

# ansible



## Ansible 128 March 1998

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**OBSESSIONS.** Your editor confesses to several recent lost weekends, thanks to the recurrence of an old addiction: writing software. I got irritated once too often at the Grolier CD-ROM *SF Encyclopedia*, with its marginalization of the actual text, midget 'leper's squint' display area, nasty but unalterable font and colours, semi-adequate search facilities, severely restricted ability to backtrack when browsing, etc. Wait for a brutally hard sell when I try to flog all Grolier victims my home-made Windows 95 *Encyclopedia* viewer, tentatively approved by John Clute....

### The Garden of Time

Steve Baxter, man of modesty, offers his own angle on the current fracas at HarperCollins UK (where books are cancelled from on high against their editors' wishes, if not nice enough about China to suit the Murdoch strategy for world domination): 'I only hope Rupert "Keith" Murdoch doesn't notice that in *Titan* the Chinese drop an asteroid on the USA,' Steve shyly conveys in 40-foot neon lettering. Meanwhile, sf fans admired the timing with which Malcolm Edwards, that born survivor, deftly sprinted from HC to Orion shortly before the uproar began.

John Clute has been showing off his and Judith's transformed back garden. The BBC2 *Home Front* programme converted this at vast expense from a bit of roof to, er, a bit of roof with random plants in tubs, ever so many glass fishing floats, and attitude. Its bijou wonders and small-scale marvels should appear on UK screens this month. *Stop Press:* a mysterious 'John and Judith' are listed as victims on 11 Mar, 8:30pm.

Lionel Fanthorpe sightings continue unchecked despite sceptics' sneers: showers of inexplicable Fanthorpeana are regularly reported in crop-circle territory, on motorbikes and on TV. Dave Clark asks: 'What were Lionel Fanthorpe and John Norman discussing outside the program rooms at LoneStarCon? They thought no one saw them, but ... *The Shadow knows!* All together now: 'Terrifying bondage, weird bondage, uncanny bondage, inhuman bondage, alien bondage, robot bondage ...'

Frederik Pohl struck fear into fellow-writers' hearts by quoting a recent fan letter: 'Dear Mr Pohl, I am 18 years old and I haven't ever completed a book before reading *The World at the End of Time*. I would always get part of the way through the first chapter and then get too bored to finish....' [SFC Feb]

Bryan Talbot's latest graphic epic approaches completion: 'The title is still under wraps, but the subtitle is *The Legacy of Luther Arkwright* and it's nearly 300 pages long.' *Ansible* mysteriously received the draft artwork for a period tavern scene which, being rowdy and involving the ignition of farts, naturally features sf walk-ons—including Brian Aldiss, Iain M. Banks, Molly Brown, Octavia Butler, Ramsey Campbell, Susanna Clarke, Colin Greenland, Diana Wynne Jones, Gwyneth Jones, me ('You are the only one to have kept your glasses ...'), SMS and Bob Shaw.

James White is the newest winner of NESFA's Skylark Award; little does he know that Geri Sullivan will be personally presenting it to him during her imminent progress through Northern Ireland.

### Concameration

14-15 Mar • **Corflu** (the fanzine con), Griffin Hotel, Leeds. £25/\$40 reg. Contact 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY.

25 Mar • **BSFA Open Meet**, Jubilee pub, nr Waterloo, 5-7pm on.

27 Mar • **The Discreditable Attractions of the Supernatural** (academic conf). With Andy Sawyer *et al.* £15 reg, £7.50 concessions; early booking advised, i.e. now. Cheques to U of London at venue: Inst of Romance Studies, Senate Ho (3rd fl), Malet St, London, WC1E 7HU.

27-9 Mar • **Deliverance** (Blake's 7), Stoke-on-Trent Moat House. £50 reg; 2 days £45, 1 day £30; advance booking closes 12 Mar. Contact (SAE) 18 Bury Ave, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 0ED.

29 Mar • **Star Wars Event**, Basildon Sports Centre, Essex. 11am-4pm. With Dave Prowse, others. £2 admission. 0181 523 1074.

