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Ansible 269 December 2009

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Novacon 39. I enjoyed this year's move to the very hospitable Park Inn, Nottingham. The only regret was that I failed to photograph the hotel's health & fitness club sign: 'innaction'. Justina Robson was a popular GoH. Nova Awards for fan work went to *Banana Wings* (fanzine), Claire Brialey (writer) and Sue Mason (artist).

In the Bleak December

Roland Emmerich, purveyor of filmic holocaust, destroys many world landmarks in the new *2012*—with one tactical exception. The holy Kaaba at the heart of Mecca, goal of Hajj pilgrims, is spared: 'Well, I wanted to do that, I have to admit [...] But my co-writer Harald [Kloser] said, "I will not have a fatwa on my head because of a movie." And he was right. [...] so I kind of left it out.' (Sciwire.com) [DKMK]

Terry Goodkind has been cruelly misjudged: 'First of all, I don't write fantasy. I write stories that have important human themes. They have elements of romance, history, adventure, mystery and philosophy. Most fantasy is one-dimensional. It's either about magic or a world-building. I don't do either.' (USA Today interview, August) [RF]

Joe Haldeman was at last allowed home on 10 November after 52 days in hospital, many spent in intensive care. Oh good! [GH/RF]

Jay Lake's surgery on 25 November, to remove a tumour from his lung, was reportedly successful. [SFWA] He's back home and doing well.

Christopher Lee was knighted by Prince Charles on 30 October.

H. Beam Piper has a new memorial stone at the Fairview Cemetery, Altoona, Pennsylvania, paid for by a fund that raised over \$5,000 from Piper fans. The stone was unveiled on 7 November. [SD]

Frederik Pohl celebrated his 90th birthday on 26 November.

David Pringle was at the secret (though leaked in the *Guardian* by loose-lipped Will Self) 79th-birthday celebration of J.G. Ballard on 15 November: 'So who was there? Will Self, of course, and Mike Moorcock (on crutches). About 100 people in all, in a large function room at Tate Modern—apparently all paid for by HarperCollins. Representatives of other publishing houses were somewhat thin on the ground, although Malcolm Edwards was there as one might expect. / Who else? Well, the event was organized by Ballard's daughters, Fay and Bea, with much help from Claire Walsh and Maggie Hanbury (JGB's agent). Fay and Bea's brother, Jim Ballard or "Jimmy Junior" was there too! It was the first time most people present had a chance to meet him. / Apart from W. Self and M. Moorcock, and the daughters, there were speeches from M. Amis (by video), S. Spielberg and producers (also by video), British film producer Jeremy Thomas (in the flesh), and V. Vale of Re/Search Publications fame, over from America—who managed to compare JGB with Shakespeare. / Others seen around included writers Iain Sinclair and Toby Litt, film-makers Chris Petit and Solveig Nordlund, and sundry faces familiar from TV—Joan Bakewell (thinking man's crumpet), Peter York (style guru of yore). Bill Spencer, Ballard's old friend from Cambridge in 1949-1950 and himself a Carnell sf author in the 1960s, was looking remarkably spry at 84 with his red bowtie and full head of hair. / Not there, sadly—Brian Aldiss, Emma Tennant, Hilary Bailey, and Martin Bax of *Ambit* fame. (Apparently at least some of them were invited but were unable to come.)'

Conze

4 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, The George, Fleet St (pedantically, 213 Strand), London, WC2R 1AP. 6pm onward. Free.

17 Dec • **London Circle Xmas Meeting** (if pub booked), Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, EC1N 2LE. 5-6pm to late. All welcome.

16-17 Jan 10 • **ConRunner 2**, Mercure St Paul's Hotel, Sheffield. £40 reg, rising to £45 on 1 January; £45 at the door. Day £25. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth GC, Herts, SG6 1RH.

27 Jan 10 • **BSEA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. With Jim Burns. (Please note that as usual there is no BSFA meeting in December 2009.)

30 Jan 10 • **BFS Open Night**, York Brewery, York. Time Tbc.

27 Feb 10 • **Picocon 27**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-

7/8pm. Details Tbc. Payment is normally at the door only. Contact ICSP, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

27-29 Mar 10 • **Edge of the Wild** (Tolkien art exhibition), Redesdale Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 0AW. GoH Ted Nasmith and other artists. Free admission 9am-5pm. Contact malx at adcbbooks.co.uk

2-5 Apr 10 • **Odyssey 2010** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Now £65 reg, £55 unwaged, £30 supporting or under-17s (£60 reg and £50 unwaged for BSFA members); £75, £65 and £30 at the door. E5 child (<11), E1 infant (<5). Contact: Fiona Marshall c/o Coton House, Conference Centre, Rugby, CV23 0AA.

