

Ansible



Ansible 207 October 2004

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE, Permagatol, Silonium, or Radioperforers.

The October Country

Jeff Berkwitz is the new editor-in-chief at *Amazing Stories*.

Kyril Bonfiglioli had a four-page profile by Leo Carey in *The New Yorker* (20 Sep), focusing on his life and splendidly rancid thrillers, but mentioning that in the mid-60s 'he was the editor of a couple of small science-fiction magazines for which he wrote occasional items.' [MMW] The famous *TNY* fact-checkers didn't spot that it was a single magazine, *Science Fantasy*, twice retitled under Bonfiglioli (*Impulse*, *SF Impulse*).

Richard Branson charmed *Star Trek* fans by announcing that his first 'Virgin Galactic' suborbital spaceplane will be the *VSS Enterprise*. £110,000 for a 3-hour flight with 3 weightless minutes.... [DKMK]

Stephen Fry on writing/directing a film adaptation of *Vile Bodies* (as *Bright Young Things*): 'Waugh wrote the book in 1928 and set it in an imagined gay '30s [...] He was writing science fiction. I can hardly make a film in which I posited that a world war in 1933 ended all wars—we know it didn't happen.' (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 Sep) [DC]

Neil Gaiman has the last word in a *Wired* article on the 2004 Worldcon: "I come from comic books," said Gaiman. "If sci-fi is the gutter of literature, comics are the place that the gutter flows into."

Graham Joyce was taunted in *Private Eye* (1 Oct) for wangling a PhD from Nottingham Trent U by the 'brilliant wheeze' of writing a '140,000-word study' of his own novel *Smoking Poppy*. Adam Roberts crossly notes that this is not true. It wasn't a PhD in literature as implied, but in creative writing, for which it's entirely normal to submit fiction (that novel and the novella 'Leningrad Nights'), plus no more than 15,000 words of critical commentary on the candidate's writing practice. Adam adds: 'Farah Mendlesohn and I were the two examiners; and believe me we were sticklers for doing it exactly by the regs.'

Sam J. Lundwall noted our anniversary: 'Is it really 25 years since *Ansible* appeared as a beacon of shining, unbearable truth in the darkness? I remember vividly the Brighton 1979 con. At least I vividly remember parts of it. I remember the bars and the drink and the drunken parties and many things, including your smiling countenance and the beer that always followed you around, or maybe it was the other way around. Such glorious times, such glorious youth. How beautiful we all were. But nothing, nothing, was even half as beautiful as you with your first issue of *Ansible* in one hand, and the beer in the other. I am so grateful I was there, witnessing history in the making. • I am sorry I will not be able to kiss you gratefully in Glasgow next year. My eyes are failing, not to mention the rest of my body. BUT my beautiful 26-year old daughter Karin—slightly older and even more beautiful than *Ansible*—will be there to kiss you from me.' Promises, promises.

Terry Pratchett's Discworld® enjoyed a boozy 21st birthday party on 28 September. Next day on Radio 5, Simon May marvelled that the latest DW novel features a successful, profit-making postal service—prompting the Pratchettian reply, 'Truly I am a fantasy writer.' [SG]

Anne Rice was irked by negative Amazon reviews of her final vampire novel *Blood Canticle*—some disappointed, some nastily personal. Pausing to award her book five stars, she posted a vast unparagraphed tirade which perhaps unwisely revealed that: 'I have no intention of allowing any editor ever to distort, cut, or otherwise mutilate sentences that I have edited and re-edited, and organized and polished myself. I fought a great battle to achieve a status where I did not have to put up with editors making demands on me, and I will never relinquish that status. For me, novel writing is a virtuoso performance. It is not a collaborative art.' Some of us lesser writers still need that editorial whisper in the ear, 'Remember thou art but mortal.'

Michael Swanwick has yet another 'self-promoting' anecdote: 'The accounts of Terry Pratchett's mock-yearning after a Hugo in *Ansible* put me in mind of my own first such award, given the year the Worldcon was in Australia. My son's D&D buddies were present when I got the traditional drunken phone call. So when I heard the news, I said, "Hey, guys, I just won a Hugo!" "That's nice, Mr. Swanwick, congratulations," they said, being polite, well-brought-up young men. Then I added the

information that Pratchett had been the presenter. Their eyes grew wide with awe and, as one, they said, "Wow!!!" So, forget the money, if Terry Pratchett wants to trade one-fifth the awe in which he's held for one of my Hugos, I'll make the swap in a heartbeat.'

