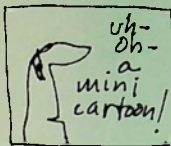


Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Bill Rotsler. Available for SAE, klaptico, nipling or passet.

The Whichness of the Why

Greg Bear and other sf authors—Arlan Andrews, Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle and Sage Walker—were asked to a US Homeland Security conference to provide anti-terrorism advice as 'deviant thinkers'. According to Andrews, they 'need people to think of crazy ideas.' (*USA Today*, May) Once again sf proves eerily prophetic: wasn't there just such an ego-boosting think tank in the Niven/Pournelle *Footfall*?

Gregory Benford has an interesting mention in science historian James R. Fleming's report on the NASA climate control conference last November: 'Astronomer J. Roger Angel suggested placing a huge fleet of mirrors in orbit to divert incoming solar radiation, at a cost of "only" several trillion dollars. Atmospheric scientist John Latham and engineer Stephen Salter hawked their idea of making marine clouds thicker and more reflective by whipping ocean water into a froth with giant pumps and eggbeaters. Most frightening was the science-fiction writer and astrophysicist Gregory Benford's announcement that he wanted to "cut through red tape and demonstrate what could be done" by finding private sponsors for his plan to inject diatomaceous earth—the chalk-like substance used in filtration systems and cat litter—into the Arctic stratosphere. He, like his fellow geoeengineers, was largely silent on the possible unintended consequences of his plan.' ('The Climate Engineers' in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2007). [TW]

Ray Bradbury amazed us all by explaining that 'Fahrenheit 451 is not ... a story about government censorship.' (*LA Weekly*, 30 May)

John Clute confides that on 3 May, 'I was assaulted by several kids as I tried (successfully) to prevent my bicycle being stolen. Nothing broken, but I was kicked a bit in the side, and that kind of bruising surfaces slowly and takes a long time to clear. Feel strangely perkier today, so maybe we're past the fluctuant time.' (27 May) A young man was charged with attempted theft and assault; court case on 15 June.

Kenneth Eng, last seen sabotaging his own writing career with an execrated race-hate article (see A237), has been jailed in New York—charged with harassment and attempted assault on neighbours. [DC] As far as *Ansible* can tell, he hasn't recently visited Camden Town.

J.K. Rowling urges her fans not to buy spinoff books while waiting for Harry Potter 7: 'I want the readers who have, in many instances, grown up with Harry, to embark on the last adventure with him without knowing where they are going.' No names are named, but the Channel 4 News report (14 May) cited the horrid example of Langford. I, conversely, am too nice to tell people not to buy J.K. Rowling.

Convivinity

Until 16 Jun • **Anne Sudworth** exhibition, Square One Gallery, 592 Kings Rd, London, SW6 2DX. Weekdays 10am-6pm. 020 7736 2073.

15-17 Jun • **Fantastic Films Weekend**, National Media Museum, Bradford, BD1 1NQ. With Brian Aldiss (Saturday, £5 admission). £35 weekend pass, £15 day, concessions. Box office 0870 7010200.

16 Jun - 30 Sep • **Out of This World: The Art of Josh Kirby**, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. 10am-5pm daily. First retrospective exhibition of works by this much loved artist. Contact 0151 478 4199.

16 Jun • **PKD-Day** (celebrating Philip K. Dick), Clifton Campus, Nottingham Trent University. Admission free but by ticket only: contact John dot Goodridge at ntu dot ac dot uk.

16 Jun • **SF Foundation/BSFA Free Event** (with both AGMs), The Old Queens Head, 40 Pond Hill, Sheffield, S1 2BD. Programme 11am-4pm; room booked to 11:15pm. Guests: Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Liz Sourbut. Contact 103 Rustat Rd, Cambridge, CB1 9G.

27 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Brian Stableford.

5 Jul • **Arthur Machen: Master of Holy Terrors**, The Boardroom, University of Wales, Caerleon, Newport, Gwent. From 6:30pm, with Lionel Fanthorpe in the chair. £5 inc glass of wine. Linked to unveiling of local Machen sculpture on 60th anniversary of his death.

7 Jul • **British Fantasy Society** Awards Showcase'. Ye Olde Cock

Tavern, 22 Fleet St, London, EC4. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome.

3-5 Aug • **Discworld Jamboree**, Wincanton, Somerset. GoH Terry Pratchett. £40 reg; £30 students; under-15s free. Contact 41 High St, Wincanton, BA9 9JU. 01963 824686; fax 01963 824671.

