



## Ansible 219 October 2005

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: **Bill Rotsler**. Available for SAE or the nature of the struback.

**Censored!** In September, after at least 12 tranquil years, the *Ansible* archive at Glasgow University was closed down by nervous university staff as a result of menacing email. Although access has been restored except for one 'offending' issue, *Ansible* is moving to the former mirror site. Please change your web links from [www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible](http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible) (or .../SF-Archives/Ansible) to [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk). I marvel at the spinelessness of the Glasgow authorities who instantly panicked at a message with the alarming but never-explained subject line 'Violation'. Sent from the cosy anonymity of a Hotmail account, this missive shows an erratic grasp of legal terminology suggesting that whoever the actual author may be (the email is signed 'Timothy Donaldson, J.D., B.A. George Washington University Law School'), he's probably not a lawyer:

'It is my estimation, after careful review, that David Langford did willfully and with malice of forethought cause material and economic harm to Robert Stanek through his online column. • Given the opportunity to correct such without recourse, David Langford chose a course of action that caused continuing material and economic harm to Robert Stanek. • As a university, Glasgow must uphold a higher standard or be held equally accountable and liable. I respectfully request that you take immediate action to remove the following pages from your site: [Here the Glasgow URLs of Ansible 181 and Ansible 178 are given.] • As recompense, I would further ask that you cease publication of Mr. Langford's work and remove all Ansible listings from your site ...'

Me again. 'Given the opportunity' is a lie; there was no prior complaint about those issues. As for 'malice' and 'material and economic harm', I'd better lay bare my wickedness by reprinting the first item from May 2002; the August follow-up merely cited more examples.

**'Amazon Mystery.** Authors of fantasies on sale at Amazon.com have noticed a rash of oddly similar customer reviews that rubbish their work and instead recommend, say, George R.R. Martin, Robert Jordan, and Robert Stanek. The number of Big Name commendations varies, but not the plug for self-published author Robert Stanek. Who could possibly be posting these reviews (many since removed by Amazon) under a variety of names? It is a mystery, but *Ansible* is reminded of how Lionel Fanthorpe's pseudonymous sf would often mention those great classic masters of the genre, Verne, Wells and Fanthorpe.'

Speculations about who wrote or instigated the complaining email had better be kept private. But I don't think it was Lionel Fanthorpe.

### Man In His Time

**Brian Aldiss** went to the movies on 3 September: 'To the Odeon West End in Leicester Square. We ate eggs benedict in the square before going in to view the Marlin Film of *Brothers of the Head*. The cinema was packed. / Of course I had been apprehensive; Toni Grisoni had warned me I might not like the adaptation. In fact, it's a splendid film, put over with immense conviction, and executed in documentary style. Noisy, of course—lotsa rock'n'roll—but well-characterised and brilliantly photographed—sometimes almost abstract. The young brothers, whom I had met in Holt when filming last year, were excellent. Shot mainly on the bleak North Norfolk coast, far from humanity. / I call it "England's First Surrealist Movie".'

**M. John Harrison's** *Light* (trans. Hannu Tervaharju, as *Valo*) won the *Tähtivaeltaja* Award for best sf published in Finland in 2004. [TJ]

**Kazuo Ishiguro's** clones-for-organs novel *Never Let Me Go*, the closest thing to sf on the Booker Prize longlist, subsequently made it to the six-book shortlist. The winner will be announced on 10 October.

**Stephen King** predictably drew the highest bid of \$25,100 in an on-line auction of Tuckerization opportunities: the winner gets to name a character in King's new novel *Cell*. Other participants familiar in genre circles were 'Lemony Snicket' (\$6,350), Peter Straub (\$2,125), Jonathan Lethem (\$2,025), and Karen Joy Fowler (\$1,853.88). A second auction round features Neil Gaiman, last seen trailing some way behind John Grisham. Proceeds go to the First Amendment Project. ([SFgate.com](http://SFgate.com))

**Ursula Le Guin** is somewhat surprised by the physical description of an ansible in Paul Park's *A Princess of Roumania*, as quoted last issue:

'I don't know where they get their ansibles from in Roumania, but the last model I'm familiar with is more like a large pocket handkerchief with holograms and sound effects. The Roumanian version sounds unnecessarily massive.' So there.

**Jonathan Lethem** is one of this year's 25 MacArthur Foundation fellows, each to be encouraged in their work by a bounty of \$500,000 spread over five years. Certain snide fans suggested that getting out of sf was a smart move for Mr Lethem; this wasn't necessary, though, for our previous MacArthur recipient Octavia Butler.

**Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle** received Heinlein Awards for 'lifetime achievements for outstanding published work in hard science fiction or technical writings inspiring the human exploration of space.' I could not forbear from reverently murmuring that great line in *Foot-fall*: 'Nuke 'em till they glow, then shoot 'em in the dark.'

**Chris Priest's** novel *The Prestige* is now in pre-production as a Nolan brothers film, with photography to begin in January. Author soundtrack: 'Interviewed at his luxury home on the south coast of England, Mr Priest said, "Hic." Later he added, "Pass the Alka-Seltzer."'

**J.K. Rowling's** sales figures can still surprise us. According to a widely-reproduced AP report on H. Potter audio downloads, 'Rowling's fantasy series, most recently "Harry Potter and Half-Blood Prince," has sold more than 200 copies worldwide in print editions ...' [RC]

**Rev. Graham Taylor** of *Shadowmancer* fame spoke blasphemy to an audience of Cornish schoolchildren, saying that Harry Potter was gay (and Rowling's villains were wimps). Apparently the Potter line—'As for Harry Potter, well, he's not the only gay in the village'—was a droll allusion to a British TV show that your editor does not watch. The kids apparently didn't see it that way, and became 'excitable'; offended school staff told Taylor to make himself scarce. (CNN) [BB]

**Ian Watson** disported himself on a bed of nails at NewCon3 last weekend, and was described as 'enjoying it far too much'. [MP]

### Conurbia

10 Oct • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Cory Doctorow.

15-16 Oct • **Octocon**, Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Ireland. Unofficial start: 7pm Fri 14th in hotel bar. GoH Charles Stross. €30 reg, student €25, under-18 €15, to Octocon, Basement Flat, 26 Longford Tce, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Sterling £20, £15, £10 to 'Dave Lally #2 A/C', 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

26 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm onward. With Marcial Souto and Ian Watson.

28-31 Oct • **Cult TV 2005**, Birmingham. Various guests. £99 reg, £49 child (10-15). Contact PO Box 1701, Wolverhampton, WV4 4WT.

11-13 Nov • **ArmadaCon 17**, Novatel Plymouth. £30 reg. Contact 4 Gleneagle Avenue, Mannamead, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

11-13 Nov • **Novacon 35**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. £36 to 30 Oct; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

4-6 Aug 06 • **MeCon 9**, Queen's Elms Centre, Malone Rd, Belfast. GoH: Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Ian McDonald, more TBA. £14/€21 to 31 Dec; £5/€8 supp. Contact: 99 Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6SP

26-30 Apr 06 • **Sci-Fi London** film festival, Apollo West End cinema, Regent Street, London, SW1. Further details TBA.

10-12 Aug 07 • **Recombination** (Uicon 21/British RPG con), New Hall, Cambridge. Guests TBA. £20 reg until 1 Jan 06. Contact 155 Gilbert Road, Cambridge, CB4 3PA.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** Some coverage of *Serenity*: 'Writer Brian Pendreigh suggests: "As a race, sci-fi fans make Klingons seem like regular, laid-back guys, only better-looking and often with clearer complexions. History, however, shows that Whedon's appeal can stretch beyond the intergalactic anorak and reach a much wider audience." [...] Actor Sean Maher, who plays the ship's doctor, admits that he was put off by the science-fiction tag when he first heard about *Firefly*. "But now I feel like

*Firefly* and *Serenity* are their own genre. It's not science-fiction so much as it's about humanity and characters and dynamics between people." (*Scotland on Sunday*, 25 Sep) [PC] • Another classic opening line: 'Sometimes, when devoted fans of fantasy and science-fiction entertainment—for economy's sake, let's just call them geeks—get together ...' (*NY Times*, 2 Oct) The story, by Dave Itzkoff, discusses a new TV SF series called *Threshold* which we shouldn't call SF: 'It's all played real and true, and it's not played as science fiction,' says producer David Heyman. 'It's played as science fact.' Why this diplomatic deception? Itzkoff writes: 'for a contemporary sci-fi series to find a place on a network's schedule, it can't look too much like a sci-fi series.'