4 Apr • **BFS Open Night**, Princess Louise pub, Holborn (upstairs bar), 7pm on. Guest to be confirmed: Douglas E. Winter.

10-13 Apr • **Intuition** (Eastercon), Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £35 reg, £15 supp; advance booking closes 27 Mar. £40 at door

or £20/day Sat/Sun; £15/day Fri/Mon. Contact 1 Waverley Way, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 3LQ.

18-19 Apr • **Mecon**, SCR, Queen's U, Belfast. GoH James White. £10 reg; £12 from 1 Apr. Contact 38 Palestine St, Belfast, BT7 1QJ.

24-6 Apr • **SFeracon** (national con and 'Euroconference' in place of Eurocon proper), Zagreb, Croatia. \$20 reg. GoH: Guy Gavriel Kay. Contact Igor Mrkoci, Brace Cvijica 21, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

25-6 Apr • **Unconvention 98** (Fortean/UFO/weird), U of London Union, Malet St. £12.50 day, £20 both days; £15/£25 after 9 Mar; advance booking closes 6 Apr. Contact (cheques to John Brown Publishing) PO Box 444, Woking, Surrey, GE21 1GZ. 01795 41925.

23 May • **BFS Open Night**, as 4 Apr. Guest TBC: Jonathan Carroll.

22-5 May • **Lazlar Lyricon II** (*Hitch-Hiker*), Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. £30 reg; ZZ9 members £25; rises Easter. Contact (cheques: ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha) 67 South Pk Gdns, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1HZ.

13-15 Nov • **Novacon 28**, Britannia Hotel, New St, Birmingham. 'I've spent 2½ months negotiating with 17 hotels until we finally cut a deal last week,' said shattered Chairman Tudor on 17 Feb. GoH A Paul J. McAuley. £28 reg, rising after Easter. Rooms £35/person twin/dbl, £40 single. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, W. Midlands, DY9 8SS.

20-22 Nov • **Armadacon X**, Cophthorne Hotel, Plymouth. £25 reg, £19 unwaged. Contact PO Box 38, Plymouth; 01752 267873/812698.

13-15 Aug 99 • **Wincon V** (Unicon 1999), King Alfred's College, Winchester. GoHs TBA. £20 reg, £10 supp; may rise after Easter 98. Contact 53 Havant Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants, PO2 7HH.

*Rumblings* • **Picocon** (28 Feb) tactfully explained that they could find no notable guests this year, so would I help fill in until proper GoH service can be resumed in 1999? Alas, I couldn't, but appreciated the sentiment.... • **Octocon**, the Irish national sf con, is skipping a year; despite the hopeful reports in A126, there will be no 1998 event. [DL]

### Infinitely Improbable

**Publishers & Sinners.** Official Wired Books response to eager query about the scheduling of John Shirley's *Eclipse*: 'Wired Books has decided not to continue with the Cortex series. The rest of the series (including *Eclipse*) has been cancelled. The titles published are: *Artificial Kid*, *White Light* and *The Silicon Man*.' See A124 for hot denial of any cancellation.

**Tiptree Award** for 1997's 'gender-bending' sf: joint winners were *Black Wine* by Candace Jane Dorsey and the short 'Travels with the Snow Queen' by Kelly Link, the third short story to be a Tiptree winner.

R.I.P. Jo Clayton (1939-1998). Katharine Kerr writes: 'On 13 February, at 4 in the afternoon, Jo Clayton died in hospital with friends and her sister there to see her off on the last journey. Her respite from multiple myeloma proved all too brief, and as the doctors had warned us, when the end came, it came quickly. She would have been 59 in two more days. She leaves behind nearly forty fantasy and science fiction books and a small army of grieving friends.' John Lorentz adds: 'She never once gave up. She completed two novels and several short stories which she was hospitalized. (A third novel was nearly complete, and will probably be finished by Kit Kerr, her literary executor, based on Jo's notes.)' • **Kenneth Gatland** (1924-1997), rocketry author and editor, died on 11 Dec. The sf link: he was the technical adviser to BBC Radio's much-loved 1953-5 serial *Journey into Space*. [BH] • **Antonio Prohías**, Cuban-born cartoonist who drew *Mad* magazine's sometimes science-fictional *Spy vs Spy* strip (1960-1990), died aged 77 on 24 Feb. [BB]

