

Ansible



Ansible 183 October 2002

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DILEMMA. All right, it seemed jolly clever to have Tobes Valois announce, when accepting the 2002 fanzine Hugo for *Ansible*, that by dint of having a circulation in excess of 3,500 and *sometimes* paying contributors other than in copies of the magazine (i.e. buying them drinks), *Ansible* must according to the Hugo rules be a semiprozine. No one seems to take the buying-drinks argument seriously, but a third criterion (one needs to meet only two) is that *Ansible* should announce itself to be a semiprozine—as it has, through Tobes. So has *Ansible* now left the fanzine category? Nigglers note that the circulation criterion speaks of 'average press run', and that copies produced by an actual press (or photocopier) fall far below the semiprozine threshold of 1,000, since more than 3,000 go out by e-mail. In short: *Ansible* says it's a semiprozine, but is it? I await a ruling from fandom's legal experts, who should be able to sort this out in a few hundred WSFS Business Meeting fan-hours, or 'standlees' as they are technically known.

The Little Apocrypha

Stephen Baxter's Tuckerization of a 2005 Worldcon guest of honour is confirmed by the proofs of his coming sf blockbuster *Evolution*. Is Interaction aware of this man's eco-terrorist activities? 'British-born Gregory Pickersgill was the charismatic leader of the central cult; the worst kind of trouble—sometimes lethal—followed him around.' Later, though, it's revealed that 'Pickersgill is a pleasing joke, and useful.'

Lionel Fanthorpe, according to his latest book jacket (*The World's Most Mysterious Objects*), is now Magistral Chaplain General and Knight Commander of the Templar Priory of St. Mary Magdalene. I don't know whether you can get that one by mail order....

Philip José Farmer was presented with a plaque at a Peoria IL public library on 10 August, celebrating the 50th anniversary of his once controversial alien-sex story 'The Lovers' (*Startling Stories*, Aug 52)—which helped him win a Hugo in their first year of presentation, as Best New Author. Forwarding this news, Jim Meadows invited me to contemplate the 50th anniversary of my first Hugo, in 2035. Er um.

Chris Priest is strangely fascinated by the Amazon.co.uk ranking of his alternate history novel *The Separation*, somehow clocking up hardback sales despite the publisher's decision to avoid tiresome newspaper reviews by furtively releasing it in trade paperback only. 'According to Amazon, for a few days at the beginning of August the nonexistent hardcover was outselling the paperback. I was greatly bemused by this. Since then, its sales have slipped steadily downwards.... Now, in an attempt to beef up sales a little, Amazon are offering the hardcover *Sep* as a special set, bundled with the paperback. I'm so-o-o-o tempted to order this to find out what they'll do!'

Whitley Strieber's on-line journal warns of what lies in wait for people like himself who fearlessly oppose the world UFO cover-up conspiracy: 'What has been happening to me is this: every night as I go to sleep, something begins moving against my skin, creeping like some sort of very slow insect. I have seen and held this object. I have tried to crush it. But I cannot. I cannot get a sample. It seems like a living thing, but I do not believe that it is alive in the same sense that we are. ● About a week ago, I woke up and found it penetrated into my chest just above my collarbone. I pulled it out and tried to crush it between my fingers, to gouge it with my fingernail. It struggled furiously in my hand. It would not break up. I turned on the light and sat up, with the intention to take it into the bathroom and capture it in a water glass. But when I relaxed my grip just a little, it disappeared before my eyes, for all the world like some kind of a magic trick. ● It has tormented me night after night....' [BB] These are interesting symptoms; I'm trying not to be reminded of the opening of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*.

Conniption

12 Oct ● **Hammer Films: The Bray Studio Years**, Cine Lumiere, London. Four-film showing, including the 'classic' *Plague of the Zombies*. MC: horror director Norman J. Warren (*Inseminoid*). Tickets £20, to him c/o 25 High Hill Ferry, Bakers Hill, London, E5 9HG.

19-20 Oct ● **Octocon 2002** (Irish national con), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. GoH China Miéville, others. *Advance registration now closed*. No word of at-the-door rates.

21 Oct ● **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Roz Kaveney and others going on about *Buffy*. La Diva Loca warns: 'Juicy hints about the upcoming season will be dropped. Anyone not there won't be In The Know. How sad. You dog.'

23 Oct ● **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA.

25-28 Oct ● **Cult TV 2002** (9th annual festival), Southport Theatre and Floral Hall Complex, Merseyside, UK. Many guests. £75 reg, £45 child. Contact PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER.