Wilson 'Bob' Tucker will be 90 on 23 November; a fannish celebration is planned in Bloomington, Illinois, on Saturday the 27th.

Peter Weston has written a book! I must seek out the details....

James White's and **Walt Willis's** Retro Hugo for *Slant* was presented to Peggy White on 19 September by James Bacon, who writes: 'Peggy said of the award: "It's absolutely fabulous. Such a handsome and beautiful award, it looks gorgeous and is a real honour from the fans. [...] James would have dearly loved it: it's a shame Walter and he are not here to see it, they would be both very proud. James never had great notions and would be quite startled as he would never have expected such a recognition." She was very happy, and proud.'

Contrist

11 Oct • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Susanna Clarke and China Miéville. *Originally announced for 12 Oct, and later moved from Tuesday to Monday.* (Pat told me on 15 Sep that the event she had announced for 14 Sep didn't happen. Sorry.)

16-17 Oct • **Octocon 2004** (Irish national con), Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. €40 reg. Contact Basement Flat, 26 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Sterling cheques: £30 to Dave Lally #2 A/C, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX.

27 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, 6 Belgrave Mews W, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With N.M. Browne.

5-7 Nov • **Armadacon 16**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Lionel Fanthorpe, Bernard Pearson, more TBA. £30 reg, £27 concessions. Contact Mrs M.Pritchard, 4 Gleneagle Ave, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

5-7 Nov • **Novacon 34**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £36 reg to 26 Oct; £40 door. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; 0114 281 1572.

13-14 Nov • **P-Con 2**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. GoH Juliet E. McKenna. £15/€20[?]30 reg. £7/€10 supp. Contact: Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

4-6 Feb 05 • **Construction 4** (Interaction staff weekend). Location TBA: 'probably one of the hotels close to the SECC', for site access.

23-27 Aug 06 • **L.A.con IV** (64th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. *Now \$150 reg.* Contact PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

30 Aug - 3 Sep 07 • **Nippon 2007** (65th Worldcon), Yokohama, Japan. \$160 reg to 31 Dec; presupporters \$100; other discounts for site voters etc. Contact (UK) 23 Ivydene Rd, Reading, RG30 1HT.

Rumblings • **Interaction**, the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon, will raise attending memberships from £95/\$170 to £110/\$195 on 1 December.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. David Gates reviews Philip Roth's alternative history *The Plot Against America* in *Newsweek*, beginning: 'Literary novelists generally leave alternative history (take a big *what if* and go from there) to writers of pop fiction and sci-fi. This is either because of its fundamental unseriousness—at bottom, who cares about an *if* that never happened—or because of the sheer drudgery involved in elaborating some counterfactual premise.' *Ansible's* informant Andrew Love deduces that we can care about (say) Hamlet or Anna Karenina only because their lives really happened.

Awards. *Booker Prize:* David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is the closest thing to a genre title among the six finalists (announced 21 Sep), and is the favourite. Against bookies' expectations, the list omits Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. • *Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire.* Best translated novel: China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*. [SFS]

R.I.P. *Tim Choate* (1954-2004), US actor who appeared in *Ghost Story* (1981) and played Zathras in *Babylon 5*, died in a motorcycle accident on 24 September; he was 49. [DLA] • *Alfred Coppel* (1921-2004), US sf and thriller writer whose sf career ran from a 1947 *Astounding* story to the 1990s 'Goldenwing' trilogy, reportedly died in

May. [GVG] • **Konstantinos 'Gus' Dallas**, US journalist whose sf story appeared in *Fantastic* (10/79), died on 22 September. He was 75. [AIP] • **Janet Leigh** (1927-2004), US actress of *Psycho* shower fame, died on 3 October aged 77. Her 63 films also included *Night of the Lepus* (1972) and *The Fog* (1980). [BB] • **John E. Mack** (1929-2004), Harvard professor and ufologist who wrote *Abduction* (1994) and *Passport to the Cosmos* (1999), died in a UK car accident on September 27. [SFS] • **Frank Thomas** (1912-2004), one of the legendary 'Nine Old Men' of Disney animation, died on 8 September aged 92. [DKMK] • **Doug Webster**, British fan active before and during WWII, died at the end of August. Harry Turner writes: 'He was a key figure in keeping fandom alive during those chaotic war years after the SFA folded. He helped out Mike Rosenblum with stencil-cutting and production of *Futurian War Digest*, as well as taking over publication of the fanzine *Fantast* when Sam Youd ['John Christopher'] was called into the forces. He personally contacted many fans during occasional "hitch-hikes", as per the enclosed pages from the last *Zenith* I published before the RAF claimed me in 1942....' • **Harvey Wheeler** (1918-2004), US political scientist who with Eugene Burdick wrote the accidental-nuclear-war novel *Fail-Safe* (1962), died from cancer on 6 September. He was 85. [PDF] • **Fred Whipple** (1906-2004), US astronomer and co-author of the 2004 Retro Hugo winner *Conquest of the Moon* (1953), died at age 97 on 31 August—just four days before the award was announced. [BH]

