



Ansible 66 January 1993

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan, art by J.G.Posada. *Ansible* is available for SAEs, whim, or (monied idiots only) £12 per year. Abigail Frost for TAFF!

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS. To become rich enough to attend some conventions. • If I ever get invited to speak at the Science Museum again, to have a very large drink before casting my polysyllables at a small audience with a heavy six-year-old component. • To pour beer over persons in ties who demand a copy of *Ansible* and instantly crumple and discard it on finding it's not (presumably) an insider-dealer newsletter. • To remember that there is a subtle difference between Windsor and Winchester. • To be nicer henceforth to Orson Scott Card.

The Late Breakfasters

Orson Scott Card, during his Hillcon speech (SoB), offered a sweeping critical approach to sf which I have heard authors formulate before, but never so nakedly. The fundamental idea is that there are *no* bad books. Therefore there should be no bad reviews. 'Those critics who are condemning other people's work are really saying "I don't understand why people like this. I don't understand why the writer wrote this. I don't get it."' Any and every bad review merely indicates a *dumb critic* who *didn't* get it. Sod off if you thought you were a disappointed reader who was short-changed by some lazy, lacklustre sf novel (not that Card himself writes such). You're just dumb.

Dave Carson wishes to sell you his Lovecraftian t-shirts depicting cuddly gods Nyarlathotep or Yog-Sothoth: £9 to Flat 10, Block J, Peabody Estate, Horseferry Rd, London, SW1P 2EN. *Me*: 'Haven't you got one of Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat With A—' *DC*: 'Fucked if I draw a thousand young.'

Nick Dance of Serendipity Picture Co. was outraged by that Terry Pratchett bit ages ago on the Minehead Space Festival. 'His comments about "the arrogant film crew" are un-just, if anyone was arrogant he was, he was well aware who we were and what we were going to film. Also, the "outrageous disclaimer form" he refers to was just a standard broadcast TV release form used by all the major broadcasting companies. He was the only contributor to the documentary that would not sign the form, everyone else, including world famous authors, scientists, artists and special effects designers were happy to sign,' etc, etc. Your editor grovels at having condensed TP's phrase about the event's weird atmosphere to 'amateurish' in *Interzone*, this word having vastly offended N.Dance. TP sticks by his view of the film crew: 'Maybe it had been a long week and the natural courtesy they'd extended to the other participants had dried up? ... Dance's letter is full of that affronted astonishment professed by TV people when it's suggested that not everyone likes them.'

Lionel Fanthorpe gets about, cropping up in *The Independent* magazine (12 Dec) as tutor of famously precocious lad James Harries ('Only 60,000 words of homework finished this weekend, James? You *must* try harder.') and on the guest list of Orycon 15 (Portland, OR, 12-14 Nov 93, with Terry Pratchett), prompting Ben Yalow to muse on Orycon's penchant for us 'British humorist types'....

William Gibson's fan past keeps returning to haunt him, most recently in xeroxes of a 1963 *Fanac* newszine containing real Gibson cartoons and a con masquerade report with 'young Bill Gibson as a priest of the Beetle God'. Ho ho. [DH]

Steve Jones, Britain's Mr Horror, gloats that he's one of the guests at a vast con marking the 35th anniversary of Forrest J.Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (28-30 May, Arlington, VA, USA) ... along with such luminaries as Ray Bradbury,

Robby the Robot and the star of *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*.

Chris Priest got an unsolicited plug when the *Observer* looked back at the Best Young British Writers promotion he featured in long ago, and famous Julian Barnes explained: 'Priest always was a chippy bugger.' An unsold Priest book on the horrors of publishing may now be retitled *Chippy Bugger*.

Maureen Speller 'upset the outgoing editor of the SFRA [*SF Research Association*] review magazine by agreeing with Gary Westfahl's comments on its inadequacy. I freely admit I was very disappointed with the thing when I first received it. I wanted to get in touch with other people interested in the study of sf, to find out what they were doing ... instead, all we get are cruddy little reviews, often not terribly well written.'

Brian Stableford updates the glum report in A65: 'Oh, by the way, Jane came back just before Christmas.'

Roger Weddall, the much-loved Australian fan who made the 1992 DUFF trip to America, died of (essentially) lymphoma on 3 December, aged 36. 'A large, gentle and mischievous bloke prone to sending postcards in the traditionally tiny fannish script from unexpected corners of the world.' [JH] 'Roger began his fannish career in the 70s ... edited *Thyme*, which won the Ditmar for Best Fanzine of 1986 ... in 1991 Typo (residing with Roger) won the Ditmar for Best Fannish Cat. He had known since May 1992 that he had cancer [*and had to curtail his DUFF trip to return for treatment*].' [VR] 'It has been proposed that a report of Roger's DUFF trip should be assembled out of short contributions from all those he met and with whom he stayed; the result would serve as a sort of memorial booklet.' [JN]

David Wingrove contributed an awesome article to the *Daily Telegraph* (5 Dec) explaining that poor reviews of his legendary *Chung Kuo* series have a wicked common cause! 'Long before this over-the-top [*BSFA*] editorial appeared, I had been singled out by the British science fiction field for a sin which, for many, went beyond that of the pornographer. I was politically incorrect.' [JN] Um. I felt that some folk were ganging up on DW even before Book 1 came out, but their point seemed to be not so much a question of PC as that his prose was, er, stylistically challenged.