1-3 Nov ● **Novacon 32**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH Ian McDonald, with (Sun only) Kevin 'Captain Cyborg' Warwick. £35 reg to 20 Oct 02; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

9 Nov ● **Costume Closet** (costuming), Warwick Arms Hotel, High St, Warwick. 9:30am on. £10 reg, £5 child. Contact 7 Church Close, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 1SG. Prequel to 'Wardrobe' costume con.

9 Nov ● **DangerCon 40** (*Dangermouse*), Ruskin House, corner of Park Lane and Lower Coombe St, Croydon. 11am-11pm. £1 at door.

Rumblings. ● **Melbourne in '10**. Fuller UK price list: Pre-support £13, Firend [sic] £65 (£52 upgrade from pre-supp), Pre-oppose £26. Cheques to Pat McMurray, 28 Plaistow Grove, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3PB.

Infinitely Improbable

Even Yet More Additional Awards. *Rhysling Award* for sf poetry: LONG Lawrence Schimel, 'How to Make a Human'. SHORT William John Watkins, 'We Die As Angels'. ● *Gaylactic Spectrum Awards*: NOVEL Hugh Nissenson, *The Song of the Earth*. SHORT Alexis Glynn Latner, 'Kindred'. OTHER *Bending the Landscape: Horror* ed. Nicola Griffith & Stephen Pagel. ● *British Fantasy Awards* were presented at the one-day Fantasycon 2002 in September. NOVEL (August Derleth Award) Simon Clark, *The Night of The Triffids*. ANTHOLOGY *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror 12* ed. Stephen Jones. COLLECTION Paul Finch, *Aftershocks*. Short: Simon Clark, 'Goblin City Lights'. Artist: Jim Burns. SMALL PRESS Peter Crowther's PS Publishing, for the second year running. The special Karl Edward Wagner award wasn't presented.

Thog's Interviewing Masterclass. Guy Haley reports his favourite interview question by an SFX freelance who shall remain nameless. Interviewee Jeffrey Combs was talking about the latest *Re-Animator* sequel, imaginatively entitled *Beyond Re-Animator*. Released 13 years after *Re-Animator II* (1989), the new film is set 13 years later, leading to the enquiry: 'Will Combs wear make-up so that West looks older?'

R.I.P. Lloyd Biggle Jr (1923-2002), US author, musicologist and oral historian, who published a number of entertaining sf novels in (especially) the 1960s and 70s, died on 12 September aged 79. His first story appeared in 1954; his most popular books were *Monument* (1974) and the 'Jan Darzek' sequence beginning with *All the Colours of Darkness* (1963) and *Watchers of the Dark* (1966). He was a founding SFWA official and also founded the SF Oral History Association in the 1970s. I liked his novels a lot. ● **Michael Elphick** (1946-2002), the UK actor who died on 8 September aged 55, did little genre work but is known to *Star Wars* fans as 'the Empire officer Darth Vader choked with The Force.' [BB] ● **Robert L. Forward** (1932-2002), US gravitational physicist and author of 11 hard sf novels, died from brain cancer on 21 September; he was 70. He described his sf novel debut *Dragon's Egg* (1980)—built around the audacious notion of ultra-fast, intelligent nucleonic life on a neutron star—as 'A textbook on neutron star physics disguised as a novel.' Bob Forward was a popular and ebullient figure at sf conventions. [JK] He would surely have chuckled if he could have seen his polygamous characterization in the *Daily Telegraph's* obituary: 'Forward, an unmissable sight at science fiction conventions in his bespoke suit, white shirt and bow tie, and the coloured waistcoats run up by his wife (he had a couple of dozen) ...' [SJ] ● **Kim Hunter** (1922-2002), Oscar-winning US actress who played the sympathetic ape Dr Zira in *Planet*

of the Apes (1968) and its first two sequels, died on 11 September aged 79. 'The only thing of me that came through was my eyeballs.' [BB] ● *Jo Thomas* (1943-2002), Dutch fan, convention runner and sf editor/translator, died from kidney cancer on 10 September, not long after celebrating his 59th birthday. Nico Veenkamp writes: 'He was translator of Jordan's *Wheel of Time* into Dutch, and the Head of Programme at ConFiction, the 1990 World SF Convention in The Hague. We all raised a glass at his funeral to honour his words: "Don't mourn my passing. Let's celebrate my life."' ● *Wynne Whiteford* (1915-2002), long-time Australian sf author and fan, died on 30 September. He began publishing sf in 1934; his most recent novel was *The Specialist* (1990); though frail, he attended fan gatherings as recently as December 2001. Bruce Gillespie writes: 'In Australia, Wynne's career was overshadowed by that of George Turner, who also became successful only in his sixties and seventies.... Some people who should have known better tended to forget about his contribution to Australian sf, but those of us he befriended regarded him as a great lion of the Australian sf scene.'

