



## Ansible 178 May 2002

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Fax 0705 080 1534. Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sandra Scholes**. Available for SAE or Vol 67 in *The History of the Purple Poinard*.

**ADVERTISEMENT.** A word from our sponsor, after gangrene surgery: 'RELICS! Now's your chance to own a part of MICHAEL MOORCOCK. Yes, friends, for the first time in literary history (not to mention church history) you can now buy an AUTHENTIC RELIC of a man *The Sun* once called "an author of rare goodness and sanity" and whom many already believe to be a saint. The author of *Behold the Man*, considered by many to have taken science fiction to the extreme, offers his extremities (beautifully preserved in Franklin Mint Formaldehyde) for only a few pounds (down payment). Each extremity is numbered and signed in blood by the AUTHOR HIMSELF and soon to be available on e-bay.

'In other words, the operation seems to have been successful.'

### Theories Of Everything

**Mike Ashley** was announced as this year's winner of the SFRA Pilgrim Award for distinguished sf criticism, to be presented in June. 'It seems odd to get a lifetime award when I still feel I've only just started!'

**Fred Clarke**, Arthur C. Clarke's younger brother, had a heart attack at Easter but is out of hospital, recuperating, and should make a full recovery. [MKS] Still a dedicated behind-the-scenes worker in UK sf circles (especially the Clarke Award), Fred was 81 in April.

**Harlan Ellison's** anti-piracy action against AOL continues despite the apparent setback of that March judgement. (See Letters, overleaf.) The *Ansible 177* aside indicating that the suit had failed was based on the supposedly authoritative *BNA's Internet Law News*, whose summary of the decision and its impact isn't accepted by Ellison's lawyers. In his usual temperate style, the affronted author complained that *Ansible* had never before mentioned his legal struggles against Internet fiction pirates (incorrect; see *A164* and *A175*), suggested baleful influence from Chris Priest (who was not in any way involved), and instructed his on-line supporters to 'find your e.way onto that *Ansible* site, whatever and wherever it is, and put a chokehold on their crowing, lest they have to eat those rotten eggs poached in their own perfidy.' Oh, good grief.

**Ian McEwan** conveys that finding inspiration is far tougher for Real Writers like himself than for, say, Kim Stanley Robinson. '... Where does it come from? You have to dig fairly deeply and relax your control of it, unless you're a genre writer and can say, "I'm going to write about the colonization of Mars."' (*New York Times*, 23 April) [DB]

**Mike Moorcock** sends a disappointed PS: 'The ad is a bit of a con. I only lost two toes.... And actually they don't let you keep the bits.'

**Gordon Van Gelder** of *F&SF* was alarmed by a Michigan government website story: 'Governor Appoints Gordon Van Gelder to Michigan Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Commission'. Who'd have thought there could be more than one Gordon Van Gelder?

### Confarreation

3-6 May • **Damn Fine Convention** (*Twin Peaks*), Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton. £30 reg at the door. Just turn up.

12 May • **Fantasy Fair** (10th anniversary event), Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Contact 01477 534626.

13 May • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Pat Cadigan, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, China Miéville. 6:30pm. 'You dog.' (The April reading was cancelled by Borders owing to 'personnel changes.')

17 May • **The Prisoner** 35th anniversary event, EMD Cinema, 186 Hoe St, London, E17. 7.30pm. Guests, showings, *Official Companion* book launch. £6.50 advance reg (send with SAE marked 'Prisoner', by 7 May) or at door. Cheques to McGuffin, 458 Hoe St, London, E17 9AH.

18 May • **Arthur C. Clarke Award**, Science Museum, by invitation, 6:30pm. Also free panels etc arranged by Pat Cadigan, 2pm-6pm.

23/25 May • **Cheltenham Science Festival** sf-ish events, all £5 (£4 concessions). 23rd: Town Hall, 4:15pm—*Ghost Hunting*, Richard Wiseman; Everyman Theatre, 6pm, *Futures Debate*—Brian Aldiss, Ray Hammond *et al.* 25th: Everyman Theatre, 10am—*Robo-Sapiens*, Steve Grand, Kevin Warwick. Bookings/more information: 01242 227979.

1-3 Jun • **plokta.con 2.0** (small, friendly, superfluous tech), Hilton National Hotel, Basingstoke. GoH John Meaney. £25 reg.

Cheques to *Plokta*, 24 St Mary Rd, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG.

17-18 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), Oxford Union, St Michael's St, Oxford. Rates now announced: £9 reg (£6 students/unwaged), £12 at door. Contact 18 Hawkins St, Oxford, OX4 1YD.

