



Ansible 319 February 2014

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 or videos showing the act of distimming.

Editorial Plug. Ebooks of Algis Budrys's *F&SF* critical collections *Benchmarks Continued*, *Benchmarks Revisited* and *Benchmarks Concluded* are now, at last, available at £5 apiece from ae.ansible.co.uk.

The Gostak and the Doshes

Iain Banks's *Consider Phlebas* has a new German edition from Heyne, translated 'Aus dem Amerikanischen' ('From the American'). [DH]

Russell Brand, here described as 'the usually liberal comedian', tried to silence students' uproar at the Cambridge University Union with 'Shut up you Harry Potter p**fs.' (*Independent*, 14 January) [MMW] Asterisks supplied by the newspaper, which shuddered at this 'homophobic slur'. As distinct from, say, a geeks-who-read-J.K. Rowling slur.

Glenn Brown, the artist once fond of 'appropriating' sf imagery, has been in the news again after his repainted version of an old Chris Foss cover was auctioned at Sotheby's for over £3.5 million, more than 100 times its 2002 price. (io9, January) Note that profits went to the seller, not Brown. Past sf appropriations included a Tony Roberts cover, which led to a lawsuit: see *A161* and *A166*. The background to the current stir: 'Foss says he had distractedly given Brown permission to homage his work while working long hours on Stanley Kubrick's *AI*, and professes to have been surprised—and outraged—by what he saw as the subsequent plundering of his art.' (*New Scientist*, 7 September 2011) The worst sort of plundering—fiendishly carried out *with permission!*

Chang-rae Lee's *On Such a Full Sea* may be reviewed as sf in the UK *Independent*, but the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* is made of sterner stuff: 'Lee's futuristic America is redolent of the post-apocalyptic worlds of J.G. Ballard; not science fiction, more the speculative fiction that Margaret Atwood occasionally dabbles in.' (5 January) [DL]

George Orwell must be rotating in his grave after the announcement that the 1956 film of 1984 is being remade as *Equals*, described as a 'futuristic love story'. Kristen Stewart, playing the female lead, breathlessly comments: 'It's a love story of epic, epic, epic proportion ... I'm scared.' Is it she rather than the hapless Winston who at the end will really, really, really love Big Brother? (*US Weekly*, 24 January) [LP]

Confeny

7-9 Feb • **2emi6reve** (UK filk convention #26), Ramada Grantham Hotel. Advance booking still possible: £42 reg, £29 unwaged; £45/£30 at the door. Under-18s £1/year; under-5s free. Cheques to UK Filk Convention, c/o 159 Winns Avenue, Walthamstow, London, E17 5HB.

7-9 Feb • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets £104; child £52; other options. See sfbevents.com/sfball.

8-9 Feb • **Phenomecon** (was Epic-Con), NUIM Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. €15 reg or €10 per day. Look for the online ticket purchase link somewhere or other at www.facebook.com/phenomecon.

22 Feb • **Picocon 30**, Imperial College Union, London. GoH Sarah Pinborough, Charles Stross, David Southwood. £10 reg. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB; picocon@icsf.co.uk

26 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Tom Pollock. Free.

Late Feb or early Mar • **Microcon**, Exeter University: CANCELLED.

16 Mar • **EM-Con** (multimedia), Albert Hall, Nottingham. Many guests. Tickets *including booking fees*: £14 'early bird' (10am-5pm) SOLD OUT; £9 day (11am-5pm); under-5s free; £6 evening live-music party at another venue—The Approach, Friar Lane. See www.em-con.co.uk.

May • **Middle-earth Weekend**, Sarehole Mill, Cole Bank Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham. CANCELLED this year but should return in 2015.

2 May - 19 Aug • **Comics Unmasked**: Art and Anarchy in the UK (exhibition), PACCAR Gallery, British Library, London.

20 Jun • **CRSF 2014** (academic), U of Liverpool. Call for papers: currentresearchinspeculativefiction.blogspot.co.uk/p/crsf-2014.html

9-11 Aug • **Discworld Convention**, Palace Hotel, Manchester. £65 reg, £50 concessions, £25 supp, under-13s free. SOLD OUT: you can join the waiting list for cancellations at www.dwcon.org.

14-18 Aug • **Loncon 3** (72nd Worldcon), ExCeL centre, London

Docklands. £115 reg; £260 family; £65 YA; £30 child; £2 infant; £25 supp; *may rise on 1 March*. Day tickets available: adults £25 Thur, £40 Fri, £45 Sat or Sun, £20 Mon. See www.loncon3.org for other rates. A 29 January release announced that Loncon has over 5000 members.

5-7 Sep • **FantasyCon 2014**, Royal York Hotel, York. *Now £50 reg, £85 joint (2 adults), under-16s £27.50; BFS members £35, £60, £15; under-5s free*. Join online at www.fantasycon2014.org.

