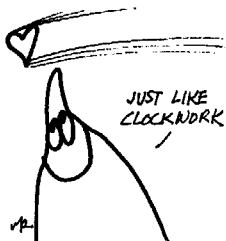


ansible



Ansible 211 February 2005

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks. RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Bill Rotsler**. Available for SAE or the secrets of the fluxus quo.

Many-Faceted. What song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, are puzzling questions—but less tantalizing to sf fans than the lost ending of that trans-Thoggian classic ‘The Eye of Argon’. Now, according to a letter in *The New York Review of SF* (January 2005), a complete copy of the relevant 1970 fanzine has been unearthed in the Jack Williamson SF Library at Eastern New Mexico University! JWSFL collection administrator Gene Bundy reports that the long-missing Page 49 begins: ‘With a sloshing plop the thing fell to the ground, evaporating in a thick scarlet cloud until it retained its original size.’ You will hear more of this.

The Dorbott of Vacuo

Douglas Adams is officially a heavenly body. The lump of space debris which had been provisionally named 2001 DA42—conveniently encapsulating his death date, his initials, and his Ultimate Answer—was confirmed in January as Asteroid Douglasadams. [JS]

Arthur C. Clarke enjoyed the dubious accolade of a mention on the Popbitch gossip site in January: ‘Famous Sri Lanka resident Arthur C. Clarke has survived the terrible floods. He was found in the sea clinging on to a buoy ...’ [KN] What can this possibly mean?

Maxim Jakubowski has bad news for London fans, conveyed by Roger Robinson: ‘The building containing the triple bookshop (Murder One, Heartlines, New Worlds) will be demolished soon. The shop is moving. The new premises will be on 2 floors of a building just across the street [Charing Cross Road] from the present location.’ To fit the smaller space, ‘they will be closing down New Worlds (the SF section). This will happen at about the end of March, and the winding down process has already started.’ A closing sale is under way. Andy Richards of Cold Tonnage Books confirms: ‘Yes, the real shame is that the sf section as a whole is closing. My second-hand section is just a part of it.’

Stan Lee, co-creator of Spider-Man, was awarded 10% of Marvel Comics’ profits from the spinoff films by a US district court on 19 January. His lawyer gloated: ‘It could be tens of millions of dollars. That’s no exaggeration.’ Of course Marvel plans to appeal. [BB]

Jim Minz left Tor Books on 21 January, and moved into a new editorial post at Del Rey Books on the 31st.

Jeff VanderMeer wants to make our flesh creep with tales of ‘how dangerous it is to live in the colonies. I was minding my own business January 1st on a nature trail way out in the boonies and this wild pig attacked me without provocation. I was able to take (admittedly) blurry photos because it began to charge at me from so far away I wasn’t quite sure what it was doing until it was closer. I then dropped my camera and prepared to defend myself with walking stick and small pen knife, but luckily the beast stepped aside at the last second and went off into the forest making a dreadful banshee sound.’ From the photographs it’s hard to tell whether the approaching blob is a wild boar or—more in keeping with Jeff’s predilections—an enraged freshwater squid.

Contragestion

4-6 Feb • **Construction 4** (Interaction staff weekend). Moat House Hotel, Congress Rd, SECC, Glasgow. Free to anyone interested.

14 Feb • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Graham Joyce, and Roz Kaveney.

19 Feb • **Picocon 22**, Imperial College Union, London. Admission £7; students £5, ICSF members £2. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB.

23 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm onward. With Jon Courtenay Grimwood.

4 Mar • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Devereux pub, East St, off the Strand, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome.

4-6 Mar • **Mecon 8**, Park Avenue Hotel, Holywood Rd, Belfast. GoH Ian McDonald. £20/€30 reg; £22 at the door. Contact 17 Meadowbank Place, Belfast, BT9 7FE, N. Ireland.

5-6 Mar • **Microcon**, Exeter University campus. Guests TBA.

25-28 Mar • **Paragon2** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel,

Hinckley, Leics. £45 reg, £20 supp, £22.50 junior (12-16), £5 child (5-11), infants free. *At-door rates apply from 21 March*: £75 full, £35 jr, others as before. Day: Fri or Mon £15, £7.50 jr; Sat or Sun £35, £20 jr. Contact 4 Burnside Ave, Sheffield, S8 9FR. Phone 0114 281 0674.

16 Apr • **BSFA/SF Foundation** free event, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1. 10:30am-5pm. Including both thrilling AGMs! GoH: BSFA-sponsored, Ian McDonald; SFF-sponsored TBA.

11 May • **Clarke Award Ceremony**, English Heritage Lecture Theatre, London. By invitation. See below for 2005 shortlist.

