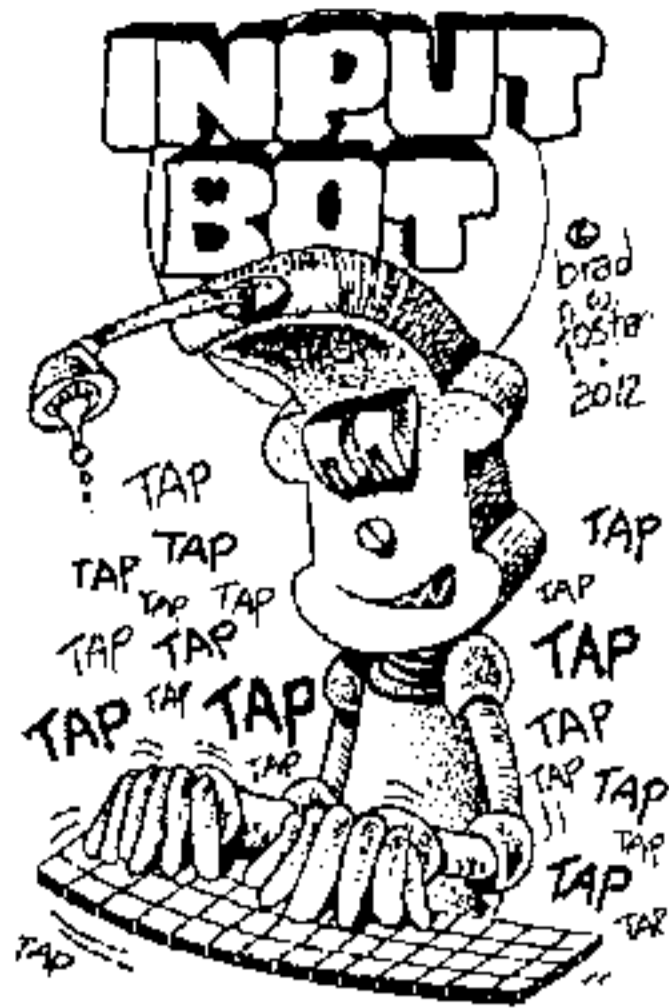


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From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE, visual clarity or Martichorastic Minikins.

Editorial. Thanks for all the messages of cheer about my eyesight woes. New and horribly expensive glasses are helping, though not quite enough; the saga continues. Meanwhile the *SF Encyclopedia* text crept past four million words in January, and that continues too.

The Blurring of the Lines

Hugo Gernsback had little-known artistic talents, according to an essay on sf cover art by Scott Beauchamp which defines 'the Golden Age of sci-fi: the magazine-dominated epoch lasting roughly from the 1920s until the 1950s, when graphic artists like Frank R. Paul and Hugo Gernsback set the standard for speculative fiction cover art.' ('Space Cartoons to Space Psychedelia', *The Atlantic*, 9 January) [MF/AIP]

William Shatner was unable to resist asking Chris Hadfield of the Canadian Space Agency (who is currently on the International Space Station): 'Are you tweeting from space?' The reply: '@WilliamShatner Yes, Standard Orbit, Captain. And we're detecting signs of life on the surface.' (Twitter, 3 January) [MPJ]

Lisa Tuttle has her finger on the pulse: 'It is possible that a novel by India Knight called *Mutton* has not come to your attention (published 2012 by Figtree, an imprint of Penguin Books) but this may be of interest for the character called Bernard Frossage, who is rather obviously a romantic-fantasy version of George R.R. Martin. He is the author of "The Men of Granite Chronicles", described as "this huge long epic saga with dragons and stuff, set in the imaginary land called Lapidosa ..." and because he's blocked, his publishers have sent him to stay on a remote Hebridean island without even internet access until he finishes the latest instalment. The book's narrator is (quite amusingly) rude about fantasy fiction ("I'll read anything, but there are limits.") but her son (in love with Bernard's daughter) and the narrator's best friend Gaby are huge fans ... in fact, it turns out that author India Knight is also a self-confessed fan of George's books and wishes he could be shackled to his desk until he finishes writing the series. Although Bernard is first described as "hobbit" and "looking like a little angry troll, all gnarly and covered in hair", when the women meet him he is more attractive: "He's built on an enormous scale, like a bear; his author photograph, taken from the waist up, gives no indication of his hugeness." He turns out to be a romantic hero in the end.... I have alerted George to his fictional alter-ego and am waiting to hear if he is annoyed or amused by it.' (email, 21 January)

Adam West's Batmobile from the 1960s ABC *Batman* tv series, a modified 1955 Lincoln Futura, sold at auction for \$4.2 million. The original cost to the customizer in 1965 had been \$1, plus \$15,000 for the makeover. (*The Register*, 21 January) Other past owners complained that 'while I was at college my mother threw out my Batmobile.'