**Thog's Art Masterclass.** I quite liked Tor's new fantasy blockbuster, *The Runelords: The Sum of All Men* by David Farland ('Edited by David G. Hartwell'), but giggled immoderately at the cover painting. It wasn't so much the lady in the mediaeval mini-skirt as the central figure, a ghostly Viking type with vast and unutterably silly horns growing out of his helmet. Close textual study revealed the author's description which had been so sensitively interpreted: 'His helm was a simple round thing of ancient design.'

**Weird Tales** (est. 1923) has a new publisher, DNA of *Absolute Magnitude* fame. George Scithers & Darrell Schweitzer continue as editors.

Submissions: 123 Crooked Lane, King of Prussia, PA 19406-2570, USA. DNA prefer to call the magazine *Weird Tales Nasty Little* © Symbol.

**Random Fandom.** Brian Ameringen, ace book-hunter, is officially launching his SF/Fantasy/Horror Catalogue and Bookfinding Service ... first catalogue around 1 Apr. 37 Coventry Rd, Ilford, IG1 4QR. • *Lilian Edwards*, possibly not speaking as the Voice of Corflu, notes that "50% of all known Corfluoosies are no longer in communication with Tommy Ferguson, having been fatally offended beyond all fannish powers of forgiveness by his famous tact, diplomacy and emotional honesty!" (See A127, not that it helps.) • *Alison Freebairn's* fanzine ad for a 'Fangagochi' virtual pet may yet plunge all fandom into war: 'It's the new craze that's sweeping the nation! The virtual fan can now be yours! Groom his beard! Feed him beer! Pretend he is Gary Farber, and just let him die! Only £2,000.' • *Richard E. Geis* expressed alarm when Arthur C. Clarke, at 80, declared 20 years of sexual inactivity: 'Hell, I'm 70 and I still have weekly orgasms!' • *Martin Hoare*, beset by tax horrors and reckoning that the Inland Revenue hit squad acted illegally in convicting him of wilful naughtiness without letting him present evidence or appear before the General Commissioners, is now busy preparing his case for the European Court of Human Rights. Be afraid. Be very afraid. • *Minicon 33* is doing a GoH fanthology of Stuff Langford Liked (i.e. other folks' articles from my old fanzines), inexplicably titled *Wrath of the Fanglord*. • *Andrew I. Porter* threatens to send 'a clipping about comparative costs of running conventions in various convention centres in the UK. Prices for the same event ran from a low of £5,000 pounds in N. Ireland to over £12,000 in—surprise!—the SECC in Glasgow. Hmm....'

**Who Will Rid Me ...?** Blurb from the US Diamond Comics catalogue, on a comic called *Solar*: 'ACCLAIMED SCI-FI AUTHOR CHRISTOPHER PRIEST PENS SOLAR. Christopher Priest, author of numerous science-fiction novels, has been known to write comic books from time to time—and his latest (and perhaps greatest) effort is to tackle an almighty Solar for Acclaim comics.' [AP] When comics writer Jim Owsley decided for no very clear reason to change his name to Christopher Priest (see A82), he surely had no intention of trading on an established author's reputation. But somehow that's the way it seems to be working out.

**C.o.A.** *Gary Farber*, just evicted from his New York apartment, is currently penniless, peripatetic, and crashing with various hero fan friends. *Chris & Penny Hill*, The Bungalow, Evingar Rd, Whitchurch, Hants, RG28 7EY. *Lucy Huntzinger & John Bartelt*, 4102 Thain Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306, USA. *Catherine McAulay's* Brussels job now extends to Sept, with a slight switch of address: Quai au Bois à Brûler 47, B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium. *Dan & Lynn Steffan*, 800 S Ivy St, Arlington, VA 22204, USA. *Norman J. Warren*, 216 Boston Rd, London, W7 2AD.

