

ansible



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YOU READ IT HERE LAST! Almost everyone rushed in the news that whatsername's next book will be *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* ... bad luck for me, since I'd placed a large bet on the 1000-1 outsider *Harry Pooter and the Diary of a Nobody* (by J.K.Grossmith).

The Sinking Parade

Simon Ings, spurning mere publicity, hopes that 'the massed readers of *Ansible* missed my appearance with my writer girlfriend Anna Davis in last week's *Sunday Times* Style supplement. "Competitive couples", no less, and quite an achievement on the part of freelance journalist Amy Anderson in that it managed to be both cloying and spiteful at the same time. And fictitious. "We laugh and cry about our writing," apparently. And we sneak into each other's studies to secretly check how much each of us has written each day. Oh, and when Anna and I met I patronized her about her work and reckoned she'd never make it. Nice. • Mind you, there was one big compensation. The photo accompanying the article was of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman' [12 Oct]

Gordon Van Gelder left his part-time editorial position at St Martin's Press on 20 October and is now working full-time on *F&SF*.

Chris Priest just returned from Utopia 2000, run by Bruno Della Chiesa in Nantes, France: 'a week of some of the most frenetic and inspired congoing in many years. I don't think I have been to a better-organized con: lavish hardly approaches an adequate description. An ever-open bar, totally free of charge, totally unrestricted. (Someone asked for a glass of champagne, and the bar staff cheerfully opened a brand new bottle of the real thing.) No one drunkenly abused the facility, incidentally. A restaurant open ditto. Even when the con laid on other meals (a banquet, a riverboat trip, a reception at a film showing) you could drop in and have a free three-course meal. An exhibition in honour of Verne (Nantes is his birthplace) that took over the whole of the local castle, an immense building, for a huge display including a library, a "life-size" reproduction of the *Nautilus* (complete with harmonium, and so on), then masses of adjacent material like a room-sized orrery, virtual reality displays and other bleeding-heck stuff. Meanwhile, the programme was notable for intelligent and challenging items. The whole thing was staffed by the town council: squads of courteous young men and women who seemed to speak about fifteen different languages, constantly friendly. A disarming experience. Most of us who were there agreed that a new standard had been set, one difficult for others to follow. Even Norman Spinrad admitted it was "not bad".'

James White was remembered at the White Award presentation, and *Ylva Spangberg* was there: 'The inaugural James White Award ceremony was held in Dublin on 22 October, immediately after Octocon, in the Irish Writers' Centre. After an introduction from award founder and administrator James Bacon, we were treated to a reading from James White's work by Dave Stewart, a entertaining and moving talk on James the fan by Graham Andrews, a speech by White's daughter Patricia Larkin (visibly moved by this honour to her father's memory), and praise for the high quality of entries from one of the judges, Michael Carroll. • The winning story was "Think Tank" by Mark Dunn, who attended with his girlfriend Emma; both work for the *Oxford English Dictionary*. After receiving the prize—a cash award of £200, the promise of publication in *Interzone* [December], and a silver trophy in the shape of a pen nib—he gave a happy and entertaining acceptance speech. • We then turned to the food and drink, and one of the evening's surprises, the James White Award beer—a tasty bottled home-brew with special labels for the occasion. I have a feeling these beer bottles will become fan collectables. • It was a very enjoyable evening and a great success for the JW Award, which had nearly 100 entries from as far afield as Brazil and Australia—a promising sign for its future.'

Concaulescence

10-12 Nov • **ArmadaCon 2000**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. GoH £27 reg; concessions and day rates available. Contact 165 Egguckland Rd, Higher Compton, Plymouth, PL3 6QB. Phone 01752 257635.

10-12 Nov • **Novacon 30**, Britannia Hotel, New St, Birmingham. £32 reg, £35 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

10-12 Nov • **Tropicon/Fanhistoricon**, Clarion Hotel, Hollywood Beach, Hollywood, Florida. GoH Vernor Vinge, David Cherry; *Ansible's* xenophobic convention listing policy has once again been subverted by asking me as a special fan guest, gosh wow. \$33 at the door.

11 Nov • **Day of the Daleks**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. £29 reg; less for Dalek owners? Contact 8a Dovedale Rd, Wallasey, CH45 0LP.

11 Nov • **Dreddcon** (official 2000 AD comics event), Posthouse Bloomsbury, London WC1N. Tickets £5 at the door. Drokkl!

13 Nov • **Chester Literature Festival**, St Mary's Centre, St Mary's Hill (off Castle St), Chester. Ken MacLeod reading and discussion with Andy Sawyer, 7.30pm. £4 (£3 concessions) inc refreshments.

