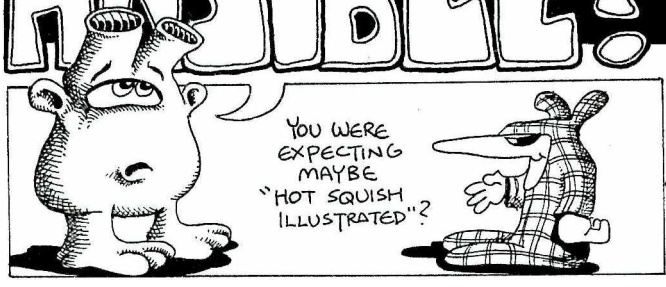


ANSIBLE?



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BENEATH THE FLAT STONE :: THE WORLD OF BOOKS

J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun*, heavily tipped for the Booker Prize by millions of reviewers, duly bounded onto the shortlist in the favourite's position despite an unusually boring and anti-innovative panel of judges—whose token human being Polly Devlin expressed loud bogglement that Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* wasn't shortlisted. (A lot of reviewers thought the same. The *Guardian* explained that AC's "brilliant extravaganza may have been thought too overreaching by the rather conservative panel of judges.") Devlin went on to explain that *Empire* was the favourite because "it is the only novel on the shortlist that is not about writers writing." Even *Private Eye* gave its blessing to 'Jim Gentleman Ballard'... but rumblings of disquiet have emerged from 5,271,009 people interned in 40s Shanghai (setting of *Empire*), who are unanimous in saying It Wasn't Like That At All, Ballard Has Got It All Wrong. "Er um well," replied a shifty-sounding Gollancz editor, "Ballard was creating a *metaphorical, fictional* truth." The crack *Ansible* team of semanticists has analysed this remark by Malcolm (for it is he) Edwards, decoding it as: "You cretins, this is really *SF* set in an *alternate-world* Shanghai, only I can't say that with the mainstream critics listening..." STOP PRESS: Booker result later this issue!

A MARVELLOUS EAR FOR NAMES is one of the things that just about everyone grants Tolkien. Which is why I think it's a bit mean of Unwin to publish (in *The Book of Lost Tales II*) the fact that in callow 1917 he perpetrated, inter alia, an elf called Tinfang Warble...

BOB SHAW'S *Fire Pattern* has roused speculation: the hero rings an aging John Sladek to ask about spontaneous combustion in people, and can only extract flip, joky, content-free answers. Is Shaw needling Sladek, I was asked? Bob confesses: "John wrote all his own dialogue for that scene." Thus *Fire Pattern*—like *Lies, Inc*, which has two Sladek linking passages—becomes a vital item for the Sladek bibliography even now being prepared by notorious pamphleteer Chris Drumm. (CD produces mini-booklet SF/reference stuff at 20-55pp: recent ones are 'It's Down the Slippery Cellar Stairs', Lafferty nonfic \$2; 'Love Among the Xoids', Sladek short \$1; 'A James Gunn Checklist' \$1.25; 'Tiger, Tiger!', short Gunn novel from 1952, \$2.25, all postpaid: PO Box 445, Polk City, Iowa 50226.) Meanwhile, Bob shyly confesses to having contracted to write Gollancz a massive SF blockbuster of 120,000 words or more! Title? Content? "Er, I'm still thinking about that part."

SAVOY CENSORED, AS USUAL: D.Britton & M.Butterworth of Savoy Books produced a vast anthology, *Savoy Dreams*, a weird and slightly self-indulgent (eg. reprinting all the reviews of previous Savoy books) collection full of famous names, bits of books that didn't get published, the inside story of their police prosecution, etc: apparently they only did 800 copies at £7.95, sending most of these to reviewers who almost instantly said nothing. Hear now the word of fearless alternative bookshop Compendium (NW.1), tactfully explaining to Savoy why Compendium feels unable to stock *SD*: "Dear assholes, I've got enough boring letters to open every morning without you two whining because we don't want to stock your book... The pseudo-mystical soft porn you specialize in is very, very conservative and deeply boring. I mean, down here it's 1984 and our customers are just not interested in such pretentious twaddle. Piss on you, Chris Render." Far out, man.

THE SF SOURCEBOOK ed.D.Wingrove was launched on tides of alcohol, 3 Sept, down in the Planetarium's 'Astronomers' Gallery' amid giant orreries and a model of the Ptolemaic epicycles which for authenticity used real bicycle wheels. Brian Aldiss's speech did not neglect to mention the book had been his idea. Kingsley Amis chatted up nubile young publishing people. "What market d'you think this book's aimed at?" someone asked Brian Stableford. "Remainder," he said instantly. Brian had contributed to the book's 'Michelin Guide To SF', but denied having given the supreme accolade of five stars for characterization to (wait for it) Jack Chalker. "I didn't give five stars to anything," he said. "Nor I," said Roz Kaveny. "In fact I gave lots of things no stars at all," grumbled BS, "but they all got edited out." Somewhere a boring *Ansible* editor was droning, "Listen to this. C.Sheffield's *Web Between the Worlds* gets five for literary merit, putting this undistinguished acolyte of Arthur C.Clarke ahead of Aldiss, Dick, Huxley, Lem, Nabokov, Orwell, Swift, Twain, Vonnegut and Wells, not to mention Clarke himself..." With such controversy, how could the book fail? Presently the Planetarium slung everyone out: the Wingrove coterie retreated to DW's private party ("I don't suppose I'll be seeing you there?" said Ritchie Smith to Roz: "No, I thought you wouldn't be invited.") and the rest of us went home to write our reviews.

