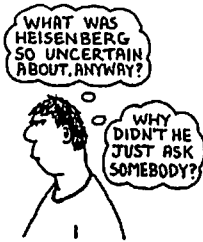


Ansible



Ansible 123 October 1997

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OOPS. It has been pointed out to me that August 1997 was not the best time for me to publish a story (in DAW's *Fortune Teller* anthology, ed Schimel & Greenberg) whose amazing examples of prediction include the routine *Times* headline PRINCESS DI IN PALACE SHOCK HORROR.

The Asylum of Adventure

J.G. Ballard has quietly deleted his Thog's Masterclass phrase (see *Ansible 122*) from the French translation of *Cocaine Nights*. [BS]

Steve Baxter was awesomely photographed by *Playboy* ... 'in connection with my collaborative story with Arthur C. Clarke, upcoming in their January edition, in time for Arthur's birthday. While it takes five days and thirty-five light sources to do a centrefold, it took 30 minutes of daylight and an old bit of polystyrene to do me. The photographer actually told me to put more clothes on.' ⁷

Harlan Ellison appeared again on Tom Snyder's CBS chat-show (24 Sep). Hinting that publishing *Dangerous Visions* might have been harder today owing to censors and bluenoses, he nevertheless assured us all: 'There will be a *Last Dangerous Visions*; watch the skies.' [GF]

Dan Gallagher, a new sf writer not known to me, gained vast notoriety by attaching himself to various LoneStarCon panels for which he wasn't scheduled and then (a) reciting the entire plot of His Novel; (b) trying to convert at least one panel into a religious revival meeting. AUDIENCE: 'Take the mike away from him!' Con-runners are warned. [JG]

Judith Merrill died on 12 September, aged 74. She wrote some notable sf but is most fondly remembered as an anthologist and feminist champion of sf: for the dozen ghetto-busting 1960s-70s *Year's Best* collections, for promoting the 'New Wave' to a US audience with *England Swings SF* (1968), for inaugurating the *Tesseract* anthologies which drew attention to Canadian sf, and for her gleefully entertaining gossip about past sf-writer lovers. More overleaf from John Clute.

Terry Pratchett's works may soon become, officially, Literature. The British Council's upmarket 'Writers and their Work' series of critical monographs—which admitted Tolkien to the ranks of the saved only in Autumn 1995—is apparently planning to commission a Pratchett study.

Salman Rushdie, speaking on the radio (10 Sep) about his *New Yorker* article on media excesses following the death of Princess Diana, cited a science-fictional parallel: Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*, where celebrity starlet Montana Wildhack is trapped in an alien zoo so they can study every detail of her mating habits. Ouch. [SJ]

Walter Jon Williams has been enjoying, or not enjoying, a run-in with *Wired* magazine over his 1986 novel title *Hardwired* ... a title subsequently licensed by WJW for games, action figures, cars, etc, and (nearly) as Paramount's 'improved' title for *Johnny Mnemonic*. Imagine his joy when menacing *Wired* lawyers forced cancellation of NovaLogic's 1996 *Hardwired* CD-ROM game, costing WJW a heap of licence money, on the basis that (a) *Wired* owns everything with 'Wire' in the title: 'Anyone remember Women's Wire? Another going concern that *Wired* flattened because it didn't fit into *Wired's* grandiose and self-important schemes.'; (b) *Wired's* brand-new imprint *HardWired* Books obviously has a prior claim over anything published in 1986. WJW's legal struggle was delayed through much of 1997 owing to *Wired* attorneys' claimed difficulty in getting a deposition from their on-line empire's jet-setting bossman Louis Rossetto ... who, we must infer, lacks both e-mail and a cellphone. WJW adds: 'Word has reached me that *Wired* is dreadfully upset that I have chosen to go public in this way. I am assured that they never meant to restrict my use of *Hardwired*. What do they call a trademark action against one of my licensees? Chopped liver?'

Conchite

11 Oct - 30 Nov • **SF/Fantasy Art Exhibition**, Grosvenor Museum, Chester. 10:30am-5pm daily; Sun 2-5pm. Contact Steve Woolfall, Grosvenor Museum, 27 Grosvenor St, Chester, CH1 2DD. 01244 402015.

18 Oct • **Dr Who Event**, Cardiff University. With Elisabeth Sladen ('Sarah Jane Smith'). £8 reg. Cheque + SAE to SPFC Events c/o 57 Keppoch St, Roath, Cardiff, CF2 3JS. 'Places for this event are limited.'