Rumblings. *Beijing in 2016?* This Chinese Worldcon bid's website at www.guokr.com/zone/worldcon is not heavily laden with information. It must have come as a surprise to the existing Kansas City bid (kcin2016.org). Reportedly the new contender is ready to file the necessary bid paperwork with Loncon 3 by the 15 February deadline.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Russell Banks, author and devotee of 'literary fiction', uttered a generalization for the ages when asked what he preferred to avoid: 'Anything described by the author or publisher as fantasy, which to me says, "Don't worry, Reader, Death will be absent here."' (*New York Times* online, 2 January) [VJ-K] At a stroke the corpse-strewn Harry Potter saga, the *Game of Thrones* series and Discworld have suddenly become non-fantasy. Perhaps they're all literary fiction.

Awards. BSFA shortlist: NOVEL Kameron Hurley, *God's War*; Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*; Paul McAuley, *Evening's Empires*; Gareth L. Powell, *Ack-Ack Macaque*; Christopher Priest, *The Adjacent*. SHORT Nina Allan, *Spin*; Sofia Samatar, 'Selkie Stories are for Losers' (*Strange Horizons*); E.J. Swift 'Saga's Children' (*The Lowest Heaven*); Tori Truslow, 'Boat in the Shadows Crossing' (*Beneath Ceaseless Skies*). ARTWORK Joey Hi-fi, cover, *Dream London* by Tony Ballantyne; Kevin Tong, *Metropolis* poster (tragicssunshine.com); Richard Wagner 'The Angel at the Heart of the Rain' (*Interzone* 246). NONFICTION Jeff VanderMeer, *Wonderbook*; John J. Johnston, 'Going Forth by Night' (*Unearthed*); Liz Bourke, 'Sleeps with Monsters'. • **Clarke Award**: a record 121 books from 42 imprints have been submitted. • **Crawford** (fantasy debut): Sofia Samatar, *A Stranger in Olondria*. [L] • **Philip K. Dick** shortlist: Anne Charnock, *A Calculated Life*; Cassandra Rose Clarke, *The Mad Scientist's Daughter*; Toh EnJoe, trans Terry Gallagher, *Self-Reference Engine*; Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*; Jack Skillingstead, *Life on the Preservation*; Ian Whates, ed, *Solaris Rising 2: The New Solaris Book of Science Fiction*; Ben H. Winters, *Countdown City*. [GVG] • **Robert A. Heinlein Award**: Geoffrey A. Landis. • **Kitschies** shortlists. NOVEL Anne Carson, *Red Doc*>; Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*; Thomas Pynchon, *Bleeding Edge*; Patrick Ness, *More Than This*; James Smythe, *The Machine*. DEBUT Monica Hesse, *Stray*; Anne Charnock, *A Calculated Life*; Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*; Ramez Naam, *Nexus*; Robin Sloan, *Mr Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*. COVER ART Sinem Erkas for *Dreams and Shadows* by C. Robert Cargill; Will Staehle for *The Age Atomic* by Adam Christopher; Amazing15 for *Homeland and Pirate Cinema* by Cory Doctorow; Gianmarco Magnani for *Stray* by Monica Hesse; Joey Hi-Fi for *Apocalypse Now Now* by Charlie Human. • **Newbery Medal** (children's fiction): Kate DiCamillo, *Flora & Ulysses*. [PDF]

We Are Everywhere. The kind of fellow who sinks to publishing sf newsletters: 'Langford, self-styled leader of the local vigilante group, shared the same basic mental genotype with playground bullies and third world secret policemen.' (Zoe Sharp, *Riot Act*, 2002) [AR/RC]

R.I.P. Neal Barrett Jr (1929-2014), US author who began publishing sf in 1960 and late in his long career was named SFWA Author Emeritus at the 2010 Nebula Awards, died on 12 January; he was 84. [JC] His many novels include the Aldair and Through Darkest America series, contributions to several franchises, and some notable standalone titles; story collections run from *Slightly Off Center* (1992) to *Other Seasons: The Best of Neal Barrett, Jr* (2012). • **Alexandra Bastedo** (1946-2014), UK actress best remembered for the ITV superhero/spy series *The Champions* (1968-1969), died on 12 January aged 67. Other genre credits included *The Blood Splattered Bride* (1972), *The Ghoul* (1975) and a cameo in *Batman Begins* (2005). [GW/SG] • **Jon Bing** (1944-