NON-REVIEWS: D.Wingrove is also responsible for John Goodchild Publishers' 'SF Alternatives' series, aimed at producing nice, expensive editions of books you already have. To hand are Bester's *Tiger! Tiger!* (I turned straight to the typographical pyrotechnics of ch.15, hoping to find the bits clearly missing on p231 of the Penguin edition, only to find this is photolithoed from the Penguin edition—rats) and Crowley's *Beasts* (a bit young, at 8 years, for canonization, but never mind. It would have been gracious, though, to cut a page of editorial introduction and make room for Crowley's omitted dedication and epigraph). Another reissue deserving of a mention: H.G.Wells's *The Croquet Player* from Ian Henry Publications, possibly the best of Wells's later fiction and disturbingly prophetic (in 1936) of events in 1939. *Fandom Directory 1984-5* (\$9.95: Fandom Computer Services, PO Box 4278, San Bernardino, CA 92409) may be of value to people wanting to compile vast mailing lists of US comics/media fans, or to purchase plastic bags (the principal product advertised). But coverage is spotty—I can't even find *Locus* in the publications index—and the 230 or so UK addresses are riddled with bygone fanzines, cons and addresses. The problem is that *FD* is not researched but compiled from forms completed by (some) fans: imagine how slim and useful the telephone directory would be if everyone had to make an active and regular effort, involving postal costs, to be listed. Caveat emptor. Lastly, Mosaic Publishing Ltd have released computer-game versions of Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat Saves The World* and Moorcock's

ANSIBLE 40 looks back over five hectic years of publication and, in a flood of sudden nostalgia, decides it's safer not to mention any of the details. Instead, the usual up-to-the-gigasecond news and abuse from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKS, RG1 5AU, England... Subscription rates are being heroically, if temporarily, held constant despite postal increases: 6 issues for £2.00 with notes to me, sterling cheques/money orders to ANSIBLE, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403; \$3.50 US to agents Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550; £2 equivalent to Roelof Goudriaan should you meet him at some continental con; and for Australians I hope to quote rates in local currency real soon now. (Leigh Edmonds, This Means You!) The cartoon is by BRAD W. FOSTER, the mailing labels are as ever the work of KEITH FREEMAN, last issue's collation was by Hazel and me because no one else turned up (mumble, grump) and this issue will be zooming off to 424 addresses. Mailing label runes: LASTISH XX means you're OK to issue XX, SUB DUE means you just stopped being OK, ***** delicately conveys that even if your best friend hasn't pointed it out you have been non-OK for a detectable period, and TRADE means you're permanently OK until I change my mind. This issue's excursion into culture: "I believe that composing on the typewriter has probably done more than anything else to deteriorate English prose." (Edmund Wilson, 1962.) DOES ANYONE read this small print? To test this, I'm putting the Complaints Department here: Marise Morland-Chapman passes on comments from boyfriend Sydney Jordan to the effect that he didn't object to the fake Bob Shaw, merely to "being on the unpopular side" of the Albacon/Faircon clash—"If he's going to take 3 days off he doesn't want to spend it lecturing to 3 people." Mr Jordan avers that he will never agree to be Goh anywhere ever again... Malcolm Edwards was miffed by my fascist, oppressive behaviour in not mentioning his BSFA award on the front page; Chris Hughes complained that I'd utterly failed to trace 95% of Seacon's problems to a certain co-Chairman who is not John Brunner; and Alan Dorey was unhappy about the 'Cassandra' bits (but later said that when he actually got around to reading *Ansible* rather than relying on Graham James's phone call, it seemed OK). Fulsome apologies to all these afflicted persons. Oct 1984.

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Nomad of Time (the 'Bastable' trilogy), £9.95 apiece (CBM-64 version only). Over the phone I mentioned to a Mosaic publicist that I'd heard Harry enthuse about working with a programmer on the Rat adventure-game: "Oh no," was the reply, "that would be the other version that'll be released in the States, he didn't have anything to do with this one." Oh.

DISCH BATHROOM HORROR! Roz Kaveney gleefully notes that one of the hideous fates allotted to characters in Tom Disch's new *The Businessman: a Tale of Terror* is being condemned to haunt a fearful bathroom appallingly decorated with Aubrey Beardsley designs. It is said that Gollancz bounced the book. It is certain that, after all their parties, the decor of Malcolm Edwards's and Chris Atkinson's bog is notorious...

EXCITING, VIBRANT, LATE, BORING WORLDCON STUFF
That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons Malcolm Edwards may send in the report *Ansible* has long awaited, but stuff that. Instead, some bitlets from

COLIN FINE: "LA-Con II committee started as they were to go on, by getting up people's noses. They kept to all their much-trumpeted mottos but #2, 'No standing in line.' Around 11am on the Thursday the half-room in front of the registration tables was so full of people milling about in search of the right desk, they had to stop people coming in for a bit. Result: a 20-minute queue in about 100° heat. Lovely. Queues returned on Sunday: at midnight they were showing the Star Wars trilogy in a 1600-seat theatre, and somebody panicked and put up a notice by registration, pointing out that con membership didn't *guarantee* admission to popular items; registration gophers were instructed to repeat this to each day-member they enrolled at a princely \$35. Whether because of this scaremongering or not, they were queuing for the films before 6pm. Rumour has it that eventually only 1100 people ~~stayed~~ sat through the trilogy, and received long-service medals from the official SW fan club.

"The main way the concom upset people was by carelessly allowing themselves to appear partisan over future bids. First they apparently invited Atlanta in '86 to provide bags for members' programme bumf, without extending any similar offer to NY or Philly. When Britain in '87 turned up ready to man a membership desk all day, rejected the Fan Lounge (tucked in an inaccessible corner... sound familiar?) as a venue, and asked nicely for a table somewhere prominent, they let us use one at the front of the hucksters' room. Phoenix in '87 objected, apparently because they hadn't thought of asking for—and couldn't man—a table. LA-Con's Solomonic solution was to oust us and allow Phoenix a day in the same spot—which they did not take up. Instead we acquired a real paid-for table by simply buying up (privately) a dealer's entire stock and offering him a small sum for the tail-end of his table-rent.

