

Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Joe Mayhew. Available for SAE or secrets of the Diagonal Relationship.

POLICY STATEMENT. This old *Times* law report neatly encapsulates the spirit of *Ansible*: 'His Lordship—I suppose the word "horse" in the rule does not include an aeroplane? Counsel—No, I think not. His Lordship—It ought to, it is much the same thing. Counsel—I think that it was put in for the relief of archdeacons.' (Maclean vs Trembath, 1956)

Tours of the Black Clock

Forrest J. Ackerman won his suit against *Famous Monsters of Film-land* publisher Ray Ferry and was awarded not only the right to his pseudonym Dr Acula but \$724,500 damages for libel, breach of contract, trademark infringement, etc. An appeal from Ferry is expected. Ray Bradbury testified for Ackerman and Harlan Ellison (for reasons of course *totally unconnected* with any old grudges) against.

Charles Platt was unamazed by Robert Vaughn Young's claim to have ghosted various L.Ron Hubbard writings, including interview responses and the introductions to (though not the main text of) all ten volumes of the dire *Mission Earth*: 'When I was pursuing the possibility of a (written) interview with Hubbard for my book *Dream Makers II*, Vaughn Young was the aide I negotiated with. The interview that I received was in Hubbard's style, but I wondered if Young had written it—because clearly it had been typed on the same typewriter that Young had used in correspondence with me! He claimed that he had merely transcribed a tape from Hubbard. I mentioned these details in my somewhat skeptical commentary surrounding the interview. ● To allay my suspicions, I was sent a single-page handwritten letter signed by Hubbard, "authenticating" the interview; and I reproduced this in my book. However, many years later, after Young defected from the Church of Scientology (the highest-level defection ever, I understand) he contacted me via email and told me that I had been correct in my suspicions: He had been the one who wrote the "Hubbard interview".'

David Pringle, connoisseur of pulp fiction, enjoyed the sf strand of 'Semana Negra' (Noir Week) in Gijon, Spain, and 'had the pleasure of taking a meal with Ian McDonald—a meal of octopus, which I'd never tasted before. The place we ate it in was called a "Pulperia"—so, a whole new meaning of the word pulp! ("Pulpo," apparently, is Spanish for octopus.) So, there we sat in the pulperia, eating slices of this eight-armed pulpy mollusc; and Ian ate it with particular relish, preferring the pieces with the suckers still on. "Octopi are highly intelligent beasts, you know," said the famed sf writer. "In fact, this reminds me of science fiction—it's like eating the alien."

Brian Stableford was at Nasacon 2000 in Stockholm (July): 'The Scandic Slussen Hotel's conference rooms are named after ancient Greek philosophers and mythic figures, but my hopes of performing in CHAOS or HADES were dashed, as my natural gravitas prompted the committee to place all but one of my items in PLATON (Plato). Attendance was well in excess of 200, boosted by the heroic publicizing exploits of Ahrvid Engholm and Wolf von Witting, aided and abetted by the photogenic winner of the Miss Universe competition. Fellow-guest John-Henri Holmberg raged in vain against the hotel's non-smoking regulations, but got through a long session as auctioneer by lightening the load of his presentation bottle of whisky. I, being famous for my moderation in matters alcoholic, received a representation of myself carved by local artist Urban Gunnarsson, who has a wonderful shop in the city where he can be observed at work. Most of his sales are politicians; when we visited he explained that he was fresh out of Hitlers and Stalins, but Mrs Thatcher and the Ayatollah Khomeini were still awaiting purchasers. He lamented to Jane that if only he had met me rather than relying on photographs he could have included my bald spot, but she assured him that we could live with the hirsute version.'

Conglutinant

To 11 Aug, **SF/Fantasy Art Exhibition**, Foyles, Charing Cross Rd. 10:30-17:30 except Sundays. Info 0207 440 3249 (office hours).

12-13 Aug ● **Caption 2000** (small-press comics), Oxford Union. £8 reg (£5 students/unwaged), £10 at the door. Contact 71 Hugh Allen

Crescent, Marston, Oxford, OX3 0HL. Fax 0870 174 0622.

18-20 Aug ● **Lexicon** (Unicon 2000), Exeter College, Oxford. GoH Philip Pullman. £28 reg, £15 student/unwaged, £18/day. Contact 18 Letchworth Ave, Bedfont, Middlesex, TW14 9RY.

23 Aug ● **BSFA Open Meeting**, Florence Nightingale, on York Rd/Westminster Bridge Rd roundabout. 7pm on. With Lionel Fanthorpe. (Combined with 'Skeptics in the Pub' meeting, moved from 17 Aug.)

