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The Chinese Obelisks

Liu Cixin, China's Mr Science Fiction, got into trouble when – thanks to the success of the film adaptation *Wandering Earth* – there was much sharing on social media of his 2015 interview that mentions writing lots of sf while working at a state-owned power station. 'Everyone was sitting in front of a computer, and nobody knew what anyone else was doing ... You have to be in the office. But when you're there, you are free to write.' (*Bloomberg News*, 13 February) [F770] How your editor managed to write *War in 2080* and a spoof UFO book while working full-time for the Ministry of Defence must remain an official secret.

Nick Lowe received the supreme literary accolade when a sentence from his *Interzone* 279 'Mutant Popcorn' film column was enshrined in the venerable 'Pseud's Corner' department of *Private Eye* (22 February).

Vonda N. McIntyre, very sadly, has inoperable pancreatic cancer. No emails, please: see www.caringbridge.org/visit/vondanmcintyre.

Eric Frank Russell would have enjoyed NASA's plan to include an official comedian in their hypothetical future Mars mission, easing stress and uniting the astronaut team (*Guardian*, 15 February). [JS] The EFR story about just this is 'A Little Oil' (*Galaxy* magazine, October 1952).

Amélie Wen Zhao's debut YA fantasy *Blood Heir* was met with much Twitter outrage – including accusations of plagiarism and racism – based on a few advance copies and a lot of people who piled on anyway despite not having read it. Zhao asked her publishers to cancel the book. According to an assessment at *Vulture.com*, 'the plagiarism allegations are shaky at best – and the charge of racism, led by a series of caustic tweets from YA fantasy author L.L. McKinney, relies on both a subjective interpretation of the word "bronze" and an exclusively American reading of scenes involving slavery.' (31 January) Oh dear.

Conoidal

Until 16 Mar • **Frank Hampson** – The Man Who Drew Dan Dare (exhibition), The Atkinson, Lord St, Southport. 10am-4pm, Mon-Sat. Free; donations welcome. See theatkinson.co.uk/whats-on/events/.

1-2 Mar • **Frightfest** (film), Glasgow Film Theatre. Tickets £75 for the full weekend, or (limited numbers) £11.50 per film: now on sale at www.frightfest.co.uk/filmsevents.html. Also London events at Leicester Square: 22-26 August plus a Hallowe'en special on 2 November.

9-10 Mar • **Film & Comic Con Cardiff**, Motorpoint Arena, Cardiff. Tickets £8 or £15 for early entry. See filmandcomiconcardiff.com.

CANCELLED: 10 Mar • **Birmingham International Horrorshow**, Victoria pub, Birmingham. See www.birmingham-horror.co.uk.

11 Mar • **John Wyndham** event on the 50th anniversary of his death. 6pm for 6:15pm talk at his one-time home The Penn Club, 21-23 Bedford Place, London; later at The College Arms pub, 18 Store Street. Further details and poster at triffidalley.com/50_Anniversary.html.

15-16 Mar • **Starburst Film Festival**, The Landing, Salford. 5pm-1:15am. Tickets £33.25. See starburstmagazine.com/filmfestival/.

20 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 6pm for 7pm. BSFA Awards discussion. Free.

20 Mar • **Engineering Paradise**: talk on *Brave New World* by Nicholas Murray, Century Club, Soho, London W1. 6:30pm for 7pm. Tickets £12: see acurioussinvitation.com/aldoushuxley.html.

SOLD OUT: 29 Mar - 1 Apr • **Irish Discworld Convention**, Cork. No membership transfers allowed after 1 March. See idwcon.org.

29-30 Mar • **Sci-Fi Weekender Part 1**, O₂ Academy, Sheffield. From £99 reg; other packages at www.scifiweekender.com.

5-7 Apr • **Springmoot** (Tolkien Society), Ambassadors Bloomsbury Hotel, London. AGM for members only; dinner with GoH speech £36. Details at www.tolkiensociety.org/events/springmoot-and-agm-2019/.