"About the same time we met the Phoenix people and struck up a relationship culminating in the great '87 Bid Party on Sunday night, which won the coveted 'Party of the Day' accolade in the Monday newsletter: a triple party, Phoenix, us and LA (a Westercon bid). Chris Atkinson spent the evening selling UK in 87 badges, and occasionally her body, to all comers...

"Membership was 9282; actually *there* were 8365, comprising 5823 pre-registered and 2542 walk-ins. Rumoured profits are over \$100,000, probably \$150,000; rumouredly they broke even in June and everything since is gravy, which they courageously maximized by such financially responsible acts as refusing to show the roomful of short films they'd already hired, as that would need an extra projectionist. Another rumour: part of the surplus will be used to refund memberships of those who put most into the con... The 1986 Worldcon will by Confederation in Atlanta, Georgia, Aug 28 to Sept 1, GoH Ray Bradbury FGoH Terry Carr Toastmaster Bob Shaw. Membership rates until 1985: \$25 supp \$35 att, further info from UK agent Colin Fine, 205 Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY.

"LA's venue, the Anaheim Hilton & Towers, is a strange hotel. The 'Towers' is merely the 14th, ie. top, floor—actually the 13th since though there's a floor numbered 13, there isn't one numbered 10! Long rambling corridors surround, on floor 5, a pool and two 'decks' of astroturf: many parties were in 5th-floor suites opening onto the decks, so ultimately there was just one giant party in the open under the stars, the Disneyland fireworks and the Goodyear blimp.

"Shock recognition at the con was *Brian Burgess*. Surprise predicament was that of Duncan Lunan, who'd been flown out by a symposium so incompetent that they only got him a single flight and then went broke. He was desperately trying to sell *Man & the Planets* (at \$17.95/copy) to raise his fare home.

"Hugos? Oh yeah, some books or other won them." (C.Fine)
SOME BOOKS OR OTHER comprised David Brin's *Startide Rising* (novel), Timothy Zahn's 'Cascade Point' (novella), Greg Bear's 'Blood Music' (novelette), Octavia Butler's 'Speech Sounds' (short), Donald Tuck's *Encyclopaedia of SF & Fantasy vol 3* (nonfic), *Return of the Jedi* (film), Shawna McCarthy of *IASFM* (editor), Michael Whelan (artist), *Locus* (semiprozine), *File 770* (fanzine), Alexis Gilliland (fanartist), Mike Glyer (fanwriter), R.A. MacAvoy (John W. 'Not A Hugo' Campbell Award). Censorship in its ugliest form occurred when—Hugo nominees having been asked for transparencies of themselves to enliven the ceremony—LA-Con bounced a pic of D. Langford, requesting 'one we can show in public, please.' Thus a boring slide was hastily unearthed from the files, and thus Dave Wood failed to gain an international audience for his tasteful study of my Seacon nosebleed, Shame.

CHARLES PLATT evidently had a great time: "'Too large,' people complained, referring not only to the attendees but the environs: several halls the size of football fields, huge concrete plazas across which fans toiled in baking heat, and 100-yard hotel corridors all combined to make it impossible to meet friends except by appointment. The programme was disappointingly sparse. California is the state richest in SF writers, but few big names attended. Frank Herbert spent 2 hours signing books and promoting the *Dune* movie; he said the soundtrack by the Viennese Symphony Orchestra was 'at least as compelling as the theme from *Jaws*' and claimed the \$60M made it the most expensive movie in history. The clip I saw looked sort of shabby and dim, like an etching.

"Bradbury, van Vogt, Sturgeon and Heinlein didn't show. Ellison appeared only to bestow a special plaque on one-time SF editor Larry Shaw (who bought Harlan's first story). Ellison's speech, read in collaboration with Bob Silverberg, was unusually rich in hyperbole, and couched in the past tense, making it hard to tell the recipient was alive. Shaw appeared, in fact, to be dying of throat cancer, and was thus mercifully unable to respond at length. The grim ritual came midway through the Hugos, as if Ellison were sanctimoniously reminding his audience of the Real Values in life.

"The Hugos drew half the crowd of the 3-hour costume parade. Generally, the more serious the item, the smaller the audience. A beautiful, authoritative slide-show by a JPL physicist, documenting the Voyager mission past Jupiter and Saturn, attracted a crowd of ten. By contrast, fans were lining up to see the Star Wars trilogy hours before showtime, playing cassettes of the movie theme to get themselves in the right frame of mind. Those of us who have always felt alienated from the outside world can now feel totally alienated from worldcons, too. The huckster room was heavy on t-shirts, badges, toys, memorabilia and food; light on books. Hollywood studios contributed big media exhibits; I found the 8-foot model Nautilus from Disney's *20,000 Leagues* the only item with any real imaginative authority.

"Most enjoyable program moment for me was when Barry Bayley won a 'Japanese Hugo' for best translated English-language novel. Most enjoyable evening activity was when Greg Benford and his twin brother Jim led me in search of a rumoured nitrous oxide party: 'It's somewhere around here,' Greg said, at which moment the loud hissing of a balloon being inflated came clearly from behind one of the Hilton doors. Within, we found four large tanks of nitrous and a dozen or so left-over 60s freaks in various stages of decomposition. 'Always look behind you before you fall over,' one of them told me—sage advice, from one who knew." (C.Platt)

SQUIRMING MAGS

The section heading comes from *Cheap Truth*, a vile piece of samizdat rumoured to emanate from an anonymous *Interzone* ? contributor at 809-C W 12th St, Austin, Texas 78701, USA. *CT* covers SF mags like this: "[*IASFM*] suffers from Dr Asimov's own prolixity, for his prolificacy has now reached the terminal stage and he can write any amount of anything about nothing... *Analog* exudes the stale, mummylike odour of attitudes preserved too long... brain and heart are in canopic jars somewhere, while its contributors' word-processors spit out

copy on automatic pilot... [I2] has the finest editorial ideology in the English-speaking world, bound cheek-by-jowl with stories often riddled with conceit and void of substance. Yet *IZ* sustains hope with unpredictable bursts of appalling brilliance... *Omni's* 'Boy Eats Own Foot' approach to science coverage makes its reportage highly suspect... its power-mad art department has earned an unpleasant notoriety. Stories are trimmed to fit like styrofoam, occasionally without authorial consultation; sometimes, incredibly, lines are even added... (CT7) An earlier issue features a Swiftian Rhapsody on SF, which a famous SF author living in Oxford would surely deny writing: I passed this to Joe Nicholas for *Paperback Inferno*, but just a few lines...