22 Nov • **BSPA Open Meeting**, Florence Nightingale, on York Rd/Westminster Bridge Rd roundabout. 7pm on. With sf booksellers' panel.

24-7 Nov • **Con-Fiction** (*Trek*/media), Imperial Hotel, Blackpool. £45 reg. Contact 36 Finsbury Ave, Blackpool, Lancs, FY1 6QN.

6 Jan 01 • **Avengers Day**, National Film Theatre, South Bank, London. With Brian Clemens? £7.50/session, NFT members £1 less.

2-4 Feb 01 • **Conthirteena** (13th UK filk con), Albany Hotel, Eastbourne. £25 reg; concessions available. Contact 15 St Catherine's Cross, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4PX.

28 Jun - 1 Jul 01 • **A Celebration of British SF**, Liverpool. GoH Brian Aldiss, Stephen Baxter, John Clute, Nicola Griffith, Gwyneth Jones, Ken MacLeod. £235 inc B&B, 3 lunches, 2 dinners; authors (with professional sales), students or unwaged £177; £25 deposit. Day rate £50. Cheques to SF Foundation, 22 Addington Rd, Reading, RG1 5PT.

5-7 Oct 01 • **Supernova-Retribution** (*Trek*), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. £50 reg. Contact PO Box 1701, London, SW6 5WU.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. Dept of Upelevating Insights. Andrew Wheeler of the (US) SF Book Club confides: 'When we saw the manuscript of Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, it had obviously been the victim of a perfunctory search & replace Americanization, since characters were always saying things "apartmently".'

Top's Litrit Masterclass. '... some novels, such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, have animals as central characters ...' (John Peck and Martin Coyle, *Literary Terms and Criticism*, 2nd ed, 1993) [DH]

Random Fandom. Solomon Davidoff of *The Journal of Mundane Behaviour* ('Really.') wants sf fans to send him their definitions of 'mundane'—by Feb 01, to Dept of Ethnic Studies, Shatzel Hall, Bowling Green State U, Bowling Green, OH 43403, USA. [DC] • **Leigh Edmonds** was attacked by two yobs in Ballarat, Australia, robbed of \$15, and left with a broken jaw and nose. He's recovering but won't be able to tackle solid food for weeks. All sympathy.... [JE] • **Arthur Hlavaty** has a tactful comparison in *DR96*: '... a level of factual precision somewhere in the neighborhood of Colin Wilson, if not the *Weekly World News*.' • **Steve Sneyd** is bemused by 'a recent letter to Hilltop Press asking to borrow a marquee. Perhaps they thought Hilltop a trade name for Big Top?' • **Lucy Sussex** knows who's Who: 'Well-regarded mainstream novelist Marion Campbell read from a work in progress on 22 Oct, Fitzroy, Melbourne. It had the interesting title of *Tardis Envy*.' • **Lew Wolkoff** plans a 2001 Worldcon exhibit on the 'controversy' about whether the first SF con was Philadelphia in Oct 1936 or Leeds in Jan 1937. Leeds event info especially wanted. PO Box 5085, Harrisburg, PA 17110-5085, USA. All together now: it depends on how you define 'convention'....

More Awards. *World Fantasy Awards 2000*, presented 29 Oct at WFC. NOVEL Martin Scott, *Thraxas*. NOVELLA (tie) Jeff VanderMeer, 'The Transformation of Martin Lake' (*Palace Corbie 8*), and Laurel Winter, 'Sky Eyes' (*F&SF 3/99*). SHORT Ian R. MacLeod, 'The Chop Girl' (*Asimov's 12/99*). ANTHOLOGY Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling (ed), *Silver Birch Blood Moon*. COLLECTION (tie) Charles de Lint, *Moonlight and Vines*, and Stephen R. Donaldson, *Reave the Just*. ARTIST Jason Van Hollander. SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL Gordon Van Gelder for editing (St. Martin's,

F&SF. NON-PROFESSIONAL The British Fantasy Society. • *Jane Stableford* is all excited: 'Brian's just been awarded a "Children of the Night" award for his translation of Paul Féval's *Vampire City* from 1867—picked it up at the Dracula Society meeting last week. It's a truly disgusting thing—a green hairy man (probably undead) with popping eyeballs and too many teeth, emerging from the grave with one clawed hand resting on a tombstone nicely decorated with human skulls. Well, Brian likes it, bless him.' [6 Oct] • *Gaylactic Spectrum Awards*. NOVEL *The Gumshoe, The Witch And The Virtual Corpse* by Keith Hartman and *The Wild Swans* by Peg Kerr (co-winners). SHORT 'Dapple' by Eleanor Arnason (*Asimov's* 9/99). OTHER *Being John Malkovich*. [RG]