13-15 Aug 10 • **Festival in the Shire** (Tolkien), Y Plas, Machynlleth, Wales. £25 until 1 January; day £10 Fri or Sun, £15 Sat (£15 and £20 at door). There are pricier options: 'Collector's Exposition' £100; conference attendance £150; VIP pass (i.e. everything) £235; all to rise 1 January. Contact info at FestivalintheShire dot com.

24-31 Oct 10 • **Milford Conference**, Snowdonia. Published authors only. ~£430 (Tbc) full board; £100 deposit. Contact c/o Homeway House, 40 Westhay Rd, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9TL.

12-14 Nov 10 • **ArmadaCon 22**, Royal Fleet Hotel, Plymouth. GoH, prices Tba. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, PL7 2DW; enquiries at armadacon dot org.

12-14 Nov 10 • **Novacon 40**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. GoH Iain M. Banks with Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison. £40 reg, likely to rise after Easter. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

Rumblings • *International SF Reshelling Day* was announced for 18 November by John Leavitt: a guerrilla-shopper initiative in which sf and fantasy books not so classified would be moved to suitable genre shelves in shops. Richard Adams and Margaret Atwood (who tweeted 'Hilarious! Nov 18 my b'day ...') headed the list. After protests—the main sufferers would be shop staff who'd need to carry all those books back again—Leavitt changed his mind: 'Okay. ISFRD is a bad idea. Hell, it's a terrible idea. It's not my first, and I'm sure it won't be my last. But this one I can do something about. ISFRD is cancelled.' (Isfrd.org) • *Illustrious* is a 2011 UK Eastercon bid whose chosen hotel is the Hilton Metropole at the Birmingham NEC site. See www.illustrious.org.uk • *Renovation*, the 2011 Worldcon in Reno, Nevada, announces that online registration is 'now up and running' at Renovationsf.org.

Infinitely Improbable

Tell Me The Old, Old Story. Morena Baccarin, the actress playing the lead alien in the new version of *V*, has a unique insight: 'Science fiction used to get a really bad rap and I think that's really changing. "V" is not necessarily a science-fiction show. It's more about relationships, drama and everyday stuff ...' (*Boston Herald*, 3 November) [DK] • Likewise BBC1's series *Paradox*, featuring Dick-style efforts to avert future disasters displayed by a precognitive computer: Tamzin Outhwaite, playing one of the would-be averters, says 'It's not sci-fi; it's more a police drama with a mad twist.' (*Total TV Guide*, 21-27 October) [MPJ] Ms Outhwaite did not reach this conclusion lightly: 'Initially I thought it was a sci-fi project ... Then I read the script and realised it wasn't. It's about police officers trying to work out whether there is a worm hole between two time zones.' (*Teletext TV Plus* interview) [DH]

Awards. *Booktrust Teenage Prize*: Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*. [AW] • *David Gemmell Legend* (heroic fantasy): two extra categories have been added, *Newcomer* and *Cover Art* as well as *Novel*.

Court Circular. B.C. Bamber (who?) has self-published a dystopian sf novel snappily titled *The Vast and Gruesome Clutch of Our Law*. The hero's father is bumped off by the dread secret police, but 'escapes and sets out to halt the vile purges of Intrum and Justica ...' Could B.C. Bamber have a grudge against the feared UK debt collection agency Intrum Justitia? The firm is consulting its legal advisers'. Vile purges may follow. (Martin Waller, *Times City Diary*, 12 November). [MMcG]

R.I.P. J.F. Clarke (1918-2009), UK sf bibliographer, anthologist and scholar of future-war fiction whose books included *The Tale of the Future* (1961; revised 1972, 1978) and *Voices Prophecying War* (1966;