These failures clog the lists of DAW, Del Rey, Ace Books, Avon and Tor, Where copywriters gild their sins With 'Greater Tolkiens', 'New LeGuins', 'Beats Arthur Clarke', 'Equal to Niven'—As if that awful thought were Heaven!—Or 'Starrier Wars'... And Sturgeon there, Here Budrys, 'Masterpiece' declare, 'Not to be missed...' Such feeble lies Support a feebler enterprise Of Royalties at 4%

Which scarcely serve to pay the rent.... (CT6)

OMNI UK has appeared on the stands: advance rumours (such as belatedly printed in *Matria*) hinted that the 're-launch' would have 16 pages of British material bound into the same old US edition. In fact the whole thing has more of a British look, the 'disposable' 16pp merely containing all the SF content. "The emphasis is on the science side", explains editor Jon Chambers... who may edit only one more issue (out 29 Nov), since a searching *Ansible* investigation discloses that Sightline Publications Ltd (a division of Northern & Shell, owning *Forum* and *Penthouse UK*) has merely bought rights to publish two trial issues of *Omni UK*. Despite pious hopes of "going monthly from early 1985", the outlook is currently uncertain—better not rush all your *IZ* rejections to PO Box 381, Mill Harbour, London, E14 9TW just yet, as #2 closed on 12 Oct, two days after I was begged to rush in some reviews.

FTL MAGAZINE (New York): putative editor Greg Costiyan announces this SF/games mag's "abortion" owing to a pro-posed publication deal, and pleads for no more stories...

WHITE DWARF & IMAGINE, the UK role-playing-game thingies, persist with rumoured circulations of over 40,000 for *WD*, well under 20,000 for *I*. The former shows signs of developing a fiction policy, ie. publishing some; editor Jamie Thomson has been replaced by one Jon Sutherland. "I see Jamie has decided to call it a day after hearing about the Polaroid and the goat," confides *I* editor Paul Cockburn, meanwhile bouncing a Langford joke about religious attitudes to D&D ("We all suffixed our mirth by saying 'No, no... we daren't...'",) and mentioning that 4500 words is about as bloated and verbose as a story can be for publication in *Imagine*.

STARLIGHT SF NEWS is that sort of 'electronic *Ansible*' which has intermittently appeared on the Micronet 800 view-data pages (moving confusingly and inexplicably between pp 6006207 and 8006207—a Prestel cock-up has lately filled the former slot with a version exhumed from 1983, mentioning Asimov as GoH at Seacon 84... oh the shame). Its intermittent status was largely the result of communication problems, the electronic whizkids of Micronet being incapable of anything so low-tech as writing letters: a renaissance is hoped in the near future, and I may be able to pay m*n*y to contributors. Meanwhile I find myself connected to Prestel via bootleg hardware which conceals me under the secret identity 'Radio Kent' (brother of the more famous Clark). I'm told I can receive electronic mail sent to the 'address' 733 631 000. Um well.

NOVA SF, the major Swedish mag, has acquired a Managing Editor, writes co-Boss Editor John-Henri Holmberg: "lacking anybody else with even a minimum of editing experience or spelling ability, we had to settle for Ahrvid Engholm." Rush your submissions (Ahrvid recommends sending traditional hard SF, or well-written prose with subtlety/emotion) to Pålunds-gatan 1 A, S-117 31 Stockholm, for marvellously tactful rejections. John-Henri: "I rather liked [it] and have passed it on to our new Managing Editor." Ahrvid: "John-Henri tossed a small paper plane in my direction, which when I unfolded it proved to be a story by you that he wanted me to reject."



INTERZONE has had an editorial reshuffle, with J.Clute, A.Dorey and R.Kaveney (the latter already absent from the *IZ* masthead) 'promoted upstairs' as advisers, C.Greenland, S.Ounsley and D.Pringle as co-editors proper, A. Frost news editor as well as designer, and newcomers Judith Hanna & Lindsey Morris conscripted as 'assistant editors'—their brains becoming cannon-fodder on suicide missions into the uncharted slushpile. An *Interzone Anthology* appears in Dent trade-paperback next April—12 stories from issues 1-9 plus a new, long outbreak from Geoff Ryman. Added publicity for *IZ* was provided when Pseudos Corner (*Private Eye*) published J.G.Ballard's belief in adolescent women's pudenda (see *IZ*8)—I was glad to help out, folks, no trouble at all.

TO THE STARS, or more properly *L.Ron Hubbard's To The Stars*, was launched at LA-Con (my invitation to the party came two days beforehand, but even with this generous margin I failed to make it). It is a 'NEWS, REVIEWS & COMMENTARY' magazine of the SCIENCE FICTION—and all related—field of interest!" (sic)... Methuselah Press, 3963 Wilshire Blvd #142, Los Angeles, CA 90010, USA. No fiction, apparently, except winners of the Hubbard Skiffy Comp which despite *A39* remains open (all Fred Harris's fault for not sending further details as promised): new—no more than 3 shorts published—writers can rush in stuff up to 17000 words until the final quarterly deadline 30-6-85; only one entry/quarter; author's name on covering sheet but not on MS proper; address 2210 Wilshire Blvd #343, Santa Monica, CA 90403; prizes zero to \$1000.

