



Ansible 163 February 2001

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoons: Sandra Scholes (left), Jim Barker. Available for SAE, Mokie-Coke, Vgroom, or Teeg/mee's Food.

GREAT SF PROPHECIES. 'This brilliantly conceived novel explores what happens when the computer is used to further the world ambitions of the dictator of a tiny desert state and of the unscrupulous commercial organisation INTEL.'—blurb for *Andromeda Breakthrough* by Fred Hoyle and John Elliot, 1964. [MdR]

The Living End

Poul Anderson has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, writes Karen Anderson. 'It has also damaged some ribs and vertebrae. Treatment is already showing good results and the ribs are healing, and he and the family are not at all downhearted.'

Ray Bradbury reportedly went blind in his left eye during a November signing session, with no hope of treatment or recovery. [SFC]

Leslie Charteris notoriously had some of his Saint stories ghosted by sf authors (including Henry Kuttner and Harry Harrison). Now David Pringle argues on stylistic grounds that the 1946 'Charteris' novel *The Saint Sees It Through* is actually the work of Theodore Sturgeon.

Edmund Cooper was mentioned in *A161*, provoking a rant from Ian Covell about the fading of this author's reputation. Apparently his publishers Hodder & Stoughton held grimly on to book rights for decades, refusing either to revert or reprint, so that 'gradually he slipped from the current crop; commentary by the feminist mafia didn't help.' Also unhelpful was the protracted court battle between Cooper's ex-wife and family and his common-law wife Dawn Cooper; though it was ruled that the latter owns all Cooper's manuscripts etc, items have since been offered for sale that had 'vanished on the day of Edmund's funeral (i.e., the day that Edmund's ex-wife and family [says Dawn] grabbed whatever they could, and have since refused to list even for the court proceedings) ... It has been a nasty situation for a long time, and as a many-years-fan of Cooper, it has been heartbreaking to watch his work slip out of ken and print; the man was an artist and a poet (and yes, I have all his published work, and a bibliography in the final stages of preparation), and SF's treatment of him has been an insult.'

Josh Kirby rushed me a jubilant letter about our mighty 2001 Public Lending Right bounty for library loans of *A Cosmic Cornucopia*: 'I've blown 27p on a 1st class stamp, but what to do with the remaining 10p?? ... I'll discuss it with my investment manager.'

Dean R. Koontz's sf innovation in *From the Corner of His Eye* was reported by reviewer Janet Maslin: 'As Mr Koontz modestly notes in an afterword, this is the first time to his knowledge that human relationships and quantum mechanics have been linked in a work of fiction. What this boils down to is the book's theory that there are for each of us multiple realities: for instance, one in which Junior's wife was pushed off a water tower, one in which she wasn't, maybe even one in which it was she who did the pushing and Junior who died.' (*New York Times*, 8 Jan) [SW] Possibly Mr Koontz doesn't read a lot of sf....

Mike Moorcock sends an alternate-multiverse scoop: 'We have at last produced the one-stop sci-fi fan all-purpose GM meal. That's right, Mr Langford—we have successfully crossed a Big Mac with a Raymond E. Feist novel. Now all we have to do is produce the SuperMac—we take the MacFeist and cross it with an episode of *Xena, Warrior Princess*. This will be a serious blow to Books & Cappuccino 'R Us. News of flotation to follow. As soon as we've built the Ark.'

Peter Nicholls writes: 'On my return from England last October I was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. This is bad news on several grounds. It's a degenerative, irreversible brain disease. By the time you know you've got it it's often pretty advanced. Symptoms are varied and not only physical (I barely have any tremor yet, but I have a lot of muscular stiffness and rigidity). My doctor tells me that though the disease does cause cognitive damage, I don't have any yet. Unfortunately, the tests I passed with 100% accuracy include really difficult questions like "What's your name?" and "Where are you?". I tried to explain to him that I was coming off a somewhat higher plateau than that, but he seemed to feel I'd still be OK while I knew who I was. In fact, my memory is already beginning to resemble gruyere.'