1992) and *The Pattern of Expectation* (1979), died on 5 November. He received the SF Research Association's Pilgrim Award in 1974. [AS] ● **Lionel Davidson** (1922-2009), UK writer of well-regarded thrillers whose sf/fantasy includes *The Sun Chemist* (1976) and the YA *Under Plum Lake* (1980, also as by David Line), died on 21 October aged 87. [JC] ● **Shel Dorf** (1933-2009), US comics artist and letterer who in 1970 founded San Diego's now huge Comic-Con International, died on 3 November; he was 76. [AIP] ● **Raymond Federman** (1928-2009), French-born author long resident in the USA, whose *The Twofold Vibration* (1982) is dystopian sf, died on 6 October; he was 81. [JC] ● **Herbert Goldstone** (1920-2009), US writer whose story "Virtuoso" (F&SF 1953) was reprinted in anthologies, died on 7 May aged 89. [GVG] ● **Robert Holdstock** (1948-2009), UK author of many notable sf, fantasy and horror novels, died on 29 November, having been in intensive care since collapsing on the 18th with what proved to be a serious *E. coli* infection. He was only 61. [RKME] Most of his finest work is part of or linked to the Mythago cycle, opening with *Mythago Wood* (1984)—a World Fantasy and BSFA Award winner—and dealing with powerfully re-imagined mythic archetypes inhabiting an English heartwood far vaster inside than out. All sympathy to his partner Sarah and the rest of the family. Losing Rob leaves a huge, aching hole in the British sf scene. ● **John Joyce** (1939-2009), UK actor who worked with Ken Campbell's Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool—with major parts in *Illuminatus!*, *The Warp*, and an adaptation of Theodore Sturgeon's *Some of Your Blood* seen at the 1979 Brighton Worldcon—died on 15 September aged 70. He attended many North London fan parties of the 1980s. [RKME] ● **Karl Kroeber** (1926-2009), US literary academic who wrote the nonfiction *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1988), died on 8 November. He was Ursula K. Le Guin's brother. [GVG] ● **William Miller** (1934-2009), UK publisher in the 1960s/1970s and later a Japan-based literary agent, died on 5 November aged 75. David Pringle writes: 'Along with John Boothe, he ran Panther Books (later Granada) throughout much of the 1960s, and was responsible for a lot of sf there (notably Ballard).' ● **Sheila Pover**, UK fan and *Ansible* reader who used to attend the Discworld conventions, died on 20 November aged 79. ● **Edward Woodward** (1930-2009), UK actor perhaps most famous for starring in *The Wicker Man* (1973), died on 16 November; he was 79. [AW]

As Others See Themselves. Another V star, Elizabeth Mitchell, joins the peer group: "I'm a dork and a nerd," admits the actress, who once breathlessly approached the son of *Dune* author Frank Herbert in a bank. "They know I'm one of them. Completely. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing. I'm a sci-fi fan—with a soccer mom on the outside." (Dan Snierson interview, *Entertainment Weekly*, 6 November) [MMW]

Fall of the Columns. Sci Fi Wire, the online presence of the dread Syfy, cancelled all its regular columns including John Clute's long-running 'Excessive Candour' reviews. The Clute response to editor Scott Edelman: 'In very brief compass, what SCI FI Wire did over the past year was to institute changes that themselves made it hugely difficult for anything remotely resembling a column to be 1) findable on the site or 2) understandable as a column if found by accident or 3) linkable to any previous column that might provide readers with continuity. Once this was accomplished, it was child's play to then "discover" what you had arranged to be the case: to "learn" in other words "that the whole online column idea has become passe". / Because you guys created a situation you then pretended to discover.' (7 November) The column is to relaunch next year as 'Scores' on the *Strange Horizons* site.

Outraged Letters. *James Bacon* enjoyed last month's Wexford sf festival: 'WexWorlds was a huge success, first event had 644 children present, and the momentum never flagged with many events being full houses. Darren Shan and Eoin Colfer sharing a stage was superb, and Dr Emma J. King soon had her own fanclub, of children loving exploding light bulbs in microwaves and watching apples treated with LN, getting hit with a hammer. Serious panels also well attended. So went well. Looking at 26th-28th November next year.' ● **Marion Pitman** on David V. Barrett's A268 report: 'Intrigued to see that the Ken Campbell tribute show was performed by "25 actors in different combinations". Saved on the wardrobe bill I guess.'

Science Masterclass. A sleuth identifies the instant poison used for a fiendish crime: '... CO₂ gas. Carbon dioxide, you know! [...] Are you sure?' 'Positive! As both you gentlemen know, it is a violent and fatal poison. When inhaled in any quantity, as for example from a vial, it produces a spasm of the glottis and immediate death.' (George Allan England, 'Ping-Pong', in *Best Detective Stories*, 1930) [MP]

Random Fandom. *Dave Lally*, 'who was present at his own birth in Dublin on Sun 4 Dec 1949', warns London fan meetings that he'll be

even more relentless in his attendance after 4 December, when as a doddering sexagenarian he receives his Freedom Card travel pass. ● **Martin McGrath** lost nine months' work and email in a hard drive (plus backup drive) failure. If awaiting a reply from him, especially re BSFA *Focus* submissions, please resend: martinmcgrath at ntworld dot com. ● **Dan Steffan** won the annual Rotsler Award for long-time achievement in fanzine art, bringing him not only eternal glory but also \$300.