Court Circular

'GW won their injunction against Bantam/Transworld's *Dark Future* books, which will now presumably be withdrawn. British justice and the English sense of fair play triumph again!'—writes Brian Stableford, possibly in tones of mild sarcasm.

As known *Ansible* readers, this lawsuit arose because Games Workshop had a game called *Dark Future*™ and had published spin-off *Dark Future* books (mostly by Kim 'Jack Yeovil' Newman) before apparently discontinuing the game and their own book venture. Their new co-publishing project with Boxtree starts this month, with no DF books in the launch and none announced for later. (But on an Xmas card Ian Watson wrote: 'The rest of Kim's and Brian's [*Stableford's*] books are due subsequently.') Meanwhile Transworld have been publishing a series of young-adult books with the overall title *Dark Future*, by Laurence James, which have incidentally sold a great deal better than the GW titles. GW objected and the lawsuit was on.

The law is pretty bloody murky. There is no copyright in titles; anyone can call their new space opera *War and Peace*. (Evelyn Waugh's title *Men at Arms* is being recycled by Terry Pratchett in a Discworld novel even now under construction.)

Nevertheless Laurence James apparently searched Whitaker's *Books in Print* (plus the entire Essex Library database) to check that **Dark Future** wasn't currently in use. No mention: it seems GW had got bored with registering books and took to making up their own ISBN numbers instead. What about trademark infringement? British trademark law applies to a distinctive style or logo: anyone can write 'IBM' but use of the IBM logo is strictly controlled. The GW and Transworld **Dark Future** books didn't look at all alike. Transworld (said to have been very supportive of their author) had encouraging affidavits from the Society of Authors, the Publishers' Association and major authors. 'Everyone in the book trade,' said my spy, 'realized the potential gravity of this case and absolutely everyone rallied around from all quarters.' It was expected throughout the publishing industry that GW's injunction would fail.

It succeeded, and early in December Transworld were duly landed with costs of £60,000 plus instructions to get their **Dark Future** books out of the shops in one week.

All this was an interlocutory hearing; an appeal is expected shortly, while the trial proper may be a year off. The charges against Transworld were trademark infringement and 'passing off'. The Deputy Judge declined to rule on the latter, so the law remains unclarified. The judgement on trademark infringement *appeared* to follow the line that (a) the GW **Dark Future** books all have clear TM or ® marks on the cover near the words **Dark Future** (but they don't; only the GW logo on the back has a TM mark—and of the three Yeovil DF books here, two refer on the copyright page only to the trademarked status of **Warhammer**, another game altogether); (b) if GW had brought out a magazine called *Dark Future*TM, and if Transworld had published its own *Dark Future* magazine, that would have been an infringement owing to the technicalities of 'A' and 'B' trademarks, of which one applies to mags and the other doesn't (er, yes, but what have magazines got to do with it?); (c) for practical purposes there is no difference between a numbered series of books and a magazine or periodical (sickening sound of dropped jaws across the entire publishing industry); (d) there was an infringement: injunction granted.

It had earlier emerged that one cannot use as a trademark, on a book, 'any descriptive phrase'. Happily for GW but to the slight surprise of English grammarians, **Dark Future** was ruled not to be a descriptive phrase.

Ansible does not take sides, perish the thought, and lots of sf authors are grateful to GW for generous book advances. But the Transworld lot are bitter about such reputed facts as that GW went into court with a sympathy-winning attitude of 'poor little firm being crushed by big firm ... not our fault ... always wanted a compromise' after having initially stormed on Transworld with legal guns blazing and DEMANDED the withdrawal and destruction of all copies, no deals, no compromise; that GW gave sworn evidence that the Boxtree launch wasn't yet going ahead (i.e. was in peril from this wicked passing-off), only to be shown as fibbing thanks to contradictory evidence from the great and good Rog Peyton; above all, that if only GW had acted professionally and registered their bloody titles in the first place this whole nonsense would never have arisen.

Before the hearing a GW author had remarked, optimistically, that if GW/Boxtree were to win on a platform of claimed lost sales of **Dark Future** books, they might feel honour-bound to publish some of the DF epics left in limbo ever since the game was (allegedly) scrapped. We shall see....

Concrescence

Infrequent Policy Reminder ... except on rare 'Oh God, a whole column to fill' occasions, this listing is generally confined to New, Imminent and Significantly Changed convention entries.

