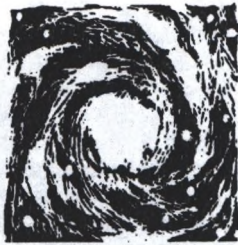


# Ansible



## Ansible 193 August 2003

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Net: [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk), [www.ansible.co.uk](http://www.ansible.co.uk). ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Julia Morgan-Scott**. Available for SAE or modifications of the Klydon beam.

**Dying of the Light.** Grim news from Darren Nash, senior editor at Earthlight—a position for which he gave up a well-paid marketing job after assurances that this Simon & Schuster UK sf/fantasy imprint would continue to be supported by the parent company. Now the corporate bean-counters have struck, with a vast S&S shake-up: Earthlight will be abolished at the end of 2003, while Darren gets the push in late September. Unsurprisingly he says: 'I'm desperately disappointed, appalled, disgusted ...' The Earthlight authors, some awaiting contracts for their next series novels, may not be entirely comforted by MD Ian Chapman's official announcement that they 'will be published on the Simon & Schuster and Pocket lists where they will be given the same profile and commitment as before, but will enjoy the benefits of belonging to the main body of the fiction list.' These benefits, judging by the recent fate of Chris Priest's *The Separation* in that 'main body', could include zero publicity budgets and clueless marketing; Darren laments that 'The trade press have printed Chapman's corporate double-speak without mentioning the obvious loss of focus on genre titles.' Earthlight's founding editor John Jarrold wrote (in *The Alien Online*): 'I'm left with an emotional response: sadness and depression. Having moved from Random House to S&S in May 1997, after discussions about launching a new genre list with Nick Webb, the then-MD, Earthlight took up my life until I left the company in July 2002. So I feel that five years of my life, heart and soul, has now gone for nothing.'

### The Battle of Pico

**Kevin J. Anderson's** favourite fan mail places him firmly in the earnings class of, say, Stephen King: 'Dear Mr. Anderson, I'm an average American and im 15 years old. You have more money then you know wat to do with so it wouldnt hurt you to send me \$5,000 dollars. Please, Im going to be 16 soon and I need to buy a car. I only get paid minimum wage, and dont work enough to make payments. All i want in life right now is a car, but i CANT afford it. You have so much money, this wont hurt you at all. Just take 5 min and write me a check please!! I need a car! • PS. You probly wont even read this. Do you really care about me, your fan? Or am I just someone who gets u more money? If you send me the check, I will totally beleieve you are the most caring, genourous, kindest, sweetest person this planet has ever known. If not...well no offense bur u'll be just one of those rich conceited Hollywood people who only think of themselves...'

**Raymond Briggs**, in his autobiographical retrospective *Blooming Books*, reveals that his notorious personal eccentricity began early in life thanks to his mother—who, he insists, was an inspiration for Fungus the Bogeyman. (*Independent*, 22 July) The mind bogles.

**Harlan Ellison's** piracy suit against AOL has progressed (following a Californian court's adverse ruling in March 2002) to the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals—one level below the Supreme Court. [MMW]

**Lisa Goldstein** had an 'As Others See Us' moment at a class on copyediting fiction: 'The instructor handed out a leaflet, and the first thing on it was a list of the different types of fiction we will have to copyedit. First there was "Art", then "Entertainment", then "Dreck". And "Dreck" consisted of—you guessed it—"fantasy, sci-fi, mystery, suspense ... "After the class I went up to her and told her I was a writer. "And I guess I write"—big show of looking at leaflet—"here it is, dreck." She did apologize, which I suppose is progress. Later, though, studying the leaflet, I realized that "Entertainment" is dreck that she likes to read.'

**Michael Swanwick** reports momentous news which, if confirmed, could shake the very foundations of sf scholarship. 'I had a surprising conversation at Readercon with literary superstar Samuel R. Delany, who told me of how at an early Clarion the students and teachers had decided to see exactly how bad a story they could write if they put their minds to it. Chip himself contributed a paragraph to the round robin effort. Its title? "The Eye of Argon".' Paging Jim Theis ...

**Quentin Tarantino** pays homage to sf in his upcoming film *Kill Bill*, according to a fragment of opening screenplay published in a UK newspaper. BLACK FRAME / QUOTE APPEARS: / 'Revenge is a dish best

served cold'—credited not to the usual sources like *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) or any number of 19th-century proverb collections, but as 'Old Klingon Proverb'. (*Independent Review*, 22 July)

**Gene Wolfe**, as a writer in residence at the Odyssey workshop in mid-July, caused much on-line buzz when he walked out early. Had the ungrateful pupils refused to accept expert criticism? So it seemed when Wolfe was handed a letter of protest, supposedly from most of the class but actually from one 'disruptive' member, threatening a student boycott for such Wolfean crimes as opining that some attendees wrote better than others. Alas, while Wolfe and the Lone Complainer exchanged strong words, many workshop members nervously stayed well clear, giving the impression that a boycott was indeed in progress...