Condottieri

2-4 Feb • **Conthirteena** (13th UK filk con), Albany Hotel, Eastbourne. £25 reg; concessions available.

9-11 Feb • **Starfleet Ball** (*Trek*/media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. £65 reg inc meal and ball. Contact Snowdrop Cottage, 6 The Street, Sutton Waldron, nr Blandford, Dorset, DT11 8PF.

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.

10 Feb • **Watt Con**, Heriot-Watt University, Riccarton, Edinburgh. 11am to late. GoH Craig Charles. £5 at the door.

15 Feb • **Skeptics in the Pub**, Florence Nightingale, on York Rd/Westminster Bridge Rd roundabout. Interview with Geoffrey Dean on astrology. Upcoming meetings: 14 Mar, 18 Apr, 17 May, 21 Jun.

23-5 Feb • **Redemption** (B7/B5), Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent. Now £45 reg; concessions £10 off; £50 at door or £30/day. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

24 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting** at new venue: The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC2. 7pm on. With Ben Jeapes/Big Engine.

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 Malton Court, Upper Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6HB.

22 Apr • **Jedicon** (SW), Towngate Theatre, Basildon, Essex. Noon-5pm. Contact c/o Nelson House, 341 Lea Bridge Rd, Leyton, E10 7LA.

2+6 Aug • **Eboracon** (Unicon), Langworth College, U of York. £25 reg. New address: 9 Prospect Terrace, Fulford, York, YO10 4PT.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 02 • **Helicon 2** (Eastercon), Hotel de France, Jersey. £30 reg, £15 supp/junior, rising to £35 and £18 on 1 April. Contact 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berks, RG14 6SY.

3-6 May 02 • **Damn Fine Convention** (*Twain Peaks*), Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton. £20 reg, contact address to follow.

Rumblings • **UK in 2005**: the Glasgow bid issued its first progress report, cunningly numbered minus-3. Presupporting membership £13/\$20, 'friend' status £50/\$80. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ, or 23 Kensington Ct, New York, NY 11550-2125, USA.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. *Playboy* magazine decided that a full-time fiction editor is now too great a 'luxury', and said goodbye to sf-friendly editor Alice Turner. • *Ringpull Press*, rumour says, may be revived. • *Maureen Kincaid Speller* mourns a former freelance market: 'Apparently the *Good Book Guide* has gone into receivership and their loathsome editor is out of a job. I shouldn't gloat, I shouldn't gloat but ...'

Nebulas. All novellas on the too-long-to-list preliminary ballot are finalists, since there are only five: 'Fortitude' by Andy Duncan (*Realms of Fantasy* 6/99); 'Ninety Percent of Everything' by Jonathan Lethem, James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel (*F&SF* 9/99); 'Hunting the Snark' by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 12/99); 'Crocodile Rock' by Lucius Shepard (*F&SF* 10/99); 'Argonautica' by Walter Jon Williams (*Asimov's* 10/99).

Yo-Ho-Ho! *Keith Brooke* reports a huge web archive of stolen texts at www.sympad.net/books/download/content.htm, based in Russia. Much sf is included: when I looked, the recent-acquisitions list was crammed with pirated Larry Niven novels. Sic 'em, Larry!

Random Fandom. *Atom* (Arthur Thomson), that fine fannish cartoonist who died in 1990, was honoured with the Rotsler memorial award for 2000. • *Paula Guran* sent the final (26 January) issue of her horror e-newsletter *DarkEcho*, a Stoker Award winner. This ran to 300-odd issues and well over a million words since 1994. • *Paul Kincaid* is replacing Steve Jones and Jo Fletcher as 'London Report' news columnist in *SF Chronicle*. • *Farah Mendlesohn* & *Edward James* are marrying: 'On 17th Feb, I'm making an honest man of him. The government tells



me it's very important to both books and cats that they feel the security and protection which can only be provided by a legally married couple.' ● *Stan Nicholls* was unexpectedly refused entry to the USA for last year's World Fantasy Convention: US Immigration still had him black-listed for overstaying his visa by one day in the 1970s, when his flight home to Britain was delayed by bad weather. He even had to pay air fare for his own deportation, though a whip-round at WFC later helped with the extra expenses. [SFC] ● *Martin Tudor* stepped down as *Brum Group News* editor; the curse has now fallen on Rog Peyton (see COA).

