

Ansible

Gerbil porn



Ansible 140 March 1999

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GOSH. Spot the living sf author in the BBC News website poll's 10 Greatest Writers of the Millennium: Shakespeare (#1), Austen, Orwell, Dickens, Banks, Tolkien, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, Cervantes and Twain.

The Impaler of Distortions

Arthur C. Clarke's post-1998 'Egogram' has a little gloat about the recent 'unique tribute from my adopted country, when a stamp was issued showing my portrait superimposed on the geostationary satellite configuration. I certainly never imagined that this would happen, when I sorted the mail in Bishops Lydeard post office 65 years ago.' [SB]

Michael Coney has evidently been distracted from sf writing by fiercer pleasures, as indicated by his letter in *Railway Modeller* (Feb 99) debating a point of hobby theology. The author of *The Celestial Steam Locomotive* has Views on motorized tenders: 'As a science fiction writer I am accustomed to persuading my readers to suspend their natural inclination to disbelief. Well I can swallow—just about—the fact that the steam locomotives on my GWR 00 layout are actually driven by electricity, but I could not swallow the knowledge that the same locomotives were being pushed along by their tenders. It's ludicrous.' [PB]

William Gibson has an even more thrilling hobby than Michael Coney's, and spent several pages of *Wired* (Jan 99) explaining his new addiction to the eBay on-line auction market, which meets this former netphobe's insatiable need for vintage Rolex watches. '[M]echanical watches partake of what my friend John Clute calls the Tamagotchi Gesture. They're pointless in a peculiarly needful way; they're comforting precisely because they require tending.' [MMW] Ajhh.

Stanislaw Lem's four-year lawsuit against his former agent Franz Rottensteiner was recently thrown out by a Viennese court. Lem was reportedly required to pay the equivalent of \$9,000 in legal costs.

Anne McCaffrey won the American Library Association's 1999 Margaret Edwards Award, for lifetime achievement in writing books popular with teenagers. The announcement adds that 'The ALA has created a beautiful gold seal for placement on all Anne McCaffrey titles.' Unreliable sources predict a new Porn book in which a spurned would-be dragonrider finds consolation and telepathic intimacy with the beautiful gold seals not previously noticed in Pernese oceans.

William Shatner denies everything: 'I'd love to tell you that *Star Trek* was one sexual olympiad, but I was working 15 hours a day. I can't say I didn't try to, but I was always being called to the set at crucial moments.' (*Guardian*, 13 Feb) [BB] Er, just how crucial ...?

Connie Willis provided a tasty soundbite at Boskone 36, on the joy of research: 'You get to ask questions like "If you had the plague and tried to lance one of the buboes, what exactly would come out of it? And how far would it spurt?"' Also at Boskone, James Patrick Kelly said of her first story 'Santa Titicaca': 'I happen to know that Connie Willis is willing to spend big money for somebody who is willing to find one of the few remaining copies and destroy it in front of her.' [H] This should boost the market for *Worlds of Fantasy*, Winter 70-71....

Conan

Until 27 Mar • **Naomi Mitchison: A Century of Achievement**, The Writers' Museum, Lady Stair's Close, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh. 10am-5pm, admission free. Further details 0131 529 4901.

6-7 Mar • **Microcon 19**, Devonshire House, University of Exeter. GoH: me. Free entry, with no advance booking, but members are asked to give to University Rag charities. Contact 01626 888797.

11-12 Mar & 18-19 Mar • **Elements**, Lincoln Central Library, 'a festival of science fact, fiction and phenomena.' With S.Baxter, C. Greenland, R.L.Fanthorpe and others. Contact 01522 528753.

13-14 Mar • **Mecon 2**, SCR, Queen's U of Belfast. GoH Michael Marshall Smith. £10/£121 reg, to Queen's U SF Soc c/o Flat 2, 12 Ashley Avenue, Belfast, BT9 7BT.

24 Mar • **BSEA Open Meeting**, Florence Nightingale pub, on York Rd/Westminster Bridge Rd roundabout. 7pm on. With Liz Holliday.

25 Mar • **Michael Moorcock Q&A Session**, Dulwich Library

Hall (1st floor), 368 Lordship Lane, London, SE22. 7pm. No charge.

27-8 Mar • **Memorabilia** (vast sf film, cult tv, pop and comic collectors' fair), NEC, Birmingham. Box office 0121 767 4525.