### Conima

9 Aug • **A kind a magic** [sic]: sf charity event, Braintree Institute, Bocking End, Braintree. GoH Warwick Davis, Hattie Hayridge. Tickets £2.50, child £1, family £5.50. Cheques to Braintree District Council, Tourist Info, Town Hall, Market Place, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3YG.

11 Aug • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan and Earthlight's orphans: 'I would like to get together as many of the Earthlight authors as I can for a reading/signing, plus professionals in publishing to discuss the crisis in SF publishing, and how the actions of large corporations often seem to have absolutely no basis in reality.' Darren Nash adds: 'This isn't to be a Simon & Schuster UK hate-session, but an elegy of sorts to Earthlight, and an exploration of why SF&F is first out the door when things become tough.'

16 Aug • **AKFT 7.5** (*Trek*), Pavilion Public House, 13-15 North Pole Rd, London, W10 6QH. £3 at the door. Contact 0208 801 8867.

5-7 Mar 04 • **Oktokon/AKFT 8** (*Trek*), Fircroft Hotel, Owls Rd, Bournemouth, BH5 1AE. £20 reg until 31 Oct 2003. Rooms £32 pppn half board. Contact 0208 801 8867. Cheques (until official bank account is set up) to D.E.Pratt, 12 Greenfield Rd, London, N15 5EP.

27 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA.

28 Aug - 1 Sep • **Torcon 3** (Worldcon), Toronto, Canada. \$275C/\$185US reg; children (or supporting only) \$60C/\$40US. \$295C at door. Contact PO Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5W 1A2.

29-31 Aug • **Festival of Fantastic Films #14**, Renaissance Hotel, Manchester. Numerous actor/director/sfx guests. £70 reg to Tony Edwards, 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

5 Sep • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Princess Louise pub, High Holborn, London. 6:30pm on. Also 5 Dec. All welcome.

10-12 Oct • **Grissecon 1** (Wraeththu), Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford. GoH: Storm Constantine. £50 reg to 31 August, when advance booking closes. Contact 6 St Leonards Ave, Stafford, ST17 4LT.

14-16 Nov • **Alternate Universe** (media), Thistle London Heathrow Hotel. Many guests. For charity, says Brian Aldiss (running a workshop). £125 'VIP' reg, £85 weekend, £40 Fri. Contact Level 3 Conventions, 71 Virginia Way, Reading, Berks, RG30 3QR. 0118 967 5739.

15-16 Nov • **Wardrobe** (costuming), now *Boundary Hotel, Walsall*. £35 reg to 6 Oct, then £40; day £25 Sat, £15 Sun. Cheques to British Costume Convention, 7 Church Close, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 1SG.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Still Yet More Awards.** The John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best SF novel of 2002 went to Nancy Kress for *Probability Space*, and the Theodore Sturgeon Award for the year's best short SF was won by Lucius Shepard's 'Over Yonder' (*Sci Fiction*). [L] • Bob Graham's children's fantasy *Jethro Byrde—Fairy Child* won the Kate Greenaway Medal. [PL] • Seiun Awards for work translated into Japanese, 2002: NOVEL Robert J. Sawyer, *Illegal Alien*; SHORT Greg Egan, 'Luminous'.

**As Others See Us.** Max (*Jennifer Government*) Barry is yet another author who defines sf by futuristic gadgetry and regards this with Atwood-like alarm: 'I had the idea for a story set in an ultra-capitalist world for a long time. But I didn't want to write a science-fiction book

with laser guns and flying cars. I was more interested in writing a social fiction: taking the world we live in now and tweaking it a bit.' (*Orbit Ezine* 60) [DH] Of course no sf author could create that kind of thing. *The Observer's* reviewer agreed: 'The point of the dystopian satire, of course—as opposed to pure science-fiction—is that its imagined world is both recognisable and chillingly possible ...' (27 July) [MM]

**R.I.P. Alex Gordon** (1922-2003), London-born film producer and screenwriter, died in Los Angeles on 26 June; he was 80. Simo writes: 'His [1950s] genre credits include *The She-Creature*, *Day the World Ended*, *Voodoo Woman* and *Atomic Submarine*. He also wrote *Bride of the Monster* for Ed Wood and had a regular column in the early days of *Fangoria*.' ● **Matt Jefferies**, designer of many series props for the original *Star Trek*, died on 21 July aged 82. The BBC website obituary included a picture of the USS *Enterprise* (remember the Jefferies Tube?), described as 'instantly recognisable'; unfortunately they showed the film version, which Jefferies didn't design. [GD] ● **Tim Maroney** (1961-2003), US fan, Internet personality, and brother of Kevin J. Maroney of *The New York Review of SF*, died with shocking unexpectedness on 3 July; he was 41. ● **Peter Redgrove** (1932-2003), UK poet, author and playwright, died on 16 June aged 71. His novels—two co-written with his wife Penelope Shuttle, who survives him—are mostly fabulations and occult fantasies; Steve Sneyd reminds me that he wrote poetry with an sf flavour, some of it published in *New Worlds* in the 1960s.