Hazel's Language Lessons: English. *liripoop*, the long tail of a graduate's hood; a part or lesson committed to memory; a silly person.

R.I.P. *Eileen Costelloe*, well known in British fandom, died peacefully on 21 January. Stan Nicholls writes: 'Eileen was a good friend for something like 35 years and I'll miss her terribly. But she outlived all the doctors' predictions by at least six months, achieving both her 49th birthday and 2001.' ● *Gordon Dickson* (1923-2001), Canadian-born US sf author of note since the 1950s and best known for his ambitious *Dorsai/Childe Cycle* novels, died on 31 January. He was a beloved and convivial presence at conventions. Patrick Nielsen Hayden remembers him: 'Writer, fan, complex personality. Huge influence on many. Gentle spirit, thinker of strange thoughts. It was good to know him.' ● *Denis Langford* (1924-2001), my father, died on 6 January after three grim years in a nursing home and a week of coma; it was a painless, tranquil end. Dad wasn't a science fiction reader, but I'll always be grateful for his encouragement to read anything and everything, and his patience when I filled the house with books. A kind, gentle man, now much missed. (Renewed thanks to the sf people, too many to list, who rallied round with sympathy and offers of help. You know who you are.)

C.o.A. *Brum Group News*, c/o Andromeda Bookshop, 2-5 Suffolk St, Birmingham, B1 1LT. *Eboracon*, see con listing. *Tommy Ferguson & Leslie Altic*, 12 Gipsy St, Belfast, BT7 3FW, Northern Ireland. *Roelof Goudriaan & Lynne Ann Morse*, PO Box 5861, Fairview, Dublin 3, Ireland.

Thog's Blurb Masterclass. '... a tense and exciting adventure with subterranean reptile men—SILURIANS—and a 40 ft. high *Tyrannosaurus rex*, the biggest, most savage mammal which ever trod the earth!' (Malcolm Hulke, *Doctor Who and the Cave Monsters*, 1974, aka *Doctor Who: The Silurians*; blurb unchanged through six printings) [JF]

Philip K. Dick Award. Shortlist for best original US sf paperback of 2000: *The Bridge*, Janine Ellen Young; *Broken Time*, Maggie Thomas; *Call From a Distant Shore*, Stephen L. Burns; *Evolution's Darling*, Scott Westerfeld; *Midnight Robber*, Nalo Hopkinson; *Only Forward*, Michael Marshall Smith. Winner to be announced 13 April. [L]

Outraged Letters. *Grania Davis* brags: 'I just "liberated" Cuban SF. We visited La Habana on research visas, and met with the Cuban SF writers group. They are eager to make contact with the international SF community, so I gave them copies of the essentials, *Locus*, *NYRSF*, and the e-address of *Ansible*!' ● *Simon R. Green* shudders: 'There Is No Justice; having nobly agreed not to use the title *Necronauts* because Terry Bisson got there first (EVEN THOUGH my version had nothing in common with his) I now discover that the comic 2000 AD will have a running series called ... *Necronauts*. It is to shudder in disbelief. The right