FANTASY BOOK, the new version, has turned up for review. Parts are quite good, though I can live without stuff like *yet another* po-faced Lovecraft pastiche from Brian Lumley (part 3 of a serial, yet). No foreign sub rates quoted; it's imported by the usual shops with £2 UK on the cover. Fiction rates 2½-4¢/word. Needs fewer fantasy clichés, more risk-taking. Ed. Nick Smith, PO Box 60126, Pasadena, CA 91106, USA.

FORTEAN TIMES, edited from East Ham by former fan Bob Rickard, is getting computerized with an IBM PC... or maybe not. "I've discovered 3000 subjects so far, and I'm only up to C," confessed BR as he discovered commercial database programs to be unable to cope with his "millions of new clippings" about rains of frogs, blood, crabs and small portions of Richard Bergeron's brain (among other arcane phenomena).

PETER NICHOLLS NEWS! At long last the dispute between PN (also D.Langford & B.Stableford) and Roxby Press, regarding the money from *The Science in SF*, has come to a suitably messy lack of conclusion. Old-time readers may dimly recall that RP deducted some £46000 from gross receipts before calculating royalties, thus enabling the authors to subsidize the cost of printing the book. The PN/RP contract is a shambles (leading to PN's later sacking of his then agents). Our Peter has now obtained counsel's opinion to the effect that (a) there would be an 80% chance of getting RP to cough up via a High Court case; (b) however, if PN/DL/BS lost the case, costs of up to £15000 might have to be paid; (c) the few thousand involved is unfortunately too much to chase through Small Claims Court. This will be absolutely wonderful news for all publishers.

Peter writes: "*The Encyclopaedia of Fantasy*, companion volume to *The Enc. of SF*, has awoken from its 3½ year slumber and is sending out tendrils of new growth. It will be edited by myself and Clute, and Granada are considering it v.seriously right now. Even if they cannot find a US co-publisher the project will not die, because Clare, Clute & I will probably set up a small packaging company and do it ourselves, selling to Granada here and to whatever intelligent American finally wants it over there... Apropos of all this, you may also report that Maxim Jakubowski has, in recent months, been writing to every semi-prozine in the USA telling them that he is doing an Encyclopaedia of Fantasy (with Allen & Unwin), designed to be a companion volume to Nicholls's *Encyclopaedia of SF*. Jakubowski is a cretin, and has no right to make claims of this sort without prior consultation with either Nicholls or Granada... Love and kisses..." (PN, 27 Aug)

Maxim was last seen at packagers Rainbird, commissioning books in all directions (like a Georgette Heyer Companion by Garry Kilworth, the mind spungs) and clutching the typescript of *The Heliocenta Encyclopaedia*, which Mr Aldiss hopes will do for the trilogy what Eliot's notes did for *The Waste Land*.

COME TO SUNNY MILFORD :: PAUL KINCAID

The Compton is a small, comfortable hotel in the salubrious south coast resort of Milford-on-Sea; an ideal setting for a

quiet, relaxing break. Wander country lanes to the sea, enjoying splendid views of the Isle of Wight. Lounge by the pool, play pool or table-tennis in the games room. Regular guests are quiet and you'll find it easy to unwind in their company, or join in the regular games and entertainments. Pat and Don Emberson, our hosts, will make you welcome with delicious cuisine and a well-stocked bar. All in all, you are sure to leave Milford feeling rested and refreshed.

More accurately—come along to the Milford SF Writers' Workshop. A somewhat shortened Milford this year, taking place over the weekend of 28 Sept-1 Oct. And with just nine ~~satifficial~~ attendees.

The Compton is inconveniently situated for the train—four miles from the nearest station, in New Milton, or further still for Lisa Tuttle. Travelling on the last train of Friday night, Lisa got to New Milton only to find all the doors of her carriage locked. After a few tantalizing moments in the station she was carried off willy-nilly to Bournemouth, where a ticket collector scratched his head and said wonderingly, "Yes, we've had a few complaints about that." People in the know might suspect that Lisa's story was an elaborate excuse to avoid a lift from David Garnett, whose car appears to have been cobbled together years ago from rusting fragments found on a scrap heap by someone who didn't really know what cars are supposed to be like. That it still runs must be counted one of the wonders of modern science. They built 'em to last in 1954.

A warm welcome is guaranteed—provided there's actually anybody there to welcome you. I arrived feeling very hungry and more than a little damp. The hotel looked deserted. I rang the bell, knocked on the door: no answer. I checked my invitation to see if I'd got the right place and the right date. I had. Included was a dadaistic map showing the hotel and a pub down the road where, I was assured, Milforders tended to congregate on the first night. So I repaired there for a drink and a meal, but found no sign of my fellow workshopers. Returning, I found the hotel still devoid of life, until eventually a shamefaced Langford (with Hazel in tow) appeared. "Oh, er, sorry boss. You been waiting long?" Pat and Don, it appeared, had gone out to frivel; the Milforders had shifted to a pub not featured on the Langford map...

Saturday appeared bright and sunny enough for group exercise—a route march along muddy lanes to within a stone's throw of the sea. At least Mary Gentle threw stones at it; then agonized over whether she'd hurt it or not. This walk was an aberration; our most strenuous later exercise consisted of helping ourselves to drinks from the bar, and playing unending games of pool. Mary and I regularly stayed up into the early hours, each totally incapable of defeating the other at this silly game. Decorum was maintained throughout, with cues only occasionally broken over the opponent's head and language restrained to near-publishable levels.

