadomasochistic cult' (*Times*); 'Sex slave cult uncovered in Darlington' (*Telegraph*), etc, etc. Darlingtonians of Gor! [E]

Kurt Vonnegut has been much misunderstood, says this article on the ubiquitous Charlie Kaufman: 'There are traces of other writers too, older writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, whose fingerprints seem to be all over "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." Vonnegut was misread when he was younger, labeled a science-fiction writer because his work took place in the future or involved speculative realities, when in fact this was just a strategy to address his themes.' Of course mere SF authors could never do *that*. (David L. Ulin, *LA Times*, 16 May) [PH]

Conchiolin

Until 11 Jun • **Day of the Triffids** art show by Christopher Campbell, StART SPACE, 150 Colombia Road, Shoreditch. 'The paintings are far from fantastical; they depict a believable and desolate scenario. / There is emptiness in the works; they are home to neither human nor triffid.' Yes, this interpretation is so respectable that it *contains no triffids*.

12 Jun • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Justina Robson, Adam Roberts.

28 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star, W Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Keith Brooke, Molly Brown.

3 Jul • **Royal Society Annual Open Evening**, 6-9 Carlton House Tce (tube: Piccadilly Circus). From 6pm. Free. Exhibits include 'Mind-reading machines' and 'Invisibility at the flick of a switch'.

4-6 Aug • **MeCon 9**, Queen's Elms Centre, Malone Rd, Belfast. £18/€27 reg; £20/€30 at door. \$5/€8 supp. Cheques to QUB Science Fiction & Fantasy Society. Contact: 99 Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

18-20 Aug • **Discworld Convention IV**, Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. £50 reg to 31 Jul 06. Contact PO Box 102, Royston, Herts, SG8 7ZJ ... or info@dwcon.org.

23-27 Aug • **L.A.con IV** (64th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. \$175 reg until 1 Jul; \$200 at door. Day memberships now available: \$50 Wed, \$60 Sun, other days \$75. Contact L.A.con IV, c/o SCIFI Inc, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

25-27 May 2007 • **Confounding Tales!** (crime/sf/horror pulp), Normandy Hotel, Glasgow. £35 reg (£40 from 10 Apr 07), £15 child 6-15, £10 supp. Contact 66 High St, Stewarton, East Ayrshire, KA3 5DY.

? 2007 • **Year of the Teledu**, date/venue still TBA. £35 reg, £5 'pre-supp'. Contact 14 Endsleigh Gdns, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 2HJ,

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Paul Riddell discusses the MOD's UFO-debunking 'Project Condign' report, and ponders the implications of there being no intelligent life elsewhere: 'Well, for a start, we will no longer have to read science fiction, the entire marketing strategy for which is based on the nostrum that truth is stranger than fiction and that all this stuff will probably come true one day.' (*The Scotsman*, 9 May) Oh dearie me. One small consolation for this vanishing of the whole genre: 'Scientology [...] will be rendered literally meaningless, based as it is on the theory that human life on Earth began when our ancestors jetted in from another planet.' [SK] • BBC reporter James King explains the inwardness of Richard (*Donnie Darko*) Kelly's new film *Southland Tales*: 'Don't expect aliens from outer space. It's sci-fi with brains ...'

Publishers & Sinners. Hachette Livre, owners of Little, Brown Book Group (formerly Time Warner) and its Orbit sf/fantasy imprint, plan to launch Orbit USA and Orbit Australia within 12-18 months. Tim Holman, Orbit UK publishing director, will coordinate the launch from New York and return to London when the new imprints are established.

R.I.P. Peter Bryant (1923-2006), UK TV producer of *The Tomb of the Cybermen*, *The Web of Fear*, and eight further 1960s *Doctor Who* series starring Patrick Troughton, died on 19 May. [GW] • Seamus Cullen (1927-?2006), pseudonymous US-born author of the bizarrely erotic *Astra and Flondrix* (1976) and other fantasies, seems to have died. Mail to his Eire address has been returned, stamped DECEASED; a local postmistress confirms his terminal cancer though not as yet his death. [MA] • Paul Gleason (1944-2006), US film/TV actor whose genre credits included the 1975 *Doc Savage* movie, died on 27 May. He was 62. • Val Guest (1911-2006), UK-born film writer, director and producer responsible for *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955), *Quatermass II* (1957), *The Abominable Snowman* (1957), and *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961), died in Palm Springs on 10 May. He was 94. [JL] • Bernard Loomis (1923-2006), US toy marketing executive who entered the Toy Industry Hall of Fame in 1992, died on 2 June. Spurning *Close Encounters* as not 'toyetic', he grabbed the *Star Wars* franchise, beating a spinoff embargo by selling empty boxes with promises of future toys. His other action figures included the Six Million Dollar Man and Bionic Woman. [AIP] • Gytha North (1951-2006), UK fan who founded the British filk-singing community and in 2001 was inducted into the international Filk Hall of Fame, died on 24 May after several months' struggle against cancer. She was 55. Terry Pratchett wickedly borrowed her name for the popular Discworld witch Gytha (Nanny) Ogg: 'I think she secretly liked it, although she threatened to sue me because Nanny