26 Aug ● **Gene Wolfe** conference, Dept of English, U of Birmingham, UK. Contact Jonathan Laidlow, Modern Lang & Classics, U of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT.

31 Aug - 4 Sep ● **Chicon 2000** (58th Worldcon), Chicago. Mail registration closed 15 Jul; on-line registration \$150 until 15 Aug. *Art Show Note*: space must be booked by 28 Aug. Rules are available only via the net (www.chicon.org/artshow or artshow@chicon.org) or—as revealed on Usenet—by postal request to 1220 S. Westnedge, Kalamazoo, MI 49008, USA. 'Our communications with folks could be better.'

2 Sep ● **BFS Open Night**, upstairs bar, Princess Louise pub, 208 High Holborn, London. 6:30pm on.

8-10 Sep ● **Fantasycon 24**, Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. Now £55 reg, or £30/day at the door. Rooms £30 pppn. Contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, CW9 8PQ.

8-10 Sep ● **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Renaissance Hotel, Manchester. £60 reg or £30 supp, to Soc of Fantastic Films, 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN. 0161 707 3747.

23 Sep ● **Byzantium**, The Magpie, Fratton Rd, Portsmouth. Informal fan pub gathering with guest speakers, open to all. Noon-18:00.

7 Oct ● **Margate Poetry Festival**, Margate Museum, Market Sq, Old Town. GoH Lionel Fanthorpe, who will read his own poetry! Book by 1 Sep if you'd like to retaliate by reading some of yours. £5 (£4 concessions) plus SAE to 31 Addington Rd, Margate, Kent, CT9 1NH.

6 May 01 ● **Fantasy Fair 11**, Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Contact 5 Arran Close, Holmes Chapel, Crewe, CW4 7QP.

25-27 May 01 ● **Second** (Secon 2): De Vere Hotel, Swindon now confirmed. GoH Paul McAuley. £20 reg; may rise Nov. Contact 19 Hill Court, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 3JJ.

Rumblings ● **Eurocon**. Helicon 2, the 2002 UK Eastercon to be held in Jersey, is bidding to make the event a joint Eastercon and Eurocon. Vaclav Pravda independently announced a Czech-Republic Eurocon bid.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. 2000 AD, the comic that gave literary criticism the long-needed words 'Drokk!' and 'Stommi!', has been bought from Egmont International by the Oxford software outfit Rebellion, who describe it as 'a goldmine of intellectual properties.' The new editor is Andy Diggle. [BB] ● **SF World**, a new UK magazine, was launched in a blaze of non-publicity: 'I was fully intending to do press releases and everything,' confesses editor Steve Holland, 'but got bogged down too far in the actual process of getting the magazine out (we were given seven weeks from a standing start to get the first issue into design, do a book, and to work out my month's notice with the people I was working for!).' Steve notes that readers and distributors were unhappy with the initial price of £3.25, duly cut to £1.95 with the third (August) issue—out 28 July, featuring brand-new pseudonym 'Ian M. Banks'. [AB]

R.I.P. (I just wanted to savour this slot being empty for once.)

Clarke Award. Sir Arthur's royalties must be in good shape, since the prize for the 2001 Clarke Award has been—in administrator Paul Kincaid's words—'more than doubled to £2001.' Numerologists are pondering on the occult significance of this particular figure.

Random Fandom. Harry Andruschak gloats that he fooled play-by-mail Diplomacy fandom—from 1994 until recently rumbled—with his flirtatious hoax player 'Sara Reichert', who was voted the 1998 John Koning Memorial Award for Best Player in the Diplomacy Hobby. ● **Paul Barnett** was sternly told by Chicon, 'The badge name you have on your membership: Paul Barnett/John Grant, is not acceptable for a badge name. We need a single name on it.' After a gentle explanation

that both names were the same person, this Cartesian duality became acceptable. • *Simon Bradshaw* wonders: 'Do you think Mary Gentle was trying to pass comment on one of the recent TAFF candidates in her latest book? I refer you to *Ash*, p275 of the Gollancz paperback: "... the bright black eyes and almost ugly face—certainly a Valois!" • *Alan Stewart* reports on the march of language: 'In Official Australian Scrabble Tournaments you can no longer play the words *dianetics* and *internet* but you can now play *cybercafe*, *email*, *login*, *meme*, *newsgroup*, *spam*, *spumante*, *stiffy*, *website*, *zine*.' [ASFB] • *Peggy White* hopes fans will stay in touch. 'So many people have stopped writing ... Life is so strange without James and the massive brain surgery has left me with vertigo, so I can't go out alone (I'm "at Risk"). But the surgeons say I'm great for 72. Depends how you look at it.' 2 West Drive, Portstewart, Co. Londonderry, BT55 7ND. • *Bridget Wilkinson* celebrated the 100th issue of her *Fans Across the World* newsletter (est. 1990) in July.