Oops. The 3 October *Independent on Sunday* UK hardback bestseller list has, entering in fourth place, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* by (it says here) 'Alexander McCall Smith (Polygon)'. • Karen Traviss was alarmed by the BSFA's *Vector* 247 cover image, which though looking a bit like her is described as a 'Composite photo of Saturn and Phoebe.' Karen: 'It's only my planet-sized ego that's regularly confused with a gas giant. Most of the time I pass quite easily for an asteroid.'

Random Fandom. **Paul Harland** (John Paul Smit), sf author and fan, was reported as committing suicide last year—but this September a Dutch court sentenced his Bosnian husband 'T.D.' to 12 years' imprisonment for the premeditated murder of Paul Harland. The motive was apparently T.D.'s fear of losing Dutch residence rights if an intended separation had gone through. [MAH, PNN] • *The Los Angeles SF Society* is 70 years old: an anniversary celebration follows the usual clubhouse meeting on 28 Oct. [VWV] • **Geri Sullivan** remembers the Worldcon: 'Peter Weston was simply marvelous as a GoH. He did a splendid job interviewing the other guests during the Friday Night "Time Machine" event (with Retro Hugos and short interviews). He had his charm turned on high the whole weekend, and was a master at managing the running gag of promoting his book, mentioning it at every opportunity and then some. / James Bacon was equally splendid, both as TAFF delegate and as a working shadow in the Children Services area, which he is running next year. He was one of 15 people working on the convention to receive an "Unattached Lensman" medal, our "Hero" award.' • **Peter Weston**, author of the fine fannish autobiography *With Stars In My Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom* (NESFA Press, 2004), begs: 'Hope you'll like it and will give it a mention in your Award-losing newsletter.' Later: 'Hope you'll give me a review in *Ansible*.' Still later, after my review elsewhere: 'Now if you can squeeze a tiny bit into *Ansible* next time, if you have room, please, guv, bless you ...' Even later: 'My wants are simple, merely a line or two in the All-Powerful *Ansible*. Is that too much to ask?' Will this do?

British Fantasy Awards, presented at Fantasycon on 26 September: NOVEL (August Derleth Award) Christopher Fowler *Full Dark House*. SHORT Christopher Fowler, 'American Waitress' (*Crimewave* 7). ANTHOLOGY Stephen Jones, *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror* 14. COLLECTION Ramsey Campbell, *Told by the Dead*. ARTIST Les Edwards. SMALL PRESS PS Publishing. SPECIAL (Karl Edward Wagner Award) Peter Jackson, for *The Lord of the Rings*. [PSP]

Another Book Not To Read On Planes. They'll be rounding up the Stephen King fans next, after New York's scare about a 'possible [Bush] assassin' whose wife—quoted in a US Secret Service report—called him 'obsessed with weapons, Timothy McVeigh and the book *The Dead Zone*—a novel about the stalking and attempted assassination of a presidential candidate'. (*New York Daily News*, 21 Sep) [TW]

Fanfundery. TAFF. Nominations are open for the TransAtlantic Fan Fund race from North America to the Glasgow Worldcon next year. Candidates should send 5 written nominations (3 NA, 2 EU), a platform of up to 101 words, and \$20 bond—to Randy Byers, 1013 N 36th St, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. E-mail fringefaan atsymbol yahoo.com. Deadline is 24 Nov. • **GUFF.** The race from Australasia to Glasgow in 2005 has four candidates: Sue Ann Barber, Alison Barton, David Cake, and

(jointly) Damien Warman and Juliette Woods. UK ballots from administrator Pat McMurray, 88 Poppleton Rd, London, E11 1LT.