Court Circular. As everyone not living on a remote Tibetan mountain peak now knows, Nancy Stouffer's never very convincing plagiarism case against J.K. Rowling didn't just fail on 19 September but rebounded spectacularly. Deciding that Stouffer had naughtily improved the evidence about her creation of Larry Potter and the Muggles, the judge fined her \$50,000 for a 'pattern of intentional bad faith conduct', warned her never again to claim that Harry Potter violated her trademark, and ordered her to pay part of Rowling's costs. Oops! [BB/AP] *Ansible* 156 (July 2000) gleefully noted that *OED* citations for 'muggle', a word Stouffer said she'd invented and trademarked, go back to 1205.

Random Fandom. *Chris Bell* spills the beans: 'the ~~Second~~ ~~Scottish~~ ~~Convention~~ is now Go, and I am therefore quite certain that Bindweed is also Go. We have to have *somewhere* as a haven for the con-running folk, to provide a Get Out Of Worldcon Free option for 2005.' So far this event is described only as 'a weekend-long party in York'—on, of course, 6-7 August 2005—at which 'Diana [Wynne Jones] is firm that there shall be Balloon Tennis Tournaments.' ● *Charles N. Brown* 'announced that after 500 issues he is stepping down as editor of *Locus* and is leaving the day-to-day running of the magazine in the capable hands of Kirsten Gong-Wong and Jenni Hall.' [CM/EC] ● *Dick Geis* relishes *Ansible* for 'the notices of ill health, drastic therapy and approaching death.' ● I approve of the Death Watch section(s) since they assure that when my time comes I'll be mentioned and perhaps tracked to the grave. What more can a fan ask? ● *Bruce Gillespie* on Australia in 2010: 'The main question now is: how do we Australian fans spend the next five years before we actually bid? And will Melbourne remain the main candidate? Vanessa Jacobsen [of Canberra] believes that Canberra facilities are more than adequate to hold a worldcon. But does Canberra have the people on the ground to hold one? Not now, perhaps, but very possibly by 2007.' Brisbane apparently lacks con-runners and Perth lacks facilities, but this too could change. ● *Paul Kincaid* enjoyed discreet 50th-birthday celebrations in September. 'Thinking back, this is very possibly the first time I've ever had a birthday party, but it was worth the wait.' ● *Dave Langford* has been stuck at home for weeks with a mysterious knee injury, and is beginning to develop pub withdrawal symptoms. *Chris Priest* diagnoses: 'I suspect you are suffering from shaggedoutitis, the normal decay of an otherwise healthy body, brought about by living too long.' ● *Antony J. 'Dop' Shepherd*, Pilot of the Future, reports his first solo flight on 28 September: 'It was fantastic!!!'

In Typo Veritas. 'Mrs Sundquist pureed her lips ...' (Robert Wadholm, 'From here you can see the Sundquists', as reprinted in *The Best of 2001*, ed. Robert Silverberg & Karen Haber) [BJ]

C.o.A. *Harry Andruschak* (correction), 734 W 214th St, Apartment 12-A, Torrance, CA 90502-1907, USA. *Phil Plumbly & Anna Fisher*, 7 Newcome Rd, Fratton, Portsmouth, PO1 5DR. *TTA Press US Office*, c/o Wayne Edwards, 360 W 76th Ave #H, Anchorage, AK 99518, USA. *Howard Waldrop*, PO Box 16779, Ft. Worth, Texas 76162-0779, U.S.A.

Fantasy Definitions Masterclass. Years ago John Clute, John Grant, and their *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* team wrestled with tough problems of defining fantasy and telling good from bad. If only they'd had the help of Tom Snyder, whose www.movieguide.org review of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* makes everything crystal clear while explaining how Miyazaki got it all wrong: 'In a proper fantasy, the heroine might encounter messengers or representatives, allegorical or otherwise, from God or Jesus Christ, or even God Himself and/or one or more members of the Holy Trinity. The heroine certainly should not learn things from encountering pagan, animistic spirits, unless she's there to completely defeat them and/or worship or honor the One True God of the Bible.'

This is the difference between good fantasy and bad fantasy.' [AO/PB]

Small Press. *A Bright Particular Star: Words and Deeds of Lucy Huntzinger* collects a dozen pieces of that talented lady's fanwriting. Available for 'a couple of dollars to cover postage' from editor and publisher Kim Huett, 29/63 Pearson St, Holder, ACT 2611, Australia.

