

Ansible



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CLARKE AWARD. In the words of a Science Museum security guard directing Ian Watson to the toilet last year, the Clarke event on 19 May was at the far end of Space. It had outgrown the usual lecture theatre and moved to the deep blue yonder of the Wellcome Gallery, with a lightshow of messages and graphics jittering along the far wall and even flashing underfoot. All six nominees—Octavia Butler, Mary Gentle, Ken MacLeod, China Miéville, Alastair Reynolds, Adam Roberts—came early for a crowded afternoon of readings and panels hosted by the reportedly inept and much-heckled Dave 'Where do you get your ideas from?' Green (previously described by Pat Cadigan as 'very cool'). For the ceremony Sir Arthur himself manifested through the miracle of video as a talking head against a background of his own books, only patchily visible through the crowd since the display, though quite large, was at floor level. After the usual speeches, and presenter La Cadigan's initial reluctance to open the envelope—'I'm sorry, I can't do that, Paul'—the newly increased £2001 cheque went to a grateful China Miéville for *Perdido Street Station*. All thanks to administrator Paul Kincaid and the Clarke family for heroic organization and copious plonk.

Journey of the Sorcerer

Brian Aldiss brags: 'Last week I popped down to Macedonia to receive the "Vision" Award from the SF Centre of Macedonia, in the city of Veles. I'm sorry to say this is the first award I have received this year.'

Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* was shortlisted by the female jury of the UK's women-only Orange Prize. But there's also a male jury which picks its own shortlist, whinges in public about the women jurors' 'lily-livered deference to dull or soppy books by big name writers' (*Guardian*), and calls *The Blind Assassin* an 'overblown, inflated piece of sci-fi—probably the least interesting book she had written.' [FL]

Pat Cadigan gained new honours: 'in addition to being the Queen of Cyberpunk™, I am now also, according to the June *Wired* magazine, a Sci Fi Maverick. Unquote. The gratuitous use of the unfortunate "sci fi" (obviously for shock value) is tempered by my photograph, which is, of course, gorgeous. You will want many copies, I'm sure. You dog.' On 16 July, fans may personally explore Pat's gorgeous borders: see below.

Terry Gilliam recently told a correspondent: 'Tony [Grisoni] and I may have actually finished a sufficiently good enough draft of *Good Omens* to start moving forward with the business of making it.' [CS]

China Miéville, famous Socialist Alliance parliamentary candidate, joined protesters at a Kensington & Chelsea council meeting (opposing Tory plans to close a local day nursery) and was duly 'pinned down by six cops with a knee in my back', handcuffed, and hauled bleeding from the council chamber, before protesting parents and Labour councillors insisted on his release. Suspicious-looking folk, these sf novelists. [LR] *The Evening Standard* (4 Jun) subsequently called him 'the sexiest man in politics' [JB], but of course you have to consider the competition.

Bob Rickard of *Fortean Times* worries: 'You may have heard we have been sold, like pigs at market, to James Brown of IFG (ex editor of *Loaded*). No one has told us much yet. Anxiety all round.'

Conocarp

9 Jun • **Pangbourne Fête**, Pangbourne Meadow, Berks, 12 noon on, with 'free firework display by the usual suspects at 22:30. All day bar, BBQ etc.' writes representative usual suspect *Martin Hoare*.

27 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. With Adam Roberts.

28 Jun - 1 Jul • **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.

6-8 Jul • **Nexus 2001** (*media*), Jarvis International Hotel, Bristol. *New rates*: £51 full, £45 Fri+Sat, £46 Sat+Sun, £30 Fri, £32 Sat, £31 Sun. Contact 280 Southmead Rd, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS10 5EN.

16 Jul • **Reading with La Diva Loca**, Borders Books, Oxford St,

London. From circa 6:30pm. New Pat Cadigan-hosted sf reading and discussion group, to be held thereafter on the 2nd Mon each month.

29 Aug - 2 Sep 02 • **Conjosé** (60th Worldcon), San José, California. £96/\$140 reg, rising to £112/\$160 on 10 July. £25/\$35 supp as before. Contact PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1363, USA; British agents 52 Westbourne Tce, Reading, RG30 2RP.

18-21 Apr 03 • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), venue still TBA. £25 reg or £15 supp to 1 Nov. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR.

Rumbings • **Unicon 2002**: Simon and Bridget Bradshaw are bidding for a Cheltenham venue, and Andrew A.Adams for Reading. [BB]

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. 'Suspect all sci-fi fans come from the Planet Glob.' —Ed Perkins (*Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 12 May), subtly finessing his inability to write a coherent review of *Revelation Space*.