2-5 Apr • **Reconvene** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. £50 reg; £25 supp, children 5-14, over-60s. Under-5s free. £80 and £40 at the door. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ. *Ansible* nervously approached the ominous *Chris Bell* to ask whether Reconvene might look kindly on belated applications until, say, 13 Mar, since unfortunately A139 did not carry hideous warnings about that 1 Mar cutoff date for postal memberships.... Shifting a chewed matchstick from one side of her mouth to the other, she answered: 'Tell you what, Dave me old mucker.... Seeing it's you, and I wouldn't do it for anyone else mind, the treasurer'll have my hide for it, but ... You tell 'em, if they want to send in their bleedin' memberships on the pier-head jump like, if they send 'em with the *Ansible* you say it in or what looks like it any'ow, they can do it till 13 March, and for you, I'll even hold the rate to 50 smackers for 'em, I'm cutting me own throat to do it, right? Can't say fairer than that, now can I?' (Printout/photocopy acceptable.)

3-5 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Sacha's Hotel, Manchester. Now £50 reg, rising 1 Jun. Tenth event in series. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M7 3QP.

10-12 Sep • **Masque 7** (costumery), U of Wolverhampton, Dudley Campus, W.Midlands. £25 reg to 14 Apr, £30 to 1 Aug, then £35. Contact 130 Hamstead Hall Rd, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB.

17-20 Sep • **Breakaway** (Cult TV '99), Pontin's Sand Bay Holiday Village (shudder), Weston-Super-Mare. Celebrates date of the Moon's escape from orbit in *Space 1999*. £128 reg inc 3 nights' half board. Contact PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER. 01733 205009.

17-19 Sep • **Fantasycon 23**, Britannia Hotel, New St, Birmingham. £50/\$100 reg, £25/\$50 supp (BFS members £40/\$80 and £20/\$40). Contact (SAE) 46 Oxford Rd, Acecks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT.

30-31 Oct • **M.R.James Weekend**, Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel, Rochester, Kent. Linked to this year's 20th anniversary of *Ghosts and Scholars*, the James appreciation magazine. £25 reg. Contact (SAE) 150 Elstree Park, Barnet Lane, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 2RP.

4-6 Feb 00, **Didgeri-12** (filk) Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes. £22 reg, £11 unwaged. GoH Brian Biddle, Urban Tapestry. (Supposed to be Didgeri-Douze, ho ho, but they're stuck with the above name for arcane bank reasons.) Contact 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5LU.

Rumblings • Reconvene: Urgent! If you joined but didn't get PR3, contact Reconvene now. The PO ate part (10%) of the Nov mailing....

Infinitely Improbable

Nebulas. The latest novel shortlist: Catherine Asaro, *The Last Hawk*; Joe Haldeman, *Forever Peace*; Jack McDevitt, *Moonfall*; Harry Turtledove, *How Few Remain*; Martha Wells, *Death of the Necromancer*; Connie Willis, *To Say Nothing of the Dog*. Also, Avram Davidson's and Grania Davis's nifty short novel *The Boss in the Wall* made the novella shortlist.

Publishers and Sinners. Orion/Millennium mercilessly tested our Philip K.Dick awareness by reissuing *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* twice last month—in B format, thus titled, as an SF Masterworks series selection (£6.99), and in A format as *Blade Runner* (£5.99).

Random Fandom. *Chris Evans* and long time girlfriend Fiona were married on 27 Feb. Chris Priest and family were there: 'a rather good thrash at a large and excellent riverside pub overlooking Canada Tower and, from the safety of the far side of the river, the Millennium Dome (the children, of the latter: "Can we go there, Daddy, can we?, can we?" etc.; the shame of it). The usual sf suspects present included Dave Garnett, Rob Holdstock and—fannish nostalgia!—the Charnock and Kettle menages. • *Ian Gunn's* fannish comic *Space-Time Buccaneers* has been assembled as intended into a circa-100pp graphic novel, by Karen Pender-Gunn. This will be sold for his memorial fund (aiding fau causes, sponsoring an iguana in Melbourne zoo): price around £6. To get the print run right, advance orders are begged—no money as yet—c/o 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE. [CB/MP] • Bryan

Talbot, plugging the launch of his Luther Arkwright comic epic *Heart of Empire* in Apr, unwisely let slip that the 'SF Writer Tavern Scene' (see adumbrations in A128) isn't until issue 7 of 9, chiz chiz chiz.