6-7 Apr • **Sci-Fi Scarborough** (multimedia), The Spa, Scarborough. Adult ticket including booking fees: £28. £15/day; students and under-17s £5 day; under-5s free. See scifiscarborough.co.uk.

18-21 Apr • **Dead by Dawn** (horror film festival), Filmhouse Cinema One, 88 Lothian Rd, Edinburgh, EH3 9BZ. £75. Box office 0131 228 2688. Online booking via www.deadbydawn.co.uk.

19-22 Apr • **Ytterbium** (Eastercon), Park Inn, London Heathrow. £80 reg, rising to £90 on 1 April; £30 concessions; £25 under-18s; infants under 5 free; £20 supporting. See <http://ytterbium.org.uk/>.

3-4 Jul • **Science for Fiction**, Imperial College, London. Science presentations for published authors only: afternoon of 3rd, all day 4th. £30 including catering. Contact Dave Clements, davecl@mac dot com.

7-11 Aug • **Tolkien 2019** (Tolkien Society), Macdonald Burlington Hotel, Birmingham. £125 reg. See www.tolkien2019.com.

15-19 Aug • **Dublin 2019** (Worldcon), Dublin, Ireland. Now €235 reg; under-26s and Irish First Worldcon €150; under-13s €70; under-6s €5; supp €40. Hugo Awards nominations close on 15 March.

22-25 Aug • **Eurocon/TitanCon**, Waterfront Convention Centre and Hilton Hotel, Belfast. GoH George R.R. Martin. Now £65 reg; 16-25s £40; 6-15s £25; no more supporting memberships to be sold; supporting-to-full upgrades (now £42) cease on 30 March. See titancon.com/2019/.

26 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. GoH Diane Duane, Gareth L. Powell, Andy Bigwood. £25 reg; £15 under-18s and concessions; under-15s free. Full details at www.bristolcon.org.

9-10 Nov • **Comic Con**, Leeds Town Hall. Part of Thought Bubble, the Leeds Comic Art Festival, running 4-10 November. £28 weekend pass or £17/day. See thoughtbubblefestival.com.

7-9 Feb 2020 • **DemiSemiQuaver** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. GoH Annie Griffith (UK), Sunnie Larsen (international). £37 reg/£25 unwaged, rising to £39/£29 on 1 April 2019 and again on 1 December; under-18s £1/year of age; under-5s free. Further details to follow at www.contabile.org.uk/demisemiquaver/.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. 'The recovery of the past represents a sheer enrichment of human thought. It is a sort of time travel in which, unlike in science fiction in which we encounter generally pitiful creations of an ethnocentric imagination in alien worlds, we make acquaintance with fellow humans who represent aspects of ourselves which temporal and cultural boundaries have made impossible to actualize.' (Miguel Civil, foreword to Samuel Noah Kramer's *In the World of Sumer*, 1986) [PL]

Awards. BAFTA and Oscars, best animated film: *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. • Crawford (debut fantasy): R.F. Kuang, *The Poppy War*. • Horror Writers Association life achievement: Graham Masterton. • IAFA Distinguished Scholarship: Mark Bould. • Jack Gaughan (new artist): Nicolas Delort. [F770] • *Skylark*: Melinda M. Snodgrass. • Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame: 2019 inductees include Vincent Di Fate.

