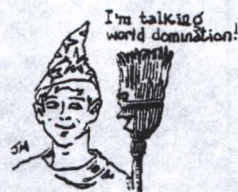


# Ansible



## Ansible 164 March 2001

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Logo and cartoon (over): Dan Steffan. Cartoon (left): Joe Mayhew. Available for SAE or Obnoy, Kat, Domenica, Sise, and Min.

### Low Point X

**Gardner Dozois Gives Up Pussy** is Mike Glycer's suggested *Ansible* headline for the hot story (from *PSFS News*, the Philadelphia SF clubzine) that the great man is seeking a home for a surplus cat.

**Philip José Farmer** is to be this year's SFWA Grand Master, and Robert Sheckley will be their Author Emeritus. Presentations 28 April.

**Robert Heinlein's** latest posthumous glory is the naming of the Robert A. Heinlein Endowed Chair in Aerospace Engineering at the US Naval Academy (where he graduated in 1929). Applications invited, with the first incumbment starting 'as early as August 2001'. [DK]

**Rob Holdstock** gibbers lavatorially: 'I'm still reeling from the (very welcome) *SFX* review of *Celtika* whose tag-line asks: "Ever thought fantasy novels needed more toilet-based passages? Then look no further!" A coda to the review adds: "One of the most famous books to feature the drama of a bowel movement is James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* ..." Good God!! A character takes a quick shit on page 293 of *Celtika* before going into combat on page 294 and suddenly I'm in the company of Kings! It's the academic papers I fear the most. "Chthonic or Colonic: The Bowel as Metaphor for Rite of Passage in the Later Fantasy of ..."

**Philip Klass** ('William Tenn') had a rare public appearance at Boskone in February for a book launch, incautiously saying beforehand that he'd like to make a grand entrance preceded by flutes and cymbals. *Geri Sullivan* struck: 'You know me well enough to predict the outcome of that. Priscilla Olson brought the tambourine with cymbals attached, and a recorder, too, which she played. Kent Bloom was there with another recorder. Phil Klass was ready for me, asking if he should do a strip tease upon his arrival at the signing table. We both agreed what an exciting thing that would be, but I begged off out of consideration for my heart, and he confined his opening remarks to a demonstration of the one vaudeville step he'd learned decades ago....'

**Terry Pratchett** was surprised on 22 Feb at the British Book Awards ('Nibbies', shaped like giant pen nibs) with a special award for contributions to bookselling. As *The Bookseller's* editor put it, 'He is the kind of author who tends to get overlooked when awards committees meet. One reason for this neglect may be that he produces bestsellers year after year, and so gets taken for granted; another, that the genre in which he writes is unfashionable among the kinds of people who sit on awards committees....' [CS] *Terry*: 'I've had a lot of puzzled emails querying the "services to bookselling" bit, but it's an industry award and an award for causing them to sell skiploads of books does have a certain four-square honesty about it. You could call it a Mid-Lifetime Achievement Award. It's quite a spiffy thing, too—so much better than those rocket ships which, frankly, they give to just anyone....'

**Philip Pullman** also won a British Book Award, for *The Amber Spyglass* as best children's book, while the omnipresent and pantheistic Harry Potter had to be content with 'marketing campaign of the year'.

**Gordon Van Gelder** rose to the occasion when many April copies of *F&SF* appeared without full stops. Copious replacements were posted to the web site, some reprinted with permission here: .....

**Kurt Vonnegut** is not being sued by Random House, which is odd since Random are suing RosettaBooks for publishing Vonnegut (and other Random authors) after acquiring e-rights directly from the author. Random claim their contractual 'exclusive right to publish ... in book form' covers e-texts, usually assigned separately ('all rights not granted are reserved to the author'). Paul Aiken of the US Authors Guild said: 'Everyone knew what a book was when these contracts were signed—volumes printed on paper—and this is nothing more than a bold and baseless retroactive rights grab.' Interesting times. [PL]

### Consentant

3-4 Mar • **Microcon 2001**, Devonshire House, University of Exeter. GoH Jon Courtenay Grimwood. £5 at door, £3.50 concessions.

9-11 Mar • **Mecon Delta**, Queen's University, Belfast. GoH Michael Sheard, Ian McDonald, Dave Lally. Now £17 reg. Contact 24 Malton

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

23-25 Mar • **Portmeiricon** (*Prisoner*), Portmeirion, N.Wales. Contact (SAE) Six of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich.

28 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting** at new(ish) venue: The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC2. 7pm on. With Geoff Ryman.