22 Oct • **BSFA London Meeting** POSTPONED to 29 Oct—see below.

25-7 Oct • **Octocon/Eurocon '97**, Dublin Castle. GoH Robert Jordan; several others. £30/£30I reg. Contact (SAE/IRC) Eurocon, PO Box 5130, Dublin 4, Eire. Sterling cheques to English agent D.J.Lally 'No 2 a/c', 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX; 0171 735 3819.

29 Oct • **Jubilee**, York Rd, nr Waterloo: unofficial pre-World Fantasy Con evening, 5pm on. In town for WFC? Experience a typical London sf pub meet.... NB: this is also October's BSFA London meeting.

30 Oct - 2 Nov • **World Fantasy Convention**, The International Hotel, Marsh Wall, London. £100/\$165 reg; day rates £50 Sat, £30 Fri or Sun. Contact PO Box 31, Whitby, North Yorks, YO22 4YL.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 27**, De Vere Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. £35 reg and at door; postal registration discouraged after Oct. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. The hotel (presumably full) has now been sold, but Novacon is unaffected. [MT]

21-3 Nov • **Armadacon IX**, Astor Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Colin Greenland, David Hardy. £25 reg (£20 unwaged). Contact 4 Gleneagle Ave, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon, PL3 5HL. 01752 267873.

30 Nov • **Starcon97** (*Star Wars*), Town Centre Theatre, Basildon, Essex. GoH Dave Prowse etc. £10 reg; £13 at door. Contact (cheques to R.Miley) Nelson House, 341 Lea Bridge Rd, London, E10 7LA.

17-19 Jul 98 • **Nexus 98** (media), Bristol Hilton Hotel. Contact (SAE or 2XIRC) 1 Lullington Rd, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LH.

5-9 Aug 98 • **Bucconeer** (56th Worldcon), Baltimore, USA. Now \$130 reg, until 15 Jun 98; still \$30 supp. Contact PO Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701, USA.

Rumblings • **London SF** meetings (first Thur each month) continue at the Jubilee, York Rd, near Waterloo—a reminder for those who don't pick up *Ansible* there.... • **Surrey SF** now meets in the Coronation Hall, Surbiton, a Wetherspoons pub some 100 yards from station: 2nd/4th Thur monthly, 8pm onward. 'Not at all limp-wristed this time!' [JB]

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. Most of the cyber-sf titles scheduled for *Wired* magazine's new *HardWired* imprint are on hold and may never appear, owing to *Wired's* 1997 financial crises. Retrenchment looms. [SFC] *Ansible* has asked Walter Jon Williams for an exclusive giggle. • *Spider Robinson* has followed Norman Spinrad in issuing an open letter full of doom and despair, because his latest contract is (in the words of evil Sir Jasper at cruelly oppressive Tor Books) 'offering a lower mid-five-figures advance than the previous mid-five-figures advance'. [PNH]

Too Late! My chance to send in the minimum £333 for one share in 'Legionnaires PLC' expired at 3pm on 29 September, scant hours after I received their mailing offering the exciting opportunity to finance *Legionnaires*. This British skiffy film project was/is aiming to raise millions from sf fan investors, the first 3,000 of whom will be invited to appear as extras; its blurb is cagy about the plot ('ONLY ONE THING STANDS BETWEEN A WORLD WITHOUT A FUTURE AND THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD'), but we can deduce at least one large crowd scene.... I admired the described wonders of Film Distribution Shortfall Insurance, whereby if the movie fails to make a profit, 'LEGIONNAIRES PLC can claim an amount equal to the shortfall from the insurer.' (*Hotspur*: 'Why, so can I, or so can any man; / But will they come when you do call for them?')

Random Fandom. *Martin Hoare* made a long detour in order to send a postcard from Hugo, Oklahoma—a town that reacts with stunned disbelief to the notion of visitors. 'Nobody ever comes to Hugo!' Jean Hoare provoked an appalled H.M. Bateman tableau as The Woman Who Asked For Wine In A Hugo Bar.... • *Paul Kincaid & Maureen Kincaid Speller* sent their postcard from Glastonbury: 'Everything is Tor here—Tor Records, Tor Rugby Club. Maybe Patrick Nielsen Hayden is branching out.' • *Ross Pavlac*, well-known fan, 1982 Worldcon chair and connoisseur of Christian sf/fantasy, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer; the outlook is not encouraging. Best of luck, Ross. • *Greg Pickersgill*, struggling with a 10-foot stack of 1,000 excess/duplicate fanzines from the Memory Hole recycling project, seeks enthusiasts

prepared to collect this surplus (3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, SA61 2XG) or pay for shipping charges. ● *Bob Tucker's venerable Neo-Fan's Guide to SF Fandom* is in print again after more than a decade: 8th edition, \$3 NA or \$5 overseas, to KaCSFFS Inc, PO Box 36212, Kansas City, MO 64171-6262, USA. ● *D. West* stirred from his immemorial slumber and published a fairly mild denunciation of the Corflu UK Progress Report in the form of *Dainsaid 7½*, for a 'Super-Exclusive Pannish Elite' of some 11 people including Hillary Clinton.