21-23 Sep • **FantasyCon**, Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. £45 reg rising to £55 after 30 June; students/BFS members £40, then £45. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, Berks, RG6 4EQ. 29-30 Mar 08 • **P-Con V**, Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. GoH C.E. Murphy; others TBA. €25 reg (to rise in October), €10 supporting. Contact 253 Sundrive Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, Ireland.

6-10 Aug 08 • **Devention 3** (66th Worldcon), Denver, CO, USA. Now \$175 reg, \$40 supporting, \$45 child; site selection voters \$135 (supp/child free). Contact PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201, USA.

Infinitely Improbable

SF Book Club Upheaval. Bertelsmann, the German media giant, is shedding 280 employees (about 15% of staff) at its Bookspan book club operation. Although the US SF Book Club will continue, its chief editor Ellen Asher took early retirement, ending a 34-year career that outdid John W. Campbell's previous record time in a single sf editorial position; senior editors Andrew Wheeler and Jay Franco were reportedly laid off. [JS] Losing one's most experienced people does not bode well.

Later: SFBC's new chief editor is Rome Quezada, formerly of Morrow.

As Others See Us. Ruth Franklin opens her review of Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*: 'Michael Chabon has spent considerable energy trying to drag the decaying corpse of genre fiction out of the shallow grave where writers of serious literature abandoned it.' (*Slate*, 8 May) [GS] • Charles McGrath calls Philip K. Dick 'A Prince of Pulp, Legit at Last' and adds a little whitewash: '... "The Man in the High Castle," his most sustained and most assured attempt at mainstream respectability, and it's barely a sci-fi book at all but, rather, what we would now call a "counterfactual" ...' (*New York Times*, 6 May) [PB]

Nebula Awards. Odd fact: all these '2006' winners appeared in 2005. Novel: Jack McDevitt, *Seeker*. Novella: James Patrick Kelly, *Burn*. Novelette: Peter S. Beagle, 'Two Hearts' (*F&SF* 10/05). Short: Elizabeth Hand, 'Echo' (*F&SF* 10/05). Script: *Howl's Moving Castle*. Andrew Norton (young adult sf/fantasy): Justine Larbalestier, *Magic or Madness*.

Star Wars Trivia Masterclass. On the 30th anniversary SW celebration in LA: 'Those in touch with their dark sides rushed exhibits of tortured druids on a rack, Luke Skywalker's severed head and the Princess Leia slave costume ... (Rebecca Winter Keegan, *Time*, 25 May) [A] Gary Flaver explains: "These are not the druids you're looking for."

R.I.P. Lloyd Alexander (1924-2007). US author best known for his 1964-68 Prydain sequence of YA Celtic fantasies, died on 17 May; he was 83. His first book appeared in 1955 and his last is scheduled for August 2007. The central Prydain novels are *The Book of Three*, *The Black Cauldron* (title of Disney's animated film of the first two), *The Castle of Llyr*, *Taran Wanderer* and *The High King*. • **Clifton Ambsbury**, old-time US fan who was a founder member of the Science Correspondence Club (often cited as the first sf fan club) circa 1928, died on 28 May. • **Frank Gasperik**, US fan/filker featured in the Niven/Pournelle *Lucifer's Hammer* (as Mark Czescus) and *Footfall* (as Harry Reddington) died on 3 May. [AL] • **Bernard Gordon** (1918-2007), US screenwriter who scripted the 1962 *The Day of the Triffids* (and also, as Raymond T. Marcus, *Zombies of Mora Tau* and *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*), died on 11 May aged 88. [CH] • **Dabbs Greer** (1917-2007), US character actor whose films included *House of Wax* (1953), *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* (1958), *The Green Mile* (1999), died on 28 April aged 90. [MJS] • **Curtis Harrington** (1926-2007), US film-maker who directed horror movies from *Night Tide* (1961) to the Poe-based *Usher* (2002), plus various sf tv series episodes, died on 6 May aged 80. [PDF] • **Charles Nelson Reilly** (1931-2007), US character actor featured in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* and several other genre tv series, died on 27 May aged 76. [CH] • **Gordon Scott** (1927-2007), US bodybuilder turned actor who starred in six Tarzan films from 1955 to 1960, and then played

Hercules, Goliath, etc in Italian fantasy films, died on 30 April. [MJS]

As Others See Us II. Why the artwork of Antony 'Angel of the North' Gormley isn't to be taken seriously: 'Well, look at the words I've been using, Vaporise, star-burst, humanoid, space station, beaming down. And look at those figures waiting on rooftops—it's like an opening shot from *Doctor Who*. What is the language this sculpture speaks? Isn't it obvious? Sci-fi. [...] Serious artists need not feel threatened by it, any more than serious film-makers need feel threatened by an android blockbuster.' (Tom Lubbock, *Independent*, 15 May)

Publishers and Sinners. Jim Minz, late of Del Rey (see A237), joined Baen Books as a senior editor in May.