13-19 Aug • **Milford (UK) SF Writers’ Conference**, Trigonos, Snowdonia. Published authors only (1 pro story). Contact Liz Williams (Secretary), Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

30 Sept - 2 Oct • **FantasyCon 2005**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. GoH Simon Clark, Mark Chadbourn, more TBC. £40 reg to 30 Jun 05, then £50; BFS members £35, then £45. Day rate £20. Contact (with SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8DQ.

Infinitely Improbable

As Some Of Us See Us. A generally positive article by Suzanne Ryan (*Boston Globe*, 14 Jan) about the new *Battlestar Galactica* ended by quoting a fan’s all too familiar weasel words: ‘I thought the mini-series was fantastic,’ he said. ‘It was incredibly written. The characters were really fully developed. It wasn’t traditional science fiction.’ [CM]

Arthur C. Clarke Award shortlist for 2004 novels: Ian McDonald, *River of Gods*; China Miéville, *Iron Council*; David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*; Richard Morgan, *Market Forces*; Audrey Niffenegger, *The Time Traveler’s Wife*; Neal Stephenson, *The System of the World*. Prize this year: £2005.

The Demolished Nurse. Tony Keen on the 3 Feb London pub meeting: ‘The Florence Nightingale was closed tonight, due to imminent demolition. So we shan’t be going back there again. Emergency fall back (the Jubilee) was used tonight, but at Pat McMurray’s instigation the London Circle will return in March to the Silver Cross in Whitehall!’

BSFA Award shortlists for 2004 work: NOVEL Alastair Reynolds, *Century Rain*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *Forty Signs of Rain*; Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*; Ken MacLeod, *Newton’s Wake*; Ian McDonald, *River of Gods*; Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Stamping Butterflies*. (Six novels are listed owing to a tie for fifth place.) • SHORT Vandana Singh, ‘Delhi’ (*So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Visions of the Future*); Stephen Baxter, *Mayflower II*; Jon Courtenay Grimwood, ‘Point of No Return’ (*New Scientist*, Xmas/New Year); Kelly Link, ‘The Faery Handbag’ (*The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm*); Howard Waldrop, ‘The Wolf-man of Alcatraz’ (*SCI FICTION*). • ARTWORK Sebastiao Salgado, Iguana photograph (*Guardian*); Eric Cabanis, Millau Bridge photograph (*Guardian*); Stephan Martiniere, *Newton’s Wake* cover (Tor); *The Algebrast* cover (Orbit); Edward Miller, *The Year of Our War* cover (Gollancz). • The nonfiction category is still in limbo.

As Others See Us. An uplifting view of sf from the musician Moby, interviewed in *Q* magazine (March 2005): ‘The perfect marriage is one where the man enjoys watching *Sex and the City* and the woman loves science fiction. Find me a couple who are like that, and I guarantee you they’ll be happy.’ [GS] Too bad, of course, if it’s the other way around.

Publishers and Sinners. Possibly the most astonishing novel ever written, *Atlanta Nights* by ‘Travis Tea’ was created to test—preferably to destruction—PublishAmerica’s claim to be a serious ‘traditional publisher’ with old-fashioned trappings like editorial standards. James D. Macdonald explains: ‘Thirty authors answered the call by banging out a chapter or two over a long weekend. They were each given a brief outline and a few character notes. They then wrote their chapters—without knowing what might be in other chapters, whether their chapter was first, last, or somewhere else in the narrative, what time of year it was, or much of anything else. Any accidental literary competence was rapidly blue-penciled into oblivion. The result varied from unreadable to incoherent. The manuscript was submitted to PublishAmerica by a volunteer. PublishAmerica bought the book.’ Alas, on counsel’s advice the hoax had to be revealed before signing a contract which guaranteed

that the book was written solely by the figurehead author—whereupon PA seized the opportunity to back out. Instead it's been published by Lulu.com, with profits going to the SFWA emergency medical fund.

