

Ansible

DECEITFUL

EAR



Ansible 73 August 1993

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 689914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. *Ansible* can be had by accosting the editor, by making him rich, or for stamped addressed envelopes (1 per copy).

Night's Black Agents

Mike Bishop struggles to write something suitable on an 'I was an American Spy!' movie postcard: 'On a secret mission to your country last year, I sifted through the trash of John Major and discovered via discarded subscription labels that he regularly reads *Soldier of Fortune*, *Fortune*, *The New Yorker*, DC Comics' *Wasteland*, *The New Hampshire Waste Control Digest*, *Watch Your Waist with Richard Simmons* and other publications I am too discreet to list on a postcard. / No one in your country will buy *Count Geiger's Blues*. Are you responsible?' [Never—Ed.]

John Brunner, sad to say, is now sending out a depressed circular about the poor state of his marriage with LiYi ('I asked whether she would take £20,000 to go back to China...').

Pat Cadigan, voice of moderation, supplies another soundbite: 'Nobody tells me I can't puke on a few fans if I want to!'

Stephen Marley was bemused to discover, on the BY THE SAME AUTHOR page of his *Mortal Mask*, that his novel about the Madonna is called *The Life of the Virgin Marley*. [PB]

Colin Murray, ace Orbit editor, responds to A72's leaked comments on the *Before the Sun Falls* proofs: 'It's a most unusual occurrence for obsessive proofreaders who send slightly crazed four-page faxes to publishers to admit to such personality defects in print, even in such august and highbrow publications as *Ansible*. Since Paul Barnett has courageously chosen to come out of the closet and admit to a problem in public, it may be useful for *Ansible* readers to learn how the affliction is best coped with by those closest to the sufferer.'

The first course of action is to thank him (those so afflicted are almost always male) for the efforts he has taken and to indicate whether or not (usually not) he can expect any result from them and why. It is very important at this stage to make soothing noises. Otherwise there can be major inflammation of the ego with all its symptoms: the patient taking himself too seriously and so forth.

'In the event that the condition persists, it is appropriate to remind the proofreader that he is just that—someone who reads proofs against copy to determine the accuracy of the printer—and while his views are valued, there have to be very pressing reasons (sometimes there are) to put a succession of minor points to the author at that late stage. After all, authors are also entitled to strong views about their prose and often, to the apparent surprise of the sufferer, express them forcefully.'

'In the virulent form of the disease, as here, it is necessary (leaving aside matters of trust and confidentiality) to remind the sufferer that F.R. Leavis didn't care much for James Joyce's prose, and to ask him if he, as the writer of such distinguished and memorable lines as "Rehan was seasick for most of the two-day crossing, and Kursten tended him solicitously except when she didn't" (p.218, *The World*, "John Grant") really has much sound advice to offer other writers.'

'If all this fails than one can always suggest that the sufferer think seriously about the so-called Charles Platt option, and consider having his head cryogenically frozen—immediately.' [9-7-93]

Chris Priest escaped national fame in July: 'For the fiftieth year running, *The Guardian* neglected to note my birthday....'

Steve Sneyd 'just read a poem of mine re an alien spy passing as "one of us" (John Major?) as light relief in a Radio Sussex UFO phone-in (by invitation & on their phone bill, thank dog)—felt the guy who'd seen UFOs over Brighton 7 miles up and been told by the fuzz it was light glinting off seagulls' wings had me well beaten in the poetic imagery stakes.'

Theodore Sturgeon, I learned only when Leslie Charteris

died this year, ghosted the oddest of all the Saint stories: 'The Darker Drink' (1947)—retitled 'Dawn' in the 1949 *Saint Errant*.

David Wingrove's legendary **Chung Kuo** series is being re-packaged by NEL: it was doing less well than hoped, and the covers must be at fault. Out goes the 'hard sf image (they say: looked like a chinoiserie image to me). In come sensuous Jim Burns covers from US editions, with the words **Chung Kuo** reduced to microprint. The new blurb line 'Bladerunner meets Shogun in the epic future history' has provoked imitations ... offered a similar catchphrase for *Harm's Way*, Colin Greenland paled at 'Doc Smith rapes Jane Austen on the high spaceways!'

DW adds: 'I actually went to China for the first time last month—courtesy of *YOU* magazine (they're running an article on the trip 5 Sept)—and loved it. It was genuinely like being on an alien planet ... all those X's and Z's in the names, and Dongs and Wangs everywhere you looked.' [21 July]

Roger Woddis the poet and parodist died in July aged 76: sf fans will remember his *Prisoner* script, *Hammer into Anvil*.

Conessine

7-15 Aug • **Minehead Space Age Exhibition**. Contact Town Hall, The Parade, Minehead, TA24 5NB. 0643 707213.

11 Aug • **BSFA meeting cancelled**—the Conservatory pub has cast it out for not drinking enough (boo, hiss).

27-30 Aug • **Holodeck**, 36th UK Trek con, Telford Moat House Hotel. Contact PO Box 29, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9TG.