Otherwise... mornings were spent feverishly trying to read a six-inch pile of manuscripts, and afternoons in tearing these manuscripts to bits. One should not minimize the tremendous generosity shown by everyone at Milford. They would dispense their sharpest criticisms lavishly and with great bounty, never letting their smiles fade throughout this strenuous attention that was surely beyond the call of duty. Between such bouts of intense intellectual activity, Geoff Ryman kept us entertained for hours with colourful descriptions of the grosser aspects of plastic surgery, while Peter Beere proved expert in various country practices involving sheep. Lisa Tuttle did her famous imitation of a big-mouth frog; Colin Greenland kept up the charade all weekend, croaking piteously as his voice gradually faded to nothing.

Speaking of charades, a game did develop on Sunday night, after an especially good and well-lubricated banquet laid on by the hotel. Garry Kilworth proved remarkably adept at thinking up titles like *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, while Geoff Ryman's performance of *The House at Pooh Corner* should be preserved in a thespian hall of fame. Elsewhere, a no-holds-barred, bare-fisted game of scrabble erupted in furious debate over Dave Langford's spelling of 'jism'.

Speaking of bodily fluids, David G. had arrived in apparent rubicund health to announce that he had a cold. With remarkable open-handedness, he proceeded to share his good fortune. Thus, on Monday morning, as we slowly emerged,

bleary-eyed and hungover, many of us had this extra souvenir of our visit to take home. (Other, equally welcome souvenirs included the unfortunately ineradicable memories of G. Kilworth's jokes. It was Mr Garnett who contributed the most harrowingly memorable scene in any story, a detailed yet inadvertent description of a flasher in what was supposed to be a space-opera for kids... DRL)

In truth, though, it was a marvellously stimulating and enjoyable weekend, one of the best I've had, and I can only hope I'll be invited back next year (please!). I also hope for a return to the week-long format. A weekend that good, extended over a full week, would be worth experiencing. (PK)

CASSANDRA WORKSHOP 1984 :: CHARLES STROSS

So where were the slaving publishers, waiting to snap up first serial rights to the masterpieces served up at this workshop? It began quietly, as one by two the hesitant writers appeared in the door of the hotel bar. There, these exotic, unknown beings from alien locations who wrote such peculiar things were snorkling *La'ger* and *ci'de'r* and such esoteric brews through their appendages. Ian Watson appeared quite smug, possibly due to Gollancz's decision to feed him better in return for more volumes of *The Book of the River*. Dave Clements considered translating his contribution from the American for those of us who live on this side of the great undrinkable. Sue Thomason caused controversy by her absence due to lurgi (shall we or shall we not wait till closing time?)... aggravated next day when, in the quiet and dignified Westone Hotel conference room (grovels—we may need it again), it was agreed that her piece was worthy of good publicity—the kind with royalties attached.

Saturday passed without anyone quite crawling through the door whilst trying to stem the flow from the jugular. It wasn't as self-congratulatory as it might have been; no one escaped some degree of red-pencil, though a couple were told by Ian in no uncertain tones to "get it off to ——" (fill in your favourite mag here). The event hinged on guru Ian's presence; his criticisms were detailed, effective and helpful; we all owe him. Sunday morning passed in a haze of discussions on how to grab publishers by the throat and suck them dry (thank you, Dr Acula, for your keynote lecture), on the basis of which I predict a boom in SFWA (UK) membership within the next few months. A good time was had by all, including the obligatory *Internoze*-bashing session: most of us had collected bloody ones (rejection slips, that is) from that worthy organ of the New Wave establishment... hence our presence at Cassandra. Next year—see you there? (CS)

IAN WATSON elucidates: "The first Cassandra SF workshop was held in Northampton, 24-26 Aug, in the idyllic surroundings of the Westone Moat House which laid on endless hot coffee, lime cordial, and notepads, while innumerable RAF officers held wedding receptions on the lawns outside. Ace organizer Bernard Smith ensured the workshop went instantly into top gear by distributing copies of everything beforehand. The world's forests should beware of Charles Stross, who submitted a highly saleable story and turned up with 2 awesome-looking novels apparently written in the previous 3 weeks and about to become trilogies. Simon Ings was commanded to transform his story into a portion & outline for the US fantasy editors. Stephen Bowkett confided he'd just sold a children's fantasy to Gollancz; so modestly did he confide that most present did not hear. Dave Clements & Jim England cautiously flashed the guilty secrets of their earlier Hale novels at each other, like secret agents comparing the halves of a torn-up fiver. Brains were set on fire that weekend; enthusiastic demands to hold another workshop mere weeks later were, in the end, trounced by sanity; the next Cassandra workshop will occur next August Bank Holiday. Bernard was urged to transform *Cassandra* magazine into a full-scale commercial venture, perhaps funded from the excess profits of a convention he could organize in Northampton. Naughty things were said by many participants about *Internoze*, to the amazement of the Chairperson, who remained nobly impartial throughout." (IW)

RAMSEY CAMPBELL: "From the press handout of *Children of the Corn*, produced by Terry Kirby, directed by Fritz Kiersch: 'During the filming of *Stephen King's Children of the Corn*, Kiersch and Kirby made judicious use of cameras.' Who knows, it may even catch on." (RC) Which brings us to closing credits for John 'E-Stencils' Harvey and Jim 'UK87 Logo' Barker. ***

EDITORIAL The results of our latest in-depth readership survey were that (a) no one else should (or wants to) take over *Ansible*, which is OK by me provided you (meaning everyone but Abigail) can cope with the irregular schedule; (b) a massive majority of well over 400 subscribers did not care to vote in the 1983/4 Poll—owing to apathy, inability to cope with the enormous intellectual effort of preparing a bit of paper, or conviction that the relevant period was too long ago for memory (or too dull for attention). Interestingly, the pitiful scatter of votes received hinted at an overthrow of the boring old names—including me, thank goodness—and acknowledgement of New Talent. Another couple of dozen votes and the thing may be worth printing; otherwise, it looks like bye-bye till 1985. Your cue. (See *A39*.)

