

# Ansible



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

**Clarke Award.** Once again the presentation (London, 11 May) was surrounded with controversy, since money was desperately tight this year and sf notables who'd been expecting free drinks were confronted with the stark horror of a cash bar. Otherwise the mood was sunny as China Miéville accepted his second Clarke award, and Sir Arthur's £2005 cheque, for *Iron Council*. This at last equals the achievement of Pat 'Two-Clarks' Cadigan and entitles Mr Miéville to exclaim 'Langford, you dog!' Even the delighted author was surprised by this result, the general sense having been that if one of the 'mainstream' contenders (*Cloud Atlas* and *The Time Traveller's Wife*) didn't win, the award must surely go to Ian McDonald—also present—for *River of Gods*. But those Clarke judging panels are famously unpredictable. Administrator Paul Kincaid closed the ceremony by saying: 'Let the arguments begin.'

## Slaves of Time

**John Betancourt's** Wildside Press, formerly a minority owner of *Weird Tales*, is buying the magazine outright from Warren Lapine's DNA Publications and takes full control from issue 337 (at the printers when the takeover was announced on 27 May; now expected in late June). Betancourt himself is joining George Scithers and Darrell Schweitzer as co-editor of *WT*, restoring what he calls the 'classic editorial lineup' of 1987. Meanwhile, DNA can now devote more time to its mysterious fascination with a magazine about the rock group Kiss.

**Allan Bryce**, his horror magazine *The Dark Side*, and his publishing company Stray Cat Ltd attracted much recent attention after accusations of plagiarism on a web discussion board led to the identification of very many reviews, most from horror film websites, allegedly recycled without permission, payment or credit in *The Dark Side* (typically under Bryce's byline) and in *DVD World* (edited by 'Richard Marshall', a known Bryce pseudonym). Evidence is almost surreally plentiful; victims include not just genre reviewers but the *New York Times* and the BBC; the *UK Press Gazette* is now investigating. Steve Green takes up the tale: 'Stray Cat has contacted at least one "contributor" with an offer of payment, but it may be too little, too late, given the scale of the alleged plagiarism (more than 100 individual reviews, each often more than 1,000 words long) and the number of years the trail stretches back (refuting reported claims by Bryce that any breaches of copyright were the fault of a new member of staff, "Gordon Booker").' [SN/SG]

**Dave Golder** is leaving his long-time position as overall editor of *SFX* magazine, explains his successor David Bradley.

**Jo Fletcher** of Gollancz/Orion married Ian Drury on 20 May. Steve Green was distantly implicated: 'my brother-in-law John Mayo designed the tiny silver bats for Jo Fletcher's wedding tiara ...'

**Warren Norwood**, US author who published more than a dozen sf novels in the 1980s, has entered hospital with liver and kidney failure; terminal hospice care is expected to follow, alas. [SFS]

**Frederik Pohl** made a surprise appearance at the Clarke event.

**Robert Sheckley** was under intensive care in a Kiev clinic for several weeks from 27 April, after catching a cold that led to respiratory failure and required artificial respiration. He had travelled to Odessa as a guest of Portal-2005, the sf stream of April's Ukrainian computer/sf expo, and fell ill while touring the country afterwards. Since he'd lost his medical insurance card, the mounting bills (\$1,000 daily) caused great alarm to the local con committee which guaranteed the cost of treatment. Boris Sidyuk reported regularly on progress and fundraising activities, and Sheckley at last returned to the USA via chartered plane (with medics in attendance) on 27 May, for further treatment in New York. His overseas costs—including that \$22,000 flight—were indeed covered thanks to heroic fan efforts and a huge donation from Viktor Pynchuk, wealthy son-in-law of the former Ukrainian president. Several thousand dollars were also raised in the USA, once it was made clear that the 'company' which had guaranteed those medical costs wasn't something like IBM but merely a group of concerned local fans. Help is still needed: see [www.sheckley.com](http://www.sheckley.com) for PayPal donation options. Let's hope that Bob Sheckley will make a full recovery for Interaction.