Utopia's Science Masterclass. NASA's Astronomy News website reveals the remarkable powers of modern astronomers ... 'An expanding universe "thins out" what astronomers can see at the furthest reaches of their instruments by moving galaxies further and further apart.' [JBJ]

Gender-Bender Splendour. *Tiptree Award* ... Raphael Carter, 'Congenital Agenesis of Gender Identity' (in *Starlight 2*). • *Lambda Literary Award* (gay/lesbian) sf/fantasy category shortlist: Nichola Griffith/Stephen Pagel (ed), *Bending The Landscape*; Ulysses Dietz, *Desmond*; Elizabeth Brownrigg, *Falling to Earth*; Clive Barker, *Galilee*; Lawrence Schimel (ed), *Things Invisible to See*. [LS]

R.I.P. Robert 'Buck' Coulson (1928-1999) died unexpectedly on 19 Feb. He wrote some sf with Gene DeWeese—notably the recursively fan-ish novels *Now You See It/Him/Them* (1975) and *Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats* (1977)—but is far better known in fandom for his copious correspondence and 259 issues of *Yandro* (1953-86; winner of the 1965 fanzine Hugo). His wife Juanita, a more prolific author and the co-editor of *Yandro*, survives him. For fans who'd like to make memorial donations, she suggests the American Heart, Lung, and Diabetic Associations. • *Wayland Drew* died 3 Dec 1998 in Canada, aged 65. John Clute writes: 'He was best-known for the Erhring Cycle, a post-apocalypse sf series for Ballantine (1984-6); but his finest work is probably *The Wabeno Feast* (1973), published only in Canada.'

Oh Dear. *The Rev. Jerry Falwell*, famous US religious loon, has notoriously been denouncing Tinky Winky of the Teletubbies as a gay icon. This embarrassed journalist Michael Colton, who first outed TW in a joke *Washington Post* column claiming that besides carrying a handbag, this Teletubby walks, or waddles, with sinister effeminacy. Irony-proof Falwell then came up with his own clinching evidence—TW's triangular antenna and purple coloration are Gay Pride symbols! Colton: 'Falwell admits he's never watched the Teletubbies. But homosexuality obviously excites the man...' Falwell has since denied something or other.

Critical Asides. 'You say that having "a vision and a message" makes a fine literary style. How about H.G. Wells, for example? *There's* an evangelist and a seer, indisputably. But his writing! Have you ever seen a cold rice-pudding spilt on the pavement of Gower Street? I never have. But it occurs to me as a perfect simile for Wells's writing.' (Max Beerbohm, letter to Bernard Shaw, 1903) • *Tom Holt's* latest comic fantasy *Only Human* has an interesting Hell scene, where a chap is incarcerated in fire for cruelty to authors (e.g. saying how good their early work was, and how the new stuff isn't a patch on it) and suffering his 75 millionth rereading, so far, of some mysterious unnamed text: 'I've just got to the bit where the tourist meets the wizard....'

Once More ... *John Barnes's* titles are again in a twist: 'The reason the US edition of my first story/essay collection is titled *Apostrophes and Apocalypses*, and the UK edition *Apocalypses and Apostrophes*, is neither because Americans don't see any point in punctuating after the end of the world, nor a British insistence on alphabetical order, but because the author, who is something of an idiot, never decided between the two versions and used both in correspondence over a period of years. Both publishers took their best guesses, and came out in opposite directions; the blame rests solely upon the author, just as in US editions of *Prejudice and Pride*, *Punishment And Crime*, and *A City Of Two Tales*.'

Group Gropes. *Skeptics in the Pub* brings yet another group to the Florence Nightingale: the fan-infested UK sceptical movement Bent spoons and UFOs will doubtless abound. 3rd Thur monthly 'usually' (but next is 11 Mar), 7:30pm on. 0171 862 8686. • *Birmingham*: 'A bloody coup amongst the war-torn ranks of the Brum Group saw young turk Yvonne Rowse enthroned as chair/emperor, whilst holding on to the newsletter editorship in order to stifle reports of her machinations. In other words, she was daft enough to remain in the room when they took nominations, and not run screaming into the street.' [SG]

Small Press. M.J. 'Simo' Simpson has assumed the awesome role of UK correspondent for French fan Alain Nevaunt's exciting, glossy new venture, entitled, um, *Science Fiction Magazine*. Interesting ('to our Gallic chums') news solicited: 405 Saffron Lane, Leicester, LE2 6UF. • *Fanzine Fanatique*, the reviews fanzine of which it was so often and so loudly said since 1972, is back—and wants fanzines for review: K&R Walker, 6 Vine St, Lancaster, LA1 4UF. Now in glorious DTP, which may clarify traditional FF judgements like 'Astibie is u5t*r b0Lolacs.'