Thog's Futurology Masterclass. *Mountain-to-Mohammed Dept:* 'And when you drive your car into Heathrow to one of the parking lots, you will get your own personal vehicle and program it to go to your terminal, or vice versa.' (Sir Peter Hall, Cities21 website) [KM]

More Awards. **BAFTA TV: Life on Mars** won the Audience award, the only category voted by the public; *Hogfather* won the Interactivity award for work 'extended and enriched by the interactivity by new media'. • *Compton Crook/Stephen Tall* for best first sf/fantasy novel: Naomi Novik, *His Majesty's Dragon*. • *Pilgrim* for sf criticism: Algis Budrys. • *Tähtivaeltaja* for best sf in Finland, 2006: Stepan Chapman, *Troikka (The Troika, 1997, translated by Hannu Blommila)*.

Fanfunding. Yvonne Rousseau reports on Ang Rosin's triumphal GUFF progress: 'Intrepid viewing of Australian wildlife took place yesterday, with Ang holding Koala Molly for the traditional GUFF photograph opportunity. She did this at the Gorge Wildlife Park in the township of Cudlee Creek—where we also observed quokkas, wombats, penguins, non-Welsh sheep, a mysterious bird that runs about shouting "Woof woof", a dodo-like giant petrel, and a deer which chomped the (green) koalas off my map of the park. Meanwhile, Mark Plummer was extremely popular with all wallabies.' (31 May)

Magazine Scene. *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, which closed down in 1955, is to be relaunched in July under a new editor/publisher, Winston Engle: 'It's not a pastiche or nostalgia exercise as much as modern SF with the entertainment, inspirational value, and excitement of the golden age.' [JJ] Contents include old sf reprints but also new articles and new fiction (25,000 words max). Payment up to 10c/word. • *Nature*: the 'Futures' series of short-short hard(ish) sf stories, currently running in *Nature Physics*, also returns to *Nature* in September. Submissions for both can be sent to Futures at Nature dot com: 850-950w Word attachment, with 30-word bio and contact details. [HG]

Random Fandom. *Tony Alleyne*, the *Star Trek* fan who converted his Hinckley studio flat into a replica of the *Voyager* flight deck, sold it on eBay for £425,000—about five times the assessed value. [DKMK] • *Mike Cobley* and *Maureen Kincaid Speller*, fandom's Lib Dem candidates for Govan (Glasgow) and Folkestone in the UK local elections, were both proudly not elected. • *Amanda Kear*: 'A new BBC4/OU series, *Fossil Detectives*, due to transmit in 2008, is in search of authors who collect fossils as a hobby or have a strong interest in palaeontology, and who wouldn't mind being on camera to say so.' UK/Irish residents only. Contact Amanda dot Kear dot 01 at bbc co uk, 0117 9732211. • *Dave Wood* wants all his fan friends to know: 'I have just spent the last 18 days in hospital intensive care. Thursday was awful when the Consultant came to tell me they could do no more for me. I took the bull between the horns and asked, well how long. Believe it or not he broke down in tears and said I wouldn't see Christmas.' (19 May) Much sympathy, Dave—and I very much hope that diagnosis is wrong.

As Others See Us III. Josh Lacey on *Un Lun Dun*: 'When I've mentioned China Miéville to people over the past week or two, I've been surprised how few have heard of him. That's because he's a science-fiction writer, I suppose, and his readers keep themselves to themselves. [...] skip to end [...] A common complaint about science-fiction writers is that they prefer ideas to people, and that's certainly a noticeable problem with this book. Although the narrative is witty, energetic and fast-paced, I couldn't bring myself to care about a story that isn't populated by any believable characters. However, for science-fiction fans who don't mind the lack of characterisation, *Un Lun Dun* should provide lots of fun.' (*The Guardian*, 5 May) [AH]