CONS **Mexicon 2** has been having trouble finding suitable and affordable hotels—hence its postponement to a tentative Feb 1986. "We couldn't even afford one *day* at the last place we tried," groaned Greg Pickersgill, adding that hotel managers had readily confessed that (a) if they didn't get Mexicon they'd have an empty hotel and lose money, but (b) they still wouldn't reduce their charges in the slightest. "Weird," commented Ealing's guru. Official press release promised soon; meanwhile, until '85, registration is £6 to Mexicon at 24a Beech Rd, Bowes Pk, London, N11 2DA. **Aussiecon II**: chairman John Foyster has fled (family problems), replaced by David Grigg, with Carey Handfield as Deputy Chair... **Camcon 85** should be the 6th Unicon, in Cambridge; the committee is reportedly still searching Mexicon-style for an affordable and unbooked college venue. £1 presupp ("returned if no con possible") to 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ... **SF Foundation AGM** on 15 Nov!! (Control yourselves)... **European Trek Conventie** (see *A39*): Maureen Porter passes on a partially coherent note from the con's organizer, explaining that it won't take place on 2-4 Nov 84 but 1-3 Nov next year... **Yugoslavia** is dead keen to host a Worldcon at the end of the decade, says Ian Watson, adding that they need a UK agent. Mastermind: Miha Granda, Vrajema 5, 61000 Ljubljana, Yug. (tel 061-443-629)... **Yorcon III** surges onward (5-8 April 85), with no more than the usual appalling rumours of events at committee meetings. Surely there can be no truth in the story that chairman-in-all-but-name Graham James remarked that the only good thing about the con would be the fan room; that Alan Ferguson queried this remark, coming as it did from the person organizing the main programme; that GJ wittily riposted by seizing AF and starting to drag him from the room with cries of "You've been getting at me all this meeting, we're going to settle this outside"; that the remainder of the committee gave a remarkable Still Life performance for some seconds until Arnold Akien stood to remonstrate with GJ; that GJ, pausing only for brief abuse ("You're just a joke in fandom, Akien!") burst out of the room to sulk; that several committee members then resigned, one (Pete Lyon) for the second time, but were coaxed back in the interests of Total Committee Unity and Cosmic Harmony; that... but enough of these evident smears which have reached me. Yorcon is no doubt strong and vital... **Space-Ex 84**, that huge but shifty event, proved not to be strong and vital (A editor represses cry of "I told you so!"). Ace reporter Marcus Rowland turned up on the supposed first day, 6 Aug, to find at the Westminster Central Hall a sign saying SPACE-EX IS CANCELLED. Investigator D.M.Sherwood reports that the event was moved to Bank Holiday Weekend (in a blaze of non-publicity): "Hall managers were a bit dodgy about letting Mike Parry [*De Boss*] have the place for a week on the slate but were persuaded to OK 3 days (fools). This was decided about a week before the old date. Set decorations weren't finished at beginning of Aug; of course they weren't paid for. P ordered 50 uniforms for Starship Ushers (gophers), all the same size, to be paid for out of profits (!). Just about all Gohs dropped out. Other P.stories: the time he sold carpets & furniture from under his 7 kiddies' feet to finance a previous con; the time he organized a quiet buffet for about 100 and 35 came, so he had to accost startled passers-by in the street and tout ½-price tickets; the time he [*etc, etc*]..." (DMS)

:: THE CRASS, COMMERCIAL AND UNFANNISH PAGE ::

- Help Langford clear out his duplicates, subsidize *Ansible* and become a capitalist. Postage is not included in these prices, and will be charged at the cheapest practicable rate unless you arrange to collect goodies from here, at the One Tun, etc. Pay when you actually get the stuff. Urgent orders will fall on deaf ears at Reading (0734) 665804.
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- TERRY CARR (ed). *Universe 9: Dobson* hc UK 1st, £1.
- ANGELA CARTER. *Fireworks—9 Profane Pieces: Quartet* pb, near-mint, £1.25.
- LESLIE CHARTERIS. *The Saint on the Spanish Main: Hodder* pb, 35p.
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- MARK CLIFTON. *When They Come From Space: Macfadden* US pb, vg, 40p.
- JOHN COLLIER. *Defy the Foul Fiend: Penguin* 1st pb 1948, 75p; not fantasy despite being *Penguin Book Number 666...*
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- JOHN CROWLEY. *Little, Big: Methuen* pb, mint, £1.
- JACK CURTIS. *Terrahawks—the Novelization! Sparrow* pb 1st 1984, mint, 40p, oh God oh God oh God...
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- WARD MOORE. *Bring The Jubilee: Heinemann* hc UK 1st, ex-lib and looks it, £2.
- CHRIS MORGAN. *Fritz Leiber—A Bibliography 1939-79: new A5 booklet, 36pp+covers, 90p.*
- JOHN E.MULLER. *Crimson Planet: Badger Book* SF60! Much thumbed (by connoisseurs of the immortal prose of R.L.Fanthorpe) pb, 25p.
- ANDREW NEIDERMAN. *Someone's Watching: Arrow* pb horror nasty, new, 45p.
- GEORGE ORWELL. 1984 (yawn): *Penguin* pb 1964, essential for convincing visitors that you didn't buy it specially this year, 40p. (Taped spine.)
- EDGAR FANGBORN. *A Mirror For Observers: Penguin* pb, 50p. 1955 Int Fantasy Award winner.
- THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK. *Gryll Grange: Penguin* pb 1949, 45p. (More of this next issue...)