Outraged Letters. *Diana Wynne Jones* is tired of being doomed: 'We went to a dishonest hotel which poisoned me with milk products, while blandly asserting the food was safe. AND when we went home early because I got so ill, they made us pay for the entire time we'd booked. I'm considering putting a curse on their drains—you know, one of those subtle untraceable bad smells that lingers and lingers....' ● *Dave Lally* notes that we missed the death of US film director John Frankenheimer (1930-2002) on 28 June. His *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Seven Days in May* (1964) and *Monsters* (1966) were praised in the 1993 *SF Encyclopedia*; the inferior monster movie *Prophecy* (1979) was not. ● *Farah Mendlesohn* monitored *Desert Island Discs* on 20 September: 'Has anyone ever selected an sf novel for their book before? (I don't mean *Lord of the Rings*.) Brian May of Queen picked *Out of the Silent Planet* this morning, complemented by Holst's Saturn.' ● *Jonathan Palfrey* feels we need more cheer to balance all the grim health news: 'Are there no prominent sf figures quotably announcing "I am in rude health!", "I wrestle poodles and win!", or "My doctor says I could live to be a thousand"? How about photos showing young, fit sf writers breaking the ice to swim nude in a Scandinavian lake? There must be some healthy professional sportspeople who read sf, even if occasionally and moving their lips.' Well, there's all too ample photographic evidence of he-man Gardner Dozois baring his nipple during the recent Worldcon.... ● *Jeff VanderMeer* on the photo layout of October's *Locus* cover: 'I will forever after be known as the unfortunate guy being crushed by Dan Simmons' huge, Stalin-like head, my small kingdom announced in hot pink, my smile goofy, my demeanor squirrel-cheeked. I will have horrible nightmares of a huge stone likeness of Simmons toppling over on me as, be-monocled, I give readings in tiny Parisian cafés....'

Fanfunder. *TransAtlantic Fan Fund* nominations are open for the 2003 eastbound race. Aspiring NA candidates should send a platform of 100 or fewer words, a pledge to make the trip if elected, \$20 bond, and 5 nominations from known fans (3 NA, 2 Europe), to Victor Gonzalez, 263 Elm St, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA. Deadline 1 Nov 02. The winner will travel to the 2003 UK Eastercon, Seacon '03 in Hinckley.

Not Space Opera. *The Handmaid's Tale*, adapted by Poul Ruders, will be an English National Opera production in 2003: April 3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 25; May 2. 7:30pm. 'This will be the first performance in English, I believe—it's been done in Danish. It is *seriously* modern music....' [KL]

The Dead Past. *Twenty Years Ago*. After Dan Steffan's and Ted White's fanzine *Pong* folded with issue 40, Bob Shaw pronounced its epitaph: 'Arrivaderci aroma.' ● Coincidentally, Greg Benford sent a postcard from Italy, praising British fanwriting's 'quick and bizarre, glinting intelligence. Too much laidbackism in the ol' USA, methinks. You have to be hungry to write good fan....' (*Ansible* 29, October 1982)

Farscape, whatever that may be, is being cancelled by the Sci-Fi Channel; there's to be no Series 5 of what's been described as Sci-Fi's flagship offering. Many fans are mightily upset. ● But there are whispers of a possible return of *Dr Who* (dead since 1989) to BBC1.... [BB]

Thog's Masterclass. *Detached Viewpoint Dept.* 'Isaac threw up his face and swung it around him, desperately searching for light.' (China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*, 2000) [JK] ● *Long Division Dept.* 'The moment you draw a circle, pi exists. Yet it's entirely irrational. There's no rational answer to the sum "twenty-two over seven". You can divide twenty-two by seven for ever but you never get a real definite answer.' (Ian Watson, *Alien Embassy*, 1977) [HW] ● *Golden Flow of Rhetoric Dept.* 'Other-ness plays the same part in urinating as in producing poetry.' (Colin Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone*, 1969) [LP] ● *Dept of 468%.* 'The Orphean atmosphere was mostly nitrogen—six times as much as on Earth ...' (Greg Egan, *Diaspora*, 1998) [KJN] ● *Eyeballs Dept.* 'Her wide, dark eyes crawled over me like spiders.' (Manly Wade Wellman, 'The Spring', 1979) [LP] ● *Dept of Pre-Emptive Threats.* 'Captain, you will long have known that I consider Mote Prime the greatest threat to humanity since the Dinosaur Killer struck Earth sixty-five million years ago.' (Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle, *The Gripping Hand*, 1993) [PB]