R.I.P. General Sir John Hackett (1910-1997), author/editor of the futurological *The Third World War* (1978). ● *Burgess Meredith* (1908-1997), best-known to fans as *The Penguin* in the *Adam West Batman* tv series and 1966 movie. 'The latter was in about 100 other movies, directing some of them, despite falling foul of the House Un-American Activities Committee; as far as I can see, none of the others were of genre interest.' [PB]

Hazel's Language Lessons. Inuit, for decipherers of Wolfe's *Book of the Long Sun* character names: *oosik*, the penis bone of the walrus. Anglo-Saxon, for jaded reviewers of too much genre fantasy: *ælfsgoða*, a hiccup or eructation thought to be caused by elves.

TAFF. Next year's TransAtlantic Fan Fund race to the Baltimore worldcon (Bucconeer) now has three intending candidates: Bridget Hardcastle and Maureen Kincaid Speller have been joined by Chris Bell.

British Fantasy Awards ... here's the 1997 novel shortlist: Iain Banks, *Excession*; Clive Barker, *Sacrament*; Storm Constantine, *Scenting Hallowed Blood*; Robin Hobb, *Assassin's Apprentice*; Graham Joyce, *The Tooth Fairy*; Terry Pratchett, *Hogfather*; Michael Marshall Smith, *Spare*; Peter Straub, *The Hellfire Club*.

C.o.A. Tommy Ferguson, 40 Deramore Ave, Belfast, BT7 3ER, Northern Ireland ('Wild rumours that I will be marrying Lesley Reece are unfounded. I shall be returning to the USA some time next year—after Corflu—and hope to stay there for good.'). *Bridget Hardcastle & Simon Bradshaw*, 19 Wedgewood Rd, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 0EX. (From 14 Oct. Bridget: 'And we've just got engaged and we're very happy.'). *Duncan Hedderley*, Stats Research & Consulting Centre, Massey Univ, PO Box 11-222, Palmerston North, New Zealand. *Caroline Mullan & Brian Ameringen* hope to move on 24/5 Oct: 37 Coventry Rd, Ilford, IQ1 4QR; 0181 554 3799. Volunteers to help shift 15,000 books that weekend are welcome: call 0181 863 8849. *Tibs & Joan Paterson*, 26 Paradise St, Cambridge, CB1 1DR (6 months min). *Elst & Carole Weinstein*, 1427 Cambridge Ave, Upland, CA 91786. USA. *Pam Wells*, Flat 6, Cambridge House, 7 Bootham Tce, York, YO3 7DH.

Whog's Language Lesson. *Battlestar Galactica* official measuring units: 1 cubit = 1 gold coin. 1 centon = 1 minute. 1 micron = 0.1 centon (hence the Very Close Action alert, 'Enemy fighters fifty microns away and closing!'). 1 metron = approx 1 metre. 1 parsec = 90 million miles. 1 hectare = 9 million miles. 1 crawlion = 1 spider. [MR]

Delta Film Awards at 1997 Festival of Fantastic Films (Sept) ... INDEPENDENT FEATURE: *Darklands* (UK; dir Julian Richards). INDEPENDENT SHORT: *Zuyuva* (UK; dir Jonathan Randall). AMATEUR: *Legend of Roy* (UK; dir Rob Richardson, Keith Wright). [SG, exhausted judge]

Classic Film Criticism. From a 1936 review of *Things to Come*: 'Since what happens 100 years hence is of no consequence to anyone now old enough to enjoy the cinema, the notion of producing a film of which the longest and most spectacular portions deal with 2036 seems, at first glance, daringly original. Original it is. It is daring only by contrast with Hollywood's timid preference for doing, insofar as possible, only what has been done before.' [BJ]

First Contact with Planet Burke. 'I have exciting news for you and all Terrans!' begins this tacky alien circular offering *The Burke's Peerage World Book of Terrans*, as sent to (oh, I see) Chris Terran...