R.I.P. Morton Klass, anthropologist, writer, and brother of Philip Klass ('William Tenn'), died on 28 April. He published several sf stories. [JS] • **Simon Raven** (1927-2001), prolific British satirical novelist who unashamedly deployed vampire and supernatural themes in such books as *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (1960), *The Roses of Picardie* (1980), and *September Castle* (1983), died in London on 19 May. He was 73.

Chog's Coppeditior Masterclass. *John Grant* is grumpily re-proofreading his huge *Masters of Animation* after sweeping changes made for the US market (where, according to his US editor, 'readers have difficulty with long sentences'). 'The Americanizer has been particularly fastidious about nasty Brit double-Ls, as in revelled/reveled. So far I've picked up joys like "kiled" and "a roled-up carpet".' Later came 'filed with amour' and 'biled himself'. Our author is, as his MS now puts it, appaled.

Side-wise Awards shortlist for alternate history: LONG Suzanne Allés Blom, *Inca*; Mary Gentle, *Ash: A Secret History*; S.M.Stirling, *The Nantucket Trilogy*. SHORT Eugene Byrne, 'HMS Habakkuk' (*Interzone* 155); Ted Chiang, 'Seventy-Two Letters' (*Vanishing Acts*); Paul J.McAuley, 'A Very British History' (*Interzone* 157); Kim Newman, 'The Other Side of Midnight: Anno Dracula 1981' (*The Vampire Sextette*); Carla Pereira, 'Xochiquetzal' (*Altair* 6/7, trans David Alan Prescott). [SHS]

Great SF Predictions. Robert A.Heinlein (in *Space Cadet*, 1948) extrapolates the etiquette of mobile phone users in company: "... Say, your telephone is sounding." / "Oh!" Matt fumbled in his pouch and got out his phone. "Hello?" / "That you, son?" came his father's voice. / "Yes, Dad." / "Did you get there all right?" [...] "Sure, sure, Dad," Matt broke in. "I'll have to sign off—I'm in a crowd. Good-bye. Thanks for calling." [DP] Alas, the future isn't what it used to be.

Outraged Letters. *Jean Lamb* found a US analogue of the Hanover Hotel: 'Buffet Flats (about five to ten miles north of Bend, Oregon). It's not every day you see a lovely Victorian mural—black and white, The Lady or the Skull—on the wall of any store. The bowling ball garden is properly odd (bowling balls of varying sizes on steel piles); they have a good selection of dusty books of varying ages and conditions; an interesting dollhouse with a tiny television inside that actually works (it shows *The Wizard of Oz*, nonstop, till closing); the perennial sign asking if anyone wants kittens; oh, yes, and a pickle-eating goat. Up in a tree. These people would be famous if they were anywhere near a populated area...' • **Simon Ounsley** footnotes the A166 mention of D.West's Eastercon imperturbability: 'West informs me that he wasn't stubbornly refusing to smile at the con, it's just that his ears were stubbornly refusing to hear. I think I shall write to Greg Pickersgill to suggest that he organizes a whip-round to buy D a hearing aid.' • **Sandy Sladek** recalls John Sladek's last days: 'He joked that he was going to have his picture taken with the three large liquid oxygen tanks in the living room. The caption would read, "Sladek with Daleks". When friends came to visit him shortly before he died, his breathing was extremely labored. Still he managed to observe that he could probably take advantage of the heavy breathing to make obscene phone calls...'

Spectrum Awards shortlist for sf/fantasy dealing positively with gay issues: NOVEL *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, Michael

Chabon; *The Chosen*, Ricardo Pinto; *A Face Without A Heart*, Rick Reed; *The Jazz*, Melissa Scott; *Jumping Off The Planet*, David Gerrold; *Kirith Kirin*, Jim Grimsley; *Teranesia*, Greg Egan. ● OTHER *The Authority: Under New Management* (comic); *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (tv); *A Dist-ant Soil*, Colleen Doran (comic); 'Oracle', Greg Egan (short); *Queer Fear*, ed. Michael Rowe (anthology). [RG] Presentation at Worldcon 2001.

Science Corner. Another classic problem solved, according to the *Annals of Improbable Research* (May/June 2001): "Quantum Gravity Treatment of the Angel Density Problem" by Anders Sandberg. Modern physics tools yield a solution to the classical problem of how many pins can fit on the head of an angel. Someone tell Clive Barker.