13-16 Apr • **Paragon** (Eastercon), Hanover International in Hinckley, Leicestershire. GoH Michael Scott Rohan, Stephen Baxter, Lianne Norman, Mark Plummer, Claire Brialey. £35 reg, £15 supp, £17.50 junior (12-16), £15 child (5-11), infants free. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

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

19 May • **2001: A Space Odyssey Event**, Science Museum, London. Organized by Pat Cadigan. Ends with Clarke Award presentation.

18-19 Aug • **Caption 2001** (small-press comics), Oxford Union. £8.00 reg, £5 students/unwaged, £3 Sun only; £10.00 (£4 Sun) at door. Contact 18 Hawkins St, Oxford, OX4 1YD. 0777 585 0207.

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **The Millennium Philcon** (59th worldcon), Pennsylvania Convention Center & Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Now \$170 reg, or \$125 for 2001 site selection voters. Contact PO Box 310, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0310, USA.

9-11 Nov 01 • **Novacon 31**, new venue: Quality Hotel, Walsall. £32 reg, rising after Easter. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

3-6 May 02 • **Damn Fine Convention** (*Twin Peaks*), Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton. £20 reg to 1 Dec 01; Norwegians free, if resident in Norway. Contact 37 Keens Rd, Croydon, CR0 1AH.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Publishers and Sinners.** Collins & Brown (Paper Tiger sf/fantasy art books) are being taken over by Chrysalis: 'a bit unsettling for life here, as you can imagine. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that Chrysalis sees the sense of Paper Tiger having a US office,' writes *Paul Barnett*.

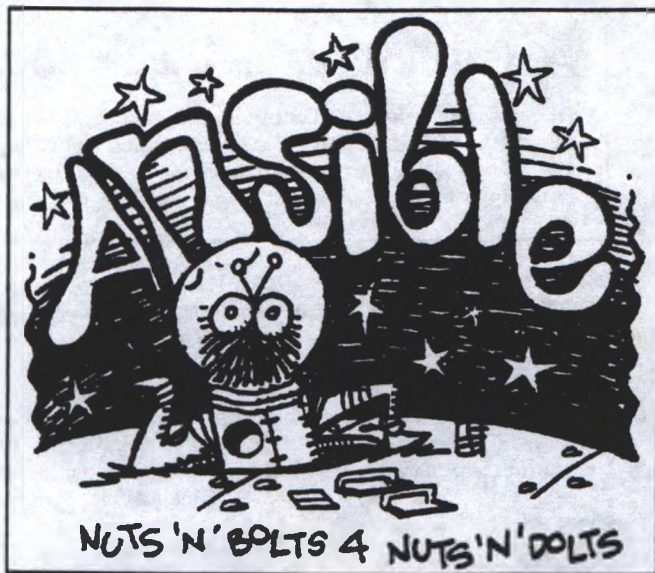
**Clarke Award.** Shortlisted novels: *Parable of the Talents*, Octavia E. Butler; *Ash: A Secret History*, Mary Gentle; *Cosmonaut Keep*, Ken MacLeod; *Perdido Street Station*, China Miéville; *Revelation Space*, Alastair Reynolds; *Salt*, Adam Roberts. Presentation 19 May; see events list. [PK] *Al Reynolds* mutters enviously: 'I don't know what the other shortlisted authors think, but at the moment, being about half way through his book, I'm in total awe of Miéville and thinking of giving up this writing lark and leaving it to the experts ...!'

**As Others See Us.** Another mainstream critic writes: 'These are all things which do not exist, cannot exist, and have never existed. Yet these new fantasies are so fashionable today that hardly a person can state what is good art.' (Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 1st century BC)

**BSFA Awards.** NOVEL *Perdido Street Station*, China Miéville; *redRobe*, Jon Courtenay Grimwood; *Paradox*, John McAneaney; *Revelation Space*, Alastair Reynolds; *Ash: A Secret History*, Mary Gentle. • SHORT 'Destiny on Tartarus', Eric Brown (*Spectrum SF* #2); 'La Vampireesse', Tanith Lee (*IZ* 154); 'Adventures in the Ghost Trade', Liz Williams (*IZ* 154); 'Singing Each to Each', Paul di Filippo (*IZ* 155); 'The Suspect Genome', Peter F. Hamilton (*IZ* 156). • ARTWORK *Physiognomies of Flight*, China Miéville (*Vector* 213); *Hideaway*, Dominic Harman (*IZ* 157); *Afetere's Eyes*, Gerald Gaubert (*Scheherazade* 19). Winners 15 Apr.