Jane Yolen, on 1 November, was the first woman to deliver the Andrew Lang Lecture since its founding at the University of St Andrews in 1927. J.R.R. Tolkien's 'On Fairy Stories' was the 1939 Lang lecture.

Controve

8-10 Feb • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets from £104; £35/day Sat/Sun. See sfbevents.com/sfball.

9-24 Feb • **Space Fiction** events, readings etc, National Space Centre, Leicester. Brian Aldiss, Alastair Reynolds, Peter F. Hamilton, many more. See www.spacecentre.co.uk/space-fiction-at-a-glance.

15-17 Feb • **Fantasy February** (residential workshop), Dove Valley Centre, near Buxton, Derbyshire. £150 including shared accommodation. Contact alexdavisevents@hotmail.co.uk.

16-17 Feb • **Picocon 30**, Imperial College Union, London. £20 reg; £15/day; concessions £15, £12/day. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB; picocon@icsf.co.uk.

22-24 Feb • **Redemption '13** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. £70 reg or £40/day (concessions £50, £35); £15 supp and under-18s; under-3s free. *Advance booking closes 11 February*; £75 or £45/day at door (concessions £55, £40). Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

23-24 Feb • **Microcon 2013**, Streatha, Campus, Exeter University. Various guest speakers. £10.00 reg: cheques payable to Exeter University Sci Fi Society, 17 Eldertree Gardens, Exeter, EX4 4DE.

27 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Argyle pub, Leather Lane, London. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Elizabeth Hand. Free; all welcome.

3-4 Mar • **P-Con X**, Dublin, Ireland. Still CANCELLED/POSTPONED.

9-10 Mar • **BritSciFi3** (media), National Space Centre, Leicester. Guest actors from *Blake's 7*, *Doctor Who*, *Red Dwarf*, *Space: 1999*. See www.spacecentre.co.uk/special-events/britscifi3.

11-14 Apr • **Eurocon 2013**, Expo Plaza, Kiev, Ukraine. £25 reg by sterling cheque to 'D J Lally No 2 a/c' (*not No 6 a/c as announced last issue; that account has died*) or cash in person to UK agent Dave Lally, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX, by 1 April; then cash at door.

14-21 Sep • **Milford UK** (writers' workshop), Trigonos, Snowdonia. £585 inc room and meals; £115 deposit required; published writers only. Contact c/o 10 Park Head, Birdsedge, Huddersfield, HD8 8XW.

15-17 Nov • **Armadacon 25**, Future Inn, Plymouth. GoH TBA. £30 (£25 concessions) to 18 Wadham Rd, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3BD.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others Quote Us. 'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, said Isaac Asimov ...' (Rory Carroll, guardian.co.uk, 10 January) But the writer inexplicably fails to cite Arthur C. Clarke's three laws of robotics. [DL]