Mythopoeic Award finalists: ADULT LIT Win Blevins, *ravenShadow*; Charles de Lint, *Forests of the Heart*; Guy Gavriel Kay, *The Sarantine Mosaic* (both vols); Midori Snyder, *The Innamorati*. ● CHILDREN'S Dia Calhoun, *Aria of the Sea*; Rita Murphy, *Night Flying*; Donna Jo Napoli, *Beast*; Laurel Winter, *Growing Wings*; Jane Yolen, *Boots and the Seven Leaguers*. ● SCHOLARSHIP/INKLINGS Lionel Adey, *C.S.Lewis: Writer, Dreamer & Mentor*; George Clark & Daniel Timmons, ed., *J.R.R.Tolkien and His Literary Resonances*; Stephen N.Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest: a Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams* (how I'd love to read or maybe even write *The Lion, the Will and the Superman: a Nietzschean Reading of C.S.Lewis*); Verlyn Flieger & Carl F.Hosetter, ed., *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*; T.A. (Tom) Shippey, *J.R.R.Tolkien: Author of the Century*. ● SCHOLARSHIP/OTHER Alan Lupack & Barbara Tapa Lupack, *King Arthur in America*; C.N.Manlove, *The Fantasy Literature of England*; Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art 1840-1920*; Jack Zipes, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. [MKK] Winners announced early August.

Anniversaries. In May, Maureen Kincaid Speller's literary sf APA Acnestis celebrated its 100th mailing, while the *Plokta News Network* web site notched up a full year of not being updated. In June, *Dave & Hazel Langford* are about to realize they have been married for ... argh!

C.o.A. Ian & Barbara Brooks, North View Barn, Lees Farm, Haworth Rd, Cross Roads, Keighley, W.Yorks, BD22 9DL. *Jennifer Swift & Tim Bartel*, 4 St Christopher's Place, Oxford, OX4 2HS. *Huw Walters*, 34A St Augustine's Rd, Camden, London NW1.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Yahgan. *mamihlapinatapai*, to look at each other, each hoping the other will offer to do something which both parties much desire done but which neither is willing to do. [SG]

Random Fandom. *Cuddles* produced a son, Connal Alexander, on 6 May. ● *Alison Freebairn* is UK agent for Corflu 19 (Annapolis, 14-17 Feb 02): 41 Kendal Rd, East Kilbride, G75 8QT. ● *Edward James of Foundation* has been awarded a year's teaching fellowship at Rutgers (2001-2002), giving one course each semester, including 'Medievalism, SF and Fantasy'. [FM] ● Neil 'Squaddie' Johnstone & *Alison Freebairn* 'have announced their intention to marry,' writes Alison, suggesting the headline 'ZZ9 bad boy tamed by short fanzine fan!' Millions of despairing male fans are now queuing for the suicide booths. ● 'Guy H.Lillian & Robert Neagle are getting married June 30th,' writes Guy. 'Of course, to other people. Rose-Marie Green Donovan, in my case.' ● *Mark Slater & Elaine Coates* announce the emergence on 4 May of Joel Matthew Slater Coates and, two minutes later, Ethan Alexander Slater Coates.

The Dead Past. 30 Years Ago: the British Arts Council discontinued its grant of 'about £1500' each year to *New Worlds*. 'Hurrah for jolly Conservatives....' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 5, Jun 71.) ● 20 Years Ago: a Forbidden Planet photo-poster carried a very plausible speech balloon for the depicted author. 'Hi! I'm J.G.Ballard! I'll be signing copies of my new book *Hello America* here on June 6 ...' (*Ansible* 18, Jun 81)

Group Gropes. *Didcot* sf meetings: 7:30pm, 2nd Wed each month, Ladygrove pub. Turn left out of Didcot station, follow road to Cow Lane rail underpass on left, and along lane to pub. ● *Cambridge*: 7pm or earlier, 2nd Mon, back of the Cambridge Blue in Gwydir Street. [TI]

