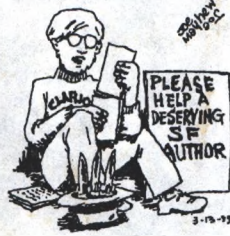


# Ansible



Ansible 197 December 2003

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Net: [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk), <http://www.ansible.co.uk>. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Joe Mayhew**. Available for tubs with two lugs, or quantities of wirtglugs.

**As Others See Us.** Here's some interesting advice from Authors-Market ('a service of PublishAmerica') which may come as a surprise to *Ansible* readers: 'Are all fiction books difficult to market? [...] science-fiction and fantasy writers have it easier. It's unfair, but such is life. As a rule of thumb, the quality bar for sci-fi and fantasy is a lot lower than for all other fiction. Therefore, beware of published authors who are self-crowned writing experts. When they tell you what to do and not to do in getting your book published, always first ask them what genre they write. If it's sci-fi or fantasy, run. They have no clue about what it is to write real-life stories, and how to find them a home. Unless you are a sci-fi or fantasy author yourself.' [JH] • Can this nonsense possibly be linked to the fact that members of the sf community have vigorously criticized operations like PublishAmerica? Though not technically a vanity press—it pays a tasty \$1 advance—this outfit does not appear to copyedit its highly-priced POD books, has a gruesome standard contract, and allegedly confines its marketing efforts to authors' friends and family members (providing an extensive list is mandatory).

## Wintersol

**Neal Asher** insists that his alien 'tors' and 'torbeasts' (in *Cowl*, forthcoming) were invented long before he'd heard of his present UK and US publishers, the ones so many people thought Torcon was named after.

**Shaun Jeffrey**, interviewed in *SF Crowsnest*, indicates that his appeal is to slow readers: 'So far, the reaction to *Evolution* has been pretty good. Most people have said they read it from cover to cover in a few days because they couldn't put it down.' [SG]

**Sharyn McCrumb**, who so endeared herself to sf fans with her crime/fandom novels *Bimbos of the Death Sun* and *Zombies of the Gene Pool*, has moved well away from all that genre stuff. According to her press kit, she 'is an award winning Appalachian novelist. She is forbidden by her publishers to appear anywhere billed as a mystery/crime fiction author, or to sign in any store shelving her work in the crime/mystery section.' So concerned is McCrumb to avoid such contamination that legal threats from her agent caused her entry to be dropped from Mike Ashley's *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Modern Crime Fiction*. We mustn't even mention that *Bimbos* won an Edgar (m\*st\*ry) award....

**A.R.R.R.R.Roberts**, the impenetrable pseudonym under which Gollancz published their Tolkien parody *The Soddit*, is apparently not unrelated to the author or authors of the similarly packaged *Matrix* spoof: Robertski Brothers. But when *The Soddit* peaked at #8 on the *Independent's* hardback fiction bestseller list (7 Nov), the credit went to 'Robert Adams'. Has the late author of the Horseclans sf series risen from the grave? 'Nope; that was a spontaneous typo by the *Indie*, bless 'em,' writes our special parody correspondent Adam Roberts.

**Neal Stephenson** received an approving thumbs-up from *Word* magazine (December 2003): 'Neal Stephenson doesn't deal in science fiction—what he writes is fiction with science in it.' [MC]

## Conjoiners

18 Dec • **London** pre-Xmas fan meeting, Barley Mow, Long Lane.

18 Dec • **Skeptics in the Pub**, Old Kings Head, London Bridge, 7pm for 7:30. Speaker TBA. £2 admission; 'free' sandwiches/chips.

24 Dec • **BSFA Meeting** CANCELLED as usual in Dec; back in Jan.

8 Jan • **London** fan meeting, Barley Mow, displaced from 1 Jan.

29 Jan - 1 Feb • **Sci-Fi London 3** film festival, split between the Curzon Soho, 99 Shaftesbury Ave (box office 0871 871 0022) and The Other Cinema, 11 Rupert St (box office 0207 734 1506). Contact 22 Hanbury St, London, E1 6QR, or 077537 46621.