Award Shortlists. **BSFA:** NOVEL Chris Beckett, *Dark Eden*; M. John Harrison, *Empty Space: A Haunting*; Ken MacLeod, *Intrusion*; Adam Roberts, *Jack Glass*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *2312*. **SHORT** Aliette de Bodard, 'Immersion' (*Clarkesworld* #69); Chris Butler, *The Flight of the Ravens*; Rochita Loenen-Ruiz 'Song of the Body Cartographer' (*Phillipines Genre Stories*); Tim Maughan 'Limited Edition' by (*Arc Magazine*); China Miéville 'Three Moments of an Explosion' (*Rejectamentalist Manifesto*); Ian Sales, *Adrift on the Sea of Rains*. **ARTWORK**, all book covers: Ben Baldwin, *Dark Currents*; Blacksheep, Adam Roberts's *Jack Glass*; Dominic Harman, Eric Brown's *Helix Wars*; Joey Hifi, Simon Morden's *Thy Kingdom Come*; Si Scott, Chris Beckett's *Dark Eden*. **NONFICTION** Karen Burnham, 'The Complexity of the Humble Space Suit' (*Rocket Science*); Paul Kincaid, 'The Widening Gyre' (*LA Review of Books*); Edward James & Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*; Maureen Kincaid Speller, *The Shortlist Project*; Lavie Tidhar, ed., *The World SF Blog*. • **Kitschies:** NOVEL Jesse Bullington, *The Folly of the World*; Nick Harkaway, *Angelmaker*; Frances Hardinge, *A Face Like Glass*; Adam Roberts, *Jack Glass*; Juli Zeh, *The Method* trans Sally-Ann Spencer. **DEBUT** Madeline Ashby, *vN*; Jenni Fagan, *The Panopticon*; Rachel Hartman, *Seraphina*; Karen Lord, *Redemption in Indigo*; Tom Pollock, *The City's Son*. **COVER ART** Tom Gauld, Matthew Hughes's *Costume Not Included*; Oliver Jeffers, John Boyne's *The Terrible Thing That Happened to Barnaby Rickett*; Dave Shelton, his own *A Boy and a Bear in a Boat*; Peter Mendelsund, Ben Marcus's *The Flame Alphabet*; La Boca, Ned Beuman's *The Teleportation Accident*. • **Philip K Dick** (US paperback original): Ryan Boudinot, *Blueprints of the Afterlife*; Keith Brooke, *Harmony*; Eric Brown, *Helix Wars*; Moira Crone, *The Not Yet*; Nancy Kress, *Fountains of Age*; Andri Snær Magnason, *Lovestar*; Brian Francis Slattery, *Lost Everything*.

Jabbagate. 'The Turkish Cultural Community of Austria said in a statement that a Lego set of Jabba's Palace from the Star Wars series is racist because it appears to closely resemble the Hagia Sophia (formerly a mosque) in Istanbul, the Jami al-Kabir mosque in Beirut and a minaret and therefore reinforces negative stereotypes about the Middle East, according to the Austrian Times. The statement threatened legal action against Lego if it does not withdraw the toys.' (*Huffington Post*, 24 January) [DKMK] Presumably it also closely resembles Jabba's Palace as portrayed in *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, in which case these expressions of shock, horror and outrage have been a long time coming.

R.I.P. Keith Armstrong-Bridges, long-time UK fan and convention-goer who was a founder of the Tolkien Society in 1970, died on 11