**Chog's Blurb Masterclass.** Spotted on the back of Christopher Stasheff's *The Warlock Enraged*: 'On the magical planet of Gramarye, science coexists with witches and elves [...] and telepathy is the most common means of transportation.' [SB]

**R.I.P.** *Don Adams* (1923-2005), US comedian remembered as the inept Agent 86 in the 1960s TV spy-spoof series *Get Smart*, died on 25 September; he was 82. In the 1990s he voiced the title role of the *Inspector Gadget* cartoon. [BB] • *Tommy Bond* (Thomas Ross Bond, 1926-2005), US actor who played Jimmy Olsen in the first *Superman* film serial (1948) and its sequel, died on 24 September aged 79. [BB] • *Hamilton Camp* (1934-2005), London-born actor who appeared in *Star Trek: Voyager* and *ST: Deep Space Nine*, and voiced characters in many SF/fantasy TV cartoons, died on 2 October; he was 70. • *Richard E. Cunha* (1922-2005), cult horror/SF director remembered for his late-1950s films *She Demons*, *Giant from the Unknown*, *Missile to the Moon* and *Frankenstein's Daughter*, died on 18 September at age 83. [PDF] • *Robert Denver* (1935-2005), US actor best known for playing the title role in the much-repeated 1960s TV sitcom *Gilligan's Island*, died on 2 September. He was 70. The series often wandered into fantasy dream sequences, and the 1980s cartoon spinoff *Gilligan's Planet* reworked its castaway template as SF. [SG] • *Charles L. Harness* (1915-2005), US patent attorney and much-loved SF author, died on 20 September aged 89, following a lengthy illness. He wrote several works of classic sense-of-wonder SF, notably his influential first novel *The Paradox Men* (1953 as *Flight into Yesterday*), which moved Brian Aldiss to coin the description "Widescreen Baroque"; the extraordinary art-versus-science melodrama "The Rose" (1953); and the cosmologically audacious *The Ring of Ritornel* (1968)—all personal favourites for which I'm still grateful. [L] • *Jerry Juhl* (1938-2005), US puppeteer and screenwriter who joined the Jim Henson Company in 1961 and was chief writer for *The Muppet Show*, several Muppet films, *Fraggle Rock*, etc., died on 26 September. (Some reports say the 27th.) [SFS] • *Helen Cresswell* (1934-2005), British author of more than 100 children's fantasies and comedies, died from cancer on 26 September; she was 71. Her best known fantasies were *Lizzie Dripping* (1973, assembling stories written for the BBC's *Jackanory*) and the Bagthorpe Saga which began with *Ordinary Jack* (1977) and became a 1981 TV series. [BB] • *Constance Moore* (1920-2005), US actress and singer who co-starred with Buster Crabbe in the 1939 *Buck Rogers* film serial, died on 16 September; she was 85. [CH] • *Joe Nolan*, long-time Belfast SF Group fan and con-goer, died on 27 September; he was in his nineties. He assisted James White with novel research, and appears as ship-captain 'Seosadn Uí Nuallain, or Joseph Nolan' in JW's *The First Protector* (2000). [ED] • *Vladimir Volkoff* (1932-2005), French author born of exiled Russian parents, died on 13 September aged 72. Though best known for spy fiction, he won the Jules Verne award for *Metro Pour L'Enfer* ("Metro to Hell", 1963) and returned to SF with two 1980s novels. [J-ML] • *Robert Wise* (1904-2005), Hollywood directory whose work covered many genres, died on 14 September—four days after his 91st birthday. His SF, fantasy and horror films included *Curse of the Cat People* (1944), *The Body Snatcher* (1945), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *The Haunting* (1963), *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979). [PT] • LATE ENTRY: *Jonathan Adams* (1931-2005), UK actor seen in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and other genre productions, died on 13 June aged 74. See also 'Outraged Letters' below.

**British Fantasy Awards.** NOVEL (August Derleth Award) Stephen King, *The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower*. NOVELLA Christopher Fowler, *Breath*. SHORT Paul Meloy, 'Black Static' (*The Third Alternative* #40). COLLECTION Stephen Gallagher, *Out of His Mind*. ANTHOLOGY Andrew Hook, ed., *The Alviso Project*. ARTIST Les Edwards. SMALL PRESS Elastic Press. SPECIAL (Karl Edward Wagner Award) Nigel Kneale. [CM]

**Fanfunding.** TAFF candidates for the 2006 westbound race to LAcon are Bridget Bradshaw, ½r Cruttenden, and Mike 'Sparks' Rennie. (Fran Dowd had intended to stand but withdrew for health reasons.)