2014), Norwegian law professor and sf author/editor of international repute (he was a guest of honour at the 1997 UK Eastercon), died on 14 January: he was 69. With his close friend Tor-Åge Bringsværd he effectively founded present-day Norwegian fandom and also provided its reading matter by assembling many anthologies, creating and editing the sf line of the leading Norwegian publisher Gyldendal (1967-1980) and publishing novels—Bing's most recent being *Oslo 2084* (2004). [J-HH] ● **Alan Burns** (1929-2014), UK author who began in *Authentic* and *New Worlds* and used sf devices in such novels as *Europe After the Rain* (1965), *Babel* (1969) and *Dreamerika!: A Surrealist Fantasy* (1972), died in January; he was 84. [JC] ● **Peter Darling** (1946-2013), Australian fan deeply involved with the 1975 and 1985 Australian Worldcons and for many years a member of ANZAPA, died on 2 October 2013; he was 67. [BG] ● **Ruth Robinson Duccini** (1918-2014), the last surviving female Munchkin actor from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), died on 16 January aged 95. (One male still remains.) [PDF] ● **Frederick Fox** (1931-2013), Australian-born milliner to HM the Queen whose one foray into sf was designing the space-stewardess hats for *2001*, died on 11 December; he was 82. [MMW] ● **Janrae Frank** (1954-2014), US author, editor, journalist and fan who with Forrest J Ackerman and Jean Marie Stine edited *New Eves: Science Fiction About the Extraordinary Women of Today and Tomorrow* (1994), died on 12 January; she was 59. Her dark fantasy appeared in many ebooks and the print collection *In the Darkness, Hunting* (2004). [CH] ● **Vic Ghidalia** (1926-2013), US tv publicist who edited and co-edited genre anthologies from *The Little Monsters* (1969 with Roger Elwood) to *Feast of Fear* (1977 solo), died on 28 May 2013 aged 87. [CMO'B] ● **Bernard Glasser** (1924-2014), US film-maker whose productions included *Space Master X-7* (1958), *Return of the Fly* (1959), *The Day of the Triffids* (1963 uncredited) and *Crack in the World* (1965), died on 2 January; he was 89. [PDF] ● **Michael Hemmingson** (1966-2014), US author and journalist whose first novel *Minstrels* (1997) uses the sf device of an implanted camera converting the protagonist's life into reality tv, died on 9 January; he was 47. *The Rose of Heaven* (2004) is fantasy. [MAM] ● **Gordon Hessler** (1930-2012), German-born director of *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1973), died on 19 January aged 83. [SFS] ● **Russell Johnson** (1924-2014), US character actor best known as the Professor in *Gilligan's Island* (1964-1967) but with many sf genre credits including *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *This Island Earth* (1955) and *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), died on 16 January aged 89. [PDF] ● **Roger Lloyd-Pack** (1944-2014), UK actor who was first seen in *The Avengers* (1965 tv) and played the inventor of the New Cybermen in the 2006 *Doctor Who* storylines *The Age of Steel* and *Rise of the Cybermen*, died on 15 January aged 69. Film credits include *The Magus* (1968), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005). [MPJ/SG] ● **Michael Sporn** (1946-2014), US animator and director of many animated features for children—including classic fairytale adaptations—died on 19 January aged 67. [PDF] ● **Hal Sutherland** (1929-2014), US animator, director and co-founder of Filmation, who worked on Disney's *Peter Pan* (1953), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), died on 16 January aged 85. He directed 20 episodes of the original *Star Trek* and was production director for the tv *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. ● **Saul Zaentz** (1921-2014), US producer whose three Oscars were for films other than Ralph Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings* (1978), died on 3 January aged 92. His control of Tolkien film rights and trademarks led to much litigation in which the Saul Zaentz Company intimidated such potential rivals as a Southampton pub long called The Hobbit (see A297). [MMW]

Science Masterclass. 'As the gas touched the metal plate, it became solid, icy ... With every second the ice would get colder until it finally reached absolute zero.' ● 'A laser ray hit the wall and flashed towards her. She fell back and pulled the table on its side. The ray hit it and glanced off ...' (both Marv Wolfman, *Doomsday*, 1979) [BA]

Publishers & Sinners. Quercus, with its genre imprint Jo Fletcher Books, was put up for sale in late January after announcing a 'significant trading loss' for 2013. (*Bookseller*, 22 January) ● Simon & Schuster (US) announced a new, mainly digital sf imprint called Simon451. [L]

The Weakest Link. Dale Winton: 'Dame Judi Dench played which character with a single-letter name in James Bond?' *Contestant*: 'I'm thinking D or E. [Pause] D!' (BBC1, *In It to Win It*) [PE]

As Others See Us II. Nicholas Lezard selected *The Flame Alphabet* by Ben Marcus as one of his favourite 2013 paperbacks, explaining: 'It looks from a distance like a sci-fi dystopia, à la Margaret Atwood, but is, in fact, far more interesting than that.' (*Guardian*, 7 December) [EA]