**SF Mags Go Decimal.** The Dell-owned sf magazines *Analog* and *Asimov's* are changing schedule to 10 rather than 11 issues a year, including two double issues apiece. *Interzone's* regular boast of being the only printed fiction magazine to appear 12 times yearly couldn't be made in 2002, with 10 issues (two double). There's been one double *IZ* this year, May/June: can Mr Pringle avoid a second and stay ahead of his Dell rivals? If not, *F&SF* surges into the lead, as I pointed out to Gordon Van Gelder—who said, 'Good lord, you're right! If we continue to publish 11 issues a year and *Analog* publishes 10 per year, we'll overtake them for the #1 spot of most issues in ... what, 300 years?'

**C.o.A. Ray Holloway**, 12 Oak Close, Tipton, DY4 0AY. **Sarah Mooring**, 5 Alwoodley Ct, King Lane, Leeds, LS17 7BB. (Goodbye to a long-time fan address, 21 The Village St, home to the Pringles from the mid-70s, Simon Ounsley from 1982, and Sarah & Dave Mooring from 1992.)

**Sshh!** Ray Bradbury is 83 on 22 August, and The Planetary Society hopes to surprise him with the world's largest birthday card. Enter your greetings at <https://planetary.org/bradbury/> by the 20th, and I assume they will be transcribed to some suitable medium, such as Mars.

**Mythopoeic Awards.** ADULT Patricia A. McKillip, *Ombria in Shadow*. CHILDREN'S Michael Chabon, *Summerland*. SCHOLARSHIP/INKLINGS Michael D.C. Drout, ed., *Beowulf and the Critics* by J.R.R. Tolkien. SCHOLARSHIP/OTHER Graham Anderson, *Fairytales in the Ancient World*. [MKK]

**Science Corner: Astronomy.** 'Like total eclipses, the chance to write a Dalek story only happens once in a blue moon.' (Simon Clark, Telos Publishing press release) [BJ]

**Random Fandom.** *E.B. Frohvet*, famously pseudonymous publisher of the US fanzine *Twink*, declared in his 30th issue that this would be the last. ● **Hal Hall**, Curator and Senior Bibliographer of the SF Research Collection at Texas A&M University, is looking for donations of fanzines. He can be contacted at Cushing Library, 5000 TAMU, College Station, Texas, 77843-5000, (972) 862-1840. [LP] ● **Kev McVeigh** provides another 'As Others See Us' submission, striking unexpectedly close to home since the source is, um, my brother: 'Your Life Is Science Fiction, In A Flash You'll be gone.'—from *Walking on Hell's Roof Looking At The Flowers*, The Waco Brothers, written and sung by Jon Langford. Naturally I disclaim all responsibility. ● **Andrew I. Porter** has a tale to tell: 'I gave a Hugo Award away, but it wasn't mine. Sort of. In 1970, I was assistant editor at *F&SF*. When the mag won the Hugo at Heicon, Ed Fernan suggested I keep the statue. ● The reason: Heicon was run by very inexperienced fans in Heidelberg, Germany. Apparently, days before the con, they realized they had no Hugo bases. So they cut up a plywood door into big squares and smaller squares, which they glued together, smothered in brown enamel paint, and on which the award plaques were glued. The result: one of the ugliest Hugo Award bases, ever! ● So I've had the 1970 *F&SF* Hugo all these years, even after leaving the mag in 1974. I offered to give the thing back to Ed several times, but every time, he graciously declined. ● Jump forward to the present, when Gordon Van Gelder is the new Editor/Publisher, all the fiction mags have seen better days (circulation wise), and the mags themselves don't win the awards: their editors do. I've been threatening several times to travel across the Hudson River to far-off, exotic Hoboken, New Jersey, to give Gordon a big, shiny, phallic rocketship

thing. ● Instead, I used as a venue a neutral meeting point, the monthly KGB reading series hosted by Ellen Datlow and Gavin Grant. And there, to stunned disbelief on the part of many, perhaps even including Gordon Van Gelder, the transfer was completed.' ● **SORENSEN IN A BLACK HOLE** (*Welsh Daily Mirror*, 31 July) is actually about some footballer, but we're sure Ian Sorensen would like the namecheck anyway. [RM]

**Clarion** (East), the long established (since 1968) sf writers' workshop, lost its funding from Michigan State University—apparently as a result of a cash crisis affecting the whole state. In July, millions of sf notables were urged to rush e-mail to university officials and plead for a reprieve; the response was overwhelming. Meanwhile, a fundraising campaign was kicked off by Clarion co-founder Kate Wilhelm's donation of \$5,000. The story continues at <http://www.msu.edu/~clarion/>, which also reveals that Kate Wilhelm is writing a history of Clarion.