7 Feb 04 • **Picocon 21**, Imperial College Union Building, London. GoH Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Peter F.Hamilton, more? Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

5-7 Mar 04 • **Mecon 7**, Senior Staff Common Rooms, Queen's University, Belfast. Now £18/€28 reg; £20/€30 at door; £7/€11 supp. Contact 12 Hopefield Ave, Belfast, BT15 5AP, Northern Ireland.

6-7 Mar 04 • **Microcon**, Exeter University campus. Contact Daniel

Bond, 100 Magdalen Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4TU.

9-12 Apr 04 • **Concourse** (Eastercon), Blackpool Winter Gardens. Now £45 reg until 21 March 2004; £25 for the unwaged. New contact address: 4 Cody Rd, Waterbeach, Cambridge, CB5 9LS.

1-3 May 04 • **plokta.con 3.0**, Chequers Hotel, Newbury. GoH Charles Stross. £25 reg; may rise in 2004. Cheques to Plokta c/o Mike Scott, 39 Fitzroy Court, Croydon, CR0 2AX.

4-6 Jun 04 • **SFX: The Event** (media), Hilton Metropole Hotel, Edgware Rd, London. £75 (child £45) plus SAE to London Expo (SFX1), PO Box 38727, London, E10 7YH. Bookings 020 8523 1074.

16-17 Oct 04 • **Octocon 2004** (Irish national con), Chief O'Neill's Hotel, Smithfield Village, Dublin 7. GoH Tanith Lee. Now £20 reg to Easter, £30 thereafter; sterling payments to Dave Lally no.2 a/c, 64 Ritchbourne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

5-7 Nov 04 • **Novacon 34**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. GoH Ian Watson. £33 reg to end of Eastercon 04, then £36 to 26 Oct; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; 0114 281 1572.

4-8 Aug 05 • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. Now £95/\$155/€145 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; or PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us II.** Jonathon Keats reviews *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales*: '[The editor, Michael Chabon] is mistaken about genre fiction. Even given an opportunity to succeed, genre is, and has always been, antithetical to creativity. It is one thing to romanticise it, quite another to read it, and to be reminded that it is what it says it is—a formula. The failure of genre writing generally is that it makes a worthy literary technique, such as suspense or horror, the sole purpose of a story.' Conversely, if it's good it's not genre: 'Edgar Allan Poe and Henry James may have written stories full of mystery, or situated in the future, or haunted by spectres, but to read *The Turn of The Screw* as a ghost story makes as much sense as situating Homer's *Odyssey* in travel fiction.' And so on, and so on. (*Prospect* magazine, November) [TF]

**British Fantasy Awards** announced at Fantasycon on 23 Nov: NOVEL (August Derleth Award) China Miéville, *The Scar*. ANTHOLOGY Stephen Jones, ed., *Keep Out the Night*. COLLECTION Ramsey Campbell, *Ramsey Campbell, Probably: On Horror and Sundry Fantasies*. SHORT Mark Chadbourn, *The Fairy-Feller's Master Stroke*. SMALL PRESS PS Publishing (Peter Crowther). ARTIST Les Edwards (aka Edward Miller). SPECIAL (Karl Edward Wagner Award) Alan Garner.