January. [SN] • Late report: *Mike Deckinger*, US fan involved with fanzines since the late 1950s, died on 2 February 2012. [RL] • *David R. Ellis* (1952-2013), US stuntman and director of *Snakes on a Plane* plus two films in the *Final Destination* horror sequence, died on 7 January; he was 60. He was second unit director for many genre films including *Waterworld*, *Sphere*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *The Matrix Reloaded*. [MMW] • *Jon Finch* (1941-2012), UK actor who played Jerry Cornelius in *The Final Programme* (1973) and starred in the BBC sf series *Counterstrike* (1969; all tapes wiped), was found dead at home on 28 December; he was 71. [DP] • *Sophiya Haque* (1971-2013), Bengali-UK actress whose genre credits include *Wanted* (2008) and *House of Anubis* (2012 tv), died on 17 January aged 41. [AW] She was also in the non-genre but controversially titled Indian film *Hari Puttar: A Comedy of Terrors* (2008). • *Bernard Horsfall* (1930-2013), UK actor seen in 15 episodes of *Doctor Who* (1968-1976), died in January; he was 82. [BB] Further tv genre credits include *Pathfinders to Mars*, *The Avengers* and *Doomwatch*. [CM] • *John N. Marx* (1937-2012), US fan, collector and genre book dealer since 1977 as Marx Books, died on 13 December 13; he was 75. [GVG] • *Daphne Oxenford* (1919-2012), the voice of BBC Radio's *Listen with Mother* 1950-1971, died on 21 December aged 93. [MPJ] Besides this link with children's fantasy, she was in *Doctor Who's* 'The Unicorn and the Wasp' (2008; scenes deleted but on DVD) and the *Sapphire and Steel* audio play *Cruel Immortality* (2007). [MPJ] • *Denni Schnapp* (1964-2013), UK fan and member of the T Party Writers' Group, took her own life on 17 January after a long struggle with depression. She was 48. [GC] • *Gloria Pall* (1927-2012), US model and actress seen in *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954) and *The Twilight Zone* (1959), died on 30 December aged 85. [AIP] • *Jacques Sadoul* (1934-2013), French editor, anthologist, writer and sf historian who presided for many years over the *J'ai Lu* sf imprint, died on 18 January aged 78. [RS] In 1972 he founded the Prix Apollo, given until 1990 for the year's best sf novel published in France. • *Steve Utley* (1948-2013), US author of many admired short stories including 'Custer's Last Jump' (1976) and 'Black as the Pit, from Pole to Pole' (1977)—both written with Howard Waldrop—died on 12 January all too soon after diagnosis of cancer. He was 64. [LP] • *Riccardo Valla* (1942-2013), Italian science/sf writer and translator (of *The Da Vinci Code* and much sf) who was chief editor at Editrice Nord in the 1970s, died on 14 January aged 70. [SS] • Late report: *H.R. (Henry Richard) Van Dongen* (1920-2010), prolific sf artist whose first magazine cover was for *Super Science Stories* in September 1949 and who painted covers for 46 issues of *Astounding/Analog* 1950-1985, died on 27 February 2010; he was 89. Many further book covers were for Ballantine/Del Rey and DAW. [JF] • Late report: *Roger Waddington*, long-time Yorkshire fan who was once a very regular contributor to fanzines (including the BSFA's *Vector* and *Matrix* 1969-1990), died on 23 July 2012; he was 66. [SL] • *Michael Waite* (1936-2013), long-time US fan and FAPA member, died on 1 January aged 76. [RL] • *Lynn Willis*, wargame and role-playing game designer important in the development of *RuneQuest*, *Call of Cthulhu* and other well-known games, died on 18 January. [MR] • *Michael Winner* (1935-2013), UK director, writer, producer and controversial newspaper columnist whose genre films were *The Nightcomers* (1971, a prequel to *The Turn of the Screw*) and *The Sentinel* (1977), died on 21 January. He was 77. [AW/SG] • *Sol Yurick* (1925-2013), US novelist whose 1980s story 'The King of Maleputa' anticipated the virtual data-haven theme of Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* (1999), died on 5 January aged 87. [DP]

The Weakest Link: *Climate Change Dept.* Bradley Walsh: 'What Shakespeare play has the coldest season of the year in the title?' Contestant: 'A *Midsummer Night's Dream*.' (ITV, *The Chase*) [PE]

More Awards. *American Library Association* winners included Tamora Pierce for life achievement in YA fiction and Rachel Hartman's fantasy *Seraphina* as fiction debut. [L] • *Heinlein Award:* Allen Steele and Yoji Kondo. [L] • *National TV Awards:* Colin Morgan was the only genre winner, as Best Actor for his lead role in the BBC's *Merlin*. [MPJ]

Court Circular. Warner Bros' commercial control of Superman was confirmed when the US 9th Circuit of Appeals 'unanimously ruled that Jerome Siegel's heirs must abide by a 2001 letter accepting Warner's offer for their 50% share of Superman.' (BBC, 11 January) [MPJ]

Outraged Letters. *Paul Barnett* on scriptwriter Jeremy Lloyd (see R.I.P. in A306): 'He also wrote two fantasy collections/fixups called *The Further Adventures of Captain Gregory Dangerfield* (1973) and *The Continuing Adventures of Captain Gregory Dangerfield* (1979) [...] They're modestly amusing. The premise is that our wannabe-writer narrator rents a bedsit in which a successful pulp novelist, now dead, once lived;

the spirit of the latter enters our hero (through, I think, the typewriter left in the bedsit) so that not only does he start churning out lurid pulp stuff in the L. Ron Hubbard vein but he also lives the various pulp adventures.' • *Sam Long* remembers the oft-told anecdote of how the late lamented Keith Armstrong-Bridges (see R.I.P. above) 'once painted himself purple with gentian violet for a con masquerade in the late '60s. Trouble was, the gentian violet wouldn't come off. It had to wear off as skin cells were replaced, and he was the Purple Man for weeks!' • *Ina Shorrocks* asks me to send her no more printed *Ansibles* since 'My eyesight is failing and I'm writing this with a magnifying frame ... With Large Print Books I am OK, but soon it will be Talking Books.' All sympathy. • *Andrew Wells* liked the closing words of the BBC News report on Gerry Anderson's funeral: 'Fans travelled from across the country, as well as from overseas to be at the funeral which featured tributes from former Thunderbirds cast and crew.' (11 January)

Magazine Scene. *Amazing Stories* has at last officially relaunched online, 'with more than 50 bloggers covering the field from more than 50 different perspectives'. See amazingstoriesmag.com.

