

# ansible



## Ansible 120 July 1997

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**WISH-FULFILMENT.** From Lord Abinger's judicial summing-up in *Fraser v. Berkeley*, 1836: 'I really think that this assault was carried to a very inconsiderate length, and that if an author is to go and give a beating to a publisher who has offended him, two or three blows with a horsewhip ought to be quite enough to satisfy his irritated feelings.'

### In a Petri Dish Upstairs

**Arthur C. Clarke** is battling against natural modesty to tell the world about his Feb 97 fan letter from the Dalai Lama: 'Your short story titled "The Nine Billion Names of God" was particularly amusing.' [F]

**Harlan Ellison** 'is threatening to sue St Martin's Press because his entry in the *Fantasy Encyclopedia* is not fulsome enough.' [JG]

**John Grant** had an awkward moment with the Public Lending Right office: 'They've just rung up and asked if my kids' retelling of *Frankenstein* ought to have a share set aside for Mary Shelley.'

**Richard Haigh**—the one who did two Grafton horror paperbacks in the 80s—proves to be yet another pen-name of Laurence James. [SH]

**Gabriel King** is the collaborative pseudonym of M. John Harrison and Jane Johnson, for a childrens' book largely about cats.

**Terry Pratchett** is constantly beset with bright ideas for Discworld spinoffs which will enrich others, a repeated suggestion being a *Magic-style 'collectable card game'* which I like to think of as *Rincewind: The Gathering*. But Terry polled his fans on the net, and the verdict was thumbs-down. 'I have to say that I regard CCG with mild loathing, but I've had enough approaches for me to question my own judgement. Now I'll turn down future approaches with a light heart.'

**David Pringle** sought drained swimming pools at the SF Research Association's California thrash: 'The conference was held on the Queen Mary, which as you probably know is moored permanently (set in concrete) at Long Beach and is now a hotel. • What a Ballardian landscape it proved to be! There was this stalled luxury liner, surrounded by water. On one side was a yacht marina, with behind it a cluster of high-rise buildings (downtown Long Beach); on the other side was a spit of land with a huge Buckminster Fuller-dome, built to house Howard Hughes's "Spruce Goose" (unfortunately now gone). Behind the dome, at some distance, a general industrial landscape, giant cranes, old docks, etc. Overhead, pelicans and other seabirds aplenty, and an occasional helicopter clattering by. On board the ship, big blown-up photographs of yesteryear's celebrities (Humphrey Bogart, Winston Churchill, etc). Above all, under the California sun, an eerie silence and emptiness, as though this were some depopulated near future. Almost no people, just the occasional car crossing the distant freeway bridge....

• Extraordinary. Unfortunately, there were no papers on Ballard at the conference; nor could I even find a Ballard fan to share all this. They were busy listening to papers on Iain Banks, Octavia Butler, on time-travel and space opera, etc., and, without realizing it, were all living in a Ballard novel! The Ultimate City meets Cocaine Nights.'

**George Turner**, grandmaster of Australian sf, died on 8 June without recovering consciousness after a stroke on the 5th. He was 80, an established mainstream novelist who began publishing sf in his sixties with the solidly crafted *Beloved Son* (1978), and won the Clarke award for *The Sea and Summer* (1987; US *Drowning Towers*). Aussiecon 3 was determined to honour him despite his worries about living that long, and will not be replacing him as a 1999 Worldcon Guest of Honour.

**Gene Wolfe**, some say, does not hold US critic Gregory Feeley in high regard as a reviewer. But it must be sheer coincidence that Wolfe's *Exodus from the Long Sun* (constrained by a naming system which calls males after animals or animal parts) makes a point of dragging in a reference to a proverbially carping, fault-finding critic named Feeler....

### Concanavalin

11-14 Jul • **The Alliance** (B5), Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. GoH J. Michael Straczynski; many others. £70 reg. Contact Wolf 359, 141 Waarden Road, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 9BE. 01753 771078.

18-20 Jul • **Convocation** (Unicon 16/RPG), New Hall, Cambridge.

GoH S. Brust. £20 reg. Contact 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX.

19-20 Jul • **Minamimi Con 3** (anime), Novotel, Southampton. £35 reg, £40 at door. Contact 15 New Rd, Fair Oak, Eastleigh, SO50 8EN.

23 Jul • **BSFA London meeting**, Jubilee, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on (fans lurking in the bar by 5pm). With, um, maybe a guest?

25-7 Jul • **Voyage 97** (... to the Bottom of the Sea), Novotel, Arundel Gate, Sheffield. £35 reg. Contact 15 Fullers Ct, Exeter, EX2 4DZ.