The Higher Criticism. William Friedkin, director of *Rules of Engagement*, easily rebuts an interviewer's tactful suggestion that the film's supposed anti-Arab racism might like a certain sf movie be excused as satire: '[Y]ou leave me with great doubt when you talk about this film in relation to something like *Starship Troopers*. Why don't you compare it to *Paths of Glory* instead? I will accept comparison to *Paths of Glory*, but though I've never seen *Starship Troopers* I sense that it's a load of bollocks!' (*Independent on Sunday*, 30 Jul)

More Awards. *John W. Campbell Memorial Award* for best sf novel of 1999: Vernor Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky*. • *Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award* for best short sf of 1999: David Marusek, 'The Wedding Album' (*Asimov's*). [L] • *Mike Resnick* became the first US author to win France's 100,000-franc Tour Eiffel Award for best novel, for the translation of his 1987 *The Dark Lady*. [F770] • *Rhysling Awards* for 1999 sf/fantasy/horror poems: SHORT Rebecca Marjesdatter, 'Grimoire' (*Tales of the Unanticipated*); LONG (over 50 lines) Geoffrey A. Landis, 'Christmas (when we all get time machines)' (*Asimov's*). [D]

Outraged Letters. *Molly Brown* is unhappy: 'Have you ever heard of a Japanese publication called *SF Magazine*? I never had until yesterday, when a bit of ego surfing led me to find that my story, "Bad Timing", had been reprinted by them back in 1995, without my knowledge or permission. • You may be interested to know that you've been published by them, too. Or did they at least do you the courtesy of asking first?' *Langford* says: I sold them—Hayakawa Publishing Inc, Tokyo—two stories in 1996 and got paid. Demand your rights, Molly! (At least one American author has also been reprinted in this magazine without her knowledge.) • *Simon R. Green* is working on a tasteful fantasy concept: 'Necronauts! Just as astronauts explore other worlds, necronauts kill themselves so they can explore the afterworlds, then a sorcerer brings them back so they can tell us all about it. It's sort of the philosophical equivalent of bungee-jumping.' • *Bernard 'The Cunning Artificer' Pearson* brags about his latest figure-making project: 'Us lot here in Suffolk have signed a deal with a company called zynTROPICS, inc. to produce sweet Anne McCaffrey's dragons of Pern. [...] We really are doing the number on these beasts, none of your wimpy cutesy stuff, these are big bastards, that bite.' • *Mark Fiummer* makes my flesh creep: 'Whilst I wouldn't query the wisdom of avoiding the infamous body piercing demo at ASMH (A156), you may regret the suggestion that as a result you and John Whitbourn are "forever branded as boring old farts". I understand that—subject to securing the necessary licenses—"The Daisy Piercers" (as they are known) hope to offer precisely this body modification very soon.' • *N. Lee Wood*, spurning perfidious Albion, is moving to the south of France: 'Got a six-month's let on a place near Carcassonne starting end of October ... I definitely want out of Britain before November, one more dreary dark cold gray bleak dank wet Northern English winter will kill me. I need sunshine.'

C.O.A. *Sheryl Birkhead*, 25509 Jonnie Ct, Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA. *Teddy Harvia*, 12341 Band Box Place, Dallas, TX 75244-7001, USA. *Robert (Nojay) Sneddon*, c/o 69 Tremona Rd, Southampton, SO16 (to end Nov); c/o 1660 Morgan Walk, Canton, GA 30115, USA (Dec-Feb). *Norman Spinrad*, 1 rue Frederik Sauton, 75005, Paris, France.

Terrifying Things, Steel Things, Metal Things! Watchful *Peter Wareham* wonders if David Brin is paying homage to Lionel Fanthorpe's most famously lyrical passage: 'Within this contorted mass, Dwer spied objects—each nestled in its own cavity. Each sealed, embedded, within a separate crystal section. Golden things, silvery things. Things gleaming like burnished copper or steel. Tubes, spheroids, and complex blocky forms. Things shining unnatural hues of pigment or nanodye.' (*Brightness Reef*, 1995) • Speaking of homage, the film novelization *FAKK2* by Kevin Eastman and Stan Timmons—a Thog selection in *A156*—contains

one hauntingly familiar exchange between minor characters: "I have a plan, Mr B.," Bald Rick said. / "Is it a cunning plan?" Mr B. Adder asked. / "Very cunning," his little companion assured him. / "As cunning as a fox that's just been appointed Head of Cunning at Oxford University?" Mr B. further inquired ... Are these lines really from the movie?