The Dead Past. *50 Years Ago*, an almost timeless news round-up: 'KEN SLATER & THE DAILY EXPRESS reported late December that ex-fan Kingsley Amis is resigning his fellowship at Cambridge to emigrate and start a fan club in Majorca :: George Locke is buying a glider :: Disney is filming T.H. White's "Sword in the Stone." :: [...] Fracas in DC. Cutting from Larry Grilly states that a religious cult, the Founding Church of Scientology is denouncing the government for seizing its teaching equipment, the Hubbard Electrometers, named after founder Ron Hubbard. L. Ron is described in the cutting as "British science fiction writer." ...' (*Skyrack* 49, February 1963) • *30 Years Ago* the news was less timeless: '*L. Ron Hubbard Not Dead*, reports our expert on the esoteric, George Hay [...] *Starlight SF: an Ansible* spinoff now lurks in the pages of Prestel, British Telecom's fabulously unpopular viewdata system.' (*Ansible* 31, February 1983) I barely remember editing that early and tatty digital sf newsletter, ten years before I had email.

Fanfundery. *GUFF 2013:* Mihaela Marija Perković won this southbound race with a simple majority (31 first-place European votes, 12 Australasian, 6 Other; total 49) over Julie McMurray (19, 5, 6; total 30). She will attend the Australian Natcon, Conflux, in late April. • *TAFF 2013:* candidates for the eastbound race to LoneStarCon, the Texas Worldcon, are Theresa Derwin and Jim Mowatt. Voting has begun and continues until 19 April. See taff.org.uk for ballot etc. • *DUFF 2013:* nominations are now open for a northbound race from Australasia to LoneStarCon. Candidates should contact administrator David Cake, 6 Florence Rd, Nedlands, WA 6009, Australia (e-mail dave@difference.com.au) as soon as possible with the names of nominators (3 Aus, 2 NA), a 100-word platform and \$A15 bond.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of In Space No One Can ...* 'From near-Earth out to the cold, dark territory of the outer system, space hummed with intense, fevered scrutiny.' (Alastair Reynolds, *Pushing Ice*, 2005) [JDB] • *Ornithology Dept.* 'He watched a bird the size and colour of a penny fly across the road ...' (Ali Shaw, *The Girl with Glass Feet*, 2009) [PB] • *Dept of Anatomy.* 'Hairs on her lower leg trembled as if they were on the back of her neck.' (*Ibid*) 'When Midas spoke he fancied it came from his insides, maybe from some alliance of organs that didn't have a name.' (*Ibid*) 'He could smell her perfume, something shocking and alcoholic that ghosted through his lungs into his guts.' (*Ibid*) 'She felt a sudden clamminess in her gullet, an oyster swallowed wrong, dropping through her stomach and into her bowels, becoming a numbing absence beneath her knees.' (*Ibid*) • *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'His teeth would grit, his eyes would bow.' (*Ibid*) 'He finished his drink and let his eyes slide away from hers into the empty cup.' (Doyce Testerman, *Hidden Things*, 2012) [PB] • *Mannerly Homicide Dept.* 'I told him she had been strangled as gently as I could.' (Jody Shields, *The Fig Eater*, 2000) [PB] • *Dept of Euphemism for Taboo Practices.* 'One of his eccentricities jutted out from between clenched teeth and emitted regular puffs of cherry-flavored smoke.' (William C. Dietz, *Andromeda's Fall*, 2012) [PM] • *Cunning Subterfuge Dept.* 'An elderly, uniformed man strolled out of a gatehouse disguised as a cantina.' (Harry Harrison and Marvin Minsky, *The Turing Option*, 1992) [CM]

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