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INFINITELY The Last Dangerous Visions: "Harlan is claiming that he'll have the
IMPROBABLE MS in to his publishers in October; all he has to do is pry in the last purchased story, bought over Worldcon weekend from non-attendee Steven Bryan Bieler (c)..." (*Thus Jerry Kaufman, who adds:*) "Tell C. Atkinson I have a horrible picture of her from the Brit in 87 party, in which she looks sour, suspicious and hostile. Did I capture the true Atkinson?"... **Fantasycon Awards:** Peter Straub's *Floating Dragon* (novel), Karl Edward Wagner's 'Neither Brute Nor Human' (short), Ro Pardoe's *Ghosts & Scholars* (small press), Rowena Morrill (artist), *Vid-eodrome* (film), Don & Elsie Wollheim (having been around a long time). At the con an outraged Tanith Lee demanded that vile Neil Gaiman be cast out onto the street for general malpractice: he got his comeuppance at an Unwin launch party where to his disgust he learnt that several fans thought his *Knave* bits were by D. Langford (perish the thought). "Such an obvious *pseudonym*, after all," said Colin Greenland sweetly... **Rob Holdstock Shaves Off Beard!** (What d'you mean, "is that all?" When Frank Herbert shaves off his beard he gets front-page coverage in *Locus*—isn't our Rob news too? Oh)... **Cheap Printing**, or rather photocopying (up to A3 size) is offered to fans by Mike Costello, who eagerly awaits your SAEs—for-details at 17 Langbank Ave, Rise Park, Nottingham, NG5 5BU... **APAs:** the blight continues to spread, its latest outbreak being provisionally titled DA ORGANIZATION, run by Stan Eling at 124 Galton Rd, Smethwick, Warley, Birmingham. In reaction the Astral Leauge has announced APA ASTRAL: "THESE SOCALLED APAS ARE NOT IDEOLOGICALLY SOUND... THE ASTRAL LEAUGE WILL TAKE MEASURES. You are advised hereby for the final time not to take notice of any except APA ASTRAL. This is FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. In other APAs it is all trivial like whether Tedy Bears have feelings or if rubber is bad for the skin but in APA ASTRAL it is more COSMIC which is IMPORTANT." 50p to the usual address. By the way, D. West appears to have landed a job as part-time librarian and bought a suit. He's in the children's section. Please close your eyes for one moment and imagine this... **Folies Bergeron:** the biggest downer of 80s fandom, for me, has been

Richard Bergeron's^s incredible, vindictive accusation that Avedon Carol fiddled TAFF in favour of a Welsh boyfriend. In RB's weird world, the statement that D. West's domino games are a boring spectator sport ranks as crafty poisoning of voters' minds against dynamic extrovert D.: and so on, and on. I can't cope... TAFF ballots will circulate at Novacon etc: Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden vs. Rich Coad, victor(s) travelling to Yorcon III, deadline end '84, more from Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, E6 1DX. SEFF (to Swecon, Aug 85) looks like Steve Green vs Hans-Jürgen Mader; nominations (to C. Fine or A. Engholm, addresses elsewhere) close 1 Dec... **Booker Horror!** J.G. Ballard's failure to win (I hope not because the judges reacted against media enthusiasm for JGB, or his 'shady sf background') was the big news, eclipsing the actual winner—Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*... **Troutmania:** in the afterglow of Albacon 84, the Glasgow mob has been speaking expansively of bidding for a Eurocon, a Novacon (!), a Worldcon... **Updates:** instead of the \$1M+ rumoured in A39, Clarke flogged his next two novels for \$1.10 (10¢ for *Songs of Distant Earth*, \$1 for *20,001: The Final*—you should be so lucky—*Odyssey*), anticipating colossal royalties. His reaction to his success in getting USSR editor V. Zakharchenko sacked (he serialized *2010* and failed to notice that *all* Russian characters are named for dissidents) is not known... *Citadel of the Autarch* won the JWC Memorial Award... *To the Stars* will carry fiction despite preliminary ads. (*SFC*)... **Britain in 87** pre-supports well over 600 and rising steeply... **Births/Marriages/Deaths:** Babies have emanated from Pat (& Graham) Charnock—Daniel, b. 14 Oct—and Helen (& Mike) McNabb—Nicola, b. 17 July. Further ones are expected from Kath Mitchell (& Leroy Kettle: they got married on 20 Oct to celebrate, with J. Brosnan officiating as best man with his usual tact and taste, and a rare sighting of Peter Roberts) and Faith Brooker—hers and Chris Evans's is bound to be fannish, the words "conceived at Mexican" being on many lips... Deaths were many, especially in medialand (cf. Richard Burton's posthumous appearance in 1984): most notable SF-linked obits are Walter Tevis, Aug 10, and J.B. Priestley, Aug 14... **Greg Benford** rang on 18 Oct to say he was in Britain, had just been in Moscow and was about to be in California... Judy Lawrence has been trying to flog something called *The Tabby Tarot*, intended to lure fans of both cabbala and cats... Geoff Ryman topped the *Interzone* readers' poll with 'The Unconquered Country', to appear ere long in book form. (Wonderful mag, . . . they've bought one of my stories at last. *The Plain People of Moreton Pinkney*: "H'm, sold out, have you?")... **R.I. Barycz** reports on the film of Bongyear's 'Enemy Mine': "Wolfgang (*Neverending Story*) Petersen into the director's chair with enough clout to junk several megabucks' worth of film already shot. Now there is not only going to be your noble Earth Pilot & your alien in a rubber suit crashlanded, but also a young woman pilot *and* (wait for it) a little boy... *Space Vampires* now known as *Lifeforce* & scheduled for June 85 release. Feeble title. Something tells me it will end up as *Space Vampires* by then... *Bug Jack Barron* apparently to be made as a mundane, not SF, flick—sort of Russell Harty with more teeth & charisma—as Costa Gavras doesn't want to do skiffy. *The Stars My Desination* (Bester) definitely set for Sept 85 start at Elstree on \$30M budget!" (*RIB*)... Trufan = "dedicated fan of *Star Trek*", says R. Green's *Newspack*...

§Hazel's Language Lessons #31: Swahili

hatinafsi (n.) used of a person taking an action without consulting anybody because he thinks they may try to persuade him not to do it.

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