20 Jan • BSFA, V&A pub, Marylebone Station. Hot debate planned: 'Where Do We Move This Bloody Meeting Next?'

29-31 Jan • **Starbase 93** (Trek), Hilton Hotel, Leeds. £30 reg. Contact 152 Otley Rd, Headingley, Leeds, LS16 5JX.

5-7 Feb • **Pentatonic** (filk), Rozel Hotel, Weston-super-Mare. £25 reg. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

28-31 May • **Mexicon 5**, Scarborough. £18 reg, £20 from 10 Jan. GoH (additional): Ian McDonald and Ken Campbell, who will perform his world-acclaimed thingy *Pigsputt*. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

1-3 Oct • **Fantasycon XVIII**, Brum. *Yet another* contact address: 137 Priory Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TG.

29-31 Jul 94 • **Wincon III**, King Alfred's Coll, Winchester ... *not Windsor as mistyped last issue!* GoH: Algis Budrys, James Hogan. £17 reg (goes up 17 April 93). Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

Infinitely Improbable

'Bum Steer Department: Don't rush those stories to *Tomorrow!* Editor and owner Algis Budrys, who has purchased the new magazine from the ailing Pulphouse, is "bought up for two years".' [A Foreign Correspondent]

Club of the Crabs! A publicity pack for the new Guy N. Smith Fan Club has shaken my very bowels. Many thrilling Smith memorabilia are offered—'Wow, you should see those clockwork crabs clicking and shambling, if you've read any of Guy's Crabs series, then it's all really happening and you'll run a mile!' The newsletter spares us the Ultimate Horror of how much it costs; contact 59 Meriden Ave, Wollaston, Stourbridge, W. Midlands, DY8 4QR.

R.I.P. 'Peyo' (Pierre Culliford), the Belgian cartoonist creator of the dread Smurfs, died on 24 December aged 64. [KH]

Back Brain Recluse magazine now includes a 'Directory' of small-press items received and sends offprints of this section (only) to the lucky publishers mentioned. I like the wheeze and am persuaded to do an *Ansible* 65 'Directory', consisting of this paragraph. (BBR, PO Box 625, Sheffield, S1 3GY.)

Social Whirl: svelte playboy *Martin Hoare* and lovely incontinence expert *Jean Owen* plan exciting, whirlwind nuptials in a month or three. *Ansible:* 'Does this mean I have to make my famous Best Man speech a *third* time?' *Martin:* 'You said it, mate.' *Jean:* 'I'm sick of being an Owen, I've been an Owen all my life, I'd much rather be—' *Ansible:* 'Quite.'

C.O.A. *Iain Dickson*, 404 Bideford Green, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, LT7 7TY (Married Lamorna Cape 26-10-92!). *Steve & Leah Higgins*, 5 rue Charles Desvergnés, Meudon 92190, France. *Nigel Rowe*, 6339 North Clark, 2nd Floor, Chicago, 60660-1216, USA, 'to move in with new wife Karen Babich'. [JN]

Me. After a huge lack of orders for my *Critical Assembly II* review column collection, the original *Critical Assembly* (50 columns, 1987, now revised/expanded) is back out any day now. Same price: £9 (+75p post); £12 abroad, £15.50 airmail.

Not Hazel's Language Lessons. *Me transmitté sursum, Caledoni!* is one of the useful items in Henry Beard's *Latin For Even More Occasions*. 'I could do better than *that*,' sniffed Hazel.

Apologies to Wincon (qv) and, apparently, Rog Peyton, whose Great Wrath at A65 was rumoured but not confirmed. The only written quiz entry was John Dallman's: 'I'd guess the Xmas quiz authors are an unread books pile; Ian Watson would be a good candidate for the next.' As instantly guessed by all-knowing Abigail Frost, the authors were those whose titles/quotes have been pinched to head successive *Ansible* 'people' columns. (A65: James White. A66: Robert Aickman.)

Your Neighbour May Be A Space Alien: this traditional tabloid story has now popped up in the USA, with 'theoretical biologist Dr Thomas Easton' telling how to spot hidden extraterrestrials by their compulsive buying of Earth books, magazines, computers.... [RE]

Ansible 66 © Dave Langford, 1993. Thanks to Hazel (chiefly for patience), the Anonymous Admirer, Richard Brandt, John Bark, Cuddles, Jenny Glover (who sent, more in sorrow than in anger, some chocolate flavoured potato crisps), Judith Hanna, David Hartwell, Kim Huett, Joseph Nicholas, Chris Priest, Yvonne Rousseau, Shards of Babel, Ben Yelow, our hero distributors and this issue's Noble Sponsor, David L. Russell of Australia. Oh, and absolutely everybody who sent Xmas cards. I really meant to get around to this myself.... 7/1/93