



Ansible 297 April 2012

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That Share of Glory

Phil Davis, the actor, gave sf a plug on BBC2's *My Life in Books* (6 March) by praising *The Sirens of Titan*, but nervously added 'It's not really science fiction, it's satire.' [RS] Asked whether he'd read any other Vonnegut novels, he confidently cited *Cat's Cradle* and *Fahrenheit 451*.

Carl Frederick, a 2002 finalist and 2003 winner in the L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future competition, decided to sever all links with WotF following a 12 March *Village Voice* exposé arguing that the supposed 'firewall' between competition organizers and the darker side of Scientology is distinctly leaky. Much online comment ensued. [JW]

Simon Ings, now editing the digital magazine *Arc*, had a write-up in the *Independent*: 'Science fiction starts to get a bad reputation when it stops being a source of play and starts to take itself seriously as a force in the real world, says Ings. "If you don't take it seriously then it can be useful, because you're freeing up your imagination and churning through ideas of what the future might be like. The moment you take it seriously is the moment you stop having ideas."' (23 March) [MPJ]

Chris Priest was mightily gobsmacked to learn he was the hidden theme of the *Independent*'s 2 March cryptic crossword, by veteran setter 'Phi'. Besides Christopher and Priest, answers included Affirmation, Extremes, Glamour, Islander, Prestige, Scintilla and Separation. [PD]

J.K. Rowling is still news even for not being news: *Telegraph* coverage of the latest Forbes billionaires' list was headlined 'JK Rowling fortune under vanishing spell' to mark her absence owing to charitable donations and the UK's 'heavy taxation burden'. (7 March) [MPJ]

Norman Spinrad's unproduced 1967 *Star Trek* script 'He Walked Among Us' was to appear at last in the fan-created online series *Star Trek New Voyages: Phase II*—until CBS, which owns the rights, issued a cease-and-desist order. There was, strangely, no such objection when David Gerrold's unused 1987 *Star Trek: The Next Generation* script 'Blood and Fire' appeared in that same series in 2007; but Spinrad told *File 770*, 'Not so mystifying when you consider that "Blood and Fire" was done well before J.J. Abrams came on the scene.' Our author was also told to stop selling copies of his script through online bookshops. (*New York Times*, 29 March) *Star Trek* fans are not happy. So it goes.

Andrew Stanton, talking on Radio 5 Live, said the reason for Disney's title change of his *Barsoom* film *John Carter of Mars* to just *John Carter* was that 'audiences don't like science fiction.' [MPJ] Perhaps in some parallel world where *Avatar* flopped ... A more plausible story is that Disney lost serious money on the 2011 *Mars Needs Moms* and decided with arcane logic that 'Mars' in the title had to be the problem.

Bram Stoker's original 1897 contract for *Dracula*, drafted and handwritten by the author himself, is to be published for the first time in a new edition of the novel. Using arcane mental powers, Stoker had negotiated a princely 20% royalty deal. (*Independent*, 25 March) [MPJ]

Connandscipe

Until 27 May • **'It's Life Jimmy, but Not As We Know It'**: SF in Scotland (exhibition), National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW. Free. 10am-8pm; to 5pm Sat; 2-5pm Sun.

6-9 Apr • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. *Advance booking has closed. The convention is full and no memberships will be available at the door. No transfers of existing memberships after noon BST on 3 April.* Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or enquiries at olympus2012 dot org.

13-15 Apr • **The Hub 8** (*Torchwood*), Park Inn, Northampton. Tickets from £78 to £195. See massiveevents.co.uk/hub8.

21 Apr • **Bradford After Dark** (film), Cineworld, Bradford: all-day showing in horror strand of Bradford Film Festival, 19-29 April. More at www.bradfordfilmfestival.org.uk; tickets www.cineworld.co.uk.

22 Apr • **Diana Wynne Jones Celebration** (informal and non-religious), St George's, Brandon Hill, Bristol. 2pm for 2:30. Family members and close friends will share their memories of Diana. All are welcome. For full travel details, see calcifer.co.uk.

25 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Melton Mowbray (new venue), 18 Holborn, London, EC1N 2LE. 6pm for 7pm. With Sharyn November.

26-29 Apr • **Kontakt** (SFeraKon/Eurocon), Zagreb, Croatia. *Advance booking now closed.* At the door: €20 reg, €30 deluxe (includes a guided tour). Further details at zagreb-eurocon2012.com.

1-7 May • **Sci-Fi London** film festival at Apollo Piccadilly Circus, BFI Southbank, other London venues. See www.sci-fi-london.com.