**R.I.P.** **Margaret Armen** (1921-2001), US TV writer who scripted episodes of both the original *Star Trek* and the animated series, died from a heart attack on 10 November. [PY] • **Jonathan Brandis** (1976-2003), US actor who appeared in *Sequester: DSV* (1993-95) and *The Neverending Story 2: The Next Chapter* (1991), committed suicide by hanging on 12 November, aged 27. • **KIM Campbell** (1956-2003), popular Canadian-born fan involved in the running of many UK conventions, died peacefully on 15 November after a recurrence of cancer; she was 47. She played a key part in launching the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon bid, and was Board Convenor of the resulting Interaction committee. Vince Docherty writes: 'KIM was a long time fan whose great talent was in engaging and encouraging people. She was a force for good and will be missed by us all.' • **Giles Gordon** (1940-2003), major UK literary agent who published stories in *New Worlds* from 1967 to 1975 and featured in Langdon Jones's 1969 anthology *The New S.F.*, died on 14 November after a bad fall earlier in the month; he was 63. • **Pierre Pairault** (1922-2003), French dental surgeon who as Stefan Wul was a cult sf author, died on 26 November aged 81. *Le Temple du Passe* (1957) was his only novel translated into English (*The Temple of the Past*, 1973); the animated *Fantastic Planet* (*La Planete Sauvage*) is based on his 1957 *Oms en Serie*. His last novel *Noo* appeared in 1977. [L] • **John Ritter** (1948-2003), US actor, died on 11 September, days before his 55th birthday. Genre appearances included *Stay Tuned* (1992), *Stephen King's It* (1990 miniseries) and a *Buffy* part as a homicidal android ('Ted',

1997). [SG] • **Mark Siegel** (1949-2003), US writer who published critical works on Tiptree and Gernsback, and whose first novel *Echo and Narcissus* appeared this year, died on 12 November aged 54. [GVG, [sff.net](http://sff.net)] • **David J. Stern** (1909-2003), author of the 1940s 'Francis the Talking Mule' books which became a 1950s film series, died on 22 November aged 94. [PDF] Embarrassingly, the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* gives his death date as 1971. • **Dr Ernest Henry Taves** (1916-2003), US psychoanalyst and co-author of the sceptical *The UFO Enigma* (1977, with Dr Donald H. Menzel), died on 16 August aged 87. His sf stories were published in *Galaxy* and *If* from 1969 to 1976. [JM] A tiny bibliographical point: until now Taves appeared in sf references as 'Ernest Keith Taves', his first *Galaxy* byline, though later sf story credits were to 'Ernest Taves' and *Galaxy* eventually profiled him as 'Ernest H. Taves, M.D.' [WC] • **Kellie Suzanne Waymire** (1967-2003), US TV actress who played Ensign Elizabeth Cutler in *Star Trek: Enterprise* and also appeared in *ST: Voyager*, died on 13 November; she was 36. [PB]

**True Facts Dept.** 'The latest Orion list includes a new Asterix book—under the heading "Orion Non Fiction",' reports Mat Coward with breathless excitement: 'I knew it! And to think, people used to laugh at me when I said Asterix was non-fiction...'

**Random Fandom.** *Lilian Edwards* appeared in 47th place on a *Scotland on Sunday* list of the 100 most eligible people in Scotland. [AS] • **Guy Haley** is leaving *SFX*: 'I'm off to work on *White Dwarf* as a managing editor after Xmas and make it into a proper magazine.' Promises, promises. • **Roy Johnson** has rediscovered fandom after a slight gap since the time when he 'at the ripe old age of sixteen in 1943, organized a convention in Leicester, the so-called Midvention.' • **Mike (Simo) & Hillary Simpson** announced the birth of Thomas Ford Simpson on 2 December. 'Regarding the slightly unusual middle name: the minimal research we have done suggests that it will be nicely inconspicuous.' • **Jim Young**, peripatetic fan, has retired from his globetrotting career with the US Foreign Service and settled down: see C.o.A.

**As Others See Us III.** *Doctor Who* books editor Justin Richards made it all clear in an Amazon interview: '*Doctor Who* is not science fiction, or at least it isn't "just" science fiction. It's broader and more interesting than that. We're in the business of telling stories, we're after plot as a major ingredient alongside situation and character.' [RH] Far-out literary notions that could never have occurred to mere sf writers.