R.I.P. Bruce Cassidy (1920-2005), US author and historian of sf and crime fiction, died on 12 January. He wrote the novelization *Flash Gordon: The War of the Cybnauts* (1975, as by Carson Bingham) and edited *Modern Mystery, Fantasy, and Science Fiction Writers* (1993). [RIB] ● **Walter Ernsting** (1920-2005), German author, editor and translator who as Clark Darlton co-founded the mighty Perry Rhodan shared world franchise, died on 15 January aged 84. His career began in the 1950s, when he edited and wrote for Germany's *Utopia-Magazin*, launched in 1955; he had become known as the grand old man of German sf. [ARW/PY] ● **(Diane Gail) Kelly Goldberg**, US author who published horror fiction as by d.g.k. goldberg, died on 14 January. [SFWA] ● **Jack Kine** (1921-2005), special effects pioneer who co-founded the BBC Visual Effects Department in 1954, died on 14 January; he was 83. With Bernard Wilkie he worked on the 1954 BBC production of *1984* and created memorable monsters for *Quatermass II* (1955) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-9), before moving on to the greater horrors of *Tomorrow's World* and *Blue Peter*. ● **Gerald Pollinger**, UK literary agent who represented many sf authors during his more than 50 years with the Laurence Pollinger agency, died on 5 January. He was 79. [JB] ● **Patsy Rowlands** (1934-2005), UK actress who was best known for comedy but had genre TV roles in *Raven* (1977) and Nigel Kneale's *Kinvig* (1981), died on 22 January aged 71. She also appeared in *Danger Man*, *The Avengers* and *Out of the Unknown*. [ChM] ● **Sven Christer Swahn** (1933-2005), major Swedish sf author, critic, and translator of nearly 200 books, died on 15 January aged 71. [WJ]

In Typo Veritas. '... her public hair is as black as night, the starkest possible contrast to the fiery crimson hair higher up.' (Robert Silverberg, *Roma Eterna*, 2003). [TK]

Idols of the Marketplace. *Nature* has revived its 'Futures' series of short-short sf stories as a back-page feature, beginning with Ian Stewart on 3 February. Kindly editor Henry Gee would prefer not to receive unsolicited submissions, but query letters may be addressed to him at *Nature*, The Macmillan Building, 4-6 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW. ● **Inferno!** (1997-2005), the Games Workshop magazine which provided one of the few professional UK outlets for short genre fiction, is ceasing publication with its January/February issue. Contributors have included Barrington J. Bayley and Brian Stableford. [PS-P]

Hazel's Language Lessons: Inuktitut (Canadian Arctic): *puijilittatuq*, he does not know which way to turn because of the many seals he has seen come to the ice surface. (BBC) [MC]

Industrial Tribunal Dept. Waterstone's contrived much negative publicity for itself on 5 January, when the Princes Street branch in Edinburgh sacked its most enthusiastic promoter of sf, Joe Gordon—for the 'gross misconduct' of occasional disrespectful remarks in his weblog. Joe writes gloomily: '11 years of service, all the author events I have organized and run, the reviews, writing for Waterstone's publications, appearing on the radio or TV to discuss books on their behalf, all count for nothing apparently ...' Some see this as a free speech issue, others as a transparent pretext for getting rid of an employee disliked by the recently appointed store manager. (Interestingly, the previous manager knew about the offending weblog and didn't mind at all.) Much press coverage followed: BBC News, *The Guardian*, *The Register*, *The Times*, and even that ultimate journal of record Charlie Stross's *Diary*.

Outraged Letters. *Pierre De Jaeger*: 'Just read interview with Ballard in French paper *Libération*, where he explains how science-fiction died when Armstrong walked on the moon (many other bitter old fart absurdities in the interview).' [17 Jan] ● *Simo* gloats: 'I was surprised to read a report in *Screen International* that my screenplay of Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* was "in advanced development" at the modern day incarnation of Hammer Films. Almost as surprised, it turns out, as the CEO of Hammer, who has expressed his liking for the script but has not yet optioned it. It seems that some staffer on the trade paper, reporting Hammer's latest co-production deal, got somewhat confused about the facts. Film journalists, eh? Who would trust them?'

Thog's Critical Masterclass. *Lord of the Rings* plot summary: 'The plucky hobbits cross treacherous mountains to stop the evil Lord Saruman obtaining the ring he needs for world domination.' (*Independent*, 29 January) ● '... Brian Aldiss' *Methuselah's Children* ...' (Terry Pratchett, *Once More* With Footnotes*, 2004)

Real Lit'ry Awards. *The US National Book Critics Circle* awards shortlist of five titles includes two of genre interest, David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. [PL, 24 Jan] ●

Lambda Awards (gay, lesbian, etc) sf/fantasy/horror nominees: Michael Jensen, *Firelands*; Greg Herren, ed., *Shadow of the Night: Queer Tales of the Uncanny and Unusual*; Jim Grimsley, *The Ordinary*; Jean Stewart, *The Wizard of Isis*; Nicola Griffith, *With Her Body*.

Medical Report. *Jack Chalker*, though out of danger, remains 'unresponsive' in hospital. ● *Dave Locke*, having refused heart surgery for the time being, returned home on 10 January. He's said to be in good shape; an angioplasty should eventually follow. [BB] ● *Harry Turner* has been recovering in hospital after a stroke. [RoB] ● *Roger Levy* (writes Keith Brooke, following the A210 stabbing report) is 'back at home now and making good progress. He's already received many good wishes messages, which he appreciates greatly. Anyone wishing to contact Roger may do so via his editor, Simon Spanton, at Orion Books.'