## Congenic

- 22 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Steve Cockayne.
- 9-10 Jul • **Faringdon Arts Festival** sf events, Faringdon, Oxon. Most items free. Contact paulcornell[at]jowlservice.freemove.co.uk
- 29-31 Jul • **Accio 2005** (H. Potter), U of Reading. £160 reg (room & meals). Contact 26 Discovery House, Newby Place, London, E14 0HA.
- 29-31 Jul • **Clarecraft Discworld Event**, Warren Farm, Woolpit, Suffolk. Camping weekend. £5 reg to Clarecraft, Unit 1, Woolpit Business Park, Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9UP.
- 29-31 Jul • **Precursor 2** (relaxacon)—CANCELLED.
- 30-31 July • **Caption** (comics), Wolfson College, Oxford. £10 reg; £5 unwaged. Guests TBC. Contact 149 Campbell Rd, Oxford, OX4 3NX.
- 4-8 Aug • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. £110/£195/€165 reg to 30 Jun. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.
- 7 Aug • **PM 2005** (*Prisoner*), Portmeirion. 11am-8:30pm. £15 reg, advance booking only, plus Village admission. info[at]theunmutual.co.uk
- 11-15 Aug • **The Ring Goes Ever On** (Tolkien Soc): Aston U, Birmingham. £60/\$115/€103 reg; society members £55/\$105/€95. Contact 28 Loverock Crescent, Rugby, CV21 4AR.
- 13-19 Aug • **Milford (UK) SF Writers' Conference**, Snowdonia. Contact Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.
- 12-14 Aug • **Consternation** (RPG), New Hall, Cambridge. Now £27 reg. Contact 130 South Rd, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 6EL.
- 14 Aug • **Banopticon** (*Who*), Marine Ct Hotel, Bangor, Co Down, Ireland. GoH C. Baker. £20 reg. Info: banopticon2005[at]yahoo.co.uk
- 2-4 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films 16**, Day's Hotel, Sackville St, Manchester. £70/\$140 reg; £30/\$60 day. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN. Fax [+44](0)161 792-0991.
- Rumblings* • **Borders, Oxford St.** Yes, the 9 May reading event was cancelled shortly after *Ansible* listed it. Sorry. John Birchby bewails: 'Top floor is now dense music display—staff on desk know nothing.'

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Neil Ford reports another maker of ingenious distinctions: 'Hal Hartley has made a movie set in the near future, when the US is run by a totalitarian corporation and is visited by an alien—but of course it's not sf.' From an interview: 'But, really, I don't think of "The Girl from Monday" as sci-fi. Not for real. It's more like a song about life now told AS IF it were sci-fi. Sometime copping the postures of a genre can allow you to address a broader range of topics and allow you to be a little more poetic without being too heavy.' No doubt.

**The Sidewise Awards** for alternate history have two unusual features this year. The Long Form shortlist consists of one book, Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (which could still lose to No Award, unlikely though that seems), while the six Short Form finalists include a graphic-novel sequence, Warren Ellis's *Ministry of Space*.

**R.I.P.** *Henry Corden* (1920-2005), Canadian-born actor who first appeared in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (1947), and in 1972 began his long stint as the voice of Fred Flintstone, died on 19 May aged 85.

• **Frank Gorshin** (1934-2005), US actor, impressionist & comedian who played the Riddler in the 1960s Batman tv series and 1966 film, died on 17 May aged 71. Other film appearances included *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (1957), *The Meteor Man* (1993) and *Twelve Monkeys* (1995); other tv appearances, *Star Trek*, *Wonder Woman*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* and *Lois & Clark*. [SG] • **Joe Grant** (1908-2005), Disney artist, animator and story man who worked on *Snow White* and co-wrote *Dumbo* during a career that began with a 1933 Mickey Mouse cartoon, died at his drawing table on 6 May. He was 96. • **Ed Kelleher** (1943-2005), US screenwriter, playwright and film critic who scripted the 1972 *Invasion of the Blood Farmers* and other 'cult classics' (in the Ed Wood sense) of horror cinema, died from degenerative brain disease on 14 May. He was 61. [PDF] • **Samuel H. Post** (1924-2005), US editor, publisher and anthologist responsible for many 1960s MacFadden-