Ogg is portrayed as liking babies...’ • **Arthur Porges** (1915-2006), US maths teacher and author of some 70 short sf/fantasy stories, died on the night of 12 May; he was 90 and had been ill for some while. [MA] His best-known stories are ‘The Fly’ (1952; not the much-filmed George Langelaan story) and ‘The Ruim’ (1953). • **Robert Sterling** (1917-2006), US actor who co-starred in the 1950s *Topper* TV series and played the captain in *Voyage to the Bottom of The Sea* (1961), died on 30 May aged 88. [CH] • **Frankie Thomas** (1921-2006), US actor who played the lead in *Tom Corbett: Space Cadet* (TV 1950-55), died on the night of 11 May aged 85. He was to be a special guest at L.A.con IV (Worldcon 2006), which has a space-cadets theme. On 16 May, as he’d wanted, he was buried in his Tom Corbett costume. • **Alex Toth** (1928-2006), US comics artist, died at his drawing board on 27 May; he was 77. Bill Higgins writes: ‘In addition to a long career drawing comic books, he designed characters for many animated TV SF series in the 1960s-70s, such as *Space Ghost*, *Jonny Quest*, and *The Herculoids*. My favorite remains his work on the nearly immobile—but beautifully drawn—space opera *Space Angel*, which married static drawings of characters to live-action lips which pronounced the dialogue.’ • **Alexander Zinoviev** (1922-2006), Russian philosopher and author whose *The Yawning Heights* (1976, trans 1979) is a fantastical dystopian satire of the old USSR, died from cancer in Moscow on 10 May; he was 83. • Late notice: **James O. Causey** (1924-2003), US crime novelist whose occasional sf/fantasy stories appeared in *Weird Tales* (1940s), *Galaxy* (1950s) and other magazines, died on 3 April 2003 aged 78. [JNV/B]

Science Masterclass. *Fahrenheit 2800* Dept. ‘... November arrived, cold as frozen iron, ...’ (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2003) [GS] • **Low Profile Dept.** ‘It is doubtful if we could live on that small asteroid. The air blanket would extend, perhaps, no higher than our heads.’ (Donald Wandrei, ‘Colossus’, 1934) [TMCD] • **Dept of Absorption versus Reflection.** “‘The intensity will peak in the visible spectrum.’ / ‘As the spectrum of sunlight does normally.’”, Mikhail said. “In green light, as it happens. Which is where our eyes are most sensitive, and where chlorophyll works best—which is why, no doubt, chlorophyll was selected by evolution to serve as the photosynthetic chemical that fuels all aerobic plant life.’ (Arthur C. Clarke & Stephen Baxter, *Sunstorm—A Time Odyssey: Book Two*, 2005) [JC]

AbsoluteWrite.com, a popular forum for swapping information on writing, publishing and associated scams, was taken down by its ISP (JC-Hosting) at one hour’s notice on the night of 23 May. The alleged cause was a complaint from Barbara Bauer, who features in the SFWA/Writer Beware list of the 20 worst agents, and has a habit of threatening to sue those who mention this undeniable fact. (She has even tried to get Teresa Nielsen Hayden fired from Tor Books on this account.) It was an unfortunate coincidence that JC-Hosting’s owner, Stephanie Cordray, very soon launched her own web forum for information on writing, etc, etc. Why AbsoluteWrite wasn’t allowed time to retrieve its message database, and why JC-Hosting kept issuing contradictory stories and bizarre excuses for not handing over gigabytes of intellectual property belonging to others (released at last in June), is still unclear. Reconstruction continues at the newly hosted AbsoluteWrite.com site.

As Others See Us II. Jonathan Rhys Meyers is interviewed. Q: ‘Is there a certain type of film you’d like to take on? A: ‘I don’t like sci-fi—I don’t want to do anything with sci-fi. *Star Wars*? *Star Trek*? I’d rather eat turpentine and piss on a brush fire.’ (Premiere magazine, June) [BB]

Awards. *Doctor Who* (BBC1) won the BAFTA award for best drama series. • *Compton Crook* for first novel: Maria Snyder, *Poison Study*. • *Heinlein* for commercial space development: Peter H. Diamandis. [SD]

Outraged Letters. *Brian Ameringen on State of Fear*: ‘It was with a sense of shock that I read in *Ansible* 226 that my (anti)-hero Michael Crichton had written a book that I had (unaccountably) overlooked... so I immediately investigated—to find copies available from \$0.02 (plus post). I obviously then ordered a couple of dozen from the more-than-300 copies available. Is it a reflection of the quality of the text, do you think, that so many are accessible? Did they print too many? Too many review copies hurriedly sold to second-hand merchants? Or is this simply a reflection of the current state of the Publishing Industry/Reading Public?’ • *Chris Lawson* on Thog’s selection from Margaret St. Clair (‘It is obviously impossible for an unarmed man to kill a bigger one with his bare hands.’): ‘I must respond to this inaccuracy. In my forthcoming historical fantasy *Thogoric the Ostrogoth*, the goths’ second-in-command (named Gloriamund) has both arms cut off in battle, and yet still manages to extinguish the leader of the opposing army by gripping one amputated limb between his teeth and forcing it down the throat of the unfortunate, though physically larger, general. This