Oscars. Numerous sf/fantasy items are scattered through the 2005 nominations, far too tiresome to list in full. The Best Animated Feature shortlist comprises *The Incredibles*, *Shark Tale*, and *Shrek 2*.

As Others See Some Of Us. 'Very much the Moonies of television cults, *Doctor Who* is second only to *Star Trek* in its ability to attract sociopaths, hobbyists, theorists, collectors, role-playing gamers, fanatics and, frankly, experts. There is little this encyclopaedia can put forward which has not already been the subject of a keynote address at some high-priced, stale-smelling conference in Leicester, called something like SADCON or TOTALCON.' (Richard Lewis, *The Encyclopaedia of Children's Cult TV*, 2002)

C.o.A. *Tom Feller*, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214, USA.

Media Moribundity. The 98th and last *Star Trek: Enterprise* episode airs in the USA on 13 May. For the first time since 1986, the *Trek* franchise will have neither a movie nor a tv show in the pipeline. [SG]

Heartthrobs. Sapphire Awards (for sf romance) novel shortlist: Kathleen Nance, *Day of Fire*; Charlene Harris, *Dead to the World*; Robin D. Owens, *Heart Duel*; Angela Knight, *Jane's Warlord*; Patricia Briggs, *Raven's Shadow*; Susan Grant, *The Scarlet Empress*.

The Dead Past. *Twenty Years Ago*: '... when, in 1985, pollsters asked 1500 Americans to name a famous Japanese person, Godzilla came third (or second, if you don't count Bruce Lee, who wasn't Japanese; Hirohito came top).' (*London Review of Books*, 3 Feb 05)

Random Fandom. *Michael Harker* offers one non-smoking *Ansible* reader a free single bed in Glasgow city centre for Interaction. Over-25s from overseas preferred. Contact michael.harker1 at virgin.net. ● *Colin McGregor* brags that he smuggled a Torcon 3 report into *Linux Journal* (February 2005), in the guise of an article about running that event's Linux-based convention internet lounge.

Ghastly Social Blunders Dept. *Ansible* 210: Quentin Blake is a Commander, not Companion, of (the Order of) the British Empire. ● *Helen Spiral* feels that Steve Green's rant about Adam Mars-Jones and his attitude to sf on *A Good Read* (BBC Radio 4) misnamed the actual culprit Andrew Collins, even though AM-J 'has previous form for the offence on at least one BBC review programme'. Steve: 'Possible, I guess ... Whichever, it's an attitude prevalent at Radio 4, typified by Mark Lawson's kneejerk dismissal of anything fantastical (such as scheduling his holidays to avoid having to review the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy).'

The Naked Lunch. John Ordovery, the former Pocket Books *Star Trek* novel editor who now runs Phobos, is interestingly exposed in *Time Out New York* for 6-12 January—which reveals, complete with nude group photo, his spare-time activity of running Clothing Optional Dinners for NYC naturists. 'The unofficial motto of the COD is "No Hot Soup".' It must be healthier than all those frowsty sf conventions....

Thog's Masterclass. *Understatement Dept* (or, *Hot Soup at COD*). 'Kassad was aware of the pain as a great sound beyond hearing, a huge, incessant foghorn of pain, as if thousands of untrained fingers were falling on thousands of keys playing a massive pipe organ of pain.' (Dan Simmons, *The Fall of Hyperion*, 1990) [DL] ● *Magical Physics Dept* (or, *the Bounceless Bounce*). 'Satellites watched the residue of gas and energized particles strike the surface and rebound. There was no heat or momentum transfer.' (Peter F. Hamilton, *Pandora's Star*, 2004) [DC]

● *Solid Geometry Dept.* 'The capsule was a truncated cylinder, perhaps four meters in diameter at the base and three at the top ...' (Charles Stross, *Singularity Sky*, 2003) [LC]

Ansible 211 © Dave Langford, 2005. Thanks to Barbara Barrett, Ron Bennett, Richard Bleiler, Judy Blish, Bill Bowers, Len Charlap, Mike Christie, Dave Clements, Steve Green, Wilf James, Tony Keen, Duncan Lawrie, Locus, Catherine Moore, Chris Moore, Kim Newman, Publishers Lunch, Joyce Scrivner, Graham Sleight, Phil Stephensen-Payne, Gordon Van Gelder, Arnold W. Winter, Pete Young, and Hero Distributors: Rog Peyton (Birmingham), Janice Murray (North America), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Thyme/Australia). 4 Feb 05