**Lord Farland's Bane.** Could this be the Hugo-amassing secret of a certain sf semiprozine? 'A locus was a creature that housed itself within the mind of a vile man or beast. It entered like a parasite, but soon assumed control of its host.' ('David Farland', *Wizardborn*, 2001)

**R.L.P. Richard Laymon** (1947-2001), a prolific US horror author since 1980, died of a heart attack on 14 February; he was 54. [PB] • **Ernest Sterne** died on 2 February after a long illness: 'noted Leeds historian, long time SF collector and contributor to Michael Rosenblum's *New Futarian*,' writes Ron Bennett. • **Rick Shelley** (1947-2001), US sf author, died on 27 January. • **Gerald Susser** (1951-2001), British author of horror and occult nonfiction, died from an apparent heart attack on 4 February. He was 49. [SJ]



**Ghost Stories.** Hot from arguing by geometric logic that the Leslie Charteris thriller *The Saint Sees It Through* (1946) was ghosted by Theodore Sturgeon, pulp sleuth David Pringle now reckons that *The Saint Steps In* (1943) bears the fingerprints of sf author Cleve Cartmill (now chiefly remembered for his 1944 atom-bomb story 'Deadline').

**Outraged Letters.** Pat Cadigan fully and frankly explained her 19 May extravaganza plans: 'Langford, you dog—I'd tell you about it, but then I'd have to kill you. Actually, I'd tell you about it if I had time to kill you. Well, OK: I'm plotting a day-long media event with the Science Museum. So far, that's all there is to tell at the moment, since I've only had one meeting with one person at the Science Museum, and we're supposed to have another shortly. I'll find a copy of the proposal I gave them and send it to you so you can get the idea. Before you die, of course. You dog.' • Steve Jones wishes Paul Kincaid luck as *SF Chronicle's* new UK reporter, and adds: 'It is possibly worth pointing out that Jo and I resigned as columnists from *SFC* nearly a year ago, when it was sold off to DNA Publications. After almost twenty years, we finally got tired of being messed around with deadlines etc.' • Mike Moorcock mourns: 'Very sorry to hear Gordy Dickson died. He was on medication when I first met him and was complaining he'd been on a plane with a rude Englishman, then realised I was English and went through a red-faced pantomime of trying to say he didn't mean me, that he knew some quite decent Englishmen, that he had everyone in the room in stitches. A gentle gentleman, indeed. Another nice guy gone.' (UK obituaries appeared in the *Independent* and *Guardian*, written by J.Clute and D.Langford respectively.) • C.E.Petit is hunting down the evil-doers mentioned last issue: 'I'm working on Harlan Ellison's case against internet pirates, and I've gotten some information that may link the sympad site (which is in Moldova, not Russia) in to the pending matter.'

**Fanfundery.** TAFF 2001 was a first-round win for Victor Gonzalez: 56 votes to Tom Springer's 40, with No Pref 5 and Hold Over Funds 3. Victor travels to Paragon, the 2001 UK Eastercon. (Result out just too late for A163's first printing, but inserted in e- and overseas editions.) • Past TAFF administrator Martin Tudor apologizes for accidentally failing to note the following in his 1998 newsletter: profuse thanks to Brian Robinson, who died in 1997 and wanted his sf collection sold for a fannish cause, Paul & Cas Skelton for arranging this and sorting the material, Tony Berry for transport, and Andy Richards of Cold Tonnage Books for buying it sight unseen. £1,000 was raised for TAFF.

**Hard Questions.** Ah, the eternal joys of TV quiz embarrassments. *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* featured this £16,000 poser on 18 February: 'Who wrote the Discworld series of science fiction novels? A. Frank Herbert; B. Douglas Adams; C. Isaac Asimov; D. Terry Pratchett.' Science fiction novels? The contestant, who had inclined towards Herbert, eventually gave up. [HP] SF was also fleetingly present in BBC2's *The Weakest Link* on 22 February. 'Anne Robinson: "Who wrote the 1951 novel *The Sands of Mars*, featuring Martin Gibson?" Contestant (after an agonisingly long pause): "John Betjeman?" [PW]

**Potteriam.** The 'Spoken Word Album for Children' Grammy award went to Jim Dale's reading of *Harry Potter and the Gilet of Fire*. [PL]

**Random Fandom.** Bob Devney knows how to arouse the sense of wonder with quoted con gossip: 'Gardner Dozois was used as a model for an Army recruiting poster when he was in the service. He was like