rousing battle is followed by a scene of (if I say so myself) unbearable pathos as Thogoric is forced to dismiss Gloriamund despite this feat of courage. The poor fellow is no longer capable of performing his duties as Thogoric’s right-hand man, for obvious reasons. Gloriamund wanders off in despair at Thogoric’s underhanded treatment, eventually to throw himself under a Mongol wagon train on the banks of the Neva river. While this is fantasy, it is based on impeccable research and Ms St Clair’s comment can not stand uncorrected.’ • *Andrew I. Porter* (founding editor of *SFC*) on its merger with DNA fiction mags: ‘Re the curious plans for *Science Fiction Chronicle*: It’s pretty obvious that fiction readers want to read fiction and not news, and vice versa. But *SFC*’s current publisher apparently hopes to continue publishing his various magazines while still pulling in the advertising revenues of *SFC* and hopefully the subscription revenues of his fiction magazine readers. The two don’t mix. How about a magazine titled *Hot Babes and Salad Fixings*? Another brilliant idea no one has ever used, for obvious reasons.’

In Typo Veritas. From an sf novel dealing with indefinite life extension: ‘His second child, by some fluke, had proved to be immune to the immortality virus.’ (Donald Moffit, *Second Genesis*, 1986) [MQ]

FAAns. Fanzine Activity Achievement awards presented at Corflu 2006: WRITER Claire Brialey. FANZINE *Chunga*. LETTERHACK Robert Lichtman. ARTIST Steve Stiles. NEW FAN Christopher Garcia. (*Banana Wings* was initially announced as the winning fanzine. FAAn administrator Murray Moore subsequently confessed: ‘I can’t add numbers.’)

Much Exaggerated. Philip K. Dick is dead, alas, but the chap who sold 25 old sf magazines on eBay (\$750 reserve) went further: ‘Two other of the most important short story-to-silver screen tales were penned by Philip K. Dick and Harlan Ellison. No matter how distant *We Can Remember it for You Wholesale* and *Soldier of Tomorrow* might seem from their cinematic cousins, the world never would have known *Total Recall* or *The Terminator* without them. (Arnold Schwarzenegger ought to lay some bouquets at these dead author’s graves!)’ (Sic) [RC]

Fanfundery. TAFF. Bridget ‘Bug’ Bradshaw won the westbound race ‘by a clear majority of the 292 votes cast’, as announced on 27 May. Rival candidates were ½r Cruttenden and Mike ‘Sparks’ Rennie. Bridget will travel to the USA in July for L.A.con IV in August.

C.o.A. *Dave Locke*, 32 Providence Dr #15, Fairfield, OH 45014, USA.

As Others See Us III. Another review: ‘In the event this is a deal breaker, you should know right off the bat that “The Stolen Child,” by Keith Donohue, belongs to the genre known as fantasy, and that its pages are populated by hobgoblins and changelings. Fantasy is often dismissed as a necessary evil to get kids to take their medicine—i.e., learn values—or as a soft blanket for 40-year-old virgins. But as the success of “The Time Traveler’s Wife” attests, fantasy can serve a nobler function.’ Saved by the But! (Raina Kelley, *Newsweek*, 29 May) [AL]

Not-So-Small Press. From Oxford University Press this autumn: *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* by Jeff Prucher, ‘the first citation-based dictionary of science fiction terms.’ Sample entries credit vital sources like *Fancylopedia II* and *Quandry*.

Thog’s Masterclass. *Dept of Atmospheric Physics (or, Accretions of Black Air)*. “‘I’ve only seen Dask fly when it’s late,” Kindan said. “My father said something about how the atmosphere condenses at night, and air gets thicker.” / Master Zist nodded. “That’s so. I’ve heard the dragonriders say that it’s dangerous to fly too high at night—the air has gotten thinner there. Perhaps the watchwhers are adapted to fly at night, and have smaller wings because the air is thicker then.” (Anne & Todd McCaffrey, *Dragon’s Kin*, 2003) [AK] • *Read My Lips Dept.* ‘An expression of inexpressible shock crossed his face ...’ (James Blish, ‘There Shall Be No Darkness’, 1950) [CG] • *Eyeballs in the Sky Dept.* ‘His eyes climbed the tower of rickety scaffolding above him. It rose six stories, almost to the top of the church’s rose window.’ (Dan Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 2000) [EM] • *Dept of Fuseli’s Influence.* ‘An emotion he identified as frustration sat on his chest. He ignored it.’ (Elizabeth Bear, *Hammered*, 2005) [HC] • *Fashion Dept.* ‘She indicated the skin-tight black-spotted orange fur jumpsuit she was wearing, with open circlets on each leg revealing patches of skin up to her arms.’ (Alan Dean Foster, *Bloodhype*, 1973) [JK]

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