● *Gravity's* ten Oscar nominations include Best Picture. Over to the BBC

pundits! *Colin Patterson*, *BBC entertainment correspondent*: 'No sci-fi film has ever won the Best Picture Oscar.' *Richard Bacon* (*show host*): "Gravity" is science fiction? I thought science fiction was aliens and spaceships and stuff. This is science fact.' *Mark Kermode* (*film critic*): 'No, it's science fiction.' (BBC Radio 5 Live, 16 January) [MPJ] ● Meanwhile, Christopher Nolan's coming sf film *Interstellar* is described as 'ambitious and top secret'. Co-star Wes Bentley cagily explains that 'what's interesting about it is it's not really science fiction as such as it's based in real theoretical physics.' (MTV, 24 January)

Magazine Scene. *Interzone* for January/February 2014 is issue 250, with my 200th 'Ansible Link' column. Champagne all round!

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*, Rob Holdstock gloated after selling *Mythago Wood*: 'A follow-up novel [...] *Lavondyss* is in production. Other great recent works from the mighty-thewed pen include *Night Hunter 4: The Shrine*. The terrifying saga of Dan Brady's endless bloody quest to find his lost family in the foetid and haunted labyrinths of occult England, continues. Again, he totally fails to find them. It is very possible that Dan Brady is extremely inept. [...] *Realms of Fantasy*, new Edwards/Holdstock epic, is out from Dragonsworld: lavish illustrations of 10 fantasy worlds including Earthsea and Urth. The first publicity was an interview for Manchester radio. Rob was totally flummoxed by almost every question the crazy DJ interviewer asked, but particularly by one about Mars: "There's a chapter on Mars in the book, and the pictures are very red. And, like, Mars itself is very red, isn't it. Do you have any opinions on that, Robert?" Listen carefully for the thud of someone's jaw impacting the table.' (*Ansible* 37, February 1984)

Media Awards. Besides its ten Oscar nominations including best picture, *Gravity* had the only genre win in the Golden Globes, for Alfonso Cuarón as best director, and won seven Critics Choice Awards: director, actress in action movie (Sandra Bullock), cinematography, editing, visual effects, sf/horror movie and musical score. Additionally, Cuarón received the top Directors Guild of America award (feature film director) and *Gravity* shared the Producers Guild of America award for outstanding producer; the PGA animated film award was won by *Frozen* from Disney. ● UK National TV Awards went to *Doctor Who* for best drama and best drama performance (from Matt Smith). [MPJ]

As Others See Us III. Advice from Sherlock (Benedict Cumberbatch) at Watson's wedding, while checking out male guests on behalf of a bridesmaid in search of a new boyfriend: 'He's also a comics and sci-fi geek. They're always tremendously grateful. Really put the hours in.' (BBC1, *Sherlock*: 'The Sign of Three', 5 January) [MPJ]

C.o.A. *dwain Kaiser*, c/o The Magic Door Used Books, 155 West 2nd St., Pomona, CA 91766, USA.

Fanfundery. *DUFF*: Voting in the 2014 southbound race from North America to Australasia is now open, with candidates Aurora Celeste and Juanita Coulson. The voting deadline is 31 March. See taff.org.uk/duff.html for linked announcement and PDF ballot form. ● *TAFF and GUFF reminder*: voting ends 22 April and 9 June respectively.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Morbid Anatomy*. 'Smiling John dangled his face out on the long stalk of his neck and knitted his face into an intentionally stupid smile.' (Speer Morgan, *The Freshour Cylinders*, 1998) [PB] ● *Drunken Gunplay Dept*. 'Still fully loaded, I slammed the magazine home and cocked a round into the chamber.' (Vincent Zandri, *As Catch Can*, 1999) [PB] ● *Bad Hair Day*. 'Her smooth long hair gravitated toward the floor.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Lazy Public Transport*. 'She walked slowly up Dearborn Avenue, barely noticing the buses that snored past her, resting every block or two on bus stop benches.' (Stephen King, *Rose Madder*, 1995) [KMCA] ● *Personal Attention Dept*. 'On the playground, Blaze followed her with his own eyes.' ('Richard Bachman', *Blaze*, 2007) ● *Dept of Gastrology*. 'He felt his stomach drop. Then it seemed to bounce, and cram itself halfway up his throat.' (*Ibid*) ● *Precarious Dept*. 'The generosity of her breasts, like an overhanging cliff, magnetized his gaze; he seemed to expect a landslide.' (Thomas Burnett Swann, 'The Blue Monkeys' [*Day of the Minotaur*] part 2, *Science Fantasy* December 1964/January 1965) [BA] ● *Scandal at the Villa Diodati?* 'Mary Shelley streaked across the table.' (Stephen Marley, *Doctor Who: The Missing Adventures: Managra*, 1995) [CM]

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