Outraged Letters. *Richard E Geis*: 'My only claim to fame in *re* *Novoguit* is that he once, in a phone call, called me a cocksucker, because of something I had published in *SF Review*. Details lost in corroded memory. I got the impression he called a lot of people cocksuckers. The word rolled off his tongue so easily.' • *Paul Voermans* brags about literary enlightenment Down Under: '*Overland*, Australia's mag of slightly Lefty literature/culture (over fifty years old—the zinc

not the lit) will be publishing a special skiffy edition later in the year. This is not their first, I think. There'll be interviews with Kim Stanley Robinson, China Miéville and Justine Larbaestier, with fiction by Aussie sf writers. Lucy Sussex writes regularly for *Overland* and new talent Rjurik Davidson is the reviews editor. This seems to me to be a happy combo of comfort with sf from a younger generation at home with the idea of sf as Literature. Has there been a *Granta* skiffy edition? Oops, it's verboten in the submission guidelines.' • *Martin Morse Wooster* was deeply thrilled by junk mail from 'a company called Hawthorne Village, which has the Official Lord of the Rings Express Diesel Locomotive. This heirloom quality train—richly adorned with scenes and characters from the movie trilogy including Elven text and a working headlight on the diesel locomotive—will have you reliving this epic saga every time the train journeys around the tracks. You know, when I mentally visit the rugged, primeval landscape of Middle Earth, I think to myself, "You know, these trees and rocks are OK. But WHERE are the toy trains?"'

As Others See Us IV. A journalist warns that silly people who actually think about the future must be kept away from the steering wheel, leaving it in the hands of (surprise!) journalists: 'And with the world getting ever hotter and running out of oil, it shouldn't be left to the sci-fi nuts to guide us into *[the future]*: it should be *The Week's* responsibility.' (Jeremy O'Grady, editorial, *The Week* news digest, May) [FC]

R.I.P. Addenda. Michael Bishop writes: 'This regards the murder of our son Jamie, along with 31 other students or instructors, on the Virginia Tech campus on April 16: Jamie's mother and I would like to thank the hundreds of you who have sent cards, letters, or condoling e-mails. Virtually all of you note that it's next to impossible to express your heartbreak in words (although some come eloquently close) and that mere words are not likely to assuage our pain. However, we would like those who have written, or telephoned, to know that your grieving with us and for us does in fact offer some comfort. We will never fully escape the ache that we now feel, but if we did, we would no longer qualify as fully human. Meanwhile, it's impossible, at least for now, to reply to every welcome expression of sympathy because of their sheer overwhelming number and a myriad pressing practical concerns. • Right now we're also hurting for our daughter Stephanie Loftin and her husband Bridger and their two children, Annabel and Joel, and of course for our daughter-in-law, Jamie's widow, Stefanie Hofer, whom Jamie loved with all his heart. • Jamie did digital covers for four of my books, not merely a story collection from Golden Gryphon and an essay collection for PS Publishing. The others were for my poetry volume from Steve Pasechnik's Edgewood Press, *Time Pieces*, and a forthcoming anthology of sf stories for PS Publishing coedited with Steven Utley, *Passing for Human*. Further, he spoke German like a native, understood computers inside out, played drums in a basement band, bicycled and hiked, followed the fortunes of the Atlanta Braves as obsessively as his mother, grandmothers, and I did, and made friends everywhere. He was a people lover from the get-go, and his energy levels put mine to shame. • I will miss going into Jamie and Steffi's home in Blacksburg and seeing new pieces of his art on their walls and also the ingenious pieces of furniture, unlike anyone else's, that he periodically created. Nor will I ever forget him running shirtless, swift and elusive, on the toli (Indian stick ball) field at the University of Georgia and elsewhere, so replete with life that he seemed to all who met him forever immune to personal extinction. In our minds, hearts, and imaginations, indeed, he tenaciously persists. • Abschied, mein Sohn. And Godspeed.'

Thog's Masterclass. *The Nose of Heisenberg Dept.* 'Big boogers of uncertainty were beginning to form.' (Vernor Vinge, *Rainbows End*, 2006) [MM] • *Dept of Astronomical Revelation.* 'Planets have axes, stars don't.' (Jonathan Kellerman, *Gone*, 2006) [PB] • *Whack-a-Simile Dept.* 'Pieces of a jigsaw puzzle began to pop into place like rabbits into holes at the sound of dog.' (Peter Hawkins, 'The Edge of Oblivion,' *New Worlds* #102, Jan 1961) [JB] • *Dept of Possibly Unfair Advantage.* 'Claudie Andre-Deshays ... had beaten hundreds of men to become her country's first spacewoman.' (Brian Harvey, *Russia in Space: The Failed Frontier?*, 2001) [CM] • *The Beast With One Back Dept.* 'Then M'long's gentle arms went around him, and he was pulled to M'long's lightly bandaged back and comforted with many caresses and kisses.' (Anne McCaffrey, *Red Star Rising*, 1996) [AK]

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