19 years old and 130 pounds ... You could make a lot of money off Gardner if anybody found one of those posters now.' [D] • *Ahrvid Engholm* is all excited at finding 'a document that in my view pushes back the start of Swedish fandom one year, from 1950 to 1949.' Everything you know is wrong. • *Andy Sawyer* suspects fans may be involved in 'Drink and Conviviality in Early Modern England: An Interdisciplinary Conference' (Reading U, 10-11 July). Topics for papers: 'drink and community; "elite" and "popular" constructions of drink and conviviality; drink and gender; drunkenness and sobriety; politicisations of drink and conviviality....' • *Seattle Earthquake, 28 Feb:* reports so far indicate that no sf fans or pros were hurt in the 45-second, Richter 6.8 quake, though many were shaken. • *Jo Walton & Emmet O'Brien* are marrying in Hay-on-Wye on 28 July. All friends welcome to informal gathering 27-29 July; e-mail Jo for details. • *Kim Whysall & Tony Hammond* announced the birth of Paul Andrew Hammond (10lb 7oz) on 5 February.

**20 Years Ago.** Bob Shaw's dome of many-coloured glass stained, as it were, the white radiance of eternity: 'I have taken up stained glass work recently as a hobby, and have just installed in my own home what is possibly the world's first SF stained glass window. It is a 4ft by 3ft job, designed and manufactured by myself, showing a sort of futuristic city with a giant moon rising behind it.' (*Ansible* 16, March 1981)

**Light of Other Days.** ScreenSound Australia is adding the legendary *Anti-Fan* fannish movies (promoting the Aussiecon 1 and Sydney in '83 worldcon bids) to its historical media collection, and in a few months VHS tapes will be available for \$10.50A plus carriage. Enquiries to Mark Loney, PO Box 181, Campbell, ACT 2612, Australia. [ASFB]

**More Medical Gloom.** Actor Dave Prowse lost the use of his arm while in Germany last week, and the unexplained paralysis has spread to his back. He's in hospital in Croydon. Not a stroke, doctors say. [MS]

**C.o.A.** Jane Carnall is moving back from Reading to Edinburgh: COA soon. *Andrew Seaman & BSFA Matrix*, 2 Beechwood Court, 33A Thornsett Rd, Kenwood, Sheffield, S7 1NB. *Jim Trash*, 25 Highfield, Tingley, Wakefield, WF3 1LA: 'I'm being evicted (what kind of country is this where they expect you to actually PAY mortgage instalments) on 28 Feb so staying with my mother until I've got another place to live.'

**Small Press.** A new *Forgotten Futures* CD-ROM is out from Marcus Rowland, 22 Westbourne Pk Villas, London, W2 5EA. Cost £18. Besides game scenarios, there's a fat reference library of Victorian/Edwardian scientific romances (shorts and novels) and weird retro-tech articles.

**Editorial.** It's been a grim year so far; all the fannish support and sympathy was much appreciated. Bruce Gillespie suggested: 'You are allowed to put *Ansible* off for a few months, you know. People won't mind at all.'—but it seems wiser to keep going. In other news, I've been a frightful John Sladek bore of late as this book of his uncollected fiction takes shape with 21 Sladek stories, 9 poems and playlets, 8 pseudonymous shorts, 11 Disch collaborations (3 unpublished, sent at Tom Disch's behest from the Yale archive of his papers), and a handful of autobiographical fragments. I can't resist quoting e-mail from the great Tom Disch: 'Thanks for a chance to see the intro. My eyes are still moist with laughter. Lord, John was a funny guy! And such titles. What contents pages he could boast! It all reads fine, I have no quibbles, and I'm pleased to be present at such a distinguished wake. I hope I have the good luck someday to have so conscientious and quick-witted a memorialist. Were there a heaven and were John in it he'd be raining down suitable blessings, I doubt not. Thanks on his behalf, Tom Disch.' • ps You can use this as a blurb if you like! Waste not, want not.' You bet! Further shameless plugs for *Maps: The Uncollected Stories of John Sladek* (from Big Engine, Sep 2001, with luck) will no doubt follow.

**Chag's Masterclass.** Dept of Deep Cryogenics. 'His dart throwers had been sealed and "washed" against snoopers, then maintained at minus 340° Kelvin in a radiation bath for five SY to make them proof against snoopers.' (Frank Herbert, *Heretics of Dune*, 1984) [BA] • Dept of Eye-balls in the Library. 'She was spellbound. She took a few paces within, her amber eyes clambering up library steps, sliding along polished shelves housing neatly ranged books within a mellow wood gallery then down the stairs on the opposite side of the room.' (Mary Brendan, *The Silver Squire*) [PS] • Dept of Anatomy. 'I felt my molars reach for each other.' (Kathy Reichs, *Death du Jour*, 1999) • 'Collapsing in her chair, she felt her buttocks slide into the hole.' (Nancy Taylor Rosenberg, *Interest of Justice*, 1993) [PB]

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