**Nebula Awards 1997 final ballot ...** NOVEL *A Game of Thrones*, George R.R. Martin; *Ancient Shores*, Jack McDevitt; *Beltwether*, Connie Willis; *City on Fire*, Walter Jon Williams; *King's Dragon*, Kate Elliott; *Memory*, Lois McMaster Bujold; *The Moon and the Sun*, Vonda McIntyre. • NOVELLA 'Abandon in Place', Jerry Olton (F&SF); 'Chrysalis', Robert Reed (Asimov's); 'Loose Ends', Paul Levinson (Analog); 'Primrose and Thorn', Bud Sparhawk (Analog); 'The Funeral March of the Marionettes', Adam-Troy Castro (F&SF); '... Where Angels Fear to Tread', Allen Steele (Asimov's). • NOVELETTE 'The Copyright Notice Case', Paul Levinson (Analog); 'The Dog's Story', Eleanor Arnason (Asimov's); 'The Flowers of Aulit Prison', Nancy Kress (Asimov's); 'The Miracle of Ivar Avenue', John Kessel (Intersections); 'The Undiscovered', William Sanders (Asimov's); 'Three Hearings on the Existence of Snakes in the Human Bloodstream', James Alan Gardner (Asimov's); 'We Will Drink a Fish Together', Bill Johnson (Asimov's). • SHORT 'Burning Bright', K.D. Wentworth (Aboriginal); 'Itsy Bitsy Spider', James Patrick Kelly (Asimov's); 'Sister Emily's Lightship', Jane Yolen (Starlight); 'The Crab Lice', Gregory Feeley (Alternate Tyrants); 'The Dead', Michael Swanwick (Starlight); 'The Elizabeth Complex', Karen Joy Fowler (Crank). [VM]

**Fannish Fortunes.** San Francisco's 2002 Worldcon bid promotion involves fortune cookies: some slips were accidentally blank ('You mean I have no future?' 'Er, it's a Zen fortune') while others ranged from the Hofstadterian 'This fortune no verb' through the disquieting 'The next set of Magic cards will be based on your college years' to the deeply soul-chilling 'You will be Martin H. Greenberg's next co-editor'.... [OC]

**Small Press.** 'Over £1m a year for writers—are you getting your share?' is the alluring blurb of *Prizes, Grants & Bursaries 1998* (211 pp, £6.99). Writers' Bookshop, 7-11 Kensington High St, London, W8 5NP.

**In Typo Veritas.** I enjoyed the Modest Proposal, in Judith Hanna's and Joseph Nicholas's new fanzine *International Revolutionary Gardener*, to '... take over derelict vacant blacks and turn them into community gardens.' For the sake of fairness, *Ansible* urges that this programme of

urban improvement be extended to derelict, vacant whites.

**Hugo Controversy.** Oh, what fun: it's the *SF Weekly* Hugo status wars again. The Big-Endian position is that since this webzine's notional circulation is far beyond the defining 'pro' level of 10,000, it must be a prozine; the Little-Endians—who include the Hugo administrators—feel that although prozines start at 10,000, semiprozines do not necessarily stop there (despite what the Hugo rules seem to say), and that *SFW* is a semiprozine. The Dunno faction is still wondering whether a website has a print run at all: ever so many readers, but only one copy....