**Outraged Letters.** A191 correction: the fabulous Stross/Feorag wedding was 28 June, not May. ● **Stephen Baxter** on Margaret Atwood's latest dismissive definition of sf, 'talking squids in outer space': 'Yikes, it's all my fault then; I did have talking squids in outer space, in my novel *Time*. Get a life, woman!' **Jeff VanderMeer** adds: 'I do agree that the disreputable "talking squid in outer space" subgenre is giving sf a bad name. On the other hand, talking squid in a fantasy or postmodern fantasy story are not only acceptable—they're expected! At least, by me.' ● **Garry Kilworth** spread sweetness and light as a con guest in the Czech Republic: 'There was a Czech rock band there called Perez who were great fans of Rob Holdstock's *Mythago Wood*. Their symbol was one of the masks from his book cover. In fact they were considering changing their name to Mythago Wood. Naturally I was somewhat jealous of Rob's fame in the Czech music world, so when they asked me if I thought the name would work in English for a rock band, I said, "Well, it would be improved with a few extra syllables. May I suggest the Mythago Woodentops?" They seemed quite excited by my advice.' ● **Mike Moorcock** on Simon & Schuster UK: 'S&S have gone to the dogs since John Jarrod and Co. left. Scribner went to the dogs, too.... They did *Mother London* and *London Bone* while S&S did the fantasy. Everyone left more or less at once. Ian Chapman's the common denominator in that, I'd say. Didn't like his dad and don't like him. I told them to fuck off.' ● **Emma Tottman** on the London Beer/B7 meeting venue (1st Fri each month): 'Just a quick not very cheery note to advise anyone going to the Shakespeare's Head by Holborn tube station: I had my purse, phone and walkman stolen from my bag there [in July], and the police told me it occurs regularly in there! Be warned, people ...'

**Small Press.** Warren Lapine & John Betancourt, supremos of DNA Publications and Wildside Press, are launching the 'Fantastic Book Club' in September; the first title assembles uncollected shorts by Roger Zelazny. More information from Fantastic Book Club, PO Box 2988, Radford, VA 24141, USA, or on line at [www.fantasticbookclub.com](http://www.fantasticbookclub.com).

**As Others See Us.** A pleasant surprise for once. *New York Times* film critic A.O. Scott may not like *The Hulk* or *The Matrix Reloaded*, but has a good word for sf. '[I]t has been a long time since anyone but a few unreconstructed culture snobs has denied that sci-fi and superhero stories can be illuminating, even profound, as well as entertaining. That argument is long settled: without science fiction, we would lack a crucial imaginative resource for grappling with the promise and peril of technology, and without comic books we would have fewer heroes, fewer monsters, and thus a poorer idea of what it is to be human.' [HOB]

**The Dead Past.** *Ten Years Ago*: 'Who Are The 50 Most Powerful People In SF?' asked Paul Di Filippo in *SF Age*, and awesomely gave his choices. Listed earth-shakers of UK origin or address were: J.G. Ballard, Arthur C. Clarke, John Clute, David Garnett, and an exultant David Pringle. (*Ansible* 73, Aug 1993) I wonder whom Paul would pick now?

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Relativity Dept.* 'London was a city of ghosts, some deader than others.' (Mark Billingham, *Scaredy Cat*, 2002) [PB] ● *Dept of Sexy Cars for Sexy People.* 'He appreciated the fact that the woman who walked beside him was young and virile by her carriage.' (Russell Thorndike, *Dr. Syn Returns*, 1935) [DOL] ● *Dept of Unfortunate Juxtaposition.* 'And they had a wonderful sail on the dancing trimaran all the way around Acadia Park Island and back to a great clam dinner. That night in bed afterwards Loolie brought it up again.' (James Tiptree Jr, 'Forever to a Hudson Bay Blanket', 1972) [BJ]

Ansible 193 © Dave Langford, 2003. Thanks to Paul Barnett, Marion Byon, Gordon Davie, David Hebblethwaite, Ben Jeapes, Mary Kay Kare, Danny Lien, Locus, Mark McCann, Rob Miller, Hal O'Brien, Lawrence Person, Publishers Lunch, Martin Morse Wooster, and Hero Distributors: Rog Peyton (Brum Group News), Janice Murray (North America), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Thyme/Australia). 16 Aug 03