9-10 Aug • **Clarecraft Open Day**, Bury St Edmunds. Terry Pratchett signings, CC Discworld figures for sale, beer & barbecue, etc. Contact Clarecraft, Woolpit Bus Park, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9UP.

28 Aug - 2 Sep • **LoneStarCon** (55th Worldcon), San Antonio, Texas. \$135 reg (rises 1 Aug). Contact PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA, or 27 Hampton Rd, Worcester Pk, Surrey, KT4 8EU.

20 Sep • **Whitchurch Fireworks**, nr Pangbourne ... moved from usual 'approx 4 July' date. Contact 45 Tilehurst Rd, Reading, RG1 7TT.

29 Oct • **Jubilee** (as BSFA): unofficial pre-World Fantasy Con evening. In London for WFC? Make merry with impoverished non-attendees.

30 Oct - 2 Nov • **World Fantasy Convention**, The International Hotel, Marsh Wall, London. £100/\$165 reg. Contact PO Box 31, Whitby, North Yorks, YO22 4YL. Membership limited to 750.

13-14 Dec • **Babylon 5 Academic Conference**, York. £75 reg; £48 non-residential. Contact Farah Mendlesohn, Faculty of Humanities, Coll of Ripon & York St John, Lord Mayor's Walk, York, YO3 7EX.

11-13 Sep 98 • **Fantasycon 22**, Albany Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Freda Warrington; more TBA. Contact (temporary/emergency, pending organizers' house move) c/o BFS, 2 Harwood St, Stockport, SK4 1JJ.

18-21 Sep 98 • **Discworld Convention II**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Contact (SAE/IRC) PO Box 3086, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8TY. Will mail flyers for non-profit-making cons with its publications, free.

**Rumblings** • **Cardiff** meetings (1st Tue eve monthly) have moved to Wellingtons Café Bar, 42 The Hayes, Cardiff. • **South Hants SF Group** (2nd/4th Tue) moves to The Magpie, Fratton Rd, Portsmouth, on 22 July. • **Jersey in 2000?** Martin Hoare and others plan a third St Helier Eastercon bid, contingent on successful Hotel de France negotiations. Driven by fan demand, the offered breakfast may well consist wholly of chocolate-coated mushrooms. • **Worldcon 2003** ... there are indications that the Berlin bid is merely a practice run for 2005.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Another Definition.** *Greg Bear* on a panel at the ICFA: 'Good hard sf is fiction that scientists consider grammatical.' [AH]

**Publishers & Sinners.** *Simon & Schuster UK* have hastily changed the name of their coming (1998) 'Spectrum' sf/fantasy imprint to 'Earthlight', because 'Bantam Spectra in the USA were worried that the names might be confused.' But does the celebrated author of *Earthlight* worry that the names might be confused? • *David Garnett* gloatingly reveals that *New Worlds* returns in Aug, with stuff by P. Cadigan, E. Brown, K. Newman, P. F. Hamilton/G. Joyce, N. K. Hannan, B. W. Aldiss, A. Stephenson, H. Waldrop, I. Watson, G. Kilworth, C. Manby, G. Charnock, M. Moorcock and W. Gibson. • *Urban Dreams* is an e-zine which runs a 'metafiction' contest. Its liberal entry rules exclude only the two vilest literary forms imaginable: 'No science fiction. No pornography.' [PN]

**Hordes of Awards.** *Bram Stoker Awards* for horriblest horror ... NOVEL *The Green Mile*, Stephen King. FIRST NOVEL *Crota*, Owl Goingback (Donald Fine). LONG FICTION (NOVELETTE) 'The Red Tower,' by Thomas Ligotti. SHORT 'Metalica', P. D. Cacek. COLLECTION 'The Nightmare Factory', Thomas Ligotti. NONFICTION *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*, S. T. Joshi. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Ira Levin, Forrest J. Ackerman. [GVG] • **SFRA Pilgrim Award** for sf criticism, Marleen Barr ('whose acceptance speech didn't actually include the words "And by lucky chance I have a heavy academic paper right with me just to prove I can do it," but the paper was delivered anyway.' [AS]); *Milford Award* for lifetime achievement in sf publishing and editing, David Pringle. 'I was humbled to notice that among previous recipients (beginning with Donald A. Wollheim in 1980) was one Harlan Ellison....' [DP] • *James Tiptree Memorial Award* for