Outraged Letters ... *Kyle McAbee* adds to the ever-thrilling mass of Microsoft thesaurus apocrypha: 'Unfortunately, typing "deaf Welsh fan" into the Word 97 thesaurus produces the suggestion "Martin

Hoare". A Microsoft spokesman explained that this is acceptable, because Microsoft anticipates that Mr Hoare will become at least slightly deaf as future versions of Microsoft Word are released.' • *David Garnett* looks askance at the new 'fantasy sci-fi list' from Swift Publishers, all by one Frank Ryan: '*Tiger Tiger ... The Sundered World ... what next: Dune? Childhood's End? Foundation?*' • *Simon R. Green* wants to make my flesh creep: 'It used to be one of my minor claims to fame that I was big in Lithuania. Just by being published in Lithuania, I was automatically big there. But now my agent informs me that my Lithuanian publisher has been found murdered in his own home. As yet, there appears to be no connection between this and my work, but still, I can't help feeling a bit like Salman Rushdie.' But not perhaps a whole lot like Salman Rushdie.... 'More Disney smut: apparently, if you look very closely, you can see the priest marrying the Little Mermaid has a hard-on under his surplice. I personally cannot confirm this, as I have a life.'

Where Are They Now? 25 years ago, the *Checkpoint* poll for Best British Fanwriter was won by a certain Malcolm Edwards, with runners-up Greg Pickersgill and John Brosnan. (*Checkpoint 46*, March 1974)

C.o.A. *Jonathan Coxhead*, 660 Gail Ave #A3, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-8160, USA. *Mike Damesick*, 48 Galton Tower, Civic Close, Birmingham, B1 2NW. *Stefan Dziemianowicz*, 41 Parkway Dr, Bloomfield, NJ 07003, USA. *Donald Eastlake III* and family, 65 Shindegan Hill Rd, RR #1, Carmel, NY 10512, USA. *Tommy Ferguson* has escaped the *Belfast Telegraph* to write software in Nottingham: new address to follow? *John Mansfield*, 516 Portage Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, S3C 0G2, Canada.

Confirmation: The Hard Evidence of Aliens Among Us. This hard-nosed NBC tv survey of said 'evidence' attained stupefying heights of impartiality by using an expert source, interviewer, and executive producer with no possible financial interest in pushing alien abduction theories. Yes, you guessed it: Whitley Strieber. Lawrence M. Krauss of *Physics of Star Trek* fame was mystified that the aliveness of a fragment of iron extracted from someone's hand was considered proved when a geologist with a big microscope 'couldn't classify it.' God forbid they should risk taking it to a metallurgist. Or a scrap-metal dealer. [AIP/NTY] • Meanwhile *Dop* noticed subtle sf influence in a Feb UK outbreak: 'that C4 crap *Riddle of the Skies* ... Brilliant UFO footage. Silvery, conical, apparently spinning. The guy from the MoD said it might have been a cloud, but to saddoes like me it was blatantly obvious what it really was. It was a UFO from Gerry Anderson's UFO. What a load of toss.' • *Martin Morse Wooster* sends *Sedona: Journal of Emergence*, containing channelled words from the disguised aliens among us. 'Our representatives [...] are now known (by your word) as penguins. [...] There is no mathematical problem that has ever been dreamed up by your species that has not already been long solved by these beings.' Fancy missing the opportunity to channel their proof of, say, Goldbach's Conjecture.

The Picocon Experience. *Imperial College, London*, 6 Feb. *Claire Brialey* and *Mark Plummer* were there ... 'Notable features of Picocon 16 included: • —the presence of Stephen Lawhead, M. John Harrison and Jane Johnson (and thus Gabriel King) as guests; • —the absence in Ireland for the weekend of the key-holder for the cheap food bar; • —the old-fashioned but thus ultra-fannish positioning of the book dealers in the corner of the main programme room; • —the funeral pace of the team quiz, and the disengagement of Z29 Plural Z Alpha; • —efforts to collect at least seven Imperial College SF Society Past Presidents to complete the set, er, take a photograph; • —the extensively superior knowledge of the pub quiz participants to the quiz master about capital crimes, and the disengagement of the BSFA; • —the stunningly low cost of Drink; • —the possibly related invasion of the bar by drunken fuckwits—or, if you prefer, respected members of one of the college's ex-student drinking societies—who were out in force, in drag and in a state of severe intoxication for the rugby; • —the logical inability of typical weedy student sf fans to evict typical drunken aggressive adult rugby fans; • —the fact that it's unlikely to put anyone off turning up next year either.' [CB/MP]

Utopia's Masterclass. *Dept Of (Yet Again) Eyeballs In The Sky*: 'Rod's eyes broke away from the ghost and wandered slowly about the great chamber.' (Christopher Stasheff, *The Warlock in Spite of Himself*, 1969) [PC] • 'Jack pulled back his fists in readiness, and eyed the druid through clenched teeth.' ('*Maze*', *Pro-Am*; *The Serial*, on the web) [CR]

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