R.I.P. Julie Adams (1926-2019), US actress best remembered as the heroine of *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), died on 3 February aged 92. • Chelo Alonso (1933-2019), Cuban-born actress in such Italian sword-and-sandal epics as *Son of Samson* (1960) and *Atlas Against the Cyclops* (1961), died on 20 February aged 85. [PDF] • Carmen Argenziano (1943-2019), US actor with many genre credits from *Grave of the Vampire* (1972) via *Stargate SG-1* (25 episodes 1998-2005) to *Future World* (2018), died on 10 February aged 75. [MR] • Betty Ballantine (1919-2019), US publisher fondly remembered for launching Ballantine Books with her husband Ian in 1952, died on 12 February aged 99. Ballantine Books published much important sf and the first Tolkien-approved US paperbacks of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. [MJJE] • Victor J. Banis (1937-2019), US author best known for gay fiction who wrote some supernatural tales beginning with *The Gay Haunt* (1970), died on 22 February aged 82. [TM] • Late report: Russell Bates (1941-2018), US author of short sf and a co-written episode of *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1974), died on 9 April 2018 aged 76. [GVG] • Larry Brand (1949-2019), US writer/director who co-wrote and directed *Masque of the Red Death* (1989), died on 9 February aged 69. [PDF] • W.E. Butterworth (1929-2019), prolific US author of military and police fiction as W.E.B Griffin and other work including the sf *Next Stop, Earth* (1978) under his own name, died on 12 February aged 89. [PDF] • Graeme Curry (1965-2019), UK writer of *Doctor Who*: 'The Happiness Patrol' (1988), died on 24 February aged 54. [DWN] • Clark Dimond (1941-2019), US musician and writer who contributed to *Castle of*

Frankenstein (1962-1975) and with his friend Terry Bisson co-scripted stories for the Warren comics *Creepy* and *Eerie*, died on 19 February. [TB via PDF] ● **Stanley Donen** (1924-2019), US film-maker whose genre ventures were *Bedazzled* (1967), *The Little Prince* (1974) and *Saturn 3* (1980), died on 23 February aged 94. [SD] ● **Carol Emshwiller** (1921-2019), highly regarded US author of many short stories since 1955 and several novels since *Carmen Dog* (1988) – including the Philip K. Dick award winner *The Mount* (2002) – died on 2 February aged 97. [LO] She received World Fantasy Awards for her collection *The Start of the End of It All* (1991) and for life achievement in 2005. ● **Albert Finney** (1936-2019), UK actor whose genre credits include *Scrooge* (1970 musical whose title role won him a Golden Globe), *Looker* (1981), *Wolfen* (1981), *The Green Man* (1990 tv), *Cold Lazarus* (1996) and *Corpse Bride* (voice, 2005), died on 8 February aged 82. [AW] ● **Bruno Ganz** (1941-2019), Swiss actor best known for *Downfall* (2004), whose genre films included *The Boys from Brazil* (1978), *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979) and *Wings of Desire* (1987), died on 15 February aged 77. [A-TC/AW] ● **Richard Gregory**, UK effects and animatronics designer who worked on Gerry Anderson's *Terrahawks* (1983) and *Space Precinct* (1984-1985), and films including *The Lost World* (2001), *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *John Carter* (2012), died on 12 February. [S] ● **Glen D. Johnson**, long-time US comics fan who edited issues 26-40 of *The Comic Reader* (1964-1965), died on 16 February. [PDF] ● **George Locke** (1936-2019), long-time UK fan, sf book dealer, bibliographer and publisher (as Ferret Fantasy), died on 1 February aged 82. [JL] His *Spectrum of Fantasy* bibliographies (1980-2004) annotated many rare or unknown genre works and have been of great value to sf researchers. ● **André Previn** (1929-2019), German-born conductor and composer whose film credits include *Rollerball* (1975), died on 28 February aged 89. [JJ] ● **Dave Reeder** (1950-2018), UK horror writer and editor of the first four issues of *Fantasy Macabre* (1980-1983) and the last four of *Skeleton Crew* (1991), died last November. [SN] ● **Carrie Richerson** (1952-2019), US convention organizer, and author of short sf from 1992 to 2006 – some collected as *Something Rich and Strange* (2001) – died on 2 February aged 66. [GVG] ● **Dave Smith** (1940-2019), founder of the Walt Disney archives and editor of the official company encyclopedia *Disney A to Z* (first edition 1996), died on 15 February aged 78. [PDF] ● **Ted Stearn** (1961-2019), US cartoonist and animator whose credits include episodes of *Futurama* (2008-2013) and *Rick and Morty* (2015), died in early February; he was 57. ● **Tony 'Blindpew' Smith** (1953-2019), long-time UK fan and convention-goer (with his guide dog), died on 9 February. [N49/CC] ● **Clive Swift** (1936-2019), UK actor whose credits include *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1980), *Excalibur* (1981) and *Doctor Who* (1985, 2007), died on 1 February aged 82. [CM] ● **Morgan Woodward** (1925-2019), US character actor in several sf tv series – including *Star Trek* (1966, 1968) – and *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980), died on 22 February aged 93. [PDF]