27-29 Aug • **Greenwood IV** (*Robin of Sherwood*), Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Middlesex. £28 reg. Contact 'High Hopes', La Vrangue, St Peter Port, Guernsey, C.I.

29-31 Aug • **European Skeptics' Conference** with 'alternative medicine' focus, Keele Univ. £25 reg. Contact 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex, IG10 4PZ. 081 508 2989.

2-6 Sep • **Confrancisco** (51st Worldcon), Moscone Convention Centre, San Francisco: \$145 at the door.

4-5 Sep • **Panopticon** (*Dr Who*), Novotel Hotel, London. Contact PO Box 357, London, SW19 8BT.

?Jun 94 • **Mexicon 6**, most probably a 'one-day programme, between two hotel nights ... in Newcastle'. £9.50 reg. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

25 Jul 94 • **Cosmic Explosion** caused by giant comet hitting Jupiter (final deadline). Surely no sf fan would wish to avert such a spectacle by meeting God's blackmail demands—as conveyed by 'Sister Marie Gabriel' in full-page UK newspaper ads, beginning 'Drastically reduce the crime rate by copying Saudi Arabia's successful system of law and order', and also requiring the abolition of porn, alcohol, vivisection, war and immodest female dress. However, Sister Nutter warns that 'global extinction by a giant asteroid' will follow if we don't take heed. [JN]

29-30 Oct 94 • **Who's 7** (*Dr Blake* event), Queens Hotel, Crystal Palace, London. 'Featuring guests.' £30 reg to end 93. Contact 131 Norman Rd, Leytonstone, London, E11 4RJ.

Infinitely Improbable

The The Sun Sun Falls Falls? SF gossip circles buzzed all July with rumours about William James's **Sunfall** (Orbit), a 'Mongol hordes on distant planet' trilogy comprising *The Earth is the Lord's*, *The Other Side of Heaven* and (unpublished; coincidentally mentioned last issue) *Before the Sun Falls*. Parts of the published books are said to bear an uncanny resemblance to

scenes in Cecilia Holland's 1969 historical novel about Mongol hordes, *Until the Sun Falls*. Merely scanning James's Book 1 and the first 5Opp of Holland's, an *Ansible* spy found and sent me several corresponding passages not easily explained via common nonfictional research sources ... there are similar bits of dialogue and action as well as background. According to the grapevine, publishers Little, Brown had all the documents in the case examined and subsequently Discussed Things with James—who allegedly muttered of reading the Holland book long ago and being now amazed by the quirk of memory that led him to echo certain of its scenes. In mid-July *Ansible* asked LB/Orbit about the truth of all this chatter and still awaits the company's official, stalwart defence of its author.

Explain It Again, Professor. Circular to subscribers: 'I hope that you enjoyed the final issue of *Quantum*, which, as you know, was our final issue.' (*SF Eye* replacement subs are offered.)

C.O.A. Etc. *Lilian Edwards* [temporary, 12 Aug-15 Dec], 3854 W 38th Ave, Vancouver, BC, V6N 2Y4, Canada. *Mike Ford* longs to share a room at ConFrancisco: groupies phone 0532 753663. *Gwen Funnell*, 25 St Leonards Rd, Hove, E.Sussex, BN3 4QP. *Zy Nicholson*, Room 6, 100 Lower Oldfield Pk, Bath, Avon, BA2 3HS. *Tim Richards & Narrelle Harris*, ex-pat Aussies, urge fans touring Egypt to contact them: Ill, Mohamed Bayoumi St, off Merghani St, Heliopolis, Cairo. *Pam Wells*, lured to a Southend flat by her new job, has lost the job (ouch)....

Bram Stoker Award: the annual prize for best horror novel went to Thomas Monteleone's *Blood of the Lamb*. [SFC]

Food & Translation. Yvonne Rousseau idly wonders 'whether British eaters have a version of "Nutella": a cocoa-flavoured hazelnut spread, popular both here and in its birthplace Italy? [Yes—Ed.] William Weaver publicly admitted (at an Adelaide Festival Writers' Week) that he represents "hazelnut spread", when translating Italian fiction for American readers, as "peanut butter", because he opines that peanut butter is of equivalent popularity in the U.S., and that the General Reader will never have heard of hazelnut spread (which, moreover, he himself esteems to be yukky). In the same spirit, in *Foucault's Pendulum*, Weaver wrote "Barbara Cartland" in place of the popular Italian novelist that Eco had actually mentioned—thus causing unnecessary puzzlement to this reader ("Do Italians really dote on translations of Barbara Cartland? Why does she appeal to them?"). Listening to Weaver, I grew steadily more ferociously opposed to his Principles of Translation and to his underlying Estimate of the Common Reader and of the Only Important Culture that readers-of-English inhabit....'

Who Are The 50 Most Powerful People In SF? asks Paul Di Filippo in *SF Age* (July), and gives his choices. Listed earthshakers of UK origin or address: J.G.Ballard, Arthur C.Clarke, John Clute, David Garnett, and an exultant **David Pringle** (now planning his own *interzone* list of 50 *British SF Potentates*)....

The Glamour: BBC Radio 4 version of Priest never repeated Mon 27 Sept (19:45) for fans who missed its Eastercon airing.