2 May • **Clarke Award** at Sci-Fi London. By invitation.

14 Jul • **Edge-Lit** sf/fantasy horror day, QUAD art centre, Derby, DE1 3AS. 10am-midnight. £25 reg. Box office 01332 290 606.

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **Chicon 7** (70th Worldcon), Hyatt Regency, Chicago. *Now \$195 reg; \$540 family; \$100 YA (17-21); \$75 child (5-16); under-5s free.* Contact PO Box 13, Skokie, IL 60076, USA.

22-29 Sep • **Milford UK** (writers' workshop), Trigonos, Snowdonia. £560 inc room and meals; £115 deposit required; published writers only. Contact c/o 40 Westhay Rd, Meare, Glastonbury, BA6 9TL.

3-4 Mar 2013 • **P-Con X**, Irish Writers' Centre, Parnell Square, Dublin 1. GoH Cory Doctorow, Sarah Pinborough. 20 reg (may rise later); payment via PayPal or at the door. See www.pcon.ie.

Rumblings • A Chicon press release announces that no 2014 Worldcon bidders other than London filed paperwork by the 2 March deadline. London in 2014 is unopposed and doomed to succeed! The Hugo shortlist will be announced on 7 April, during Eastercon.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Race. There was a storm in a twittercup as watchers of *The Hunger Games* tweeted bitterly that characters described in the novel as 'dark brown' or with 'dark skin' are shockingly portrayed in the film by black actors. One twit felt this 'kinda ruined the movie'; another asked 'why did the producer make all the good characters black'. [PD]

Awards. *Arthur C. Clarke Award* shortlist: Greg Bear, *Hull Zero Three*; Drew Magary, *The End Specialist*; China Miéville, *Embassytown*; Jane Rogers, *The Testament of Jessie Lamb*; Charles Stross, *Rule 34*; Sheri S. Tepper, *The Waters Rising*. Carrying on the great Clarke tradition of grumbling, Chris Priest posted an online denunciation of the judges and (almost) the entire shortlist; others sniped back, and a fine cranky time was had by all; Charles Stross enshrined his description 'internet puppy' in t-shirt form. • *James Tiptree Jr.*: Andrea Hairston, *Redwood and Wildfire*. • *Lambda* (LGBT) shortlist: Lee Thomas, *The German*; Geoff Ryman, *Paradise Tales: and Other Stories*; L.A. Witt & Amber Allure, *Static*; JoSelle Vanderhooft, ed., *Steam-Powered: Lesbian Steampunk Stories*; J.M. Frey, *Triptych*. • *SFWA Solstice Award*: Octavia Butler (posthumously), John Clute. • *Service to SFWA*: Bud Webster.

Publishers & Sinners. Penguin UK is reviving the glorious tradition of Penguin SF with a new imprint called, actually, Berkley UK.

Sky at Night Masterclass. Anne Robinson: 'In astronomy, a nucleus, a coma and a tail are all parts of which celestial body?' *Contestant*: 'A horse.' (BBC1, *The Weakest Link*, now mercifully cancelled.) [PI]

R.I.P. M.A.R. Barker (Prof. Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman Barker, 1929-2012), creator of the science-fantasy world Tékumel as a setting for *Empire of the Petal Throne* (1975) and related role-playing games, died on 16 March aged 83. [AW] Tékumel outdoes even Tolkien's Middle-earth for its density of historical, cultural and linguistic detail; besides 'nonfiction' treatises on the world, Barker also set five novels there, beginning with *The Man of Gold* (1984). • *Peter Bergman* (1939-2012), US writer and member of the surreal comedy group The Firesign Theatre, died on 9 March aged 72. Firesign humour was often sf-themed: their albums *Don't Crush That Dwarf*, *Hand Me the Pliers* and *I Think We're All Bozos on This Bus* were Dramatic Presentation Hugo nominees in 1971 and 1972 respectively. [BH] • *Christine Brooke-Rose* (1923-2012), Swiss-born UK novelist and academic critic whose linguistically inventive fiction includes such sf novels as *Xorandor* (1986) and *Verbivore* (1990), died on 21 March at the age of 89. • *Bruce Cornwell*, one of the original *Dan Dare* artists in Frank Hampson's *Eagle* comic team—specializing in hardware and spaceships—died on 2