28 Sep - 4 Oct • **Milford SF Writers' Conference**, Hedley House Hotel, York (new venue!). Professionally published authors only. £35 reg inc £20 deposit against £280 hotel bill for 7 nights' B&B (single). Contact c/o Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

*Rumblings* • George Flynn brought encouraging news to the April NESFA business meeting: 'To the best of my knowledge, no worldcon committee has had a coup d'etat yet this month.' [JM]

### Infinitely Improbable

'**Andromeda Is Back!**' rejoiced Rog Peyton on Saturday 20 April. 'I have a job again! We were bought on Thursday and reopened yesterday. Laurence Miller and myself have been employed at the moment but the rest of the staff will be re-employed as and when they are needed. We are now part of the Boomclear Ltd organization. They also own Dungeons and Starships here in Brum. We are staying here for a month and then moving into the city centre. The guy who bought us saw premises he liked last week and instead of asking how much the rent was, he decided to buy the building! Apparently he hates renting. He'll be moving us and D&S into these new premises next month.' The fabled Birmingham sf bookshop officially closed its doors in January but carried on trading as a speakeasy—'knock twice and ask for Rog.'

**Awards.** *James Tiptree Award: The Kappa Child*, Hiromi Goto. • *Nebulas*, 27 April: NOVEL *The Quantum Rose*, Catherine Asaro; NOVELLA 'The Ultimate Earth', Jack Williamson; NOVELLETTE 'Louise's Ghost', Kelly Link; SHORT 'The Cure for Everything', Saverna Park; SCRIPT *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. [KS] • *International Horror Guild* awards for 2001 work included: NOVEL *Threshold*, Caitlín R. Kiernan; FIRST NOVEL *Ordinary Horror*, David Searcy; COLLECTION *Through Shattered Glass*, David B. Silva; ANTHOLOGY *Night Visions 10* ed. Richard Chizmar.

**Chog's Bibliographic Masterclass.** 'In the sixties *The Eagle* was an enormously popular English science-fiction magazine.' (Peter Guzzardi, editor's note in Douglas Adams, *The Salmon of Doubt*, 2002.)

**R.I.P. John Agar** (1921-2002), US actor remembered in sf circles for his parts in 1950s B-movies like *The Mole People*, *Revenge of the Creature* and *Tarantula*, died on 7 April; he was 81. [SD] • **Richard Cowper** (1926-2002), author of the Corlay trilogy and other lyrical, very English sf, died on 29 April. In real life he was John Middleton Murry Jr, son of the noted critic, and published fine autobiographies as Colin Middleton Murry. A witty, charming man, now much missed. See Chris Priest's memoir overleaf. • **Joan Harrison**, wife for 48 years of sf author Harry Harrison, died from cancer on 21 April. [MC] All sympathy to Harry and family. • **Damon Knight** (1922-2002), one of the great shapers of 20th-century sf, died on 14 April. He was 79. Any list of Knight's achievements stretches on and on: artist (the least of his talents), our genre's first critic of real stature (see his 1956 *In Search of Wonder*), winner of a 1956 Hugo as best book reviewer and a 1975 SFRA Pilgrim award for distinguished criticism, author of many unforgettable stories, influential editor (especially of the 21 *Orbit* anthologies, 1966-80), founder of SFWA and cofounder of the Milford SF Writers' Conference, underrated sf novelist (late in life producing the sly, quirky, unexpected treats *Why Do Birds and Humpty Dumpty*), biographer of Charles Fort, sf/fan historian in *The Futurians*, SFWA Grand Master laureate (1995), popular convention guest, husband of that other fine writer Kate Wilhelm (who survives him), and all-round good guy. Our loss is great. • **George Alec Effinger** (1947-2002), talented US author who attracted much attention with his first novel *What Entropy Means to Me* (1972), and won both Hugo and Nebula awards with 'Schrödinger's Kitten' (1988), died on 27 April aged 55. His life had been plagued with health problems and vast medical bills. • **John R. Pierce** (1910-2002), US engineer and writer who published sf as John Roberts and J.J. Coupling as well as his own name, died on 2 April aged 92. As executive director of Bell Labs (1952-71)

he was a key figure in the Telstar project, and always credited the inspiration of Arthur C. Clarke's 1945 *Wireless World* article on communications satellites. [JF] • *Mary Scott*, author of "literary" fiction that invariably strayed into the science fictional and fantastic, died of cancer on 23 April, at the age of 54 [writes *Molly Brown*]. Though in constant pain towards the end, she never lost her sense of humour, and those of us who knew her will never forget her zest for life and generosity of spirit. • *Henry Slesar* (1927-2002), US sf/fantasy author and scriptwriter—though better known for his crime fiction—died on 2 April. [L]

**Amazon Mystery.** Authors of fantasies on sale at Amazon.com have noticed a rash of oddly similar customer reviews that rubbish their work and instead recommend, say, George R.R. Martin, Robert Jordan, and Robert Stanek. The number of Big Name commendations varies, but not the plug for self-published author Robert Stanek. Who could possibly be posting these reviews (many since removed by Amazon) under a variety of names? It is a mystery, but *Ansible* is reminded of how Lionel Fanthorpe's pseudonymous sf would often mention those great classic masters of the genre, Verne, Wells and Fanthorpe.