Gossip. '... barely averted fisticuffs at the impromptu "Dave Party" at the Conservatory's Banks/Greenland signing, where several Daves reportedly had to intervene between Gamma and the manager after Gamma decided to annex a large portion of the downstairs bar "for Daves only"....' [Aok]

Alternate History. I was not aware that I had ever painted Zsa Zsa Gabor's face, let alone Pee Wee Herman's, but *Fangoria* magazine never lies and hidden hands at *The New York Review of SF* eagerly passed on a (somewhat vomitous) 'Spotlight on Success' ad feature informing me that 'David Langford graduated from the Joe Blasco Makeup Artist Training Center in 1980 and ...' no, no, it's too painful, I can't go on.

St James Guide to Fantasy Writers: this new, epic David Pringle Project is on the go, with *Horror & Gothic* to follow.

And Again—Harry Adam Knight fears that people will think the Gollancz reissue of his *Carnosaur* is naughtily based on *Jurassic Park*, since both have similar scenes involving Mongol hordes—sorry—dinosaurs even though the HAK book predated Michael Crichton's novel *Jurassic Park* by 6 years. John

Brosnan, possibly our greatest living expert on Knight, loves the sequence in Spielberg's movie where a charging dinosaur crashes into a display of a fossilized dinosaur skeleton ... which by pure coincidence (his phrase) resembles a scene found in *Carnosaur* but not, oddly enough, in the Crichton novel.

Secrets of the SAE! *Ansible's* availability for stamped addressed envelopes means just that—to save your harassed editor the bother of printing address labels etc. Mere stamps are frowned on. *Lilian Edwards* sniffs: 'I don't need to get my secretary to send you envelopes now as I can get *Ansible* off the net.'

Gateways. 'I rang Richard (*The Gate*) Newcombe to see what was news. Unfortunately his magazine's recent lack of history supports Brian Stableford's comment that British sf publishing is constrained by economics rather than literature. Issue 4 is typeset and ready—and has been for years, awaiting money to print the thing. Past contributors are still being paid in small slow instalments (I'm still down £42 myself), getting slower. In his dusty storage boxes are various MSS accepted but not paid for, not scheduled, not yet returned. Subscribers are in for a long wait... • Pity. He started *The Gate* trying to publish the kind of sf he'd like to read, but was poorly advised on marketing and ended with unsold thousands of the dated-looking first issue. (Still in his attic. Any offers?) As printers, his people can print the mag but have no expertise in distribution. Newsstand sales earned him only 45% of an already low cover price. He tried selling to fan groups, but each bought just one copy and passed it around. He wrote to publishers and only got crates of review books worth £100s in shops, when a few battered fivers would have been more use to produce a magazine in which to review them.... Wanted, a kindly millionaire.' [DA]

Clarke Award Fun. Arthur C.Clarke Himself reveals that the slight controversy about this year's award inspired to him start reading the winner *Body of Glass*, which he's enjoying. 'As much of the fuss seems to stem from a belief that Arthur would hate the book, I think this is extremely funny.' [MS]

Electronic Skiffy. That instant CD-ROM anthology of 1993 Hugo/Nebula stuff turned up and may be the hugest sf collection ever ('Gosh,' Chris Priest did not say, 'a publishing format that might make *The Last Dangerous Visions* almost feasible!'). All the Hugo-nominated fiction is there, even novels, plus a vast mass of hitherto unpublished V.Vinge annotations on his *A Fire Upon the Deep*; additional Nebula stuff comprises the shorter categories only, with two novelettes including J. Morrow's winning 'City of Truth' password-protected in a manner which, as I understand the *Apologies For Hideous Bugs* notes, means you can read them only on a Macintosh. Art, fan and nonfiction (i.e. me) material is represented with varying spottiness. The voluminous 'bonus' text ranges from mildly interesting (a *New York Review of SF* index) to unreadable (endless sf computer-net chitchat). Of format horrors like vanishing double-quotes, em dashes and indentation, let us not speak: seemingly all this is ascribable to wonky software from an obscure cowboy outfit called MicroSoft. The CD publisher says reassuringly that the message '*The picture could not be displayed because of an authoring error*', which I get in place of certain fan-art and fanzine images, is unique to me. A hastily corrected edition should be out for Con-Francisco. [Clarinet Communications Corp, \$29.95, for Mac and IBM/Windows]

Science Corner. Millennium's very wonderful newsletter *Antivivity* reports: 'Up to fifteen per cent of the mass of all land animals is made up of ants.' Answers on a postcard to *Antivivity*: which 15% of its editors Deborah Beale & Charon Wood is ...?

Feeling Horny? The Ellen Kushner/Donald G.Keller anthology of music-related fantasy *The Horns of Elfland* has not closed (as advertised) but will be held open for another year. DK is at 30 St Mark's Place, Brooklyn, NY 11217, USA. [JG]

And Yet Again! Concerned fans studying *Ansible* 73 claim evident plagiarism, both the jokes being strongly reminiscent of original witticisms featured in *Ansibles* 1-72 inclusive.