decision for the wrong reason.' ● *Guy Haley* of *SFX* gossips: 'Spoke to the overawing Mr Moorcock the other day (very few overawe me, but I'm a bit of a fan, though I hate to admit it—such weakness. I should be cool and aloof) and sent him into a bit of tizzy by telling him about a card game being made involving his characters. Completely without his knowledge and on a dubious second hand licence, of course. From his response I figure this kind of thing happens all too often to those high up the SF Hierarchy of Fame. Maybe it's a mark of respect. Do authors etc gather round at conventions and compete to see how many unlicensed merchandising products and flagrant rip-offs have been engendered by their work that year?' ● *Robert Sneddon* found another amazing prediction: 'In *Conquering Space and Time*, by Prof A.M. Low, author of that seminal hard-sf epic *Adrift in the Stratosphere*, he peers into the distant future from 1937, and prophesies ... mobile phones. "The telephone may develop to a stage where it is unnecessary to enter a special call-box. We shall think no more of telephoning to our office from our cars or railway-carriages than we do today of telephoning from our homes." What radical foresight! What a bold leap of the imagination! He goes on ... "We shall each carry a small apparatus as we carry a watch and simply plug it into one of thousands of points at the roadside." Or, presumably, the railwayside.

Tense Moment. Fans were alarmed by the 6 Jan entry in *Arthur C. Clarke's 2001 SF Calendar*, which informs us: 'One of the leading British science fiction authors and winner of the Australian Ditmar Award in 1970, Brian Aldiss was also a prophetic writer ...' [MM] Was? Brian confirmed in an exclusive interview that he, in fact, is.

Fanfundery. *DUFF 2001* was won by Naomi Fisher and Patrick Molloy, who travel to Swancon in Perth at Easter. They had 92 votes (89 NA, 3 Australia), Steven Silver 37 (28+9), No Pref 20 (17+3), Hold Over Funds 7 (6+1), Write-in 5 (3+2). [JG] ● *TAFF 2001* was a first-round win for Victor Gonzalez: 56 votes to Tom Springer's 40 (No Pref 5, HOF 3). Victor travels to Paragon, the 2001 UK Eastercon. [MKS]

As Others See Us. 'Asimov is a scientific sci-fi writer and his laws are best known from the film *Röbocop*.' (Kieren McCarthy, *The Register*)

Spacewatch. *Eddie Stern* brags that Smofcon in Florida had the best ever opening to a convention: a Shuttle launch, 'the most perfect one I've had the good fortune to view. The weather was clear, if cool, and there were no "holds" other than the scheduled ones. The dolphins came into the bay, as tradition holds they do for every successful launch, and when the shuttle lifted, it turned the darkness into day for a while. Spectacularly, a meteor crossed the contrail as it went up (and Naomi Fisher caught it on her camera!).' ● That area of Florida is filled with folks knowledgeable about the space program. We flew in the day before, and ended up in a greasy spoon diner at 3 in the morning. A very large man, who seemed fairly drunk, got into conversation with another table as he waited for his food. He knew lots of details about the space station, and wanted to talk about earlier launches. I was cheered considerably at the caliber of the local drunks, until he wandered into hopes that they were sending up a woman since those guys in the space station had been up there for a long time. He lapsed into dozing, face first on the counter.... Even so, you can't help but like a place where the drunks are enthusiastic about space.'

Twenty Years Ago. *Pierrot Publishing Ltd* collapsed in a sufficiently spectacular ruin to get several mentions in *Private Eye*, which roused Rob Holdstock to paroxysms of jealousy by naming Malcolm Edwards (also Mike Moorcock and Paul Ableman) but not Rob. Debts were in the region of £500,000.... ● *The Yorkshire Ripper* gave his godmother a box of nice chocolates for Xmas; when he was arrested she lost her taste for them and gave them away, which is how they came to be eaten with enormous relish by the famous *D. West*. (*Ansible* 15, Feb 81)

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Biblical Longevity*: 'It formed with the rest of the solar system, around five billion years ago. That's fifteen million human generations ...' (Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*, 1992) [BA] ● *Dept of Prehensile Breasts*: "'Good Night, Farder Coram," she said politely, clutching the alethiometer to her breast and scooping up Pantalaimon with the other.' (Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights* aka *The Golden Compass*, 1995) [LN] ● 'The flies left his mouth like tiny words.' (*Ibid*) [CH] ● *Dept of After-Dinner Conversation*: 'But at this point their hostess firmly put an end to the morbid discussion by collecting the ladies' eyes.' (Nicholas Blake, *The Corpse in the Snowman*, 1941) [HW]

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