Thog's Masterclass. *Big Chief I-Spy's Dept of How to Recognize the Marquis de Sade*. 'Only his hands betrayed the disguise—white and plump like a pair of corpse-fed spiders, ornamented with a dozen costly jewels like the glistening bodies of dead insects. Despite the well-tended softness of the skin, the nails were black and ragged, as if eaten away by unspeakable vices.' (Andre Norton & Rosemary Edghill, *Leopard in Exile*, 2001) [MH] ● *Dept of Can You Feel Anything When I Do This?* 'Then it [pain] entered him with power: into his eyes, down his throat, in through his nose, his ears, ripping open his rectum and jamming up the length of his shriveled penis, forcing into him with howling lust; it filled him to bursting, swelling him from within, stretching him thinner and thinner like a weather balloon expanding toward destruction, while it dissolved and digested his guts, his heart, lungs and bones, everything

within the stretching membrane of his skin. His eyeballs expanded, threatening to burst from his face, to explode from the pressure that built within them. ● He screamed in pain as he squeezed his eyelids shut, trying to keep his eyes in their sockets by sheer strength ...' (Matthew Stover, *Blade of Tyshalle*, 2001) [PB]

Douglas Adams (1952-2001)

Douglas Adams, world famous for *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, died of a heart attack while exercising in a California gym on 11 May.

● **SIMO:** Douglas Adams wasn't part of fandom *per se*, although he did attend a few conventions early in his career. He was never terribly comfortable being classed as an sf writer, although he never denigrated the genre. Indeed, he adored the works of Shekley and Vonnegut (and was also script editor on *Dr Who* during the Tom Baker era). Adams's background was firmly in comedy and *Hitch-Hiker's Guide* succeeded because it fused sf ideas to satirical humour in a way that had never been achieved before. Later, he became a leading advocate of technology and a popular speaker at techie conferences. In many ways he was a science writer who just happened to specialise in fiction—although his one non-fiction book, *Last Chance To See*, was a favourite with both DNA and the fans. I don't know of anybody with an interest in sf who doesn't love *Hitch-Hiker's Guide*, and I know a lot of people who can't stand SF who love it too. Adams's death has left a lot of people in shock, being both sudden and at an early age (49). He was famously bad at hitting deadlines—it's a shame that he couldn't miss this one.

● **CHRIS PRIEST:** He enlivened my life no end in the late 1970s. He was wonderful entertainment to be around. Full of funny stories and funny ideas. Then he moved on to greater things. I still thought of him as a friend, even though I hadn't had any contact with him for years. I remember a boozy evening with him in London just after *Hitch-Hiker* had first been published. We walked past a bookshop where they had an entire wall of the shop filled with copies of the book. Douglas was obviously pleased and embarrassed; he was blushing and tongue-tied for a while. But his company is what you remember. He said such funny things. This morning I was reading an article about him in *The Guardian*, feeling a bit damp-eyed, and they quoted one of his sayings. 'I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go past.'

I always hugely liked him. However, I've been irritated by two tributes to him: one by Stephen Fry in *The Observer*, the other by someone called Dr David Whitehouse on BBC radio. Both went to some lengths to explain that until Douglas came along, sf was universally po-faced and that he singlehandedly invented sf humour. Well, not only is this provably untrue, but Douglas himself was acutely aware of his predecessors and was well-read in Tenn, Shekley, Brown, etc.

● **TERRY PRATHEM** was *exhaustingly on tour when*: ... the news of DNA cast a grey pall over everything. I haven't the faintest idea what I was doing when Kennedy was shot but I think I'll always remember the pattern on the curtains in my hotel room in Chicago, which I sat and stared at just after reading the little par in *USA Today* and nearly throwing up. Then I tried to remember the words of the Betelgeuse Death Anthem (and did ...).

Americans were trying to contact me for quotes on the assumption that we were terrific mates, but I only ever met him once, introduced by a mutual friend at a huge, crowded party where the only conversation possible was 'NOISY, ISN'T IT!' There were a huge number of occasions when we quite spookily didn't meet but ought to have done.

I spent the rest of the tour feeling sad but, mostly, very angry. He was four years younger than me. I'm one of a number of people that owe him a lot for proving to publishers that, yes, genre humour could sell big. I only wish he'd written more stuff.

● **VARIOUS:** Early BBC news reports seemed unaware that *Hitcher* began as a 1978 radio series. E.g. BBC teletext: 'His cult science fiction saga [...] was published in 1979. ● He became a household name when it became a BBC Radio and TV series.' [AAA] ● Two days before Adams's death, the Minor Planets Center at Harvard announced (in a list of 206 newly named planetoids) the naming of a 5km asteroid in his honour: 18610 Arthurdent, as proposed by the German amateur Felix Hormuth who discovered this 'ordinary' object in 1998. [SM/DK] ● On 13 May the Amazon.com sales ranking for the first *Hitcher* novel was, briefly, 42.

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