



## Ansible 162 January 2001

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sandra Scholes**. Available for SAE or John Cage's arrangement of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

**WELCOME TO 2001** ... and a short, unmonolithic *Ansible*. As some of you already know, my father is nearing the end of his life. All thanks for messages of sympathy and support. The next issue may be delayed.

### The Silent Three

**Ken MacLeod** marvels at the uncanny talents of reviewers: 'In the current [January] issue of *SFX* there's a rave review of *Cosmonaut Keep*. It includes a plot summary about rival families and space arks ... which was posted by Orbit when I was still planning the book (and which still appears on Amazon) but which has nothing to do with the book I eventually wrote. Thus the reviewer appears to have read the book I didn't write. Perhaps a sub-editor cut'n'pasted the wrong plot summary, but I prefer to hope that *SFX* has opened a gate to another timeline, thus Turning Science Fiction Into Science Fact, and is up for the physics Nobel in the "best prozine" category.'

**Terry Pratchett** was again caught red-handed: 'Quote from one of the fan letters I'm answering today: "Did you get the name Hogswatch from Hogwarts?" I'm inclined to say yes.'

**Justina Robson** of *Silver Screen* fame won one of the two writer's bursaries presented for the first time in 2000 by Amazon.co.uk.

**Jane Yolen** reminisces about 'the very large and very hairy man at the back of a signing line in a bookstore in Grand Rapids who said to me, "I am your biggest fan." (He was.) "Would you like to know how big?" (I nodded.) He pointed to the cover of *The Books of Great Alta* and then to the back of his shoulder. "Tattooed it on my back." My children are chagrined that I did not ask to see it. But he was very big. And very hairy. And perhaps very mad.'

### Consimilitiy

6 Jan • **Avengers Day**, National Film Theatre, South Bank, London. With Brian Clemens? £7.50/session, NFT members £1 less.

24 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting** at new venue: The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC2. 7pm on. With Cherith Baldry.

2-4 Feb • **Conthirteena** (13th UK filk con), Albany Hotel, Eastbourne. £25 reg; concessions available. Contact 15 St Catherine's Cross, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4PX.

10 Feb • **Picocon 18**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB. £8 reg, students £5, ICSF £2. GoH Chris Priest, Geoff Ryman, Juliet McKenna. Contact 21 Hooper St, London, E1 8BU.

3-4 Mar • **Microcon 2001**, Devonshire House, University of Exeter. GoH Jon Courtenay Grimwood. £5 at door, £3.50 concessions. Contact 22 Cottey Brook, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 5BR.

9-11 Mar • **Mecon Delta**, Queen's University, Belfast. GoH Michael Sheard. £15 reg; £17 from 1 Mar. Contact 24 Maiton Court, Upper Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6HB.

21 Jul • **Constantinople**, one-day sf gathering, Duke of Wellington pub, Bugle Street, Southampton. £1 reg.

24-26 Aug • **Festival of Fantastic Films #12**, Renaissance Hotel, Manchester. GoHs include Forrest J. Ackerman. £60/\$95 reg, £30 supp. Contact 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, M6 8EN; phone 0161 767 3747.

13-14 Oct • **Octocon** (Irish national con), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. GoH Anne McCaffrey. £12 or £15(I), rising to £20/£16(I) 1 May. £(I) to 151 Ardmore Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland; £££ to Dave Lally #2 A/C, 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

9-11 Nov 01 • **Novacon 31**, venue TBA. GoH Gwyneth Jones. £32 reg, rising after Easter. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

### Infinitely Improbable

**2001 Nobs**. New Year Honours went to Patrick Moore (knighted), Spike Milligan (honorary knighthood, as he's an Irish citizen) and Fay Weldon (CBE). The sf links include Moore's 1957 critical volume *Science and Fiction* ('It seems that the golden age of the fanzines is passing, if, indeed, it has not already passed.'), Milligan's post-holocaust farce *The Bed-Sitting Room* (written with John Antrobus; filmed 1969) and Weldon's rip-snorting space opera *The Cloning of Joanna May*.