**Nova Awards** for fan activity, presented at Novacon 33: FANZINE *Zoo Nation* ed. Pete Young. FAN WRITER Claire Brialey (with a special commendation of Jae Leslie Adams for committing calligraphy on people throughout the convention; unfortunately 'this category means writing by fans, not on them'). FAN ARTIST Sue Mason. BEST FAN (an occasional extra Nova) presented by Harry Harrison to Ina Shorrock in honour of her 50 years in fandom.

**It Pays To Decrease Your Word Power.** Millions of *Ansible* readers demand that Thog do something terrible and terminal about the description of the DVD set of four *Alien* films as a 'quadrilogy'. Unfortunately, Thog has gone into hiding rather than count that far.

**Outraged Letters.** *Phyllis Gotlieb* has bad news for J.G. Ballard (see A196). 'A National Geographic expedition found the source of the Amazon in December, 2000. It flows out of the Andes in southern Peru, from a mountain 18,363 feet high, called Nevado Mismi. (Information courtesy of Google.) You needn't tell J.G. Ballard if it will destroy his dream.' • **David K.M. Klaus** joins the campaign to prolong the *Eye of Argon* correspondence until we have all kissed the fleeting stead of death: 'Unless Jim Theis moved to the other side of the state of Missouri in the last few years, Darrell Schweitzer has it wrong. Jim Theis wasn't a Kansas City fan, he was a St. Louis fan: the Ozark SF Association, in the clubzine of which, *OSFAn*, "The Eye of Argon" was first published in 1970, was the group which put on St. Louiscon in 1969.' • **Adam Roberts** was bemused by a recent NASA 'astronomy picture of the day' (<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/>): 'Today (03 Dec 2003), under the nice piccy of the moon rising through Mauna Lea's shadow, they say that that the mountain produces (quote) "spectacular photographs since it is arguably the premier observing location on planet Earth". Every word is a link to another site, and not in a conventional explanatory way. "The", for instance, is explained or glossed by a picture of "an Unusual Globule in IC 1396". This isn't the traditional understanding of the word "the", surely. I'm wondering if we need to rewrite our dictionaries: "the, article, Unusual Globule in IC 1396" and so on. Perhaps nasa know something we don't.' This is the attention to detail which in sf circles has earned him the nickname Adam Link. • **Steve Sneyd** remembers: 'Very sorry to hear of death of Beryl Mercer—we had an intermittent correspondence for years, that began when I was getting

info on her poems in 60s fanzines & poems by others she & Archie M. published in their titles. A "Christ of Other Worlds" theme poem of hers won an SF Book Society prize competition way back when, though as a humanist she clearly had cognitive dissonance with this success.'

**Fanfunderdy.** *GUFF*: 'Pat McMurray wins in one of the tightest races imaginable,' writes European administrator Paul Kincaid: 'At one point, we actually thought we had a dead heat on our hands.' Full figures: Doug Bell: UK 25 + Australia 8 = 33. Pat McMurray: 22 + 13 = 35. No Preference: 6 + 2 = 8. Paul is grateful for mighty fund-raising efforts at Novacon, especially by Nic Farey, bringing in over £400 including £100 from the auction. 'It was a great weekend for GUFF.' • *TAFF*: nominations are open for the westbound TransAtlantic Fan Fund race to Worldcon 2004—Noreascon 4 in Boston. Candidates should provide 3 European and 2 NA nominations, a 100-word platform and £10 bond, to Tobes Valois, 20 Bakers Lane, Peterborough, PE3 9QW. Deadline 28 Feb. Interest so far declared by James Bacon: 'can't really lose anything really so it might be worth it just for the laugh.'

**'Amazon Is So Helpful.'** Damien Broderick exults after finding that *Slaves of the Death Spiders: Essays on Fantastic Literature* by Brian M. Stableford is usefully annotated: 'Customers interested in this title may also be interested in: Spiders / Expert & Affordable Solutions to Spider Problems—Learn More Here ...'

