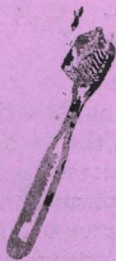


Ansible



Angela Carter, 1940-1992

JOHN CLUTE writes: Angela Carter never made bones about dying, and did not leave the world until she was taken from it, until there was nothing left of her. Two weeks before she died of lung cancer, a journalist friend came from the States in large part because she had conveyed to him her wish to do an interview. He knew (because she made no bones about it) that her health was precarious, but came because she was important to him, one of the few important writers around, the sort of writer (as the *Guardian* obituary said) who was too threatening ever to win a Booker. My friend waited by the phone, but the call, when it came, was from an intermediary, who said that Angela Carter, much against her will, was now leaving. Words to that effect. He went back to America.

She threatened the literary establishment (the *Times* obituary was notably poisonous), and I suspect she threatened its readers too. Novels like *Heroes and Villains* (1969), or *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972), or *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), or *Nights at the Circus* (1984), are dangerous. They dissect the psyche and the future, sex and the technologies of control, with an intelligence that seems at times excessively barbed and rebarbative, sharp and loony, amused and incessant. She had an instinct for the masks of power that gives her work a feminist import, not because she was an advocate (she advocated nothing) but because she seemed incapable of telling a lie. Her only book of journalism was called *Nothing Sacred*, which is to say, of course, that everything to Angela Carter was indeed sacred, but also very funny. She is best perhaps approached through her stories, in which she strips bare myths and fables of the Western world, and then gives them to us again. Books like *Fireworks* (1974), *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) and *Black Venus* (1985) are where to start. Where you end will be a new mourning. [JC]

The Usual Suspects

Greg Benford, I overheard in New York, is far from pleased by the announcement of a movie called *Timescape*. Since this is a trademark (of Simon & Schuster), eager lawyers might well get the film renamed for US distribution. *Timescape?* mused mighty editor David Hartwell™: *The Scape of Time?*

Abigail Frost reports: 'Geoff Ryman had a party to celebrate his very wonderful *Was*; much falling about in the Munchen, graced by everyone from Dave Wingrove to scummy little fans like me and Ashley Watkins. Jane Johnson looked editorially radiant and smug as she accepted the congratulations of all readers, Ryman being by then too pissed to hear. Dave Barrett and Roger Robinson handed out Eurocon Award voting (nomination?) forms with orders to vote for *Foundation*; scanning the other categories I squealed, "Young Author/Artist? Giggle giggle giggle, let's all vote for Charles Stross!"

"Yes, he's quite a serious contender," said Barrett, not giggling one little bit. Stuffed socks into mouth ... but the laugh was on me; next day Roz wandered into the Greg Bear signing and found Strossers and Deborah Beale celebrating his new two-book contract. "Mine's a pint," she said, faster than a speeding bullet, and actually got one. "Aaargh!" I said at the news, "He'll become insufferable, no, not become...."

"I think fame will mellow him," Roz said rhapsodically.

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From: Dave Langford, 84 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 639914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: Dan Steffen. Available at random fan gatherings, by whim or for stamped addressed envelopes—sorry, no paid subscriptions.

"Yes—you could say, *Charles (Fame Will Mellow Him) Stross was buying rounds and telling Greg Bear what was wrong with his science....*" [AJF]

Neil Gaiman has nothing to report, 'other than the phone call I got last week from a Big Record Studio, saying "Hi, we've got a Famous Rock'n'roll Star who's a fan of yours. He wants to make a concept album." NG: "Yeah? That's nice." Him: "So, um. Do you have any concepts?"

Joseph Nicholas, 'left-wing bogeyman', is now banned from the letter pages of 'libertarian' Kentucky fanzine *Faxfax!* [PH]

Gene Wolfe's *Book of Odds* was suggested; alas, this 'Tor double' will merely be *The Castle of Days*. Guess which books?

Concinnity

6 Mar • British Fantasy Society open night, Royal Connaught, High Holborn, 6pm onward. Informal piss-up; all welcome.

7 Mar • Picocon 10, Imperial Coll. Union, Beit Hall, Prince Consort Rd, SW7 2BB. GoHs Brian Stableford and me. £5 reg.

17-20 Apr • Illumination, 43rd Eastercon; Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. £25 reg. Rooms £28/person/night. (Double/twin rooms copiously available; no singles.) GoHs Paul McAuley, Geoff Ryman, Peter Wells (fan). Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. • The Norbreck's parent group Principal Hotels went into receivership on 24 Feb (*Daily Telegraph*). An Illumination spokesman called this a mere business ploy—one day's voluntary liquidation while unwanted property investments were flogged off. 'As far as we're concerned, nothing happened,' he said. 'The newspapers did a bad job of reporting it,' whinged the hotel. 'I'm going to the lavish champagne reception when the Norbreck opens again after redecoration, on 7 March,' drooled our spokesman. *Ansible*: 'Er. Can I at least report you as saying all this in a shifty and unconvincing manner?' *Steve (for it is he) Lawson*: 'Oh, all right.'