'gender-bending' sf: Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow*, and Ursula K. Le Guin, 'Mountain Ways'. • *Mythopoeic Fantasy Awards* novel shortlist: John Barnes, *One for the Morning Glory*; Patricia A. McKillip, *Winter Rose*; Nancy Springer, *Fair Peri*; Terri Windling, *The Wood Wife*; Gene Wolfe, *The Book of the Long Sun*. The Children's novel category was suspended this year owing to a shortage of nominations. [DB]

**Random Fandom.** John D. Berry boggled at the agglutinativenomenclature of our publishing tribes ... 'But do you mean that you're not making up "HarperCollinsTradeDivision"? Oh, please tell me that you made it up, please...' • Helena Bowles (with some assistance last year from Richard Standage) gave birth on 5 Jun to a daughter, Magdalen. [MT] • Bruce Gillespie was stunned to find himself made George Turner's literary executor. 'Panic! What the hell does a literary executor do? Why, George, why?' He duly plans 'various projects to honour George's life and work.' • Teddy Harvia received a Rebel Award for contributions to Southern (US) fandom: 'Feeling rebellious, I accepted.' • Andy Hooper and his team, exhausted by editorial collaboration, are ceasing publication of the relentlessly 3-weekly *Apparatchik*. (Bang go my plans for joint celebrations when they caught up with *Ansible's* numbering at issue 209 or so.) For relaxation, Andy plans a new and leisurely fanzine which will appear, er, every 3-4 weeks. • Tim Illingworth & Marcia McCoy are not news just now but plan to become so in August. • Bob Smith, returning to fandom after long absence (*floreat* 1952-82), seeks renewed contacts: 37 St Johns Rd, Bradbury, NSW 2560, Australia.

**In Typo Veritas.** According to Fripp PR's release for the ghastly-sounding video Tony Blair—*The Road to Victory*, 'It looks at the man behind the politician, his robots, his upbringing, his faith and his family.' [PP] But will those clanking servitors obey the Zeroth Law of Robotics?

**TAFF.** That is not dead which can eternal lie.... The TransAtlantic Fan Fund has stirred to eldritch life and announced a TAFF race from North America to Intuition, Easter 1998. Candidates should send in nominations (3 NA, 2 Euro), 100-word platform and \$20 'bond' by 1 Aug ... to Dan Steffan, 3804 S 9th St, Arlington, VA 22204, USA, or Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes La), Willenhall, WV13 1HX. Despite EuroTAFF's 1996 frostbite, fannish generosity has now restored the kitty over here to a fairly healthy £1,200. [MT]

C.o.A. Jane Barnett, 17 Polsloe Rd, Exeter, EX1 2HL. Andrew M. Butler, 33 Brook View Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5JN—'for the summer at least'. *San Francisco* in 2002 bid, PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088, USA (PO box update only).

**Small Hugo Controversy: Not Many Dead.** The *Nova Express* Fanzine Hugo campaign provoked on-line grumpiness when (by laboriously cross-referencing the Worldcon's web-published membership list with the Fan E-Mail Directory, which is explicitly not for bulk-mail use) editor Lawrence Person sent mass e-mail offering freebies to potential Hugo voters. He's unashamed: 'I had about 50 people ask for free issues [...] and a grand total of two people who objected to the tactic.' • More grumbling was caused by lexically challenged US sf promoter Pesach Latlin's bombardment of fans with junk e-mail about his 'Sphere Fantasy' web sites: 'I am hoping that with better contact, we can create a closer nit community on the net.' He's trying hard. • Meanwhile, debate continues over possible future Hugo nomination of the webzine *Science Fiction Weekly*, whose commercial aspirations and public claims of 'circulation' figures in excess of 22,000 would seem in some eyes to put it amid the tough competition of the professional 'Best Editor' category. (Whose threshold is 10,000 copies.) *SFW's* editor, though, strenuously insists that his own figures should be interpreted in a Pickwickian sense and the magazine placed in the less competitive 'Semiprozine' lists.

**Outraged Letters.** Dr Andrew M. Butler: 'Re *Ansible* 119: *Mythago Wood* features two brothers and a father in love with the same woman (whose name is a variant on that of their mother/wife) and a monster who looks like the father. I don't think you could see a clearer Freudian schema if you blinded yourself, and Mr Holdstock has clearly been repressing something. His relaying of a story about scrotums and onion bhajis merely confirms the neuroses.' (Which, alas, reminded me of Murray Moore's query to John Clute on one *FE* entry: 'Would a grouping of EDIFICES, connected to each other, be an edifice complex?') • Steve Green: 'The truth about *Critical Wave* finally came to light when Martin and I worked out our monthly repayments on the £5k [bail-out] loan: £66.60 each. The Devil made us do it...' • David Pringle: 'I was interested to read about Malcolm Edwards and the inflated scrotums. I too have just finished a stint of jury service. Bloody typically, though, Malcolm has to go one better—his was a murder trial that lasted three weeks, while mine was a rape case that lasted three days!'