**21 Years Ago.** Another stupefying sf prediction, as erstwhile fan pundit *Terry Hughes* studied the second issue of *Asimov's*: 'The magazine is unlikely to last more than four issues.' (Checkpoint 81, 1977)

**Was It Donatello?** Wild turtles could not persuade me to print the long extract from Dan Gallagher's *The Pleistocene Redemption*—selected for the author's own PR as a specially good bit—in which a 'monstrous turtle' subtly makes its presence known: 'It sliced off Abrih's entire jaw from ear to ear, just missing the carotid artery and jugular vein. Abrih's upper larynx, ripped completely out of his neck, formed a lump of bloody sinew and cartilage floating from the right side of the hungry reptile's hideous head.' Further hostilities take us into *Thog's Elegant Variations Masterclass* as in rapid succession this turtle becomes 'the eight foot long horror', 'the voracious monster', 'the vicious animal', 'the nightmarish turtle', 'the *Meiolania*' (thrice), 'the horrendous eating machine', 'the monster', 'the grotesque turtle', 'the gigantic spiked turtle' and 'the terror', all in four very busy paragraphs. Thog smack lips....

**Fanfundery.** TAFF NA administrator *Dan Steffan* moved at short notice. Ballots carry his old address but should go to the new one (see CoA) or to incoming administrator *Ulrika O'Brien*, 123 Melody Ln #C, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, USA—whose Feb TAFF newsletter amazed the world with forgotten courtesies like listing and thanking voters and donors. Nominations open 1 May for a new race, NA to Europe and the 1999 Eastercon; probable closing date 25 July, voting to 5 Dec. • *Mark Plummer* urges fans to beg a free *Bumper Snufkin*, the sampler of Maurice Kincaid Speller's fanwriting published for her TAFF campaign: SAE (A4/A5) to 14 Northway Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE. • *Ken Bulmer's* 1955 TAFF report, published 1998 and poshly bound (A4 softcover), is copiously available from *Ansible*: £5 post free. • **GUFF:** 1998 northbound plans vanished into apathy. A southbound race is hoped next year, from Europe to Aussiecon 3 (Worldcon). • **DUFF:** the 1998 Australasia to N.America race is on, with candidates Susan Clarke & Terry Frost contending for a Worldcon trip. Voting deadline 23 Apr. Ballots on request from Janice Murray (NA), Perry Middlemiss (Aus) or me.

**Outraged Letters** (A127). Punctilious *Paul McAuley* pedantically protests the BSFA shortlist: 'I'm very pleased, naturally, that Paul Young has been nominated for the cover of my book, but I ought to point out that its title (printed in big letters on the top and along the spine) is *Child of the River* not *A Child of the River*.' The BSFA grovels abjectly.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Authors Who Should Perhaps Find A New Butcher:* 'They'd see the way that some of their husbands twitched into life like dead meat when introduced into her company.' (Stephen Gallagher, *Red, Red Robin*, 1995) • 'Somewhere in Snowfield, were there living human beings who had been reduced to the awful equivalent of foil-wrapped Pop Tarts, waiting only to provide nourishment for some brutal, unimaginably evil, darkly intelligent, other-dimensional horror?' (Dean R. Koontz, *Phantoms*, 1983) [HF] • *Dept of Rampant Urban Decay:* 'Outside, the garrison town of Philippopolis—Philippopolis-trans-Indus—was slowly dissolving in the summer rains.' (Melissa Scott, *A Choice of Destinies*, 1986) [RBW] • 'Poulpe himself appeared unaware. His lapis eyes, bright and hard as sunlit ice, were turned inward.' (Paula Volsky, *Illusion*, 1991) • 'The flowers churned in her mind.' ... 'The lake was a good quarter of a mile across and longer in length.' (both Peter James, *Prophecy*, 1992) • *Dept of How To Tell Evil Spirits To Go Away:* 'Cyrus steadied the witch as she recovered enough to make a series of signs in the air with two sharply pointed fingers.' (Gary L. Holleman, *Howl-O-Ween*, 1996) • 'The Dark Man's eyes were round and black like two holes in the fabric of night.' (*ibid*) • *Dept of Skiffy Plotting Plausibility:* 'The Space Shuttle *Atlantis*—carrying a Russian satellite equipped with nuclear warheads—makes an emergency landing right in the middle of a Palestinian terrorist compound.' (blurb, Timothy Rizzi, *Strike of the Cobra*) [All PB if not otherwise credited]

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