**Hugo Nominations** were released on 18 April. 626 people sent in ballots. • **NOVEL** (486 ballots cast) *The Curse of Chalion*, Lois McMaster Bujold; *American Gods*, Neil Gaiman; *Perdido Street Station*, China Miéville; *Cosmonaut Keep*, Ken MacLeod; *Passage*, Connie Willis; *The Chronoliths*, Robert Charles Wilson. • **NOVELLA** (300) 'May Be Some Time', Brenda W. Clough (*Analog* 4/01); 'The Diamond Pit', Jack Dann (*F&SF* 6/01); 'The Chief Designer', Andy Duncan (*Asimov's* 6/01); 'Stealing Alabama', Allen Steele (*Asimov's* 1/01); 'Fast Times at Fairmont High', Vernor Vinge (*Collected Stories of VV*). • **NOVELETTE** (292) 'Hell Is the Absence of God', Ted Chiang (*Starlight* 3); 'Undone', James Patrick Kelly (*Asimov's* 6/01); 'The Days Between', Allen Steele (*Asimov's* 3/01); 'Lobsters', Charles Stross (*Asimov's* 6/01); 'The Return of Spring', Shane Tourtellotte (*Analog* 11/01). • **SHORT** (331) 'The Ghost Pit', Stephen Baxter (*Asimov's* 7/01); 'Spaceships', Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* 6/01); 'The Bones of the Earth', Ursula K. Le Guin (*Tales from Earthsea*); 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm', Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 9/01); 'The Dog Said Bow-Wow', Michael Swanwick (*Asimov's* 10/01). • **RELATED BOOK** (252) *The Art of Richard Powers*, Jane Frank; *Meditations on Middle-Earth* ed. Karen Haber; *The Art of Chesley Bonestell*, Ron Miller & Frederick C. Durant III; *I Have This Nifty Idea ... Now What Do I Do With It?*, Mike Resnick; *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Tom Shippey; *Being Gardner Dozois*, Michael Swanwick. • **DRAMATIC** (452) *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—'Once More, With Feeling', *Shrek*. • **PRO EDITOR** (382) Ellen Datlow, Gardner Dozois, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Stanley Schmidt, Gordon Van Gelder. • **PRO ARTIST** (323) Jim Burns, Bob Eggleton, Frank Kelly Freas, Donato Giancola, Michael Whelan. • **SEMI-PROZINE** (283) *Absolute Magnitude*, *Interzone*, *Locus*, *The New York Review of SF*, *Speculations*. • **FANZINE** (237) *File 770*, *Ansible*, *Challenger*, *Mimosa*, *Plokta*. • **FAN WRITER** (248) Jeff Berkwitz, Bob Devney, John L. Flynn, Mike Glycer, Dave Langford, Steven H Silver. • **FAN ARTIST** (177) Sheryl Birkhead, Brad Foster, Teddy Harvia, Sue Mason, Frank Wu. • **WEB SITE** (365; extra category added for this year by ConJosé) *Locus Online*, [www.locusmag.com](http://www.locusmag.com); *SciFi.com*, [www.scifi.com](http://www.scifi.com); *SF Site*, [www.sfsite.com](http://www.sfsite.com); *Strange Horizons*, [www.strangehorizons.com](http://www.strangehorizons.com); *Tangent Online*, [www.tangentonline.com](http://www.tangentonline.com). • **John W. Campbell Award** (272; not a Hugo) Tobias S. Buckell, Alexander C. Irvine, Wen Spencer, Jo Walton, Ken Wharton. • **Winners to be announced 1 September.** [JL] • Bob Devney observes: 'Hey, rather a scandal that it took fewer nominations [21] to get onto the best short story ballot than the best fan writer [26], no? Not that I'm counting.'

**Outraged Letters.** *Mike Moorcock* on my helpful idea of fell, rune-carved, prosthetic toes: 'I'm not sure even I can get a good name for magical, self-willed pinkies—Antfrightener? Snakeupsetter? Frogscarer?' • *C.E. Petit* on that 40pp Ellison vs AOL decision: 'Your story made an understandable error, as AOL's news release misstates the ruling. (Gee, what a surprise!) Judge Cooper actually ruled that AOL could be found liable for contributory infringement, but that the Digital Millennium Copyright Act's draconian limitations on liability would not allow any recovery of money. It's sort of (but only sort of) like a conviction with no sentence.' *Charles Samaha* added: 'The Judge made a finding that may or may not be adverse to Mr Ellison's case (this has yet to be determined); and, if adverse, Mr Ellison has the right to appeal said decision. Thus, this case is far from over and far from being lost.' • *Jeff VanderMeer* reminisces: 'I had Ellison call me up twice threatening to nail my head to a wall. Once because I'd sent him a manuscript he'd requested. And once because I'd truthfully recorded his remarks at a convention.'