March. [GW] • *Robert Fuest* (1927-2012), UK director of various *Avengers* and *New Avengers* episodes, *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (1971; also 1972 sequel), *The Final Programme* (1973), *The Devil's Rain* (1975) and *Revenge of the Stepford Wives* (1980), died on 21 March aged 84. [SFS] • *Paul Haines* (1970-2012), New Zealand-born horror and sf author (in Australia from the 1990s) who won several Ditmar and Aurealis awards for his fiction, died on 5 March; he was 41. [PDF] • *Gene DeWeese* (1934-2012), US fan and author who began publishing with the *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* spinoff *The Invisibility Affair* (1967, with Robert Coulson) as by Thomas Stratton and contributed novels to the *Star Trek*, *Dinotopia* and other universes, died on 19 March; he was 78. [ML] With Coulson he wrote the light-hearted recursive sf romps *Now You See It/Him/Them* (1975) and *Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats* (1977). • *Jean Giraud* (1938-2012), highly prolific and influential French comics artist who cofounded the seminal magazine *Métal Hurlant* in 1975, died on 10 March aged 73. [GW] Much of his sf work appeared as by Moebius. Genre films using his design concepts include *Alien*, *Tron*, *The Abyss* and *The Fifth Element*. He was commissioned to draw a 1988 French postage stamp in honour of himself, and was inducted into the SF Hall of Fame in 2011. • *Elyse Knox Harmon* (1917-2012), US actress fondly remembered for screaming, fainting and being carried off by a heavily bandaged Lon Chaney in *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), died on 16 February; she was 94. [MPJ] • *Sheldon Moldoff* (1920-2012), US comics artist whose work appeared in the 1938 *Action Comics #1* (which introduced Superman) and whose cover art included the 1940 comics with the debuts of Flash and Green Lantern, died on 29 February aged 91. [PDF] • *Noboru Ishiguro* (1938-2012), Japanese anime director best known for the long-running tv and film anime series *Space Cruiser Yamato*, died on 21 March. He also co-authored a 1980 history of Japanese animation. [JC] • *Hans Kneifel* (1936-2012), German sf author who published his first novel in 1956, wrote over 80 Perry Rhodan books and scores more for other shared-world franchises, and returned to standalone work from the 1990s, died on 7 March aged 75. [J-HH] • *Ralph McQuarrie* (1929-2012), US designer and illustrator whose conceptual designs helped define the look of the original *Star Wars* trilogy, the original *Battlestar Galactica*, *E.T.* and *Cocoon* (for which he won a visual-effects Oscar), died on 3 March. He was 82. [AIP] • *Philip Madoc* (1934-2012), Welsh actor who appeared in *Doctor Who* (several times), the *Space: 1999* pilot, *Survivors* and *UFO*, died on 5 March aged 77. [AW] • *Don Markstein* (1947-2012), US fan, co-founder in 1981 of the Apatoons animation APA, author of books about comics and creator of the encyclopedic Toonopedia site www.toonopedia.com, died after a long illness on 10 March. He was 64. [GHL] • *Peter Phillips* (1920-2012), UK author of 21 distinctive short sf stories published 1948-1957, died on 28 March; he was 92. He is best remembered for 'Dreams Are Sacred' (1948 *Astounding*), adapted for the BBC's *Out of the Unknown* sf anthology series as 'Get Off My Cloud' (1969). [MA] • *Robert B. Sherman* (1925), US lyricist who with his brother Richard wrote the songs for various genre films including *Mary Poppins*, *The Jungle Book*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, died on 5 March aged 86. [MPJ] • *Warren Stevens* (1919-2012), US character actor who played Doc Ostrow in *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and appeared in various tv sf serials, died on 27 March aged 92. [PDF]

Cautionary Tales. The March/April *Accounting Technician* explains what not to say in an interview when asked about one's interests outside work. 'BAD—My partner and I like dressing up as Doctor Who villains and socializing with fellow sci-fi fans in full costume. GOOD—I like to spend time with my partner attending cultural events.' [IS]

Court Circular. The Southampton theme pub The Hobbit (so called for twenty years) became the latest target of the Saul Zaentz Company, owners of Tolkien-related trademarks. After very public complaints about this 'bullying' from Stephen Fry and Ian 'Fly, you fools!' McKellen, the SZC cease-and-desist order was followed by a friendlier offer from producer Paul Zaentz: 'When it's an established business, we like to get the company to acknowledge they are using our trademarks, stop selling infringing articles and then we will grant them a licence for a nominal fee—approximately \$100 a year.' (BBC, 13 & 15 March)