**Small Press.** *BBR*/New SF Alliance catalogues of magazines etc are

again available for SAE ... PO Box 625, Sheffield, S1 3GY.

**Wing's Masterclass.** 'It was not a cancer on the face of Darkover, but a strange and not unbeautiful garment.' (Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Heritage of Hastur*, 1975) [CW] • 'In the room below, her two halves slept.' (Sean Stewart, *Clouds End*, 1996) • 'I felt a smile climbing my mouth but I pulled it down.' ... 'I was hollowed-out. A ballbearing rolled around and around where my innards should be.' ... 'An impulse guided my hand to my manuscript and my legs to frog-leap high in the air.' ... 'The submerged apocalypse tossed and turned in its uneasy sleep.' ... 'His eyes were trapped on the far side of his music.' (all John Shirley, 'What He Wanted', 1975) • 'In fact, the sight of her made me feel a little queasy and I started to walk back out when her eyes opened, nailing me to the floor.' (Jay Russell, 'Lily's Whisper', 1996) • *True Romance Dept.*: 'As his eyes bulged, so did his cock ...' (Nicholas Royle, 'The Comfort of Strangers', 1996)

## One of My Mob

*John Bangsund spoke at George Turner's funeral in Melbourne ...*

George Turner was one of the most generous people I have known—generous with his time, which was very precious, as it is to any writer; with his talents, which were prodigious; and with his friendship, which was unqualified. There were very few ifs, buts or maybes about George. His yes was yes; his no, however gently framed, was just as firmly no. You knew where you stood with him. That is, once you began to appreciate what an extraordinary person he was, you knew where you stood with him. There was a certain shyness or reticence about him that for some people hindered this appreciation. I was one of those people. He was a friend of mine long before I knew he was.

I met George in 1967. At the time I was a publisher's sales representative, probably the least effectual ever employed by Cassell and Co. in Australia. I didn't want to be a sales rep, I wanted to be an editor, but Cassell already had an editor—Bob Sessions—and it would be some time before they wanted another. As it happened, in 1967 I was an editor, of sorts. I was publishing a fanzine called *Australian Science Fiction Review*, and since I did the typing I felt entitled to call myself editor.

One day Bob Sessions called out to me from his office: 'Do you know that George Turner is one of your mob?' Which mob? I wondered. All I knew about George Turner was that he had shared a Miles Franklin Award with Thea Astley, that Stephen Murray-Smith had spoken very highly of him in *Overland*, and that Cassell Australia would soon be publishing his sixth novel, *The Lame Dog Man*. Bob was working on the jacket copy for *The Lame Dog Man*, and he showed me what George had written about himself: he was a science fiction addict.

As soon as I could, I arranged to meet George. We had a good talk, and I gave him the first eight or nine issues of *Australian Science Fiction Review*, the like of which he had never seen or suspected—a magazine that discussed science fiction seriously, as literature.

Either then or soon after, I asked George if he would consider writing something for *ASFR*. He did. He wrote an essay called 'The Double Standard'. I had published many adverse reviews in *ASFR*, but nothing quite like this. George had taken one of the most highly regarded novels in the genre, acknowledged that it was an exciting piece of story-telling, then ripped it to shreds as a novel and as science fiction. I was amazed to learn that this was the first book review George had ever written.

He went on writing for *ASFR*, and when it folded, for Bruce Gillespie's *SF Commentary*—and for many other publications. So that meeting, thirty years ago, accidentally launched George's distinguished career as a critic and eventually writer of science fiction. [...]

An incident at that first meeting with George gave me some little insight into his sense of humour, which at times was so understated that you were in at least two minds about his meaning. As I rose to leave, he said: 'I suppose you had better meet Caesar'—and he opened a door, and in burst the biggest dog I had ever been anywhere near. Caesar was a Great Dane—very young, very skittish, and enormous. Caesar gave me a quick examination. Something about my legs interested him, and before I knew it he had crawled between them. There I was, for an absurd moment, helpless, sort of mounted back-to-front on a gigantic hound. Then just as suddenly he was in front of me again, and he put his huge paws on my shoulders, and began licking my face. And George said: 'Don't encourage him, John.' [11 June]

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