**Signs of Life.** Maureen Kincaid Speller was there in London on 13 April: 'There were few Signs of Life in the sf community at 10am, but by 11, the SF Foundation/BSFA's joint day of activities was well under way, with a panel discussion on the Arthur C. Clarke Award, with suitable pauses to accommodate waves of new arrivals. By the time Ann Halam's presentation on "How To Write A Ghost Story" began, the room was packed to capacity, and remained that way through Mark Bould's interview with M. John Harrison, and the quiz, in which the Foundation comprehensively thrashed the BSFA. The two organizations' respective AGMs were also very well attended; it's estimated that 100 people attended the event during the course of the day. The Friends' Meeting House, a venue with a pleasantly ecumenical attitude to hiring out facilities, provided some unusual extras across the corridor: a rehearsal of extracts from Mozart during the morning, and chanting Buddhists with added cymbals for a large part of the afternoon. It is to be hoped that our vital signs will be retested next year, and in a larger venue.'

**C.o.A.** *Wm. Breiding*, PO Box 1901, Tucson, AZ 85702, USA.

**As Others See Us.** Not everyone, it seems, can distinguish between sf and Scientology. 'Sandra Bernhard on Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz: "Leave the Spanish girl alone! Let her go home! Let the chick go! Don't fuck her mind with your mind-bending, scientific, science-fiction shit!"' (*Evening Standard* free magazine *Hot Tickets*, 23-28 March) [RH]

**Random Fandom.** *Kathryn Cramer* mentioned a literary rarity at Boskone: 'When she was in college, Joanna Russ wrote a play of *The Hobbit* ... We have this manuscript somewhere in our basement. With stuff in the margin, in Tolkien's very recognizable handwriting, that says, "No, no, no, hobbits do NOT wear hats with red pompoms on them!"' [TD] • *Anne Gay & Stan Nicholls* regret the demise of their UK 'SF and Fantasy Zone' website, popular for four years since launched under LineOne but now axed by the ISP's new owner, Tiscali. • *Lee Montgomerie* cunningly evaded our paparazzi: 'I got married to Chris Terran on 27 June last year, an event *Ansible* seems to have missed, but we were in the middle of Africa at the time.'

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Highbrow Dept.* 'Nordon dug out the ship's plans and located the approximate position from Jimmy's report. Then he whistled softly and his eyebrows climbed towards the ceiling.' (Arthur C. Clarke, *The Sands of Mars*, 1951) [RG] • *One-Eyed Trousers Snake Dept.* 'Poring over the curves of her breasts and hips, Patrick's erection pulsed wildly.' • 'And then there was the old man she'd met that afternoon. He'd behaved as if a wolverine were in his drawers when she'd mentioned Chris.' (both Thomas Staab, *Heart of Ice, Blood of Fire*, 2000) [PB] • 'He was not as old in appearance as his age might have made him appear.' (Gordon R. Dickson, *Soldier, Ask Not*, 1967) [ASR]

## Richard Cowper (1926-2002)

*Chris Priest* writes: 'I met Richard Cowper (John Murry) at the first British Milford workshop. It was his first contact with the sf world, ever. He stuck it gamely for a day, then slunk away somewhere. I found him in a tiny TV lounge, horizontal on a couch, a ciggie smouldering in his fingers, a story about a dragon folded across his chest. We got talking, united by our irritation with the inane writing. Our friendship began then. Nearly thirty years have passed since, my estimation of him, both as a man and as a writer, growing year by year. I loved the mischief in him, the way he could play the giddy goat, his funny gossip, his rage at the idiots around him—but also I respected him for his seriousness and passion about books and writing, the extent and depth of his reading, the skill and emotional impact of his novels, the adoration he had for his wife Ruth and his two daughters, Jacky and Helen. A capable man, he could plant a wood, sail a boat, restore antiques, grow tobacco, rail at critics, sweep a chimney in two seconds flat. His fiction was never given the critical reception it deserved, though the books were popular with readers. Fifteen years ago he suddenly gave up writing, exhausted, he said, of things to say. He took up painting instead and repaired Victorian chairs. At the end of March this year, after fifty years of marriage, Ruth died after a long illness. At her funeral Richard read a paragraph from his autobiography, describing his love for her at first sight. It was a stunning moment in the quiet chapel, charged with love and an aching sadness. Just under four weeks later he died too, suddenly and shockingly. His heart was broken, his daughters say.'

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