8-12 Apr 93 • Helicon, 44th Eastercon; Hotel de France, Jersey. £22 reg. Contact 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ. 'Official leak': Larry van der Putte is to be Fan GoH.

Infinitely Improbable

The SF Encyclopaedia II team breathed huge sighs of relief as Macdonald (their fatally Maxwellled publisher) was bought by Little, Brown—with promises that vast sums owed to Paul Barnett and Brian Stableford would be paid real soon now. 'I'll believe it when I see the cheque,' exults Paul.... More data: 'The Encyclopaedia itself, because it had been on a tight production schedule, has necessarily been delayed, and is now slated for Easter 1993 release; we are expecting Macdonald to lay on some sort of event at Helicon.' [JC]

GUFF 1992 ... Eva Hauser of Czechoslovakia is the winner and zooms to Sydney for the Aussie national con this Easter. 84 votes were cast (32 Oz/52 Europe): 27 for Bridget Wilkinson (6/21), 51 for Eva (22/29), 6 'no preference' etc (4/2).

Fall of the Foundation: as feared last issue, the cruel Polytechnic of East London is kicking the SF Foundation out on to the streets. Ace psychohistorians at 'Friends of Foundation' are now plotting devils' rescue schemes. Stay tuned.

New Worlds 2 is scheduled for July. Mighty editor David Garnett sends me line up: Ian McDonald, Paul Di Filippo, Warwick Collier Jr, Brian Aldiss, Peter F. Hamilton, Marc Laidlaw, Simon Ings, Ian Watson, Jack Chabon, Stephen Baxter, D.Langford (criticism),

Philip K. Dick, Michael Moorcock (afterword). Who is Colvin, author of the 'hard-science serial' *Corsairs of the Second Ether* (all three parts this issue)—any relation to once-famous pseudonym James Colvin? Dick contributes 'unpublished outlines of unwritten novels', 25 years old. He would, wouldn't he?

TAFF 1993: many Euro-candidates are rumoured, including well-known fans 'Definitely DNQ For Now', 'I Haven't Made Up My Mind Yet', and (I hear via America) Kev McVeigh.

R.L.P. George MacBeth (1932-92), long ago an sf poet....

Does Posterity Deserve This? '... a huge time-capsule the Scientologists have just finished sinking in a hillside in Humboldt County, a couple hundred miles from here. They bought a 3,600 acre ranch to situate the capsule on and are allowing no visitors. The capsule itself is about 350 feet long and has the profile of a 747.' [RL, Glen Ellen, CA] At last, they've found somewhere to put all those remaindered dekalogies.

Ten Years Ago: 'Philip K. Dick died on 2/3 March in California, aged 53.' (*Ansible* 24, Mar 82) Ignoring excuses about this stop-press item coming too late for date checking, fans agreed that it was *very like Dick* to die on an indeterminate day.

Boskone 29: USA Postcards

JFK Airport. I seem to have arrived early. My official mentor and transport boss Ben Yalow is delayed by traffic. An increasingly persistent cabbie works on my fears: 'You're all alone here now. Soon you'll be getting hungry.... Believe me, this is a *bad place* to spend the night.... I want to *help you*....' Ben rescues me before I actually break down and cry.

Flushing, NY. Chinese nosh with Moshe Feder (now editor of the Military Book Club) and Lise Eisenberg is overshadowed by grim news of why I'm not meeting fannish legend Gary Farber. He has a kidney stone the size of a walnut, with operation after operation being postponed because his health isn't up to it.... At the fabulous Feder family home I gaze on bits of the Coke Collection. Is that a Coke bottle? No, it is a loving facsimile carved from solid rock crystal. A Coke neon-sign dominates the living room, a Coke clock broods over the kitchen, and I fall asleep surrounded by smaller Coke memorabilia of all shapes and sizes. Blimey.

New York City. Totally unimaginative touristy doings, plus a skiffy exhibit at the IBM Gallery (early editions of space operas by Kepler, de Bergerac, etc). Tor Books in the Flatiron Building is equally full of sights to boggle at: Anna Magee's desk with its litter of plastic rats and rubber brains ('I want to pick your brains.' 'Here, catch.'). Senior Editor Patrick Nielsen Hayden, an inflatable Edvard Munch 'Scream' figure diffusing Angst out over Broadway, and (most eldritch of all) David Hartwell's tie. Teresa Nielsen Hayden is also an editor these days, at Masquerade: her lurid book samples do, er um, worry me a bit when coming back through Customs. Having recently edited one porn epic whose hero was called Langford and the villain Hartwell, she says wistfully: 'No one would believe I hadn't put the names in myself, so I had to change them.' Returning bloated from a swish publishing dinner with P&T, I wonder dimly what I've promised to write. Words?