Outraged Letters. *Malcolm Edwards*: 'HarperCollins Trade Division is not one word: it is three words, as any fule kno. [But two words on *Malcolm's July 97 letterhead—Ed.*] HarperCollins Publishers, on the other hand, and equally obviously, is one word, but one of those rare words that turns into italics partway through. HarperCollins San Francisco is of course one word, or was before it was closed down. There is a style guide running to some hundreds of pages which explains all this, and I would send you a copy had I not inadvertently chucked it away some years ago. ● I see my inflated scrotums made it into your pages [Ansible 119]. What Rob Holdstock didn't mention was that the poor bugger to whom they belonged was one of a pair of identical twins, both murdered, named, er, Langford.... This case brought me briefly to prominence on the front page of the *Guardian*, though you might be excused for missing it as my identity was cunningly concealed within the phrase "an Old Bailey jury". ● *Teddy Harvia*, staunch Texan, objected

to that line about 'too much white space' at Worldcon: 'Teresa Nielsen Hayden's sound bite on LoneStarCon2 came across as so much white noise. If you expect a Worldcon to entertain you while you passively sit back, you will go home with an empty memory book. I filled my pages of the convention to the margins with friends, programming, parties, and the city.' ● *Teresa Nielsen Hayden* clarified: 'Oh dear. I was referring to all that unpeopled space one had to pass through in order to get to anywhere from anywhere, and the diffuse, low-energy feel it gave things.' ● *Walter Jon Williams*™ hardwires a cheery footnote: 'Wired has given up its oppositions in the UK—a legal action running parallel with the one in the US—which means I now (or will shortly) own a couple of UK trademarks. If you wish to license these trademarks for scads of money, by all means let me know.'

Whog's Masterclass. 'They looked at each other with naked eyes.' (Gordon R. Dickson, *Young Bleys*, 1991) ● 'The marshland had run for a day's walk.' (Mick Farren, *The Texts of Festival*, 1973) ... 'The bazooka rang like a tuning fork.' (Tom Monteleone, *Seeds of Change*, 1975) [LM] ● 'He felt as if he'd been thrown out of a helicopter with a mountain tied to his back.' (Lewis Shiner, *Frontera*, 1984) [AT] ● 'Their range was, within limits, virtually unlimited.' (A.J. Merak, *No Dawn And No Horizon*, 1959) [SH] ● 'He was handsome and blond, with the same height and almost the same muscular build as Chastity, except her chest-circumference measurement involved different lumps from his.' (Robert L. Forward, *Saturn Rukh*, 1997) [SHS]

Judith Merrill 1923-1997

John Clute remembers her ...

From the moment she arrived in Canada in 1970, until she died this month, Judith Merrill lived in the heart of Toronto. This was something of a miracle, as the heart of Toronto—though intensely urban and much loved by those who lived inside its invisible walls—is not very large.

It had taken Judith Clute and myself years to find it. The apartment block we eventually moved into, 160 Huron Street, was dark, dismal, festooned with balconies like a New Orleans slum, as stinky as New York in August. I doubt there was another place like it in the city. We loved it, and mourned departing it when we left the country in 1968. Neither of us knew Judith Merrill at all, or spoke or wrote to her about where to live in Toronto when she came; but in 1970, like a mongoose scooting into its lair, Judith Merrill found 160 Huron, and went inside. And stayed a long while.

Here she was close to the University of Toronto, and to the public library where, very soon, she deposited her sf collection which formed the core of the archive known first as the Spaced Out Library, eventually as the Merrill Collection. By 1977, when Judith Clute and I returned to Toronto for a while, she had become the central voice of sf for the metropolis, a function she only slowly relinquished as her body began to fail her, and as the Canadian sf community began to exfoliate a jangle or three of new voices.

In 1977 she was domineering, raunchy, funny, bad-tempered; and bore a scolding gravitas; and was locked into the very famous writer's block that lasted the rest of her life, with remissions. She had a mongoose eye, and a grin. She certainly frightened me quite a bit, though I loved being around her.

As the years passed, and as she resolutely failed to live wisely, she became solider and wider, pressing heavily on the ground (or later into the motorized wheelchair she used with an ill grace when her heart was paining her). She gossiped, with an exhilarating viciousness, about the past; she longed for new stuff.

In June this year, she came to Ad Astra, a convention held at Toronto Airport. Physically she had continued to melt into the humiliating soft girdle of age. She hated it volubly; she hated dying. There, and in her new apartment a mile or so from Huron Street, we talked a bit, gossip mainly; though she had a sharp longing to hear about anything new: new books, new careers.

It was not an old person's apartment—it was full of new books, and gadgets, and it smelled good. The gossip also smelled like good clean dirt. I loved her. I can hear her voice now, inside the head, shaping the pasts of so many personages of sf into tales more human than perhaps they dream for themselves. [John Clute, September 1997]

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