**As Others See Us**. 'So—2001, eh? One of those Buzz Years, like 1984, that some rabble-rousing shyster once wrote a depressing book about, thereby sending that section of the population who are prone to believing that authors have a clue about anything into a decade-long funk.' (Julie Burchill, *Spectator*, 30 December)

**R.I.P.** Jason Robards Jr (1922-2000), US actor, died in December aged 78. SF fans remember his appearances in film versions of *A Boy and His Dog* (1975) and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983). [SG] • **Ray Walston**, who played the title role in the 1963-66 TV sf sitcom *My Favorite Martian*, died on 1 January aged 86.

**Publishers and Sinners**. *GalaxyOnline* lost its publisher and fiction editor when Ben Bova and Rick Wilber resigned in Nov and Dec, grumbling about 'lack of financing'. Plans to buy *Amazing* (see A158) collapsed; *GalaxyOnline* is now buying the original *Galaxy* magazine. [L]

**Outraged Letters**. *H.P. Lovecraft's* view of my countryfolk: 'The Welsh, who have no Teutonic blood, are of little account.' (Letter, 6 Dec 1915.) [MM] • **Colin Smythe**, Agent of Discworld, obsessively traced the 'Ook' in other editions of *Ulysses* (see A161): '1986 Penguin corrected text, p348. Penguin Classics 2000, p560. Folio Society 1998 (Stephen Joyce's only approved edition), p407.'

**C.o.A.** Barry Traish (but not Tara Dowling Hussey), 17 Blenheim Square, Leeds, LS2 9AR.

**2001 James White Award** for best story by a new writer is open, deadline 31 Aug. Contact 211 Black Horse Ave, Dublin 7, Ireland.

**Random Fandom**. *Ray Radlein* mused millennially: 'This year, I will watch the pretty fireworks, and celebrate, along with the rest of the world, the fact that Arthur C. Clarke will now *finally* SHUT THE FUCK UP about how "2001" is the actual start of the new millennium.'

**Fanfundery**. *TAFF* final warning: the 2001 eastbound race voting closes on 31 Jan. Which candidate, *Ansible* impartially wonders, will be Victor? • *DUFF*: 2001 southbound race voting closes earlier, on 20 Jan.

**Thog's Sepoy Mutiny Masterclass**. 'But they were all British. Once the gauntlet had been thrown down and the sky blazed with mutiny, regional differences faded, local dialects paled to insignificance before the enormity of the challenge by "faithless natives" that welded them into a single bullet, which each of them bit with tenacity.' (Stanley Wolpert, *India*, University of California Press, 1991) [JB]

**Pudding Regurgitated**. Philip Pullman's all-time favourite book has suffered in translation, reports *Yvonne Rousseau*: 'Gloom and doom in Australia: there's a film been made of *The Magic Pudding*—animating Norman Lindsay's drawings rather unwatchably, and adding characters and plot-lines thought likely to appeal to Americans (Bunyip Bluegum is looking for his parents—an evil wombat kidnaps and imprisons travellers ...). As in telemovies of Jane Austen's work, the original dialogue is also "improved"—what boots it, then, to have John Cleese doing the voice for the Pudding?—and the result has been "novelized".' Oh dear.

**Advt.** Collectors of John Sladek rarities can find his unpublished, handmade, interactive storybook *The Lost Nose: A Programmed Book* at Ulysses Bookshop, 40 Museum St, London, WC1A 1LU, phone 020 7831 1600. Alas, its price tag is £550 ... but I'm grateful that the nice people at Ulysses let me take photos and transcribe the text. Hence this plug. The SF Foundation may yet acquire the book for its Liverpool University Library collection, if sufficiently encouraged with pledges and donations.

**Thog's Masterclass**. *Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'A ceiling fan can be a blur, or you can try to hang onto one of the blades with your eyes and let it swing you around. This last is a queasy business, and I abandoned it after a half hour.' (William Browning Spencer, 'Pep Talk' in *The Return of Count Electric and Other Stories*, 1993) [HF] • 'Her knees grope along the floorboards of the pew, slight pressure as the cushions give, spreading out, buckling upward. As do her eyes.' (Charles Laird Calia, *The Unspeakable*, 1998) [PB]

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