Small Press. *Cosmos Books*, founded by Philip Harbottle and Sean Wallace, has become part of the mighty Wildside Press empire with Sean as senior editor. Books by Philip E. High, E.C. Tubb and various younger Brits are to appear in print-on-demand editions—including, reliable sources fear, the first publication of the legendarily tasteless horror spoof *Guts* by John Grant and D. Langford (commissioned, enthusiastically accepted and then silently dumped by Grafton Books in the dim distant 1980s). *Cosmos* is at 589 Park Hill Drive, Apt 8, Fairlawn, OH 44333, USA; Wildside at PO Box 45, Gillette, NJ 07933, USA.

Fanalysis. At last—the success secret of *Plotka* (ed. Alison Scott, Steve Davies et al). Two Mancunian psychologists, inspired by who knows what random suspicion, have discovered that the name Alison at the top of an English essay (What I Did In My Hols) is likely to get a rosier reception from an examiner than, say, the name Beryl. Similarly, it's jollier in this respect to be called Steven rather than Norman. The "swing" between the likes and dislikes is said to be about 4%. (Arthur Marshall, *Sunny Side Up*, 1987) One imagines examiners trembling at the possible consequences of giving low marks to an Alison.

Update. *Brian Aldiss's* apotheosis at Reading University on 29 June didn't involve a Vice-Chancellorship (as he teasingly let us think in *A154*) but an honorary Doctor of Letters degree. The presentation address was delivered by our very own Prof. Edward James of *Foundation* fame, who gleefully indicted *Billion Year Spree* and *Trillion Year Spree* as 'seriously flawed' since 'Brian Aldiss had totally refused to recognize that Brian Aldiss himself has played a crucially important role in the story of the maturing of science fiction in the English-speaking world in the second half of the twentieth century.' • This eulogy hails the Aldiss/Harrison *SF Horizons* (1965) as 'the first serious magazine of sf criticism in this country'. I am unreliably informed that the BSFA's *Vector* (est. 1958 with E.C. Tubb as founding editor) will henceforth be billing itself as our country's first comic magazine of sf criticism.

Fanfundery. *GUFF's* 2001 race continues: Eric Lindsay & Jean Weber vs Damien Warman & Juliette Woods. Voting ends 13 Nov. Ballots from P. Kincaid, who's published a 4th substantial *GUFFaw* newsletter—a snip at £1/\$2/\$A2.50 from 60 Bournemouth Rd, Folkestone, CT19 5AZ.

E-Publishing. As the splendid Paula Guran points out in *DarkEcho*, the curious thing about Stephen King's launch of his on-line novel *The Plant* (at \$1 per instalment, on the honour system) is that news outlets instantly released gloomy stories like the Reuters SALES OF 'PLANT' WITHER ON KING'S WEB SITE before any figures were available. When 76% of the 152,132 people who'd downloaded part 1 dutifully paid up (and another 23% promised to), King announced 'The pay-through rate has been higher than I dared hope' and plunged ahead with the third instalment—but what does he know? • Richard Curtis's 'E-Reads' operation, seemingly stagnant since January, is showing signs of life after several redesigns and 'should be up and running by the end of August'.

Group Gropes. *Reading* pub meetings (normally Hop Leaf, Southampton St, 9pm Mon) are now earlier and more central on the 3rd Mon each month, to lure out-of-towners: 7:30pm, Monk's Retreat, Friar St.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Metallurgy.* 'It was a good job the Aston Martin was armoured with lightweight alloy twice the density of steel ...' (Kim Newman, *Dracula Cha Cha Cha*, 2000) [MR] • 'People who leaned over backwards, McCullough thought grimly, frequently fell flat on their face....' (James White, *All Judgment Fled*, 1968) [ECL] • 'Out came the contents of his stomach in a heaving, gelatinous rush—the mixed grill he had eaten for breakfast at the hotel, the sandwich and the can of 7-Up he had had for lunch ...' (J.M.H. Lovegrove, *The Krilov Continuum*, 1998) [GW] • *Pre-Copernican Dept:* 'The lurid light was as bright as the day of a planet circled by a red sun.' *Wet T-Shirt Dept:* 'She could almost believe a faint whiff of it still lingered, though she had changed and showered.' (both Barbara Michaels, *Houses of Stone*, 1993) [PB] • *Dept of Unexpected Positioning:* 'The sky over Vattown was a dull, flat, grey, and Ada Chichelski walked beneath it.' (Anne Harris, *Accidental Creatures*, 1998) [PW]