Bartell sf titles, died on 20 May aged 81. His son Jonathan Vos Post co-maintains the 'Ultimate SF Web Guide'. ● *Thurl Ravenscroft* (1914-2005), US actor and singer who featured in many Disney animations and (most famously) voiced Tony the Tiger in the Kellogg's Frosted ads, died on 22 May; he was 91. His animated films included *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (1966) plus other Seuss adaptations, the infamous 1977 *The Hobbit*, and *The Brave Little Toaster* (1987) and its sequels. [PM] ● *Margaretta Scott* (1912-2005), UK stage and cinema actress who played two parts in the sf classic *Things to Come* (1936, scripted by H.G. Wells), died on 15 April aged 93. ● *Noreen Shaw* (née Kane, 1930-2005), long-time fan who was married to editor Larry Shaw (1924-1985) and who chaired the 1955 World SF Convention, died in late May. Her and Larry's fanzine *Axe* was a 1962 Hugo nominee. Earl Kemp writes: 'I have known her since the early 1950s and, especially during our Midwest USA years together, we were the closest of fan friends. Another great one passes on.' ● *Harold Wooster* (1919-2005), lifelong sf enthusiast and father of Martin Morse Wooster, died on 20 May aged 86. Martin writes: 'He sold one "Probability Zero" piece to *Astounding* in 1943.... He co-wrote a letter with Robert Heinlein that appeared in *Science* (21 July 1961) about whether or not "exobiology" or "xenobiology" was the correct term. In the 1960s, my father was at the Air Force Office of Scientific Research where he was in charge of strange projects. He funded the Air Force's official investigation of the Dean Drive.' ● *Pat York*, US teacher (recently retired) and author of short sf who was a Nebula Award finalist in 2000, died on 21 May in Columbus, Ohio, when a bus collided with the car in which she was a passenger. Pat York was 57. [CD]

**As We See Others.** Terry Pratchett muses in *The Times*: 'I think about the literary world like I think about Tibet. It's quite interesting, it's a long way away from me and it's sure as hell they're never going to make me Dalai Lama'. (4 May) [AC]

**Mythopoeic Awards.** Here are the latest fiction shortlists: ADULT Kage Baker, *The Anvil of the World*; Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*; Elizabeth Hand, *Mortal Love*; Patricia A. McKillip, *Alphabet of Thorn*; Gene Wolfe, *The Wizard Knight (The Knight and The Wizard)*. ● CHILDREN'S Kevin Crossley-Holland, Arthur Trilogy: *The Seeing Stone*, *At the Crossing Places*, and *King of the Middle March*; Nancy Farmer, *Sea of Trolls*; Monica Furlong, trilogy comprising *Wise Child*, *Juniper*, and *Colman*; Garth Nix, *The Abhorsen Trilogy: Sabriel, Lirael, Daughter of the Clayr*, and *Abhorsen*; Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky*.

**Outraged Letters.** *Harry Harrison* explains the 'Howard Harrison' newspaper quote in *A213*: "That's me all right. The *Sunday Express*, with their usual record for accuracy, gets it all wrong. I did an hour interview for Sky One on predictions that didn't come true. They cut me to 40 seconds. I talked about global food shortages—and never mentioned Weetabix.' ● *Margaret Hoyt* postulates a terrifying alternate reality: 'Can one hope that when some mainstream/bestselling/literary author comes out of the closet and announces "Yes! Yes! My latest work IS science fiction. I've always loved science fiction but have never been able to admit it," we will receive an *Annsible* special edition?' ● *Simo* renounces his former way of life: 'I have given up writing about *Hitchhiker's Guide* for ever, on account of (a) I'm bored with it and (b) the film is crap beyond belief. But I heard this today from a reliable source inside the production and it's too good not to pass on: Because Alta Vista has copyrighted the phrase "babel fish" Disney had to negotiate a special deal in order to be able to use those words in the *Hitchhiker's* movie. But the agreement does not extend to the DVD extras so although a picture of a babel fish can be shown, none of the documentaries or other features can include the words "babel fish", either spoken or written. ● Ironically, this bizarre situation is actually a good deal closer to the spirit of Douglas Adams' writing than the film itself ever manages to be, and it's certainly a lot funnier.'

**Thog's Blurb Special.** Found in *Gossamer* by Michelle Hauf: "'This book kicks butt—in a lush and lyrical way.'" Susan Sizemore'. [KM]

**Fanfundery.** *GUFF 2005*: Winners are Damien Warman & Juliette Woods, who will travel from Australia to Interaction. Voting: Sue Ann Barber 8, Alison Barton 7, David Cake 8, DW&JW 37, No Preference etc 7. Total ballots 67: 36 European, 22 Australasian, 9 other.