Only Apparently Real. David Fury, co-executive producer of the coming ABC sf series *Lost*, explained to *SCI FI Wire* that 'realism is the key in making it all work. [...] We'll try to root it in real science or real pseudo-science.' (*Sci-Fi Weekly*) [DL]

Outraged Letters. **Andrew M. Butler** on Terry Pratchett's remark about not winning awards before his YA work: 'Am I misreading this as suggesting that Mr P. has never won an award for any of his novels prior to the YA stuff? If so, could I be among the several million to mention his BSFA award for *Pyramids*? It is, of course, possible that the administrator of the award or the committee of the time neglected to tell him.' Or maybe TP was misquoted. • **Simon R. Green** strikes again. 'I can definitely assure you that you made it through the [*Deathstalker Coda*] editing process, and thus you die again, horribly, in a Simon R. Green book. Perhaps you'd like to be born in the next one ...?' • **Arthur Hlavaty** reports: 'George Flynn is already missed. I checked the NESFA Press site for the Worldcon books, and read: "We published *Once More* With Footnotes* by *Tetty Pratchett*".' • **Jeff VanderMeer** bounces back: 'Our fake disease guide finished second in the Hugo balloting for best related book. I figure that this means that should the Chesley Awards art book that won be unable to perform its duties and attend to its responsibilities in the coming year as a Hugo winner, the disease guide will be prepared to step in and assume those duties and responsibilities. Say, should nude photos of the art book be published in *Playboy*.' • **Peter Weston** enquires anxiously, 'If you should happen to put in a mention for my little book in your next *Ansible* ...'

Eurocon Awards presented this August in Plovdiv, Bulgaria: AUTHOR Nick Perumov (Russia). ARTIST Otto Frello (Denmark). PUBLISHER Minotauro (Spain). TRANSLATOR Vladimir Bakanov (Russia). MAGAZINE *Science Fiction Reality (Realnost' Fantastiki)* (Ukraine). FANZINE *Emitor* (Serbia & Montenegro). PROMOTER Atanas Slavov (Bulgaria). DRAMA SCRIPT Timur Bekmambetov & Sergey Lukianenko (Russia) for film *Night Watch*. SPECIAL AWARD *Concatenation* webzine (UK). [BS]

Small Press. *Interzone* 194 (Sep/Oct 2004), the first issue to appear from Andy Cox's TTA Press, has no editorial message about the new future of the magazine—but I'm told that there's one in *The Third Alternative* 39 (Autumn 2004). *IZ* subscribers remain in the dark.... Meanwhile there are plans to rename *TTA*, but to what is uncertain.

C.o.A. **Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer**, 59 Shirley Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES. **Andy Hooper & Carrie Root**, 11032 30th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98125, USA. **Ian McDonald**, 16 Abbot's Wood, Holywood, Co Down, Northern Ireland, BT18 9PL.

Twenty Years Ago. **J.G. Ballard** made the Booker shortlist with *Empire of the Sun*, but lost to Anita Brookner's *Hôtel du Lac*. • **Jerry Kaufman** on *The Last Dangerous Visions*: 'Harlan is claiming that he'll have the MS in to his publishers in October; all he has to do is pry in the last purchased story, bought over Worldcon weekend from non-attending Steven Bryan Bieler....' (*Ansible* 40, October 1984)

Editorial. Nerves are jangled at *Ansible* HQ as builders loudly try to fix our cellar flooding problems, while the promised contract for a third Clute/Nicholls/Etc *SF Encyclopedia* is still delayed....

Update. **A203:** Basil Wells died on 23 December 2003, not 3 May 2004 as stated in previous reports. [RS] • **A206:** apologies to Peter Weston for our September issue's shocking failure to mention his book.

Thog's Masterclass. *Genealogy Dept.* 'When a hot-air balloon crashes on a remote island, the crew discovers Dr. Frankenstein's ancestor carrying on the family work ...' (IMDB on *Frankenstein Island*) [JMcN]

• *Dept of Annoying Your Proofreader.* 'Aenea was excellent at chess, good at Go, and terrible at poker.' 'I'd spent ten months dealing blackjack and had watched a lot of gamblers; this eleven-year-old [Aenea] would be one hell of a poker player.' 'Aenea [...] playing cards in the evening (she was a formidable poker player) ...' Aenea speaks: 'Just an old pre-Hegira book that Uncle Martin used to read to me. He used to say that proofreaders have always been incompetent assholes—even fourteen hundred years ago.' (all from Dan Simmons, *Endymion*, 1995) [EF] • *Sirius Cybernetics Dept.* 'ENTER, the door chimed, as it slid open soundlessly.' (C.S. Friedman, *The Wilding*, 2004) [SM]

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