Next day it's so cold that I have to pause sightseeing to buy gloves. Lunch with Messrs Hartwell and van Gelder of *The New York Review of SF*, for which I doubtless promise to write things. Wonder about souvenirs for Hazel: a clockwork toy from 'The Last Wound Up', a two-foot statuette of a chap advertising interesting elastic bandages, a set of Museum of Modern Art cookie cutters in the shapes of famous buildings (including Sydney Opera House—the World Trade Centre, which I have just been up, is conspicuously not represented)? What she'd really like is that skeletal 1890s electric toaster in the ConEd museum of energy. Not, alas, for sale.

Most of the evening passes fannishly in a 'microbrewery' said to be the only one left in New York City. Hic.

I-91 northbound. Ben Yalow reveals many titbits about cons and the New England SF Association clubhouse ('Originally built on the other side of the road from where it is now.'). I glean that Worldcon '95 bidding is neck-and-neck. Atlanta's facilities are thought superior but large US fan blocs distrust the committee for Historical Reasons ... while Glasgow has the virtue of not being chaired by Malcolm Edwards.

Springfield, MA: Boskone. This is avowedly out in the sticks, a reaction from when Boskone '87 grew far too big. Next year it moves back to civilization since NESFA think it's now too small, a mere 800-odd people, most of them on the crowded programme ('A lot of people want to appear')—so that GoH Jane Yolen has 9 items involving 26 speakers or panelists scheduled against her main speech (my figures as a mere subsidiary guest are 5 and 19). Nevertheless, great stuff.

I remember: A long walk on the first morning through new and photogenic snow • Jane Yolen disrupting 'Meet the VIPs' with an ad-hoc conga line, notables like Joe and Gay Halde-man dancing over the tables (me, I hide behind Hal Clement) • Mike Glicksohn and Teresa debating True Fanpublishing: 'Twiltone!' he cries, and 'The GENie network!' she ripostes. Tempted by technophilia, I promise to try the latter. 'But,' she sobs, 'there's no GENie node in England.' Exit Langford, with mutters of 'Bah, "generally available", humbug....' • Charles Ryan explaining to me what he thinks of Chris Priest • A Glasgow '95 party with Tim Illingworth serving single-malt from minute and clinical-looking containers (seemingly for eye lotion or tiny urine specimens), accompanied by other phenomena like Kim Campbell, Chris Cooper, Martin Hoare, haggis ... the nearby Atlanta '95 party is soon emptied by this attraction • Gene and Rosemary Wolfe inviting me to dinner: I think my jaw hangs slackly open throughout • Social awareness-free condoms in the con suite and 'British-style fan lounge' bar ('Beer, please.' 'Not until 2pm.') • Priscilla (Chair) Olson's attempts to control 'whinsey' outbreaks at the banquet: jet-assisted, whistling and helicopter balloons, chattering clockwork teeth, fetishistic headgear and worse, courtesy of Roger MacBride Allen, Lord of Misrule (resembling a smaller, more evil Derrnot Dobson). This being Boskone, the anarchy is carefully delimited. 'Please keep it to tables marked with the Whimsey logo,' Priscilla announces: 'Practise safe whimsey!' • Being interviewed by Teresa about embarrassing subjects like exploding Oxford colleges and Fred Harris • Champagne and 90° heat at the Tor party • Missing the 'Dead Doe Party' at a wild-game restaurant where Chris Cooper's new lobster glove-puppet (coming soon to a million sf events near you) makes its entry on a platter • Filling the con newsletter *Helmath* with Langfordiana, this hubris followed by Nemesis as, aghast, I hear myself volunteer for Helicon's newsletter • Gene Wolfe sneaking in halfway through my 'Insult Famous Authors' talk and asking later why I haven't slagged his books. 'You're such a flagrant case,' I lie, 'that I covered you on page one.' • Lurking enjoyably in hotel bars with [fearfully long list omitted] • Trying to eat something bigger than my head •

I-91 south. Highway culture shock at noticing that the American for 'flattened hedgehog' is 'inert raccoon'. Ben spills further dread con secrets. He it was who once mollified an irascible GoH with an unpopular presentation, by conscripting 20 gophers to remove their badges and sit doggedly through it ... I giggle a lot. At JFK, Ben even finds and switches me to an earlier flight. Truly a god amongst men.

Reading. Hazel has had a good time here: flying phobia can be cured by not flying! I think of my little rock-star brother's plans to get married in Chicago this summer. I wonder if....