**As Others See Us II.** In the 10 May episode of the TV magic and mentalism show *Derren Brown: Trick of the Mind*, DB invited Iain Banks to choose a random passage and word from any of his books: 'either your classic fiction here, or your science fiction'. (Despite or because of that subtle emphasis, Banks chose a word from *Feersum Endjinn*, successfully identified by Brown.) [JB] ● Yet more on *Never Let Me Go*: 'Given that Ishiguro's new novel is explicitly about cloning, that it is, in effect,

a science fiction set in the present day, and that the odds against success in this mode are bullishly stacked, his success in writing a novel that is at once speculative, experimental, and humanly moving is almost miraculous.' (James Wood, *The New Republic*, 16 May) [MG]

**Random Fandom.** *Simon Bradshaw* on Clarke Award funding: 'the Science Fiction Foundation and Serendip came to an agreement by which SFF will fund up to £1000 of the cost of the Award Ceremony for each of the next five years. SFF Chair Simon Bradshaw commented "the SFF is pleased to continue to support the Clarke Award and we look forward to continuing to work alongside Serendip and the BSFA to raise sponsorship for it." Simon added that he would be resigning from Serendip's committee to avoid any perceived conflict of interest, but would continue to support fund-raising activities on behalf of the Award.' ● *Joyce Katz* had a successful angioplasty on 23 May; ankle surgery and a cataract operation are to follow.

**The Dead Past.** *Nebula SF* editor Peter Hamilton (not to be confused with author Peter F. Hamilton) crushingly responds to John Brunner's permissive views about sex in sf: 'Novels and films which suggest by their subject matter that the ideal way to spend a pleasant evening is in the close proximity of a co-operative female with a plentiful supply of alcohol to hand are quite unworthy to be classified as science fiction, regardless of how well-written or produced they are, as they sully the high ethical and moral ideals inherent in by far the greater part of this type of literature.' (*Nebula SF*, July 1958)

**Bloomsbury Auctions** sent their latest catalogue of modern first editions, and I idly wondered which genre titles now command four-figure starting prices. Not *The Time Machine* (a mere £600), but: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The House at Pooh Corner*, 1984, and *North-ern Lights* (hey, I have that edition), each at £1000. All these pale before the glory of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (1st English, £1500), *Dracula* at £3000, *Farmer Giles of Ham* ditto, and a cool £6000 for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Oh dearie me.

**C.o.A.** *Steve Davies & Giulia de Cesare*, 3 Sandgate Ave, Reading, RG30 6XD. *Victor Gonzalez*, 3703 1/2 Densmore Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103, USA. *Kim Huett*, PO Box 1443, Woden, ACT 2606, Australia. *Debbi Kerr* (from 16 July), 31 Orchard St, Otley, W Yorkshire, LS21 1JU. *Dan & Lynn Steffan*, 2015 NE 50th Ave, Portland, OR 97213, USA. *Bud Webster*, 405 Aubery Rd, Richmond, VA 23229, USA.

**Editorial.** It seems that Arthur C. Clarke's novels are to be someone's specialist subject on *Mastermind*. A BBC researcher picked my brains for background material, revealing somewhat late in the day that 'we don't give out fees to our experts as they usually do it for free.' Suddenly there was an awful temptation to provide such inputs as: 'Clarke's most famous story "Nightfall" not only predicted hydrogen bombs and iPods but also inspired the new science of Dianetics ...'

**Even More Awards.** *The Fountain Award*, presented by the Speculative Literature Foundation for short fiction 'of exceptional literary quality', went to Jeffrey Ford for 'The Annals of Eelin-Ok' (*The Faery Reel*, 2004). ● *The Hal Clement Award* for best YA novel of 2004 went to *Balance of Trade* by Sharon Lee & Steve Miller. ● *Saturn Awards* for genre film/TV have all too many categories. Winning films: SF *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; FANTASY *Spider-Man 2*; HORROR *Shaun of the Dead*; ACTION/THRILLER: *Kill Bill 2*; ANIMATED *The Incredibles*.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Revisionist Paleontology Dept.* 'The megatherium, the ichthyosaurus have paced the earth with seven-league steps and hidden the day with cloud fast wings.' (George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, 1903) [ECL] ● *Genealogy Dept Revisited*: 'I died to keep you alive, and one day you will die to feed my ancestors.' (Larry Niven and Steve Barnes, *The Barsoom Project*, 1989) [PM] ● *Strangulation Dept.* 'Shock throttled a sob half spent in her throat.' (Jacqueline Lichtenberg, *Farfetch*, 1985) ● *Dept of Heavy Lifting.* 'He swung his white smile around the room like a lighthouse.' (Susan Cooper, *Over Sea, Under Stone*, 1965) [MMW] ● *Astronomy/Cosmology Dept.* 'If his calculations and instruments were correct, he was now outside the home galaxy of the Milky Way and in an entirely new universe, the universe known to him as the Crab Nebula.' ● *Dept of Preternatural Rigidity.* 'He raged and shouted at them from behind the bars which, as she shook them, held as firm as though a fly's feet were touching them.' (both from David Whitaker, *The Dr Who Annual*, 1965) [LC]

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