Outraged Letters. *Ross Fletcher*: 'Please may I nominate the following lyrics from "The A Team" (Ed Sheeran, +, 2011) for inclusion in the Sinking Faces and Screaming Pastry departments of Thog's Masterclass? "Her face seems / Slowly sinking, wasting / Crumbling like pastries / And they scream / "The worst things in life come free to us"' • *Yvonne Rousseau* on literary antecedents: 'I was surprised to notice that in Georgette Heyer's *The Foundling* (1948) there is a schoolmaster named Snape. Unlike the Snape of Hogwarts, he is acting as a private

tutor to 15-year-old Tom Mamble. From Tom's account (after Snape has been reading aloud about medieval history when on holiday and Tom has therefore hit Snape on the head and run away), the Duke of Sale judges Snape to be "a joyless individual". Tom confides that Snape "is the greatest beast in nature, and I hate him." Once encountered, Snape excites the Duke's contempt: "Yes, I had thought from what Tom told me that you were a shabby, mean sort of a fellow." • *Kip Williams* on an A296 death notice: 'Genre credits for Lou Cameron in comics are impressive. For *Classics Illustrated*, he drew very strong adaptations of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, "The Bottle Imp", *The War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine*. I like to think Cameron was responsible for the visual barb in a panel where The Time Traveler is moving across eras into the future, thinking "What wonderful progress mankind must be making!" The scene outside shows two men in gas masks struggling on a stark battlefield. / *The Count of Monte Cristo* is not in an SF genre, but I hate not to mention the fine job he did on it.'

As Others See Us. A.A. Gill knows our secret: '... people who don't like or understand literature read science fiction.' (*Paper View*, 2008)

Random Fandom. *Dave Lally* proposes a series of 6 'SF Linkcons' as extra attractions for attendees of the expected 2014 London Worldcon (14-18 August) and Dublin Eurocon (22-25 August). Current plans: 12 Aug, Woking and H.G. Wells territory; 13 Aug, London Elstree studios; 20-21 Aug Portmeirion; 27-28 Aug, Irish C.S. Lewis sites; 28-29 Aug, Scots *Wicker Man* locations; 29 Aug, London 'TunCon' for 40th anniversary of One Tun pub meetings, *not* at the Tun but at the Melton Mowbray or (if meetings move) the latest First Thursday venue.

Magazine Scene. Brit Mandelo is now Fiction Editor at *Strange Horizons*; additional short-fiction editors are still sought.

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago*, the secrets of the 1962 Eastercon in Peterborough were revealed: 'With several bills still to pay there is a small profit, but we are anticipating an unexpected bill from one hotel. Actual attendance, notwithstanding gatecrashers from the nobility and elsewhere, was 94 out of a 105 membership.' (*Skyrack* 42, April 1962)

The Governance of Britain. What do they do all day in the House of Commons? Edit Wikipedia, it seems. Genre-flavoured edits traced to Commons IP addresses include changing 'Dalek' to 'Darlek' and then back again, fiddling with Harry Potter-related entries, and improving *Lord of the Rings* film coverage with the description '12 hours of utter tripe about some little bender running around trying to find a ring with his equally bendersish mates.' (*Independent*, 9 March) [MPJ]

In Typo Veritas. From *Slate* magazine's corrections list: '... Torie Bosch misspelled the science fiction award won by writer Bruce Sterling. It is of course the Hugo Award, not the Huge Award.' [CM] Roy Kettle used to call sf's two major awards the Huge and Knobbly.

We Are Everywhere. The economist W. Brian Arthur conveys the flavour of the annual World Economic Forum in Davos: 'It's as if we woke up and discovered we were now in a different world. It's like that bit in *Lord of the Rings*, where they are underground, and they hear the distant rumblings of the Balrog. Here there are rumblings of dissatisfaction, but only rumblings.' (*New Yorker*, 5 March) [MMW] The Saul Zaentz Company lawyers' stern instruction to cease and desist from unauthorized use of the term Balrog® is no doubt in the post.

Empire Awards (cinema). Best film, overall: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 2*. Director: David Yates (HP&DH2). SF: *Thor*. Art of 3D: *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn*. [MPJ]

Thog's Masterclass. *Not Just Physical Dept.* 'They knew that the loins of this dark girl beside me were a trap that had closed on my soul.' (John D. McDonald, *Weep for Me*, 1951) [BT] • *Dept of Melodious Twangs.* 'The silence between them was as audible as the twang of an overstrained rope.' (Barbara Hambly, *The Ladies of Mandrigyn*, 1984) [KAM] • *Future Baseball Dept.* 'The game was tied, the Yanks one out shy of a win.' (Chris Moriarty, *Spin State*, 2003; Thog not understand this one.) [AL] • *Dept of Sonic Weaponry.* 'He froze as a man's wail sounded from the zoo level. The sound visibly cut through every person below.' (Kim Lakin-Smith, *Cyber Circus*, 2011) [DL] • *Nicholson Baker Memorial Euphemism Dept.* 'I had too much altar boy in me to seize the bitch goddess of success by her ponytail and bugger the Zeitgeist with my throbbing baguette.' (James Walcott, *Lucking Out*, 2011) [MMW]

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