Lawsuit Corner. *Uri Geller* is suing Nintendo for 'hundreds of millions of dollars' over the Pokemon monster 'Yun Geller', who wields a spoon, 'uses psychic mind-waves to give his victims bad headaches', and worst of all has not only lightning bolts on his chest which are obviously SS insignia, but a forehead star which *can only be* the Star of David! 'Nintendo turned me into an evil, occult Pokemon character ... Nintendo stole my identity by using my name and my signature image of a bent spoon.' There is more, but your editor can't stop giggling.

Small Press. *Small Press Guide 2001* (6th ed), 315 1-page listings of mostly UK mags, heavily poetry-oriented but with occasional genre items like *Interzone*, *TTA* and the BSFA's *Focus* (though not, oddly, *Matrix* or *Vector*). £9.99 post free in UK from Writers' Bookshop, Remus House, Coltsfoot Dr, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JX. • *The Third Alternative* sf/fantasy/etc story competition has 7 prizes totalling £2000. 'Personally I hate competitions as a rule,' says editor Andy Croft: 'too often they're just thinly veiled attempts at charging a reading fee, but I hope this one will be seen a bit differently; if it works hopefully it'll be an annual thing....' £5 entry fee. Submissions by 31 Dec to 9 Henry Cross Close, Shipdham, Thetford, IP25 7LQ (send SAE for vast Rules).

Outraged Letters. *Pat Cadigan* wanted her *Dervish is Digital* novel launch announced here, inviting 'everyone whose lives would be improved just at the sight of me', and promising 'NO AUTHOR READING FROM THE TEXT OR ANYTHING ELSE! That's right—all you have to do is eat, drink, have fun, and make only one worshipful obeisance to Cadigan. The latter may occur at any time during the evening, except for you, Langford—you have to worship for the complete duration. You dog.' Alas, her doubtless spiffy and scandalous party was on 31 Oct, two days before this issue.... • *Ursula Le Guin* on the Great Thog Controversy: 'Chris Priest say "cheap laughs" ... Socrates say "The misuse of language induces evil in the soul" ... Ursula say "Laughing at misuse of language improves quality of soul" ... George W. Bush say "I arrest my case".' • *N. Lee Wood* has presumably fled the UK by now: 'I'm leaving Cheadle the end of [October] and off to the south of France. I like everything French, with the possible exception of French men. But then British men didn't turn out to have been much of an improvement, either.'

C.o.A. *Andrew A. Adams*, 23 Ivydene Rd, Reading, RG30 1HT. *Tony Berry*, 68 Windsor Rd, Oldbury, West Midlands, B68 8PB. *Victor Gonzalez*, 9238 4th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98106, USA. *Marion Pitman*, 5a Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW2 5QE. *Gordon Van Gelder*, *Magazine of Fantasy and SF*, PO Box 3447, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA.

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: an eastbound race to Paragon (2001 UK Eastercon) was announced mere seconds after *Ansible* 159. Nominations close 6 Nov, voting 31 Jan. NA candidates reportedly include Victor Gonzalez and Tom Springer. • *DUFF*: the southbound race to Australia in 2001 is on, with candidates Naomi Fisher & Patrick Molloy (jointly) vs Steven Silver. Voting closes 15 Jan. Ballots from Janice Gelb, 1070 Mercedes Ave #2, Los Altos, CA 94022, USA, or by request from *Ansible*.

Twenty Years Ago. *Susan Wood*, much-loved Canadian fan, sf critic, academic and multiple Hugo winner, died tragically young at 32. One newspaper report tastefully began: 'As an SF scribe might chronicle it, citizen Wood journeyed into the null on the Gregorian Calendar's Day 12, Month 11, near to 1045 hours....' (*Ansible* 14, 1980)

Group Gropes. *Walsall SF Group* meets at 2pm on 1st Sat each month in the Meeting Room, Central Library, Lichfield St, Walsall.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Flexibility*: 'He encircled her hand with his arm ...' (*Marion Zimmer Bradley, Endless Voyage*, 1975) [BA] • 'She pouted, her lower lip projecting like the bottom drawer in a chest of drawers which has jammed open on account of too many clothes being stuffed inside.' (*Mary Scott, Murder On Wheels*, 2000) [DVB] • *Dept of True Romance*: 'A sudden silence richly filled the rarefied air that now seemed to encircle them. Aware of their growing attraction to one another, they both sat awkwardly for a moment unsure of how to proceed, much less conquer, the new and fertile ground of their budding relationship.' (*Sharon Sebastian, Backside of Nowhere*, 2000) [JB]

⊗ Keith Roberts, 1935-2000 ⊗

Keith Roberts died from pneumonia and bronchitis on 5 October. He was 65. *Ansible* invited reminiscences from sf people who knew him....