**As Others See Us II.** From a review of Dan Simmons's *Olympos*: '... After epigraphs by Lucian, Conrad, and Shelley, we get quotations from Virgil, Milton, Blake, Byron, Keats, Tennyson and Rupert Brooke. It's easy to understand why a science fiction writer might suffer from a literary inferiority complex; but Simmons would seem less naked if he spent less time nervously covering his ass—or if he acknowledged the real influences of HG Wells, Robert Heinlein and Kurt Vonnegut, instead of manufacturing so transparently bogus a literary lineage.' (Gary Taylor, *Guardian*, 10 Sep) [CB] • On the UK Amicus union leader Derek Simpson: 'He certainly doesn't have the interests you would associate with an engineer and former member of the Communist Party. He is a keen chess player, an avid Star Trek fan and collects old comics and Rupert the Bear annuals.' (Clinton Manning, *Daily Mirror*, 10 Sep) Our researcher Mat Coward agrees: 'I know—that's what's always put me off Trek fandom: all those Old Etonians and stuck-up debs.'

**Random Fandom.** *Maureen Kincaid Speller* is a Lib Dem candidate in the 13 Oct by-election for Harvey Central ward, Folkestone.

**Publishers & Sinners.** Beatrix Potter's publisher Frederick Warne (a Penguin subsidiary) succeeded in legal action against Chinese pirates whose unauthorized translations used Potter's own artwork. Most unusually, this victory—subject to appeal—was achieved in a Chinese court against a state-owned Chinese publisher. (*Independent*, 11 Sep)

**Outraged Letters.** *Richard E. Geis* is fascinated by 'the Hugo situation. Imagine, you and C. Brown tied at 26. It's enough to make me go up into the attic, uncover my time machine, and Go Back and revive *SF Review* ... with the added tasks of murdering you and him in most foul ways. Maybe most fowl ways—deaths by ten thousand pecks. But it's too much trouble. Gee, I just saved your life!' • *Jay Lake* has the right spirit: 'I believe that I speak for my co-author, Ruth Nestvold, in saying that now that we have been Thogged in the recentmost Ansible, both our careers have been completed. This is a climax achievement which can never be bested, and I shall hang up my keyboard, shave my head and go into seclusion in darkest Idaho forthwith.' No, no! • *Fred Smith* belatedly reproves me for not mentioning the death of fantasy/horror author Jane Rice (1913-2003). Sometimes, alas, no one tells me.

**As Others See Us III.** Jay R. Ferguson, co-star of NBC's SF series *Surface*, sings a familiar song: it isn't true science fiction. 'To me, sci-fi is *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* ... This is almost like something that could be real.' But as the *Sci Fi Wire* report continues, he makes a deft comeback: 'When describing the show, Ferguson feels the term "speculative fiction" is more appropriate than science fiction. "To me, even as a sci-fi fan, speculative fiction sounds so much more interesting."' [TMcD] • Janet Street-Porter exposes the true horror of UK education: 'we make school children read Dickens and Philip Pullman ...' (*Independent*, 15 Sep)

**Yet More Awards.** 2005 *Delta Film Award* for amateur films: *The Kingdom of Shadows*, a fantasy directed by Ross Shepherd. [SG]

**Small Press.** *Greg Pickersgill's* Interaction fan GoH book *Can't Get Off the Island*, collecting his fanwriting from over 35 years, costs £4 (UK post free) from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Rd, Croydon, CR0 7ES. Overseas rates from banana\at\fishliifter.demon.co.uk; proceeds to SFF. • *Tyrannosaurus Press* of New Orleans was flooded and most of its stock destroyed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina; but all staff are safe.

**C.O.A.** *Adam Roberts*, 30 Rosefield Rd, Staines, Middlesex, TW18 4NB. *John Jarrold*, Top Flat, 117 All Saints St, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3BG (send query letter before agency/book doctor submissions). *Pam Wells*, 5 Grove View, Clifton, York, YO30 6LF.

**Chog's Masterclass.** *Hot and Cold Running Dept.* 'Jean-Claude's sex ran over my skin while the fear ran like ice through the rest of me.' (Laurel K. Hamilton, *Cerulean Sins*, 2003) [TMcD] • *Beards Got Eyes Dept.* 'She saw him murmur to Jair, and saw the big red beard turn in the lamplit dimness to stare almost incredulously at his leader.' (C.L. Moore, 'Judgment Night', 1943) [PDF] • *Eyes Wide Shut Dept.* 'The eyes that stared directly at her across the churchyard were closed, the face was pale and pasty in the faded moonlight.' (*Doctor Who: Grave Matter*, Justin Richards, 2000) [LC] • *Unusual Psi Powers Dept.* 'Lucille Roman sat in a remote and lonely spot and mentally chewed her fingernails ...' (George O. Smith, *Fire In the Heavens*, 1958) [KMCA] • 'I shed mental tears, and I could see the same in Eve's eyes as she looked down at me.' (Otto Binder, 'Adam Link's Vengeance', 1940) [KMCA]

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