We Are Everywhere. The *TLS* review of Dinah Birch's new edition of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* mutters that 'There is palpable overcompensation for the previous neglect of science fiction.' Though Neil Gaiman's short entry is admired, there is sniffiness about the inclusion of 'Stephen Gallagher, author of two series of Doctor Who in the 1980s'; praise for Greg Bear's *Blood Music* 'feels incongruously partisan.' But overall it's a positive review. (*TLS*, 28 October) [AS]

Fanfundery. *GUFF*: the southbound race to the 2010 Australian Worldcon is now on, with candidates James Shields and Douglas Spencer. Voting continues until (just before) midnight on 5 April 2010. See taff.org.uk/guff/ for ballot. UK admin: Ang Rosin, 26 Hermitage Grove, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 6DR. ● *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*: voting closes on 22 December 2009. Candidates are Anne KG Murphy & Brian Gray, standing jointly, and Frank Wu. See taff.org.uk for ballot. UK admin: Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

Strange Bedfellows. 'More generally, the archetypal Ayn Rand devotee has a lot in common with the archetypal *Star Trek* fan. She has a following, then, but its actual influence is questionable.' (Dolan Cummings, *Spiked!* Review of Books, November) [PL]

In Memoriam. Ben Jeapes writes: 'A memorial service and requiem mass was held for Jennifer Swift in the chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford, on 7 November. Her husband Tim Bartel brought grace and dignity to his reading from the works of Julian of Norwich; and what a difference it makes when the celebrant priest delivering the eulogy clearly knows and admires the deceased. He knew all about her sense of humour, her late-blossoming career as a journalist; and her and Tim's love of taking their tandem bike to places where if a gradient is less than 2.5% it's not worth talking about. Of fannish note was an aria from *Perelandra: The Opera* with music by Donald Swann. Jennifer with her biological knowledge would have been able to describe the exact biochemical changes going on inside the just-prepubescent chorister that made him take three stabs at hitting the opening note. She would also have found it incredibly funny (certainly funnier than the chorister did). Jennifer's ashes have been buried in the Fellows Garden at Magdalen.'

The Weakest Link. *Anne Robinson*: 'In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, what type of animal is Tigger? Contestant: 'A rabbit.' (BBC1) [PI]

Group Gropes. *Friends of Kilgore Trout* (Glasgow), meeting 2nd Thursday each month: their pub the Cask & Still is closing, and future meets from 10 December will be at the Edward Wyllie in Bothwell St. ● *Broken Drummers* (Discworld!): London, 1st Monday. Next meeting is 7 December in The Monkey Puzzle, Paddington, W2 1JQ. All welcome.

Thog's Masterclass. *Arithmetic Dept.* "Death to Prowlers." Two words seemed to sing through Agar's brain ...' (Frank Belknap Long, 'Willie', *Astounding*, October 1953) [KMcA] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Slowly his right eye lidded itself and then rolled back on a moist optic.' (*Ibid*) ● *Transmutation Dept.* 'The lower portion of old Babu's face seemed to harden, as though some sudden and mysterious alchemy were working to change his jaw muscles from stone to iron.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Geography: The War on Canada.* 'To relieve even more of the population stress, the United States had invaded the much smaller country.' (Junius Podrug, *Feathered Serpent 2012*, 2010) [SHS] ● *Simile Dept.* 'A swirling lava lamp of colors boiled on the screen like a hallucination that the cat had dragged in.' (Alexander Beshar, *Rim*, 1994) [AK] '... white sideburns that grew like a pair of moccasins at the sides of his head. His greying hair was slicked back carelessly to reveal a furrowed brow with a long bridged nose and brown eyes that dogged you like a pair of English spaniels.' (*Ibid*) 'Her eyes were like glass vacuum tubes, lit.' (*Ibid*) 'He looked up at Gobi with eyes like charcoal briquettes waiting to be lit.' (*Ibid*) 'They saw two matching crew cuts and eyes as dead as pool cues.' (*Ibid*) 'Looming just ahead of them on the maglev grid was an intersecting skyway ramp that looked like it would rip them off the truck as if they were medicated plasters of Salopas.' (*Ibid*)

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