• **CHRIS PRIEST:** I met Keith Roberts several times over the years. He was tall, bulky, amusing, paranoid, opinionated and intolerant of idiots (just about everyone). He was an extrovert mimic: he did the most hilarious impersonation of Harry Harrison I have ever seen (the one about the nasal spray, Harry). He started publishing in 1964, concurrent with the New Wave, never a part of it. His virtuosic short stories commanded instant respect and admiration. Within four years he had given us his finest book: *Pavane*, a wonderful novel of English alternate history, written in glorious English. I told him so once and he called me an idiot. Farewell, Keith!

• **HARRY HARRISON:** When I was editor of *Science Fantasy*, Keith was my assistant editor. Eventually he took on all of the editing—and did the covers to boot. A multi-talented guy, something rare; as good an artist as he was a writer. He added a new dimension to SF, both in his art and his novels. A rare talent that will be sorely missed.

• **DAVID V. BARRETT:** In *Lemady*, his strange, at times haunting, at times haunted autobiography, Keith Roberts quoted a reader's comment on his character Kaeti: "I wouldn't want to meet her," says a young enthusiast mournfully. "She'd hurt me by not falling in love with me." The young enthusiast was me, and Keith (who normally didn't suffer fools too gladly) was so chuffed by my admission.

• **ROB HOLDSTOCK:** I'm sad about Keith. So's Sarah. Funny how some people leave a mark on you. I was apprehensive of meeting him in '84. His future fantasy *The Chalk Giants* and his historical novel *The Boat of Fate* had had a profound effect on me. But we talked easily about his work, and he was very generous about mine, and interesting about the whole business of creating 'fantasy'. He was certain that we 'drank from the same well'. I knew what he meant, though we were drinking a hell of a lot of real Henley ale when he said it. He lived in Henley then, in memorable conditions: when I opened the french windows, the handles came away with wood attached to them ('I never open them ... should have told you.');

when I flushed the toilet, the chain and ballcock came away from the cistern ('should have warned you about that. Sorry.'). I wasn't surprised when my car failed to start outside a church he'd been showing me, on a hill above the town; when we pushed it towards the slope in order to 'bump start' it, we accidentally pushed it over the hill. I only just managed to catch up with the car and jump in and was half way back to Henley before I got control. Ten minutes later Keith came padding up, appallingly flushed and gasping for breath. 'Quick! Drive to the Maltster's Arms.' I thought he was about to collapse and knew someone who knew first-aid. Turned out it was almost closing time! Sometime during that long afternoon he conceived the notion of the PH or Primitive Heroine, a piece of fun that later became an obsession. • I could never cope with his angry reaction to the publishing world, and was left cold by much of his later work, though he did produce some gems. But there was a child-at-heart inside Keith, and an astonishing amount of information and historical anecdote which he clearly loved to share. I didn't know him well. I suspect he could have been a very caring man. That Beautiful Boat took him up the wrong river.

• **IN BRIEF.** *Mike Moorcock*: 'Never knew a bloke so determined to destroy himself. I expected this earlier, frankly. I think it's a mercy someone that miserable is dead. Put that in your newspaper, Mr Langford!' • *Brian Aldiss*: 'There was a time when Roberts' remarkable talent showed to best effect—in the days when he wrote *Pavane* and "Weihnachtsabend", a brilliant piece of work. Unfortunately, he became rather proud and quarrelsome. Literary agents and publishers (never mind his friends) did not care to deal with him. This is not the time to offer chapter and verse.... RIP.' • *Malcolm Edwards* has just reissued *Pavane*: 'With an irony somehow totally appropriate to Keith's life a finished copy arrived on my desk the morning I heard of his death. Speaking about *Pavane* to colleagues I said something to the effect that it was one of the finest sf novels ever written, by a man who at his best was a brilliant writer, but sadly also the most difficult human being I've ever had to work with.' • *Brian Ameringen & Caroline Mullan*: '... We will miss him, cantankerous old bugger that he was, he had much charm.'

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