The Weakest Link. *Jeopardy* answer requiring a question: 'Aviation writer Robert Serling helped little bro Rod with "The Odyssey of Flight 33" episode of this series.' Contestant: 'What is *Star Trek*?' [AIP] ● **Bill Turnbull**: 'Which author wrote the novel *Dracula* in 1897?' Contestant: 'Well, I know Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, so maybe it was her husband, Tom Shelley.' (*Think Tank*, BBC1) ● **Joe Lycett**: 'In *Life on Mars*, David Bowie wonders if there was life on which planet?' Contestant: 'Hmm, *Life on Mars*.... Was it Jupiter?' (*The Time It Takes*, BBC1) [PE]

BSFA Awards Shortlist. NOVEL Dave Hutchinson, *Europe at Dawn*; Yoon Ha Lee, *Revenant Gun*; Emma Newman, *Before Mars*; Gareth L Powell, *Embers of War*; Tade Thompson, *Rosewater*. ● SHORTER Nina Allan, 'The Gift of Angels' (*Clarkesworld*); Malcolm Devlin, 'The Purpose of the Dodo Is to Be Extinct' (*Interzone* 275); Hal Duncan, *The Land of Somewhere Safe*; Ian McDonald, *Time Was*; Martha Wells *Exit Strategy*; Liz Williams, *Phosphorus*; Marian Womack, 'Kingfisher' (*Lost Objects*). ● NON-FICTION Nina Allan, 'Time Pieces' column (*Interzone*); Ruth E.J. Booth, 'Noise and Sparks' (*Shoreline of Infinity*); Liz Bourke, 'Sleeps With Monsters' column (Tor.com); Alette de Bodard, 'On motherhood and erasure' (Intellectus Speculativus blog); Adam Roberts, *Publishing the Science Fiction Canon: The Case of Scientific Romance*. ● ARTWORK Ben Baldwin, *Strange Tales* slipcase set; Joey Hi-Fi, cover for *Paris Adrift* by EJ Swift; Sarah Anne Langton, cover for *Unholy Land* by Lavie Tidhar; Sing Yun Lee and Morris Wild, artwork for 'Sublime Cognition' conference; Likhain, *In the Vanishers' Palace: Dragon I and II*; Bede Roger-son, cover for *Concrete Faery* by Elizabeth Priest; Del Samatar, art for *Monster Portraits* by Sofia and Del Samatar; Charlotte Stroomer, cover for 'Rosewater' by Tade Thompson. Winners announced at Ytterbium.

Plagiarism Corner. When romance writer Cristianne Serruya was caught stealing easily identifiable passages from novels by other people, she 'explained' this was the fault of the ghostwriter she'd hired through

the cheap-services site Fiverr. The Twitter hashtag #CopyPasteCris drew much attention, and perennial bestseller Nora Roberts aka J.D. Robb weighed in with an angry screed about theft of her material. Not only had Serruya's offending novel *Royal Love* been submitted to the Romance Writers of America awards, but she herself was a judge in some categories: there were loud calls for the RWA to exclude ghosted works or at least insist that they be clearly identified as such. SF, fantasy and horror awards may yet face similar demands. [SG]

Small Press. Bad luck for ChiZine Publications, whose entire dealers'-room stock at Boskone (15-16 February) was mistakenly dumped on the freebies table and vanished with great speed. After the error was announced, about a third of the books were returned. [A-TC]

Outraged Letters. Klaus A. Mogensen writes: 'On Friday, 15 February, the Copenhagen sf book and comic-book store Fantask announced that it would most likely close by the end of June after several years of running a deficit. Founded in 1971, Fantask is the world's oldest still active sf bookstore. Upon hearing the news, a fan of the store started a GoFundMe raiser, and by noon the following Monday, more than £50,000 was collected. This monetary injection will allow Fantask to look for a new location where it is hoped the store will thrive better.'