**C.o.A.** **Doug Bell & Christina Lake** ('strictly temporary'), 13 Florence Rd, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 3NJ. *Concourse*: see event list. **Tom & Anita Feller**, PO Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214-0937, USA. **Jonathan 'Jonjo' Jones & Sharon Lewis**, 4 Cody Road, Waterbeach, Cambridge, CB5 9LS. **Jim Young**, 2435 E Balfour Ave, Fullerton, CA 92831, USA.

**Hazel's Language Lessons.** As a Christmas treat, Greer Gilman offers seasonal words of Shetland dialect. [EG] *wirtiglugs*, brose made with wirt. *sukkaleg*, a stocking without a foot, or with a very ragged foot. *warbak*, an insect that breeds under the skin in cattle. *hwini*, a hermaphrodite sheep. *hwirkabus*, water in the throat; a disease of sheep. *hwamp*, a quirk; the hollow of the inside of the human foot. *hustak*, a big fat woman. *brimfuster*, sea-froth. *brimskud*, the vapoury, smoke-like haze which rises from the shore-bretsh. *barfljug*, to separate ears of corn from their stalks without crushing the corn. *kilpik*, a little basket made of dokkens. *kist*, a word used to scare a cat. *piri*, a single particle of sheep's dung. *pirr*, a light breath of wind, such as will make a cat's paw on the water. *sae*, a tub with two lugs. *sig*, a hardened part of the skin of the hand caused by pressure of a tool in working. *sangster*, a bruni made of sillik livers and bere bursten [if you stuff that in a cod's liver, it's *hakkamuggi*, the local form of haggis]. *sanveelter*, a disease of horses caused by their eating sand along with their food. *krug*, to crook or crouch in taking shelter from the weather under some high or overhanging thing. *krugset*, to beset in a corner. *manket*, worn out with work. *norrale*, a needle with a broken eye. *feevi*, snow falling in large flakes. *snud*, the twisting movement of the head of a refractory cow. *limmer*, a bad woman. *limmerik*, the bog asphodel. *pilli*, the penis. *tairm*, a string made of sheep's gut, used for fiddle-strings. *tamtier*, to cause delay by frivolous pretenses. *breekbridder*, when two men court the same woman, each is breekbridder to the other. *brennik*, a parhelion, a mock sun. *essi*, defiled with *ess*. *faan upon*, beginning to show signs of decay, as fish or flesh. *jap*, a short, choppy sea. *kirkasukken*, the buried dead as distinguished from those who have a watery grave. *ogarhunsh*, any frightful or loathsome creature.

**Group Gropes.** *London Beer/B7 Meetings*, Shakespeare's Head pub, Kingsway, near Holborn tube: NB first 2004 meeting is 9 Jan, not 2 Jan.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Sound Effects Dept.* 'The girl squawked and sputtered. Exactly, Peel noted, like a decapitated hen.' (Alfred Bester, 'Hell is Forever', 1942) [DC] • *Deep Thoughts Dept.* '[P]ain, in Owen Atchison's philosophy, was weakness, but death was strength.' (Jeffrey Deaver, *Praying for Sleep*, 1994) [PB] • *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'His eyes were hungrily fixed to the can of Maxwell House.' (*Ibid*) • *Life in Ancient Mu Dept.* 'Enormous birds as large as modern air liners were worshipped as symbols of the Old Ones. [...] Elephants and mastodons grew to a size that rivalled that of the dinosaurs of an earlier age. And in the sky hung an enormous moon, bluey white in colour, that counteracted the earth's gravity and caused the tremendous growth of all the living creatures of Mu.' (Colin Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone*, 1969)

*Ansible* 197 © Dave Langford, 2003. Thanks to Paul Barnett, Mat Coward, Margaret Campbell, William Contanto, David Curl, Paul Di Filippo, Tony Finch, Steve Green, Eilean Gunn, Jed Hartman, Richard Hayden, Dave Lally, Denny Lien, Locus, Jim Meadows, Alison Scott, Gordon Van Gelder, Pete Young, and Hero Distributors: Rog Peyton (Brum Group News), Janice Murray (N America), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Thyme). Merry Xmas! 5 Dec 03