Magazine Scene. Orson Scott Card's *Intergalactic Medicine Show* will cease with issue 69 in June, says its editor Scott M. Roberts. [F770]

More Shortlists. *Compton Crook* (genre debut novel): S.A. Chakraborty, *The City of Brass*; R.F. Kuang, *The Poppy War*; Rebecca Roanhorse, *Trail of Lightning*; Rena Rossner, *Sisters of the Winter Wood*; Lauren Tefteffau, *Implanted*; Nick Clark Windo, *The Feed*. [F770] ● **Nebula novel finalists:** Mary Robinette Kowal, *The Calculating Stars*; R.F. Kuang, *The Poppy War*; Sam J. Miller, *Blackfish City*; Naomi Novik, *Spinning Silver*; C.L. Polk, *Witchmark*; Rebecca Roanhorse, *Trail of Lightning*. ● **ANDRE NORTON (YA):** Tomi Adeyemi, *Children of Blood and Bone*; Roshani Chokshi, *Aru Shah and the End of Time*; A.K. DuBoff, *A Light in the Dark*; Rachel Hartman, *Tess of the Road*; Justina Ireland, *Dread Nation*; Henry Lien, *Peasprout Chen: Future Legend of Skate and Sword*. Further categories: www.sfga.org/2019/02/nebula-award-finalists-announced/.

Quotes from Boskone sent by Bob Devney: 'Patrick-Nielsen Hayden lets the mask slip for a single fatal instant: "I'm editor-in-chief at Tor Books. So I'm responsible for everything that's wrong with science fiction. I also control the Hugo Awards." ... John Clute: "I like 45-minute sentences." ... Grady Hendrix: "Horror is a women's genre going back to the 19th century. The boys are a late arrival." ... Frank Wu [reading his own short story]: "Kailo brought a telescope to his largest left eye."

The Dead Past. 70 Years Ago, an unusual letter of complaint from a reader of the American Rocket Society journal: '.....the main thing wrong with s-f today is the fact that the editors write most of the stories. When you realise that the leading monthly s-f magazine comes out twelve times a year, and averages four and half stories per issue, with perhaps one half of them written by the editor, and the rest by leading "names", it becomes apparent why they fall into ruts, or shall we say, "vortexes in hyper-space bunk"?' (*Science Fantasy News* 2, March 1949)

● 20 Years Ago, a comment now sadly past its sell-by date: 'Spot the living sf author in the BBC News website poll's 10 Greatest Writers of the Millennium: Shakespeare (#1), Austen, Orwell, Dickens, Banks, Tolkien, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, Cervantes and Twain.' (*Ansible* 140, March 1999)

Fanfundery. TAFF 2019 voting continues to 22 April 2019. See taff.org.uk for the ballot and online voting form. ● GUFF 2019: voting continues until 22 April 2019. See ozfanfunds.com/?page_id=127.

Editorial. The first proof copy looks good, and I hope that *New Mags: More Uncollected John Sladek* (98,000 words) will appear in April.

Chog's Masterclass. *The Tell-Tale What?* 'Her insides loosen and her heart ricochets.' (Sarah Vaughan, *Anatomy of a Scandal*, 2017) [PB] ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'It was the same message Kinnear sent while we were together, though it took me longer to translate, distracted by the cursive swirls of his tongue.' (Hayley Stone, 'Cold Iron Comfort', *Apex* #117, February 2019) [JM] ● *If Looks Could Kill.* 'Beau Quicksilver's tempered steel glance gouged the chief's countenance.' (Florence M. Pettee, 'Blistering Tongues', 31 March 1923 *Argosy*) [DL] ● *True Romance, or Promethea Unbound.* 'She shrugged, quivers manifest beneath the thin material of her blouse, the breasts, unbound, moving like oiled balloons.' (E.C. Tubb, *Eye of the Zodiac*, 1975) [KÆM]

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